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Revered Abroad, Abused at Home: Arthur Miller's contentious dialogue with America

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of PhD is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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FOR

Mam and Dad.

Thank you for making everything possible for me.

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NOTE

American spellings have been retained within quoted material.

ABSTRACT

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Louise Callinan

Although Arthur Miller is renowned as one of America's greatest playwrights, his reputation is founded largely on his early plays, and in particular *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949). His playwriting career spanned across a sixty-year period, yet his acclaimed plays were all produced during its first decade. The aim of this research is to tackle the myopic critical focus on his classic plays by examining works that were highly criticised in his own country at the time of their first production and devoting particular attention to his later and lesser-known works. The more inclusive approach highlights their significance within his oeuvre and traces the development of his aesthetic. A close examination of a play from each decade of Miller's career is carried out in order to chronicle the decline in his critical popularity in America. The research significantly offers socio-political and cultural reasons for their negative treatment. His appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1956, and the controversy sparked by the perceived negative portraits of his former wife Marilyn Monroe in his plays had a seminal impact on public perception of the playwright. His critical perspective on American society served to alienate American audiences and led to a disparity in the reception of his later plays. The depreciation of Miller's reputation in America coincided with his ascension to critical acclaim in Europe. The research thus makes reference to the response to Miller in Britain, in particular, where he is the most frequently produced playwright after Shakespeare. The British context serves to augment the fact that the plays discussed in this research merit inclusion in the scholarship on the playwright. His later plays are increasingly relevant to the current global environment and warrant revival and consideration in the reputation of Arthur Miller.

Introduction

Arthur Miller is acclaimed as one of the greatest American playwrights of the twentieth century. However, underneath this reputation lurks the paradox of his complicated relationship with his native homeland. Miller's career spanned over six decades, yet his esteemed status in America is mainly based on the successes of his early career. To a large extent, his later plays fell into critical neglect in America, while receiving critical acclaim in Europe. In Britain alone, Miller's popularity is reflected in the fact that he is the most frequently produced playwright after Shakespeare.

The lack of popularity of Miller's later plays in America resulted in a dense critical focus on his early work. This research aims at a more inclusive perspective and accordingly focuses predominantly on the latter plays of Miller's career. It thus aims to address the noteworthy gap in the critical commentary on a playwright that occupies such a prominent position in the history of American theatre. The thesis explores the evolution of Miller's thought and highlights the importance of his lesser-known works to his oeuvre.

In order to account for the lacuna in popularity and scholarship on Miller, it is important to consider the contentious nature of his relationship with America. As a result, the initial response to Miller's plays in America forms an aspect of this

research. The research demonstrates that the reception of his plays was the culmination of socio-political and cultural factors. The critique of American society inherent in his work was wide ranging and his counter-cultural position antagonised American audiences.

Miller's position of defiance before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1956 had a seminal influence on how he was perceived on both personal and professional levels. In spite of the shift in the political climate and the denouncement of the crusade as specious, Miller's reputation failed to be fully restored. A resentment toward the moralising of the playwright escalated in the public mindset and his plays were regarded as condescending attempts to assert his morally superior attitude. Miller may have been officially vindicated of charges of treason, yet the criticism of America implicit in his plays appeared to imply a pseudo treachery to the public psyche. Furthermore, the perceived negative portraits of his second wife, Marilyn Monroe, in his later plays was believed to seriously undermine Miller's entitlement to moral judgement. The moral intentionality that had secured the success of both *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949) became increasingly regarded with distaste in America. This resentment was accentuated by Miller's participation in anti-war and civil rights demonstrations and his involvement with PEN. In 1965, Miller became the President of the international organisation of 'poets, playwrights, editors, essayists and novelists.' PEN was established to 'promote intellectual cooperation and understanding among writers' (Abbotson, 2007, 446), and to defend literature against threats to its survival largely in the form of censorship and political oppression.

As Miller's career progressed, he adopted a more European sensibility and this was a contributory factor in the negative response that his later plays generated in America. Miller's shift to a more European orientation coincided with his third marriage to the Austrian photographer Inge Morath. The couple travelled extensively, and Miller was exposed to the experimentation on the European stage that was largely disregarded by the commercial vicissitudes of American theatre. Miller's plays remained quintessentially American, yet the manner in which the subject matter was treated was generally more congruous with the European tradition in terms of his experimental style and his tragic vision. Miller's commitment to innovation and expanding the boundaries of form lay outside the commercial interests of mainstream American theatre. His emphasis on collective consciousness drew him closer to the European mindset.

Miller's plays failed to adhere to the conventions of one particular movement, and a mutation of European generated styles was evident in his later works. From the outset of his career, Miller's plays expressed a commitment to the Ibsenite tradition. However as his career evolved, his plays employed Brechtian and Beckettian techniques associated with the post-Second World War reaction. While Miller initially resisted the plays of the Absurdist theatre, he became increasingly drawn to their mode of expression in his later plays. Miller was not a static dramatist and the continued vacillating styles that he employed helped to alienate American audiences that desired to comfortably locate his works within a particular niche created by the popularity of *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949). His later plays commonly defied the horizon of expectations established by his classic works. The

dedication of the playwright to innovation and experimentation was detached from the evolution of the American theatre, and instead reflected a personal organic development. He claimed that 'the idea of repeating the same thing would be suicide' for his personal creativity (Gussow, 2002, 126), and that it was thus 'finally not enough even to be distinct from others; the time comes when you have to be distinct from yourself too' (Miller, 1994, 239).

Miller's tragic vision also failed to be understood in America, and this was largely a product of the fact of its incompatibility with the American Dream. Throughout his career, Miller remained a persistent critic of the flawed utopianism of the American Dream and its degeneration into a destructive myth. Both of Miller's parents were Polish immigrants, and the playwright inherited the acute psychological investment in the myth of the American Dream that had inspired the migration of his ancestors. As a result, the Depression of 1929 was both economically and spiritually devastating to his family. The formative impact of the Depression on Miller's psyche filtered into his plays and was expressed in the tension between an underlay of doom and an enduring optimism. Miller was committed to exposing the darker reality of the Dream, while retaining the optimism on which it insisted. While America desired to forget the Crash, Miller was drawn to its instructiveness to an America increasingly consumed with excess. His insistence on causality was at odds with the fixation of the Dream on the potential of the future expressed in its emphasis on the 'pursuit' of happiness. His growing preoccupation with continuity was hostile to America's intolerant attitude to the past. The evolutionary mythology of the American Dream placed little reverence in tradition or the notion of traditional values.

The fact of Miller's Jewish background added a private resonance to the events of the Holocaust. His later plays were marked by the theme of survivor guilt and the struggle to accept the malevolent aspect of human nature. His insistence on the fact of human imperfection also ran counter to the individualist ethos of the American experience. His perspective that human fallibility necessitated a notion of collective consciousness held a deeper poignancy in post-war Europe.

While Miller's shift to a more European sensibility alienated the American public, it guaranteed the continued success of his plays in Europe, notably in Britain. This research makes reference to the discrepancy in the response to Miller's later plays in America and Europe in order to demonstrate the fact that their reception in America was the result of perceived flaws highlighted by the majority of American critics. An ideological prejudice was in operation in relation to his later plays in America in the aversion of critics to his more European aesthetic and his negative evaluation of American values. The thesis alludes in particular to the favourable response to Miller's later plays in Britain. The critical reception of his work in Britain is representative of Miller's wider popularity across Europe. The fact that Britain was not always in sync with the theatrical trends of mainland Europe is largely irrelevant on account of Miller's predominant affinity with the more enduring European Absurdist tradition. The choice of Britain was not arbitrary and was also rooted in the fact that issues of translation and adaptation of Miller's works for the foreign stage were circumvented by virtue of the shared language. As reception is only a dimension of the overall project, the thesis is not intended as a comparative analysis between the response to Miller's plays in America and Britain. The inclusion of the British context

is auxiliary to the research. As the title of the thesis suggests, the focus is on Miller's contentious dialogue with America. The main purpose of the British context is to highlight the extent to which the paradigm in the critical response to Miller's plays was rooted in cultural and socio-political considerations.

Given the nature of the research, this thesis is of necessity qualitative and involves a close textual analysis of a sample of Miller plays. The research predominantly examines a number of his later plays that have been virtually critically neglected. Since the death of the playwright in 2005, the volume of scholarship has increased. However, the accounts of his later plays generally fail to offer anything other than a dense overview of the basic tenets of the plays that followed *After the Fall* (1964). In addition to Jeffrey Mason and Enoch Brater, the eminent critic Christopher Bigsby has conducted the most extensive and inclusive research on the playwright.

This research analyses a play from each decade of Miller's career, and each play was carefully chosen on the basis of its representative qualities. The structure of the thesis thus lends itself to a chronological evaluation of the decline in Miller's popularity in America. The analysis excludes a discussion of *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949) on account of the exhaustive scholarship that relates to them and the decision to focus mainly on the latter plays of his career. The textual analysis also includes the primary source material of the numerous essays and articles that Miller penned throughout his career and the original reviews of his plays.

The reviews chosen for inclusion were primarily those of the dominant critics of the hour and those in whom the most authority was placed. However, the researcher widely acknowledges the problematic nature of the anecdotal evidence of critical reviews. Critical bias and ideological opposition to the playwright can shape these opinions. In the case of Arthur Miller, this latter point is significant. Miller's outspoken indictment of critics for contributing to the deterioration in the standard of American theatre created further resentment toward him among the critical community. It is also essential to highlight the fact that reviews are equally written to entertain as to inform, and thus express the desire of the critics to aggrandise their own careers. The limited time given to compose reviews can also lead to a superficial critique that can often unfairly damage a play. Nonetheless, in spite of the unreliable nature of critical reviews, they often remain the only surviving testament of audience reaction. This research makes a concerted effort to consider the limitations of reviews in analysing the response to individual plays.

The research also employs a historical framework in order to contextualise the plays. This mode of analysis includes a discussion of the socio-political and cultural climate in which the plays appeared. This thesis makes references to the personal life of the playwright in order to determine the personal context of the plays and establish public perception of him. The inclusion of this material is not intended as a means to trace the autobiographical parallels in his plays. Miller's appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1956, and the fact of his three marriages had a formative effect on him and the manner in which his works were received. His abrupt

marriage to Inge Morath in the year following his divorce from Monroe was regarded as a slight to the actress.

The legitimacy of reading the private experience of a writer into his work has long been the subject of critical debate. The authority of the author was challenged most notably by Roland Barthes. His ideas in relation to the 'Death of the Author' (1977) were shared by Michel Foucault (1980, *Language, counter-memory*) and the semiotic theorist Umberto Eco (1989). While this research acknowledges the ideas of 'Author Theory,' it nonetheless presents the private experience of the playwright as a means to understand the concepts that informed his plays. The research draws attention to the elements of Miller's personal life that shaped his plays, yet it does not employ biography as the sole lens of interpretation. The inclusion of this mode of analysis was necessitated on account of the overtly publicised nature of Miller's private life, and the fact that public perception of the playwright helped to determine the reception of his plays.

The textual approach to the plays is supplemented by examining Miller's affinity with Jean-Paul Sartre in their joint existential humanist approach. However, although Miller shares certain preoccupations with his contemporary, he is in fact closer allied to the philosophy of Albert Camus. The academic Derek Parker Royal asserts that both Miller and Camus hold that it is 'only through an awareness of our human responsibilities to others can we define ourselves, both singularly and collectively' (2000, 201, Internet). In addition to demonstrating this parallel, the research also

draws on the work of Michel Foucault and Erich Fromm. The ideas of the cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard prove informative in relation to understanding the metaphysical dimension to Miller's later plays.

As reception is only an aspect of this research, brief reference is made to the work of reception theorists (Bennett, Holub, Jauss). In terms of the theorising of performance, the semiotic analyses of Umberto Eco, Patrice Pavis, and Marvin Carlson are widely respected. However, the phenomenological and semiotic emphasis on how meaning is created and the theorisation of performance that characterises much of the work of reception theory is not the central focus of this thesis. While the research acknowledges that the effective realisation of the ideas of a play is dependent on the collective contribution of directors, designers, actors, and the wider production team, the thesis does not adopt a performance-based approach. The reception of certain Miller plays was adversely affected by faults with the initial productions, and attention has been drawn to the productions where the faults proved to be the decisive reason for their disparagement. In particular, the circumstances surrounding the staging of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) by the Old Vic in London in 2006 are alluded to in order to explain the fate of the play. However, a performance-based analysis was secondary to the textual orientation of this research. Furthermore, the lack of performance material inhibited a performance-rooted orientation. Critical reviews and the personal notes of directors and cast members are often all that remains of original productions, and as noted, the anecdotal nature of this material renders it unreliable and an inadequate basis for research.

The research prizes the text and privileges the playwright as a means to reassert the textual value of the plays and call for their radical reassessment through new productions. The thesis frequently returns to Hans Robert Jauss's theory of 'horizon of expectations' to explain the reception of Miller's plays in America. Jauss's theory aimed to supplement existing historical and aesthetic approaches with the dimension of reception and its influence. Jauss claimed that each work was received in accordance with an 'objectifiable system of expectations' (Jauss, 1982, 22) established by 'the historical moment of its appearance, from a preunderstanding of the genre, from the form and themes of already familiar works...' (Jauss, 1982, 22). According to Jauss, new works were never completely new, and so audiences were led toward a 'very specific kind of reception by...familiar characteristics' (Jauss, 1982, 23). In the case of Arthur Miller, the horizon of expectations for his later plays in America was rooted in the negative comparison to his earlier work, his supposed detachment from the reigning styles of the period, and the perceived irrelevance of his plays to the times. By aiming to uncover the horizon of expectations for his later plays at the time of their appearance, it is possible to trace the reasons for their critical neglect. As Jauss concluded, the 'way in which a literary work, at the historical moment of its appearance, satisfies, surpasses, disappoints, or refutes the expectations of its first audience obviously provides a criterion for the determination of its aesthetic value' (1982, 25). The initial negative reception of the late plays of Arthur Miller resulted in their neglect both in terms of critical commentary and productions.

Throughout his career, Miller's plays dissected the dynamics of power on both public and private levels. He mediated the conditions of the reigning socio-political

landscape through the dramatisation of personal moral dilemmas. Frequently, the tension between the individual and state power was expressed through the domestic setting. The American locale of the majority of his plays reflected their direct relevance to the American context. However, the universal element of his examination of power structures ensured their success across cultural boundaries. In particular, the post-Holocaust mentality of his later plays had a pertinence to countries that had direct experience with authoritarianism.

The thesis opens with an analysis of *The Crucible* (1953), Miller's most frequently produced play. In spite of the fact that *The Crucible* (1953) is an early and now iconic play of the playwright's canon, its inclusion in this research is validated on the grounds of its significance for illustrative purposes. The condemnation of oppression by authority inherent in the play was flammable to the miasmatic society of McCarthy in which it initially appeared. The denigration by American critics guaranteed the commercial failure of the play and the alienation of the playwright from the critical mass. However, *The Crucible* (1953) was widely praised with the shift in the political landscape. The play is thus important to this research in highlighting the dependence of Miller's plays on the socio-political climate in which they emerged. The treatment that *The Crucible* (1953) received was a direct reflection of the intolerance of American critics toward the implicit disparagement of the current conditions in America. With the subsidence of the McCarthy phenomenon, critics were more willing to acknowledge the merits of the play. The later works of Arthur Miller have frequently only attracted a small number of regional productions. The history of *The*

Crucible (1953) is instructive to the thesis in illustrating the fact that Miller's plays often required subsequent productions in order to be appraised.

After the Fall (1964) was a watershed play in the history of the response to Miller in America. The playwright was reviled for the uncensored, negative portrait of Marilyn Monroe. The immediacy of the appearance of the play to the untimely death of the icon rendered *After the Fall* (1964) a scandal in the media and in the American theatrical community. Critics wholly overlooked the relevance of the theme of personal salvation to the post-Holocaust age. In the aftermath of the play, Miller's reputation in America was irrefutably damaged.

The production of *The Price* (1968) can be understood as an attempt by Miller to re-engage with the alienated masses of American society in its indirect declaration of opposition to the Vietnam War. However, critics widely disparaged the play as irrelevant to the current socio-political and theatrical environment. Miller's well publicised participation in anti-war demonstrations and his outspoken condemnation of the conflict in Vietnam led to charges that the oblique theme of the play rendered it devoid of current significance. The theme of denial failed to be perceived as the vehicle of the commentary of the play on Vietnam. However, in spite of critical opprobrium, *The Price* (1968) was Miller's last commercial success in America.

The second of Miller's plays to be set outside of America, *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) also incited contention for its perceived lack of relatedness to American issues. The play marked a return by the playwright to the exploration of the dynamics of political oppression. The research counters the claims of irrelevance and highlights the previously unacknowledged idea that the play is Miller's personal meditation on the status of the writer in America. As a result, the thesis challenges the minor position that the play holds in the oeuvre of the playwright.

By 1987, Miller was a septuagenarian, and his increasing awareness of his own mortality is evident in the one-acts of *Danger: Memory!* The indifference that the pair sought to challenge in relation to Liberalism in American society was mirrored in the response to the play. The moral insistence of the plays was met with respectful disinterest, for the debate in relation to Liberalism had ceased in the previous decade.

The major revival of Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and *A View from the Bridge* (1965) on Broadway in the 1990s seemed to create a more positive environment in which his new plays could emerge. However, *The Last Yankee* (1993) largely dispensed with the more accommodating environment that had been generated by these productions of Miller's classics. An indictment of the American Dream and a disparaging commentary on the American experience, *The Last Yankee* (1993) was unlikely to elicit a favourable response from critics. The play was largely considered as misplaced given the prosperity of the age. However, the play was popular with audiences that perceived a parallel between the play and the reigning political

landscape. The hallmark of the Clinton administration was similarly founded in an appeal for the revision of American values.

Resurrection Blues (2002) was perhaps the most complete statement of Miller's disenchantment with American culture. In the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001, the play transcended to mirror the descent into a voyeuristic and valueless culture. However, critics focused predominantly on stylistic concerns and dismissed the play as confused. The immediacy of the play to the terrorist attacks seemed to breed a reluctance to confront the questions that the play raised in relation to American values. The events of September 11, 2001, were a direct attack on the American way of life. Accordingly, the fact that the play presented the same condemnation meant that American audiences were hesitant to face its theme at the time in which it appeared.

The thesis highlights the fact that Miller's relationship with America was contentious from the outset of his career. Aside from *Death of a Salesman* (1949), every Miller play met with largely disparaging, indifferent, or derisive reviews. In spite of the fact that the success of *All My Sons* (1949) contributed to his esteemed reputation, the play did not meet universally receptive audiences. Certain sectors of the American public resented the implication that standard American citizens had profited from the war effort. Miller was ultimately the victim of his own success and bore the consequences of achieving critical acclaim at such an early stage of his career. In America, theatre critics perpetuated a system of evaluation whereby the emerging works of a

playwright were negatively compared to their previous successes. Miller was continually made to compete with himself, and he proved unable to match the standard established by *Death of a Salesman* (1949).

While Miller's later plays fail to rival the landmark status of his seminal play, they are nonetheless significant works in their own right. However, some of his lesser-known works fell victim to Miller's growing preoccupation with theme. Some of his later plays are weaker on account of the lack of integration of plot and theme that defined his earlier plays. The standard of his characterisation was less refined as Miller sacrificed emotional integrity to allegorical value. Critics had been conditioned to expect psychological portraits from the playwright, and his shift to more mythological figures that stood outside the boundaries of conventional realism prompted a negative reaction from American critics. The psychological motivations of his earlier characters had shielded Miller from charges of creating ideological portraits. In terms of the later work of the playwright, the lack of psychologising of his characters reduced the capacity for emotional identification on the part of the spectator. However, these weaknesses were relatively minor, and only proved consequential in America due to the fact of comparison to Miller's more accomplished classic plays and the resistance to confronting more experimental plays outside of the conventions of realism and psychology. In Britain, critics were uninterested in the reductive nature of comparative analyses to his earlier work, and so Miller's plays were hailed as notable outputs in their own right.

Chapter One: *The Crucible* (1953) and the politics of freedom in the America of Senator Joseph McCarthy

With the triumphant successes of both *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949) on Broadway, the appearance of Arthur Miller's next play was bathed in expectation. The 1950s were a tempestuous time for America, with the Cold War background and the country waging its own civil war in the form of an anti-communist crusade. The dawn of the 1950s had also seen much upheaval in Miller's personal life with the breakdown of his first marriage to Mary Slattery. The period was marked by the intensified media interest and intrusion into his life by virtue of his involvement with Marilyn Monroe.

At the time that *The Crucible* (1953) first emerged, public perception of Miller had plummeted to an unprecedented low. His split with Elia Kazan was well publicised and there was a clear resentment towards Miller in the American mindset. The public interpreted their fallout as evidence of Miller's Communist sympathies. Furthermore, the public were disparaging of him for he was perceived as being culpable for the breakdown of the All-American marriage of Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio. The damage that Miller's public persona suffered in this period would serve to taint how he was perceived in America for decades to come. The magnitude of the fascination of the people with his relationship with and subsequent marriage to Monroe was only matched by a revulsion at his political inclinations.

Three years prior to the appearance of *The Crucible* (1953), Miller had adapted Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (1950) for the stage. Dramatising the vilification of an individual for harbouring minority beliefs, the play marked the beginning of Miller's public protest against the anti-communist plague of the 1950s. As would follow with *The Crucible* (1953), the play's advocacy of free speech was interpreted solely as an expression of opposition to the anti-communist assault:

Some of the critics...claimed to have detected my anti-U.S. propaganda hand in the line spoken by the Stockmanns' one consistent supporter, the Captain... "Well, maybe you ought to go to America"... According to these critics, such Miller-injected irony was a typically heavy-handed misuse of the sainted Ibsen's play for the purpose of sneering at American pretensions to civic freedom. I was tempted to point out that I had simply taken the line from Ibsen's original Norwegian text, but I refrained, hopelessly aware that nothing would burn off the fog of suspicion that I had used Ibsen as a front for the Reds. (Miller, 1999, 324-25)

As a private man, Miller became circumspect and his personal ideas became a target of public scrutiny as they intruded into his playwriting. As Miller recounted in his autobiography *Timebends*, 'As always we were trapped into estimating writers by...the critical propaganda surrounding them rather than by their literary deeds' (1999, 228). The initial reception of *The Crucible* (1953) in America was reactionary and foretold the response that Miller received following his appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) three years later (see Appendix). The unease with which *The Crucible* (1953) was initially received in America was the result of a confluence of factors, yet in line with the times the political landscape was undeniably the most palpable determinant. The play's reception in Europe and the manner with which it was viewed when it re-emerged in America five years after its

debut attests to the fact that *The Crucible* (1953) did not merit the initial opprobrium that it received.

During the McCarthy era, there was a marked absence of plays that addressed the political situation. The 1950s were a highly contentious period in America, and the political paranoia that suffused the time eroded any socio-political discussion in the theatre. The popular plays of the year included Tennessee Williams' *Camino Real*, William Inge's *Picnic* and Robert Anderson's *Tea and Sympathy*. In his *Introduction to the Collected Plays*, Miller mourned the prevailing tendency to disparage the portrayal of serious issues on the stage: 'It is believed that any attempt to "prove" something in a play is somehow unfair and certainly inartistic, if not gauche, more particularly if what is being proved happens to be in any overt way of social moment' (1994, 123).

Miller described the impetus behind *An Enemy of the People* (1950), *The Crucible* (1953), and his actions before HUAC as '...the question of whether one's vision of the truth ought to be a source of guilt at a time when the mass of men condemn it as a dangerous and devilish lie' (Miller, 1994, 17). Miller would share the fate of both Thomas Stockmann and John Proctor in being condemned for denying a reality that the majority affirm.

The inescapable parallels between the Salem witch trials and the proceedings of the House Un-American Activities Committee inspired *The Crucible* (1953). Both the witch trials and HUAC decreed that goodness was conferred solely through unquestioned conformity. However, given the hysteria that was concomitant with both, compliance appeared less as a willed act than a matter of blind acquiescence. The certainty of cooperation in the witch trials was understandable given the threat of eternal damnation that it boasted. Yet, a similar obedience was enacted in America of the McCarthy period. The Committee were already in prior possession of the names that they wished participants to confirm (Navasky, 2003, viii), and therefore any defence of HUAC as a legitimate investigating body was mooted. The hearings operated on moral lines, and a refusal to cooperate was understood as a sign of deviance from the prevailing moral order. HUAC commanded a virtual slavish conformity that verged upon the religious and this also directly reflected the dominant societal norms. The traditional God of Salem's theocracy had been substituted in the 1950s with the gods of materialism and fame. Accordingly, the threat that HUAC posed to those that it accused held the same psychological weight as that of the Salem witch trials centuries prior. The operating principle for both Salem and HUAC was chillingly similar, with the only true difference being that God had been replaced by his contemporary appropriation of an opportunistic greed for power.

Miller regarded the House Un-American Activities Committee as an incident of life imitating art. However, he was not alone in his belief that America was 'living in an art form' (Miller, 2005, 9). Writing in *Thirty Years of Treason*, Eric Bentley deemed HUAC akin to theatre (1972, 947). Victor Navasky echoed the claims of the critic and

asserted that HUAC was a 'surrealistic morality play' in which people were compelled to play a 'symbolic' role (2003, viii). Indeed, in the case of HUAC, the script had long been written in advance of the summoning of the cast to the stage. As Miller commented in *Timebends*:

...it was all a game of power entirely; they had the power and were bound to make me concede that I did not by trying to force me to break an implicit understanding among human beings that you don't use their names to bring trouble on them or cooperate in deforming the democratic doctrine of the sanctity of peaceful association. (Miller, 1999, 411-12)

The Crucible (1953) depicts the fate of individual independence of choice when set against political dictates. However, its socio-political dissection of the often subliminal battle between subjective psychological liberty and political freedom was flammable to the miasmatic society into which it appeared. His overt attack on the misuse of political power and his suggestion that individual freedom was socially important ran counter to the agenda of the age. His socio-political ideas about freedom and the rights of the individual were antagonistic to a culture that purported that authority was the only safeguard against corrupt individuals.

The first production of the play established an enduring trend whereby the political landscape in which the play is produced continues to determine the nature of its reception. The success of *The Crucible* (1953) globally is largely attributed to the pertinence of its message on political paranoia. Miller has repeatedly alluded to the play's prophetic qualities in depicting the political climate in the country in which it is to be produced. He claimed that the decision to produce the play was often intended

to stand as either a warning that tyranny is imminent or indicating that a dictator had just been overthrown (Miller, 1999, 348; Miller, 2005, 53; Roudane, 1987, 302).

The House Un-American Activities Committee may have informed the conception of the play, but the continued success of *The Crucible* (1953) lies in its universal portrayal of the impact of such powers on the individual. Fundamentally, Miller saw the play as a medium to 'express some universal element in man' (Roudane, 1987, 83). By choosing an historical framework for his play, Miller allowed the underlying dynamic to be exposed in universal terms: '...the play seems to present the same primeval structure of human sacrifice to the furies of fanaticism and paranoia that goes on repeating itself forever as though imbedded in the brain of social man' (Miller, Oct. 21, 1996).

In 1979, Miller spoke of his pride at the power of the play as a weapon for the people in speaking against authoritarianism (Roudane, 1987, 302). He was frequently humbled by the wonder with which audiences continued to receive *The Crucible* (1953), a primitive form of 'amazement that the same terror that had happened to them or that was threatening them, had happened before to others' (Miller, 2005, 55). Lewis Livesay claims that the universality of the play is assured by its keen dramatisation of 'totalitarian attempts to impose a purified homogeneity upon society' (Langteau, 2007, 17). Livesay believes that the play highlights the potential of 'repressed aggression' to 're-emerge as hegemonic totalitarianism sanctioning murder' (Langteau, 2007, 19).

Although Miller never refuted the reality of the play's allegorical connotations to the McCarthy period, he was keen to ensure that *The Crucible* (1953) was not reduced to so singular an interpretation. Speaking at Harvard in 1999, Miller attested that 'It would probably never have occurred to me to write a play about the Salem witch trials of 1692 had I not seen some astonishing correspondences with that calamity in the America of the late forties and early fifties' (Miller, 2005, 3). However, as he stressed at the time of the play's premiere, he was 'not pressing an historical allegory.' He conceded that he had 'even eliminated certain striking similarities from *The Crucible* which may have started the audience to draw such an allegory' (Roudane, 1987, 21). He claimed to have written the play 'underneath' the McCarthy issue and lamented that the historical aspect was 'mistaken for the theme' (Roudane, 1987, 83).

Miller witnessed first hand that the power of HUAC lay in severing social ties by instituting a new moral order. Allegiance to the state and conformity to its dictates became a matter of personal necessity, and individual will was thus steadily eroded. By encroaching on the social environment, political forces pitted the interests of the collective against the individual. The same apparatus was employed in Salem as the political and the social became inextricably linked. As Julie Adam comments, '*The Crucible*...examines that point where social imperatives impinge upon individual freedom' (1991, 79).

Miller was preoccupied with the tension that abounded from the fact that social responsibility is concomitant with individual freedom. Indeed, his plays frequently

dramatised the willingness with which man surrendered his personal freedom to external authority in order to evade responsibility. The social matrix of the connection between freedom, choice, and accountability is central in Miller's plays and is manifest as crises of conscience. In the case of *The Crucible* (1953), the relinquishment of private freedom was expressed in the delivery of conscience to the state.

Freedom was a narrow concept in Salem of 1692, and the strict moral order of the theocracy tightly controlled economic, psychological, cultural, and social liberty. The union of religion and authority meant that the sanctions imposed upon freedom of speech, thought, and action remained unquestioned. The connection of religion to power ironically compounded the cruelty that was inflicted with the witch trials. Salem was envisioned as a utopia, and conceived of itself as an exemplary model to the rest of the world (Miller, 2000, 227). Accordingly, any threat to its virtue was magnified to the point whereby it was inevitable that it would be eliminated by violent means.

The witch-hunts of Salem are classified as a 'witch panic' (Behringer, 2004, 49; Godbeer, 2005, 7), unique in that they were 'the one occasion on which the authorities made illegal use of physical torture and extreme psychological pressure to extract a large number of confessions' (Godbeer, 2005, 163). In his notes on *The Crucible* (1953), Miller wrote that the witch-hunts were activated by the fact that 'the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom' (2000, 228). A moral panic was

ignited as it was feared that people were slipping outside of the boundaries of the theocracy's ideological unity and control. The authority in Salem accordingly required an atmosphere of paranoia to be generated. This hysteria would then create a common enemy that would reinforce the need for authority and thus restore its power. In his global analysis of witchcraft, Wolfgang Behringer concluded that 'The idea of witchcraft thus serves a clearly defined function, and plays a positive role by keeping up moral and social balance in a given society' (2004, 24).

In many respects *The Crucible* (1953) is a parable of the seductive nature of power and the status of objective reality when it is mixed with such an authority. The diminishment of objectivity is apparent in the velocity with which values were upturned and a new moral imperative instituted. The belief of the people in the theocracy was absolute, and so the notion of the witch-hunts as a moral necessity was wholly accepted.

It is the ability of authority to create and define reality that *The Crucible* (1953) articulates most astutely. Michel Foucault theorised that power of necessity creates its own truth and hence its own reality: 'We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth' (Foucault, 1980, 93, *Power/Knowledge*). Power becomes sustainable by substituting and supplanting a new ideology, rather than merely imposing restrictions: 'What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things...it forms

knowledge' (Foucault, 1980, 119, *Power/Knowledge*). In Salem of 1692, the true question was not whether witches had an existence but a question of accepting a version of reality that was being dictated by a higher power. In his *Introduction to the Collected Plays*, Miller wrote that the dynamics of McCarthyism paralleled the paranoia in Salem in the creation of 'a new subjective reality, a veritable mystique which was gradually assuming even a holy resonance' (Miller, 1994, 153).

Exacting impediments on man's psychological sense of freedom was central to the creation of a new reality. The cause of freedom in Salem was undermined by a moral law that signified goodness through compliance alone. The witch trials established an unconditional binary between compliance and dissent, whereby 'a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between' (Miller, 2000, 293). Defence became impermissible, and opposition in any form was perceived as evidence of complicity. Miller cited *The Crucible* (1953) as dramatising diabolism, a term that he used to denote the fear and hatred of opposites that he believed characterised the witch trials and the proceedings of HUAC: 'When you have an ideology which feels itself so pure, it implies an extreme view of the world. Because they are white, opposition is completely black' (Roudane, 1987, 26). In Salem, attempts to denounce the court were deemed immoral and a blasphemous 'attack upon the court' (2000, 292) and what was perceived as the work of God.

During this time words were imbued with surfeit weight where innocent or careless statements could reap disastrous consequences. Giles Corey unintentionally sowed the

seeds for the charge of witchcraft laid against his wife in seeking the advice of Reverend Hale. He was troubled by the meaning behind his wife's reading and sought solace from a man whose knowledge he greatly admired and respected.

GILES. Last night – mark this – I tried and tried and could not say my prayers.
And then she close her book and walks out of the house, and suddenly
– mark this – I could pray again. (2000, 253-54)

The primary operating principle at work in Salem was the idea of guilt by association (Godbeer, 2005, 150). On presenting a petition against the women's indictments to the court alongside Francis Nurse and John Proctor, Giles Corey was distraught at the thought of having wrought trouble on those who had endorsed it in good faith.

FRANCIS. ...I gave them all my word no harm would come to them for signing this. (2000, 292)

The witch-hunts were accelerated with the decision to allow spectral evidence to enter the proceedings, whereby no tangible proof was required by the courts to condemn an accused to death.

PARRIS. We are here, your Honor, precisely to discover what no one has ever seen. (2000, 300)

As the witch-hunts of Salem gathered momentum, fear of accusation and insinuation further coerced many to conform to its ritualistic proceedings (Behringer, 2004, 3). The fear of the people drove them to submission, for no external power was present to protect them from implication. Suspicion was conferred by virtue of another's decrying and there were no measures in place to protect against personal vendetta. The trials were often manipulated so that people could condemn others in line with

their own personal agenda. The witch trials were inherently political, and disputes and petty grievances over land provided the motivation for many (Behringer, 2004, 53; Godbeer, 2005, 159). The omnipotence of the theocracy awarded a moral licence for such actions. As Julie Adam comments, *The Crucible* (1953) illustrates 'how mass hysteria feeds on private guilt and encourages private vengeance under the guise of self-righteous public accusation' (1991, 79).

Man's freedom of thought was policed as equally by the theocratic state as it was by what the psychological theorist Erich Fromm terms the 'anonymous authority' of public opinion, and the 'internalized authorities' of duty, and conscience (Fromm, 1984, 4). Public opinion was automatically synonymous with conformity, and duty in Salem was to the Church and those that the town had appointed as the Church's dominions. Accordingly, harbouring any sentiments as to the inauthentic nature of the proceedings was akin to blasphemy and moral iniquity.

A fundamental irony behind the hunts lay in their supposed aim for purity that shielded the fact that freedom to speak the truth was being fervently repressed. Mary Warren, one of the chief inciters, was more willing to bear the personal consequences of being branded a liar than stand apart and confess the truth. She was ultimately too bewitched by Abigail and fearful of the ramifications entailed in opposing her and exposing the proceedings as a farce. McCarthyism similarly resulted in a phenomenon of self-censorship, whereby thought and action were policed by the fear of social judgement.

In his analysis of HUAC, Victor S. Navasky used the term 'Informer Principle' to describe the fact that informing was understood as the 'litmus test' of patriotism (2003, 29). The purpose of the proceedings was purely symbolic, for the physical act of informing was more important than the information conveyed (Navasky, 2003, 29). Publically recanting and condemning one's ideals was considered worthless without offering the names of others. Navasky thus labelled the hearings 'degradation ceremonies' in deference to their ritualistic function. He stated that the aim of the hearings was stigmatisation (2003, 319), with the participant called to offer 'sacrificial scapegoats' to prove allegiance to the nation (2003, 321). HUAC thus recalled the events in Salem in that the court demanded that those accused of witchcraft conform to a public ritual in order to be redeemed. Confession to links with sorcery was insufficient for salvation and was rendered obsolete without fulfilment of the moral duty to decry others (Behringer, 2004, 37, 264; Godbeer, 2005, 146). By thus severing the social contract, the witch trials reinstated the power of the theocracy.

It was the nature of the trials as a public performance that John Proctor found most objectionable, for if the true purpose was to reunite man with God they could be conducted privately. Intent on retaining his personal integrity he refused to be manipulated as a public example to encourage the compliance of others in what he perceived as an immoral undertaking. He declined to decry others and thus challenged the morality of the proceedings.

PROCTOR. I speak my own sins; I cannot judge another. (2000, 326)

In his landmark study of the dynamics that propel domination and submission, Erich Fromm posited that the fear of the alienation that accompanies dissent ensures compliance. However, by becoming an 'automaton conformist' (1984, 218), the self is sacrificed. In discussing Fromm's idea of over-conformity with the psychologist Richard I. Evans, Miller commented that it was the loss of self concomitant with compliance that ultimately governed Proctor's actions:

...there is in *The Crucible* a man who is confronted with the opportunity, the possibility of negating himself, of calling true what he knows is half-truth. He's being asked to give way to his guilt, a guilt that arises because he has broken moral laws. By sinning that way, he's being asked by the court to condemn himself to a spiritual death. He can't finally do it. He dies a physical death, but he gains his soul, so to speak, he becomes his rebellion. (Evans, 1969, 95)

In the case of the Salem witch trials and the proceedings of the House Un-American Activities Committee, Miller believed that guilt was the underlying premise. He deduced that both events heavily relied on the ability to incite a sense of deep personal guilt for their operation. The realisation of inner guilt guaranteed conformity, for both proceedings offered the opportunity for personal salvation: 'What was manifestly parallel was the guilt, two centuries apart, of holding illicit, suppressed feelings of alienation and hostility toward standard, daylight society as defined by its most orthodox proponents' (Miller, 1999, 341). By complying with the ritualistic formula, purity was restored to private conscience. Accordingly, people willingly surrendered their consciences to the state. A self-confessed Freudian (Biggsby, 1990, 221), Miller believed that guilt was the basic mechanism of human behaviour. As a result, the notion of guilt assumes a dominant role within his oeuvre. *The Crucible* (1953) can be understood as a study of guilt, and moves from the initial discovery of

guilt in oneself to an examination of the potential exploitation of freedom that arises from that guilt.

Guilt in Salem had its origins in religion, for the stringent confines that the theocracy imposed on its people were a constant inciter of remorse. As Ima Herron notes, guilt was a Puritan ethic based on the belief that they 'not only inherit the Adamic guilt, they add to it by their innate desire to sin' (1969, 6-7). In a society as deeply repressed as Salem, guilt was easily elicited. The absolution that the proceedings promised ensured that the morally sanctioned opportunity to confess guilt was widely embraced. The witch trials thus represented the expunging of a universal sense of guilt.

The fact of his adultery confirms Proctor as a sinner by his own standards, and thus renders him a guilty man. This sense of personal guilt leads him to the conclusion that he cannot profess innocence when accused of witchcraft. E. Miller Budick identified the dilemma facing Proctor as rooted in the question of how an individual could 'exonerate himself of evil, knowing that he is indeed sinful and that according to his own beliefs he is damned' (Bloom, 1987, 132). In desperation to expiate his sin, Proctor signs his name to a false confession, believing such an immoral act befits him.

PROCTOR. I cannot mount the gibbet like a saint. It is a fraud. I am not that man. *She is silent.* My honesty is broke, Elizabeth; I am no good man. Nothing's spoiled by giving them this lie that were not rotten long before. (2000, 322)

Proctor is unable to reconcile his self-image as a man of personal integrity with the fact of his affair and this struggle results in a myriad of ambiguities. He is proud of his refusal to lie to his wife about his indiscretion, yet it appears that he believes that his honesty to some extent absolves his betrayal. He thus appears in denial when faced with the harsh treatment that his affair incites in his wife.

PROCTOR. You forget nothin' and forgive nothin'. Learn charity, woman. I have gone tiptoe in this house all seven month since she is gone. I have not moved from there to there without I think to please you, and still an everlasting funeral marches round your heart. (2000, 265)

His denial is so acute that he forgets the commandment that relates to adultery when being questioned by Reverend Hale, and he has to be prompted by his humiliated wife.

Proctor's perception of his individual perfection is destroyed in moral terms by the fact of his infidelity. He thus temporarily surrenders his conscience to his wife whose moral superiority he then asserts. However, he deeply resents the fact that his actions have made her the custodian of his conscience. He attacks her continual judgement of him, professing that she must look to herself when she is condemning him. However on a fundamental level, Proctor's assaults on Elizabeth are merely an expression of his guilt.

PROCTOR. 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! (2000, 265)

His guilt is exacerbated when Elizabeth is accused of witchcraft, and he realises that Abigail is orchestrating the proceedings to service her own agenda. His guilt is further

accentuated by the fact that Elizabeth had previously appealed to him to go to Abigail and break the promise that was made between them with their affair. He is angered at the suggestion that he may have pledged anything to Abigail when he ultimately chose his wife. However, he has never shown Abigail any ill feeling or contempt, and his shame fails to conceal a deeper regard.

PROCTOR. ...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! (2000, 270-71)

Proctor's reluctance to denounce Abigail is perceived by Elizabeth as evidence that his affections for her persist and that is the true crux of her resentment.

ELIZABETH, *with a smile, to keep her dignity*: John, if it were not Abigail that you must go to hurt, would you falter now? I think not. (2000, 264)

There is more than a hint that his desire and affection for Abigail lingers during the scene in which he finally tells her to forget their affair. However, it remains unclear to what extent his refusal to speak out against Abigail is an expression of his residual affection for her. His reticence could be construed as a natural desire to protect her, or as a matter of personal integrity in terms of a code of loyalty to a former lover.

Proctor launches a tirade to secure Elizabeth's exoneration, propelled by his realisation that the pride that kept him from confronting Abigail was going to cost his innocent wife her life.

PROCTOR. My wife will never die for me!...that goodness will not die for me!
(2000, 283)

His attempt to clear Elizabeth's name is perceived by the judges as merely a desire to overthrow the court. Proctor is portrayed from the outset as a man of utmost individuality and integrity who cherishes his independence of mind, and these traits ignited a distrust of him among authority. As Miller outlined in his opening notes on the play:

He need not have been a partisan of any faction in the town, but there is evidence to suggest that he had a sharp and biting way with hypocrites. He was the kind of man...not easily led – who cannot refuse support to partisans without drawing their deepest resentment. (2000, 238-39)

He thus realises that he must reveal the fact of his lechery to the court in order to denounce the proceedings as a 'whore's vengeance' (2000, 305). As Miller noted in *Timebends*, the confession of Proctor to an illicit act that the theocracy repressed 'might save the community in the only way possible – by raising to consciousness what had been suppressed and in holy disguise was out to murder them all' (1999, 341).

During the poignant scene in which Proctor and Elizabeth are momentarily reunited after three months of separate imprisonment, it is clear that Elizabeth has undergone an emotional transformation. The pride that choked her in earlier scenes has been somewhat set aside to allow her to accept her share of responsibility for the fate of her marriage. She confesses that it was her coldness that drove Proctor to his affair, and it is this revelation that relieves Proctor of his crippling guilt and allows him to recant his confession. She returns him his selfhood by affirming that 'There be no higher judge under Heaven than Proctor is!' (2000, 323).

ELIZABETH. John, it come to naught that I should forgive you, if you'll not forgive yourself...Only be sure of this, for I know it now: Whatever you will do, it is a good man does it...I have read my heart this three month, John. *Pause.* I have sins of my own to count. It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery. (2000, 323)

Until his final affecting scene with Elizabeth, Proctor regards conscience as the sole medium of conferring punishment for one's misdeeds. As Erich Fromm posed, conscience 'is a slave driver, put into man by himself...It drives him with hardness and cruelty, forbidding him pleasure and happiness, making his whole life the atonement for some mysterious sin' (1984, 84). Proctor's awakening to his fallibility forces him to realise that conscience transcends his self. Accordingly, his conscience ceases to merely signify a means to atone for his adultery but stands forth as the touchstone for communal accountability. By freeing himself from eternal self-judgement, he subverts the external power of the theocracy. Authority in Salem repressed opposition by turning man against himself and thus ensuring a blind acquiescence to its dictates. Proctor refuses to allow the power of the theocracy to distort his perception of his own self-worth. Accordingly, he retains the level of self-conviction required to question the morality of the proceedings. As a result, he does not submit to their will and instead asserts his own through his death. As Fromm asserts, '...to die in the struggle against oppression was better than to live without freedom' (Fromm, 1984, 1).

PROCTOR. You have made your magic now, for now I do think I see some shred of goodness in John Proctor. (2000, 328)

The Crucible (1953) demonstrates what Austin E. Quigley refers to as 'a direct link between personal choice, human justice and moral consequence' (Brater, 2005, 70, *Theater and Culture*). Indeed this idea that private acts have public consequences was a hallmark of Miller plays throughout his career and was the cornerstone of his notion of morality. The hanging of a man as highly esteemed as Proctor was an outcome that the judges hoped to avoid as they were aware of the general outrage that it would incite. Moreover, they wished to prevent the consequent doubt that it would arouse as to the ethical nature of the court's justice.

PARRIS. Now Mr. Hale's returned, there is hope, I think – for if he brings even one of these to God, that confession surely damns the others in the public eye, and none may doubt more that they are all linked to Hell. This way, unconfessed and claiming innocence, doubts are multiplied, many honest people will weep for them, and our good purpose is lost in their tears. (2000, 316-17)

Jean-Marie Bonnet argues that while '...the play ends with the personal victory of an individual, it also stresses the victory of social forces over him' (1982, 34). While this is to a degree accurate, it omits one vital truth. The fact of Proctor's death is not an expression of the perpetuation of social authority but an act of opposition and protest against it. Remaining passive and refusing to challenge its dictates stands as the signifier of a more pervasive social victory.

In line with existentialist ideology, Proctor believes and affirms through his actions that man is not only responsible for his subjective self but for all men. Therefore, the choice that he makes is representative of all those who abjured. As Jean-Paul Sartre affirmed, 'in choosing for himself he chooses for all men' (1973, 29). He refuses to

relinquish his freedom and in turn, his act symbolically represents all those denied a voice either through repression or fear. His choice not to trade his life for a lie is not an egotistical one, but one imbued with a sense of communal responsibility. His act of martyrdom stands as a protest against the all pervasive spirit of un-freedom that epitomised the times. Jeffrey Mason asserts that the resolution of 'the action through the will of the individual' was a characteristic of Miller's plays. His drama is of the liberal humanist subject (Mason, 2003, 676, Internet), for he acknowledges the necessity to 'offset human imperfection with responsible social action' (Biggsby, 1999, 270). Janet N. Balakian states that this 'celebration of the self as sole redeemer' identifies Miller as a 'quintessentially American writer' (Biggsby, 1999, 136).

Sartre hailed that '...man is condemned to be free' (1973, 34), but he is likewise condemned to choose. Existentialism decrees that adopting a position of not choosing is still in itself a choice, for one actively consents to abjure his sense of possibilities. Stephen Barker claims that choice is an 'allegory for autonomy' (Biggsby, 1999, 237), and that man thus identifies himself by the choices that he makes (Biggsby, 1999, 236). *The Crucible* (1953) challenges wilful consent to authority and condemns passivity and indifference as a conscious choice to evade responsibility.

In their studies of witchcraft in Salem, Wolfgang Behringer and Richard Godbeer emphasised how freedom as both a political and social construct was linked to the moral order of the theocracy. In the same way that the theocracy ensured that personal freedom was surrendered to the state for the pursuit of moral ends, it also determined

the nature of social and cultural freedom. The position of women and children in society was as second-class citizens and their political currency was dictated thus (Behringer, 2004, 37; Godbeer, 2005, 150, 152).

However, the advent of the witch trials prompted a paradigm shift in the cultural dynamic. As Miller stresses in his opening commentary on *The Crucible* (1953), children were regarded with indifference, and their existence was largely considered an inconvenience: '...Salem, never conceived that the children were anything but thankful for being permitted to walk straight, eyes slightly lowered, arms at the sides, and mouths shut until bidden to speak' (2000, 225). The dawn of the witch-hunts dramatically transmogrified this cultural premise as the children were not only granted the freedom to speak but awarded a superfluity of power.

As inciters of the hysteria, the children experienced for the first time the wonder of free expression (Behringer, 2004, 142). Simultaneously, the proceedings afforded them the protection of moral license under which to condemn their former oppressors. This alteration in the standing of the town's juveniles is acutely realised in the character of Abigail Williams, the undisputed leader and orchestrating force of the proceedings. Discovered trafficking with witchcraft in the forest, Abigail invents a masquerade to avoid the consequences that such a puritan community would exact on her.

PROCTOR. The town's mumbling witchcraft.

ABIGAIL. Oh, posh! *Winningly she comes a little closer, with a confidential, wicked air.* We were dancin' in the woods last night...is all. (2000, 240)

A further dimension to Abigail's lust for power lay in the fact of her gender and the traditional repression of the feminine in society. Accordingly, Abigail, on the cusp of both adulthood and womanhood, encapsulated a twofold awakening to freedom: 'For the women, such as Abigail, witchcraft may be a way of asserting their will and their power in a system centred on and dominated by men' (Bonnet, 1982, 33). In a promotional interview for the 1996 film adaptation of the play, Miller posed the inevitability of such a revolt by those most strongly repressed by the stringency of the theocracy: 'It was really an oppressive regime for a young woman and that an explosion should have occurred really shouldn't surprise anybody' (Day-Lewis, 1996). The importance of Elizabeth Proctor's testimony as to the honesty of her husband illustrates the fundamental centrality of the female voice (Behringer, 2004, 5). The judges call for Elizabeth to attest to his history as a lecher and thus render his arraignment of the court legitimate. Her 'natural lie' (Miller, 2000, 307) in defence of his honour is taken for the truth and Proctor is thus condemned.

When accused of witchcraft, Abigail seeks to make a scapegoat of Tituba, a servant of her uncle. Tituba's status as both a woman and a racial minority ensure that she was an obvious target for exploitation. Tituba appears to almost relish the proceedings as she experiences an eminence long repressed by a life subjected to racial oppression and indifference. Miller's complex characterisation sees her portrayed as a woman almost as bewitched by the gift of free expression as by the supposed sinister hold of the Devil.

Marriage was equally controlled by prevailing social and cultural norms. The constraints that the theocracy placed on the union of marriage were dictated along moral lines. As aforementioned, the puritan society repressed the expression of sexuality and adultery was held as deeply immoral. Infidelity was not new subject matter to Miller, who had tentatively grappled with it in *Death of a Salesman* (1949). However, in *The Crucible* (1953) the issue of adultery is promoted to a more fundamental role whereby the infidelity that plagues the Proctor marriage provides the symbolic guilt that underlines Proctor's involvement in the witch trials. The affair at the heart of *The Crucible* (1953) also differs from that of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) in that Proctor discloses it to his wife.

Miller ultimately viewed marriage as a unifying force, and this is expressed in the fact that both Proctor and Elizabeth are ultimately willing to tarnish their reputations and die for one another. Although Proctor greatly admires his wife, and harbours the greatest respect for her personal strength and integrity, it is difficult to see the love that was present in former Miller marriages in Proctor. The love that Elizabeth holds for her husband is clearly evident in her impassioned attacks on him in early scenes, yet his interactions with her appear more the product of a resigned frustration than the persistence of an all consuming love. Proctor's passion appears to be reserved for Abigail.

Miller wrote an additional scene for the close of the second act six months after the play's premiere in New York. Miller remained uncertain as to whether the scene was

a valid addition and it is not included in the published version of *The Crucible* (1953). Although Miller greatly liked the scene, he ultimately omitted it on the recommendation of Lawrence Olivier who felt that it was in some way superfluous and destroyed the tempo of the play (Roudane, 1987, 133). However, Miller did include the scene in the screenplay that he wrote for the 1996 film adaptation (Miller, 1996).

The scene is a passionate exchange between Proctor and Abigail that takes place in the woods. The setting is symbolic, for as Miller wrote in his notes 'the Salem folk believed that the virgin forest was the Devil's last preserve, his home base and the citadel of his final stand' (2000, 227). The scene is a revealing one in that it provides a deeper awareness of Abigail and her motivation, ultimately portraying her in a more sympathetic light.

On learning that Elizabeth has been accused of witchcraft, Proctor summons Abigail to a private conference with the intention of convincing her to confess to the fraudulence of the proceedings. Her actions against Elizabeth have incited a violent contempt in Proctor and the memory of their affair. Aware of the extent of her affection for him, he seeks to manipulate her into confessing the truth to the court. When his attempts fail he threatens her, violently pinning her against a tree.

PROCTOR. (*Leans close to her face*) You know me -- if she is condemned it will be the end of you. (1996, 44)

A new attitude is evident in Abigail in the screenplay and she appears wholly convinced that her apparitions are real. She is intoxicated with the power that she has been afforded and truly believes that she is fulfilling a moral duty.

ABIGAIL. '...thank God I have the power to cleanse the town...' (1996, 44).

Dennis Welland argues that the scene shows Abigail as 'more pathetically deluded than evil' on account of her fervent religiosity and belief in the purity of her actions (Welland, 1961, 88).

ABIGAIL. (*Incredulous*) I am but God's finger, John; if He would condemn Elizabeth, she would be condemned. (1996, 44)

Yet, it is her fixation with Proctor that fuels her psychological investment in the proceedings. Aware that his loyalty now lies with his wife, her resolve becomes strengthened and the proceedings become an act of revenge both against Elizabeth and against her former lover.

The idea that private vengeance was being sanctioned in order to strengthen and consolidate a political mandate was unwelcome to a nation unified against a common enemy. The opportunism of the advocates of the witch trials and Senator Joseph McCarthy three centuries later was overshadowed by the hysteria that both had generated. As the 1950s wore on, Miller became increasingly politically suspect. His opposition to HUAC meant that *The Crucible* (1953) would be critiqued within the frame of his personal political orientation. However, in post-war Europe, the unease with the dictates of a higher authority that the play expressed was widely welcomed.

In 1954, Miller was denied a passport to attend the European premiere of *The Crucible* at the Belgium National Theatre (Miller, 2005, 18), as his travelling was deemed to be against the better interests of the United States. Ironically, as the invitation had come from a society promoting relations between the United States and Belgium, the forced absence of the playwright proved more damaging to the reputation of America. On the opening night, the audience called for Miller to take to the stage and as their demand persisted the American Ambassador stood and took a bow. The irony of the spectacle was not lost on Miller with a representative from the State Department 'acknowledging applause for someone deemed by that department too dangerous to be present' (Miller, 2005, 19). The event was widely documented by the Belgium media who deemed that the impersonation of Miller by the ambassador was 'one more proof that America was launched on the road to fascism' (Miller, 2005, 20).

European audiences were more receptive to the ideas presented in a play and accordingly, theme achieved precedence over more aesthetic concerns. Considering the history of oppression and censorship in Europe, audiences responded instinctually to the dynamics that *The Crucible* (1953) dramatised. As Miller had anticipated, the play received the depth of understanding that America had forsaken and was met with rapturous applause, which was both 'intense and insistent' in Belgium (Miller, 2005, 19).

The Crucible (1953) exposed a universalism at the heart of politics that illustrated the commonality of America and the wider world. On learning of Miller's forced absence, Belgium embraced the play as their protest against McCarthyism. However, on account of the culturally imperialistic attitude that Europe perceived America to harbour (Caldwell, 2006), a certain loftiness can be deduced in their reaction. Perhaps the celebration of a play that was denouncing American political systems embodied the resentment to the morally superior attitude of America. By welcoming the play, a contempt for America was being simultaneously expressed.

The play experienced a similar reception to that in Belgium when it premiered at the Theatre Royal in Bristol in 1954. The review by the drama critic for *The Times* indirectly alluded to the parallel that Miller was attempting to draw between the witch-hunts and the current situation in America: 'He is angry with human stupidity in general and not only with the particular stupidity which allowed a handful of hysterical young women in the village of Salem to start a witch hunt that led to a score of executions' (Nov. 10, 1954, Reviews).

Although the play was favourably received, its shortcomings were not overlooked.

The critic for *The Times* drew attention to Miller's marred characterisation:

...Mr. Miller is so eager to assert that the historical episode with which he is dealing is characteristic of man's credulity and intolerance that his characterisation is a great deal weaker than his handling of the narrative. He shows us the witch hunt in action; but the people on whom the action hinges are not quite real enough to make us feel that the whole shocking affair could have come about in this and no other way. (Nov. 10, 1954, Reviews)

The idea that theme achieved precedence over characterisation became more common among critics with each emerging Miller play. However, in the case of *The Crucible* (1953), the reviewer from *The Times* believed that this fault was minor and the play was thus declared impressive.

As Louis Marks recalls of the first London production at the Royal Court Theatre in 1956, 'We saw it overwhelmingly as a coded onslaught on McCarthyism that, while not an active menace in Britain, nevertheless engaged the emotions of all, as I saw it, right-thinking people in our generation' (Brater, 2007, 143). He deemed that the reaction that *The Crucible* (1953) received was an expression of Britain's advocacy of the playwright as 'a champion of sanity against the anti-communist hysteria we felt was gripping America and that might spill across the Atlantic' (Brater, 2007, 143). Marks touched on a significant point, for Europe could respond to the universal sentiment of the play whilst being shielded by its specific relevance to McCarthy. Europeans could identify with the persecution that the play spoke of with a deeper understanding, and perhaps loftiness, that no nation was untouchable. Given the immediacy of the magnitude of the events of the Second World War, the warning against tyranny inherent in the play held a particular resonance. Europeans also feared an escalation of the Cold War due to the increasing fanaticism and volatility of the anti-communist movement in America.

Miller cited the writing of *The Crucible* (1953) as 'an act of desperation' (Miller, Oct. 21, 1996), that appealed for an 'act of will' (Roudane, 1987, 61). However, his

intention to penetrate the paranoia through his indirect exposition was quenched on the opening night. When *The Crucible* premiered in New York in January 1953, Miller recalled the hostility that it aroused as the audience unearthed its theme: '...an invisible sheet of ice formed over their heads, thick enough to skate on' (Miller, 1999, 347). The repression and fear of the times penetrated deeply and even political inference was confronted with censure.

The environment was highly divisive and the volatility of the times guaranteed that political orientation became the sole marker of identification. Accordingly, it was inevitable that the critical press was also partisan and susceptible to the vicissitudes of the period. Therefore, in the analysis of the critical reception of *The Crucible* (1953), the ideological positions of the reviewers and the publications with which they were affiliated must not be overlooked. Miller invoked this fact in his defence against the championing of his work by the Communist Howard Fast at his hearing before HUAC. He dissociated himself from such comments deeming them aspects of 'political' and not 'literary or dramatic criticism' (Bentley, 1972, 818, *Thirty Years*), and therefore he could not be responsible for what critics chose to deduce to suit their own ends:

The appreciation of dramatic values by people who have behind them a remorseless attachment to the political line is of no import to me. I don't believe it when they are against me, and I don't believe it when they are for me...I take no compliment out of this. (Bentley, 1972, 818, *Thirty Years*)

The critical assaults on Miller for *The Crucible* (1953) were virtually uniform on a national level, and recall Benedict Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities' (1996). According to Anderson, national consciousness is predicated on the notion of the nation as a mentally affiliated category: 'it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship' (1996, 7). America as a nation with a domestic policy of fervent anti-communism thus reacted unfavourably to the play. Stanley Fish's theory of 'interpretive communities' states that the force exerted by authority controls how meaning is constructed (Bennett, 2005, 40). In the case of *The Crucible* (1953), the power of McCarthyism meant that the play was only understood in political terms. Although the ideas of Fish were conceived in relation to reader-response theory, they hold relevance to the area of theatrical reception. Susan Bennett argues that theatre critics can be understood as an interpretive community, and refutes Fish's refusal to factor political, gendered, racial, and class factors into his theory. In so doing, Bennett also aligns herself in opposition to Patrice Pavis. Pavis asserts that theatre critics possess 'at least partial freedom from the political assumptions underlying the newspaper or journal represented...' (Bennett, 2005, 42). According to Bennett, theatrical criticism represents 'its inevitable political underpinning and relationship to the dominant ideology' (Bennett, 2005, 42). The reception of *The Crucible* (1953) stands as a perfect exemplar of Bennett's thesis. The interpretive community of theatre critics reacted to Miller's play in accordance with their political orientation. The authority placed in the opinion of the critics was also thus aligned with the subjective political inclination of the reader.

The play itself met with reasonably adequate reviews for the most part, even receiving both a Donaldson Award and an Antoinette Perry award for 'distinguished contribution to the current theatre season' (Roudane, 1987, 25). The critiques of the quality of the play-itself were not bad-enough to bring about its close, but their reference to its subject matter had the power to cripple the production. The pall of paranoia guaranteed that many patrons would avoid being associated with such a production irrespective of its merits. In line with the temperature of the times, political judgement ultimately outweighed any consideration of artistic value. As Miller later claimed in *The New York Times*, *The Crucible* (1953) 'was not condemned; it was set aside' (Miller, 1994, 171). However, the success of the play in Belgium and London attested that such a stance was not universal.

Criticism of the New York production of the play was generally founded on two ideas. Firstly, the critics claimed that such a play was beneath the great talent of the playwright as evidenced in his two preceding Broadway successes. This attack appeared to be more personally than artistically motivated, for Miller's indirect expression of his opposition to HUAC in the play rendered him politically and culturally antagonistic. The critics appear to have been alluding to the idea that it was beneath his talents to implicate himself in the political morass. Secondly, and most significantly to the fate of the play, was the idea that the analogy of the witch-hunts to the then present-political climate was illegitimate. As John McClain of *Journal American* claimed, the play was made unbelievable as it lay 'so far beyond our present concepts of Justice and plausible behaviour...' (qtd. in Bigsby, 1988, 31).

It is important to note that the weekend reviews held more authority than the daily ones, and that this accounts for some of the disparity in the critical commentary on the play. While some of the initial reviews responded somewhat positively to certain aspects of *The Crucible* (1953), the weekend commentary focused narrowly on the political dimension of the play. These weekend reviews alone formed the critical monopoly and so proved more damaging to how the play was received.

This critical lacuna also accounts for the disparity between Miller's recollections of opening night and those as recorded in reviews of the play. Miller recalls the reaction as being a negative one whilst both William Hawkins of the *New York World Telegram* and John McClain of *Journal American* chronicle a different response. In *Timebends*, Miller notes how following the opening night performance, people 'with whom I had some fairly close professional acquaintanceships passed me by as though I were invisible' (Miller, 1999, 347). However, Hawkins records that the play was 'greeted with 19 curtain calls by a vociferous audience' (qtd. in Bigsby, 1988, 31), and McClain writes of 'whistles and shouts of "bravo"' (qtd. in Bigsby, 1988, 31). It is clear that Miller's memories were somewhat tinged by the greater reception of the play and that his perceptions were coloured by his own natural paranoia as to how the play would be received. As he confided in his autobiography, his '...decision to attempt a play on the Salem witchcraft trials was tentative, restrained by...a suspicion that I would not only be writing myself into the wilderness politically but personally as well' (1999, 332).

In his initial review for *The New York Times*, Brooks Atkinson was somewhat disparaging. Atkinson was a former champion of Miller's works and the man that Miller himself credited as being responsible for his success as a playwright (Miller, 1999, 138). Although he ultimately deemed the play 'powerful' and 'a genuine contribution to the season,' he declared it to be 'on a lower level of dramatic history.' In terms of artistic virtuosity, he felt that *The Crucible* (1953) lacked the 'stature' and universality' of *Death of a Salesman* (1949). Atkinson concluded that the play relied too much on excitement, and that the emotional aspect was sacrificed through Miller's concern 'with the technique of the witch hunt' and not 'its humanity' (Atkinson, Jan. 23, 1953, 15, Reviews).

Atkinson acknowledged that the play highlighted 'certain similarities between the perversions of justice then and today.' However, he ultimately viewed *The Crucible* (1953) as 'a self-contained play' that stood independent of its analogy. He remained one of Miller's sole defenders in this regard (Atkinson, Jan. 23, 1953, 15, Reviews).

His weekend review in *The New York Times* dwelt more heavily on the political aspect of the play, yet furthered the comments of his initial review in downplaying the significance of this. He remarked on the contemporary relevance in its exposition of bigotry, yet emphasised that this was 'incidental to the play as a whole, which dramatizes a unique episode in American history long before the time of representative government and the constitutional judicial system.' He defended Miller by stating that he was 'not delivering a polemic or offering "The Crucible" as a

deadly parallel.' However, Atkinson's defence was grounded in the common misunderstanding that any analogy was negated by the fact that witches were not real (Atkinson, Feb. 1, 1953, X1, Reviews).

He reiterated his belief that the play was inferior in comparison to *Death of a Salesman* (1949), for it lacked its 'latitude in its analysis of people.' He once again cited Miller's preoccupation with the theme of the play as responsible for its flawed characterisations: 'Most of his characters are instruments of the action first and human beings with private lives and thoughts at second hand.' He believed that this undermined the individual humanity of the play, and ultimately rendered the play 'emotionally external.' Atkinson believed that Miller had sacrificed emotional warmth for excitement: 'Mr. Miller has not sufficiently mastered his material to forget the details of the story and surrender himself to the love and anguish of his people' (Atkinson, Feb. 1, 1953, X1, Reviews).

Although Atkinson identified Miller's weak characterisation as a limitation of the play, he nonetheless deemed *The Crucible* (1953) 'the most notable play by an American so far this season.' He praised Miller for his 'independent mind, professional skill and personal courage.' While he commended Miller for writing a 'fiery play,' he believed that its power was diminished by its inherent emotional coldness: 'His mind dominates this play, and it is a good mind. But he also has a good heart when he does not withhold it' (Atkinson, Feb. 1, 1953, X1, Reviews).

Perhaps the most virulent criticism of the play came in the form of Eric Bentley's appraisal of the play in *The New Republic* in February 1953. The ideological orientation of the magazine was pro-Communist and Bentley was likewise aligned in opposition to domestic anti-communism. Bentley accordingly praised Miller for bringing such a pressing issue to the public stage: 'The appearance of one such play by an author, like Mr. Miller, who is neither an infant, a fool, or a swindler, is enough to bring tears to the eyes' (1969, 62). However, Bentley's commendation extended no further as he attacked the inadequacy of the play in both dramatic and political terms.

Bentley viewed the analogy that the play drew between the trials and the then political climate as specious, and he argued this from his position as a Communist. Whilst the people of Salem were persecuted based on delusional projections on their identity, communists in America were being assaulted for their actual beliefs:

It is true in that people today are being persecuted on quite chimerical grounds. It is untrue in that communism is not, to put it mildly, merely a chimera...Indeed, the analogy between "red-baiting" and witch hunting can seem complete only to communists, for only to them is the menace of communism as fictitious as the menace of witches. (Bentley, 1969, 63)

According to Bentley, the true root of the problem with the play lay in the naiveté of Miller's political ideas:

The word communism is used to cover, first, the politics of Marx, second, the politics of the Soviet Union, and third, the activities of all liberals as they seem to illiberal illiterates. Since Mr. Miller's argument bears only on the third use of the word, its scope is limited. (1969, 63)

Bentley orchestrated his review to simultaneously attack the division that domestic anti-communism had wrought within the liberal community. He commented that the

play was rendered melodramatic by virtue of Miller's oversimplification of political ideas. He deemed that this simplification was representative of the dislocated mindset of certain sects of the liberal community: 'The inadequacy of certain lines, and characters, is of less interest, however, than the mentality from which they come. It is the mentality of the unreconstructed liberal' (Bentley, 1969, 63).

Estimating the play as inert with characters devoid of grace, Bentley termed Miller a dramatist of indignation (1969, 64). He attacked the playwright for his polarised portrayal of guilt and innocence, believing that his narrow ideas regarding innocence awarded an inauthentic aspect to the play:

The guilty men are as black with guilt as Mr. Miller says – what we must ask is whether the innocent are as white with innocence. The drama of indignation is melodramatic not so much because it paints its villains too black as because it paints its heroes too white. (1969, 64)

Although Bentley shared Miller's distaste of the anti-communist tirade, he resented the position from which it was directed.

In *Commonweal*, Richard Hayes' review of the play focused on Miller's portrayal of hysteria and ideology. *Commonweal* was known to be critical of the tactics employed by HUAC, and Hayes welcomed the depiction of the phases of hysteria in the play: 'the strange moral alchemy by which the accused becomes inviolable; the disrepute which overtakes the testimony of simple intelligence; the insistence on public penance; the willingness to absolve if guilt is confessed.' However, he deemed that the over concern with ideology meant that the 'political complexities' were not

‘approached by Mr. Miller with any comparable sensitivity’ (Hayes, Feb. 1953, 498, Reviews).

Hayes described *The Crucible* (1953) as ‘a drama of arresting polemic distinction.’ He lauded the play for its power and ‘passionate line,’ yet claimed that Miller was ‘fatuous’ in insisting that the ‘present cultural climate had not always a place in the foreground of his mind.’ He also felt that the analogy was somewhat misleading, for ‘the Salem witch-hunts and our own virulent varieties are parallel only in their effects, not in their causes’ (Hayes, Feb. 1953, 498, Reviews).

Walter Kerr of *The New York Herald Tribune* began his review of the play by lauding Miller’s virtues as a playwright. He praised his independence of thought and his commitment to humanity. However, in Kerr’s opinion *The Crucible* (1953) had hailed a descent into heavy-handed didacticism. He criticised Miller for retreating into ‘mechanical parable’ and the ‘ideological heat of polemic’ in pressing the contemporary parallel too strongly. Although he deemed that Miller’s portrayal of the present situation was indeed accurate, he felt that the play lost power in appealing more to the realm of the intellectual than the emotional. This imbalance was believed by Kerr to be the product of poor characterisation with characters standing as mere ‘conveniences to Mr. Miller, props to his thesis,’ lacking psychological individuation (Bigsby, 1988, 32-33).

After a month of production, *The Crucible* (1953) began to have trouble drawing a substantial enough audience to sustain the production, and two of the lead actors left the cast to pursue film projects. However, the cast that remained were wholly committed to the play in the face of opposition and many insisted upon continuing in the production with little pay. The loyalty of these actors to the play and what it represented was reinforced by a symbolic display by the audience after a particular performance. As Miller notes in *Timebends*, '...the audience, upon John Proctor's execution, stood up and remained silent for a couple of minutes, with heads bowed. The Rosenbergs were at that moment being electrocuted in Sing Sing' (Miller, 1999, 347). After witnessing this act of solidarity from the audience the play was further embraced by the actors as 'an act of resistance' (Miller, 1999, 347). The closing of the production in July 1953 after 197 performances was an emotional one for both playwright and cast who had been unified over its course (Abbotson, 2007, 117). As Miller recounted in *Timebends*:

After the last curtain I came out on the stage and sat facing the actors and thanked them, and they thanked me, and then we just sat looking at one another. Somebody sobbed, and then somebody else, and suddenly the impacted frustration of the last months, plus the labor of over a year in writing and revising it, all burst upwards into my head, and I had to walk into the darkness backstage and weep for a minute or two, before returning to say goodbye. (Miller, 1999, 347-48)

By the time that Miller was subpoenaed before HUAC in 1956, the power of the McCarthy phenomenon was rapidly diminishing. With a similar velocity to that which incited the hysteria, the crusade began to abate. The private madness of McCarthy began to receive public recognition, and the shift in private and political attitudes extended to *The Crucible* (1953). The ideas of the play no longer ran counter to the

hegemonic cultural mindset and instead became the medium through which to mourn the travesties of the previous years.

When *The Crucible* (1953) reappeared in New York five years after its initial premiere, it faced a wholly different reception. The play ran at the Martinique Theatre for nearly two years with 571 performances (Broadway database). Miller and Bigsby both refer to this production by Paul Libin as taking place in 1955 (Bigsby, 2008, 455; Miller, 1999, 348), yet the Broadway record suggests that it indeed occurred in 1958. Bigsby even claims that the production was running when Miller was attending his hearing before HUAC (2008, 455). A production of the play did occur in 1955, yet this took place at Hudson Guild House and not the Martinique Theatre.

The first review of *The Crucible* (1953) at the Martinique Theatre appeared in *The New York Times* on March 12, 1958. Lewis Funke alluded to the sense of 'immediacy' that surrounded the original production, yet believed that its revival proved the universal quality at the heart of the play:

That hysteria now, happily, appears to be on the wane, and it is to Mr. Miller's credit that though this be the contemporary situation, his play loses nothing of its penetrating power. Indeed, it retains its own immediacy that must continue as long as men and women of conscience remain with the courage and indomitability to resist the threat of tyranny and blind injustice. (Funke, Mar. 12, 1958, 36, Reviews)

Funke defended the initial analysis of the play as being marred in terms of characterisation: 'The original argument that the principal characters lack full

dimension, that all the characters are moved around at Mr. Miller's behest, that full empathy with individual players is lacking still has validity.' However Funke contended that 'these flaws are minor in the face of the scope and force of Mr. Miller's achievements.' The review was favourable and laudatory, and Funke ultimately deemed the play 'a provocative, stimulating, and most of all, an inspiring creation' (Funke, Mar. 12, 1958, 36, Reviews).

Brooks Atkinson's review of the same production that appeared in *The New York Times* on June 1, 1958, made reference to the 'jubilant reviews' that the play had received. He claimed that the play had 'never been forgotten' in spite of its initial disparagement, and that now with the subsidence of the 'McCarthy pandemonium' it could receive a more objective evaluation (Atkinson, June 1, 1958, X1, Reviews).

Atkinson stated that the play had retained its original excitement, but had also remained a 'taut play, without much depth of characterisation.' Atkinson alluded to Miller's frustration 'with the original criticism that although the play is exciting it lacks feeling,' yet claimed that his opinion on that issue had not altered. He believed that the characters remained 'virtually abstractions,' and that this compromised the dénouement by leaving it 'cool' and not 'overwhelming' (Atkinson, June 1, 1958, X1, Reviews).

He nonetheless remained an advocate of Miller and credited him for 'the scope and principle' of *The Crucible* (1953). He also reaffirmed his belief in the basic universalism of the play: 'Since the conflicts the scene dramatizes are ageless, since they are never resolved completely in our day or any other, this raging climax has moral force as well as excitement. Mr. Miller has made a bold statement for truth' (Atkinson, June 1, 1958, X1, Reviews).

Irrespective of whether the time elapsed was two or five years, McCarthyism had lost its power and the suppression of personal opinion was no longer an essential aspect of life. The miasma of suspicion and paranoia had finally abated and it was now possible to commend Miller for his intentions in writing *The Crucible* (1953). With the distance that time wrought, freedom of political expression returned and accordingly, 'The metaphor of the immortal underlying forces that can always rise again was now an admissible thing for the press to consider' (Miller, 1999, 348). Miller remarked how some critics assumed that he had revised the script, '...but of course not a word had changed, though the time had, and it was possible now to feel some regret for what we had done to ourselves in the early Red-hunting years' (Miller, 1999, 348). Miller commented how the play had previously been 'suspected as being a special plea, a concoction and unaesthetic.' However, the dramatic shift in the political climate allowed 'its humanity' to emerge (Miller, 1994, 218).

In spite of any other idiosyncrasies, critics formed a uniform consensus in their disparagement of Miller's characterisation. His characters were perceived as lacking

sufficient depth and individualisation to arouse the empathy necessary for effective audience engagement. Critics deemed that his preoccupation with pressing a contemporary analogy in the play resulted in conceptual characters that served the purpose of his moral message alone. The majority of the critical community agreed that the emotional aspect of the play was sacrificed as a result. His functional and intellectual approach to characterisation thus rendered him open to attack for overt didacticism.

In *Timebends*, Miller commented that his fascination with the Salem witch trials was piqued while studying at Ann Arbor. He resisted his initial impulse to write about the event, believing that his own sense of rationality was too strong to allow him to address its illogic (Miller, 1999, 330-31). However, he came to understand that his continued wonder at the Salem situation was the result of a sense of deep personal kinship. He confided that over the course of his research for *The Crucible* (1953), he:

...felt a familiar inner connection with witchcraft and the Puritan cult...they were putative ur-Hebrews, with the same fierce idealism, devotion to God, tendency to legalistic reductiveness, the same longings for the pure and intellectually elegant argument. And God was driving them as crazy as He did the Jews trying to maintain their uniquely stainless vessel of faith in Him. (Miller, 1999, 42-43)

Furthermore, with the rise of McCarthyism in America he could no longer ignore its significance. Accordingly, his deep sense of personal investment may account for his preoccupation with ideology and moral climax that cost the play empathetic identification.

There is some legitimacy to the comments of the critics in terms of Miller's characterisation, yet given the magnitude and scope that he was attempting to achieve such reductive portrayals were perhaps inevitable. In his *Introduction to the Collected Plays*, Miller-addressed the difficulty posed in dramatising such a 'mass-phenomenon' where 'the number of characters of vital, if not decisive, importance is so great...' (Miller, 1994, 156). To overcome this, he promoted John, Elizabeth, and Abigail to prominence, intending that they would be representative of the larger situation. He justified this decision on the basis that 'the central impulse for writing at all was not the social but the interior psychological question' (Miller, 1994, 156). However, in the light of the sheer volume of characters introduced, this device proved ineffective. The lack of psychological individuation of auxiliary characters renders the audience unable to relate empathically with them and their impact is thus negated.

Miller later added to the play in the form of prose passages to be read by a narrator. This Brechtian technique was employed to inform the audience of the historical background and the real-life fate of the people on whom his characters were loosely based. It seems possible to interpret this addition as Miller's attempt to silence the virtually universal criticism that his characters lacked humanity. By lending a deeper understanding of the characters and their motivations, he perhaps envisioned that a more emotional connection with the characters would be forged. However, although these passages aid emotional identification with the characters, they also interrupt the flow and the tempo that is so vital to the play. Accordingly, these passages are rarely included in productions of *The Crucible* (1953).

The emotional aspect that the critics craved was precisely what Miller was determined to underplay. He had been disappointed by the 'emotionalism' (Miller, 1994, 152) in the response to *Death of a Salesman* (1949), as he believed that this undermined the message of the play. *The Crucible* (1953) was thus the product of 'an opposite impulse and an altered dramatic aim' (Miller, 1994, 152), whereby the intellectual was awarded greater significance than the emotional.

The charges of didacticism that *The Crucible* (1953) incited became more commonplace in the ensuing decades. As Carol Iannone stated, 'Miller's increasingly determined efforts "to make people think" would contribute, over the course of the next half-century, to a decline not only in his popularity but in his critical reputation as well' (2003, 50-52, Internet). However, Miller staunchly denied any claims that he was a 'teacher in the theater' (Roudane, 1987, 370). He declared that a play could not be willed into being and must express some 'visceral connection' to avoid didacticism (Miller, 1999, 338). In the case of *The Crucible* (1953), the contemporary relevance was supplemented by Miller's psychological identification as a Jew with those who were being persecuted. Furthermore, the dynamics of betrayal and resentment within a marriage were informed by the dissolution of his union with Mary Slattery.

The issue of characterisation may have proved contentious to critics, yet it ultimately failed to impact the play negatively. *The Crucible* (1953) continues to be Miller's most frequently produced play and its universal significance attests that its message fails to be diminished by weak characterisation. Accordingly, the main determinant in

the play's reception continues to be its political dimension. Indeed, *The Crucible* (1953) occupies a distinct position in theatre in that the fact of its production offers a unique commentary on the state of individual and collective freedom in that location.

Miller's socio-political ideas about freedom and political oppression as presented in *The Crucible* (1953) proved anathema to the prevailing culture. Anti-communism was the dominant ethos of the age in America and any resistance to the nobility of such a tirade was understood as treasonous. The validation of the play was thus initially only secured on European shores. With the subsidence of the McCarthy hysteria, the message of *The Crucible* (1953) could be considered and the play struck new meaning with American audiences. A paradigm shift ensued in the American attitude towards *The Crucible* (1953) and the playwright's own later actions before HUAC.

The reception of *The Crucible* (1953) was significant in the light of the fact that both *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949) were generally well received by critics. The play marked the tentative beginnings of the descent in Miller's critical popularity in America. From the initial response that *The Crucible* (1953) received and his appearance before HUAC, Miller was confronted with the cost of his counter-cultural opinions. The play is also of importance to this research as it highlighted the fact that Miller's later plays often received a more favourable appraisal on subsequent production in America.

The reverence of Miller for his courage before HUAC was short lived and rapidly descended into contempt for his moral rectitude. As with the initial reception of the play, America once again came to resent criticism from within its own borders. The notion that the play purported that America was no longer the land of the free highly alienated the American masses and Arthur Miller was never fully forgiven for denouncing the advertised cultural reality. The fact that the American people unanimously agreed that the hysteria greatly restricted the sense of psychological freedom at the time was irrelevant. Ironically, the play fast became one of America's most culturally valuable exports.

Chapter Two: *After the Fall* (1964) and the spectre of Marilyn Monroe

In 1955, Miller composed a one-act play to supplement the dwindling production of Clifford Odets's *The Flowering Peach* at the Belasco Theatre. Miller wrote the piece at the request of Martin Ritt who was acting in Odets's play, and intended Miller's one-act to be performed one night a week to help entice audiences. *A Memory of Two Mondays* was 'a kind of elegy' broadly based on Miller's time at the auto-parts warehouse where he worked to raise the money required to attend the University of Michigan (Miller, 1999, 353). Ritt's affection for the piece prompted him to request a subsequent piece from Miller to be performed in a separate production (Miller, 1999, 352-53). The accompanying one-act was written within ten days, in spite of the fact that Miller had deeply struggled with developing the play for the Broadway stage for a number of years. *A Memory of Two Mondays* and *A View from the Bridge* owed their conception to their dissociation from the commercial theatre, yet Miller ironically consented to a Broadway production out of 'vanity' (Miller, 1999, 353).

Under the direction of Ritt, the pair premiered at the Coronet Theatre in New York in September 1955. The set ran for 109 performances, but reviews were mixed (Abbotson, 2007, 234). *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955) was largely dismissed, for the theme and context of the play were deeply antagonistic to the hedonistic culture of the 1950s. As Miller commented in *Timebends*: 'In a trivial time that delighted in prosperous escapism, I had managed to seize on the one subject nobody would want

to confront, the Depression and the struggle to survive' (1999, 353). *A View from the Bridge* (1955) fared more favourably, and it seems that this was linked to the success of the psychosexual drama of Tennessee Williams on Broadway during this period (*Summer and Smoke*, *Camino Real*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*). Given that the subject matter of the play was informing, the reception of the play was an indication that the political climate was on the cusp of change and that the public attitude toward informers was becoming more ambiguous. Miller's personal fascination with the story of *A View from the Bridge* (1955) inspired him to revise it for a British production. Appearing at the Comedy Theatre in London in October 1956 (Abbotson, 2007, 493), this extended version was widely acclaimed by critics.

A View from the Bridge (1956) was Miller's last theatrical project until the premiere of *After the Fall* in 1964. The intervening years were challenging for Miller as his professional interests were eclipsed by his personal life. In 1956, Miller counterbalanced the political controversy sparked by his appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee with his marriage to Marilyn Monroe. The outcome of both these events proved seminal. In spite of the fact that Miller's HUAC sentence was overturned in 1958, his experience before the Committee continued to negatively impact public opinion of him in America. His reputation was also irrefutably damaged by his divorce from Monroe in 1961. *The Misfits*, the film that Miller had scripted for his wife, ironically premiered in the same year that their divorce was settled. In 1961, Miller also struggled to mourn the death of his mother. The events of 1962 followed a similar equalizing pattern, as Monroe died in the months following his marriage to Inge Morath. Their daughter, the acclaimed director

and novelist, Rebecca Miller was born in 1963. In the years following, Miller and Morath were devastated by the birth of their son with Down's Syndrome. Daniel Miller was institutionalised at birth and the fact of his existence only came to light two years before the death of the playwright (Abbotson, 2007; Bigsby, 2005; Gottfried, 2005).

In interviews over the course of his career, Miller remained reticent about the impact of Monroe on his creativity during their marriage. Over an eight-year period that coincided with the duration of their relationship, Miller failed to write a single play. Instead, his energies were directed into short stories and numerous essays on theatre. The period signified a time of introspection on theatre and its value in a society where it was being displaced by other mediums. Indeed, his hiatus had the hallmarks of a spiritual crisis with his craft and is perhaps unsurprising given the success that Miller had attained at such an early stage of his career. These essays are instrumental in understanding Miller's perspective as a playwright. Furthermore, they chronicle the development of his thought that culminated in the radical departure that *After the Fall* (1964) signified.

In the immediate years following Monroe's death, Miller maintained his silence, and attributed the gap in his career to aesthetic concerns. He claimed that he had written more in this period than at any point in his life (Jan. 23, 1965, Internet), but that he was thoroughly disillusioned with the theatre of the time. He stated that a 'strange futility' surrounded playwriting (Miller, 1999, 510), for he 'simply couldn't find a

way into the country anymore' (Bigsby, 1990, 123). Indicating his own personal experience and the media frenzy that surrounded his relationship with Monroe, he lamented the fact that 'wherever I looked there seemed to be nothing but theatre, rather than authentic, invigorating experience.' (Miller, 1999, 510). However, with the passage of time, Miller was more willing to concede that the fragility of Monroe demanded his constant attention.

The period of time between the early 1950s and the late 1960s was a turbulent one in terms of Miller's reputation with the public. The damage incurred by his appearance before HUAC was largely reversed with the changing political environment. In spite of the fact that the general public was bewildered by the relationship between Miller and Monroe, their association nonetheless bolstered Miller's reputation. However, this effect proved to be short-lived, for Miller was widely vilified in the media following the demise of Monroe. Miller was regarded as responsible for failing to save the fragile icon from herself.

Miller's resentment toward the negative public perception of him following his relationship with Monroe is well documented (Bigsby, Gussow, Meyers, Roudane). Indeed, comments that he made in justification of the right to silence on the part of the writer are telling. In an address in 1963, Miller declared that 'A writer ought to have the right to shut up when he has nothing he feels he must say; to shut up and still be considered a writer' (Miller, 1994, 242-43). This remark was undoubtedly directed toward the critical speculation that his hiatus from the theatre had generated. Miller

was clearly responding to the fact that while his theatrical career had gone into apparent decline, Monroe's career was on the ascendancy. As a result, during his hiatus, Miller was more commonly referred to as the husband of Marilyn Monroe rather than as a writer. Given the success that he had struggled to attain, this fact would have proved especially difficult for the playwright to accommodate.

As John Morton Blum chronicles, in the aftermath of the domestic turmoil of the previous decade, the 1960s were defined by social activism and resistance to political dictates. The passivity that HUAC had engendered helped to inspire the rise to protest in the following decade, and undoubtedly to shape the ensuing ambivalent attitude to the past. The ritual purging of the past that HUAC had necessitated seemed to lead to a revulsion of continuity. As HUAC faded silently into obscurity, the domestic climate was becoming increasingly destabilised. The Cold War persisted and the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 accentuated the growing unrest in relation to civil rights and the Vietnam War (Blum, 1991).

The political atmosphere had a tangible effect on the theatrical scene. The dearth of politically engaged theatre that had characterised the 1950s continued into the 1960s. Neil Simon was introduced to Broadway in the 1960s and became one of the most popular playwrights for the following two decades. In 1963, Simon's *Barefoot in the Park* received over 1,500 performances (Wilmeth, 2006, 44). Thornton Wilder's success continued with *Plays for Bleeker Street* in 1962, while Tennessee Williams suffered a commercial failure with *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* the

following year. The 'spirit of disaffection' of the 1960s resulted in the popularity of the Beats (Wilmeth, 2006, 114), and the increasing success of Absurd theatre. The American playwright Edward Albee presented an Americanisation of the Theatre of the Absurd, most notably in *The Zoo Story* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. The 1960s also saw an influx of new British plays on Broadway, among them Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* in 1961 and Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* later that year (Wilmeth, 2006, 172).

Miller failed to be impressed by either the Beat movement or the work of the Absurdist at the time. He felt that the efforts were 'spurious' and bore little relevance to a culture that was starved for insight. Most significantly, he believed that the Absurd Theatre placed little emphasis on values. Over time, Miller came to understand the meaning integral in the styles of these two movements and deeply lamented the naïveté of his previously adopted position: 'It took me a while to see that the Beats had an eye on the same monster and were foiling him with an entirely different bag of tricks' (Miller, 1999, 355).

Although Miller was uninterested in the popular forms of the time, *After the Fall* (1964) nonetheless marked a significant departure from the style that had characterised his earlier plays. The play was highly innovative and experimental in its own right, expanding the territory that *Death of a Salesman* (1949) had conquered. Miller once again attempted to capture the simultaneity of the mind by setting the narrative 'in the mind, thought and memory' of the central character (1994, 127).

Similar to *Death of a Salesman* (1949), he aimed for the structure 'to mirror the psychology as directly as could be done' (Miller, 1999, 182). The subjective realism of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) laid the foundation for Miller's more complex experimentation with the expressionistic form in *After the Fall* (1964).

Miller may have resisted the dominant styles of the period, yet his sensibility was unconsciously drawing him closer to the European generated movements. *After the Fall* (1964) symbolised the beginning of a more European 'attitude and intellect' (Martin, 1998, 100, Internet), a fact that would come to influence the reception of his future plays in America and Europe. *After the Fall* (1964) proved to be a seminal play for the playwright, the significance of which is only being recognised in recent years.

The style of *After the Fall* (1964) is undoubtedly drawn from the European tradition, fusing Modernist and Brechtian influences. Miller claimed that the shift in style was a product of the post-Holocaust age, for: 'in former time you had to bring the unconscious to the surface by the end of the third act, but we were already *in* the third act. I had seriously begun to question whether a play that gradually unveiled a submerged theme could ever be written again' (Miller, 1999, 548). Abandoning the bounds of conventional realism, the style verges on the cinematic with no formal transitions between the past and present. The play recalls significant episodes from the past in a series of disjointed sequences and images that become contextualised over the course of the action. The Modernist technique of streams of consciousness was evident in the disarming style of free association that the play adopted. The

thematic connections are thus drawn in an episodic collage, reflecting Miller's belief that 'Life was a continuous multiple exposure' (1999, 252).

After the Fall (1964) continued Miller's characteristically integrated approach to playwriting, and the setting deeply reflected the thematic orientation. Consisting of three interconnecting ascending platforms, the stage was devised in the form in which *Death of a Salesman* (1949) was originally conceived. The stage was dominated by the stark image of a 'blasted stone tower of a German concentration camp' (1994, 127).

After the Fall (1964) was concerned with the theme of personal salvation, and Miller's personal struggle to conceive of individual morality in the post-Holocaust age. He envisioned the play as 'the trial of a man by his own conscience, his own values, his own deeds' (1994, 257), set against the backdrop of the ethical transgressions of his generation. As he stated in an interview with Robert A. Martin in 1970, '...it's a play which is trying to recreate through one man an ethic on the basis of his observations of its violation' (Roudane, 1987, 203).

Miller's project in *After the Fall* (1964) was a notably more ambitious attempt to forcibly link private and personal betrayals. The play was a serious response to the degree of abstraction from personal experience that Miller believed distanced man from his awareness of his relatedness and base commonality. *After the Fall* (1964)

thus aimed to assert the idea that the dynamics of betrayal on a private scale primitively mirrored those that culminated in atrocities such as the Holocaust.

Aside from the more overtly expressionist style, *After the Fall* (1964) also denoted the beginning of a more directly metaphysical and ontological orientation. *After the Fall* (1964) dispensed with the moral absolutism that had defined Miller's early plays, and adopted an ambiguity that prevailed for the duration of his career. Miller accounted for the change in his orientation as a product of the fact that the ideas that had framed his earlier plays no longer appeared instructive to the age: 'the social presuppositions of the pre-World War II world – the Depression, liberalism, radicalism, Marxism etc. – began to dissolve in terms of their force for me. They became empty repetitive' (Roudane, 1987, 333).

The initial reception of *After the Fall* (1964) fell victim to a barrage of vitriolic controversy. The play was written as the inaugural play for the Lincoln Centre, a repertory theatre under the creative leadership of Robert Whitehead and Elia Kazan. In the aftermath of their public fallout during the McCarthy era, Miller's reunion with Kazan provided much media speculation. Indeed, many critics affirmed that the character of Mickey was modelled on Kazan. For his part, the director concurred, yet disputed the idea that the character offered vindication to the informer (Kazan, 1988, 630). Furthermore, the Lincoln Centre project itself was involved in its own debate. From its announcement, the repertory theatre had incited much hostility among the dominant theatre critics at the time. Critics believed that an American repertory

theatre was ultimately unviable and the depth of their disparagement served to contribute to its eventual demise. The reception of *After the Fall* (1964) was thus embroiled in the politics of the repertory debate.

However, the controversy was centred primarily on the perceived portrayal of the recently deceased Marilyn Monroe in the portrait of Maggie. Reviews of the play were filled with moral outrage at what was interpreted as Miller's commodification of her death. While the script of the play invites the parallel, the original production demanded identification with the icon on account of certain directorial decisions. Nonetheless, the indignant attitude adopted by the critics guaranteed the commercial success of the play. The assault on Miller for the inappropriate nature of an ill-timed portrait only served to ignite public interest. Audiences were eager to experience such a supposedly intimate glimpse into the life of a cultural icon, and an insight into what was regarded as a bewildering union between the playwright and the actress. The voyeuristic element of the play satisfied the public appetite for entertainment that dominated the stage at that time. The omnipotence of the critics was further undermined by the fact that the script of the play was published in *The Saturday Evening Post* concurrent to its production. As a result, public opinion was widespread and not restricted to those that had attended the production (Feb. 1, 1964, 237.4, 32-59, Internet).

The matrix of the plot is indisputably drawn from Miller's personal experiences and the autobiographical similarities extend far beyond Monroe. Susan Abbotson reported

that Kermit Miller was profoundly uncomfortable at the premiere of the play, for he disapproved of the extent to which his private family history was being exposed (2007, 431). Both critical and scholarly opinion remains embroiled in the salacious aspect by narrowly-centring on tracing the autobiographical parallels in the play. It is only in more recent years that *After the Fall* (1964) is receiving a more academic analysis.

After the Fall (1964) was thus a watershed play in the history of the reception of Miller's plays in America. The play expressed a burgeoning commitment to the European theatrical tradition that helped to account for the alienation of American critics from his later plays. Furthermore, the perceived exploitation of a national icon in the play built a resentment toward the playwright that was never fully dispelled. The reception of the play also incited a personal disenchantment with America on the part of the playwright.

After the Fall (1964) was a form of sequel to Albert Camus' novel *The Fall* and both pieces adopted the style of 'confessional monologues delivered to an absent audience' (Royal, 2000, 195, Internet). The titles of both works allude to the focus on a protagonist who is struggling in the aftermath of his appropriation of the Biblical fall. In Camus' novel, the failure of Jean-Baptiste Clamence to rescue a drowning woman renders him complicit in her death. His inaction offsets a spiritual crisis that destroys his sense of his own perfect innocence and causes him to question his subsequent right to judge others. Miller sought to extend the parameters of the novel in his own

play and thus explore the alternative idea of the consequences of acting to save another.

After the Fall (1964) evolved in a manner reminiscent of a Freudian psychoanalytic session and Miller included material often the focus in psychoanalysis. The play explored the unconscious and looked to Quentin's relationship with his mother to explain his relationships with women. In a foreword accompanying the version of the play that appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, Miller clarified that the 'Listener' to whom Quentin recounts his life is in fact a projection of Quentin's own psyche: 'The "Listener," who to some will be a psychoanalyst, to others God, is Quentin himself turned at the edge of the abyss to look at his experience' (Miller, 1994, 257).

Quentin's mother was a formative figure in his life. Mirroring Miller's relationship with his own mother, Quentin was favoured by her since childhood. The depth of her obsequious devotion instilled a god complex in him. However, her attribution of an omnipotent status served to abstract him from his own life. His actions were frequently at odds with the self-image that had been projected on him, and thus incited his complicated relationship with innocence and guilt. Quentin chose to feel guilt in order to remain innocent and avoid responsibility. His own sense of personal salvation was inherently bound to his self-image as a moral exemplar.

In order to avoid the reality of his fallibility, Quentin lived an unexamined life in the

service of his own ego. Mirroring the protagonist of Camus' novel, Quentin also revelled in the sense of moral superiority conferred by his successful career as a lawyer. His profession granted him the legal sanction to pass judgement, yet precluded the judgement of his actions by others. Most significantly however, his assurance of his moral goodness by virtue of his occupation allowed him to evade the necessity for self-judgement.

However, both men struggle with the paradox of their profession when they experience their fall from their self-conceived moral status. Quentin had always believed that a higher power was responsible for judging his actions and granting him absolution. However, the fact of his experience confronted him with the reality that he was ultimately accountable. As Derek Parker Royal stated in his essay on 'Camusian Existentialism in *After the Fall*,' both characters come to occupy the 'double or reflexive' role of both judge and penitent (2000, 197, Internet). Camus described Jean-Baptiste as a 'judge-penitent' (2006, 6), for he was proven as fallible as those that his occupation sanctioned him to judge.

Quentin's personal crisis was thus ignited by the reality that 'the bench was empty. No judge in sight' (1999, 129). As a result, he was forced to accept that his preference for the legal profession was a deliberate means by which to deny the moral ambiguity that surrounded his life. His career granted him the reassurance of his moral goodness that his mother had necessitated.

QUENTIN. It's so damned clear I've chosen what I did – it cuts the strings between my hands and heaven...I feel...unblessed. And I look back at when there seemed to be a kind of plan, some duty in the sky...the world so wonderfully threatened by injustices I was born to correct! How fine! Remember? When there were good people and bad people? And how easy it was to tell!...Like some sort of paradise compared to this...Until I begin to look at it. (1994, 149)

The unconditional devotion of his mother also inculcated a dependence on a similar level of idolatry in his personal relationships. The unconditional adoration that he demanded meant that he viewed love as a surrender of power to him. He insisted on the sacrifice of selfhood from his partners, so that his relationships served his own ego. As Albert Camus' protagonist similarly asserted, 'for me to live happily, all the creatures whom I chose had not to live at all' (2006, 43). As a result, Quentin's first marriage to Louise is grounded in her worship of him.

LOUISE. ...you want a woman to provide an... atmosphere in which there are never any issues, and you'll fly around in a constant bath of praise... (1994, 168).

The praise that Quentin demanded was a means to maintain his sense of his own innocence. As a result, the needs of his partners fell secondary to his private concerns. In his marriage to Louise, his confession of his temptation to commit adultery was an expression of his need to expunge his own conscience. While he professed that his revelation was intended as a symbol of his affection for her, it is clear that he merely desired to be absolved of his guilt. For the majority of their relationship, Louise was a docile wife who passively accepted her subordinate status as a measure of her comparative worth. Quentin thus resented the sense of moral superiority that Louise

laid claim to in the aftermath of his confession. He was embittered by the fact that she refused to accept any responsibility for the demise of their relationship. His feelings of guilt were compounded and the relationship no longer offered him the reassurance that he required..

QUENTIN. What I resent is being forever on trial, Louise. Are you an innocent bystander here? I keep waiting for some contribution you might have made to what I did, and I resent not hearing it. (1994, 167)

Although Louise eventually gained some independence, she still commended Quentin for his convictions. She expressed admiration for his choice to defend his friend against an attack by the House Un-American Activities Committee given the personal danger inherent in his actions.

However, Quentin's decision to defend Lou was not a product of his moral indignation but an expression of his fear that the connection between men was so fragile. In truth, he despaired at the cost that his career would have to bear for his actions and the fact that his defence of Lou undermined his innocence in the eyes of HUAC. The guilt that Quentin harboured for the sense of relief that he experienced at Lou's suicide was a product of the fact that he was complicit in the mechanism of the Committee itself. Although Quentin objected to the private betrayal that HUAC demanded, he was nonetheless desperate to be freed from the sense of responsibility to his friend. While Mickey was willing to sacrifice others, Quentin wished that the need to resist such impulses was removed.

QUENTIN. It was dreadful because I was not his friend either, and he knew it. I'd have stuck it to the end but I hated the danger in it for myself, and he saw through my faithfulness; and he was not telling me what a friend I was, he was praying I would be – "Please be my friend, Quentin," is what he was saying to me, "I am drowning, throw me a rope!" Because I wanted out, to be a good American again, kosher again – and he saw it, and proved it in the joy...the joy...the joy I felt now that danger had spilled out on the subway track! (1994, 184)

Following his guilt-ridden marriage to Louise and his distress over the circumstances of Lou's suicide, his relationship with Maggie offered him the return to innocence that he desperately craved. As Jeffrey Mason noted, Maggie's vulnerability appealed to his need to avoid the criticism that he had received in his relationship with Louise (2008, 240).

QUENTIN. ...one thing struck me, she wasn't defending anything, upholding anything, or accusing – she was just *there*, like a tree or a cat. And I felt strangely abstract beside her. And I saw that we are killing each other with abstractions. (1994, 181)

Maggie's evident mental fragility conferred the role of saviour on Quentin. Their relationship was founded on the idea that she had to be saved, and the redemption that Quentin required could be conferred through ensuring Maggie's recovery. Maggie openly responded to Quentin's egotistical desire to rescue her, and her devotion was evident in her claims that he was 'like a god!' (1994, 198).

Maggie's burgeoning success as a singer only further accentuated her insecurities and paranoia. While she became increasingly dependant on Quentin to psychologically bolster her, he paradoxically feared the weakening of her devotion as he had with Louise. At the height of his insecurity, he wrote a private note that he would only love

his daughter. On the discovery of this confession, Maggie's childhood fear of abandonment was seemingly confirmed. She became convinced that Quentin would ultimately desert her, and she engaged in a chain of relationship sabotaging acts in an attempt at self-protection.

Her disillusionment with Quentin resulted in a resentment of the role of moral superior that she had previously assigned to him. The absolute nature of her devotion served to exacerbate the depth of her disenchantment. She believed that she was the innocent victim of his betrayal, yet her fear of abandonment meant that she could never fully condemn him. Their marriage thus became a psychic game, whereby Quentin's enduring commitment was guaranteed through guilt.

The venom beneath Maggie's resentment was rooted in the fact that Quentin had ultimately failed to save her from herself. In order to maintain the sense of herself as an innocent victim, she emotionally manipulated Quentin to pass responsibility for her life onto him. The depth of her disappointment led her to launch vicious public and private verbal attacks on him. She discredited his competency as a lawyer and accused him of attempting to exploit her. Quentin's self-defence against these tirades fuelled emasculating insults that recalled the treatment of his father by his mother and Lou by his wife Elsie. Quentin countered Maggie's prolonged psychological and emotional abuse with assertions of his enduring commitment to her. Although his ego was being cruelly assaulted, his ego was reliant on helping her to conquer her issues.

Maggie's manipulative behaviour ultimately culminated in two suicide attempts. Her actions were pathological and were motivated by a desire to emotionally manipulate Quentin by temporarily returning him to his status as saviour. However, the repeated nature of Maggie's suicide attempts convinced him that his continued presence was ultimately destructive to her. Furthermore, he realised that his actions were motivated by self-serving interests.

QUENTIN. I can't pull on the other end of that rope any more...The last two times when we got you out of it you thanked me for saving your life, and for days everything was warm and sweet. I'm not your analyst, but if this is how you create a happy reunion, forget it...I'm not going to be the rescuer any more. It's only fair to tell you, I just haven't got it any more. (1994, 228)

Maggie's oscillation between vindictive assaults and repentant submission culminated in her surrender of sedatives to him. However, her compliance only occurred when she was on the brink of consciousness. Quentin thus realised that she was attempting to make him complicit in her death by assigning the role of 'policeman' (1999, 228) to him. As Ronald Hayman stated, 'She is irrevocably set on a course which can only end in self-destruction and in putting Quentin into a position of godlike responsibility for her life, she is also trying to pass over to him the responsibility for her death' (1973, 62).

QUENTIN. Do you see it, Maggie? Right now? You're trying to make me the one who does it to you? I take them; and then we fight, and then I give them up, and you take the death from me. You see what's happening? You've been setting me up for a murder. (1994, 232)

In retrospect, Maggie becomes a foil character for Quentin, as her actions force him to understand 'the dangers inherent in hanging on to a martyred innocence' (Royal, 2000, 199, Internet). His attempts to compel Maggie to assume responsibility for her own life become his own quest to discover the part that he played in his own life. He pressurised Maggie to acknowledge her own deceptions, yet he equally struggled with the reality of his fallibility. *After the Fall* (1964) thus called for a more integrated self-concept, a self-image that reconciled the coexistence of benevolent and malevolent instincts. As Miller wrote in *Timebends*:

...there was something wraithlike and frustratingly disembodied in the way most people managed to live to one side of their lives, as though there were two of them, one that acted, the other condemned (or was it privileged?) to stand apart and observe, thirsting to participate in his own existence, and afraid of it too. (1999, 519)

After the Fall (1964) highlighted the difficulty of recognising in oneself the qualities that one condemns in another. Quentin has trouble judging himself, yet he judges others with comparable ease. However, Maggie's bitter accusation that Quentin assumed that he was her 'goddamn judge' (1994, 235) proved to be the turning point in his life. Miller stated that, 'when one goes to save somebody, one is seeking to create that person in a more positive fashion, and one has also judged her' (Roudane, 1987, 336). Accordingly, his failure to save Maggie, and by extension Lou, confronted him with the reality that he was not innocent and thus not entitled to the judgement conferred in the attempt to save another. He was forced to confront the reality that his attempt to rescue Maggie transcended to be in the service of his ego and the preservation of his self-conceived moral virtue. Quentin was faced with the

fact that the desire for innocence was a desire for the ultimate power to evade both judgement and responsibility.

QUENTIN. God's power is love without limit. But when a man dares reach for that...he is only reaching for the power. Whoever goes to save another person with the lie of limitless love throws a shadow on the face of God. And God is what happened, God is what is, and whoever stands between another person and her truth is not a lover. (1994, 233)

Miller claimed that Camus' *The Fall* 'ended too soon, before the worst of the pain began' (1999, 484). He appeared to be alluding to the pain incurred in the attempt to counteract the self-destructive tendencies of another. In spite of his attempts, Quentin was unable to save Maggie as the 'key to her salvation lay not in him, whatever his caring, but in her' (1999, 484). The reality was that his attempts to rescue her were exacerbating her discontent, and that his perseverance was a product not only of his love but also of his vanity. While Jean-Baptiste struggled with the fact of his apathy, Miller claims that intervention may ultimately have proved equally meaningless. In *Timebends*, Miller suggested that 'a suicide might not simply express disappointment with oneself but hatred for someone else' (1999, 484). As a result, Maggie intended her suicide as an act of vengeance against those that had exploited her and those that she was powerless to defend herself against in life.

Camus claimed that innocence was 'the most natural idea for mankind' (2006, 50), for he longed for the evasion of judgement that it implied. He affirmed that man's desperation to secure his innocence meant that he would willingly accuse the entire human race to preserve himself. Jean-Baptiste thus comforted himself by 'cleansing

his guilt...in the wash of mutual culpability' (Royal, 2000, 197, Internet): 'I have no friends any more, only accomplices. On the other hand, the number of those has grown: they are the whole human race' (2006, 46). Derek Parker Royal thus stated that a judge-penitent was 'someone-who judges others in order to diminish relatively the seriousness of his own guilt' (2000, 197, Internet).

Similarly, Quentin's claim to innocence was in fact a willed ignorance. It was not the case that Quentin was unaware of his responsibility to others. Instead, he actively chose ignorance. He deliberately ignored and avoided Mickey, as he suspected that he had chosen to testify before the Committee. Quentin sought to lay accountability on external forces, and thus blamed HUAC for necessitating his betrayal of Lou. He chose to deny the treachery in his mother's actions, and sought to scapegoat both Louise and Maggie for the failure of his marriages. His belief that life was fated was a further expression of his wish to allocate responsibility to outside factors. As Camus affirmed, 'the only use of God is to confirm innocence' (2006, 69).

The Holocaust eradicated any claim to innocence and was thus adopted by Miller as the modern day appropriation of the Biblical fall. He believed that man continued to perpetuate the instinct of Cain by denying responsibility. *After the Fall* (1964) thus exposed the reality that conscience was not organic and must be informed by an act of will.

QUENTIN. ...is there no treason but only man, unblamable as trees or cats or clouds?...if that is what we are, what will keep us safe? (1994, 165)

Quentin's visit to the concentration camp with Holga disturbed him in such a violent manner as the symbolism attacked his desire to avoid being complicit. The camp identified Quentin as an 'accomplice' (1994, 157), by confronting him with his commonality with its creators. He was troubled by Holga's emotional display of her survivor guilt, as his response was intellectual. He was unable to grieve for the victims as he felt more aligned with the perpetrators. As Derek Parker Royal affirmed, the tower 'becomes for him a point of anguish, for he finds it difficult to believe that men just like him, men whose hands are free of Holocaust blood, helped to erect it' (2000, 196, Internet). The role of the innocent that Quentin had assumed throughout his life was thus challenged by his burgeoning awareness of his own potential for betrayal.

QUENTIN. Who can be innocent again on this mountain of skulls? I tell you what I know! My brothers died here...but my brothers built this place; our hearts have cut these stones! (1994, 241)

Quentin believed that he had acted in denial of the separateness that had defined the marriage of his parents. He assumed that separateness was an expression of self-interest and single-mindedness that ultimately implied betrayal. He thus believed that his actions asserted the connected nature of man. Quentin was unable to bear the idea that life was arbitrary, and so the tenuous and fragile nature of human relatedness deeply disturbed him. However, his dogged attempt to defy the notion of separateness paradoxically perpetuated it.

QUENTIN. It's like some unseen web of connection between people is simply not there. And I always relied on it, somehow; I never quite believed that people could be so easily disposed of. (1994, 166)

He was thus forced to accept that he had unconsciously treated people as disposable, and had sacrificed others to save himself. In truth, Quentin was willing to sacrifice Maggie in the name of his own personal salvation.

QUENTIN. ...I'd noticed it when we'd begun to argue... What can be so important to gamble her life to get?... My innocence, you see? To get that back you kill most easily... Those deep, unnatural breaths, like the footfalls of my coming peace – and knew... I wanted them. How is that possible – I loved that girl! *Slight pause.* And the name... yes, the name... in whose name do you ever turn your back... but in your own? In Quentin's name! Always in your own blood-covered name you turn your back! (1994, 240)

In the aftermath of his experience with Maggie, Quentin craved judgement as he yearned to be absolved of his guilt. He wished to acknowledge his role in his own actions and to accept the consequences as the product of his own making. However, as Camus asserted, man 'would like at the same time to be no longer guilty and not to make the effort to purify ourselves' (2006, 52). Quentin's desire for absolution was thus the expression of his joint wish to be freed from guilt yet also returned to innocence. However, this desire sparked a personal crisis as to his relatedness to other people.

The evidence of his own betrayals forced Quentin to realise that the evil that had resulted in the Holocaust was not the manifestation of a social or political hysteria. Instead, it was the activation of a predetermined aspect of human nature. As Royal stated, 'The tower is an awakening to the dangerous possibilities that lie hidden just beneath the rational and humane surface of existence, something that anyone is capable of committing' (2000, 196, Internet). *After the Fall* (1964) thus appealed for a

recognition of the private treachery within man as a means to understand the human causation behind wider public betrayals. Miller believed that:

...we have what I won't call a moral responsibility for but rather a literal blood connection with the evil of the time; we have an investment in evils that we manage to escape, that sometimes those evils that we oppose are done in our interest. (Evans, 1969, 74)

Holga comes to signify redemption, for she acts as the catalyst that forces Quentin to accept his personal fallibility. She offers Quentin reassurance in her denouncing of the moral absolutes that had obsessed his former wives and accentuated his own sense of inadequacy. She accepts the moral ambiguity of modern life and asserts that assurance of good faith is a fallacy. Her courage in embracing her imperfection inspires Quentin.

HOLGA. I know how terrible it is to owe what one can never pay. And for a long time after I had the same dream each night – that I had a child; and even in the dream I saw that the child was my life; and it was an idiot. And I wept, a hundred times I ran away, but each time I came back it had the same dreadful face. Until, I thought, if I could kiss it, whatever in it was my own, perhaps I could rest. And I bent to its broken face, and it was horrible...but I kissed it. (1994, 148)

The fact of Holga's self-doubt frees Quentin from the tension that has enslaved him throughout the play. He is able to surrender the image of his own perfection that was conferred through the blessing of his mother and reinstated through his affair with Felice. Accordingly, in his attempt to return his innocence by strangling Maggie, Quentin discovers that he is in fact strangling his mother for instilling the notion of his innocence in the first place. Quentin thus accepts the guilt that he was previously desperate to absolve. Gerald Weales affirmed that Quentin accepts a version of guilt

that resembles the original sin that the Biblical title of the play connotes (Corrigan, 1969, 139). As a result, he acknowledges the personal responsibility and complicity symbolised by the dark tower of the camp.

-QUENTIN. This is not some crazy aberration of human nature to me. I can easily see the perfectly normal contractors and their cigars; the carpenters, plumbers, sitting at their ease over lunch pails, I can see them laying the pipes to run the blood out of this mansion; good fathers, devoted sons, grateful that someone else will die, not they. And how can one understand that, if one is innocent; if somewhere in the soul there is no accomplice... (1994, 184).

Miller believed that 'Guilt supplies pain without the need to act and the humiliation of contrition; by feeling guilt, in short, we weaken the need to change our lives' (1999, 520). Steven Centola suggested that Miller thus perceived guilt as 'a type of bad faith if it provides an individual with an excuse for not acting' (Roudane, 1987, 356). Miller affirmed that the ubiquity of betrayal meant that guilt was concomitant with human nature and thus ceased to be private. He asserted that if guilt was acknowledged as universal, innocence would thus be declared fraudulent. Accordingly, the dangers inherent in claims to innocence would be attested and the atrocities of the past may be prevented from being repeated. However, this idea came to trouble critics, who claimed that *After the Fall* (1964) paradoxically illustrated the inadequacy of guilt as a basis for morality.

As aforementioned, the predominant focus of critics was not relating to such analytical concerns. The spectre of Marilyn Monroe overshadowed and dominated the critical reviews and prompted serious debate over the integrity of the playwright. The

production ensured that the character of Maggie was unanimously believed to be based on Monroe, and Miller was widely disparaged for the insensitivity of his untimely portrait.

The construction of the Lincoln Centre had not been completed by the scheduled opening date for *After the Fall* (1964). As a result, the play premiered at the temporary ANTA Washington Square Theatre in New York on January 23, 1964. The play was produced in a rotating repertory alongside Eugene O'Neill's *Marco Millions* and S.N. Behrman's *But for Whom, Charlie* (Gottfried, 2005, 363). From its opening night performance, *After the Fall* (1964) became the subject of a national scandal.

Miller strongly refuted any claims that Maggie was based on Marilyn Monroe. He claimed that his preoccupation with the theme when writing the play precluded an awareness of any likeness between the two figures. The irony lay in the fact that Miller's fixation on the theme of denial shielded him from what he later termed his 'obvious' connection to the characters (Miller, 1999, 527). Robert Whitehead found Miller's delayed realisation both 'bewildering' and 'obtuse,' yet he defended Miller on the basis that creative artists were often characterised by this degree of unconsciousness. He argued that the focus of the writer on the internal life of the character obscured the realisation of any correspondence to real life figures (Evans, 1969, xi).

In an elaborate article of self-defence in *Life* magazine, Miller deemed that Maggie was merely 'a character in a play about the human animal's unwillingness or inability to discover in himself the seeds of his own destruction.' He thus stated that the inclusion of her character was based solely on the fact that 'she most perfectly exemplifies this view' (Miller, Feb. 7, 1964, 56.6, 66). However, by the time of the publication of his autobiography in 1987, Miller appeared more willing to accept the parallel. Miller conceded that while Maggie was not intentionally based on Monroe, she did possess an unconscious likeness to her.

Critics remained divided over the question of Miller's propriety, yet not all were willing to universally condemn him. The negative coverage that the play received appeared to paradoxically attract audiences. *After the Fall* (1964) ran for 208 performances (Abbotson, 2007, 33), and was thus a success by commercial standards.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Robert Brustein's review for *The New Republic* was among the more damning. Brustein had established himself as an adversary of Miller in the early years of his playwriting career. In spite of his subjective aversion to Miller's work, he nonetheless acknowledged the dignity of the playwright. However, he believed that *After the Fall* (1964) not only justified his established opinion of Miller's writing, but also undermined his integrity:

By writing the play, the author has not changed my mind about his talents, which have never seemed to me much more than minor; but, in lacking the wisdom to suppress it, he has seriously compromised his reputation for rectitude, taste, and dignity. (1966, 247)

Brustein professed no doubt as to the play's autobiographical intentions, describing *After the Fall* (1964) as 'a three-and-one-half-hour breach of taste, a confessional autobiography of embarrassing explicitness...' (1966, 243). He believed that the play was a thinly veiled attempt at self-justification by Miller:

...the author does not stop talking about himself for an instant, while making only the most perfunctory gestures toward concealing his identity... Behind this transparent curtain, however, 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. (1966, 243)

Brustein claimed that the play was more appropriate to a 'posthumous' premiere, given that it 'implicates so many people living, and so many recently dead' (1966, 244). He affirmed that the play's violation of privacy was rendered more acute on account of the fact that those involved were well-known public figures. Brustein not only understood Maggie as a representation of Monroe, he also perceived Mickey as a portrayal of Elia Kazan. He thus affirmed that analysing the play 'was a job more appropriate to a gossip columnist than a drama critic' (1966, 245).

He was equally troubled by the formal stylistic elements of the play which he again attributed to Miller's immediacy to the subject matter. He deemed the play 'a wretched piece of dramatic writing: shapeless, tedious, overwritten and confused' (1966, 244). He believed that Miller's lack of understanding as to the autobiographical form had resulted in an 'uninterrupted monologue:'

The secret of the autobiographical drama...is to find some objective theatrical image for your subjective emotional state; but Mr. Miller is too close to his material to assimilate it properly, and he still has not managed to dramatize it... (1966, 244).

Brustein appeared to struggle with the experimental aspects of the play, criticising the isolation of the characters from one another. He also believed that the standard of characterisation in the play was poor, and seemed to credit this to Miller's narrow focus on himself. As a result of what Brustein believed to be the auxiliary nature of the other characters, he claimed that they were 'too shallow to be plumbed' (1966, 245).

Brustein claimed that 'while Mr. Miller is eager to scourge himself of guilt for his inability to love, he is still conducting an involuntary vendetta against the former objects of his love...' (1966, 246). He believed that this ambivalence created a 'contradictory portrait' of Monroe (1966, 245-46). He castigated Miller for the lack of depth to her character, and moreover his seemingly intellectual approach to her agony:

The only new insight I was able to glean from these familiar episodes was that Mr. Miller must have talked his wife's ear off, since even in the act of viciously throttling her, he is explaining why she hates life, why she drinks, why she married him, and why she is trying to commit suicide. (1966, 246)

He believed that the 'excessive self-consciousness' of the play rendered it dishonest. He claimed that mendacity was 'the worst flaw in the play' as it was apparent to him 'that the real discoveries were being concealed or had yet to be made' (1966, 246).

Brustein highlighted the irony in the fact that while the play was preoccupied with the quest for truth, 'few of the insights' appeared 'genuine' (1966, 246).

Given the history between Miller and Brustein during the McCarthy era, Brustein's attack on Miller for his 'foggy political discussions' in the play was also unsurprising (1966, 246). He criticised Miller for continuing to present politics in 'the simple-minded language of the thirties' (1966, 246). He believed that this facile perspective undermined his claims to 'a state of anguished experience' (1966, 246). 'After all these terrible years, is Miller still defining Stalinism as if it were a sentiment without any reference to ideas, ideology, or power?' (1966, 247).

Brustein ultimately refuted any claim that *After the Fall* (1964) was anything other than a self-serving work on Miller's part. He deemed that Miller's belief that 'he has "universalised" his experience into a parable of guilt and innocence' was merely the product of his own wilful blindness. He evaluated the play as 'an act of exhibitionism which makes us all voyeurs' (1966, 244). However, while he disputed the effectiveness of *After the Fall* (1964) as a work of 'titillation' (1966, 244), he concluded that the play would appeal to audiences nonetheless: 'As it is, the play will unquestionably exercise a strong appeal as an indecent spectacle' (1966, 247).

Howard Taubman replaced Brooks Atkinson as theatre critic for *The New York Times* on his retirement in 1960. Taubman was the former Music Editor for the newspaper,

and his appointment as theatre critic was widely regarded with scepticism. Over the duration of his five-year tenure, little authority was placed in his reviews (Wilmeth, 2006, 172). However, his review of *After the Fall* (1964) transcended the more salacious element that Brustein had focused on, and instead examined the wider aims of the play (Taubman, Feb. 2, 1964, Reviews).

Taubman refuted the charges of distaste against *After the Fall* (1964), for he claimed that autobiography was the standard universal mode of writers. Although he acknowledged that Maggie was undoubtedly based on Monroe, he deemed that any parallel was ultimately irrelevant. He ruled that the objective of any character in a play was to serve 'a dramatic purpose' and he believed that the figure of Maggie was thus justified in that it had accomplished this (Taubman, Feb. 2, 1964, Reviews).

Moreover, he argued that the portrait was a favourable one that was enhanced by the elements that Brustein had claimed were 'contradictory' (1966, 245-46). Taubman believed that Miller's portrayal allowed Maggie to emerge as 'a touching, pathetic human being – lovable and hateful, vulnerable and wounding.' In line with his defence of the right of a writer to draw on his own experience, Taubman discredited the claims that Miller had deliberately manipulated the figure of Maggie to secure his vindication: 'I do not feel that she is in the play merely as the author's means of purging himself in a kind of public self-analysis.' Indeed, Taubman ultimately praised Miller for his courage in presenting his personal life in such a truthful and unfavourable manner (Taubman, Feb. 2, 1964, Reviews).

Taubman commended the felicitous nature of the memory play to its 'unrealistic form.' However, he claimed that the pace of some of Maggie's earlier scenes was too slow and drawn out: 'The harrowing scenes that reveal Maggie's disintegration are too long and detailed; the essential point could be made more swiftly.' He nonetheless concluded that *After the Fall* (1964) was 'Miller's maturest play' to date in that it presented the pursuit of 'truth without bitterness' and led to an acceptance by the protagonist of 'the responsibilities of his own frailties and failures' (Taubman, Feb. 2, 1964, Reviews).

The review of *After the Fall* (1964) that appeared in *Life* magazine was the most comprehensive defence of the playwright. Tom Prideaux similarly acknowledged the autobiographical overtones of the play, claiming that *After the Fall* (1964) insisted on rather than invited such an identification. He stated that Quentin was 'patently Miller's proxy' and that Miller had made little attempt to conceal the real life inspiration for Maggie. However, Prideaux vehemently emphasised that it would be a travesty for the play to be dismissed as mere 'sensationalism' (Prideaux, Feb. 7, 1964, 56.6, 64-65, Reviews).

Prideaux strongly rebutted the allegations of inappropriateness levelled against the playwright. He claimed that it appeared destined for Marilyn Monroe to appear 'so soon after her in death in so conspicuous a drama.' Citing the reality that 'exposure was her nemesis,' Prideaux deemed that the play was thus a tribute to her honour. He stated that *After the Fall* (1964) restored dignity to Monroe's name by authentically

capturing the ravages that fame had exacted on her psyche: 'But now, at last, her exposure is integrated into a thoughtful place where she keeps company with some serious philosophical ideas.' He thus argued that the inclusion of the character of Maggie was not the 'suspect' choice that others had claimed it to be: 'Quite clearly he believes the memory of Marilyn can better be honored if her tragic example can serve to better the human condition' (Prideaux, Feb. 7, 1964, 56.6, 64-65, Reviews).

However, Prideaux was troubled by the overinflated nature of Quentin's 'messianic desire to confess his self-doubts.' He believed that his self-reproach was tainted by 'an embarrassing hint of self-infatuation.' Nonetheless, he felt that the 'moral strip tease' of the first act was balanced by the change in tempo of the second act. Prideaux described the play as 'a drama of revelation' and accordingly praised Miller for the personal risk incurred in writing such a play. He thus concluded that 'Even his detractors must admit his courage; he has told the truth, as he saw it, against himself' (Prideaux, Feb. 7, 1964, 56.6, 64-65, Reviews).

Although he affirmed that it would be an injustice for the Monroe controversy to detract from the play, he nonetheless claimed that it was 'ingenuous' of Miller to expect *After the Fall* (1964) to be 'judged strictly on its own.' He asserted that 'Marilyn's golden image' would continue to haunt the play for decades to come (Prideaux, Feb. 7, 1964, 56.6, 64-65, Reviews).

The defence of Miller by Prideaux and Taubman ran counter to the dominant critical opinion. Indeed, Prideaux's assessment of the portrait as a tribute to Monroe was not endorsed by many critics or spectators of the play. Although the ethics of autobiographical works became a matter of public debate, the reviews of the play itself were not as universally damning as some scholarship suggests. In truth, the idea that the play was widely condemned was a result of the fact that the disparagement of those that found the play objectionable was complete.

Although *After the Fall* (1964) enjoyed an extensive European tour, it failed to appear in Britain until 1967. Significant attention was once again concentrated on the parallels between Maggie and Monroe, yet it did not remain the sole focus of the reviews. More intellectual concerns were raised in relation to the subject matter of the play, and a more protracted effort was made to distance the play from its salacious connotations. However, the passage of time was undoubtedly a contributory factor in this.

Irving Wardle's review of the British production of *After the Fall* (1964) at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry was nonetheless far from favourable. Writing in *The Times*, Wardle claimed that 'the work is as repellent in performance as it is on paper' and decried Miller's denial of the 'autobiographical intention' as insincere. Although Wardle acknowledged the potential for autobiography to breed good drama, he abhorred the 'stifling' nature of the 'atmosphere of self-righteousness' in *After the Fall* (1964). In spite of this, he suggested that the work was a matter of personal

catharsis for the playwright and seemed to vindicate Miller from the charges of bad taste accordingly: '...this is clearly a play that Miller had to write' (Wardle, Nov. 1, 1967, Reviews).

He deemed that there was a 'good small play' contained within *After the Fall* (1964). However, he believed that the merits of the elements of 'sturdily traditional family drama' and the 'intensely painful account of the crack-up of the second marriage' were undermined by a larger issue. He claimed that in spite of 'Quentin's agonizing self-appraisals,' Quentin failed to achieve any realisation of 'his own responsibility for the disaster' (Wardle, Nov. 1, 1967, Reviews).

However, Wardle was more concerned by a wider weakness in the play. He stated that Miller had remained a quintessentially American playwright, yet his attempt 'to annexe a part of Europe' had resulted in his dangerous adherence to 'a fashionable point of view.' He stated that Miller had employed the image of the concentration camp in line with the popular view that there was a 'community of guilt between wartime genocide and the smaller humanities of post-war America.' However, Wardle believed that Miller had failed to convey this effectively, as he had presented this perspective without any sense of proportion. As a result, he felt that Miller had undermined the value of the connection and trivialised the significance of the Holocaust: 'What comes over is not an illumination of great issues from small, but the narcissistic reliance on a major historical catastrophe to bolster up the importance of the hearer's domestic miseries' (Wardle, Nov. 1, 1967, Reviews).

The idea of disproportion in *After the Fall* (1964) came to dominate scholarly discourse of the play. However, the majority of reviews in both America and Britain continued to trace the more sensational element of the parallel to Monroe. Miller's staunch denial of any autobiographical intention or basis for the play only heightened the indignant fury of critics. The confessional form that the play adopted served to convince critics that the play was an act of self-defence by the playwright. Miller not only failed to be exonerated of guilt, but he also lay himself open to accusations of impropriety in releasing such intimate portraits into the public domain. However, British critics were less willing to condemn Miller outright for his choice to portray his personal experience and as a result, the play failed to irreversibly taint his reputation in Britain.

The tragic sensibility of *After the Fall* (1964) was more congruous with the European theatrical tradition. The notion of the inexorability of human imperfection that the play presented ran counter to the ideals of the American Dream. *After the Fall* (1964) highlighted the necessity to acknowledge human fallibility and on this basis continue to express a commitment to both personal and collective accountability. As Derek Parker Royal stated, the works of both Miller and Camus were 'concerned with the possibility of tempering individual action with an over-arching sense of solidarity' (2000, 193, Internet). This more European orientation of *After the Fall* (1964) thus helps to account for the unwillingness of British critics to wholly disparage the play.

For the duration of his career, Miller abhorred the hypocrisy of the media in relation to Marilyn Monroe. The playwright was vilified by the critical community for what was perceived as an uncensored portrait of a woman rendered defenceless by the fact of her death. The foundation of the attack was ironic to Miller, for the media had been responsible for the exploitation of Monroe over the course of her life. In the years prior to her death, the media had unceremoniously derided Monroe for her aspirations toward serious acting. However on her death, she was transformed into a cultural icon and the media were the first to pronounce effrontery at any slight to her name:

The ironical thing to me was that I heard cries of indignation from various people, who had in the lifetime of Marilyn Monroe either exploited her unmercifully...or refused to take any of her pretensions seriously. So consequently, it was impossible to credit their sincerity. (Roudane, 1987, 106)

In truth, the newfound idolatry of Monroe was the source of critical contention. Critics were resentful of the human quality to Miller's portrait, for she had come to be regarded in almost heroic terms. They claimed that Miller had manipulated the portrait to highlight a less favourable side to Monroe's personality in order to serve his own desire for public sympathy and recognition. However, Miller's characterisation was far from self-serving as he was ultimately more damaged by it. Miller frequently declared that 'if Maggie was any reflection of Marilyn...the character's agony was a tribute to her...' (1999, 527).

Miller also stated that Quentin's attempt to encourage Maggie to assume responsibility for her own life was not purely a means to apportion blame to her and thus expiate himself. He affirmed that 'blame was certainly no part of the play' and so

accusations that the play was consumed in self-vindication were ill founded: '...the very point of it all was that Maggie might be saved if she could cease to blame, either herself or others, and begin to see that like everyone else she had essentially made her own life....' (1999, 527).

Critics appeared unaware of the hypocrisy inherent in their attack considering that the majority claimed that the most effective scenes of the play were those between Maggie and Quentin. Critics seemed to conveniently overlook the fact that these scenes were granted their engaging quality at what they perceived as Monroe's expense. As a result, the critical community was as guilty of the exploitation that they condemned in the playwright. The Italian premiere of *After the Fall* (1964) strived to distance the 'tarty innocence' of Maggie from Marilyn Monroe through its choice of actress. However, critics claimed that 'While gaining something in terms of taste, the play thus loses a great deal of its force...' (Nov. 2, 1964, Reviews).

The commercial success of *After the Fall* (1964) was rooted in voyeurism. Although audiences indignantly claimed to be appalled, the fact of their attendance proved that they were also intrigued. The response to the play thus combined the unique blend of fascination and repugnance that characterises voyeurism. As Debbie Lisle writes in her article on voyeurism and spectacle, 'voyeurism is the desire to look upon something that is forbidden. But there is always a simultaneous desire for, and repulsion of, the object under scrutiny' (Lisle, 2004, 8.1, 16, Internet). Lisle reveals that the element of repulsion expresses itself in terms of 'moral judgement' (Lisle,

2004, 8.1, 16, Internet), and this aspect is acutely apparent in the response to *After the Fall* (1964). Audiences and critics alike viewed the play as a means to condemn Miller for the premature death of Monroe.

However, by virtue of attending the production, spectators were rendered complicit. As a result, it seems possible to understand the play as Miller's attempt not to vindicate himself but to condemn the wider public for the demise of an icon. The death of Monroe was a public one by both cause and effect.

It also seems likely that critics responded negatively to the play as they saw their own condemnation within it. Their reaction could be viewed as an act of clannish defensiveness against a collective assault. In order to silence this veiled attack, they construed the air of self-justification that they perceived in the play as indicative of Miller's ultimate accountability.

In his article for *Life*, Miller claimed that *After the Fall* (1964) was 'neither an apology nor the arraignment of others' (Miller, Feb. 7, 1964, 56.6, 66). However, the fact of his self-defence and his indictment of the moral sanctimony of critics seems to refute such a comment. His assertion that *After the Fall* (1964) was 'a statement of commitment to one's own actions' only served to confirm the idea of the play as autobiographical (Miller, Feb. 7, 1964, 56.6, 66).

At the time of the appearance of the play, Miller claimed that *After the Fall* (1964) was no more autobiographical than *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *The Crucible* (1953) and *A View from the Bridge* (1956). However, he later conceded that the play was 'the most personal statement' that he made (Gussow, 2002, 152).

The descriptive passages in *Timebends* in relation to Monroe and their fraught marriage appear as a character sketch for Maggie and a narrative of her ultimately destructive relationship with Quentin. Miller's defence that he had repressed any awareness of the connection between the character and her real life prototype seems too fanciful to be plausible. His subsequent claim that the two figures were divorced in his mind by the fact that he had scripted Maggie's death while Monroe was still alive is also difficult to accept. Numerous sections of his autobiography are dedicated to documenting the self-destructive tendencies of Monroe, and so the idea that she may ultimately induce her own death was thus not specious to contemplate. Miller further justified the inclusion of the character of Maggie on the grounds that he had originally conceived of the portrait in a different play and in a different guise. However, the fact remained that Miller had devised this portrait in the 1960s, at which time his marriage to Monroe was fracturing (Miller, 1999, 526).

The content of the play strongly resembles Miller's personal experiences on many levels, and is not founded merely on the unmistakable portrait of Monroe. The fact that the family life of Quentin is candidly modelled on that of the playwright is evident in the response of his brother to the play. Kermit Miller's discomfort at the

private nature of the subject matter of *After the Fall* (1964) was widely reported (Abbotson, 2007, 431). Quentin's interpersonal relationships also contain parallels to Miller's marriage with Mary Slattery, and his former friendship with Elia Kazan.

In truth, Miller relied on autobiography in the construction of all of his plays. In the case of *After the Fall* (1964), both the characters and the plot were drawn from the dynamics of his personal life. However, other Miller plays equally expressed a connection to his private experience. Indeed, the autobiographical elements of his plays were responsible to a significant extent for their success. The lack of vigour of his later plays could be argued as a product of the fact that as his career evolved, the autobiographical aspects became more divorced from character and more related to theme. *After the Fall* (1964) may have been considered a serious breach of taste, yet the undeniable fact remains that the play is awarded its intense dramatic power as a direct result of its autobiographical basis.

The appearance of *After the Fall* (1964) prompted an intense public debate as to the entitlement of a writer to base his fictive works in autobiography. It seemed that Miller's right failed to extend beyond the parameters of implicating fellow public figures. Yet in spite of the opinions of some of the more vitriolic reviewers, the majority of critics appeared to imply that Miller was indeed entitled to write the play. However, while this right was asserted, the question of whether Miller acted against better judgement in producing the play was insinuated.

The idea that autobiography was permissible in print, yet condemned in production raised questions as to the extent to which the medium was the root cause of the problem with *After the Fall* (1964). Edward Bullough theorised that the 'body vehicle' of drama obscured the awareness of the 'art character' or 'artificiality' of the play among the audience. He claimed that the use of live actors compromised the realisation of the fictional nature of the onstage action by the audience (Ben Chaim, 1984, 9). In the case of *After the Fall* (1964), the immediacy of the onstage delivery and nonverbal gestures triggered association with Monroe. Indeed, it is important to stress that the premiere production of the play in New York played up to the parallel. Writing in *Timebends*, Miller stated his personal regret at his failure to insist that the actress cast in the role of Maggie refrain from wearing a blonde wig (1999, 537). It seems possible that the difficulties posed by the medium helped to account for Miller's unprecedented decision to publish the play in *The Saturday Evening Post* (Feb. 1, 1964, 237.4, 32-59, Internet).

Miller naturally attacked critics for their feigned bewilderment that the work of a writer was informed by personal experience. He claimed that a work was imagined to forfeit 'its right to some esthetic quality' if it failed to be 'derived from the thinnest air' (Miller, Feb. 7, 1964, 56.6, 66). He stated that any similarities to the personal life of a writer were wholly irrelevant to the intrinsic value of a work and merely signified a penchant for 'psychiatric gossip' on the part of critics (Evans, 1969, 21). Accordingly, Miller concluded that critics had resorted to this reductive and cosmetic analysis as they were unable to understand the wider aspects of the play: 'This game of identification, in my opinion, is always played by those who will not, or cannot,

grapple with the objective meaning of the work at hand' (Miller, Feb. 7, 1964, 56.6, 66). He furthered these comments in *Timebends*, asserting that:

I could not help thinking that this gleeful and all but total blindness to the play's theme and its implications was one more proof that they could not be faced, that it was impossible to seriously consider innocence lethal. It was this kind of denial that had brought about the play's tragic ending. (1999, 534)

Paul deMan's essay on 'Autobiography as Defacement' possesses striking relevance to the idea of the play as an ego exercise. deMan claimed that one of the principal limitations of the autobiographical form was that it 'always looks slightly disreputable and self-indulgent in a way that may be symptomatic of its incompatibility with the monumental dignity of aesthetic values' (1979, 94.5, 919, Internet). Miller's previous plays had associated him with these values and the shift in the political climate meant that his position of defiance before HUAC was applauded. His moral integrity was thus believed to be undermined by the perceived exploitative aspect of *After the Fall* (1964).

In the aftermath of the scandal, Miller asserted his belief that a time would come 'when the extra-dramatic identification of themes and persons in them will no longer matter' (Miller, Feb. 7, 1964, 56.6, 66). However, his optimism was undermined by the continuing obsession with Monroe and the discovery of the existence of Daniel Miller in 2003. Miller openly admitted that Holga was based on Inge Morath (Biggsby, 2005, 272), and some critics construed this as further evidence that the idiot child that she refers to was in fact Daniel Miller. Although the date of Daniel's birth is contested, it is nonetheless suspected to be between late 1966 and early 1967. As a

result, these claims by critics are wholly unsubstantiated, for Daniel was not in fact born when *After the Fall* (1964) was completed.

The wider significance of the play in terms of the evolution of Miller's career remains greatly overlooked. The play returned to the formative ideas of his early career of the Depression and HUAC, yet it also saw the introduction of new themes. *After the Fall* (1964) hailed the onset of a more overtly European sensibility and an increasingly ambivalent perspective. The greatest injustice in the reception of *After the Fall* (1964) was not the preoccupation with Monroe, but the fact that this focus overshadowed any discussion of the experimental expressionist form.

The debate between theatre critics over the appropriateness of the play was replaced by the dispute between scholarly critics over the question of disproportion in *After the Fall* (1964). The majority of critics claimed that the play created a moral equivalency in its attempt to forcibly link public and private betrayals. It was declared that Miller's attempt to highlight that all men are guilty eviscerated any basis for morality by rendering all men innocent. As Christopher Bigsby stated, Miller came 'dangerously close to saying 'We are all guilty, therefore all guilt is equal, therefore we are all innocent. For if man is by nature cruel and violent how can the individual bear any blame?' (1967, 45). Furthermore, Eric Mottram claimed that the idea that all men are guilty may prompt additional ethical transgressions: 'The realisation that one is involved in a killer-humanity may, after all, encourage one to kill without the burden of guilt' (Harris, 1967, 160).

Although Miller acknowledged the disproportion, he refuted any charge that the play 'destroyed the basis of moral distinction' (Bigsby, 1990, 139). *After the Fall* (1964) was concerned with the assimilation of guilt and the acceptance of the coexistence of good and evil within. Miller perceived a connection between the unwillingness to assume guilt on a private level and the larger obliviousness to one's personal relationship to the events of history. He wished to dissolve the emotional distance and intellectual abstraction that prevented the realisation of this community of guilt. The play was thus an arraignment of the notion of innocence, and the tendency of man to conceive himself as victim. As Bigsby argued:

That we are none of us without sin does not destroy the basis of morality. It can, however, open the door to understanding, enable us to understand...the extent to which we are not merely close kin to killers but contain the potential to become what he affects to abhor. (2006, 246)

Miller was also criticised for his use of the concentration camp in the play. Ronald Hayman deemed that the true failure of the play was its inability to justify the employment of the image (1973, 61). Jeffrey Mason states that Miller adopts a Universalist perspective on the Holocaust that subscribes to the idea that the Holocaust implicated all of humanity. Through the image of the tower in *After the Fall* (1964), Miller thus attempted to communicate the moral implication of the atrocity for all mankind:

To Miller, the Holocaust is not unique but rather a landmark demonstration of the darker capabilities of humanity; yet because the guilt may attach to any people, any nation, or any individual, he seeks to extract a moral lesson that all of humanity could find beneficial. (2008, 200-01)

However, some critics were troubled by Miller's method in portraying this Universalist interpretation. Ronald Hayman claimed that 'The play cannot validate the equation it proposes between a Separate Person and a Person who Condone Concentration Camps' (1973, 62). Enoch Brater was similarly concerned that the 'universalist implication' had the 'hideous effect of neutralising Nazi genocide' (2005, 98, *Life and Works*). The connection that Miller attempted to draw between the comparably petty betrayals in domestic relationships and the ultimate symbol of human betrayal was understood as an insensitive trivialisation of the Holocaust. However, Miller's use of the image of the concentration camp was both divorced and inseparable from the Holocaust. The use of the tower within the play was intended to signify the alienation of modern life and thus the danger inherent in the concomitant lack of awareness of collective identity. As Derek Parker Royal wrote, the work of Miller communicated 'an understanding of the individual that takes into account not only the necessity for self-definition, but also an awareness of the dangerous potential of that expression in its extreme' (2000, 193, Internet). In the case of *After the Fall* (1964), Miller clearly viewed the concentration camp as a symbol of the destructive potential of the need to assert individual selfhood in the name of personal salvation:

I have always felt that concentration camps, though they're a phenomenon of totalitarian states, are also the logical conclusion of contemporary life... The concentration camp is the final expression of human separateness and its ultimate consequence. It is organized abandonment... (Roudane, 1987, 108).

Arthur Miller claimed that his Jewish inheritance resulted in the fact that he perceived private salvation as 'something close to sin' (Miller, 1999, 314). He thus understood the concentration camp as the epitome of the instinct for self-preservation and the willingness to betray another to save oneself. Although *After the Fall* (1964) signified

a major departure for the playwright, it continued his long-standing commitment to reasserting the notion of oneness.

The controversy generated by *After the Fall* (1964) hardened Arthur Miller to the vicissitudes of American critics. However, the personal condemnation implicit in the attacks that he had dishonoured Monroe never left his psyche. Indeed, his last play that was completed a year before his death returned to the topic. *Finishing the Picture* (2004) stands as a final attempt by the playwright to set the public record straight.

After the Fall (1964) served to destroy Miller's reputation in America, and he was never forgiven for his perceived portrait of Monroe. The play marked the beginning of his critical descent in America, and the disillusionment with his erstwhile role as moral paragon.

Chapter Three: *The Price* (1968) and Vietnam – a veiled response or an elaborate self-justification?

The commercial success of *After the Fall* (1964) prompted Robert Whitehead to request that Miller write a subsequent play for the Lincoln Centre Repertory Theatre. The resulting play was envisioned as a companion piece to *After the Fall* (1964). *Incident at Vichy* (1964) was a clear attempt to clarify the ideas of survivor guilt and responsibility that had troubled critics in his previous play. A conversation piece, the play was inspired in part by the experience of a Jewish friend. The man had been detained with false papers at a Nazi detention centre and his life was spared by the act of a gentile stranger (Miller, 1999, 538). The genesis of *Incident at Vichy* (1964) was also rooted in his journalistic work documenting a Nazi war crimes trial in Frankfurt for *The New York Herald Tribune* earlier that year. The play premiered at the ANTA Washington Square Theatre in December 1964 under the direction of Harold Clurman. The production met predominantly negative reviews and closed after 99 performances (Abbotson, 2007, 207). In spite of its echoes of Beckett and its likeness to Sartre's 'Theatre of Situation' (Roudane, 1987, 338), the play received a less than favourable reception in Europe. The more European style of *Incident at Vichy* (1964) failed to ameliorate the antagonism of European audiences to the ideas contained within the play.

In 1965, another phase of Miller's career was marked by his election as International President of PEN. His four-year term had a lasting effect on his work and ensured his

lifelong commitment to improving the conditions of writers. In the same year of his father's death in 1966, a televised version of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) was broadcast to an American audience of seventeen million. The playwright continued to publish short stories and a collection of these entitled *I Don't Need You Anymore* appeared in 1967 (Abbotson, 2007, 494).

As the 1960s drew to a close, the war in Vietnam and issues over civil rights continued to dominate American discourse. During this period, Miller became heavily involved in the protest against the War. His term with PEN was entering its final year and his attention once more turned to native shores. The pervasive state of dislocation in America led to the surge in the momentum of the experimental theatre movement that had begun in the 1950s. As Bigsby noted, the alternative theatre challenged the conventional Aristotelian structure of plot, character, and language, and attacked the foundation of modern Western theatre. The 'well-made' play made iconic by Ibsen, and other such traditional theatrical styles, were hailed as retrograde. The focus of dramatic works and indeed popular culture in general, was set narrowly on the present, and reflected societal resistance to 'historical imperatives' (Bigsby, 2006, 271-72). The traditional dominance of literary theatre and psychological plays was rejected in favour of a more performance-orientated approach (Wilmeth, 2006, 119). The distrust of language that characterised the 1960s led to the rise of performance theatre (Wilmeth, 2006, 135). In the rejection of conventional theatrical formulae, a new aesthetic was created that drew on influences from the world of music, art, film and dance.

The American critic Richard Kostelanetz coined the term 'The Theatre of Mixed Means' to describe the numerous experimental movements that were developing in American theatre during this time. The cross-fertilisation of variant art forms into the theatre (1970, 3) was particularly evident in the loosely defined 'Happenings' movement. This approach of theatre was inspired by the avant-garde forms of Futurism, Surrealism, and Dadaism, and emphasised the importance of the process of creation as opposed to the ultimate product (Kostelanetz, 1970, 9).

The European stage was the precursor to the American experimental theatre movement, and so the styles adopted by the American movement did not represent a radical departure to European audiences. The Absurdist theatre had been generally rejected by American audiences when it achieved popularity in Europe in the 1950s. However, the unstable racial tensions and the fear of nuclear Holocaust that defined the 1960s granted a relevance to the Absurdist styles in America (Wilmeth, 2006, 132). The combination of the war in Vietnam and the onset of the hippie generation acted as the catalyst for the American experimental movement that aimed to place the audience in a more active and central participatory role.

The rise of the experimental movement in America was regarded negatively by Miller. As his own creative history attested, he was not opposed to experimentation in the theatre. However, he claimed that the theatre in the 1960s was 'all about devastation' (Miller, 1999, 501), and thus lacked the values communicated through tragedy. He shared the commitment to politically engaged theatre that the movement

inherited from its European counterparts, yet he had an ideological aversion to the particular styles that the American theatre was adopting. He was troubled by the 'Happenings' theatre and the multimedia style of the emerging dramatic works as he believed that these forms offered little to an audience yearning for inspiration. He was concerned that the theatre 'risked trivialisation' through plays that he felt perpetuated the social dislocation as opposed to confounding it (Miller, 2005, 61).

In reaction to this, Miller's response to the times differed wholly in both style and content to the dominant plays of the period. Premiering on February 7, 1968, *The Price* divided critics and audience with its conventional form and traditional subject matter. His chosen milieu of the nuclear family and the 'moral catastrophe' of the Depression (Miller, 1999, 115) incited contention among critics that perceived the play as irrelevant to the turmoil of the times. The depth of the critical disparagement of the play prompted a widely documented self-defence by Miller in the media. However, the play proved popular with audiences, and became Miller's last commercially successful new play for the remainder of his career. This success was mirrored across the Atlantic, as *The Price* (1968) set a theatre record when it arrived in London with an unprecedented fifty-one week run (Abbotson, 2007, 283).

Akin to its predecessors, *The Price* (1968) further established the power of the past as an enduring Miller theme. He believed that the Depression context epitomised the notion of causality that was so notably absent in the 1960s. The play was thus conceived as a means to penetrate the 'stalemate' and 'moral stagnation' of the

decade (Miller, 1999, 553) that he considered the alternative movement to be perpetuating. As he affirmed in *Timebends*: '*The Price* grew out of a need to reconfirm the power of the past, the veritable seedbed of current reality, and in that way, if possible, to reaffirm cause and effect in an insane world' (Miller, 2005, 63). He believed that the Vietnam War represented a 'paralyzing vision of repetition' of the Spanish Civil War (Miller, 1999, 542) that was failing to be acknowledged. This denial of continuity in America troubled Miller, for he believed that it expressed 'a particularly dangerous commitment to an idea of national innocence and personal denial' (Bigsby, 2006, 287). Miller described American culture as one of untamed denial (1999, 521), and he thus claimed that the urge 'to reveal what has been hidden and denied, to rend the veil' was experienced with a unique intensity in all American writers (Miller, 1999, 63).

The occasion of *The Price* (1968) was the attempted reconciliation of two brothers, as the division of their father's assets forced them to confront their relationship with him and each other. The pair became estranged following the divergent courses that each pursued after their father's financial ruin by the Depression. The instantaneousness nature of his collapse maimed the brothers psychologically and shaped their moral memory. The dominant ideology that was endorsed by the father was success, and this ethos ultimately dictated and divided the actions of the two brothers. Whilst Walter pursued the ethos of success, Victor unconsciously acted in revolt to it by instead acting in affirmation of love.

The Price (1968) presented a perversion of the father-son conflict on which Miller's reputation was founded, with a father and two opposing sons once again serving as the central operating framework. The characterisation of the father as 'both the model and the rejected ideal' (Williams, 1993, 271) was by now a common trait in Miller's work. By employing a deceased father figure, Miller most effectively dramatised the idea of ideological and emotional inheritance that he aspired to in his earlier drama. The emphasis shifts to the tension between the brothers as they struggle to exorcise the power of the influence of the father and the values that he bequeathed to them. Miller believed that this rendered the father-son conflict a 'dried husk' (Roudane, 1987, 188) in *The Price* (1964).

In embodying two versions of the same reality, the fraternal portrayal offered Miller the opportunity to convey two intra-generational interpretations of the same experience. The play encapsulated a fundamental Miller theme in what Bigsby cites as the difficulty in relating one's deeds to one's self-concept (Bigsby, 1984, 244). The two brothers are ultimately foils for each other, for as Miller outlined in his production notes to the play, 'each has merely proved to the other what the other has known but dared not face' (1994, 295). There are numerous parallels between the figures of Walter and Victor Franz and their preceding prototypes Biff and Happy Loman. Janet Balakian cites the brothers of *The Price* (1968) as projections of Biff and Happy twenty years after the events that close *Death of a Salesman* (Bigsby, 1999, 132). The situation of the Loman and Franz brothers are analogous in many respects, for as Bigsby highlights, both pairings represent 'two sides of a single sensibility' (2006, 273). Accordingly, the issue of the piece is as much about the

reconciling of the existence of the disparate values of the other within as it is about the reconciling of the brothers. By now an established characteristic of Miller, innocence takes the form of self-deceit and denial. Writing of the brothers, Bruce J. Mann commented that each brother insists on his version of reality, for it renders him 'innocent' (Brater, 2005, 43, *Theater and Culture*).

The Price (1968) delivered a change in the direction of Miller's portrayal of the father figure that transformed the whole familial dynamic from that of *The Man Who Had All The Luck* (1944), *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949). In these prior plays, the relationship between father and son was marked by a matrix of love and dependence whereby each required the love of the other to sustain his self-image. It was this unconditional bond that rendered both incapable of truly condemning the other. However, in *The Price* (1968), Victor must mentally create the illusion that they were 'brought up to believe in one another' (1994, 368).

WALTER. Was there ever any love here? When he needed her, she vomited. And when you needed him, he laughed. What was unbearable is not that it all fell apart, it was that there was never anything here. (1994, 368)

By constructing this crippling illusion, Victor was unable to break free from the hold of his father. He never experienced the degree of self-actualisation whereby he became the independent arbiter of his will. Accordingly, although his father was dependent on him, his father maintained all the power, even after his death. Indeed the compulsion to perpetuate stasis became so potent in Victor that he was left equally impotent when the true reality became apparent to him. The fate that befell his father

rendered Victor fearful of retiring from the security of his career as a policeman and pursuing his private ambitions. Although the Franz household was as equally driven by the ideals of success as its predecessors, the environment was not similarly infused with unconditional love.

The existence of all of Miller's father figures was validated through their sons, and they were extremely psychologically invested in the futures of their progeny. Their fixation on their sons was vicarious and was the result of perceived shortcomings in their own lives. This vicarious interest was often focused on the eldest son and often bordered on fanaticism. Indeed, the father's estimation of his self-worth frequently became inextricably bound to the success of his son. In *The Price* (1968), Walter's success stands as the ultimate reassurance to his father, whilst reinforcing the values that Victor's actions are intent to undermine. The collapse of his business affairs is somehow absolved through Walter who attests that the legacy of success was not eternally broken with his downfall. He perceives Walter's success as proof that he has not wholly failed as a father and as a man, and thus holds him in higher esteem. Accordingly, he appears apathetic toward Victor, and the personal sacrifices that his son has made in his name.

VICTOR. ...years ago I was living up here with the old man, and he used to contribute five dollars a month. *A month!* And a successful surgeon. But the few times he'd come around, the expression on the old man's face – you'd think God walked in. The respect, you know... (1994, 328).

Miller described his favourite and most comedic character (Roudane, 1987, 360) as a 'vaudeville act' (Bigsby, 1990, 149). On account of his Jewish idiom and inflections, Gregory Solomon appears as a stereotype, yet his importance as moral arbiter is clear. Over the course of the play, Solomon becomes a surrogate father to Victor. He understands that the tension between the brothers has its roots in the matrix of pride and envy intrinsic to fraternal rivalry: 'everybody wants to be number one' (1994, 317). He accordingly 'tries to shepherd them away from the abyss towards which he knows they are heading' (Miller, 2005, 60). Speaking with Gussow in 1986, Miller alluded to the inevitability of brotherly conflict by using *Death of a Salesman* (1949) as a reference point: 'How else can you have a brother?...brothers who adore one another and also are at odds' (2002, 99).

Masculinity in Miller's plays was intrinsically bound to the power that one held, and neither father nor brother wished to concede that he might be ineffective. As many critics allude, the cautionary tale of Cain and Abel and the fratricidal impulse provides the primitive framework of *The Man Who Had All The Luck* (1944), *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *After the Fall* (1964) and *The Price* (1968). The crux of this impulse lies in the wish to forever annihilate the natural sense of competition that exists between fathers and sons and between brothers. In the elimination of the other, judgement and comparison is removed. Accordingly, sibling rivalry is both an accepted and benevolent expression of this impulse whilst also its unconscious source.

Walter and Victor Franz stand as perhaps the most vivid expression of the unwillingness to surrender power to one's brother. Victor believes that he holds a moral power over his brother, whilst Walter is afforded the power of the successful standing at the financial and professional apex. Both brothers have paid a price for the choices that they have made, and they thus attempt to scapegoat the other in order to maintain their sense of moral superiority. Walter and Victor have achieved some degree of personal realisation, yet their denials remain necessary to justify their lives. Walter's selfishness cost him his family and culminated in a breakdown, and Victor's altruism resulted in a paralysing fear to act. The fact of their sibling rivalry means that neither brother is willing to concede to the truth inherent in the accusations of the other.

In his opening notes on the play, Miller stressed the importance of a sympathetic portrayal of both brothers. Neither is intended to appear villainous and Walter's actions are not to be reduced to those of mere manipulation: 'Walter is attempting to put into action what he has learned about himself' (1994, 295). He described *The Price* (1968) as 'a kind of summing up of the balance of forces' (Bigsby, 2005, 275), as both Walter and Victor must accept that the world necessitates both of their personality traits: '...you have to have both of them, and that is what the play is telling you, which is not good news for the human race' (Bigsby, 2005, 275). The play must thus end in a stalemate, as it dramatised an ultimately irresolvable conflict between 'dutifulness and self-sacrifice on the one hand, as against the more aggressive nature' (Roudane, 1987, 340).

The denials of both brothers are supplemented by their illusions as to the true reality. The play highlights the paradox of denial, whereby illusion becomes both a sustaining and a destructive force. *The Price* (1968) expresses an organic unity with Miller's earlier plays in dramatising the destructive power of illusion and the degree to which man constructs his own version of reality to justify his life. As Erich Fromm posed, 'Illusions about oneself can become crutches useful to those who are not able to walk alone; but they increase a person's weakness' (1984, 215).

Recalling Quentin of *After the Fall* (1964), the occupations of both brothers serve to supplement their illusions. In the case of Victor, his illusion as to his moral role is manifest in the fact that his profession requires him to don a uniform and assume an identity. He becomes consumed in necessity and survival, and structures his life around what Janet N. Balakian terms a 'biological morality' in his commitment to justice and moral principles (Bigsby, 1999, 133). His career as a policeman also becomes a manifestation of his search for a rational order and a sense of security. Walter's career as a surgeon similarly reinforces his belief in his own righteousness, whilst also providing an outlet for the expression of his narcissistic impulses. In opposition to Victor, he is consumed in what Miller termed the 'sex and success motives of the society' (Roudane, 1987, 188).

Victor was more emotionally affected by the fall of his father, and his actions were a response to his father's spiritual disillusionment. As was characteristic of the times, his father believed that he was personally to blame for his losses and not the wider

economic system. He was spiritually defeated by the Depression, and the reaction of his wife to the catastrophe dissolved any vestige of faith that he placed in personal relationships. Unable to bear the hopelessness of his father, Victor felt morally compelled to assist him. He conceived of his father as a powerful figure of authority and his altruism was an expression of his need to preserve this imagined status quo. He believed that sacrificing his own personal ambitions in the name of his father would bolster his faith in the family unit and restore his will.

VICTOR. He couldn't believe in anybody anymore, and it was unbearable to me! (1994, 367)

Victor conceives of his actions toward his father as a moral duty that Walter chose to abnegate. Yet perhaps given Walter's values, his actions were his interpretation of moral responsibility to his father. Victor chose the path of self-sacrifice to restore the faith of his father in human connection, yet ultimately this was a notion that his father could not understand. A businessman whose own marriage was founded in a financial arrangement, he was unable to relate to the act of his son. He lacked faith in the strength of visceral ties and the family bond, and thus was comfortable to exploit a sacrifice that he perceived as ephemeral. He openly mocked Victor's suspicion that he had money put aside.

WALTER. I don't mean that he wasn't grateful to you, but he really couldn't understand it. I may as well say it, Vic – I myself never imagined you'd go that far. *Victor looks at him. Walter speaks with delicacy in the face of a possible explosion.* Well, you must certainly see now how extreme a thing it was, to stick with him like that? And at such a cost to you? (1994, 364)

However, in spite of his pretensions to the contrary, Victor has no right to the moral high ground that he seeks to lay claim to. Indeed he is as selfish as his brother and father. He employs the same manipulative tactics as his father to serve his own agenda. Christopher Bigsby notes how Victor perpetuates his father's actions in using guilt to attempt to make Walter feel responsible for his sacrifice (2006, 278).

Esther is the reason that Victor defends himself against the implication that he is a victim in such a staunch manner. The apparent frustration of his wife and his awareness of his responsibility for that accentuates the need for him to uphold his denial. Esther's disappointment strikes such poignancy for Victor as it is his own. The psychological effects of their upbringing left both brothers with the same resounding desire to be untouchable and the point of difference between them lies only in how they negotiated this wish. Walter believes that it was only he that caused hurt in the pursuit of this idea, yet Victor evidently hurt himself in seeking shelter from his aspirations under the auspices of an imperative to be loyal to his father. He is aware that he psychologically and financially enabled his father to exploit him. He emphatically declares that he is 'nobody's victim' (1994, 356), yet he is clearly a victim of his own self-betrayal. This is further accentuated by his morally indignant refusal to accept any concessions from Walter.

VICTOR. I look at my life and the whole thing is incomprehensible to me. I know all the reasons and all the reasons and all the reasons, and it ends up --nothing. (1994, 311)

Esther has equally been imprisoned in his illusion, and although the relationship has endured, it is not devoid of tension. In words reminiscent of Willy Loman, she laments that 'everything was always temporary with us. It's like we never were anything, we were always about to be' (1994, 307). Her disappointment at her husband's paralysed will is manifest in her alcoholism. She admires Victor for his moral principles, yet resents the fact that he has continued to suspend their lives sixteen years following the death of his father.

ESTHER. It's like pushing against a door for twenty-five years and suddenly it opens...and we stand there. (1994, 307)

Esther longs for prosperity and is preoccupied by money and its promise. She thus sees the selling of the furniture as their last opportunity to make Victor's imminent retirement financially secure. Her desperation is apparent in her continual goading of him to get the best price, and unwitting emasculation of him by challenging his competency in front of Walter. It is not until the close of the piece that Esther comes to realise the desperation within Victor, and truly empathise with his motives. She is thus the only character to undergo a true transformation over the course of the play. The root cause of Esther's distress and impacted frustration lies in the fact that she understands causality and therefore her passive role in refusing to challenge it. Her marriage to Victor on the surface appears to echo the relationship between his parents, yet it differs significantly in that it is underpinned by love.

Walter purports that he has undergone a personal transformation in the aftermath of a breakdown, and that he has realised the hollowness of success. Divorced and

distanced from his own children, Walter understands that the fanaticism inherent in his pursuit of success ultimately came at the cost of any meaningful human connection. He recognises that the values that he inherited from his father wrought the same spiritual vacuum.

WALTER. You start out wanting to be the best, and there's no question that you do need a certain fanaticism...Until you've eliminated everything extraneous – *he smiles* – including people. (1994, 350)

In a study on the role of doctors in Miller's drama, Stephen A. Marino comments that 'All of Miller's doctors - whether major, minor, or absent - confront the time-honored principle of "emotional detachment" upon which the profession is based' (Langteau, 2007, 53). The ethical bankruptcy of his father and his overcompensating drive for success culminate in Walter's megalomaniacal attitude to his profession. In spite of the fact that he was more favoured by their father, Walter nonetheless envied the sense of connection between his brother and his father.

WALTER. His selfishness – which was perfectly normal – was always obvious to me, but you never seemed to notice it. To the point where I used to blame myself for a lack of feeling. (1994, 359)

In the same manner that Victor envies Walter's success, Walter envies the sustainable relationship that Victor enjoys with his wife and son. Seemingly unaware of the irony, Walter comments that he is jealous of Victor's 'real life' (1994, 351). Victor is as equally psychologically invested in the future of his son as his own father. However, on some level, he was aware of the fact that he allowed his father to hijack his life. As

a result, his healthy relationship with his own son is a product of the fact that he liberated his son to allow him to pursue his own ends.

Walter refutes the charge that he is selfish, and believes that his concessions toward Victor contest against this. The scope of his self-realisation is limited and it seems that it does not extend to his brother or father, for he denies that either of them were casualties of his success. As a characteristic Miller physician, Walter has an ambiguous 'moral center' (Langteau, 2007, 41), and has 'difficulty...in discerning the relevance of truth' to himself (Langteau, 2007, 41). Furthermore, in spite of his assertions, it appears that he still fails to match the ideal to reality and still prioritises work. Although they have not spoken in sixteen years, Walter ironically excuses his refusal to answer Victor's telephone calls with claims that he was too busy.

The plight of the Franz family is rooted in their denial of the past and the continuity between the actions of their past and their current reality. Both brothers deny the fact of causality and this can be traced to the response of their father to his financial collapse during the Depression. The inability of Mr. Franz to comprehend the reasons behind his relative failure is reflected in the inability of his sons to understand the roots of their shortcomings. As the brothers refuse to accept the true reality of the past, they continue to perpetuate its mistakes.

Cast in the role of sage, Gregory Solomon embodies the true significance of Miller's message on the past. Solomon lost a daughter to suicide, and although he remains haunted by her death, he has learned acceptance. The plight of his daughter informs his consciousness, but he does not allow it to overwhelm his life. The laughing record that at the opening of *The Price* (1968) was the sardonic laughter of the father made manifest becomes Solomon's ultimate acceptance of the absurdity of life.

SOLOMON. 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 if it was a miracle and she came back to life, what would I say to her? (1994, 372)

Similarly, Miller's aim in *The Price* (1968) was not to romanticise the past in the tradition of the 'theatre of nostalgia' (Biggsby, 2006, 275), but to reinstate the seminal influence of the past on the present. From the beginning of his career, Miller openly acknowledged that he was a direct descendent from the Ibsenite tradition. This was most evident thematically and stylistically in *All My Sons* (1947) in the importance of the past and the contrivance of the letter. However, this dramatic inheritance from Ibsen was also expressed in *The Price* (1968). While Miller gradually distanced his work from the more conventional techniques of Ibsen, he retained the commitment to dramatising 'the story of how the birds came home to roost' (Miller, 1994, 179).

The Price (1968) was deeply ingrained in the mythology of the American Dream. In his autobiography, Miller defined the American experience as rooted in the belief that 'something good was always coming up, and not just good but fantastic, transforming, triumphant' (1999, 122). This ideology placed no reverence in either the past or the

present and instead focused solely on the future. Each character in *The Price* (1968) represents a variant phase of the American Dream, and the play thus stands as a metaphor for the American experience. Mr. Franz symbolised the ultimate failure of the Dream, while Walter embodies its frenzied pursuit of success. Victor represents the continual state of becoming, and Esther signifies the frustration that aspiration to the Dream can incite. It is the character of Solomon that represents transcendence of the myth of the Dream. He accepts the failures of the past, and he asserts the potential of the future while acknowledging the impact of the past on the present. Accordingly, he symbolises the need to build hope on the evidence of despair. As Bigsby asserts, 'For Solomon...it is not a question of a naïve faith being shattered by events, leaving nothing but despair and apathy, but of the necessity to renew faith in knowledge of its fragility' (2006, 278).

SOLOMON. Let me give you a piece of advice – 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. And if you can't do that, my friend – you're a dead man. (1994, 320)

In the light of the unrest in America at that time, engagement with the current environment was viewed as the minimum requirement for an emerging play. The combination of a traditional style and retrospective setting and subject matter led critics to conclude that *The Price* (1968) was irrelevant to the present conditions. Given Miller's well-documented work as an advocate in this period, reviews seemed to imply a moral irresponsibility on the part of the playwright. Furthermore, his talent as a playwright was called into question with many critics commenting that *The Price* (1968) was a less effective repetition of the format of earlier Miller plays. Critics concluded that *The Price* (1968) could not be regarded as a serious play, for it was

devoid of both intellectual insight and the capacity to provoke thought on the issues of the times. Ultimately, no reviewer perceived that the play's fixation on the past was its route to relevance and comment on the contemporary situation. In spite of the fact that it was discredited by the critical media as being of no major import, *The Price* (1968) ran for 425 performances (Broadway database) when it premiered at the Morosco Theatre in February 1968.

Remaining Miller's most vitriolic critic, Robert Brustein's review for *The New Republic* inferred a form of hypocrisy on the part of the playwright. Alluding to the gap between his work as an advocate and the content of his plays, Brustein remarked that 'As a citizen, Miller is deeply involved with these events, as a playwright, he is now choosing to ignore the life around us...' (Brustein, 1969, 104).

Brustein identified *The Price* (1968) as 'a memory play,' 'pulsing with nostalgia for another time' (1969, 104). He negatively compared the play to the work of Ibsen, and cited Miller's output as inferior for his comparable inability to evoke the present in equally tangible terms:

Ibsen was interested in the effect of the past on the present, as a clue to how mankind got on the wrong track; Miller, on the other hand, is more concerned with the way the present reveals the past. As a result, he writes comfortably about the thirties and forties, and describes the Depression more vividly, through conversation, than he represents, through action, the living events of his play. (Brustein, 1969, 104)

Brustein blamed the fact that the play was dominated by conversation and not action, for rendering *The Price* (1968) contrived. He believed that the play thus lacked the spontaneity that characterised the other plays of the period: 'Everything is signalled,

climaxes are superimposed, and exits are timed for applause rather than as natural departures' (Brustein, 1969, 106).

Brustein was unimpressed by what he perceived as the regurgitation of a tale that he believed had already been exhausted by the playwright:

As a playwright, he seems in the grip of a repetition compulsion which makes *The Price* a composite of *Death of a Salesman*, *All My Sons*, and *After the Fall*, involving the same family... Even the dialogue seems lifted from earlier Miller plays. (Brustein, 1969, 104)

He disparaged Miller for failing to reinvent his 'social-psychological' melodrama 'about Family Responsibility' (Brustein, 1969, 103) by informing it with the current reality. Brustein claimed that the play could have achieved relevance to the times by merely updating the source of tension within the family. The Vietnam War was a contentious generational issue among families and so Miller's exclusion of such content was considered an oversight that belied his reputation as 'the most public-spirited of dramatists' (Brustein, 1969, 103).

Brustein argued that *The Price* (1968) could not be regarded as serious, but 'solemn' and 'determined' (1969, 106). He believed that Miller's failure to evolve with playwrighting trends was less damaging than his failure to engage with current events: '...how can a new play fail to be affected, if only indirectly, by the events of its time?' (Brustein, 1969, 103). Given the litany of plights that beset America, he deemed that *The Price* (1968) could only be consigned to the realm of insignificance. He denigrated the play as 'escapism' (Brustein, 1969, 106), and claimed that audiences would not be able to relate to the play. However, the success of the play

among audiences suggested that Brustein underestimated the desire for such escapism at a time when America was oversaturated in social issues.

Clive Barnes' review for *The New York Times* raised similar ideas to that of Brustein. The comparison to Ibsen was once again drawn, yet Barnes also found the architecture of *The Price* (1968) problematic, identifying the details as 'extraordinarily clumsy.' 'Miller's confrontation is too rigged, too pat. We are asked to believe too much, and the characters are paper-thin. Even the motivation of the story is flimsy, and will bear little surveillance' (Barnes, Feb. 8, 1968, 37, Reviews).

Barnes' review revolved around the distinction between plays as entertainment and plays as serious pieces. According to his categorisation, *The Price* (1968) failed as the latter type on account of its inability to contribute significantly to the theatrical domain in terms of form or content. In comparison to the plays of the alternative theatre, *The Price* (1968) appeared verbose in nature. Barnes concurred with Brustein that the 'action has ended before the play starts,' and concluded that this rendered the piece a 'psychological quadrille' (Barnes, Feb. 8, 1968, 37, Reviews). Barnes also failed to perceive that the importance of the play was rooted in the realisation of the impact of the past.

Although Barnes relegated *The Price* (1968) to a lesser form of theatre, he nonetheless commended the play for its success within this category: 'At its own level

of psychological problem drama it is indeed a far better than average example of the genre.' He described *The Price* (1968) as 'superbly, even flamboyantly, theatrical,' and believed that it deserved 'a long and profitable run' on account of its power to move its audience (Barnes, Feb. 8, 1968, 37, Reviews).

Barnes ultimately deemed *The Price* (1968) 'one of the most engrossing and entertaining plays that Miller has ever written,' yet the capacity of a play to entertain was a trivial concern at that time. Barnes may have appreciated *The Price* (1968) as 'an extraordinarily diverting show,' yet emphasised 'that is itself of less than first importance.' Although Barnes did not attack the relevancy of *The Price* (1968) in the forthright manner of Brustein, he believed that it offered the audience little by way of identification. Unlike Brustein however, Barnes astutely predicted that the element of diversion that *The Price* (1968) offered would render it popular with the public (Barnes, Feb. 8, 1968, 37, Reviews).

In the closing comments of his review, Barnes significantly alluded to the weight of expectation that 'the label of Arthur Miller' conferred on a play. Conceding to the inevitable comparison to *Death of a Salesman* (1949), Barnes concluded that *The Price* (1968) failed to eclipse the talents epitomised in Miller's earlier work: 'regrettably - or so it seems to me - the author of "Death of a Salesman" is still waiting in the wings, unfulfilled.' He accordingly attested that *The Price* (1968) would disappoint if a play paralleling *Death of a Salesman* (1949) was expected (Barnes, Feb. 8, 1968, 37, Reviews).

The anonymous review of *The Price* (1968) that appeared in *Time* magazine was less than favourable. The tone of the succinct review was established from the outset as the opening lines described the play as 'slack, jangled and flat' (Feb. 16, 1968, Reviews). The review almost uniformly echoed the comments of Brustein and Barnes as certain aspects of the play appeared to leave themselves open to disparagement.

Time deemed *The Price* (1968) a 'museum piece,' 'vintage 1930s' in 'form, substance and attitude.' Once again any greater purpose behind the play's retrospective orientation was overlooked. In opposition to Brustein, the reviewer believed that the subject matter of the play was less troubling than its style. Indeed, the *Time* reviewer conceded that the ideas of *The Price* (1968) were 'challenging enough,' but believed that they were sacrificed by Miller's heavy handed style: '...Miller has failed to give them enough dramatic substance, substituting instead a logjam of self-justifying tirades' (Feb. 16, 1968, Reviews).

The review equally criticised the play for choosing to 'describe' the action rather than 'dramatise' it. According to the author of the piece, this greatly reduced the emotional impact of the play. It was believed that Miller could have avoided this through mirroring the flashback technique of *Death of a Salesman* (1949). However, elsewhere in the review, Miller was criticised for the similarity of *The Price* (1968) to earlier Miller plays: 'the central situation – the sibling rivalry of two brothers and their relationship to their father – somewhat resembles Miller's earlier successes, *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*' (Feb. 16, 1968, Reviews).

Irving Wardle, drama critic for *The Times*, reviewed both the New York production and the subsequent London run in 1969. Wardle made reference to the 'blood-ties' (Wardle, Feb. 8, 1968, 7, Reviews) between *The Price* (1968) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949) in both, favourably deeming *The Price* (1968) 'a worthy companion piece stamped with the author's inquisitorial concentration and sinewy powers of debate' (Wardle, Mar. 5, 1969, 14, Reviews). He also labelled *The Price* (1968) 'Miller's most Ibsenite work to date' (Wardle, Feb. 8, 1968, 7; Mar. 5, 1969, 14, Reviews). Wardle's 1969 review was a virtual carbon copy of the original and commended Miller's 'richly detailed portrait of the past' for its creation of 'a dialogue between the two American ethics of family loyalty and worldly success' (Wardle, Feb. 8, 1968, 7; Mar. 5, 1969, 14, Reviews).

Wardle's review of the first London production of *The Price* (1968) at the Duke of York Theatre in March 1969 curiously omitted comments that featured in his initial review of the American premiere. In his remarks on the New York production, Wardle alluded to the idea that the play would be 'liable to misinterpretation by a non-American observer' (Wardle, Feb. 8, 1968, 7, Reviews). He believed that the play contained intrinsically American concerns and ideas that would be too esoteric for outside audiences: '...in Mr. Miller's haunted attic with its ghostly progenitor still ruling the roost from a centre-stage armchair, are things that lie too deep in the American grain for me' (Wardle, Feb. 8, 1968, 7, Reviews). This idea was rendered invalid by the later overwhelming success of the play in London. The basic operating framework of *The Price* (1968) mirrored that of *Death of a Salesman* (1949), which had achieved unprecedented success when it premiered in Beijing in 1983. This

acclaimed production highlighted the success of the format outside the American context. The family conflict on which both plays were built embodies a universalism that guaranteed their successful translation across different cultures. It appears that Wardle recognised the universal quality of the play on reflection, for his review of the London production is strangely depleted of this concern. The only allusion to the specificity of the play's relevance is in his opening remarks: 'Leaving Western civilisation to fend for itself, Miller has returned to his native territory of American family life...' (Wardle, Mar. 5, 1969, 14, Reviews).

The idea of the influence of the past on the present was not broaching new territory, but was understood as a legitimate concern for modern drama in Britain. Accordingly, the question of contemporary relevance was not an essential component of Wardle's review as other concerns assumed precedence. Indeed, neither of his reviews posed any concern with the relevance of the play to current events in America or elsewhere.

Penelope Gilliatt of *The Observer* also reviewed the New York production positively. Deeming the play a 'beautifully intelligent new play' (Bigsby, 1988, 45), Gilliatt commented that *The Price* (1968) stood in firm opposition to the other reigning plays on Broadway. According to Gilliatt, the preoccupation with the past was:

...obdurately at odds with anything else in the New York theatre, where the expression of a cool and kinless ethic about writing off last week's bungle as swiftly and indifferently as possible, seems to be a modish obligation that is equally binding on Broadway or off it. (Bigsby, 1988, 45)

She described *The Price* (1968) as 'marvellously written, desperate, and sometimes very funny' (Bigsby, 1988, 46), yet her estimations of the play's larger impact were somewhat overblown. In spite of its popularity, *The Price* (1968) never attained the notoriety of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) whereby its lines equally remained 'in the public consciousness' (Bigsby, 1988, 46). Her review appeared as a defence of Miller by highlighting the strengths of his overall theatrical approach. Gilliatt also came closest to identifying the significance of the play to the situation in Vietnam:

No one can write more harrowingly than Arthur Miller of a man's fanatic clutch on his self-assigned part. One of the energizing things about *The Price*, like all Miller's work, is his insistence in a very determinist society that we are the authors of our lives. (Bigsby, 1988, 46)

In spite of any other disparagement, critics on both sides of the Atlantic were unanimous in their estimations of the character of Gregory Solomon. Miller's staunchest critic, Robert Brustein, praised Miller's comic creation as 'one of the most effective characters ever devised by this author' (Brustein, 1969, 105). Barnes of *The New York Times* described the antique dealer as 'always amusing' (Barnes, Feb. 8, 1968, 37, Reviews), while *Time* magazine deemed him 'a kind of pickle-barrel philosopher...welcome for comic relief' (Feb. 16, 1968, Reviews). Irving Wardle believed Solomon to be 'a marvellously imagined creature: pitched midway between wisdom and comic relief...' (Wardle, Feb. 8, 1968, 7; Mar. 5, 1969, 14, Reviews).

However, reviewers disputed the place of such a character in such a play. The perceived appropriateness of his portrait was contingent with how individual critics classified *The Price* (1968). In writing of his experience of New York theatre as an

English critic, Irving Wardle used the term 'Broadway's theatrical straitjacket' to describe the American disposition toward a rigid categorisation of plays into 'musicals, comedies, and serious plays' (Wardle, Feb. 21, 1968, Internet). Brustein classified *The Price* (1968) as a failed serious play and so a comedic character such as Solomon was deemed 'of only tangential importance' (Brustein, 1969, 105). Clive Barnes understood the play as a piece of entertainment and he accordingly believed that Solomon's wit was 'always apt' (Barnes, Feb. 8, 1968, 37, Reviews). This strict division was absent in British criticism, as comedy and high seriousness were allowed to coexist. As a result, Solomon was viewed as a well-integrated and 'effortlessly commanding' character in the play (Wardle, Feb. 8, 1968, 7; Mar. 5, 1969, 14). Disputed or otherwise, the comedic nature of Solomon's character meant that the significance of his character and his underlying purpose were largely overlooked. No critic in America or Britain alluded to the overall importance of his speeches in relation to the play's theme of denial.

The majority of American critics maintained that their perception of *The Price* (1968) as 'divorced from the concerns of today' (Calta, Mar. 5, 1968, 32, Internet) was the source of their condemnation of the play. As aforementioned, the seriousness of this perceived oversight was exacerbated by virtue of Miller's outspoken work as an advocate for civil rights and opposition to the Vietnam War. An overt and unrestrained response to the current reality was expected of *The Price* (1968). As Miller failed to adopt a direct approach, it was assumed that the play was devoid of cultural significance. The reception of *The Price* (1968) thus conformed to Hans Robert Jauss's theory of the 'horizon of expectations.' Jauss stated that a series of

assumptions were established in relation to an author by virtue of patterns and trends evidenced in previous works (Newton, 1997, 191). In the case of Arthur Miller, his reputation as a moralist and his commitment to socio-political issues meant that it was anticipated that *The Price* (1968) would directly confront the contemporary situation.

Miller's frank response to the criticism that the play was irrelevant served to further antagonise American critics. In *The New York Times*, he claimed that his personal commitment to 'certain ideals' seemed to convey an expectation that he should be 'a journalist' in the theatre (qtd. in Calta, Mar. 5, 1968, 32, Internet). He contended that *The Price* (1968) was 'right down the middle of our times,' and that the confusion otherwise was the result of his refusal to supply 'the tags for the simple-minded to latch on' (qtd. in Calta, Mar. 5, 1968, 32, Internet). He staunchly affirmed that he had addressed the present political and cultural moment in the play.

Miller's defence that *The Price* (1968) was a reaction to both Vietnam and the experimental movement was perceived as an elaborate act of self-justification prompted by the harsh criticism that the play received. Indeed, the idea that he had produced a play devoid of significance in a time of turmoil and the concomitant irresponsibility that this inferred would not have sat well with the playwright. However, *The Price* (1968) was as equally engaged with the current environment as the works of the experimental theatre. The theme of denial in the play reflected the societal denial toward the reality of the war in Vietnam. In addition, the resonance of the play to the political landscape was expressed in what Miller termed its

'architecture of sacrifice' (Roudane, 1987, 316). The values of the father represented the ideas that fuelled the War, ideas that were no longer fully supported or understood. Through the character of Victor, the human sacrifices of Vietnam were shown to be unrecognised, while Walter represented the hollowness of the victories that were claimed to being won.

The true reason that the relevance of the play failed to be realised was fundamentally reducible to cultural factors. The style of the play was in fact the decisive issue, for it distracted from the pertinence of the play. In comparison to the contemporariness of the plays of the experimental movement, the style appeared retrograde to American critics. In spite of the indebtedness of the movement to the European context, the 1960s was one of the rare periods in which American experimental drama superseded European theatre in terms of innovation (Wilmeth, 2006, 249-50). As a result, it seems that the reaction to *The Price* (1968) was rooted in the fact that the project of American theatre critics during this time was invested in ensuring that this upper hand was maintained. Running counter to the advancement of the experimental theatre movement in terms of style, *The Price* (1968) could therefore only incite their opprobrium.

The Price (1968) expressed Miller's aesthetic aversion to the transient forms of the experimental works. However, critics failed to consider this idea, and instead regarded the play as evidence of Miller's detachment from the evolution of the American theatre. It seems most likely that Miller was also reacting against the fact

that the forms of the experimental theatre largely undermined the importance of the playwright. In the plays of the alternative movement, the role of the playwright was diminished. The lack of emphasis on the ultimate product (Kostelanetz, 1970, 9) also appeared to reduce the enduring value of the dramatic text. Following the pseudo-censorship of the 1950s that had prevented the portrayal of social and political issues on the stage, Miller welcomed the heightened emphasis on free expression in the 1960s. However, he disapproved of the forms that the experimental theatre was employing to address the significant issues of the age. He believed that the dominant styles of the period trivialised the profundity of the War by distracting audiences rather than enlightening them.

The fact that the action of the play has occurred before it begins was a deliberate strategy by the playwright. As alluded to in the previous chapter, Miller had claimed that by the 1960s, 'we were already *in* the third act' (Miller, 1999, 548). The circular and ultimately futile conversing that dominates *The Price* (1968) directly reflected Miller's belief that the experimental theatre of the 1960s was ineffectual.

The style of *The Price* (1968) expressed Miller's commitment to the enduring tradition of theatre at a time when traditional values were under attack. The historical context of the play was antagonistic to the prevailing cultural appeal for contemporariness. However, *The Price* (1968) reflected the fact that the link that Miller aimed to draw between the private and the public was meant to be inferred and not overtly drawn. It seems possible that this was a deliberate strategy in the light of

the criticism that both *After the Fall* (1964) and *Incident at Vichy* (1965) had incited for the blunt and crude nature of their representations. Miller's recourse to the allegorical form to probe 'the grey areas of an American collective unconscious' (Banfield in Bloom, 1995, 83) was not a departure for the playwright.

Employing his traditional familial scenario, it is possible to understand *The Price* (1968) as a deliberate ploy by Miller. Given the success of his more conventional family plays, Miller perhaps viewed *The Price* (1968) as an opportunity to lessen the damage that his reputation had suffered in the preceding decade. However, *The Price* (1968) was heavily criticised for repeating the framework of earlier plays. Although there is an undoubtable parallel, Miller was not merely recycling material devoid of relevance. The orientation of the subject matter of *The Price* (1968) does differ from the earlier plays, and is significant in its indirect exposition of the generation gap that epitomised the 1960s.

On account of its ancillary portrayal of a father-son dynamic, it was inevitable that the play invited comparison to *Death of a Salesman* (1949). Although *The Price* (1968) lacks the stature of *Death of a Salesman* (1949), it is nonetheless well constructed and shares the emotional intensity that characterised earlier Miller plays. However, the perceived irrelevance of the play meant that the effectiveness of the Ibsenite realism of the play was largely overlooked. *The Price* (1968) is significant in Miller's oeuvre in illustrating the development and evolution in Miller's ideas on father-son conflict. The return to the father-son framework of his earlier plays suggests that *The Price*

(1968) was in part an expression of Miller's private need to excise his own past inspired by the recent death of his father. The shift in focus to fraternal conflict added a new dimension to the playwright's preoccupation with exploring notions of masculinity inherent in his previous works. Furthermore, the play expresses Miller's growing fixation with the mechanics of memory and denial.

The landmark status of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) in American theatre history established a weight of expectation that proved damaging to the reception of Miller's later plays in America. He was expected to continually reproduce plays of its calibre, and the appearance of each subsequent play in America was measured against the unrealistic standards that it had established. Given the innovative nature of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and *After the Fall* (1964), and the pioneering experimentation that was pervading the theatre at the time, it was inevitable that Miller's conservative output met disapproval.

Miller deliberately chose a form that would offer no comfort through abstraction. For the same reason, he left the play ultimately unresolved. Although this proved problematic to critics, Miller personally believed that the lack of resolution rendered the play popular with audiences. He claimed that the audience were 'grateful' (Roudane, 1987, 329) for the lack of condescension in his decision not to let the audience 'off the hook' (Roudane, 1987, 329). Paradoxically, the form of *The Price* (1968) was less alienating than some of the output of the alternative theatre.

Although *The Price* (1968) did not damage Miller's reputation further, it did cause a reiteration of the question of Miller's place in the theatre. His previous two plays had incited much controversy, and *The Price* (1968) failed to make an impression on the theatrical domain. Furthermore, critics were questioning what they perceived as a political vacuity in his plays. His outspoken work as an activist only served to accentuate the critical assault. Shifts in the political and cultural climate in America were swift. Within a fifteen-year period, Miller had moved from defending himself from attacks on the perceived political context of his plays to countering assaults on the lack of political engagement in his work. However, in spite of opprobrium, *The Price* (1968) proved to be one of Miller's most popular plays on both sides of the Atlantic. The reception of *The Price* (1968) thus highlighted what was becoming an ever-increasing gap between critics and the audience.

Chapter Four: *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) as a self-reflexive analysis and meditation on the status of the writer in America

The Price (1968) was followed by *The Creation of the World and Other Business*, a satiric take on Genesis in 1972. The play cemented the more overt preoccupation and engagement with metaphysical concerns that characterised Miller's later plays. The production of the play was fraught, and the play was savaged by the critical media when it premiered at the Shubert Theatre in New York. However, Miller was far from disheartened by the fact that the play received only 20 performances before being closed. He claimed that the play was better than *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and indeed the best play that he had ever written (Bigsby, 2006, 292). He went on to adapt the play into the musical *Up from Paradise* in 1974. Appearing for a short run at the University of Michigan, the musical received even worse notices.

In 1969, Miller's four year term as International President of PEN came to a close. His work for PEN in campaigning for the freedom of dissident writers and the abolition of censorship had a seminal effect on his personal life and also his career. His devotion to PEN had been guaranteed by his empathetic identification with the plight of the writers, following his experience before HUAC and the frequent censorship of his work in his own nation over a number of decades. He remained dedicated to these causes until his death, and his position ensured the censorship and

prohibition of his works in many countries. In 1969, after a trip to Russia where he met Vaclav Havel, Miller published a book of reportage with his wife Inge Morath. *In Russia* was heavily critical of Soviet suppression and led to his work being banned in Soviet states (Abbotson, 2007, 495).

On the surface, the appearance of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* in 1977 seemed a natural progression of Miller's involvement with such issues. However, the play also addressed the socio-political climate in America at the time by appearing to comment on the Watergate saga. In 1974, Miller had two articles published that predated the preoccupations that assumed precedence in *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977). The first of the pair was published in *Esquire*. 'What's Wrong with This Picture?' was a discussion of the political quagmire of the Soviet Union and its oppressive treatment of writers. The piece was inspired by a greeting card picture of two fully clothed adults waist high in stagnant water, symbolising their status as writers within their native homeland of Czechoslovakia. The second article, 'The Limited Hang-Out,' was a personal meditation on the Watergate scandal (Miller, 2000, 139-54, *Echoes*). Together the articles expressed Miller's perception of life as theatre, highlighting the power of the Soviet Union to reproduce fiction as truth and the rise of surveillance culture in America. The link between the two articles is significant, for it forms the basis of Miller's argument in *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977).

Focusing on a group of writers entrapped in a cycle of Soviet suppression, *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) was understood as a further step away from American

concerns by the playwright. Miller's work for PEN was perceived as an expression of his lack of interest in American affairs. However, the play was not an esoteric discussion and held much relevance to America. The play both borrowed from and lent itself to the reigning post-Watergate socio-political environment, and the wider cultural experience in America. In spite of this, no American critic identified a link between the ideological censorship of the Soviet state and the current trend of commercial censorship on Broadway. Although theatre critics greatly lamented the lack of originality on the American stage at the time, they failed to realise the pertinence of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977).

In terms of theatre in America, the 1970s were a response to the unremitting demand for contemporariness of the previous decade. The theatre experienced a 'nostalgia boom' (Brustein, 1980, 96), and the preference for remakes meant that little new material made it to Broadway. However, the popularity of plays by Neil Simon (*The Gingerbread Lady*, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *The Sunshine Boys*) and Sam Shepard (*The Tooth of Crime*, *The Curse of the Starving Class*) continued, and the early years of the decade saw the introduction of David Rabe (*The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel*, *Sticks and Bones*) to Broadway. The 1970s also saw the emergence of David Mamet beginning with the one-act play *Duck Variations* in 1972. In the same year that *The Archbishop's Ceiling* emerged in 1977, Mamet's *The Water Engine* and *American Buffalo* received productions. Musicals retained their popularity and appeared to most successfully confront the continuing division of the audience along gender, racial, and class lines. The most iconic musicals of the decade included Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar* in 1971 and Jim Jacob and Warren

Casey's *Grease* in 1972. The experimental theatre movement that had come to prominence in the 1960s also continued to dominate, with a rise in performance art and feminist pieces. The emphasis further shifted toward the self as both 'subject and source' (Wilmeth, 2006, 145), and autobiographical performance pieces were common (Wilmeth, 2006, 147). Most significantly to *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), the theatre began to explore 'the intersection of life and art' (Wilmeth, 2006, 149).

The Archbishop's Ceiling (1977) was disparaged as irrelevant when it premiered in Washington in April 1977. The play only received 30 performances (Abbotson, 2007, 71), and commanded little attention from the major national newspapers. Miller assumed primary responsibility for the fate of the play, claiming that he had ignored his instincts in being persuaded to revise the script. It was felt that American audiences would struggle with the enigmatic nature of the play. However, his subsequent attempt to remove the ambiguity from the script resulted in a play that was heavily overstated and disproportioned. The initial reception of the play and the dominant perception that it was divorced from American concerns ensured that the play has yet to receive a major production on a New York stage.

The failure of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) highlighted the importance of maintaining a sense of uncertainty in the play, and Miller returned to his original version for subsequent productions. The ensuing analysis of the play is based on this original and unrevised version which Miller deemed the more authoritative. In this

version, Miller eradicated a character that he had been coerced to include for the purposes of clarification. He also deleted the awkward scene changes that had served to undermine the ambiguity of the play. While the version that premiered before American audiences in 1977 differed significantly from the original, it nonetheless failed to alter the base character sketches on which the following analysis is based.

The Archbishop's Ceiling (1977) has been described as a significant departure (Sofer in Brater, 2005, 94, *Theater and Culture*) for Miller, not the least for being only his second play to be set outside America. The play sees him abandon his traditional domain of the family, and move towards a more overt metaphysical and abstract dimension. The importance of the play to his oeuvre has predominantly been assigned on the basis of this latter orientation. However, the concerns of the play are clearly the development of earlier themes that surfaced in *After the Fall* (1964) and that received more cogent expression in *The Creation of the World and Other Business* (1972). Christopher Bigsby claims that the only difference between *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) and his earlier works was that 'the urgency was now more apparent, the dislocations more threatening, the mood more apocalyptic, the moral certainties under greater pressure' (Miller, 2000, 180).

Although the astute scholarship on the play's metaphysics by critics such as Bigsby, Mason, and Sofer, is noteworthy, the true extent of the play's significance continues to be overlooked. The following analysis thus seeks to challenge the misconception of the play as slight, and assert its importance within his oeuvre. *The Archbishop's*

Ceiling (1977) may prove to be Miller's most important play in terms of being a personal examination of his status and place as an artist in America. The play is essentially the dialogue of a writer with himself, and with his country. Through the guises of the various characters Miller ponders on the ethics of writing, and the sometime fraught relationship between writer and state. The play is indeed a culmination of his work with PEN, but not in the way that it is traditionally conceived. His time with the association incited a private introspection on his own status as a playwright. Combined with the metatheatrical aspect which has already received critical attention, the play offers a uniquely self-reflexive and contemplative insight into the architecture of his craft.

By 1977, the disparity in the critical reception of Miller's plays in America and Europe could no longer be ignored. The issue had become a matter of public debate and in addition to the increasingly disparaging reviews of his plays, Miller was subjected to the humiliation of having his value as a playwright debated in the national media. Accordingly, the metaphysical quandary that the play raises over whether anybody is listening is an expression of the private dilemma of Miller as an artist in America. The play confronts his existential crisis as to his place in his country of nationality, whilst simultaneously addressing his critics.

In *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), the status of objective reality is undermined, and the real remains indeterminate. The play differs from earlier Miller works in which the real was ultimately triumphant, as the veil of illusion was always stripped away in

the resolution. *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) is set in an undisclosed capital of Europe that is generally understood to be modelled on Prague. Throughout the play the characters address the ceiling of the title, uncertain as to whether it is bugged by the government. In the version of the play that appeared in America in 1977, the presence of the bug was not ambiguous. Miller had added heavy-handed scene changes to indicate the necessity for characters to meet elsewhere to evade the bug (Abbotson, 2007, 67). This production also included the character of Maya's ex-husband. As Susan Abbotson describes, Martin was:

...almost certainly a government agent and plays the role of a listener. He has access to Sigmund's phone conversations and may, if they do exist, control the ceiling microphones. He manipulates the action through a series of well-timed phone calls that suggest that someone is listening and keeping tabs. (Abbotson, 2007, 73)

The required sense of ambivalence remains in the original, and the characters are thus suspended in a level of unreality necessitated by the ceiling and the totemic significance that it embodies. The ambiguity of the bug turns the characters into actors who perform before it in order to give the impression of being docile citizens. In accordance with this, authenticity on any level is difficult to decipher and interaction becomes suffused with suspicion and paranoia. The fact that the characters have learned to mutate their identities in line with governmental decree means that it is difficult to discern the truth in their actions. Furthermore, the play raises the question of whether a true self can any longer be personally identified when a multiplicity of selves is necessitated by society. As Michel Foucault asserted, 'It is true that a person can play many rôles and subjectively be convinced that he is "he" in each rôle' (1980, 177, *Power/Knowledge*). One of the many paradoxes that the regime

invites is that the only reality of the characters is that which is projected on them. In this respect, the characters also appear similar in kind to those behind Plato's allegory of 'The Cave' (1998).

In many ways the situation of the play echoes Foucault's analysis of Bentham's Panopticon. The regime corresponds to Bentham's decree that power should operate on the basis of a dual principle. According to his model, power should be both visible and unverifiable (Foucault, 1979, 201): 'The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen' (Foucault, 1979, 201-02). The peripheric ring of the Panopticon represents those oppressed by the regime, while the central tower symbolises the faceless form of power. The main purpose of the Panopticon is to ensure that the people imprisoned within it are conscious of the fact that they may be being watched at any time. This culture of surveillance guarantees conformity. *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) thus also plays on Sartre's phenomenological analysis of 'the gaze' whereby behaviour becomes altered when one is aware of being monitored (1984).

Jean Baudrillard's theory on simulation provides interesting insight into *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977). According to *Simulacra and Simulation*, man lives in a simulated version of reality, for the true reality has in fact disappeared. Man creates 'simulacra' or signs and symbols that appropriate reality to make it personally meaningful. However, the gradual reliance on these simulacra means that the reality

on which they were based disappears over time. Accordingly, the distinction between reality and its representation can no longer be ascertained (1994). In the case of the characters of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), the characters simulate reality through their docile façade. However, they have become so dependent on this façade to negotiate their lives within the regime that they can no longer ascertain their true selves.

The following analysis of the play suggests that each character within the play stands as a projection of Miller at various junctures of his career to that point. The multiple identities imposed on the characters by the regime recalled the various labels that were attributed to Miller by critics. In addition to his reputation as politically suspect following his experience with the House Un-American Activities Committee, Miller had been identified as a moralist, a traditionalist, and a hypocrite since the outset of his career. The play thus explores the effects of such identities on the playwright.

Adrian is a stereotypical depiction of an outsider to the regime, condescending and self-congratulating. On his arrival, he hastens to highlight the fact that he has previously attacked the government in an American newspaper. It is unclear whether this is in anticipation of some form of praise for his courage or merely a means to express that his commitment transcends merely creative interests. He purports to have left a symposium in revulsion of its descent into patronising rhetoric. However, he is seemingly unaware that his proclamations are equally ill informed and pompous.

Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of Adrian's presence is that he believes that he understands the country. He purports that resistance is futile, and yet later compromises all of the characters in forcing them to denounce the government in the presence of the bug. While he recognises the dilemmas of everyday life in an oppressed country, he remains wholly ignorant as to how to negotiate living in this environment.

ADRIAN (*stands; looks around*).... Is it always like a performance? Like we're quoting ourselves? (2000, 108)

There is a smugness in Adrian as he affirms that he will publicise the fact that Sigmund's manuscript has been confiscated if it is not returned. However, his gesture seems more the product of self-serving motivations than a genuine attempt at comradeship. It appears that Adrian is primarily interested in the acclaim that would accompany 'saving' a subversive writer. Furthermore, his eagerness to assist Sigmund is a means to vindicate himself for publishing an exploitative novel about his friends.

Resistance to the government by Adrian is merely symbolic, for his act of defiance is in no way personally destructive. There is a discernable loftiness in Adrian's repeated comments that such a situation would not be permitted in America. In the light of the Watergate scandal, his claims are jarringly ironic. He continually pleads with Sigmund to retreat into exile, but his rationale reveals the depth of his misunderstanding of the culture.

ADRIAN. I don't understand the point anymore.

SIGMUND. You would also if it was your country.

ADRIAN. I doubt it. I would protect my talent. (2000, 117-18)

On cursory analysis Adrian appears to be Miller's namesake, in that both were outsiders attempting to penetrate a hostile alien environment. Indeed it is easy to understand Adrian's character as representing the challenge that confronted Miller as President of PEN. Through the oblivious nature of Adrian, Miller raises some obvious concerns in relation to the ethics of outsider intervention in such situations. A sense of condescension and righteousness is often perceived in the moral indignation of outsiders. The judgement that this implies incites resentment from within. Furthermore, this intervention carries little personal cost as they do not live under the rule of the government in whose eyes they are then compromised. Miller's work may have been banned in Soviet states on account of his outspoken comments, but his survival was never threatened in the same way as its own dissident writers. As a result, many deduce that external involvement is solely motivated by a desire for international recognition as an altruistic campaigner. However, the achievements of Miller's term as International President of PEN proved that successful cooperation was possible. He believed that an open acknowledgement of outsider ignorance to idiosyncratic internal politics was the base requirement. As *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) attested, any claim to superiority or the right to judgement by another nation was specious.

The character of Adrian presented Miller with numerous opportunities to comment on both the self-serving aspect of a writer's nature, and the myriad of ethical issues concomitant with the profession. In spite of Adrian's pledges to the honourable nature of his motivations, his interests are indeed self-gratifying. His intention to publish a novel about the country and about his friends raised an ethical conundrum that

plagued Miller throughout his career. Miller alternately vehemently denied and casually disregarded suggestions of the biographical undertones of his own plays. However, following the scandal surrounding *After the Fall* (1964) the ethics of including friends and family in his fiction became an issue that he could no longer evade either publically or privately. His natural public reticence on the topic failed to quench media speculation, and there were numerous suggestions that family members were indeed offended by some of his exploitative portrayals.

Although the character of Maya possesses no obvious affinity to Miller, her portrait epitomises the personal cost of self-censorship imposed on writers by political powers and cultural dictates. By attempting and pretending to disengage from the current political environment, her true self is compromised. Her attempts to dissociate from politics leave her spiritually unfulfilled, and result in a double identity. Her frustration at the necessary repression of her true instincts results in a fractured consciousness that incites her alcohol abuse.

Once an active force of resistance to the regime, she has gradually become accommodated to power. A sense of hopelessness pervades her character, accentuated by her seemingly forced defence of the state. Maya's career as a playwright began by writing subversive radio plays. She purports to have since become disillusioned with resistance, and her supposed resignation to the regime sees her meekly defend its injustices. However, there is a deep cynicism at the heart of Maya, and it soon becomes less certain that she is indeed a woman reformed.

Maya asserts that the writers are responsible for the hostility that they incite in the government. She claims that the decision to broach politically antagonistic ideas is a product of willed and informed choice. She condescendingly affirms that writers should concern themselves only with the act of writing and divorce themselves from political engagement. She dismisses Adrian's indignation at the open intimidation of subversive writers.

MAYA. But Sigmund knows that will happen if he walks about with a famous American writer.

ADRIAN. You're not justifying it...?

MAYA. I have not been appointed to justify or condemn anything. (*She laughs.*) And neither has Sigmund. He is an artist, a very great writer, and that is what he should be doing...

ADRIAN. You mean it's perfectly all right for two cops to be...

MAYA. But that is their *business*. But it is not Sigmund's business to be taunting the government. (2000, 103-04)

Maya advocates that the two realms of the political and the artistic should remain separate, simultaneously refuting any insinuation that she herself was once a political playwright. Indeed Sigmund incites her anger so vehemently as she believes that he chooses to provoke the government. It is for the same reason that she believes that Marcus was 'naïve' (2000, 100) to spend six years in prison. However, in spite of her protestations that writers should not embroil themselves in political concerns, she desperately attempts to save a manuscript that she knows to be politically inflammatory.

MAYA. ...it will endure a thousand years...I have read it. It is all we ever lived. They must not, must not touch it. Whatever humiliation, whatever is necessary for this book, yes. More than he himself, more than any human being – this book they cannot harm. (2000, 137)

Maya's interest in the preservation of a culture that is being suppressed results in a myriad of complexities. She is consistently equivocal, retracting her affirmations in relation to the bug in the same instant that she states them. As Jeffrey Mason confirms, it is Maya's hyperawareness that produces her calculated ambivalence. She is:

...alienated from her government, so she speaks of it in the third person, referring to the faceless, nameless people who move within it, but she also contradicts herself, suggesting that she is too far removed to know the government's attitude, and all the while deliberately muddling her own perspective to evade the reproach of those who might be listening through the microphones. (Mason, 2008, 130)

Maya raises an interesting idea about writers and their relationship with the status concomitant with success. She instantly recognises the selfish motives of Adrian and realises that his attempts to penetrate the situation are primarily a means to attain power for himself.

MAYA. I have known intimately so many writers; they all write books condemning people who wish to be successful, and praised, and desire some power in life. But I have never met one writer who did not wish to be praised, and successful...*(She is smiling.)*...and even powerful. (2000, 97)

It is possible to interpret this as a personal address by Miller to his American critics in particular. By emphasising the base commonality of the drive to succeed in all writers, he attacks the hypocrisy of critics who similarly use their reviews to aggrandize their own careers.

Marcus is as similarly accommodated to power as Maya, but the true operating logic behind this remains no less enigmatic. As the play opens, Marcus is in London

promoting the publication of his latest novel. Given the stringency of the regime, the fact that the novel has been a success in his homeland insinuates that it is favourable to the government. This idea that Marcus is loyal to the regime is further augmented by the rumour that he uses his home to compromise writers with the government. However, Marcus' position becomes more difficult to define as it is revealed that he has spent six years imprisoned for treason. Rather than cementing his position as a reformer, it seems to suggest that he has merely become a pragmatist. His return heralds more confusion, and as the play evolves the enigma surrounding his identity deepens. Maya claims that Marcus generated the fiction of his status as an agent for the government to compensate for his personal despair at the loss of his creativity. However, while outwardly professing that this work is inspired by noble intentions, Maya remains suspicious.

MAYA. I think it was only to make himself interesting – he can't write anymore; it left him...(in anguish)...it left him! (2000, 161)

In many ways the fate of Marcus has numerous points of identification with Miller. The work of both men was antagonistic to the prevailing cultural norm as decreed by the government and both the character and his real life counterpart were impeached for treason. Miller's appearance before HUAC equally had a seminal effect on him, and instilled in him a deep-seated antipathy toward injustice. This passionately fuelled his advocacy work for the rights of the writer, both as International President of PEN and later. However, Miller differed from the fictional character of Marcus in that he was unwilling to accommodate to the dictates of any government in the pursuit of this end. With the dilemma facing Sigmund, suspicion becomes less a question of whether Marcus is a government agent. The question instead becomes a matter of whether he

is an agent merely to suit his own purposes or to facilitate the emancipation of other writers.

Over the course of his imprisonment, it appears that Marcus was not reformed in the conventional sense but rather became disillusioned with the effectiveness of his method of subversion. Although his writing rendered him popular with the public, it ultimately led to his internment. His time incarcerated failed to secure his status as a national cultural icon and instead saw him erased from the public mindset. His act of defiance transcended to be merely self-defeating as it failed to be representative of a larger cultural statement. Accordingly, his present work for the government boosting cultural relations with other nations may merely be a means to secure special private privileges.

The enigmatic nature of Marcus' true identity incites suspicion as to his intentions in relation to Sigmund. On Adrian's request that Marcus speak in the presence of the bug, Marcus resentfully reveals that the government are preparing a trial to charge Sigmund with calumny. Given Sigmund's notoriety, Marcus believes that the outcome will affect every writer in the state. He claims that an act of resistance on Sigmund's part would force the government to retreat back to the days of political trials. Accordingly, he concludes that the state necessitates Sigmund's exile. He entreats Sigmund to divorce his personal feelings from his decision to leave, for the greater good of the country.

MARCUS. I am interested in seeing that this country does not fall back into darkness. And if he must sacrifice something for that, I think he should. (2000, 158)

The suspicion of Sigmund and Adrian in relation to Marcus' motivations sees them employ various manipulative tactics. They believe that he is attempting to destroy Sigmund's career out of a misplaced jealousy.

SIGMUND. When I was young writer, Marcus was the most famous novelist in our country. In Stalin time, he has six years in prison. He cannot write. I was not in prison. When he has returned I am very popular, but he was forgotten. It is tragic story. (2000, 131)

However, Marcus claims that he is compelled by his own personal experience, and his inside knowledge as to the ramifications of Sigmund's decision. In a comment that has deep personal resonance, Marcus emphasises the importance of being 'of the generation that can remember. Otherwise, it's as you say – a sort of rumour that has no reality – excepting for oneself' (2000, 154).

MARCUS. It's the end of him. – I've been there. He will smash his head against the walls, and the rest of us will pay for his grandeur. (2000, 170)

Marcus resents Sigmund's insistence on remaining in the country as he regards it as evidence of Sigmund's selfishness and lack of concern for his homeland.

MARCUS. ...they refused him a visa for many years and he was terribly indignant – the right to leave was sacred to civilisation. Now he has that right and it's an insult. (2000, 173)

In comparison to the fate that he suffered at the hands of the government, he considers Sigmund's decision almost a betrayal. Consumed in bitterness at his own experience,

Marcus fails to comprehend that the options facing Sigmund are merely a different form of impingement on his sense of personal freedom.

MARCUS. You are a moral blackmailer, we have all honoured you, Sigmund, out of some misplaced sense of responsibility to our literature. Or maybe it's only our terror of vanishing altogether...We have taken all the responsibility and left you all the freedom to call us morally bankrupt. But now you're free to go, so the responsibility moves to you...We have done what was possible; now you will do what is necessary, or turn out our lights. (2000, 173)

Through the character of Marcus, Miller was offered the opportunity to explore the alternate result that his actions before HUAC could have wrought. He probes whether his later career would have differed if he had in fact been imprisoned by HUAC. The situation may not be analogous in many key respects, yet at the time of his subpoena the ultimate outcome of McCarthyism could not be predicted. Accordingly, his act of defiance could have continued to be regarded as immoral. Marcus' work for the government may be motivated by noble intentions to improve the conditions for writers in the country, but his façade of docility costs him a stable sense of self. There is an obvious fissure at the core of Marcus' personality, for his dual identity ultimately sacrifices his true self. Miller's fortified opposition to the state meant that his personal sense of integrity was never diminished.

Marcus holds an interesting resonance with Miller given the criticism that the playwright faced for divorcing the concerns of his plays from his advocacy work. The political vacuity of Marcus' work incites resentment and prompts the insinuation that his work for the government is not undertaken in the name of resistance. For Miller,

the perceived lack of political engagement in his plays led to the accusation that his plays were becoming inconsequential. Through the character of Marcus, Miller was thus raising the issue of whether the advocacy work of a writer is rendered any less legitimate by virtue of the fact that it takes place outside of their creative work. Moreover, this begged the question of whether this separation was an ethical irresponsibility on the part of the writer. The issue was yet another facet to the irresolvable conflict between art and life.

As the conscience of the nation (Sofer in Brater, 2005, 104, *Theater and Culture*), it is Sigmund who speaks most frankly about the true conditions in the state. He agrees with Adrian that the actions of the government amount to a continuous crime, and refutes any insinuation by Marcus that the quality of life there has improved. He challenges the idea that the constant surveillance and intimidation of people is an improvement on the days of the prison camps.

SIGMUND. We are some sort of characters in a poem which they are writing...
(2000, 143)

Sigmund openly addresses the fact that the state necessitates a double reality, where people must adopt an amiable position to be allowed to live in peace. Sigmund's belief recalls Foucault's assertion that people 'are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function' (Foucault, 1980, 93, *Power/Knowledge*). Sigmund concludes that the only means by which they can elude power is to lie.

SIGMUND. We must lie, it is our only freedom. To lie...gives us the feeling of hope. (2000, 155)

Sigmund accordingly affirms that the government has turned their country into a theatre, 'where no one is permitted to walk out, and everyone is obliged to applaud' (2000, 155). Echoing Adrian's earlier comments that power eviscerates appropriate emotional responses to an event, Sigmund claims that the state is a poor form of theatre, where 'our emotions have no connection with the event' (2000, 165). He thus believes that the return of his manuscript is an expression of contempt by the government.

SIGMUND. We have such good news and we are sad. (2000, 163)

On account of the ubiquitous disconnection of truth from reality, Sigmund is unable to accept Marcus' concessions as genuine. He perceives the return of his manuscript as proof that there is no personal danger in his refusal to exile. However, Sigmund is drawn to this conclusion by virtue of his deeper unwillingness to leave the country. He claims that the degree to which his work is rooted in his native country would impede his ability to continue to write in an alien environment.

SIGMUND. I am not cosmopolitan writer, I am provincial writer. I believe I must hear my language every day, I must walk in these particular streets...Is like old tree – it is difficult to moving old tree, they most probably die. (2000, 170)

This reluctance is also the expression of his vanity, for Sigmund is desperate to avoid the fate that befell Marcus. As Miller commented of his own relationship with success in *Timebends*, 'fame is the other side of loneliness, of impossible-to-resolve

contradictions – to be anonymous and at the same time not to lose one's renown' (1999, 194).

However, Sigmund's reluctance to retreat into exile is also the expression of his symbiotic reliance on the opposition of the government. As Maya claims, over time Sigmund became dependent on the censoring of his work for its validation. Known as the 'traitor to the motherland' (2000, 122), the value implicit in his novels became tied to its proclivity to provoke the distaste of the state. He is paradoxically as defined by the regime as those who serve it. The notion that he would face imprisonment if he refuses to exile is acceptable to him, for there would be an element of inevitability to it. The alternative reality of exile and the possible diminishment of his talent by his own hand is unbearable to him.

SIGMUND. How will I support this silence that I have brought on myself?
(2000, 171)

However, in a further paradox, the state equally requires figures such as Sigmund for its validation. Foucault stated that power requires resistance to confirm its strength and validate its existence. Accordingly, the government necessitates opposition in order to operate (1980, *Power/Knowledge*).

Undoubtedly, the character of Sigmund comes closest to a complete representation of Miller at that point in time. Miller and Sigmund suffered the same fate in terms of being revered abroad and denigrated at home, where their counter-cultural ideas were unwelcome. Miller's dramatisation of the internal conflict that this incites in Sigmund is indeed a representation of his own turmoil. Both the fictional novelist and the real-

life playwright were imprisoned in a paradox of symbiosis. Sigmund is unwilling to retreat into exile as he fears that he will no longer be able to write about the country that is his passion. In spite of continual disparagement of his work on native shores, Miller only set three of his plays outside America. In a similar way to Sigmund, Miller required his love for the American landscape to inspire his plays. The critiques of their countries in the works of both Miller and Sigmund were misunderstood as tantamount to treason. However, both men were motivated by a desire for their countries to maximise their sense of possibilities. Their love for their native lands was misconstrued by the media and turned into something sinister. In both instances, the criticism made in their works were confirmed and validated by the opprobrium with which they were received.

Miller frequently claimed that the artist is an outcast, for he is required to disengage himself from society in order to adequately estimate its values and faults. It is this separation that defines the worth of the work of the writer and its potential to illuminate the maladies of society for those imprisoned within it. He claimed that 'To some extent, an artist has to step to one side of what is happening, divorce himself from his role as citizen, and in that sense he becomes the enemy' (Miller, 1994, 205). Miller openly acknowledged that this perspective of the writer was naturally partisan (Miller, 1994, 205), and this reasonably accounted for the opprobrium that his commentaries on America incited.

Through *Sigmund*, Miller also questions the extent to which the writer is the property of the state. By establishing the writer as a cultural commodity, he probes the question of whether the state is thus justified in censoring or imposing restrictions on a work. Furthermore, he challenges the right that the state invokes to force a writer from his native homeland. Miller may not have been coerced into exile, but the reception of his plays in America implied that his creative home was in Europe.

The play indeed stands as Miller's most prolonged meditation on the role of the writer and the concomitant moral dilemmas. Cumulatively and separately, the characters expressed the complexity of Miller's career. In many respects each of the characters represented a form of auto-criticism as the playwright reflected on his career to date. Alongside depicting the necessity to carefully negotiate intervention, the figure of Adrian also suggested the desire for absolution for exploiting his friends and their situation in his fiction. The ethical repercussions of blending the actual with the fictive was in stark contrast to the division between art and life symbolised by Marcus and Maya. As aforementioned, *Sigmund* came closest to a depiction of the playwright at that time, and appears to signify Miller's attempt to justify his status as an American artist.

The entire play dramatises the often subliminal battle between artistic integrity and self-imposed, commercial or ideological censorship. In 1966, Miller commented that the first instinct of any writer who succeeds in the theatre is to 'know how to make 'em go with me...I mean by the time you've written your third play or so you know

which buttons to push; if you want an easy success there's no problem...' (Roudane, 1987, 107). However, he ultimately refused to be seduced by this natural impulse. Instead he chose not to compromise his sense of his own integrity by failing to criticise the flaws of American society.

In *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), Miller lamented the level of desensitisation to the ubiquitous nature of surveillance. The characters sacrifice a stable sense of self to the art of performance so that the fact that the ceiling may be bugged ironically gives meaning to their lives. As Christopher Bigsby writes, 'to believe that there is a hidden audience may be to be turned into an actor but to doubt that presence is in some way to be drained of significance' (Miller, 2000, 178). Accordingly, although the bug violates their freedom, it equally validates their existence. The play thus forges the paradox that the true terror lies not in the fact of being bugged, but in the idea that there may be no bug in the first instance. The existential crisis wrought from the notion that there is in fact no audience is one that Miller struggled with as the reception of his plays in America experienced a steep decline. The dilemma that his work was drained of significance in his native land led to his further reliance on European reception for the validation of his plays. However, as Foucault theorised, the fact of opposition to his plays in America meant that the inner truth at their heart was being recognised and denied.

The play is not only highly self-reflexive, it is also a commentary on theatre itself. In *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), Miller employs the phenomenology of theatre by

placing the audience in the position of the bug (Sofer in Brater, 2005, 104, *Theater and Culture*). This device renders the audience complicit in the action and thus reemphasises the idea that the characters are actors and that their lives amount to theatre. Although critics perceived Miller's idea that the bug theatricalises behaviour, they failed to recognise that this rendered the play an exploration into the medium of theatre itself. In his exposition of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) as a prismatic drama, Andrew Sofer claims that the play questioned the role and relevance of traditional forms in the contemporary moment: 'It is a play about how drama *itself* confronts the challenge posed by the postmodern disintegration of the self to a traditional dramaturgy built on the link between psychological motivation and individual behaviour' (Brater, 2005, 96, *Theater and Culture*).

Analysing the first production of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) is problematic for a number of reasons. The script on which the production was based was deemed fatally flawed by both the playwright and critics. However, this consensus determined the fact that the original version of the play has yet to receive a major production in America. A production of this authoritative version of the play was undertaken in Cleveland in 1984 (Bigsby, 1988, 50), yet no record of how this was received has survived. However, the fact that it failed to be optioned for the New York stage is revealing in and of itself. Aside from problems with the script, it is clear that the play's supposed distance from American concerns continues to identify *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) as irrelevant to American audiences.

The test run of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) at the Kennedy Centre's Eisenhower Theatre in Washington was the only production that the play received for almost another decade in either America or Europe. The play lasted only 30 performances, and received universally negative criticism (Abbotson, 2007, 71). Throughout the reviews of the initial production runs the insinuation that the play was staged before it was ready, and this indeed was the case.

The play was initially to be performed at a theatre in New Haven, yet was postponed as the script was unfinished. On account of this, it was felt that the rescheduled production of the play could not also be cancelled. As a result, the director and cast received the completed script only four days before the play was due to open (Coe, May 15, 1977, Internet). Reviews of the play unanimously identified the script as the cause of the problems. The subject matter of the play was seen as interesting, but it was deemed that the ideas got lost in the long-winded nature of the script.

Richard Coe's review that appeared in *The Washington Post* was representative of the critical consensus. He argued that the question of the extent to which a writer depended on his native landscape for his creativity was 'worth raising.' However, he criticised the gruelling nature of the action that he felt undermined the validity of the purpose of the play: 'But, oh how long it takes to get to the matter through the thickets of Act I exposition.' He deemed the script long-winded and significantly claimed that Miller drew too much attention and in too laborious a manner to the bug: 'By choosing bugging as a theatrical device, Miller is forced into purely technical

choices which belabor his moral concerns, taking unconscionable time.' On account of the protracted evocation of different scenes, Coe believed that the material was more appropriate for a film. He ultimately deemed the fact that the play would not make it to Broadway 'good news for New York and Miller, who can now go back to Square One' (Coe, May 2, 1977, Reviews).

The removal of ambiguity meant that the overall purpose of the play was lost. The essential complexity of the characters was eradicated and as a result, the play descended into the realm of the unintelligible. A fortnight after his initial review, Richard Coe published an article in *The Washington Post* attempting to account for the failure of the play. Coe was reluctant to wholly disparage the play and felt that there were other factors which ultimately determined its reception. He made reference to the problems surrounding the scheduled dates for the production and the accompanying financial obligations. However, in the last analysis, the script remained the dominant issue (Coe, May 15, 1977, Internet).

The play received its London premiere in its original form at the Barbican Pit in October 1986. In this final version, Miller had eliminated the character of Martin, and simplified the on-stage production by confining the action to the one setting of the former residence of the archbishop (Abbotson, 2007, 67). The sense of ambiguity that was integral to the play was restored.

Alongside seeing previous productions of the play in regional theatres in both Washington (1977) and Bristol (1985), Irving Wardle reviewed the Barbican Pit production for *The Times*. He deemed the 1977 version inferior, yet he claimed that the new script failed to address the loss of vitality in the second act. He praised the opening of the play for its realistic evocation of the 'marvellously complex atmosphere' of Eastern Europe. He credited the juxtaposition of 'explosions of terrified anger' and 'broad comedy' for accurately capturing the irony of the situation with such vitality. However, he believed that the complex balance between ambiguity and danger was compromised by the second phase of the play (Wardle, Oct. 30, 1986, Reviews).

Wardle felt that the spirit of the play was undermined by the fact that the characters spoke openly before the bug in the second act. He deemed that the play thus became merely 'a dialogue between an American innocent and two generations of East European experience.' He believed that the play became instantly Americanised and the grave reality of the situation was accordingly eroded: 'once all the figures start engaging in open dispute, the piece descends into American tribunal drama with every character coming on as a moral pugilist who always has one more thing to say, none of it conclusive' (Wardle, Oct. 30, 1986, Reviews). However, Wardle's comments appear curious for two reasons. Firstly, in order to circumvent what he terms the Americanisation of the script, Miller would have to reinstate the scene changes that were generally understood as awkward. These alterations in the setting were also considered accountable for undermining the seriousness of the play. Furthermore, his remarks were incongruous with the frame of the ethics of outsider intervention that

the play established. *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) would have been rendered infinitely more American if the complexity was undermined by assertions of moral absolutes.

Wardle identified 'how people express themselves when they are under surveillance' as the central question of the play (Wardle, Oct. 30, 1986, Reviews). However, he failed to see the wider connection between this and the playwright. In many respects, this was Miller's own dilemma as a writer. As his career evolved, his work was subject to increasingly vigorous critical scrutiny. He was thus continually faced with the decision of whether to impose censorship on himself and produce pieces that would meet critical approval, or preserve his own sense of artistic integrity.

The weekend review in *The Times* was written by John Peter who echoed his former praise for the Bristol production (qtd. in Bigsby, 1988, 51-52). In contrast to Wardle, he felt that 'the force with which Miller is able to penetrate the murky world of Eastern Europe and its dangerous crossroads of art and politics, conscience and survival' was not diminished as the play evolved. He believed that the play was imbued with moral intelligence, and lauded Miller's keen portrayal of the ethical issues that the characters as writers must personally negotiate (Peter, Nov. 2, 1986, Reviews).

Peter astutely realised the individual significance of the characters. He recognised that the figure of Marcus and his spiritual defeat was intended to embody the cost of compromise. He understood that Adrian manifested the 'special quality of American innocence abroad,' whereby confidence belied a deeper misunderstanding. He accordingly perceived 'the impatience of Eastern Europeans in the face of boisterous transatlantic innocence' in the dramatisation of Adrian's self-gratifying interests. He recognised that the root of Adrian's excitement lay in 'seeing himself in a dangerous situation,' rather than his hope of penetrating the situation (Peter, Nov. 2, 1986, Reviews).

In his initial review of the Bristol production Peter had lauded Miller for his 'giant and warm humanity' (qtd. in Bigsby, 1988, 52). His original affirmation that there was 'nothing self-righteous or complacent about this work' (qtd. in Bigsby, 1988, 52) was further reinforced following his subsequent viewing of the play. Peter thus recognised a facet to the play which has perhaps been significantly undermined or overlooked. He claimed that 'some plays give you all there is to them on first acquaintance. By contrast, *The Archbishop's Ceiling*, like certain thoughtful and reserved people, open up to you only gradually' (Peter, Nov. 2, 1986, Reviews). Given the ambiguity intrinsic to the play, perhaps additional viewings were necessary to aid understanding.

The success of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) in Britain was the culmination of a number of factors. The play was more compatible with the European mindset as it

continued Miller's commitment to the presentation of ideas in the theatre. The 'fringe' theatre movement that had dominated the British stage in the 1970s had prompted a heightened engagement with politics and morality. The fact that the play expressed what Miller termed 'the bedrock circumstances of real liberty' (Miller, 1999, 587) struck a chord with European audiences. The strict conservatism of the Thatcher government awarded the play a relevance that failed to be perceived in 1977. As Miller commented in his autobiography:

...by 1986 people could see that the play was not about "the East" alone, we were all secretly talking to power, to the bugged ceiling of the mind, whether knowingly or not in the West...It was more and more difficult to imagine in the last quarter of the century the naked selfness of a free human being speaking with no unacknowledged interest except his own truth. (1999, 573)

The Archbishop's Ceiling (1977) has received numerous revivals in Europe, yet continues to be dismissed in America by major theatre companies. It appears that the surface esoteric nature of the play alongside the play's initial fate alienates interest. The original and final version of the play has never been performed before a wide audience in America, and it seems probable that this is the result of a larger cultural phenomenon. The ironic humour of the play is more in the style of the European mode of drama and thus helps to explain the level of receptiveness to the play there.

Furthermore, while exploration into the concerns of writers was regarded as worthy engagement for a play in Britain and indeed Europe, it was overlooked as credible subject matter for a play in America. Miller personally believed that the reason for this disparity was grounded in the differing status that writers occupied in these

continents. He considered the writer in Europe to be an intrinsic part of the national consciousness in a way that was strikingly absent in America. Writers were revered in Europe while in America they were regarded as disposable commodities. The lacuna was understood by Miller to be the product of the fact that writers in America were merely ignored (Miller, 1994, 234), and never experienced the same depth of persecution that European writers were ritually subjected to: 'The importance of literature stems, finally, from the penalties hanging over the practice of it. Thus a writer is always a step away from dread heroism and is worshipped like a sacrifice' (Miller, 1994, 341). The writer in Europe is thus believed to be the preserver of culture, and he is imbued with responsibility as it is felt that 'the national fate is in the writer's hand' (Miller, 1994, 341). Accordingly, a play that centred on the concerns of the writer was unimportant in America, while the ideas about authorship and its ethics were highly respected in Europe.

The Archbishop's Ceiling (1977) uniquely comments on the role and status of the writer in America. Miller frequently lamented in his plays the fact that America was intolerant of tradition. This idea that the country possessed no traditional values or culture helps to account for the ambiguous position of the writer in America. On numerous occasions Miller highlighted the pattern of recognition and rejection that accompanied American playwrights in their homeland:

The story of American playwrights is awfully repetitious – the celebratory embraces soon followed by rejection or contempt, and this without exception for any playwright who takes risks and does not comfortably repeat himself. (Miller, 1999, 229)

This trademark of the American experience is intrinsically bound to the success mythology of the American Dream. Miller also attributed this paradigm to the 'quality

of recognition' awarded to American writers (Miller, 1994, 240). The lack of cultural consciousness in America meant that the achievements of a writer were understood within the generic parameters of success. As a result, this success would prove ephemeral as each new work was measured negatively against the standard established by the success of the previous work. Writers in America were not awarded a unique cultural status on the basis of success, and so subsequent works were regarded as a diminishment of previous achievements. As Miller mourned, 'It is hard to earn success, but much harder to keep it' (1994, 240).

The government of the play becomes the silent majority and monopoly of theatre critics. By 1972, there were only three newspapers remaining in circulation to supply reviews (*The New York Times*, *The New York Post*, and *The New York Daily News*). The ever-increasing ticket prices meant that the critics from these publications were granted an undue authority. Attempts to undermine this authority ultimately failed, for the newspapers involved were invested in maintaining their dominance. As a result, the critical opinion of one newspaper was sufficient to impose a form of commercial censorship on the theatre.

The play's ideas about writers and censorship sparked an ironic note among critics when the play reappeared in 1984. In the same year, Miller became embroiled in an overtly public dispute with the Wooster Group, an infamously experimental and controversial troupe. The Group were renowned for their reworking of classic American plays, and had previously featured the works of Eugene O'Neill and

Thornton Wilder. The Group radically revised classics based on the belief that 'Mere updating through alteration of locale or time period as many productions of classics often did would not...be sufficient and could even trivialise the plays' (Wilmeth, 2006, 148). To provoke a contemporary response, they devised an approach which consisted of blending the classic works of traditional American drama with other elements of modern performance culture (Wilmeth, 2006, 148). As Gerald Rabkin affirms in his analysis of the dispute, the Group drew on the theory of Antonin Artaud and his 'deprivileging of the playwright' (1985, 143, 144-52, Internet). Furthermore, the Group rested on Barthes' theory of the 'Death of the Author,' and Umberto Eco's notion of the 'open text' (Rabkin, 1985, 144-52, Internet).

In 1983, the company devised a play based on a forty-five minute excerpt of *The Crucible* (1955) and Timothy Leary's recounting of an experience with L.S.D. The piece entitled *L.S.D. (...Just the High Points)* generated much opprobrium from Miller, who immediately refused to authorise the company with the rights to the excerpts. In an attempt to appease the playwright, the company reduced the excerpts to twenty minutes. However, Miller further insisted that the production be halted, and in response the company 'agreed to begin performing those portions as pantomime, with no dialogue from the play' (Freedman, Nov. 17, 1984, 14, Internet). With the subsequent threat of legal procedures, the Group finally closed the play after two weeks.

The play's director, Elizabeth LeCompte maintained that the use of the play was both 'serious and respectful' (qtd. in Freedman, Nov. 17, 1984, 14, Internet). She believed that Miller's objections were founded on the grounds that the production would be viewed as a parody, or even mistaken for the actual play. She fundamentally concluded that Miller's main issue was greed, as he feared that the performance would forestall a Broadway revival (Brater, 2005, 197, *Theater and Culture*).

For his part however, Miller argued that his opposition was based purely on artistic concerns. Speaking with the *New York Times*, he commented that he thought that the production 'abstracted' and 'abbreviated' the play (qtd. in Freedman, Nov. 28, 1984, 21, Internet). He later maintained that his disagreement with the production was on the basis of 'aesthetic' considerations, deeming the version 'a simplified cartoon of a much more interesting and complicated phenomenon' (Roudane, 1987, 379). With the close of the production, he withdrew all legal action, and claimed that the group was 'well-intentioned. It was just badly handled' (qtd. in Freedman, Nov. 28, 1984, 21, Internet).

The incident incited much media attention for the issues that it raised, for the use of *The Crucible* (1953) by the Wooster Group was the first time that they had employed material by a living playwright. A *New York Times* article explored the tension that the performance had exemplified between 'a playwright's desire to protect his creation – and, by extension, his livelihood – against a director's wish for artistic freedom' (Freedman, Dec. 23, 1984, 6, Internet). The dispute rested on the question of

whether superiority was attributed to the dramatic or the performance text. Miller defended his position by asserting that his opinion as creator of the material should ultimately achieve precedence above all other considerations. He affirmed that by this he was not attempting to simultaneously suggest that a dramatic text should always be produced verbatim (Freedman, Nov. 28, 1984, 21; Freedman, Dec. 23, 1984, 6, Internet):

I'm not saying that every production should be the same...That would be boring. But if the playwright or his representatives say the spirit of the play is violated, that's got to be honored. When the playwright's alive, he's got to know best. (qtd. in Freedman, Dec. 23, 1984, 6, Internet)

However, Miller's assertion that the playwright should hold ultimate authority as the best interpreter of his own work is deeply flawed. Due to the psychological immediacy and sense of attachment between a playwright and his script, he is not often in the best position to judge his own work. Indeed the first production of a play is predominantly a collaborative effort between the playwright, the director, and the production team. This process often leads to or necessitates significant changes to the script. These alterations can mean the difference between a successful play and a failure. It seems possible that Miller was soured by the initial reception of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) and the fact that he was convinced to make changes to the script that further damaged its centre.

Miller's staunch objection to the *L.S.D.* production provoked some critics to state that Miller was in fact imposing censorship on other artists and their creative licence. Given his advocate work in this area, he was accused of being a hypocrite, most

forthrightly by David Savran (1986). However Miller was not attempting to perpetuate censorship, but in a similar vein to Sigmund, protect the integrity of his creation. His principal objection to the production was the fact that it was a bastardisation of his play. The production was a perversion in that it chose certain excerpts from his play and augmented them with the work of another artist. The crux of the issue was thus not that the whole play was not included, but that the excerpts were indiscriminately blurred with a wholly disparate piece.

Although Miller was eager to protect his work during his lifetime, the issue of artistic licence on the part of the director would not always be possible to control. Indeed the production of *L.S.D. (...Just the High Points)* toured Europe between 1985 and 1986 in spite of his opposition (Brater, 2005, 197, *Theater and Culture*). Ironically, the saga raised an ethical consideration for the writer that *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) had overlooked, namely the right to impose censorship on the use of one's own work by another.

The idea of the play as a personal reflection failed to be recognised by critics. As aforementioned, the dominant forms of the period placed the self at the centre of the drama and the intersection between life and art was a central preoccupation. Accordingly, in spite of the veiled nature of the connection, the oversight seems curious. However, the idea has also failed to be realised in critical commentary on the play to date. The theory is nonetheless an important one, for it installs *The*

Archbishop's Ceiling (1977) as one of the most significant plays in Miller's oeuvre, a fact radically undermined by the paucity of its production in his native homeland.

Chapter Five: *Danger: Memory!* (1987) and the decay of liberal values in America

The commercial failure of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977) was followed by the critical disaster of *The American Clock* in 1980. While *The American Clock* (1980) did make it to Broadway, it only lasted a meagre 12 performances (Broadway Database). Perhaps following the negative response that *The Archbishop's Ceiling* had provoked for being set in a foreign environment, *The American Clock* (1980) firmly re-established America as the central *mise en scène*. The play was envisioned with epic proportions, intended as a representative 'mural' that blended intimate portraits of individuals alongside a larger picture of society as a whole (Miller, 1999, 586). Comprising a cast of almost fifty characters, the play was Miller's most ambitious, not least for its vaudevillian form that included an array of popular show tunes and songs from the 1930s. However, the play greatly antagonised critics as it also hailed a return to classic Miller territory of the Depression era. The formative period of Miller's consciousness was deemed retrograde by critics who failed to perceive the relevance of its historic account. Indeed the Depression context was not an arbitrary choice, for it was intended to highlight the consequences of the greed and self-interest that Miller felt was once again gripping society.

The 1980s was a busy decade for Miller creatively and he was involved with many diverse projects including adapting works for the screen. He nonetheless remained committed to the theatre and wrote two sets of one-act plays during this time. The

first of the set was initially entitled *Two by A.M* and was directed by Miller at the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven in 1982. By the time of their London premiere in 1989, the title had been altered to *Two-Way Mirror* at the suggestion of Christopher Bigsby (2006, 352). The new title hinted at the fact that the theme of the play was centred on the idea of the problematic status of reality. Indeed this theme was evolving to become the dominant preoccupation of Miller's later plays. In his autobiography, Miller commented that these plays featured a diminished notion of objectivity 'as reality seems to consist wholly or partly of what the characters' needs require it to be.' Accordingly, the characters are confronted with 'the anguish of having to make decisions that they know are based on illusion and the power of desire' (1999, 590). *Two-Way Mirror* (1982) was disparaged by the critical press in America, yet received commendation for its British production.

In 1982, Miller also wrote a monologue for the International Theatre Festival. Entitled *I Think About You a Great Deal*, the piece was Miller's expression of support for Václav Havel, following his imprisonment for subversion (Abbotson, 2007, 197). During the 1980s, Miller compiled his landmark autobiography which was published in 1987. *Timebends* appears to resemble the form of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) in its non-linear structure that recalls memories in an organic rather than a chronological manner. The timing of his autobiography was provident as it appeared at a time when Miller's early works were undergoing a revival and the playwright was thus being regarded with renewed interest. While Miller was directing *Death of a Salesman* (1949) in Beijing in 1983, rehearsals commenced for a major production of the play on Broadway starring Dustin Hoffman in the main role. This 1984 production, which

led to a rift between Miller and his long time producer, Robert Whitehead, was internationally acclaimed and enjoyed an extended run. In 1985, a televised film version of *Death of a Salesman* (1949), again starring Hoffman as Willy Loman, aired to an audience of twenty five million in America (Abbotson, 2007, 496). On the surface, it appeared that Miller's reputation was once again on the ascent. Indeed, the reception of *Danger: Memory!* (1987) seems rather more curiously based on his revival than on the plays themselves.

The appearance of remakes that had begun with the penchant for nostalgia in the 1970s continued into the 1980s as Broadway and the larger American theatre scene suffered its worst financial decade to date. Spiralling production costs and exorbitant ticket prices were crippling productions, and attendance plummeted so that even the most acclaimed plays of the period were forced to close (Wilmet, 2006, 190). The state of Broadway theatre was a topic that Miller had written vociferously about since the 1960s. In an attempt to entice audiences and recoup losses, the casting of an established celebrity in lead roles, such as Hoffman in *Death of a Salesman* (1949), became more common (Wilmet, 2006, 184). In 1981, the final play of Tennessee Williams, *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*, was a commercial failure. The plays of Sam Shepard continued to dominate Broadway with the successes of *Fool for Love* in 1983 and *A Lie of the Mind* in 1985. The major success of the early years of the decade was David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* in 1984 which had premiered in London the previous year. August Wilson received his first Broadway production in 1984 with *Ma Rainey's Big Black Bottom*. The popular successes of 1987 were Pierre

Choderlos deLaclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and the iconic Victor Hugo musical *Les Misérables*.

Danger: Memory! (1987) echoed the pattern of *Two-Way Mirror* (1982), for both sets of one-acts contained plays that shared similar concerns. While *Elegy for a Lady* (1982) and *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987) were both musings on mortality, *Some Kind of Love Story* (1982) and *Clara* (1987) were detective plays. The two considerations encompassed a personal poignancy for the playwright. By the 1980s, Miller was in his seventies and accordingly, the notion of mortality was imbued with a private psychological identification. His interest in the process of criminal investigation had been piqued by his personal involvement in the extrication of a young Connecticut man, falsely imprisoned for the murder of his mother in 1973. Miller devoted himself to the case for the next five years, personally sourcing a private investigator and lawyer. Peter Reilly was ultimately exonerated, but Miller's faith in the justice system had been adversely affected (Miller, 1999, 554-58).

Several critics, including Mel Gussow, Leonard Moss, and Dennis Welland, have alluded to Miller's repeated inclusion of lawyers and representatives of the legal justice system in his plays. In the early phase of his career, lawyers and figures of the law stood as moral arbiters in his plays. However, Miller became gradually disillusioned with the upstanding nature of the legal system. From *After the Fall* (1964) onward, his portraits of legal representatives became more ambiguous, and the purity of their depictions was undermined. However, the scale of corruption failed to

erode his belief in the edifice of the law itself as 'the final appeal to order, to reason, and to justice' (Miller, 1999, 584). The law remained the ultimate seat of morality in his plays, for as Robert A. Martin affirmed, Miller identified intellectually 'with the law as a symbolic and affirmative system of values' (Miller, 1994, xlv). Miller clarified his position in *Timebends*:

There is a lawyer in almost all my plays, perhaps because man is what man is, nature's denial machine. In the course of the Reilly case I grew to treasure the law as our last defense against ourselves. (1999, 556)

Danger: Memory! (1987) also mirrored *Two-Way Mirror* (1982) in that it continued the exploration into the instability of the real. As the title suggests, *Danger: Memory!* (1987) turned the focus toward memory and its powers of distortion. Writing in *Timebends*, Miller commented that the process examined in *Danger: Memory!* (1987) grew from his central preoccupation during that period. This idea also appears to have informed the form of his autobiography:

Over the next years, I would become more and more deeply absorbed by a kind of imploding of time – moments when a buried layer of experience suddenly surges upward to become the new surface of one's attention and flashes news from below. (Miller, 1999, 590)

In many respects, *Danger: Memory!* (1987) was not broaching new ground for Miller. It explored favourite themes of the playwright and reiterated his Ibsenite inheritance in terms of establishing the seminal impact of the past on the present. Miller had been writing memory plays since the beginning of his career, yet *Danger: Memory!* (1987) marked a new perspective in that his treatment of memory was becoming more Absurdist. Miller had previously employed the notion of memory to aid the stripping

away of illusion. However, *Danger: Memory!* (1987) established memory as a contributory factor to the preservation of illusion, and the plays thus signalled the beginning of his exposition of the unreliable nature of memory. The plays centre on the distorting power of memory to sentimentalise and repress. The progression in Miller's thinking was an inevitable aspect of his own physical maturation. As Toby Zinman declared, memory 'finally strikes Miller as the hilarious, terrible joke of mortality' (Brater, 2005, 165, *Theater and Culture*).

The one-act form was not alien to Miller either. Aside from *Two-Way Mirror* (1982), he had employed it early in his career with *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955) and the provisional version of *A View from the Bridge* (1955). However, *Danger: Memory!* (1987) saw him experiment with new theatrical effects. In *Clara* (1987), Miller made use of Brechtian devices with images appearing on a screen over the heads of the characters. This technique was intended to represent the instantaneousness of the return of memory to the consciousness of the characters. *Clara* (1987) was also significant in that it represented the tentative movement of Miller away from father-son dynamics in favour of an exploration of father-daughter relationships. This shift continued in *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991), *Mr. Peters' Connections* (1998), and *Resurrection Blues* (2002). Collectively, *Danger: Memory!* (1987) furthered the more abstract direction that *Two-Way Mirror* (1982) had begun.

Danger: Memory! (1987) was a response to the time, most especially in its exploration of liberal values. Liberalism had undergone many complex changes as a

result of social, cultural, and economic shifts, and as a result had entered a period in which its principles no longer appeared certain. In the aftermath of the two World Wars and most especially the Cold War, Liberalism struggled to overcome the contradictions with which it was then faced (Brinkley, 1998). In his analysis of the drama of American Liberalism, Mike Sell writes that Liberalism's most central principle of 'stable, universal standards of moral judgement' (Brater, 2005, 25, *Theater and Culture*) had been undermined. The Liberalist tradition became crippled by its inherent paradox, whereby its 'concern for timeless values' was juxtaposed with 'the abiding belief that such values can only be defined in the concrete political contexts and constraints of the moment' (Brater, 2005, 25, *Theater and Culture*). In the political unrest of the 1960s, the various positions that Liberalism had adopted in the preceding years were subjected to a radical and public assessment. As a direct consequence of this, Liberalism suffered a collapse from which it proved unable to recover. As Alan Brinkley documents in his analysis of American Liberalism, even erstwhile liberals struggled to reconcile liberal values with the evolution of modern life. Brinkley records how some former liberals came to perceive Liberalism as a 'threat to community' for:

...its excessive, indeed nearly exclusive, emphasis on rights and freedoms makes no room for a definition of the public good...liberalism leaves society without a moral core and hence vulnerable to the destabilizing whims of fractious minorities and transitory passions. (1998, x)

Arthur Miller was a descendent of the liberal tradition that placed emphasis on the 'rights of the individual against state and society, an egalitarian vision of the human species, and a meliorist philosophy of history' (Brater, 2005, 23, *Theater and Culture*). Over the course of his life, Miller was repeatedly forced to re-evaluate his

position in relation to Liberalism. Mike Sell suggests that Miller was accordingly an 'original Liberal thinker' (Brater, 2005, 24, *Theater and Culture*), for while he advocated Liberalism's larger principles, he was never a slavish conformist to its more ephemeral positions. Indeed, Miller strived to promote the more universal ideas that Liberalism espoused, without allowing those to be compromised by the caprices of the moment:

...though he has generally refused to toe the line of any specific variant of Liberalism, he has continually sought not simply the rights due to the citizen but also the aesthetic and experimental foundations of a truly vibrant, dramatic Liberalism, a Liberalism that would goad and prod society to embrace fully and finally individual freedom, universal empowerment, and progress. (Sell in Brater, 2005, 24, *Theater and Culture*)

In the rampant materialism of the 1980s, Miller was confronted with the need to reassert the moral tradition of Liberal values. As Ashis Sengupta writes, 'Reagan's victory represented the culmination of a growing reaction against the failed policies of American Liberalism' (Langteau, 2007, 114). Reagan's term as president hailed an era of consumerism that incited Miller to question the place for liberal values in a capitalist era. In *Danger: Memory!* (1987), Miller presents the clash between liberal ideas and the pragmatics of everyday life. By so doing, he endeavoured to re-imagine liberal concepts within a modern context that deemed idealism 'naïve' (Bigsby, 2006, 364). *Danger: Memory!* (1987) thus further expressed Miller's preoccupation with what Leonard Moss termed the fall theme of the crisis of disillusionment (1996, 40). However, Miller remained committed to the quest for an intrinsic value. As Mike Sell claimed, 'If values have lost their universality in a relativistic age, Miller's plays suggest that the struggle to define and defend them has not' (Brater, 2005, 29, *Theater and Culture*). Through *Danger: Memory!* (1987), Miller was attempting to recapture

the 'confidence in the character and commitment of American society - and the possibility of creating social justice' (Brinkley, 1998, 110) that Liberalism had once symbolised.

On account of the historical context of Liberalism, *Danger: Memory!* (1987) is rooted in the idea of memory. *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987) recalls the days in which liberal values shaped a generation and their approach to both their past and future. In so doing, the play questions the fate of Liberalism within the present setting, and the resulting effect on the lives of the characters. *Clara* (1987) explores the extent to which liberal values have been repressed in modern society to be replaced by a façade of political correctness. Through *Danger: Memory!* (1987) collectively, Miller was resisting the common impulse to relegate Liberalism to history, and instead asserted that within its principles lay a lesson for the current generation.

Set in the American countryside of the 1980s, *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987) centres on two lifelong friends. Both characters are imprisoned by the ontological awareness of their own mortality, and appear trapped in the limbo between life and death. Leo and Leonora are battling a pervasive loneliness in the struggle to accept the fact that they are still alive whilst their friends are dead. As a result, both characters hold a romantic view of the past that hinders them in different ways. Although Leonora's radicalism has lapsed, she laments the memories on which Leo's unreconstructed liberalism is based.

Leo's fixation on the past is made manifest in his preoccupation with death. It consumes and dominates his thoughts and conversation and he has surrounded himself with images of death in the 'drunken line drawings of dead friends' (2000, 197) that adorn his walls. He views his crippling arthritis and the gradual diminishment of his mental acuity as signs that his end is approaching. In spite of the fact that he is twelve years Leonora's junior, Leo is convinced that he will die first.

Leo's obsession with death is not morbid, but the product of his rootedness in the past. He is proud of all that he achieved in his youth, and it is this sense of satisfaction with his life that breeds his willingness to die. Leo fears the process of ageing for he does not wish his body to become further withered by arthritis or for his mind to continue to lose its vitality. He wishes to die with dignity like Frederick, Leonora's late husband and his close friend.

LEO. That was one thing I admired about Frederick, he never once slowed down mentally. (2000, 207)

With the effect of ageing, Leo appears to view Frederick's death in a more romantic light. Although he laments the fact that Frederick died prematurely, he nonetheless envies the fact that he bypassed the ageing process and its concomitant ailments. The fact that Leo's greatest fear is to be rendered ineffective is manifest in his desire to have his organs harvested for research purposes.

His frustration with Leonora appears to be motivated by her lack of reverence for the past. However, it soon becomes apparent that his sometime caustic attitude toward her is a result of the fact that he knows that her amnesia is willed. Following the death of

her husband, Leonora abstracted herself from her past. She drained her past of significance as the happy memories were too painful for her to recall. In desperation to escape her aloneness, she attempts to repress the past through alcohol. However, her efforts only serve to further divorce her from the present. Bigsby asserts that the happiness of Leonora's past renders her present absurd (2006, 361).

LEONORA. Sometimes...I *think* I remember something, but then I wonder if I just imagined it. My whole life often seems imaginary. It's very strange. (2000, 202)

In many respects, Leonora bears a strong resemblance to a Beckettian figure. As Susan Abbotson suggests, the true source of her discontent lies not in the fact that she can't remember, but that she is unable to wholly forget (2007, 193).

Leonora's willed repression distresses Leo as it includes Frederick. He was a formative figure to Leo who describes him as 'the greatest man I ever met in my life' (2000, 211). Although he understands that Leonora's actions conceal her deeper regard, he nonetheless struggles to contain his anguish. He believes that Leonora's attitude diminishes the significance of Frederick's life.

LEO. I just don't think you ought to be forgetting that... (2000, 207)

Frederick represented a life force to them both, and the shock of his death lulled both Leo and Leonora into a fear of living. However, the Samba record that Leonora has received from her estranged son Lawrence restores a vitality that overwhelms them both. The pair dance in a manner that recalls bygone days, and both are reminded of the inner vigour that they deny. Their joint desire to escape the futility of their lives

and their fixation on death is predominantly an expression of the fact that neither wishes to be the last one to survive.

Leonora's eagerness to forget paradoxically only serves to cause her more anguish. The fact that she has forgotten Frederick's birthday deeply disturbs her. Although she knows that this dishonours his memory, it is the only means by which she can cope. She was married to Frederick for over forty-five years and the loss of her identity as a wife leaves her feeling redundant. Her identity crisis is further accentuated by the fact that she is alienated from her son.

LEONORA. ...what purpose have I got? I am totally useless to myself, my children, my grandchildren and the one or two people I suppose I can call my friends who aren't dead... (2000, 201)

The burden of Leonora's sense of futility is intensified by the fact that her body is still healthy and strong. She continually questions why she is still alive, for she believes that Frederick should have survived her. He was the entertainer and the intellectual, and the one on whom their joint friendships were based. Her self-deprecation is echoed in Leo's similar hero worship of Frederick as he equally asserts that Frederick should have outlived them both. However, his concern for Leonora is apparent nonetheless in his solicitude over her drinking and his need for assurance that she has reached home safely. Furthermore, he continually goads her throughout the play to acquire an interest and to reacquaint herself with an old hobby. In spite of his own apparent fixation on death, he will not allow the same level of resignation from Leonora.

His façade of optimism enrages Leonora, considering the decay of values that she deems ubiquitous. Although Leonora attempts to deal exclusively with the present, she fails to realise that her engagement with the present is dictated solely through her sentimental view of the past. As Miller asserted in *Timebends*, 'The brain heals the past like an injury; things were always better than they are now' (1999, 179). She laments the disintegration of values amongst the present generation, however she concedes that she was unaware of the identity of the French President during the War.

LEONORA. ...nobody *ever* knows who the President of France is.

LEO. Well, you wouldn't have known anyway.

LEONORA. (*slamming her fork down*). I would certainly have known if it was of any importance. (2000, 204)

Given the similarity of their names and the opposition in their needs, it seems possible to understand Leo and Leonora as two sides of the one personality. Whilst Leo focuses on his physical decay, Leonora concerns herself with the spiritual decay of the generation. However, Leonora's spiritual crisis results from the fact that she has no physical ailment to complain of. Their two ways of negotiating their old age are not mutually compatible, yet in their opposition both characters are sustained.

LEO. We could have a lot more interesting conversations if you would stop saying you can't remember anything.

LEONORA. Or if you could occasionally learn to accept bad news? (2000, 217-18)

Over time, the pair have become mutually dependant. Frederick may have provided the link between the characters, but their connection has transcended his death. From the outset, the play establishes that the action that follows between them is common

routine. Accordingly, each appears to adhere to a prescribed role whereby each counters the assertions of the other. Although both seem frustrated by the other, they each have come to rely on their standard mode of interaction. Neither yields to the other, and though their relationship is often fraught, both draw comfort from the familiarity inherent in their opposition.

Leonora despairs at Leo's attempts to reassure her of the hope that remains in her life as she knows that he does not likewise believe in the optimism that he promotes. She has nonetheless come to depend on it, not least because she understands it as his expression of his feeling for her.

LEONORA. This country is being ruined by greed and mendacity and narrow-minded ignorance, and you go right on thinking there is hope somewhere. And yet you really don't, do you – but you refuse to admit that you have lost your hope...it's this goddamned hopefulness when there is no hope – that is why you are so frustrating to sit with! (2000, 214)

In spite of the fact that it is Leonora who claims that she is unable to remember anything, she in fact 'uses her absence of memory as a defiance' (Gussow, 2002, 156). In reality, it is Leo who struggles not to forget. He needs Leonora to remember the past that consumes him, for while she wills forgetting, he is unable to control his own memory loss.

In spite of appearances to the contrary, the characters are two versions of the same experience. Through *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987), Miller was highlighting the disconnection of his own generation. As Sengupta affirms, 'Together, they represent a generation sandwiched between a past that belied high hopes and a present...moral

bankruptcy' (Langteau, 2007, 114). The present value system was in a similar state of decay as that which had inspired the idealism engendered in the Depression. The play thus explores the impact of the failed actualisation of idealism on the notion of liberalism. Leonora represents the lapsed-radical while Leo symbolises the obdurate Communist. As Leonora struggles to find a position in the present dislocation, Leo chooses to remain rooted in past ideals. She mourns for the loss of the values of previous decades, and negatively affirms that the country is no longer the same. Leo on the other hand, fails to be disillusioned by the failure of idealism and tenaciously clings to his communist alignment. She is unable to understand how Leo can still harbour his ideals when he is aware that the situation is continually deteriorating. However, he refuses to allow the reality to alter the ideal and he asserts that it is lack of belief that is ruining the country.

I Can't Remember Anything (1987) confronts the crises concomitant with ageing and the burgeoning awareness of mortality with a sensitivity that avoided sentimentality. The subtlety in the treatment of the subject matter is perhaps owing to the fact that these concerns held a personal significance to the playwright who was then in his seventy-first year. Indeed, *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987) is the first in a series of Miller plays to grant eminent focus to ageing. These ideas were nonetheless only a perversion of the existential crises presented in earlier Miller plays, where the characters equally struggled to determine the purpose of their existence. *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987) represented a new angle on a dominant Miller theme as it depicted the danger inherent in overindulging in the past. Although Miller continued to acknowledge the centrality of the influence of the past on the present, he

distinguished this from an absolute fixation on the past that drained the present of significance. In the case of Leo and Leonora, both characters use their age as an excuse to passively absent themselves from the present. However, this decision amounts to a self-betrayal, for their dance attests to their lingering vitality.

I Can't Remember Anything (1987) also connects the physical ageing of the characters with the figurative degeneration of American Liberalism. Miller's decision to pose concerns regarding American liberalism through the demographic of the elder generation was a deliberate and considered one. The sense of futility concomitant with ageing was exacerbated by the fact that it coincided with a decay on a national level. The symbolic failure in the actualisation of their idealism confronts the characters with a crisis that Miller deemed ubiquitous among his generation. The play thus dramatises the disparate devices that Miller believed were being employed to negotiate the disillusioning power of the reality. Leo may have retained his idealism, yet this is undermined by the fact that he engages only with the past. Leonora's former radicalism has lapsed in the face of the present conditions, but her disillusionment renders her life redundant both in the present and retroactively. Accordingly, Miller was portraying both the failure of Liberalism to adapt to current social change, and the concomitant sense of futility of former proponents.

A second version of *I Can't Remember Anything* was published subsequent to the play's premiere production in 1987. Susan Abbotson records that in this Dramatists

Play Service edition, Miller appended an argument between Leo and Leonora that surfaces both before and after the record is played. During this scene:

Leo asks Leonora not to come round every day, as she has been doing, as she is making his health suffer. She leaves in umbrage, and he seems elated that he has finally curtailed their friendship, declaring that he never cared for Leonora but only for Frederick. When she phones, he repeats his demands. (Abbotson, 2007, 193)

However, the Methuen publication that appeared in 1994 is a reprint of the original script, and is taken as the authoritative version of the play. The relationship between Leo and Leonora remains fraught throughout, for both 'are under an inordinate amount of strain as they try to make their lives more comfortable by pursuing the wrong goals' (Langteau, 2007, 129). However, to allow this to culminate in a complete fallout drastically undermines the delicate balance on which the play relies.

The second complementary one-act of *Danger: Memory!* (1987), the detective piece *Clara*, similarly commented on the decay in liberal values in American society. The two plays are linked not only thematically, but share the same theatrical device. In both plays, the playing of a phonographic record triggers a seminal memory of the past that reconnects the characters with their true selves. In *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987), the record restores youthful ebullience to the characters, albeit ephemerally. In the case of *Clara* (1987), the playing of the phonograph reminds Albert Kroll of the ideals that he once harboured that had inspired his daughter.

Clara (1987) chronicles the interrogation of Albert Kroll following the brutal murder of his daughter. Although Kroll is never an actual suspect in her homicide case, the

play raises the question of the extent to which he is personally implicated in her death on account of the values that he passed onto her. In many respects, Kroll is a figurative suspect in that his values embody his responsibility. *Clara* (1987) is thus essentially an exorcism by the father of his own value system. Clara appears at crucial moments in the play to guide her father through the process of re-familiarising himself with the liberal past from which he has become alienated. She thus becomes ultimately responsible for assuring him of his vindication for her death.

The liberal values that Clara inherited from her father incited her later work in prisoner rehabilitation. Although Kroll was aware of the potential dangers of her work, he was unwilling to discourage her. He was extremely proud of Clara's achievements, and his own vanity and egoism prevented him from making a more protracted effort to protect her. It is now suspected that one of her former clients with whom she was romantically involved is responsible for her death, and this realisation incites a personal crisis for Kroll.

The play evolves along psychoanalytical lines, whereby Kroll can only recall the name of her probable murderer once he has explored the notion of his own guilt for her death. Clara lived and died upholding values that she had learned from her father, yet these were values in which he no longer believed. Over time, his ideals had become compromised by life and transcended to become merely a façade that concealed a deeper bigotry. His personal awareness of his infringements of liberal values paralyses his memory. Accordingly, his repression of the name of Clara's

boyfriend is a direct product of his guilt for his complicity in her death. As David Savran astutely notes, 'In an almost expressionistic manner, the intersection of remembering and confession configures the murderer not as a distinct entity but as an Other within the self...' (1992, 74). This notion of the importance of name and personal integrity is a major recurrent theme in Miller's work, and first appeared in his early radio plays.

Kroll's blessing of Clara's relationship with Luiz was not an expression of his liberal conscience as his daughter believed. His approval was instead the perpetuation of the deep-seated nature of his own prejudice. Luiz had been imprisoned for the murder of his former girlfriend, and Kroll is paralysed by guilt and shame that he did not resist Clara's relationship with him in the same manner as his wife. In the months prior, Kroll had secretly witnessed Clara kiss another woman, and his relief that Clara was not a lesbian clouded his objective judgement on her new relationship.

FINE. What you're telling me, Albert, is that it was such a relief to see her involved with a man, even a Porto Rican murderer... (2000, 242).

As aforementioned, Kroll's pride in Clara's work was an extension of his own ego, and he accordingly failed to force her to end the relationship that resulted in her death. During a scene in which Clara appears onstage in a style evocative of *Death of a Salesman* (1949), Kroll confronts her with his reservations. He confides that he believes Luiz views her 'like a medal he's wearing on his chest. You're like an accomplishment for him' (2000, 239). However as the play progresses, it becomes clear that Clara was in fact a medal that Kroll wore on his chest. As David Savran

commented, 'Clara is the mirror in which Kroll sees himself,' a mirror to 'narcissistically reflect back upon Kroll the moral purity to which he aspires, despite – or perhaps, because of – his questionable business dealings' (1992, 72-73).

In recent years Kroll began working for a corrupt building contractor, which saw him involved in racist building policies. Although he affirms that he is willing to legislate for racial minorities to build homes in his area, his life is being threatened unless he acts otherwise. In spite of his assertions, there are certain points at which Kroll's racial intolerance is exposed.

KROLL. ...tell you the truth, every once in a while I just about give up on those people. (2000, 236)

Comments such as this are integral in understanding the basis of Kroll's liberalism. His ideas are grounded in a classification system that externalises the Other based on stereotypes. As Paula Langteau writes in her article on the façade of political correctness in the play, Kroll's 'distancing serves not only to make the Other less human than he is but allows him to cast himself as heroic in comparison.' Kroll's values are dangerous not because they are liberal, but 'that they are, and seem always to have been, superficially based upon assumptions and stereotypes of people rather than on distinct individuals' (Langteau, 2007, 32).

Whilst Clara was an impressionable child, Kroll had told her of how he had inhumanly killed a Japanese man to save his own life. His self-aggrandising recounting of the incident divorced his identity as a father from the fact that he had

killed a fellow man. As a result, Clara was unable to personally distinguish the difference between a loving man and a malevolent killer.

CLARA. He has two things that are a lot like you, Daddy. He's soft and he's strong. And he's overcome so much that we can't even imagine.

KROLL. How can a man ever kill a woman...

CLARA. But you've killed.

KROLL. In a war. That's a different thing.

CLARA. But you understand rage. (2000, 238-39)

As Paula Langteau affirms, 'By generalising the act of killing...and categorising together the men who do the killing, Clara not only diminishes the severity of her lover's crime but she assigns to him the same goodness and heroism she sees in her father' (2007, 33). This flaw in her discernment skills resulted in her death.

Throughout the play, Kroll's pretensions to liberal values are challenged by the interrogation of Lieutenant Fine. Hardened by his personal experience as both a criminal investigator and as a Jew, the liberal ideas that Fine once harboured have equally been compromised. The reality of the Holocaust desensitised Fine, and he lost any sense of human connection or identification. As a result, he is emotionally detached, and has no faith left in the goodness in humanity. Fine's attitude is dictated by the principle 'Do it to them before they can do it to you' (2000, 246).

Fine's negative experience of stereotyping fails to compel him to resist it, and instead he perpetuates it as though a fact. He consistently invokes statistics, even in relation to the suicide of his own son.

FINE. Nothing to be depressed about; a good number of them did that to themselves during Viet Nam...We're all one step away from a statistic... (2000, 229-30)

Fine believes that Kroll similarly types people and as a result, he perceives Kroll's confession of his liberal infringements as proof of his prejudice. He thus calls him to renounce the pretensions that he believes are preventing Kroll from naming Clara's probable murderer.

FINE. Clara's gone, kid, there's no reason to carry this on anymore – you're one of us. You admit that to yourself and I'll bet that name comes popping right out. (2000, 246)

Kroll has allowed his personal ideals to be compromised by a pragmatism that Clara resisted. When confronted with the reality of the danger of her job during a prison riot, Clara refused to stand down. Faced with the contrast, Kroll thus realises that his compromise was a betrayal of both his daughter and his own selfhood. However, as Bigsby asserts, 'The echo of that self remains, in a reluctant liberalism' (2006, 363). As a result, he must reassert that foundation to justify Clara's death and appease his own conscience. Accordingly, Kroll must resist Fine's theory by recalling an incident where he upheld his liberal values and thus prove that he is not merely a bigot. The validity of these values could thus be attested and Kroll could accordingly transcend his fear that naming her potential murderer is an act of racial discrimination.

Whilst Kroll was a soldier at war, he voluntarily took command of a black company that nobody else was willing to command. Racial segregation was still in operation, and Kroll was unable to secure any assistance from his superiors when his troops were being lynched. As a result, he alone had to save the men from hanging. By rediscovering this basis on which the liberal values that he passed onto his daughter

were founded, Kroll is psychologically liberated to name Luiz Hernandez. By assuming spiritual responsibility for her death, Kroll's sense of personal integrity is restored and he no longer needs to protect his own name.

The rediscovery of the seedbed of his liberal instincts reassures him that Clara did not die in vain. Although her appropriation of these values led to her eventual demise, they were not misdirected. Most importantly for Kroll however, is the fact that he himself still shares these instincts and the inheritance of his daughter was not grounded in a lie. Kroll may be responsible for the values that he instilled in his daughter, but this did not convey a deeper irresponsibility in how he reared her. As Miller comments in *Timebends*, 'The play ends on his affirmation; in her catastrophe he has rediscovered himself and has glimpsed the tragic collapse of values that he finally cannot bring himself to renounce' (1999, 591).

However, Paula Langteau disagrees that Kroll transcends his bigotry and asserts that his politically correct surface remains a façade. She believes that Kroll is only able to recall Luiz's name once he has admitted that 'his exercising of liberal values has been a performance in which he cast himself not only as *separate* and *superior* but also as *savior* to the Other...' (2007, 36). David Savran substantiates Langteau's thesis, similarly stating that:

In *Clara*, as elsewhere in Miller's work, the subject is cleaved, turned against itself, as it is forced to confess to the other within. Yet the inevitable end of this confession is not an acknowledgement of the inescapability of division, but an emotional catharsis, a return to an illusory – and phallic – wholeness. (1992, 74)

Both Langteau and Savran challenge the plausibility of the play, and affirm that the play ends as it begins in the upholding of illusion. However, ultimately such an assertion is unable to be made as the play ends before Kroll's future action can be determined. It is left ambiguous whether Kroll returns to-what Langteau terms a 'politically correct posture that does not penetrate underlying values' (2007, 39). The opinions of Langteau and Savran are based on the problem with the nature in which Kroll's past is recounted. Although Miller intended that the close of the play was affirmative, the inadequate portrayal of the basis of Kroll's ideals renders the resolution inauthentic. The play presents in an animated manner numerous instances of Kroll's infringements, yet the singular episode on which his future transformation is intended to be based lacks adequate substantiation.

Clara (1987) is a much darker piece than *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987), for it probes the question of the malign forces that may underpin a seemingly innocuous surface. The same seedbed of values that was evident in *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987) is absent in *Clara* (1987), as values are adopted and abandoned in line with individual need. Both plays contrast a liberal with a lapsed liberal, yet the point of difference between the plays lies in the presentation. The liberal in Kroll clashes with a pragmatism that Leo evades through his denial of the present. Through *Clara* (1987), Miller challenged the pretensions to higher values that could only fail to penetrate the afflictions of the period. By so doing, Miller appeared to be suggesting that the trouble facing Liberalism was grounded in the fact that its values were only being invoked in line with personal caprice. In depicting the reality of personal compromise, Miller claimed that Liberalism as an ephemeral concept could only

transcend to be incompatible with pragmatism. Miller was thus intimating that the mutability that had secured Liberalism's following in the past had only served to weaken its present relevance. As a result, Miller was advocating a return to the notion of Liberalism as fixed and uncompromising in its principles.

The dual composition of *Danger: Memory!* (1987) reflected the fact that Miller's warning was twofold. The interconnection between the plays meant that the warning against sentimentalising the past was juxtaposed with the dangers of repressing the past outright. In terms of his exploration of the fate of Liberalism, Miller seemed to be warning against the adaptation of Liberal values to merely be felicitous to a particular moment. However, he also cautioned against disregarding the significance of these principles outright. The plays called for a dramatic reassessment of the manner in which Liberalism was conceived, for Miller ultimately believed in the virtues of its basic foundations. Susan Abbotson's claims in relation to the manner in which Miller intended his ideas on memories to be interpreted also stand as a comment on how he desired the liberal aspect to be understood: 'Miller recognises that memories may relieve, reaffirm, and support us, but only as long as they are kept in their proper perspective; these two plays explore what that proper perspective should be' (2007, 129). As Christopher Bigsby commented:

...in both *I Can't Remember Anything* and *Clara* he sought to explore the basis on which life could constitute something more than a sanctification of greed or an ironic submission to absurdity. The answer, tentative though it is, lies in part in the past, in a confrontation of the denials and betrayals that had come to seem the necessary price for continuance. (Bigsby, 2006, 364)

The sense of balance that Miller advocates is subtly drawn where the two plays intersect. Although *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987) and *Clara* (1987) can stand as self-contained plays, the essence of their analysis of Liberalism is best expressed in their mutuality. Neither play offers a utopian solution, for Miller presents Leo's unreconstructed liberalism as being as equally dangerous as Kroll's politically correct façade. Together the plays appeal for a re-visioning of Liberalism to reinstate its relevance to contemporary times, without resorting to the usual form of accommodation or compromise. Miller calls for this redefinition to occur on both a personal level and on a wider political scale.

Danger: Memory! premiered at the Mitzi Newhouse Theatre of the Lincoln Centre in New York in January 1987, the title an ironic portent of the history of Miller's plays at the theatre. During the 1980s, the Lincoln Centre experienced a 'huge comeback' (Wilmeth, 2006, 189) based on a balance between revivals and new plays. *Danger: Memory!* (1987) was thus allotted a limited run of 33 performances over a four-week period. The plays were neither condemned or hailed by the critics in America and were considered as almost an aside to Miller's established career. On account of this indifferent attitude, the larger ideas about Liberalism were overlooked for the most part by American critics.

The New York Times review by Frank Rich made significant reference to the similarity between *Danger: Memory!* (1987) and Miller's two previous plays at Lincoln Centre. Rich deemed that Miller's conscience continued to be framed by the

same ideas, but that there was a distinct difference perceivable in his perspective. According to Rich, Miller's works were becoming more morally ambiguous. In spite of this, he nonetheless believed that this failed to diminish the sense of Miller's moral righteousness (Rich, Feb. 9, 1987, 15, Reviews).

Rich accurately identified that the characters of each one-act share a 'symbolic amnesia,' yet ultimately believed that Miller's use of theatrical devices to reinforce that point left *Danger: Memory!* (1987) shorn of any spontaneity. He felt that the writing further undermined the attempt at informality by being 'studied and ponderous.' Rich also considered Miller's 'sly sense of humor' insufficient as a means to circumvent the larger problems with the writing of the play (Rich, Feb. 9, 1987, 15, Reviews).

The main crux of Rich's difficulty with *Danger: Memory!* (1987) lay in what he perceived as a flawed characterisation. This defect bred a deeper and more serious problem in that it thus undermined the play's larger ideas in relation to liberalism. He ultimately concluded that 'Mr. Miller seems to have begun with his themes and conceits, then worked backward to fashion (and diminish) his characters to fit the predetermined pattern' (Rich, Feb. 9, 1987, 15, Reviews).

In the case of *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987), Rich deemed that the play's larger failure to 'deepen our knowledge of its characters' resulted in an inability to penetrate

and understand their differing ideals. Rich believed that the shallow nature of the portraits and the resulting lack of clarity meant that their respective credos were rendered 'equally unremarkable' (Rich, Feb. 9, 1987, 15, Reviews).

He similarly believed that *Clara* (1987) was implausible on account of its ambiguous characterisation and the concomitant oversimplification of larger ideas. As a result, he claimed that 'the heavy-hitting historical references don't add tragic import to *Clara* so much as accentuate its pretensions.' He deemed that *Clara* (1987) was imbued with 'middlebrow political ruminations' that rendered the play 'a bitter, unenlightening Sunday-morning talk-show debate about the continuing validity of Great Society social policy' (Rich, Feb. 9, 1987, 15, Reviews).

Rich was nonetheless one of the only major critics to recognise the relationship of *Danger: Memory!* (1987) to Liberalism. Although Rich perceived the connection unfavourably, it is unsurprising given the opprobrium that even allusions to Liberalism provoked during the 1980s. According to his viewpoint, the greater implausibility of the plays trivialised the ideas that they presented. He thus believed that *Danger: Memory!* (1987) was yet another example of Miller's propensity toward preaching. His plays may have been moving toward moral uncertainty, yet Rich believed that Miller remained unable to 'leave anything unsaid, any ellipses gaping: sooner or later someone will say what everything means, and maybe more than once.' In spite of the fact that he praised Miller for his firm 'admirable voice of conscience,'

he ultimately deemed *Danger: Memory!* (1987) 'an evening in which the pontificator wins out over the playwright' (Rich, Feb. 9, 1987, 15, Reviews).

David Richards' review featured in *The Washington Post* equally alluded to the thematic thread between *Danger: Memory!* (1987) and Miller's earlier work. However, he concluded that Miller's latest addition to his oeuvre lacked their eloquence. He commented that *Danger: Memory!* (1987) 'bears a collective title as blunt as the warning on a cigarette pack.' Richards viewed the dialogue as 'ponderous,' and unrelieved by a humour that he deemed 'heavy' (Richards, Feb. 22, 1987, F1, Reviews).

Richards believed that *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987) was an 'autumnal' elegiac play, of little consequence in subject matter or idea. He deemed that the absence of 'the thundering moral probity' that Miller characteristically endorsed in his early plays undermined its importance. He made no reference to the ideas about Liberalism that the play raised and thus concluded that, 'At twilight time, he seems to be saying, a little compassion, a passing word, a familiarity, will suffice' (Richards, Feb. 22, 1987, F1, Reviews).

As a result, Richards believed that *Clara* (1987) was the more forceful, if not the darker of the two one-acts. He felt that *Clara* (1987) was 'edging up on surrealism – you could even argue that it is set in the dark expanses of the father's mind...' and

that it contained characteristics of Kafka's work. On account of this, Richards seemed to assign little relevance to the inclusion of Fine's character. In spite of his more affirmative response to *Clara* (1987), Richards nonetheless concluded that it too failed to 'really deliver much of a jolt' (Richards, Feb. 22, 1987, F1, Reviews).

Richards claimed that the ultimate determinant of the reception of the plays was intrinsically bound to the degree of reverence that was afforded to established playwrights. His comments unconsciously alluded to the disparate manner with which Europe and America regarded and critiqued the works of artists. He stated that, 'In America, playwrights, like athletes, are expected to top themselves each time...'. He claimed that within this negative criteria, *Danger: Memory!* (1987) represented 'at best, footnotes to a distinguished career.' However, he believed that a more positive lens of analysis could be employed, whereby past successes were not invoked purely to inhibit a fairer estimation of the inherent value of the new work: '...if you believe that a healthy theater stands by its playwrights and that Miller earned our attention long ago, there's a definite place for *Danger: Memory!*' Richards concluded that *Danger: Memory!* (1987) should be appraised as complementary to Miller's earlier plays and not disregarded as merely a lesser piece: 'It may not stand very tall on its own, but it does not violate a career. It belongs. It's the other bookend to go with *All My Sons*.' He accordingly deemed that at certain moments *Danger: Memory!* (1987) similarly demanded a respectful attention (Richards, Feb. 22, 1987, F1, Reviews). In spite of his more impartial approach to *Danger: Memory!* (1987), Richards made no reference to the more political aspect of the plays.

The drama critic for *The Associated Press* appeared to supplement Richards' view in concluding that while *Danger: Memory!* (1987) was not 'major Miller,' it nonetheless amounted to a 'worthwhile evening' in the theatre. Michael Kuchwara believed that *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987) was the 'more satisfying' of the pair, and that it showed Miller 'at his most generous.' Although he described the play as rueful, he commented on the humour that Miller embellished the piece with throughout (Kuchwara, Feb. 8, 1987, Reviews).

Kuchwara felt that *Clara* (1987) was implausible on account of the inadequacy of the explanation for Clara's way of life. This idea framed his larger opinion on *Danger: Memory!* (1987), for he deemed that while the remembrances of the characters in the pair of one-acts may be fascinating, they remained wholly unconvincing. Kuchwara failed to allude to the ideas about liberalism contained in either play (Kuchwara, Feb. 8, 1987, Reviews).

The production of the play at the Lincoln Centre was reviewed for *The Times* in London by Holly Hill. Describing the pair of one-acts as mood pieces, Hill commended the ideas inherent in *Danger: Memory!* (1987). Hill believed that *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987) was a haunting piece that gave dramatic shape to 'the mystery of the individual soul.' Although she deemed that *Clara* (1987) was the more original of the pair in terms of concept, she believed that this was undermined by its ineffective execution: 'the revelations become too schematic and predictable to sustain the mood of mystery and wonder at the exploration of a mind in shock.'

Nonetheless, Hill reviewed *Danger: Memory!* (1987) positively, affirming the power of the ideas in the play to prompt later introspection. '*Danger: Memory!* shows the 72-year-old Miller creating a theatrical reverie which continues to play upon the mind when the evening is over' (Hill, Feb. 19, 1987, Reviews). Although Hill did not overtly state the connection of these ideas to Liberalism, the implication is clear that she recognised the wider importance of the play.

John Peter's review of the New York production lauded the plays and countered the negativity that *Danger: Memory!* (1987) had encountered in the American critical press. In his *Sunday Times* piece, Peter deemed the writing 'alert, sinewy and purposeful' and the tone 'calmly clinical and full of restrained but intense feeling.' Most notably, Peter described Miller's characterisation as 'sharp' and well rounded in a 'quizzical' sense. Peter affirmed that although *Danger: Memory!* (1987) could only have been written by an elderly man, it did not amount to an 'old man's play.' In this subtle comment, Peter was alluding to the significance of the ideas contained within the plays that draw on history without being rendered historical (Peter, Apr. 10, 1988, Reviews).

The popularity of *Danger: Memory!* (1987) in Britain was the product of its relevance on both political and cultural levels. The election of Margaret Thatcher's neo-Conservative government in 1979 represented a shift away from the Socialism that had dominated the previous decade (Innes, 1992, 179). It also hailed a new emphasis on the 'philosophy of individualism' (Laybourn, 1999, 233). The alternative theatre

movement of the 1970s had been diverse, yet each work expressed a common identification with a Marxist ideological orientation (Innes, 1992, 179). However, the movement went into decline on account of its evident failure to alter the political climate. As a result, the ideas contained in the play were equally compatible with the British political experience. Furthermore, *Danger: Memory!* (1987) was firmly rooted in the European theatrical tradition with its Brechtian overtones and Beckettian humour. While this rendered the play popular in Britain, it further alienated American audiences.

Critical reception to *Danger: Memory!* (1987) in America appeared mixed, for reviews seemed to be internally contradictory. Although American critics disparaged aspects of the play, they nonetheless advocated their viewing. Failing to incite approval or contempt amongst critics in America, *Danger: Memory!* (1987) was thus symbolic of a new phase in the reception of Miller's plays. Critics reacted with an indifferent tolerance to *Danger: Memory!* (1987), as though not to offend an ageing writer. However, this seeming reverence was directed from without. As aforementioned, at the time of the premiere of *Danger: Memory!* (1987), Miller was receiving a successful revival on the New York stage. As a result of this, a new respect for the achievement of the playwright was being instilled. Critics ultimately concluded that while *Danger: Memory!* (1987) failed to amount to the stature of the plays of his early career, it was worthy of attention as a work by an esteemed playwright. Consideration of the play was thus not based on its own merits but by virtue of Miller's illustrious status. Although critics remained unconvinced by *Danger: Memory!* (1987), they resisted their earlier impulse to dismiss the work as a

diminishment of his erstwhile achievements. It appeared that by the time of the appearance of *Danger: Memory!* (1987), critics were resigned to a different 'horizon of expectations' for his new works whereby they had accepted that his later works would fail to match his earlier success. Accordingly, it seemed that the frame of analysis for his new works had momentarily shifted from negative comparison to a consideration as secondary works of a once venerated playwright. A long-standing critic of the playwright, David Savran stated that the standard of Miller's plays in the 1970s and 1980s was low. He thus claimed that they only received production on account of the playwright's renown:

Miller's plays of the 1970s and 1980s...I believe, would not have received attention from critics, audiences, and performers were it not for the proper name printed on their title pages. These plays fail, not because they deal with trivial matters, but because they address a number of important and provocative social, psychological, and aesthetic issues in ways that are often stilted and banal. Miller's dramatic situations are, for the most part, little more than clichés, and the prosaic, quasi-existentialist philosophizing that is superimposed on them is couched in the same kind of pretentious rhetoric... (1992, 70-71).

However, one of the more common contentious issues was the subject of characterisation. Critics were virtually unanimous in declaring this inadequacy and the resounding effect on the overall effectiveness of the plays. One-act plays are traditionally character driven pieces and thus character development is of paramount importance. The realistic nature of Miller's one-acts was compromised as the characters failed to rise above the level of types. Although less serious in the case of *I Can't Remember Anything* (1987), the lack of depth was critical in *Clara* (1987). The flaw in characterisation rendered the latter play implausible.

Clara (1987) suffered from a failing that came to mar Miller's later plays. As his career evolved and his reputation as a moralist became more firmly established, a flaw developed in his mode of characterisation. His characters became more conceptual than tangible, and stood as thematic mouthpieces only distantly related to the action. Accordingly, the lack of integration between the characters and the plot led to frequent and sometimes legitimate charges against Miller for didacticism. As the characters became more of an allegorical product, emotional connection with the audience was often sacrificed. In the case of *Clara* (1987), the failed development of the character of Kroll negated the credibility of the premise on which the play relied.

The lack of connection between the characters and the action meant that the audience became increasingly aware of their 'fictionality' or what Edward Bullough termed their 'art-character' (Ben Chaim, 1984, 9). Theorists such as Sartre believed that the sense of distance that this naturally created between the audience and the play was positive, for it provided the psychological distance to allow the audience to comfortably identify themselves with the action onstage. As Daphna Ben Chaim explains in her analysis of distance in the theatre, Sartre considered 'this psychological removal as the first phase of a theatrical experience: the distanced viewers come to realize that the characters they are imagining embody aspects of themselves' (1984, 17). However, in the particular case of *Clara* (1987), Miller had employed Brechtian techniques that specifically heightened the audience's awareness of the metatheatrical quality. Miller had been resisting an overtly emotional response to his works since *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and he accordingly wished to force the audience into a more critical than an empathetic role. Yet, in actuality, Miller's

characters were too obviously intended to serve the purpose of moral representatives. As a result, the positive sense of psychological distance was compromised by the perception of the characters as didactic figures. In Britain, the play was more favourably received as moral ideas and an overall conceptual orientation were valued above other aesthetic considerations.

The passing references to the use of humour by Miller in the plays are interesting. American critics were suspicious of comedy when employed by a serious playwright such as Miller. The implication is clear that his humorous flourishes were rendered heavy-handed by means of his intellectual treatment. It was assumed that his touches of humour were strategically placed in an attempt to underplay the preaching nature of the characters. However, Miller's use of humour was not new and had surfaced in his established plays as early as *All My Sons* (1947). His later plays were increasingly abstract and as a result the use of comedy appeared as less subtly integrated than it was required to be in his more traditional realist pieces.

The idea that Miller was becoming a more ambiguous moralist was also not a new facet in his career. Indeed it can be argued that *After the Fall* (1964) marked the beginning of the end of his absolute moral assertions. However, this was not an indication that Miller's plays suspended the probing of moral issues. The converse was in fact the case as Miller's works employed a heightened moral introspection. The difference stood in the fact that Miller grew less eager to lay claim to moral certainties.

Critics failed to perceive the centrality of the undercurrent themes regarding Liberalism in the play, and indeed overlooked the allusion to what Miller perceived as 'the erosion of human values since the War' (Miller, 2000, xi). Through *Danger: Memory!* (1987), Miller was drawing a link between the decay in moral values and the devaluation of Liberalism. The plays appear to conclude that by re-evaluating the basic tenets of Liberalism, the moral core of which it had been stripped could be restored. Yet, *Danger: Memory!* (1987) is not concerned with the reinstating of utopias. Instead, the plays highlight the struggle to define enduring values in an unstable reality.

However, Miller's plays ultimately fell victim to the inevitable paradox that plagued Liberalism. The repeated adaptability of Liberalism to social and cultural shifts in the past meant that its aspiration to universal values was undermined. Liberalism thus continued to be cast in terms of its transitory nature. As a result, Leo's unreconstructed ideas imply their present redundancy, and the actions that expressed Kroll's liberal values remain in the past.

The oversight on the part of the critics can perhaps be reduced to the fact that questions about the relevance of Liberalism had subsided in the previous decades. As a result, Liberalism had ceased to be a subject of topical discourse by the 1980s. The appearance of a play that suggested the relevance of Liberalism to modern times was thus anathema to the current cultural trend in America. Nonetheless, the fact that

critics failed to discuss the emergence of such ideas in the play was not justified by the notion that they were outmoded.

Critics likewise failed to realise the significance of Miller's probe of Liberalism to the larger theatrical situation. The Reagan era was characterised not only by a reinvigorated materialism, but also by a re-emergent racism (Wilmeth, 2006, 155). The fragmentation of the audience along racial lines continued and the politics of identity achieved precedence in the 1980s. Miller was disconcerted at this division and was troubled by the rejection of the melting pot ethos that had dominated his upbringing. Although Miller embraced the assertion of cultural difference, it was the zealous nature with which it was being pronounced that troubled him. It appeared that Miller feared that within the fanaticism the seeds of a new kind of prejudice were being planted. He was not advocating a return to the assimilative ethos, yet neither was he keen to assert the supremacy of a fragmented theatre. Instead, Miller aspired to a mosaic theatre, where American life could be presented in its mutuality and diversity.

Miller later claimed in *Timebends* that the plays had simply failed to be understood by critics. He was not surprised by this given his experience with theatre critics, yet was overwhelmed by the enthused response that *Clara* (1987) provoked in young aspiring playwrights. Miller viewed their approval as the ultimate measure of the play's worth, given that he had long since discounted the opinion of critics:

Never before had this kind of excitement been expressed to me, and it justified the whole effort. These writers understood that I had cast off absolutely every instrumentality of drama except the two essential voices of the interrogating detective and Kroll – the voice of realism and the flesh against the immortal spirit that transcends gain and loss; the death-in-life, and the life-in-death. (1999, 591)

Although Miller's reputation appeared to be undergoing a recovery, the state was illusory as it was based on former successes and not his new material. At the time that *Danger: Memory!* (1987) emerged, it had been almost two decades since his last commercial success on Broadway with *The Price* (1968). *Danger: Memory!* (1987) failed to break the stalemate, and was regarded with a respect that nonetheless proved to be short lived. For Miller however, the reception of *Danger: Memory!* (1987) was meaningless. The ideas contained within the plays and in which he was passionately invested were for the most either ignored or undetected. As a result, the critical response to *Danger: Memory!* (1987) not only reinforced the decay in American values, but also the continued depreciation in the value of American theatre criticism.

Chapter Six: 'The sickness of the soul' of the American Dream – depression as an allegory for the destructive potential of the American Dream in *The Last Yankee* (1993)

In a press interview for his next play, Miller downplayed the significance of the decision to host the international premiere of *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991) in London. He quipped that 'Like most decisions...it was made because it was 5 o'clock' (Oct. 16, 1991, Internet). However, in the light of the fact that his latest offerings were better received in Britain, the choice appears to have been dictated by more pragmatic considerations. In the case of *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991), the decision ultimately carried little consequence. The play opened to mixed reviews at the Wyndham Theatre in October 1991 and closed six weeks earlier than planned. The play received some of the worst criticism that Miller had ever been subjected to in Britain. *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991) failed to be produced in New York until 1998. In spite of script changes, the play was still disliked by critics. It nonetheless proved popular with audiences, and sold out for its limited run (Abbotson, 2007, 305).

The dawn of the 1990s also saw Miller continue his involvement in other diverse projects. In 1990, a film based on the 1982 one-act play *Some Kind of Love Story* was released. Entitled *Everybody Wins*, the film received scathing critical reviews, perhaps provoked by premature press releases announcing a star cast and director that failed to materialise. Two years later, the novella *Homely Girl, A Life* was published. Although

not as commercially successful as Miller's first major work of fiction, *Focus* (1945), Miller's writing was praised. The novel was renamed *Plain Girl* when it received its publication in Britain in 1995 to coincide with Miller's eightieth birthday. In 2001, *Homely Girl, A Life* was adapted for the screen with the new title *Eden*. Some of the scenes were filmed at Miller's Roxbury homestead and starred the playwright in a minor role. *Eden* was a minor film and received little attention from critics (Abbotson, 2007, 155-58 and 187-90).

As the 1990s commenced, little had changed on the theatrical scene. Musicals continued to dominate (Wilmeth, 2006, 190), and in April 1990, Michael Bennett's *A Chorus Line* closed with a record breaking 6,137 performances (Wilmeth, 2006, 78). In 1991, Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil's *Miss Saigon* became a popular musical success. The trend toward casting star actors in lead roles continued as a means to attract dwindling audiences to a Broadway that celebrated its centenary year in 1993 (Wilmeth, 2006, 82). In an article that appeared in *The New York Times* in January 1993, Miller alluded to the cultural shift that had long been in operation in relation to theatre. He lamented the tendency toward exorbitant production costs and stressed that a different approach to production was essential if the situation was to be penetrated (Miller, Jan. 17, 1993, 5). Successful productions during this period were straight entertainment pieces that often held little relevance or shed little enlightenment on the current time. Among the more notable exceptions were August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* in 1990, Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* in 1992, and the controversial David Mamet play *Oleanna*, which premiered Off-Broadway in 1992. In the same year of the appearance of *The Last Yankee* (1993), Tony Kushner's

Angels in America and Frank McGuinness's *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* achieved acclaim on Broadway.

Although the theatrical scene remained static, there was a change in political life. President Clinton was inaugurated in 1993, and Miller responded positively to the return to power of the Democrats after over a decade of Republican reign. The appearance of *The Last Yankee* in 1993 was a reaction to Clinton's election and the resounding effect on the American way of life. Clinton's nomination heralded a new hope founded in 'renewal, reassessment of values, and belief in the future' (Kissel in Abbotson, 1998, 73, Internet). As Miller affirmed in an interview, 'There now seems a resolution to face the facts of life. It's one of the emphases of the new administration, and maybe that is being reflected in the play' (Abbotson, 1998, 73, Internet).

The Last Yankee (1993) is a deeply emblematic play that explores the relationship between the cultural myth of the American Dream and the idea of success in America. The long established American cultural obsession with materialism meant that success was measured purely within the terms of wealth. Over time a seismic shift in attitude toward the American Dream occurred, whereby the fulfilment of its version of success became regarded as an entitlement. As a result, the level of expectation surrounding the Dream became increasingly unrealistic. The unattainable nature of the new Dream left vast sections of the American population marginalised.

The destructive effect of social pressure to achieve the American Dream on the individual psyche provided the impetus for *The Last Yankee* (1993). Symbolically set in a state mental hospital, Miller employed the analogy of characters struggling with depression to symbolise the disappointment that was now concomitant with the American Dream. The characters of the play suffer under the weight of their attempts to reconcile the success mythology of society with their individual realities. The private illness and personal desperation documented in *The Last Yankee* (1993) was thus envisioned as an allegory for the sickness at the heart of the American way of life. As Christopher Bigsby stated, *The Last Yankee* (1993) was a metaphor for the American experience, highlighting the inevitable failure of the advertised dream of perfection (1999, 174).

The Last Yankee (1993) sat comfortably within Miller's oeuvre since his plays had been engaged with the American Dream from the beginning of his career. Indeed *Death of a Salesman* (1949) is regarded as one of the most iconic dramas of the American Dream. As Bigsby stated, the play is a requiem for America and its wrong dreams (Bloom, 1988, 116, *Salesman*). Although most prominent in *Death of a Salesman* (1949), the American Dream had featured as a backdrop to many of his plays including *A View from the Bridge* (1956), *The Price* (1968), and *The American Clock* (1980). Throughout his career, Miller's critique of the American Dream had garnered him much national opprobrium. However, Miller's approach to the Dream was not wholly disparaging but instead stood as an appeal for the restoration of perspective. *The Last Yankee* (1993) is the most forthright expression of this idea. Miller calls for a more realistic perspective in terms of attitude to the Dream, and also

in relation to the values of the Dream itself. As Susan Abbotson wrote in her 1998 article on the art of compromise in the play, Miller was pleading for 'a kind of humanistic democracy which advocates the old Protestant work ethic, accepts the contingencies of life, and allows people to set themselves realistic goals' (1998, 58, Internet). Miller's obsession with the role that success played in shaping destiny in America was also well established (Harris, 1967, 118).

The fact that the play received mixed reviews in New York was unsurprising. However, the pragmatism and renewed evaluation of values that was the benchmark of Clinton's campaign meant that the climate was somewhat more receptive to Miller's message than it had been in previous times. Continuing the pattern now long established, *The Last Yankee* (1993) received critical acclaim in Britain.

The play was initially conceived as a single-scene twenty-minute playlet, and appeared in this form at the Ensemble Studio Theatre in 1991 (Biggsby, 2005, 383). The scene is set in the waiting room of a state facility and features the chance encounter between two men whose wives are being treated there for depression. Their idle exchange soon becomes heated as they discuss the social contexts to the condition that afflicts their wives. This scene remained in the play's extended version with only minor changes. In a similar vein to the revised version of *A View from the Bridge* (1956), it was augmented by an additional scene which allowed Miller to include the perspective of the wives. This more panoramic approach afforded a broader analysis of the Dream, as each character adopted a variant attitude toward it.

Leroy Hamilton is the much-beleaguered last Yankee of the play's title. He stands as one of the last preserves of the traditional American Dream, disparaging the prevailing materialist values of modern society. Leroy advocates the virtues of honour and tradition and holds firm to the value that character is the measure of the man. His convictions are considered retrograde by the culture of self-aggrandizement that surrounds him. Unlike the governing ethos that prizes material wealth, he aspires to transcendence and spiritual satisfaction. Leroy subscribes to the frontier version of the American Dream, where the virtues of hard work and self-reliance reign supreme. A theorist on the evolution of the American Dream, William Caldwell describes this appropriation:

The early American Dream was the agrarian vision of a hardy new breed of self-reliant individuals who embraced hard work and sacrifice...This concept was...an ethic, for it implied not only a possibility for material abundance, but also a path to a better, more moral life. (2006, 115)

A master craftsman, Leroy garners personal satisfaction from the quality of the work that he produces and not the material wealth that it can bestow. As a result, Leroy undercharges for his labour and only raises his prices when he is forced to by the overinflated environment.

LEROY. I hate asking that much but even so I just about make it. (2000, 10)

He lacks the competitive impulses of the world around him, for he measures success by achievement. This sensibility places him at odds with normative society but also with his heritage. Leroy is a descendent of the Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, yet he holds the economic values of his forbearer in contempt. Hamilton was 'associated with the partially destructive, materialistic aspects of American thought' (Abbotson, 1998, 60, Internet), and firmly believed in the 'legitimate power of the

wealthy' (Biggsby, 2006, 383). As William Smith writes in his analysis of the play, Leroy distances 'himself from the economic legacy of his heritage' for ironically it is this 'legacy that currently dooms him' (Langteau, 2007, 90).

Whilst Leroy represents the counter culture, John Frick stands as the normative materialist automaton. Frick's ideas of success are framed within the parameters of the standardised American Dream with its focus on the accumulation of material wealth and the concomitant conferring of status. Caldwell describes this version of the Dream as the middle class cliché, wholly rooted in the 'Dream of progress' (2006, 44). This dream emerged in the aftermath of the Depression, and stood as 'a visionary Ponzi scheme in which things promise to keep getting better until an American utopia is finally achieved' (Caldwell, 2006, 42). However, this dream was equally built on the destructive impulses that had incited the Depression, holding material wealth as the sole signifier of success.

In spite of their obvious differences, there is a striking similarity between the pair. Both Leroy and Frick are driven by individualism in their desire to be self-reliant and they both share a belief in hard work to achieve this. The root of their difference lies merely in the evolution of American culture. Whilst Leroy directs these ideals toward the traditional sphere of the family and personal gratification, Frick works to accumulate wealth and achieve eminence. Leroy's sense of fulfilment is personally granted, yet Frick only receives validation and satisfaction from social recognition of his success. As Jeffrey Mason writes in his analysis of Frick's contemporaries,

'Money is the evidence of success...Yet money, by itself, isn't enough; what they desire most is the respect and unabated admiration of others' (2008, 92).

Frick is preoccupied with aesthetics, yet it seems possible that his obsession with status transcends the bounds of mere snobbery. In spite of the pompousness of his nature, Frick is acutely insecure and it seems likely that this is deeply rooted in his background. Given his age, Frick would have been raised during the Depression, and the impact of this can be traced in his overcompensating desire to succeed. To combat his fear of the levelling impulse indoctrinated by the Depression, he silently ranks strangers in relation to him. Leroy's Ivy League jacket convinces Frick that he is a college graduate. He accordingly talks disparagingly of tradesmen to distinguish himself from the worker and align himself with Leroy. However, there is a telling change in Frick's attitude to Leroy when he discovers that he is in fact a carpenter.

Frick's version of the Dream is the evolution of Hamilton's ideals. He is indeed a successful self-made businessman, but he has allowed this to subsume his personality. His obsession with business has resulted in the complete commodification of his identity. The extent of his depersonalisation is emphasised in the fact that he is the only character to be referred to in the stage directions by his surname alone. As a result of his obsession with status, he is bewildered by the fact that Leroy distances himself from his illustrious ancestry. Leroy's disinterest in the wider branches of his family and the connections that they could afford him is incomprehensible to Frick.

LEROY. ...I never kept up with the whole thing.

FRICK. (*laughing, shaking his head*). Boy, you're quite a character, aren't you.

LEROY *is silent, reddening*. FRICK *continues chuckling at him for a moment*.

(2000, 11)

Frick's pride at his own achievements results in a general condescension toward others, to which he seems unconscious. His interpersonal skills are poor and as the play evolves it emerges that this is not restricted to his encounters with strangers. His obvious discomfort in social scenarios is a product of the fact that he only understands the black and white environment of business. Frick's attempts at idle conversation are loaded with judgemental observations that indicate his inability to appropriately connect with people. An intolerant racist and a bigot, Frick embodied Miller's belief that the advertised ideals of freedom, tolerance, and adversity had become a national myth. He felt that these ideals were being steadily undermined by the renewed capacity for greed that was receiving justification under the banner of the American Dream. Leroy's patience with Frick's pompous nature soon expires and his contempt is unleashed in what appears as an atypical outburst. Although Leroy tolerated the implied offence in Frick's earlier comments, the increasingly personal nature of his remarks incites his fury.

Similar to Hamilton's belief in the supremacy of the wealthy, Frick believes that his adherence to the conventions of normative society entitles him to pass judgement on the cultural deviance of another. Leroy's appropriation of the Dream is not understood by wider society, and as a result, his personal choices fail to be respected by others. The implication is clear that Leroy is frequently subjected to such bouts of ritual

humiliation wherein his profession is undermined and understood as an expression of his lack of ambition. The audacity and impropriety of Frick's suggestion that Leroy should have been prevented from pursuing such a career path given his status as a scion proves too much for Leroy.

FRICK. Well, coming out of an old family like that – how do you come to being a carpenter?

LEROY. Just...liked it...

FRICK. Your father should've taken you in hand. (2000, 10-11)

Leroy vehemently believes that the social judgement implied in such comments is the root of the mental health problems of the country. The fact that Leroy is made to feel ashamed of an honest profession and lifestyle merely as it does not hold materialism as its primary aim disgusts him.

LEROY. ...this whole type of conversation about my clothes – should I be ashamed I'm a carpenter? I mean everybody's talking 'labor,' how much labor's getting; well if it's so great to be labor how come nobody wants to be it? I mean you ever hear a parent going around saying (*Mimes thumb pridefully tucked into suspenders.*) 'My son is a carpenter?' Do you? Do you ever hear people brag about a bricklayer? (2000, 12)

The impression is clear that Leroy is accustomed to such judgemental slights from strangers. However, the passion that informs the severity of Leroy's reaction can only be properly understood when it is considered in the context of his wider life. Perhaps the reason that Leroy has not become wholly desensitized to public opinion is the result of the fact that he receives no relief in his own home. Previous Miller characters such as Willy Loman were bolstered against their inner anguish by an unconditional

home support. However, Leroy Hamilton proves to be less fortunate and instead is confronted by the same shallowness in his wife.

Patricia Hamilton is enslaved by the same 'naïve and brutal' 'success mythology' as Frick (Miller, 2000, xxii), although her obsession is to the next extreme. Patricia's belief in this ideology fails to be tempered by objectivity and so the idea that success has to be earned is anathema to her. The virtue of hard work that binds Leroy and Frick is absent in Patricia. Indeed, the notion that hard work provides self-fulfilment in and of itself is incomprehensible to her. This proves an endless source of conflict in her marriage, for as Miller commented:

...the Yankee is somebody who has stepped off the train. He is not running after the brass ring any more; but his wife is on that train. She can't see happiness unless it is accompanied by economic success. He makes a perfectly good living, but has got to go to work every day. He works in overalls and does not have an unearned income, which is the evidence of success. She feels that he has disserved himself, and her, by failing in that respect. (Bigsby, 2005, 296)

Patricia's attitude toward the Dream is partially informed by the fact that her family immigrated to America. As a result, she was raised in a family that were wholly invested in the American promise of success. With each generation that was born in America, this promise steadily evolved into a divine right to the American version of success.

...as its prospects became more and more promising, the dream became more and more like an entitlement until, finally, somewhere in the middle of the twentieth century, many "Americans came to believe that prosperity was their birthright," with or without the traditional work ethic. (Caldwell, 2006, 47)

Jeffrey Mason described this notion of 'exceptionalism' as a unique element of the American cultural experience. Similarly to Willy Loman, Patricia has personalized this idea (2008, 93).

However, the ever-increasing set of expectations rendered Patricia and her siblings inept when it came to accepting reality. Both of Patricia's brothers committed suicide, and she has retreated into a figurative suicide through her depression. In an interview in 1980, Miller identified this sense of frustration as an inevitable by-product of the increasingly unattainable nature of the American Dream: 'You are surrounded with what you think is opportunity. But you can't grab on to it' (Roudane, 1987, 326).

PATRICIA. We were all brought up expecting to be wonderful, and...(*Breaks off with a shrug*) just wasn't. (2000, 23)

Patricia shares with Frick the 'ritualistic preoccupation' with comparison of modern society. As Miller described:

...these people are supremely the prey of the culture if only because it is never far from the centre of their minds...the endless advertising-encouraged self comparisons with others who are more or less successful than they (Miller, 2000, xxv).

She craves social validation, and it seems possible that the roots of this are buried within a type of immigrant anxiety. Indeed, the matrix of this seems to be personally informed, drawn from the dynamics of Miller's own parents and grandparents. Patricia similarly yearns for recognition and validation from a host culture with which she still appears uneasy.

Leroy has psychologically freed himself from the endless competition with Patricia's brothers and wider society. By understanding that 'We're really all on a one person line' (2000, 30), he has simultaneously extracted himself from the social comparisons that imprison Patricia. He appeals to her to equally relinquish her illusions and accept her life as it stands. However, he fails to realise that it is his isolation from society that helps to reinforce her need for social validation.

LEROY. We are in this world and you're going to have to find some way to love it. (2000, 34)

The strength of Patricia's belief in her right to success means that she blames outside forces for its failed realisation. She feels betrayed by her husband, for the expectations that she envisioned for her marriage failed to materialise.

PATRICIA. ...everyone envied us, we were the handsomest pair in town. (2000, 19)

She continually emasculates him with a barrage of disparaging comments, and he must bear humiliating slights on every aspect of his life.

The impacted frustration of her disappointment has not only resulted in the undisguised cruelty directed toward her husband but also her depressed state. The course of treatment for her condition causes further tension in her relationship with her husband. Leroy vehemently disagrees with the medication that Patricia is prescribed, for he believes that the root cause of her condition lies in an attitude problem. He disputes her theory that her illness is spiritual on the grounds of the psychological effects of her upbringing.

LEROY. ...you all had this – you know – very high opinion of yourselves; each and every one of you was automatically going to the head of the line just because your name was Sorgenson. And life isn't that way, so you got sick. (2000, 27)

He accordingly believes that the treatment of her condition through medication only serves to further distance her from reality. His grounds for his objection appear justified by the fact that Patricia has been suffering for almost twenty years.

However, after three admissions to the facility, there appears to be a perceptible change in Patricia. Acting independent of her doctor, she has secretly ceased to take her medication. She is now in a position to regard the other patients from a more detached perspective. As Miller explained in his introduction to the play:

...she knows, as do many such patients, that more Americans are in hospitals for depression than any other ailment. In life, with such people, a high degree of objectification or distancing exists...they commonly know a great deal about the social setting of the illness even as they are unable to tear themselves free of it. (Miller, 2000, xxiii)

She also appears to be in greater control of her illness and seemingly unconsciously raises concerns as to the appropriateness of her treatment. She is reluctant to inform her doctors that she has ceased to take her medication as she claims that they would be unwilling to accept that she can cope without it. She affirms that without medication she has attained a new clarity, free of 'that sort of fuzziness in my head' (2000, 15.) Furthermore, she implies that the prescription of medication is unsatisfactorily regulated and not regarded in an appropriately serious context.

PATRICIA. ...of course the minute they see you enjoying yourself they'll probably try to knock you out with a pill. (2000, 22)

Through the figures of both Leroy and Patricia, Miller appears to be asserting that medication has become a means to control patients rather than a means by which to assist them in their recovery.

Without the distancing effects of medication, Patricia registers the impact of her condition on her marriage. It appears that for the first time, Patricia is aware of the altruism of her husband and the depth of his patience. Their marriage has been plagued by accusation, guilt and resentment, yet Leroy has remained empathetic and devoted to Patricia and their children. She realises that she must stop blaming Leroy and assume responsibility for her life in order to command her condition. However, the ingrained nature of her way of thinking frustrates her conscious attempts to change her attitude and behaviour toward him. As a result, she constantly vacillates between repentance and accusation.

PATRICIA. Dear God when I think of him hanging in there all these years...I'm so ashamed. But at the same time he's absolutely refused to make any money, every one of our children has had to work since they could practically write their names! I can't be expected to applaud exactly. (2000, 17)

Patricia has grown accustomed to using her husband as an emotional crutch to explain the failed promise of her life. Without Leroy to hold accountable, she risks disillusionment with the Dream that binds her to American culture.

PATRICIA. I guess sooner or later you just have to stand up and say, 'I'm normal, I made it.' But it's like standing on top of a stairs and there's no stairs. (2000, 17)

In order to explain Leroy's lack of ambition toward the realisation of the socially approved Dream, Patricia accuses him of being more depressed than she is. She cites his lack of trust and his fierce self-reliance as an acute manifestation of this. Leroy counters her charge by arguing with claims that his condition is causal.

LEROY: ...if I'm depressed it's from something that happened, not something I imagine. (2000, 28)

Leroy's own family perpetuates the erosion of his dignity that began with the ill treatment by his father. Patricia fails to perceive the connection between his self-image and the insularity of the opinions that she shares with wider society. The condescension with which his profession is generally regarded is echoed by his wife and by his own children. Their egotistical desires disregard the reality that Leroy is personally fulfilled by his life and by his family, and that it is only their disapproval that causes his discontent. Leroy has thus learned to look down on himself and refers to himself in pejorative terms.

LEROY. I give you all the credit. I finally got it through my thick skull... (2000, 25)

Indeed, Bigsby comments that the root of Leroy's empathy with Patricia's condition lies in this personal insight: 'They have, without knowing it, shared disappointment, differently defined, differently conceived but jointly experienced. Ironically, it is, in part, what now brings them together' (Bigsby, 2006, 386).

The disinterest of his family in favour of their obsessive desire for success ensures that Leroy's sense of self-assurance remains tentative. However, it has more serious consequences in the case of Karen Frick whose resolve has been wholly broken by the apathy of her husband. After spending her marriage assimilating into the world of her

husband, Karen has lost all autonomy and sense of identity outside her role as the docile wife.

Her self-esteem has been steadily eroded by her husband's disregard and years of repression of her individual desires. Throughout their marriage, Frick prioritised business ambitions at the neglect of his wife. His dogged pursuit of his appropriation of the Dream leaves him unable to comprehend that his impulses may not be universal. He believes that providing for his wife financially should be enough to secure her happiness and is thus wholly oblivious to her needs.

FRICK. I just can't figure it out. There's no bills; we're very well fixed, she's got a beautiful house...There's really not a trouble in the world. (2000, 6)

Bigsby claims that the root of Frick's bewilderment at her illness lies in the fact that he barely registers her existence (1999, 175). His frustration at his inability to understand Karen results in his general condescension toward her and her condition. He frequently regards her in the manner of a stranger and his overriding emotion in relation to her condition is shame. A man reliant on public perception, he embraces the stigma that is often concomitant with mental illness. As alluded to earlier, the development of Frick's business acumen resulted in the sacrifice of his emotional intelligence. He approaches human interaction with the black and white rationale of business, and it becomes increasingly apparent that he considers his wife an ill investment. In many respects, he is a typical Miller protagonist, for as Abbotson

observes, 'Successful people in Miller's plays are rarely happy in any other relationship than the one they have with their success...' (2007, 374).

Karen has grown so accustomed to deferring to her husband that she lacks all confidence in her own judgement. The acute nature of her psychological paralysis means that she lacks any capacity for independent thought. She is unable to commit to even trivial decisions such as where to buy her groceries. Karen is desperate for Frick's reassurance and she relies on his support for validation. She lives in paranoid fear of upsetting and shaming him, and so allows his patronising remarks to further undermine her confidence.

The relationship between Frick and Karen is not equal in the sense that it is not reciprocal. Karen devoted her life to being the dutiful wife, silently supporting her husband. However, Frick failed to be equally forthcoming when it came to Karen's wishes. Karen has no desire for the material wealth that her husband has accumulated, for she aspires to a more organic definition of the Dream that recalls that of Willy Loman.

KAREN. I wish we could raise some vegetables like we did on the farm. (2000, 20)

Karen's speech is laden with absurdist non-sequiturs indicating her distance from the connectedness that she craves (Abbotson, 1998, 62, Internet). Abbotson asserts that Miller also resorts to non-verbal cues by choosing 'a song of nostalgic longing for

family' for Karen to dance to (1998, 63, Internet). Her desire for the visceral connection of a family is also reflected in the fact that she is haunted by the mother with whom she had an acrimonious relationship and her keen interest in Patricia's family. Her need for a sense of rootedness binds Karen to Leroy, and divides her from her husband.

It appears that the realisation that her passivity has been self-imposed has resulted in her condition. Her retreat to tap dancing is her attempt to escape her loneliness and capture the attention and recognition of her apathetic husband. However, her chosen hobby offends Frick's sense of propriety and his disapproval inhibits the positive value that it holds for Karen. Instead of standing as a liberating form of self-expression, she is reduced to despair by his humiliation.

FRICK. I think it's kinda silly at her age... (2000, 35)

He fails to understand that her dancing is her means of asserting her independence and he dismisses it as another symptom of her condition.

FRICK. ...don't tell me you think it's normal for a woman her age to be getting out of bed two, three in the morning and start practicing. (2000, 37)

Under the attentiveness and encouragement of Leroy and Patricia, Karen momentarily recovers a sense of confidence. The extent of Patricia's objectification means that she can acutely perceive what Karen needs for her recovery. She intervenes to bolster Karen's esteem and chastises Frick for his failure to transcend his own feelings and prioritise his wife's well being.

PATRICIA. Mr. Frick, she's standing under a mountain a mile high – you've got to help her over it. That woman has very high possibilities! (2000, 37)

The irony lies in the fact that Patricia is ignorant to the relevance of her comments to her own marriage. Patricia's relationship with her own condition is infinitely more complex and so the logic that she applies to Karen's situation becomes more complicated when she attempts to relate it to herself. She is unaware that her remarks to Frick to cease conveying his sense of disappointment to Karen bear any relation to her mistreatment of Leroy. Patricia constantly goads her husband and ensures that he is aware that his banjo playing humiliates her. Just as Frick wishes Karen had chosen a hobby that he would deem more age appropriate, Patricia desires that Leroy opt for an instrument that she regards as more respectable. Her failure to see the connection between herself and Frick is telling of the fact that although Patricia is aware of the wider aspects of her condition, she still lacks self-awareness.

Patricia and Leroy's attempts to buoy Karen ultimately fail as it is Frick's approval that she craves. His attempt at encouragement is underscored by his obvious embarrassment and discomfort. He is unable to transcend his own ego and as a result, it appears that he regards her condition as an act of self-indulgence. He seems to perceive her condition as an ungrateful act of vengeance against him for the life that he has provided for her.

FRICK. Looked to me like she was just favoring herself; I mean the woman has everything. (2000, 36)

This is also the reason why he chooses not to pay for his wife to be placed in a private care facility, even though he openly acknowledges the superiority of care there. Paradoxically, Leroy's decision not to allow Patricia to be transferred to the private

centre is motivated by love and insight into her condition. This facility is further from their home and accordingly he would be unable to visit her frequently. Furthermore, the prestigious nature of the centre means that Patricia would more likely be surrounded by affluent people. Given the nature of Patricia's condition, he knows that such company would hinder her recovery by perpetuating her sense of discontent.

It is apparent that both Leroy and Frick would be better suited to the other's spouse. The roots of the condition of both Patricia and Karen lie in the incompatibility of their marriages. Leroy and Karen share the same aspiration toward the spiritual side of the American Dream that prizes true integrated human connection. Both Patricia and Frick wholly take for granted this aspect of their relationships, and fail to understand success in human terms. Consumed in aesthetics, Patricia and Frick require and thrive on social validation. Their preoccupation with material success has depersonalised and dehumanised them and they thus lack compassion for their spouses.

Their desires are incongruous with those of their partners, for they aspire to seemingly mutually incompatible versions of the American Dream. Moreover, Patricia and Frick believe that Leroy and Karen's appropriation is redundant. As Steven Centola affirms, self-worth has now become determined by profit margin alone (Langteau, 2007, 11), and the authoritative version of the Dream is now founded in the frenzied accumulation of mass wealth. The concomitant reality is that success is now also measured within such a narrow parameter.

Miller's aim in *The Last Yankee* (1993) was to highlight the increasingly unrealistic nature of the new American Dream and thus the unattainable nature of success for the average American citizen. He believed that the frustration and disappointment dramatised in the play was the new American condition. The Dream makes no concessions to limited success and appears intolerant of any varying definition outside the standardized version.

Over time the traditional values of the American Dream in the form of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness gradually became synonymous with wealth and the measures taken to secure it. The spiritual dimension that was intended to be concomitant was eroded by greed and the competitive values of modern society. Through the opposing couples in *The Last Yankee* (1993), Miller appealed for the balance to be restored. Centola succinctly sums up Miller's thesis in his comment that, 'the current structure of society, dependent upon business and focused on wealth, leads people inevitably toward an empty, depressed emotional state from which only a connection to the organic can return them' (Langteau, 2007, 94). In many ways *The Last Yankee* (1993) is an expansion of the ideas about human connection explored in the seminal *Death of a Salesman* (1949).

Miller was not advocating the demise of the American Dream, but a restoration of perspective. He understood the Dream as the animating cultural myth woven into the fabric and identity of American culture, and he was invested in ensuring its preservation. William Caldwell augments Miller's appeal, as he equally claims that it

is the dual nature of the Dream that sustains it (2006, 39). Both Frick and Leroy are necessary counter forces, but Frick's ambition needs to be tempered by the supremacy of human connection that Leroy prizes.

The catatonic patient that frames the action of the play is Miller's portent of the future if this balance fails to be reinstated. Miller's stage directions outline that '*a fully clothed* PATIENT *lies motionless with one arm over her eyes*' and remains accordingly for the duration of the second scene (2000, 13). The patient is a physical metaphor reminiscent of Samuel Beckett, and indeed Paul Taylor of *The Independent* drew an analogy between the two playwrights in his review of *The Last Yankee* (1993). Commenting on the frequency of hospital settings in Miller's later plays, Taylor remarked that 'hospital beds' are 'to late Miller what dustbins were to Beckett' (Jan. 28, 1993, 23, Reviews). *The Last Yankee* (1993) drew Miller closer to the absurdist perspective on modern life.

The obliviousness and lack of awareness that characterises Frick and Patricia is reflected in the complete lack of objectivity of the patient. Miller thus intended the figure to symbolise the natural endpoint to such narrow and insular thinking. Miller was appealing for the introduction of a new consciousness that recognised the absurdity of modern society. Although the play establishes some hope for Patricia to attain this new understanding, *The Last Yankee* (1993) ultimately ends on a less positive note. The final closing image of the play is not that of Leroy and Patricia leaving the facility with a renewed optimism, but that of the catatonic patient. '*The*

PATIENT *on the bed remains motionless. A stillness envelops the whole stage, immobility seems eternal*' (2000, 42). Although Miller believed in the capacity for change on an individual level, he was clearly unable to envision a time when wider society would relinquish the success mythology of the new American Dream.

The Last Yankee (1993) was a thorough indictment of American culture, appealing for a radical reassessment of the mores and values of American life. It therefore seems inevitable that the play was not wholly embraced by American critics. However, although not uniformly positive, they were nonetheless more receptive to Miller's argument. The new political environment was an unmistakable factor in this. In spite of critical slights, the play proved popular with audiences and its run was extended twice at the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York (Abbotson, 2007, 219).

The premiere of *The Last Yankee* was joint and it simultaneously opened at the Young Vic in London on January 21, 1993. As was now an established precedent, the play was widely celebrated in Britain. The British reviews were also more astute and appeared more in tune with the play's significance. For the most part, a seemingly willed ignorance cloaked the American reviews.

The Last Yankee (1993) earned Miller one of his best reviews in *Time* magazine in decades. Reviewed by Richard Corliss, the play was regarded as a 'cause for celebration.' He praised Miller's departure from traditional drama and commended

the refinement of what he perceived as the playwright's 'best artistic tendencies.' He applauded the poignancy of the play, especially in the 'rich' and 'individual' portrait of Patricia (Corliss, Feb. 8, 1993, Reviews).

In spite of this, Corliss maintained that Miller's proclivity for preaching unfortunately remained intact:

The Last Yankee plays like a last contrition – with a bit of sermon thrown in. Miller has been in the pulpit so long that he can't completely shake the preacher's jeremiad cadences from his voice, even when he wants to whisper. (Corliss, Feb. 8, 1993, Reviews)

Corliss admonished the playwright for allowing the integrity of Leroy's character to be 'overrun' by his political agenda.' He described Miller's didactic overtures as 'a radio sonata interrupted by a campaign commercial.' However, this slight is the only recognition of the play's metaphorical intentions. He failed to perceive that Patricia's 'troubled soul having a chat with itself' was intended to be symbolic of America reassessing its values. There was no causal connection drawn between the condition of the patients and the American experience (Corliss, Feb. 8, 1993, Reviews).

The idea that Miller's advancement in years was beginning to command a new respect was apparent in Corliss' comments that the play 'qualifies as prime old-man's art.' The implication was clear that his plays should no longer be assessed alongside those of emerging playwrights, on account of the incommensurable nature of their objectives and their perspectives: 'Miller is 77 now; he has nothing to prove but much to tell, in a few words...It is just a sketch, really – some lines that reveal the contours of a soul' (Corliss, Feb. 8, 1993, Reviews).

The daily and weekend reviews of the play that appeared in *The New York Times* could be perceived as being based on two separate plays. Although neither review was overtly positive, they both adopted wholly antithetical viewpoints on the main argument of the play. Surprisingly, the daily review by the respected critic Mel Gussow overlooked the relevance of the play to the American experience. As a weekend review, David Richards' commentary was the more authoritative. His review was also the more incisive of the two, and as a result, the more scathing.

In the opening line of his review, Gussow defined the play as the work of a major playwright 'writing in a minor key.' Although he commended Miller's ability to 'be tender as well as trenchant' in parts, he believed that the play's male characters were 'thinly written.' He commented that the dialogue was self-conscious for the most part, and that the play remained too unresolved in spite of its expanded format. Gussow ultimately concluded that Miller was still constrained by the uncharacteristically short length of the revised play: 'He is a playwright who benefits from having dramatic elbow room' (Gussow, Jan. 22, 1993, C3, Reviews).

Gussow's review made no allusion to the play's allegorical undertones. Instead he understood the play as a rumination on marriage and the psychological damage that one unconsciously inflicted on one's spouse. In this way, he found the play unsatisfactory, for it failed to probe 'the roots of the shared problem or the marriages themselves.' The only reference to the wider significance of the play was suggested in

his passing comment on the conversational 'digressions about civic problems and the depressive state of the nation' (Gussow, Jan. 22, 1993, C3, Reviews).

David Richards' review readily identified that Miller intended the state facility to be understood as 'a symbol for the country itself.' He recognised the importance of the American Dream as the central motif of the play, yet his dissatisfaction with the manner with which Miller presented his argument resulted in a review that was both derisive and mocking (Richards, Jan, 31, 1993, 2.5, Reviews).

Richards believed that the play was poorly executed, and that the subject matter suffered from the weight of Miller's allegorical intentions. He felt that the details of the characters' experiences were flimsy and poorly explained. As a result, he felt that the characters stood secondary to their symbolic significance. He deemed that these factors rendered the play implausible and thus insignificant:

...you gather that their current condition has a lot to do with their respective husbands, although don't ask what...Why any of this should be is never satisfactorily explained, let alone dramatised. Mr. Miller seems interested in these souls exclusively for their symbolic value. (Richards, Jan. 31, 1993, 2.5, Reviews)

It appears that Richards believed that Miller's narrow view compromised the seriousness of his aim. In the sardonic tone of the review, he implied that the play deduced that America was both 'drugged and directionless.' It seems that Richards felt that the metaphor was lost as the play was too overtly conceptual: 'The American

dream has been a long time dying in his work, and he's got it down to a last gasp here.' Indeed, he believed that the play was only produced on account of the eminence of the playwright:

You could call it an elegy, but only out of respect for the memorable plays the author has given us. Had "The Last Yankee" been written by Arthur Jones, say, I have little doubt it would have wound up in the slush pile. (Richards, Jan. 31, 1993, 2.5, Reviews).

The tone of the reviews in Britain was wholly antithetical, yet this is not altogether surprising given the distance from the context of the play. The cultural gap also explains the fact that the reviews were remarkably more candid and pointed. As passive receptors to the American lifestyle, audiences in Britain were receptive to the cultural critique and its foreboding in the play. When the play opened at the Young Vic, it defied expectation by selling out its limited run. The production was extended and was eventually moved to another theatre to accommodate its popularity.

Irving Wardle of *The Independent* deemed that *The Last Yankee* (1993) was Miller's 'best play for a decade.' He suggested that it was the type of play required to prove wrong those that had claimed that Miller was 'a spent force' after the critical disaster of *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* two years previous. In contrast to the opinion of American critics who believed that Miller had lapsed into didacticism, Wardle praised Miller for choosing not to 'editorialise' and instead opting to tell the tale (Wardle, Jan. 31, 1993, 19, Reviews).

Nonetheless, Wardle agreed that the play was 'sustained by the barest thread of plot.' He identified this as a trend in Miller's later work in which the playwright no longer professed to be certain of what was going to happen from the outset. Wardle believed these later plays to be 'low-key conversation' pieces that existed free of the conventional constraints of plot. However, in the case of *The Last Yankee* (1993) he deemed that the lapses in detail were compensated for by its larger poignancy: 'There is no narrative logic...but the emotional logic is devastating and it moves you to tears' (Wardle, Jan. 31, 1993, 19, Reviews).

Wardle instinctively recognised the direct relevance of the play to the American experience. He understood the undertones of the American Dream in the portrayal of 'a society whose members feel obscurely cheated and where the very air they breathe is saturated in disappointment.' However, in spite of the specificity of the context, Wardle alluded to its universal message of the destructive potential of posterity (Wardle, Jan. 31, 1993, 19, Reviews).

Benedict Nightingale's review for *The Times* expanded on many of Wardle's ideas. Nightingale identified the thematic connection of *The Last Yankee* (1993) to earlier Miller plays, yet alongside other critics, noted the underwritten quality that characterised his later works. Although he similarly acknowledged the shortcomings in relation to plot and detail, he shared Wardle's view in applauding the play's capacity to move nonetheless (Nightingale, Jan. 28, 1993, Reviews).

Nightingale also identified the American context of the play, commenting that 'their disappointment is particularly acute because their all-American expectations are so high.' In contrast to Wardle, Nightingale deemed that the specificity of the play meant that it could only be properly understood by American audiences: '*The Last Yankee*... is directed at his compatriots. To be English is inevitably to miss something. We hear the notes all right, but maybe not the whole tune; the concern, but not quite the pain.' However, he still believed that the content was more significant than that produced by British playwrights (Nightingale, Jan. 28, 1993, Reviews).

Unlike his American counterparts, Nightingale commended Miller for his lack of idealisation and moralising. Instead, Nightingale praised Miller for his delicate use of humour, which complemented 'his awareness of the complexities of human behaviour and the difficulty of apportioning blame.' He concluded that the play was 'proof in itself that, at 77, Miller is still as wise and humane a dramatist as neglectful America possesses' (Nightingale, Jan. 28, 1993, Reviews).

The most laudatory of the British reviews appeared in *The Sunday Times*. An established champion of Miller, John Peter's appraisal of *The Last Yankee* (1993) may have been the most ingratiating but it was also the most insightful. Alongside emphasising the American aspect of the play, he was the only critic to refer to the catatonic patient in his review: 'In the next bed lies a third patient, face covered, an accusing, silent presence and a reminder of what one could become' (Peter, Jan. 31, 1993, Reviews).

Peter deemed the play 'a hard, dark elegy of American life,' that accurately captured 'a society that turns everyone into its own image as a puritanical task master.' He echoed Miller's disparagement of a national myth 'where success and failure have moral connotations, where private self-approval needs the blessing of a public ethic, and where personal worth is a question of value rather than values.' In spite of the fact of his recognition of the catatonic patient, he still insisted that the play ended on a semi-optimistic note (Peter, Jan. 31, 1993, Reviews).

At the time of the appearance of *The Last Yankee* (1993), the British stage was equally dominated by musicals. The nostalgia trend that had begun in the 1970s in America penetrated the British theatrical stage in the ubiquity of revivals. The popularity of the play in Britain was a unique blend of the envy and resentment that was harboured in relation to American culture. The influence of America globally was attested in the spread of its cultural exports. Therefore, while the American experience was widely imitated, it was also resented for the superiority that it conferred. As a result, Miller believed that the criticism of America inherent in his plays rendered them popular abroad. Accordingly, while critics in Britain readily recognised the American roots of the play, they also emphasised the universality of the play's admonition. With the promising economic forecast, critics and audiences were attentive to the play's warning regarding overinflated expectations. Furthermore, *The Last Yankee* (1993) continued Miller's increasingly European outlook in its parallels with Absurdist theatre and its techniques.

The unwillingness of American critics to understand or accept the play as an appropriate metaphor for the American experience was virtually inevitable. Indeed the idea that the American Dream had evolved to the status of a national madness was akin to heresy. The tone of the reviews was derisive for the most part, and any allusion to appreciation of the play was founded in a misplaced respect. Critics implied that the play received special treatment on account of the reverence for the playwright and his status as one of America's greatest dramatists.

Yet, the receptiveness of the American audience to the play implies that social attitudes toward the supremacy of the Dream and toward the playwright himself were beginning to change. By the 1990s, the contrast between how Miller was received in America and in Britain had long become an issue of public awareness. Miller's choice to premiere *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991) in London had been understood as an expression of his weariness with America, and the title of *The Last Yankee* (1993) seemed indicative of the final stage of his Anglicization. However, the play was not an arraignment of America but instead a call for a reassessment of its value system that echoed the manifesto of the new administration. The average American responded to Clinton and to Miller's play for the same reason. The ordinary American citizen was growing intolerant of a success mythology that continued to exclude them, as the American Dream became a barometer for failure and not achievement.

Both sets of critics appeared to agree on the fact that the play lacked the detail necessary to grant a clear internal logic to the action. Critics were unanimous that this

failing was as a result of the comparative brevity of the play. In an interview with Michael Billington, the resident theatre critic with *The Guardian* in London, Miller affirmed that the decision to write a play with a duration of under two hours was a deliberate one. He stated that the choice was enforced by the nature of the times and the disinterest of audiences in overarching exposition (Billington, Apr. 9, 1993, 4, Internet). However, critics concluded that the plot was thus made inadequate as an entity in and of itself. The more astute critics excused this shortcoming on the basis that the characters were secondary to their allegorical significance, whilst American critics deemed that this failing rendered the allegory implausible.

The allegory that Miller had intended between a private illness and a wider national malaise was indeed legitimate, yet the question over the plausibility of its actualisation warrants consideration. American reviewers that overlooked the parallel deduced that the play was a poor output by the playwright. However, the majority of other critics that recognised the connection remarked that the surface content of the play was compromised by its allegorical value. Therefore, the play requires the realisation of its allegory to grant it significance. In this respect, it seems certain that this fact was only excused on account of Miller's eminent status.

On account of the fact that critics recognised that the topic of depression was secondary, the reality that Miller's treatment of depression in the play went without comment is less curious. It was only with the emergence of scholarly criticism that Miller's attitude was questioned. His aim to highlight the 'moral and social myths

feeding the disease' (Miller, 2000, xxiii) garnered him praise from the majority of critics who applauded him for raising such an issue on the public stage. However, Miller's handling of depression failed to impress all critics. Martin Gottfried deemed that the 'conclusion drawn is dubious, platitudinous and possibly dangerous...that medication only worsens the illness while psychiatry is not even worth discussing' (2005, 436). Although Gottfried's comments hold some merit, they are also deeply overblown. Miller does not suggest that psychiatry is futile in the play, in fact he advocates a renewed emphasis on this in the treatment of depression. However, Miller's ideas verge on the precarious in his suggestion that medication is an inappropriate course of treatment. Nonetheless, this implication is not intended as a trivialisation of the seriousness of depression or a denial that depression is a medical condition. His thoughts are directly related to Patricia's specific case, and the tendency to overprescribe medication for depression without addressing the underlying issues. It seems possible that Miller's attitude was informed by his own experience and the reckless nature with which prescription medication was made readily available to Marilyn Monroe. Through the play, Miller was thus appealing for more regulation in relation to the anaesthesia of depressive patients.

The criticism of *The Last Yankee* (1993) is also interesting in the omission of accusations of gender stereotyping. Miller's portrayal of the feminine was often the subject of contention in both the fields of theatrical and scholarly criticism, and *The Last Yankee* (1993) appears as an obvious target in this regard. Miller's choice to portray female characters as the depressives could be regarded as a further expression of his tendency to present women figures as weaker and more passive than their male

counterparts. As a result, Miller lay himself open to charges of perpetuating the sexism and gender reductionism apparent in his other plays. David Savran found Miller's female characters objectionable in virtually all of his plays, claiming that they were frequently cast as the 'unstable Other.' He asserted that the 'women exhibit a tendency toward extremes' (1992, 36) and thus stood as destructive forces 'threatening to erupt and engulf men' (1992, 38). Although Christopher Bigsby agreed that 'the figure of a woman whose psyche is under pressure' had become a recurring motif in later Miller plays [Maggie in *After the Fall* (1964) and Angela in *Some Kind of Love Story* (1982)], he argued that the male characters in his plays were equally afflicted psychologically (2006, 382). Willy Loman of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and Eddie Carbone from *A View from the Bridge* (1956) were the psychological precursors to Phillip Gellburg who appeared in *Broken Glass* in 1994.

The Last Yankee (1993) continued the pattern of Miller's later plays in attracting criticism of his characterisation. The traits of his figures were crudely polarised in a similar manner to their gender bifurcation. The attributes of the characters of the play were seemingly assigned on the basis of Miller's age-old opposition to capitalism. As the embodiment of malevolent materialism, Frick is portrayed as intolerant and insensitive. Leroy, as the epitome of traditional values, is presented as patient and perceptive. However in the case of *The Last Yankee* (1993), it seems possible that Miller's characterisation was justified by the fact that the play necessitated such opposition to enforce its message.

The Last Yankee (1993) has further parallels to *Death of a Salesman* (1949) than merely its dramatisation of the tension between capitalism and more spiritual values. The temptation to view Leroy Hamilton as a reincarnation of Willy Loman is virtually guaranteed by their joint battle to reconcile social pressures with their individual desires. While this comparison is legitimate, it overshadows the similarities between Willy Loman and John Frick in the fanatical pursuit of success. Although Frick has attained success in material terms, he remains a mass of contradictions in a manner reminiscent of Willy Loman. Furthermore, he also remains unable to understand success in terms of human connection. Bigsby also sees a relation between Leroy and Biff Loman. Writing in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller*, Bigsby claims that Leroy lacks the same 'aggressive qualities' and 'competitive instincts' of modern society as Biff (1999, 175).

In spite of the popularity of *The Last Yankee* (1993) on both sides of the Atlantic, it appeared that American critics were still unwilling to acknowledge the relevance of the playwright. At the age of seventy-seven, Miller refused to concede defeat and continued to attack the edifices of American culture. The increasingly cryptic nature of his later plays failed to impress American critics, who seemed to avail of their vague nature to assert that they were divorced from American experience. With *The Last Yankee* (1993) however, the gap between critics and audiences once more began to emerge as the play was a commercial success.

Chapter Seven: *Resurrection Blues* (2002) and the commodification by the media in America

The 1990s proved to be Miller's most prolific decade in terms of new plays, whilst also marking a period of major revivals of some of his earlier works. As Miller approached his octogenarian year, his creative output showed no signs of diminishing. In 1994, Miller premiered a play based on the events of Kristallnacht in 1938. Miller cited *Broken Glass* (1994) as a product of his private need to identify with his own Jewishness. *Broken Glass* (1994) was one of the few Miller works that tackled the Jewish experience and the area of Jewish identity. Although Miller was a self-declared agnostic, he still struggled with the visceral ties of his religion and evidence of his Jewish inheritance can be traced in certain preoccupations of his work. *Broken Glass* (1994) was also the third consecutive Miller play of the 1990s to focus on a fractured marriage. Alongside *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991) and *The Last Yankee* (1993), *Broken Glass* (1994) formed the closing play of what is more widely recognised as Miller's marriage trilogy. After its transfer to the Booth Theatre in New York, *Broken Glass* (1994) ran for 73 performances (Abbotson, 2007, 89). The play met mixed reviews in America, as critics were deeply divided over the relevance of the play's message on moral and political paralysis. The play was widely acclaimed when it reached British shores, and enjoyed an extensive British tour. It also received the Olivier Award for Best New Play (Abbotson, 2007, 89).

The 1990s continued Miller's long-standing commitment as an essayist. Similar to his

plays, these pieces were predominantly socio-political in content. They also expressed the disillusionment with the state of the theatre in America that had marked his essays through the decades. He published numerous short stories and as he celebrated his eightieth birthday he completed work on the screenplay for *The Crucible* at Oxford University. In 1995, he also wrote a short one-act play, entitled *The Ryan Interview*, for the Ensemble Study One-Act Play Marathon in New York (Abbotson, 2007, 497-98).

It was 1998 before another new Miller play emerged. In the same year that he was voted 'Playwright of the Century' in Britain (Abbotson, 2007, 498), *Mr. Peters' Connections* appeared for a limited run at the Signature Theatre in New York (Abbotson, 2007, 249). The play greatly resembled *Death of a Salesman* (1949), and indeed *After the Fall* (1964), as it hailed a return to the interior landscape as form. *Mr. Peters' Connections* (1998) also adopted a theme of his later plays in the focus on a father-daughter relationship. The play appeared deeply personal as it explored the process of ageing and the growing awareness of private mortality. Miller personally requested for the play to be directed by Garry Hynes, and she remains the only female director of an American Miller premiere. The tone of American reviews was mixed, yet the major critics were predominantly scathing. The play also failed to impress British critics, who felt that the play was too confused. However, British critics were more sympathetic and placed the blame at the feet of the production and not the playwright.

In 1998, a period of Miller revivals in America commenced with an acclaimed

production of *A View from the Bridge* (1956). In 1999, a major revival of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) arrived on Broadway to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the seminal play that secured Miller's status as one of America's greatest playwrights. Over the next three years, *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991) and *The Crucible* (1953) appeared on Broadway. Perhaps most personally fulfilling for the playwright was a Broadway revival of *The Man Who Had All The Luck* (1944). Miller's first professionally produced play had closed after only 6 performances in 1944, after receiving a barrage of attacks from critics. The revival production fared remarkably better and was positively noted by most critics. Unsurprisingly given the trend on Broadway, these revivals all cast star actors in the lead roles. During the early years of the new millennium, the American stage was dominated by revivals, including the work of Eugene O'Neill (*Moon for the Misbegotten*), Tom Stoppard (*The Real Thing*, *The Invention of Love*), and Harold Pinter (*Betrayal*). The more noteworthy new emerging play was David Auburn's *Proof* in 2000. In the same year, Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen*, and the Irish playwright Marie Jones's *Stones in his Pockets*, received Broadway productions.

The events of the opening years of the new millennium were cataclysmic for Miller on both personal and social levels. In late January of 2002, Inge Morath died abruptly of lymphatic cancer. After an illness of only six months, the award-winning photographer left Miller a widow after over four decades of marriage. Miller frequently declared that the years with Inge were the best of his life, and that the shock of her death temporarily abstracted him from life (Welsh, Mar. 21, 2004, F1, Internet). Only months prior, Morath had accompanied Miller to Paris, where they were in residence as the events of September 11, 2001, unfolded. The fact of the

attack was incomprehensible to Miller who later commented that 'I could not absorb it while it was happening' (qtd. in Gussow, 2002, 14). Occurring a month before his eighty-sixth birthday, Miller was unable to process the scale of the atrocity. The treatment that September 11, 2001, received in the media only served to confirm Miller's looming fears about the post-millennial age.

The genesis of Miller's penultimate play, *Resurrection Blues* (2002) appeared to have been drawn from the events of 2001. However, Miller had in fact completed the original script prior to the attacks. The prescience of the play was rooted in the appropriateness of the conclusions that Miller had drawn about the previous century. In many significant respects, *Resurrection Blues* (2002) is the most complete statement of Miller's beliefs about modern America. The play is the progression of earlier Miller themes, similarly disparaging the prevailing ideals of self-interest and commercialism. However, there is a distinct difference not only in Miller's style but in his sensibility. The style brings Miller closest to the Absurd tradition, the only style that he felt could be indicative of the modern age. There is also a resignation in *Resurrection Blues* (2002) that was absent in his earlier plays. Over the passage of time, it appears that Miller felt that in the interests of the continuation of humanity one had to laugh at the farce of tragedy:

It's just more than you can contemplate, some of the madness that's going on now. I thought one of the challenges was to put real farce and tragedy together in one piece because I think that's the style we're living in now. One minute the bombs are falling, the next minute some perfectly idiotic farcical thing is going on, cheek by jowl. (Billen, Oct. 15, 2002, 14, Internet)

Resurrection Blues (2002) was the third Miller play set outside America. However, similarly to *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), *Resurrection Blues* (2002) was a play very much about America. The play is set in a banana republic in an undisclosed region of Latin America that is clearly intended as a 'displaced version of the United States' (Bigsby, 2006, 425). *Resurrection Blues* (2002) sees Miller tackle satire for the first time in his plays. Although a common feature of his work as an essayist, the form never featured in his plays until this point. Indeed, numerous essays appear to have been formative germinating precursors to the issues that assume precedence in *Resurrection Blues* (2002).

During the 1990s, Miller wrote two articles for *The New York Times* satirising the descent of society into spectacle and the supremacy of appearances over reality. The first of these, which appeared in 1992, was a proposal to privatise executions and host them in vast stadiums and arenas. Incensed by the increase in instances of the death penalty, Miller claimed that the solution was to ensure that the public appetite for executions be over-satisfied. He believed that it was only the boredom of repetition that could confer any preventative purpose. As it stood, Americans were too fascinated by the spectacle to question and combat the unparalleled level of violent crime that prompted them: 'Then perhaps we might be willing to consider the fact that in executing prisoners we merely add to the number of untimely dead without diminishing the number of murders committed' (Miller, 2000, 238, *Echoes*).

In 1995, 'Let's Privatise Congress' was published in *The New York Times*. On this

occasion, it was the corruption among Congress that was the subject of Miller's satire. He proposed a system of 'legalized corruption' (Miller, 2000, 253, *Echoes*), whereby each senator would openly represent the business group that paid his salary in exchange for his vote. He envisioned that this system would then be gradually applied to both the Supreme Court and the Department of Justice. Miller foresaw that some would object that by rendering public interests secondary to private economic ones, America would come to resemble a corporate state. To this opposition, Miller simply retorted that 'we already have a corporate state. All privatisation would do would be to recognize it as a fact' (Miller, 2000, 254, *Echoes*).

These two articles seemed to lead Miller to the acerbic address that he delivered for the Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities in 2001. The piece was printed in *Harper's* in June 2001 under the title 'American Playhouse,' and was subsequently published in its own right as *On Politics and the Art of Acting*. Inspired by the farcical nature of the presidential election between George Bush and Al Gore in 2000, the piece highlighted how the merciless nature of the age of entertainment had penetrated the political sphere. The charisma of a political figure and their individual ability to simulate the role of politician reigned supreme over their political intentions or moral agenda. Echoing Miller's thesis that life had become theatre, a façade of competency was all that was required by the public. As a direct result, he claimed that 'Political leaders everywhere have come to understand that to govern they must learn how to act' (Miller, 2001, 7).

Although Miller openly accepted the inevitability and ubiquity of social acting, it was the infiltration of this de facto version of realism in the political arena that continued to trouble the playwright. The media age meant that society possessed a greater awareness of the processes behind the media, yet this insight merely conferred heightened expectations from the average citizen. People now required more sophisticated spin from politicians and more precision in the manufacture of gestures. The real was being displaced by the trivial and Miller shared Jean Baudrillard's fear that with time the real would no longer be perceivable. He questioned 'whether the relentless daily diet of crafted, acted emotions and canned ideas is not subtly pressing our brains not only to mistake fantasy for what is real but also to absorb this process into our personal sensory mechanism' (Miller, 2001, 4).

The ideas simmering in these articles culminated in *Resurrection Blues* (2002), a play satirising the state of global politics and the amoral nature of the media obsessed culture. His piece on privatising executions forms the genesis of the play, whereby an advertising agency wishes to buy the rights to a crucifixion. The ideas presented in his article on Congress are reflected in the matrix of *Resurrection Blues* (2002), which highlighted the similarities between the strategies employed by politics and the media. Both spheres act under the supposed auspices of public interest, yet both bow to private concerns. Political mandates can be bought in much the same manner as a media slant. Fundamentally, the play emphasises the reciprocal and symbiotic relationship between politics and the media. His essay on politicians as actors informs the sensibility behind the play as a whole, yet is most keenly epitomised in the portrait of the military general. The idea of commodity value normalised by the media means

that Felix is more than aware that his power as a politician relies on how he brands himself.

Although the idea of media generated spin was now ingrained in the public psyche, it nonetheless failed to ameliorate the vulnerability of the public to confusing its façade for reality. The claims of the academic Dana Polan that 'We never 'know' an event but only its media coverage' (qtd. in Bennett, 2005, 32), reflect the distorted version of the real that the media present. The image is the dominant idea and as a result, the media creates an equivalence between the real and the fictional. The desire to deliver more realistic reportage paradoxically results in a further emotional abstraction of the audience. The repetition of these images breeds a lack of sensitivity by diminishing susceptibility to their vulnerability. As Miller lamented, 'You know, the world won't end now unless we get a picture showing that it ended. Otherwise, people will go right on shopping. It's horrendous. Horrendous in the sense that our grasp of what used to be called 'the real' is getting more and more feeble' (Billen, Oct. 15, 2002, 14, Internet).

The scope of the play was vast, encompassing themes on religion, totalitarianism, commercialism, and self-interest. The play draws on age-old concerns of Miller, returning to his personal crisis at the collapse of idealism, the failure of promise and the concomitant onslaught of cynicism. *Resurrection Blues* (2002) also saw him probe new territory in his indictment of the voyeuristic culture. All of these ideas are mediated through a twofold arraignment of the mass media. Miller credits the

penetration of political, social, and economic spheres by the media as responsible for the perfection of man's status as a social actor. Reminiscent of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), all of the characters consciously deploy various manipulative strategies to conceal the truth behind their actions and thus preserve their public image. Miller is thus stressing the correlation between this action on a private level and the wider mechanism of media generated images. The play also abhorred the ubiquitous commodification of events by the media whereby the meaningful was reduced to spectacle. As Christopher Bigsby stated, ethics had turned into aesthetics (2006, 423), and there appeared to be no boundaries to what was deemed worthy of broadcasting.

Resurrection Blues (2002) first appeared at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis for a limited run. Reviews of the production were mixed, yet not as uniformly negative as they had been for his previous plays of the 1990s. However, there was a clear consensus that the play was unfinished and needed more work. The play subsequently underwent numerous changes and Miller was still working on it a month before his death in February 2005. Among the more significant of the changes was the 'eradication of an entire scene' that emphasised American support for the military junta (Abbotson, 2007, 292). As a result, the criticism of the overdone quality to Miller's moralising in the American reviews was largely absent in those in Britain.

The play was thus considerably altered by the time of its British premiere in 2006. In spite of this, the play again received mixed reviews, and many critics claimed that the

play remained in need of work. Virtually unprecedented for a Miller play in Britain, The Old Vic was forced to close *Resurrection Blues* (2002) ahead of schedule on account of dwindling audiences. As Michael Billington reported in *The Guardian*, *Resurrection Blues* (2002) played to less than half the audience capacity of The Old Vic (Apr. 15, 2006, 6, Internet). The production history of the play is interesting nonetheless, for the play's lack of critical success appeared intrinsically linked to the misrepresentation of the play in its production.

Resurrection Blues (2002) unfolds in a Latin American military junta, where the military leader has made the unilateral decision to crucify a man. General Felix Barriaux believes the man to be responsible for inciting revolt among the people, and in the process incurring the death of his men. The country has been ravaged by a civil war stretching over almost four decades, yet is now on the cusp of peace. More accurately, the country is on the verge of docility, and the General refuses to allow this to be compromised. He refutes any claims that the man is the Messiah, and thus seizes the opportunity to capitalise on the crucifixion by authorising the television rights to an American advertising agency.

The development potential that the money promises for the impoverished nation offers Felix the perfect cover for his private agenda to aggrandize his position. Behind Felix's carefully constructed social veneer lies a less than benevolent set of private intentions. The money allows Felix to purport that the man is being sacrificed for the good of the nation, and not merely in the service of his own political agenda. In the

aftermath of numerous futile revolutionary efforts, the people perceive the Messiah as a bastion of renewed hope for their emancipation. They understand him to be preaching justice, yet to the General he merely represents a threat to his power. The crucifixion is therefore intended as a symbolic message to the people that resistance will not be tolerated. As Michel Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish*:

In the ceremonies of the public execution, the main character was the people, whose real and immediate presence was required for the performance. An execution that was known to be taking place, but which did so in secret, would scarcely have had any meaning. The aim was to make an example, not only by making people aware that the slightest offense was likely to be punished, but by arousing feelings of terror by the spectacle of power letting its anger fall upon the guilty person...' (1979, 57).

The value of life in the country has been steadily cheapened by years of civil unrest and the ubiquitous nature of the violence has resulted in an almost complete desensitisation to death. The absurdity of life in the country means that the body of a dead baby lying in a gutter in a busy shopping district fails to attract attention (2006, 12). As a result of the desensitisation, Felix insists that a crucifixion is the only valid means by which to discipline the people. However, the idea that the figurative value of the crucifixion would silence rather than foment more revolutionary action seems naïve at best.

FELIX. Shooting doesn't work! People are shot on television every ten minutes; bang- bang, and they go down like dolls, it's meaningless. But nail up a couple of these bastards, and believe me this will be the quietest country on the continent and ready for development! A crucifixion always quiets things down. (2006, 14-15)

The figurative country of the play stands as an allegory for the desensitisation

conferred through the graphic nature of media reports and the ubiquitous nature of the violence on television. Through the figures of Skip and Emily, Miller portrays the fact that the media capitalise on the sense of equivalency that it creates between the real and the fictive. Emily refutes Skip's praise of her ability to render a sense of the real in the items that she films with the assertion that, 'My genius is to make everything comfortably fake...' (2006, 29). However, Skip argues that it is this quality that communicates a sense of the real to which audiences were receptive. Miller abhorred the tendency of television to treat serious issues with little 'profundity' (Miller, 2003, 13-16), describing television as 'the great trivializer of our lives – a form that reduces everything to powder' (Weiss, Aug. 12, 2002, 44, Internet).

As a leader, Felix idolises the American experience and has ambitions to achieve the same level of international recognition as American presidents. Felix worships and is enslaved by the media image of the United States, and thus has learned the centrality of the role of image to his own political success. The duplicity of Felix's portrait is thus intended as a satirical comment on the malevolent aspects of political life.

Felix is a savvy political leader who acutely understands the importance of the image that he projects. As Jeffrey Mason states, 'Felix understands that consolidating power involves managing what people know so that actuality becomes less significant than belief' (2003, 667, Internet). His accommodation to power results in his oscillation between two personalities. His ultimately dominant media friendly personality sees him play the part of the charismatic leader, acting altruistically to secure the progress

of his country. This aspect of his leadership invites comparison with the amoral television producer, Skip Cheeseboro. In the interplay between these two characters the parallel between the media and politics is most directly drawn. As Jeffrey Mason comments:

To Felix, Skip, and Emily, appearance is prior to substance; the real is a matter of what they can present through image and rhetoric. They have little interest in truth or genuine experience; they are much more invested in coverage and exposure, in the quality of presentation rather than content... (2003, 669, Internet).

In truth, Felix is a deeply paranoid leader, desperate to secure personal international eminence. He disregards any suggestion that his actions would render him morally reprehensible with the claim that the 'one sacred rule' of politics was that 'nobody clearly remembers anything' (2006, 19). In citing the case of Richard Nixon, Felix highlights the fact that 'egotism is the strongest motive power' of his behaviour, and that his 'desire for personal advantage is stronger than all moral considerations' (Fromm, 1984, 98).

FELIX. ...fifteen or twenty years after they kicked Nixon out of the White House he had one of the biggest funerals since Abraham Lincoln. (2006, 18)

The private reality of the General is revealed in the comedic interchanges with his cousin Henri, and indeed the honesty of the portrait of Felix as a despot is the source of much grim humour within the play. Felix is above all a pragmatist, and his actions express little regard for the citizens that stand in the way of his personal ambitions. He is widely despised by the people and lives under the constant threat of assassination. In fact, Felix sees the people's belief in the Messiah as one more act of

vengeance against him and his authority. Given that the people fail to respect the efforts that he believes that he has made in their name, Felix devotes his energies to international relations. He is desperate to secure multinational investment, yet his vision of progress for the nation is widely removed from the general welfare of the citizens. Instead, he sees the crucifixion as a means to attain status for singlehandedly securing the progress of a turbulent nation.

FELIX. ...with that kind of money I could put the police into decent shoes and issue every one of them a poncho. And real sewers...with *pipes*! – so the better class of people wouldn't have to go up to the tops of the hills to build a house...we could maybe have our own airline and send all our prostitutes to the dentist... (2006, 18).

His fixation with ensuring that the country holds a positive international image has filtered into even his everyday conversation. His media face is so automatic that he instinctually deflects attention from the negative aspects of the country and instead asserts the more positive qualities. He responds with casuistry to Henri's anguish at the health risks posed to the inhabitants from pollution and inadequate living conditions. When Henri despairs at the fact that the water supply in the poorer regions is infected with blood fluke, Felix interjects in a manner akin to a representative of a tourist board. He cites the claims of the *National Geographic* that the area boasts the best views, highlighting the fact that his public relations jargon fails to be tempered by reality. More importantly, this emphasises the reality that everything holds a commodity value in Felix's eyes.

FELIX. According to this *Vanity Fair* magazine that is one of the finest views in the world, you know. (2006, 10)

Felix's acute understanding of the importance of his public image sees him temporarily consider cancelling the crucifixion. As the play evolves, he comes to realise that the popularity of the Messiah among the people may be more effectively construed to his advantage. In an act of media savvy, he offers the Messiah a place in his government. While this would allow him to further consolidate his power, it would also simultaneously boost his reputation among the public.

FELIX. The military is not as stupid as maybe we've sometimes looked, Jeanine. We must get ready for some kind of democracy, now that the revolution is finished. He could help us in that direction. (2006, 67)

Henri stands as the moral counterforce to Felix's more rationalist mentality in appealing to him not to discount the obvious reverence that the people harbour for the Messiah. The violent futility of the new drug-fuelled revolution created a spiritual despair among the people. As a result, Henri believes that the people invented the Messiah out of a deeply rooted spiritual necessity. In an interview in 1972, Miller affirmed that 'there is no religion that is closer to a man than the one he invents' (Roudane, 1987, 252), and this statement appears to define the variant positions that the characters adopt in *Resurrection Blues* (2002). Henri describes belief in the Messiah as akin to a 'poem' (2006, 54), for he claims that this belief is preconditioned by subjective agendas. He states that Felix and Skip are invested in his existence to aggrandize their own eminence, while the people respond to the sense of hope that he represents. He thus perceives a parallel between the crucifixion and the Vietnam War in the self-serving nature of the motivating illusion behind them.

HENRI. ...set off...by a night attack upon a United States warship by a Vietnamese gunboat in the Gulf of Tolkin. It's now quite certain the attack never happened. This was a fiction, a poem; but 56,000 Americans and two million Vietnamese had to die before the two sides got fed up reciting it. (2006, 54)

In the final analysis, the Messiah is conceived and destroyed in the service of private interests. It seems possible that in many respects the Messiah was intended as a manifestation of the American myth. Conceived as the guiding light to the world, the idea of American moral supremacy was undermined by the events of September 11, 2001. The American century was a similarly glorified image promulgated by the media. The terrorist attacks hailed the death of this iconography, yet the power of the media was resurrected. The media coverage of the events of September 11 highlighted the amoral inheritance from the previous century and hailed a new appetite for media driven voyeurism.

It thus seems possible to interpret Henri's role as that of tempering force to Felix's worship of America. Although Henri does not directly disparage America, it is clear that he is not enslaved by the same mythological mentality as his cousin. As Jeanine reveals in the opening scene of the play:

JEANINE. He says the Russians have always had more ideas than any other people in history and ended in the pit. The Americans have no ideas and they have one success after another. (2006, 4)

Henri's retreat into philosophy appears as a direct consequence of the fact that he is

deeply disturbed by the arbitrariness of life. As Christopher Bigsby writes, Henri is a man 'caught in his own contradictions' (2006, 426). While he is 'a man in search of the truth,' he is 'also something of an intellectual and moral butterfly, flitting from idea to idea' (Bigsby, 2006, 426). However, Henri passionately believes that the alienation of modern life has abstracted man from his experience. To overcome the absurdity of existence, man has retired to 'the realm of the imagination' (2006, 55). It is clear that this idea is intended as a direct attack on the media, and its responsibility for the desensitisation of man to existence. Miller arraigns the mass media for the depletion of meaning and the erosion of emotional connection.

HENRI. The imagination is a great hall where death, for example, turns into a painting and a scream of pain becomes a song. The hall of the imagination is really where we usually live; and this is all right except for one thing – to enter that hall one must leave one's real sorrow at the door and in its stead surround oneself with images and words and music that mimic anguish but are really drained of it – no one has ever lost a leg from reading about a battle, or died of hearing the saddest song. (*Close to tears*). (2006, 55)

However, Henri's nature is unconsciously fractured by the idealistic philosophy to which he aspires and the reality of his private motives. On a smaller scale to his cousin, Henri masquerades private for public interests. His attempt to mask the more private aspects of his motivations behind a wider ethical pretext sees him adopt numerous manipulative strategies.

It appears that Henri's close understanding of the mood of the people is a product of his own experience. His disenchantment with the revolution led him to channel his spiritual void into philosophical avenues. However, before his change of orientation

he had indoctrinated the ideology of revolution within his own daughter. Consumed in the myth of her father's heroism, Jeanine was devastated by the discovery of her father's idealistic treachery. As Bigsby states, Jeanine believes that Henri is 'content to interpret experience rather than change it' (2006, 431). The implicit betrayal in her father's favouring of rhetoric over action served to commit her further to the course of rebellion.

JEANINE. ...you said you had decided to go into the mountains and join the guerillas to fight against Felix! Lightning seemed to flash around your head, Papa. You were like a mountain, sitting there. At last you would do something, at last you would answer the idiots and fight against Felix! And I knew I would follow you...and high up in the mountains I found you in your tent with a rifle on your lap, reading Spinoza. (2006, 65)

Jeanine was a staunch revolutionary, as equally consumed in the concomitant drug culture as the fight for freedom. By virtue of her kinship to the General her life was spared when the battalion that she led was murdered. The absurdity of her survival sparked a spiritual crisis for Jeanine that culminated in a suicide attempt. She was left physically paralysed and her spiritual despair is only alleviated by her relationship with the supposed Messiah. The depth of her belief in him is rooted in his perceived status as moral paragon. Her affirmation that his actions are motivated by justice rather than a desire to 'get people's approval' separates him in her mind from the 'shitty politician' that Felix represents (2006, 70).

Both Jeanine and Stanley are passive victims of such idealised images. Their devotion to the revolution was preconditioned in the myths of their own country that Henri defined as a poem. Invoking the ancient Egyptians and indeed Platonic philosophy,

Henri explained to Skip that ‘Ancient peoples saw no difference between a vivid description of marvels and what we call reality – for them the description itself *was* the reality’ (2006, 53). Both Jeanine and Stanley were similarly duped by Plato’s cave, unable to ‘distinguish the real from the images projected on the psyche by those who process experience without understanding it’ (Bigsby, 2006, 436). They are imprisoned within Baudrillard’s simulacra, a supposed reality created by the mass media and localised propaganda. They are shielded from the failure of the idealised image through the dissociative powers of drug use. Indeed, the inability of the people to decipher the authentic may be the true reason that they are invested in the existence of the Messiah.

As a result of Jeanine’s devotion, Henri’s commitment to ensuring that the Messiah is allowed to live is sparked by personal as well as humanitarian interests. He is desperate to preserve the one vessel of hope that his estranged daughter possesses. Henri is as plagued by guilt as earlier Miller protagonists, and his actions are equally dictated by the quest for redemption. In many ways, Henri’s relationship with Jeanine echoes that of Kroll with his daughter in Miller’s 1987 one-act play *Clara*. Henri and Kroll share the burden of guilt for misleading their daughters in the ideas that they indoctrinated within them.

In spite of his seemingly noble façade, Henri is as consumed with public appearances as Felix. Although the benevolence of his intentions is undeniable, his own commercial interests further compromise his position. Henri is among the two percent

of the population that own ninety-six percent of the land in the nation (2006, 15), and his power as an oligarch extends beyond the parameters of the country. Henri is the owner of a largely successful pharmaceutical company that is represented by the advertising group that wishes to televise the crucifixion. As a result, Henri knows that his products will be advertised during the intervals in the broadcast, thus associating his company with the event. Henri is aware of the deleterious effect that this will bear on both the company and his name.

HENRI. Is there a hole in the human anatomy we don't make a dollar on? With a crucifixion the sky's the limit! (2006, 17)

Furthermore, while Henri situates himself on a higher moral ground than Felix, he seems unaware of the extent to which his manipulative tactics echo those of his cousin. His desperation to ensure the cancellation of the crucifixion compels him to manipulate the director. From the outset of the play, Felix's struggles with impotence are made apparent. He undergoes regular psychoanalytic treatment for the condition in Miami and it is clear that the issue deeply troubles him and the sense of bravado that is so central to his leadership. Indeed, Felix's desperation to resolve the issue sees him launch a humiliating plea to one of the Messiah's disciples. On hearing of his prowess with women, Felix is eager to arrange a personal meeting with the man. On perceiving the positive reaction that Emily incites in Felix, Henri seizes the opportunity to manipulate the scenario to his personal advantage. He knows that Emily's success in seducing Felix could persuade him to cancel the crucifixion.

Emily's instinct to refuse to participate in the filming prompts a desperation in Skip,

and he is willing to resort to any means in order to guarantee her commitment. A master of spin, Skip vacillates between appealing to her sense of ambition and blackmail. He initially claims that her involvement would accelerate her career and garner her international recognition.

SKIP. Emily dear, you know I adore you. Have I ever steered you wrong? This is a door to possibly Hollywood. There's never been anything remotely like this in the history of television. (2006, 28)

However, on realising the extent of her ethical reservations, he changes orientation. He declares that filming the crucifixion is a matter of moral responsibility, for doing so would help ensure the abolishment of capital punishment.

SKIP. (*sudden new idea*) Showing it on the world screen could help put an end to it for ever! (*Warming.*) Yes! That's it! If I were moralistic I'd even say you have a duty to shoot this! Really. I mean that. (2006, 28-29)

Skip symbolises Miller's arraignment of the amorality of modern media, highlighting the variety of manipulative tactics that are deployed to secure filming. The fact that the transparency of Skip's motives fails to extract any reaction from the other characters highlights the reality that they are conditioned to expect such moral transgressions from his type. Skip's representative actions are prompted by his general abstraction from experience, a consequence of the false environments and scenarios that are the foundation of his career. Jeffrey Mason concludes that 'To Skip, experience is something he arranges, designs, films, and packages; in other words, it is subject to his conscious control with specific goals in mind. Reality is what he devises rather than what happens to him' (2003, 668, Internet). Skip thus publically describes Ralph as a 'revolutionary terrorist' (2006, 24), and then subsequently petitions him privately as a man of wholesome virtues.

SKIP. (*looking up*) You simply have to return, there's no question about it. I will only remind you that my agency has a signed contract with this government to televise your crucifixion and we have paid a substantial sum of money for the rights. I will forebear mentioning our stockholders, many of them widows and aged persons, who have in good faith bought shares in our company. I plead with you as a responsible, feeling person – show yourself and serve your legal sentence. I want to assure you that everyone from the top of my company to the bottom will be everlastingly grateful and will mourn your passing all the days of our lives. (2006, 76-77)

Skip is keen to play to the religious connotations of the crucifixion, without directly enforcing the parallel. Although he objects to portraying certain aspects of the original crucifixion that he fears may alienate some sectors of the audience, at other points he emphatically declares that 'we can't be twisting the historical record!' (2006, 33). As a result, he is unwilling to concede to Emily's demands for the man to be either sedated or intoxicated. Skip claims that such actions would offend potential audiences in the 'dry states' of America (2006, 33). He is seemingly unaware of the irony that to televise a crucifixion is offensive in its own right. For the same reason, he requests that Felix petition him not to scream during the filming.

SKIP. ...you could put it to him as a test of his faith that he not scream on camera. The camera, you see, tends to magnify everything and screaming on camera could easily seem in questionable taste. (2006, 36)

However, the most noteworthy of Skip's justifications relates to the notion of the accountability of the media for what it portrays. According to Skip, none of the crewmembers bear any responsibility for they are merely recording the practice. As Christopher Bigsby affirms, the characters insist that 'they are agents and not principals, and thus not responsible for their actions' (2006, 428). As a result, the idea

that their involvement in the process would confer complicity fails to be considered. He thus draws on the historical fact of crucifixions to circumvent their ethical misgivings.

SKIP. We are recording a pre-existing fact...not creating it – I create nothing! (2006, 56)

He concludes that they must refrain from appealing for any changes to the standard practice for their role is not to ‘make some kind of *comment*’ (2006, 33) on a cultural ritual. In the ultimate act of media manipulation, he states that he will not patronise the people by impressing American cultural values.

SKIP. ...I will not superimpose American mores on a dignified foreign people. The custom here is to crucify criminals, period! I am not about to condescend to these people with a foreign colonist mentality! (2006, 33)

Although the supposed Messiah does not feature as an actual character in the play, his presence is mediated through Stanley and Jeanine. The supposed Messiah operates under many aliases in the play, including Ralph and Charley, a decision prompted by the desire to avoid being branded as ‘some kind of celebrity guru’ (2006, 45). Ralph is portrayed as a man deeply troubled by the daily atrocities in the country. In many ways, his uniqueness lies in the fact that he is one of the minority who has failed to become desensitised to the mindless violence.

Ralph is personally caught in the tension between his self-concept and the image projected on him by the people. In many respects, Ralph is the embodiment of a media generated entity in that he submerges his private identity in favour of the public persona. He is seduced by the hype that his presence has generated, yet he remains

uncertain of the veracity behind it. It is the vacillation between his sensitivity to this image and then his apparent normalcy that is the root cause of his self-doubt.

STANLEY. I've seen him go for...like two hours at a time, crying his heart out. Then he stops and he's cool for a while. We even have fun. Then he sees something and it like hits him again...Then he falls asleep, and wakes up sounding like anybody else – and that's when he doesn't know. (2006, 48)

The spiritual value of Ralph's sacrifice is already being undermined by the greed that the proposed filming has kindled in the people. The mountain villages have become engaged in a competition to ensure that their village is the chosen location. They understand that their property value will soar by virtue of hosting the crucifixion, and their commercial mindset extends to calculating the further money to be made from exploiting such an event. From the fact of the proposed filming, the people have learned the commodity value of death.

STANLEY. Well, face it, once it's televised they'll be jamming in from the whole entire world to see where it happened. Tour buses bumper to bumper across the Andes to get to see his bloody drawers? Buy a souvenir fingernail, T-shirts, or one of his balls? It's a whole tax-base thing, Jeanie, y'know? Like maybe a new school, roads, swimming pool, maybe even a casino and theme park – all that shit. I don't have to tell you, baby, these people have *nothing*. (2006, 72)

As a result, Ralph's presence becomes destructive and ceases to symbolise redemption. The search for salvation that characterised Miller's plays since *After the Fall* (1964) is finally rejected in *Resurrection Blues* (2002). Miller surrenders to the absurdity of life in the junta that symbolises the fact that he believed America was not yet ready to revise its decaying values. As Bigsby states, 'The Second Coming, real or not, is declined. The world is not ready for redemption' (2006, 432).

STANLEY. The country's like nice and quiet at least for the moment, right? – give or take a minor ambush here and there? After thirty-eight years of killing, so they tell me, it's almost normal now, right? – So the thing is, Charley – do you want to light the match that'll explode the whole place again? (2006, 78)

The proposed filming of the crucifixion represents the reality that life has been stripped of value and that death has become a marketable spectacle. The commodification of death by the media in the play possessed chilling parallels to the real life bids placed for the licence to transmit the execution of the Oklahoma bomber live on the Internet in 2001. As Michael Billington lamented in his review of *Resurrection Blues* (2002), 'The only problem with satirising America...is that reality quickly outstrips fantasy' (Aug. 21, 2002, 10, Reviews). Indeed, Miller began the play in 1992 following the publication of his article on privatising executions. He abandoned the script and only returned to it as 'it became more and more obvious to me that the thing was less a satire than a description of what was going on' (qtd. in Welsh, Mar. 21, 2004, F1, Internet). Thus, as Jeffrey Mason claims, the junta itself is intended to represent 'the inverse of the United States, or rather the self-conceived image of the United States, what the United States...hopes it is not: poor, backward, abused and abusive' (2003, 663, Internet).

It is no coincidence either that the advertising agency that desires to film the crucifixion is American. The arraignment of the media in the play is a clear indictment of the very edifices of modern American culture. The increased detail of news reports and the intrusive coverage of the September 11 attack confirmed

Miller's fears regarding society's growing obsession with voyeurism. The voyeuristic tendencies that had been exploited with the onslaught of reality television were gradually assuming a more sinister aspect. Given the now inseparable nature of the media and private life, Miller was drawn to tracing the roots of the public appetite for voyeurism.

The more ethical justifications for such broadcasting are undermined by the reality that it also appeals to a voyeuristic sensibility. As Helen Freshwater writes in her examination of theatre and audience, there is a:

...difficulty in predicting how images and stories of suffering which circulate in the media and entertainment industries will be received. Sometimes they may function to raise awareness, transforming spectators into actively engaged witnesses and increasing the likelihood of a remedy for instances of injustice, distress, or pain. At other times they may simply sate the undeniable public appetite for gore, sensation, and Schadenfreude. (2009, 52)

Given the technological advances of the age, Miller failed to perceive any ethical merit in such exploitative broadcasting that emptied tragedies of any human feeling.

Further echoing the thoughts of Baudrillard, *Resurrection Blues* (2002) also obliquely raised the question of whether it is the media that induces fascination with such broadcasting or whether it is 'the masses who direct the media into the spectacle' (Baudrillard, 1994, 84). Skip's eagerness to secure the exclusive rights expresses the reality that there is a willing audience. Yet, the question of whether the media has fostered audiences or whether the media are merely responding to a pre-existing appetite among the public is virtually impossible to answer. Miller seemed to imply that the increasingly interconnected nature of media and culture means that both

forces are equally responsible for the dwindling of aesthetic ethics.

Undoubtedly, *Resurrection Blues* (2002) represented a significant departure for Arthur Miller. The style of the play proved to be the central focus among critics, who were confused by the oscillation between dark humour and moral seriousness. Nonetheless, reviews of the play in America were far from damning and appeared to bode well for future success of the play in Britain.

The review of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) that appeared in *The New York Times* was among the more astute, and raised ideas that recurred in the opinions of other critics. Bruce Weber recognised that the play was 'indisputably aimed at skewed American values,' yet felt that the play at times thus verged on the indignant. Weber acknowledged the fact that Miller 'has always held America, hopefully and critically, to a higher moral standard than it has ever achieved' and so perceived in the play the angry demise of this idealised view (Weber, Aug. 15, 2002, Reviews).

Weber described the play as a 'bitter comedy,' yet he appeared divided as to the overall effectiveness of Miller's use of humour. He lauded the double act scenes between Felix and Henri for their 'genuinely original comic flavor,' and commented that 'Mr Miller intermittently hits on comic gestures that work beautifully.' However, he concluded that the use of humour was overwrought, and so rendered the play 'on the wrong side of cliché.' Ultimately, he ruled that Miller's attempt at sexual humour

appeared 'juvenile' and belied the 'stature' of the playwright. Although Weber's review was not uniformly negative, his preference for the opening half of the play was made apparent. He ruled that the humour was more successful in this section by virtue of being more effectively integrated into the action (Weber, Aug. 15, 2002, Reviews).

The standard of Miller's characterisation also failed to impress Weber. He disparaged Miller's portraits for their caricature quality and the resort to standardised clichéd portrayals of 'self-important, know-nothing American yuppies.' However, Weber retained the force of his opprobrium for Miller's female figures:

The furious revolutionary laments of Jeanine have a distressingly sentimental tint. And the film director, Emily Shapiro, is as poorly thought out a character as Mr. Miller has created. Her dilemma – does she make the film, which will save her career, in spite of the fact that someone is going to be killed in it? – is either lacking in credulity or in satirical edge. It's not clear which. (Weber, Aug. 15, 2002, Reviews)

Weber reserved his praise for the relevance of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) to the current environment. He acknowledged the contemporary social and political element of the play, and expressed admiration for the playwright's refusal to rest 'on well-deserved laurels.' Nonetheless, while he lauded Miller for attempting such an ambitious play and not merely 'reworking favorite tropes,' he believed that the play ultimately failed as a satire: 'Unfortunately, this play, which means to be acrid and even hip social satire, doesn't get there. Its most lingering effect is that of a serious finger wag, a respected elder's tone of disapproval' (Weber, Aug. 15, 2002, Reviews).

The Chicago Sun-Times described *Resurrection Blues* (2002) as a 'carnival ride' in its blend of 'comedy, tragedy, farce and magic realism.' Hedy Weiss appeared undeterred by the shifts in style within the play and praised the playwright for his artful blend 'of buoyant optimism and black pessimism that most usually suggests the passions of a youthful writer.' Weiss praised the playwright for refusing to feign certainty in order to maintain his reputation as the 'most clear-minded of writers.' It appeared that she drew comfort from the fact that Miller was equally bewildered by the age (Weiss, Aug. 12, 2002, 44, Reviews).

She recognised the play's attack on the predatory nature of the media, and the idea of collective responsibility for the now normative voyeuristic culture: 'Life is a form of quick-change performance art fueled by and for the mass media.' She also acknowledged the thematic layers of the play and how each strand drove Miller to the conclusion that '...all popular doctrines – whether Marxism, capitalism or religious fervor – ultimately seem hollow and futile and invariably deteriorate into grotesque mockeries of themselves' (Weiss, Aug. 12, 2002, 44, Reviews).

Weiss' review was shrewd, and while she claimed that the play 'sometimes states the obvious and sometimes repeats itself,' she believed that it was also 'at times zany, funny, mysterious and true, and full of quicksilver mood changes.' Weiss appeared to suggest that the effective use of humour redeemed the moments in which the comedic touches were unsuccessful. Her review was accordingly one of the more uniformly positive (Weiss, Aug. 12, 2002, 44, Reviews).

In stark contrast to Hedy Weiss, Peter Ritter of *Variety* widely disparaged the play. He openly identified the play as 'a parody of modern America' that indicted 'the moral vacuity of its citizenry in the sternest terms.' He proceeded to unleash a critical assault on the overwrought manner in which Miller's moral design was conducted. He believed that the indignant nature of the playwright resulted in 'an unfocused jeremiad with more bluster than bite.' He commented that Miller's intentions were 'noble' in 'decrying moral rot in all its modern incarnations,' yet deemed that the trivialised evocations of serious issues rendered Miller as guilty of 'the same glibness he condemns in American culture' (Ritter, Aug. 19, 2002, 47, Reviews).

Ritter was also unreceptive to Miller's comedic flourishes in the play. He felt that the use of humour was designed solely to soften the morally indignant attitude of *Resurrection Blues* (2002), and thus failed to be effective: 'Such broad humor would be more palatable if it were something beside guilt on Miller's wide-ranging polemic.' Similar to other critics, he also despaired at Miller's 'crudely drawn' 'gross caricatures' (Ritter, Aug. 19, 2002, 47, Reviews).

He cited the fact that *Resurrection Blues* (2002) was 'Billed as a satire along the lines of Swift's work' to help explain his disappointment in a play that left little impression. He similarly felt that the satire was undermined by the 'awkward' shift toward 'embarrassingly earnest empire-in-decline angst.' Ritter ultimately concluded that the play was 'a slight addition to the author's distinguished oeuvre' (Ritter, Aug. 19, 2002, 47, Reviews).

Although critics took issue with certain stylistic problems within the play, the majority did not wholly dismiss *Resurrection Blues* (2002). While they acknowledged that the play remained in need of some work, they deemed that it was nonetheless a respectable output. The play never received the finance required for Broadway, and after numerous regional productions, Miller set to work revising the script. Miller continued to work on the play until his death in February 2005. As aforementioned, he removed a scene in which Henri takes Emily to visit Jeanine and thus understand the potential consequences of the crucifixion. Miller chose to condense the main points of this scene into Jeanine's opening monologue in the hope that this would eradicate critical complaint as to the confused nature of the play's style (Abbotson, 2007, 292).

However, the most interesting aspect of the reception of the play in America was the omission of its direct relevance to September 11, 2001. Although the play had been completed before the event, there was a chilling quality to the line, 'I hear they finally believe in death in Manhattan' (Billen, Oct. 15, 2002, Internet). However, Peter Ritter of *Variety* was the only critic to mention the parallel (Ritter, Aug. 19, 2002, 47, Reviews). The seeming oversight by critics is curious given the immediacy of the event to the appearance of the play. Miller commented that the line was intended to signify the more general absurdity of modern life: 'I guess I was referring to the sense of a tragic life permeating New York...I had the feeling that people were more and more asking ultimate questions because of the fact that they had everything' (Billen, Oct. 15, 2002, Internet). However, in his revisions for the British premiere of the play, Miller omitted the line. It seems that in the light of the tragedy, he considered the

continued presence of the line in bad taste.

When the play premiered in Britain at The Old Vic in 2006, the play itself received little discussion by critics. The production of the play was a disaster by critical standards, and reports of fighting amongst the cast and the ineptitude of the director overshadowed any genuine appraisal of the play. Moreover, the farcical nature of the production coloured critical opinion on the play itself. As a result, it is specious to deduce that the premature closing of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) was merely a reflection of the play's inner inadequacies.

The review of the resident theatre critic for *The Guardian* epitomised this difficulty. Michael Billington had attended the premiere of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) in Minneapolis. His review of that production was unquestionably positive, deeming the play 'a funny, pertinent and sharp-toothed satire aimed at the materialist maladies of modern America.' He praised the appearance of a more direct form of irony in Miller's plays, believing that this challenged those who regarded Miller as 'solemn' and 'sententious' (Billington, Aug. 21, 2002, 10, Reviews).

However, the tone of his review of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) at The Old Vic resembled that of a lament. Invoking the 'sparky' nature of the original production, he asserted that 'it's almost impossible to judge the play fairly on the basis of the clumsily inept' production. Billington openly acknowledged that *Resurrection Blues*

(2002) was not of the same stature as the plays on which Miller's reputation was based. However, he painstakingly emphasised that this did not mean that the play lacked the same moral seriousness (Billington, Mar. 3, 2006, 17, Reviews).

He claimed that the production trivialised the play in preventing its serious ideas from emerging. While he recognised that the play 'was not the subtlest of satires,' he believed that this was excused by the relevance of its indictment. He affirmed that the play's criticism of the 'American commercialisation of death' and its pertinence to 'the public pretexts for invading Iraq' were sacrificed to 'momentary effects.' He stated his regret for Arthur Miller and his personal disappointment that *Resurrection Blues* (2002) was not 'given a fair chance' (Billington, Mar. 3, 2006, 17, Reviews).

The reviewer from *The Independent* was not afforded the luxury of witnessing the original production and thus believed that the faults of the play and those of the production mirrored one another. Paul Taylor described the production as 'bizarrely awful' and believed that this served to accentuate the shortcomings of the play. Taylor was unconvinced by Miller in the satiric form, and abhorred the base level of humour in the play. He claimed that the 'misfiring' production was the only means by which laughter was elicited from the audience: 'Miller did not have a natural gift for freewheeling satire and the death of mirth is aggravated by the negligent direction' (Taylor, Mar. 3, 2006, 16, Reviews).

Taylor ruled that the link that *Resurrection Blues* (2002) endeavoured to forge between the return of Christ and 'the mercenary opportunism of the media' was rendered implausible by the overall inadequacy of the plot. As far as Taylor was concerned, the quality of the play and the production were equally poor. He concluded that while the production was inferior, the play's 'basic premise fails to bear the slightest inspection' (Taylor, Mar. 3, 2006, 16, Reviews).

Benedict Nightingale, resident critic with *The Times* appeared unable to reconcile his divided opinion on the play. Nightingale described the play as 'interesting' if 'uneven' and confirmed that the play did 'hit targets' including an arraignment of society for the proclivity to 'turn reality into entertainment.' Nightingale was critical of aspects of the production, yet deemed that the true issue was the fact that 'Altman has trouble establishing the right tone for Miller's satire.' However, he did not wholly attribute the blame to the director, instead pointing to a softening within the plot. Nightingale thus alluded that the play's shift to moral seriousness weakened the effectiveness of the satire. He accordingly believed that 'A more forthright production, surer of how to handle the grotesque, might counteract the diminishing toughmindedness.' In conclusion, Nightingale felt that the play and the production were equally responsible for its ineffectiveness. Most significantly however, he did not dismiss the play (Nightingale, Mar. 3, 2006, 40, Reviews).

The majority of critics believed that the play fell victim to a misguided production. The premature closing of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) garnered much media attention

and prompted much speculation as to the reasons for the play's failure. Interestingly, these reports placed no blame with the play itself. As newly appointed artistic director of The Old Vic, Kevin Spacey earned much opprobrium from critics for the choices that he had made in this role. In the case of *Resurrection Blues* (2002), he was heavily attacked for his appointment of an octogenarian film director as the play's director. Although acclaimed in his field, Miller's play was Robert Altman's theatrical debut. His inexperience proved costly to the fate of the play as the style that earned him accolades in the filmic medium failed to translate effectively to the stage. Moreover, his casual approach reflected an apathetic attitude toward theatre and his flippant remarks appeared to cement friction within an esteemed cast. In an interview with *The Guardian* days before the play opened, Altman confessed to Michael Billington that 'I don't know this script. I read the script all the way through once myself a long time ago. And I've heard it read. I've gone to the auditions. But I don't know the play' (Billington, Feb. 1, 2006, Internet). Given the reviews that the play went on to receive, it is possible to understand Altman's comments as an elaborate defensive and self-protective ploy.

As far as the play itself was concerned, the numerous rewrites that *Resurrection Blues* (2002) received failed to dispel critical consensus that the play remained in need of further work. The subject matter itself was awarded little attention in Britain, yet it was generally acknowledged that the play encompassed serious issues. British reviews thus paralleled American critical consensus as to the contemporary relevance of the play.

The allusion to the importance of the play in Britain is inherently bound to the political alignment of America and Britain. Since the election of Tony Blair's New Labour government in 1997, the two countries were strongly allied. However, in the post-September 11 environment, Britain staunchly supported America's foreign policy. The involvement of Britain in the War on Terror in Iraq meant that Britain was an equal target of the resentment directed toward George Bush's administration in the public mindset. The ill feeling toward the degeneration of American culture that the play expressed was thus compatible to the British experience at the time. Furthermore, Blair was renowned as the Prime Minister of spin and so the message of the play held a particular resonance in Britain.

The comedic element of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) attracted comments from both American and British critics. Although the interchanges between Felix and Henri are successful from a comedic point of view, the level of humour within the play is crude. It is difficult to argue with the critical majority that the sexual jokes are beneath the playwright. Indeed the title of the play itself was a coarse allusion to the impotence of the General. It is clear that the use of this form of humour was a deliberate attempt by Miller to prove his relevance to more youthful audiences. However, in reality, the flourishes appear amateurish and awkward.

Reviewers from America and Britain concluded that the play failed to be successful as a satire. However, in America, critics seemed to struggle more with the use of irony that Zoja Pavlovskis-Petit deemed endemic to the satirical form:

There is no necessary connection between irony and satire; indeed, they would seem to exclude each other. Irony works through ambiguity, while satire must be plain and clear (albeit amusing) to make its point. Yet satire often makes irony its instrument or even its substance...irony is a characteristic or an attitude...it is an intention. The word "satire" denotes neither a characteristic nor an intent. It is a way of expressing censure – a form. (Quintero, 2007, 510)

The difficult relationship between American audiences and irony is a widely acknowledged stereotype, yet it is impossible to overlook the significance of this issue in analysing their attitude toward the play. As Pavlovskis-Petit stated, 'The ability to perceive irony is something we either do or do not have. If the latter is the case, we are not conscious of our lack...' (Quintero, 2007, 519).

Perhaps more significantly however, is the fact that America failed to appreciate a lighter side to a playwright that they comfortably niched as solemn. Miller's reputation was founded on the basis of his moral seriousness, and it appeared that some critics felt that this failed to be communicated in the vacillating style of *Resurrection Blues* (2002). In truth, the shifting style of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) between political morality play and comedic satire was more in keeping with the Absurd tradition. Audiences were unaccustomed to this element in the playwright's work.

Reviews of Miller's plays in the 1990s expressed a confusion in the production of the later Miller plays and this trend continued into the new millennium. Critics and directors alike struggled to both understand the ambivalence that the plays portrayed and how to present it. They proved unable to dissociate the later plays from the moral absolutism of his classic plays, and were thus bewildered by their orientation.

Ultimately, the use of humour and the absurd, ambivalent style defied Jauss's theory of the 'dominant horizon of expectations' (Bennett, 2005, 48) for a Miller play. In a piece for *The New York Times*, Mervyn Rothstein referred to Miller's own comments on the topic in a newsletter for the Guthrie Theatre: 'Mr. Miller is quoted as saying that he has to explain to people they are supposed to laugh at *Resurrection Blues*, "because when it's one of my plays, they forbid themselves to laugh" ' (Rothstein, July 28, 2002, Reviews).

In numerous interviews regarding the play, Miller commented that the significance of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) lay in its contemporary relevance. He claimed that the absurd style was the only appropriate means by which to comment on a time in which the real was indeterminate. As Mason affirmed, 'the loss of commitment is so crushing that we must laugh it off in order to survive. Events have moved beyond serious consideration and submit only to ironic treatment' (Mason, 2003, 671, Internet). Miller was echoing the work of Eugene Ionesco, who concluded that 'The comic alone is capable of giving us the strength to bear the tragedy of existence' (qtd. in Quintero, 2007, 471).

Resurrection Blues (2002) is a play undoubtedly sparked by the crisis of the millennium and the reality that there was no longer a sense of connection to the past. As Christopher Bigsby commented, 'the dawn of the millennium prompted summaries, cool assessments of history, of human nature...' (2006, 424). The seamless transition into the new millennium sparked a personal calamity for the

playwright. Miller was confronted by the moral dilemma that there was no apparent consequence for the ethical dearth of previous centuries. The fact that life continued without interruption following the atrocities of the Holocaust and genocide that had marred the twentieth century alone convinced him of the absurdity of existence. The fact that the millennium wrought no repercussions meant that the horrors of previous centuries risked being forgotten. As Jean Baudrillard claimed, 'today one has the impression that history has retreated, leaving behind it an indifferent nebula, traversed by currents, but emptied of references' (1994, 43). As *Resurrection Blues* (2002) expressed, Miller believed that media reportage of global events only resulted in a further distancing. The equivalence that the media created between the real and the fictional denied history by reducing experience to image. The media thus reflected and reinforced the absurdity of modern existence in the sense that the image prevails and not its meaning. The significance of the image itself is a unique part of the American experience and this aspect of American culture was the primary target of attack in *Resurrection Blues* (2002).

The tenacity of the playwright and his commitment to contemporary issues is thus clearly evident in *Resurrection Blues* (2002). The play is undeniably flawed, and the crude level of humour and the heavily caricatured portraits allude to the fact that the themes of the play were once again given supremacy over other considerations. Miller's flair for satire that was keenly displayed in his essays was compromised by the proclivity of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) to overstate its moral intentions. It appears that this would have been more easily forgiven in the work of an emerging playwright, yet the newfound reverence for Miller's reputation meant that critics were

not too disparaging nonetheless. In spite of its shortcomings, it was generally accepted that the play was a respectable output by the playwright.

Occurring on the first anniversary of Miller's death, the British premiere of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) was guaranteed to garner media attention. The fact that the play closed early overshadowed the defence of the play itself within the critical reviews. It was widely acknowledged that Miller's plays received a more welcome reception in Britain and so the reputation of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) and the playwright was unfairly damaged. Ironically, the reception of *Resurrection Blues* (2002) in Britain fell victim to the form of misrepresentation that the play maligned.

The issues raised in *Resurrection Blues* (2002) in relation to the media and the worship of the image can also be traced in his final play. *Finishing the Picture* (2004) is undeniably a retrospective account of the breakdown of his marriage to Marilyn Monroe during the filming of *The Misfits* (1961). The play is thinly veiled autobiography, and in addition to the parallels to Miller and Monroe, *Finishing the Picture* (2004) contains portraits of the film director John Huston. The play also includes negative portraits of Monroe's mentors, Paula and Lee Strasberg.

Dramatising the difficulty to complete filming on account of the personal struggles of a troubled star, the play is clearly Miller's final attempt to vindicate himself for the death of Monroe. The play exposes the reality behind the glamorous media image of

Kitty, and chronicles the private demons that fracture her psyche and destroy her marriage to the writer of the film. The character of Kitty has no lines in the play and instead features as a largely catatonic figure in a bed. The focus of the play is on her power as an icon and the contradictions that her success-incites within her.

Finishing the Picture (2004) was completed only a year before the death of Miller, and it appears that it was his ultimate attempt to set the public record straight in relation to his marriage to Monroe. Given the scandal that accompanied *After the Fall* (1964), Miller was reticent when it came to discussing the icon. In truth, Miller was given little outlet to present his perspective free of media spin. The vilification of Miller in the media in the aftermath of Monroe's demise was a taint that remained with the playwright. Accordingly, his return to the matter in *Finishing the Picture* (2004) appears to be the product of a deep personal need. Miller typically denied the autobiographical parallels in the play, yet the fact that he only recommenced work on the script in the aftermath of Inge Morath's death in 2002 is somewhat telling. He had begun and abandoned the play in the late 1970s (Abbotson, 2007, 162).

Finishing the Picture (2004) premiered at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago in September 2004. The production ironically coincided with a major revival of *After the Fall* (1964) on Broadway (Abbotson, 2007, 499). *Finishing the Picture* (2004) appeared for a limited run and received mixed notices. The dominant focus of the reviews was on the parallels to Monroe, and further disillusioned the playwright in terms of the enduring spectre of his former wife on the reception of his works. The

contemporariness of the play to the current celebrity obsessed age and the glamorisation of fame in the media was largely overlooked. *Finishing the Picture* (2004) has yet to receive a subsequent production in America or Europe, and only received publication in 2009. The title of the play proved to be an ironic portent of the imminent death of the playwright, and an appropriate symbol of the career of a playwright that had challenged America's self-conceived image.

Conclusion

Much of the dramatic work of Arthur Miller has been overlooked on account of an ideological and aesthetic aversion to his later plays in America. The critical oversight in relation to these plays reflected the reality of Miller's increasingly contentious engagement with American critics and audiences. The high moral standard to which he held his native country resulted in his commitment to challenging the values of modern America. The ideas expressed in his plays frequently ran counter to the American socio-political and cultural landscape. In particular, his exposition of the darker underside of the American Dream was regarded with suspicion. His plays frequently deviated from the cultural hegemony in America, and lay outside the reigning styles of American theatre. His troubled relationship with America was also rooted in the depreciation in public opinion of the playwright as a private man. His appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1956, and the perceived unflattering portraits of Marilyn Monroe in his plays incited a resentment of Miller in his homeland.

The re-evaluation of Miller's later plays which has been carried out in this thesis shows that his standing as a playwright should not solely rest on his acclaimed masterpieces. While *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949) are undoubtedly among the finest of American canonical dramas, his reputation should include the greater body of his work. The many critically neglected plays of Miller's that are dealt with in this thesis may not quite reach the acknowledged

status of his established success, yet they are nevertheless worthwhile plays in their own right. These later plays enrich the understanding of his work and give a more complete and inclusive insight into his dramatic achievement. The close textual analysis of the later plays of Arthur Miller that forms the body of the research serves to emphasise their significance within the oeuvre of the iconic playwright.

In addition to his politically suspect position, the evolution of Miller's sensibility in terms of style and theme was incompatible with the American experience. The appearance of *After the Fall* in 1964 commenced Miller's shift in orientation towards a more European tradition. This alignment was manifest in the fact that his later plays became increasingly experimental, moving from the Ibsenite realism of *All My Sons* (1947) through to the subjective realism of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) to techniques of Absurdism and Expressionism. Miller was a dynamic playwright, and he refused to repeat the forms of the earlier plays that had guaranteed his success. His commitment to innovation set him in conflict with the mainstream performance styles that the entertainment dominated American stage adopted.

The increasing ambiguity in the moral tone of Miller's later plays reflected the seminal influence of the Holocaust on his psyche. His work became less morally apocalyptic in the sense that he no longer felt the need to resolve the moral lapse of his characters with a suicide in the plays following *A View from the Bridge*

(1956). Echoing the mindset of the post-Holocaust age, Miller no longer presented evil as the product of external forces and his plays presented malevolence as a fact of human nature and of types of political fascism. His concomitant insistence on connectedness and continuity was hostile to an America that placed special emphasis on the individual at the expense of community.

Miller's tragic vision was thus incongruous with the American experience. His belief that 'There is a sense of catastrophe in life' and that 'most of what man endeavoured was doomed to failure' was at odds with the fervent optimism of the American Dream (Yentob, 1987, Internet). Miller's critical perspective on the animating myth of the country was perceived as an implied act of treason. The examination of the punitive dimension of the American Dream in his plays was anathema to a country that demanded praise. Miller's commitment to questioning rather than applauding American values deeply antagonised American critics and audiences.

The critic-driven argument that Miller's standard of characterisation in his later plays failed to equal that established by his classic works is long-standing and is considered legitimate by this researcher. It is widely accepted that his later plays were flawed in the sense that they lacked the well-developed characterisation of his early works. Miller's increasing preoccupation with theme resulted in less compelling characters that were more symbolic than the psychologically individualised portraits for which he was renowned. The playwright employed a

more schematic approach in his later works, whereby the emblematic value of his characters was of primary importance. Miller's shift to more mythological figures resulted in characters whose emotional integrity was sometimes sacrificed to their allegorical purpose.

Miller's repeated portrayal of fragile women figures in his later plays was often construed as insensitive portraits of Marilyn Monroe. Many critics also criticised what they considered under-written women's roles in his plays. The playwright was castigated by critics for the autobiographical parallels in his works, yet it was his dramatisation of his personal experiences that granted vigour to his plays. The research indicates that the flawed characterisation that marred his later plays was rooted in the fact that Miller's private life was informing their theme and not their portraits. His later plays largely explored his personal awareness of his own mortality and the absurdity of existence, yet his preoccupation was mediated predominantly through characters that lacked a real-life counterpart.

However, in spite of these issues, Miller's plays did not warrant the vitriolic criticism that they received in America. The research highlights that these flaws were only afforded greater significance on account of certain cultural predispositions. The tendency of American critics to negatively compare the emerging works of a playwright to his previous successes was particularly damaging to the fate of Miller's later plays. He fell victim to the fact that he had achieved eminence at such an early stage of his career. His later plays were

punished by American theatre critics for failing to rival the incommensurable standard established by *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and the success of his earlier *All My Sons* (1947). It is therefore not specious to conclude that Miller's later works would have received a more objective analysis if they had appeared under a different name. Although British critics acknowledged the flaws in characterisation, the weaknesses were deemed minor in relation to the wider effectiveness of the plays in terms of style and theme.

Miller frequently commented on the importance of a sense of timing in playwriting. However, his own ability to gauge the tempo of the time failed at certain periods throughout his career in terms of assessing the receptiveness of his critics and audiences to his ideas. His sentiment was often unwelcome at the moment in which it appeared and so many of his later plays were regarded as irrelevant. His later work consistently expressed a relevance to the prevailing socio-political climate in America. However, Miller's counter-cultural position in relation to the socio-political environment meant that critics undermined the pertinence of his plays. The more favourable response that these plays received when subsequently produced is evidence of the fact that the reception of a significant number of his plays would have been dramatically altered if they had premiered at a different time. Confronted with the reality of the fate that befell the reception of his plays in America, Miller commented that he had come to depend on the 'grace of time' to reveal the value of his plays (Gussow, Feb. 1, 1987, Internet). The reception of *The Crucible* (1953) established the precedent for the interdependence of Miller's plays on the prevailing socio-political and cultural

climate in which they appeared. The initial response to the play was politically reactionary, yet its reappearance five years later was regarded more positively due to the changing attitudes to the McCarthy witch-hunts. Miller's penultimate play completed the paradigm: *Resurrection Blues* (2002) was widely acclaimed on its second production for the pertinence of its commentary on the media dominated voyeuristic society.

Miller typically rooted his plays in an historical context that he believed was instructive to the current age. The Depression was a formative event in Miller's personal life, for it had occurred at a particularly sensitive stage of his development. The effects that the Depression exacted on his adolescent psyche, alongside that of the Holocaust, remained with the playwright and occupied a prominent position in his works. His repeated recourse to the Depression era was anathema to the cultural commitment to the portrayal of optimistic American myths on the stage. However, Miller believed that the psychology of impotence that the Depression engendered was instructive to the passivity of the modern age.

The reception of Miller's plays in America can be divided into three distinct phases. The early years of his career were generally the most successful, and the plays that appeared in this period provided the basis on which Miller's esteemed reputation is founded. The watershed reception of *After the Fall* (1964) signified the beginning of Miller's most contentious period in America and the critical neglect of his emerging works. During this time, Miller's reputation plummeted to

a new nadir. The final phase commenced in the 1980s and was a direct result of the commercial success of major revivals of Miller's classic plays on Broadway. The reappearance of these works instilled a new reverence for the playwright and his iconic status in American theatre history. As a result, his emerging plays were generally considered in a more sympathetic light. However, in spite of the less hostile approach, these later plays failed to achieve higher commendation than a mixed review or attract significant attention from scholarly critics.

The reception of Miller's plays in America can be attributed in part to the lack of a long theatre tradition. Miller's later works were excluded from the entertainment saturated Broadway stage, and he was deemed insufficiently experimental to be produced in Off-Broadway theatres which often catered for performance art for which Miller felt no sympathy. The absence of a commercial outlet for serious plays in American theatre contributed to Miller's eagerness to participate in the Lincoln Centre project. He frequently claimed that the lack of a repertory company in America was responsible for the fact that he had failed to write more plays (Miller, 1999, 538). The absence of a theatre culture also resulted in the reductive element of American criticism in the negative comparison to the previous successes of a playwright. The conditions of American theatre were thus largely hostile to the experimentation to which Miller was committed.

In spite of Miller's widespread opprobrium by American critics, his relationship with them became more symbiotic as his career progressed. In the productions of

his early plays, Miller relied on a close partnership and cooperation with the directors of his plays to resolve any minor difficulties within the script. However, in the aftermath of his fallout with Elia Kazan, Miller appeared less willing to enter into such a complete collaborative effort with the directors of his plays. As a result, Miller seemed to become more dependent on critics to articulate the wider flaws in his plays that needed to be addressed. On numerous occasions, he revised his later plays in accordance with the response of critics and thus appeared to place an authority in their opinions that he was reluctant to acknowledge.

There is an unmistakeable irony in the fact that while Miller was internationally regarded as the quintessence of America, he was displaced from the culture of his homeland. American critics and audiences widely disparaged Miller for the impassioned and enduring critique of American society inherent in his plays. Critics and audiences perceived a betrayal in Miller's attempt to undermine the commodity value of the image that America projected to the world. His desire for America to lose its immense global influence and thus 'take its place as a nation among nations' (Yentob, 1987, Internet) was not a popular view in America. However, this perspective paradoxically helped to create a respect for America abroad. The concurrent despair and wonder at America evident in Miller's plays mirrored the mixture of fear and envy that characterised the international perspective on America. Miller's denunciation of aspects of American society was granted added significance on account of his nationality. The fact that an American indoctrinated with the myths of the society exposed its simultaneous flaws helped to undermine the arrogance traditionally associated with America.

The relevance of Miller's later plays to the current socio-political landscape in America warrants their production and a reassessment of their significance within the oeuvre of the playwright. Indeed, the context of the Depression acutely resonates with the present global economic recession. Furthermore, Miller's later works are compatible with the benchmark of change on which the presidency of Barack Obama is founded. The playwright and the administration share the desire for a new vision of America, and an honest reassessment of its more destructive values. Accordingly, subsequent productions of the later works of the playwright would illustrate the fact that they possess the same lasting quality as his earlier plays.

The reputation of Arthur Miller as one of America's greatest playwrights forming the triumvirate with Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams is thus partially rooted in his commodity value as a cultural export. His landmark status within American theatre history is assured by the iconic plays of his early career that proved compatible with the American psyche. However, Miller's counter-cultural status on both personal and professional levels gradually served to alienate American audiences. Indeed, it seems unlikely that America will afford his later plays the same respect that they have received in Europe. While subsequent productions of his later plays fared more successfully than their initial appearances, his later work fails to attract the same attention as his early plays. America remains unwilling to engage in Miller's contentious dialogue, and so his later plays continue to be ignored in terms of both production and scholarship. Following the death of the playwright in 2005, there has been a noteworthy

increase in the volume of critical analysis of his career. However, the majority of this work fails to apportion equal consideration to his later work. The research demonstrates that his later plays significantly contribute to his oeuvre, and are integral in charting the development of his aesthetic. Miller is in truth the quintessential displaced American playwright, for the source of his reverence abroad is the source of his neglect in his native home.

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Appendix

The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was established in 1938 under the auspices of the Truman administration to purge State Departments of communist spies. In the climate of the Cold War, paranoia in relation to communist infiltration was rife. The hearings were a bastion of the anti-New Deal sentiment on which Truman's presidency was founded. The Committee attacked the edifices of the New Deal and the head of its Federal Theatre Project (FTP) initiative was subpoenaed in 1938. It was claimed that the project was overrun with communist sympathisers (Bigsby, 2008, 113). Miller had entered the project on his graduation from the University of Michigan, but HUAC closed it down within six months of his membership (Bigsby, 2008, 13).

From 1947 onwards, the Truman administration accelerated a staunch anti-communist campaign under the guise of protecting national security. The investigations were ultimately extended to the public domain to unearth communist sympathisers amongst the nation's people. The entertainment industry became a prime target as it was perceived as the most acute medium for the transmission of communist messages (Navasky, 2003, 78). The focus on the industry was a shrewd move as it guaranteed enduring public interest in the Committee (Abbotson, 2007, 410; Bigsby, 2008, 531). The Committee was made iconic in 1947 with the conviction of the 'Hollywood Ten' for their refusal to co-operate. In the years following, a blacklist was institutionalised primarily in the film industry and this provided the impetus for many to comply. The

blacklist threatened the careers of those mentioned and as the scope of the Committee grew many felt compelled to adhere to its dictates in the interests of self-preservation (Abbotson, 2007, 409; Gottfried, 2005, 182; Navasky, 2003, 86).

The proceedings of HUAC are frequently confused with the phenomenon of McCarthyism. However, Joseph McCarthy acted independent of HUAC and he had no direct involvement in its rulings. His campaign against communism was a personal crusade that gathered political velocity by virtue of sheer coincidence. The conviction of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for espionage in 1951 seemed to validate the investigations of the Committee and thus led to the popularity of the Senator's campaign. McCarthy served to galvanise public interest and accelerate and maintain the fervent tempo of HUAC.

However, the case of the Rosenberg's proved to be a subject of global contention. The Communist Party claimed that the conviction of the couple was grounded in American anti-Semitism. However, American based Jewish communities were eager to distance themselves from such claims (Navasky, 2003, 114). The unprecedented decision to execute the pair sparked concern among the wider American public. In the aftermath of their execution in 1953, McCarthy's increasingly fanatical nature began to trouble many of those that had previously supported him. Indeed his censure in 1954 may be regarded as a public expression of regret for the outcome of the Rosenberg trial. The investigations of the Committee continued for a further two decades, yet public interest had dwindled.

Miller was subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee in June 1956. His hearing was called under the guise of his alleged misuse of his American passport based on trips to countries under communist influence. This charge was specious, for Miller had never in fact visited these countries (Bigsby, 2008, 511). In truth, the grounds for Miller's subpoena were rooted in more pragmatic concerns. The timing of Miller's subpoena was an attempt to capitalise on Miller's currency as a public figure by virtue of his relationship with Marilyn Monroe.

At the time of his subpoena, Miller's more politically active phase had lapsed. His protest against McCarthy and the Committee had been focused in the early years of the decade. In terms of the theatre alone, Miller had written three plays that indirectly addressed the age in the form of *An Enemy of the People* (1950), *The Crucible* (1953), and *A View from the Bridge* (1955). These plays alongside numerous other contentious projects that Miller had been involved in had appeared at a much more politically volatile period. Accordingly, it is curious that Miller was not summoned during this time if he was indeed considered a legitimate suspect by the Committee.

The FBI dossier on Miller commenced in 1938 on Miller's graduation from the University of Michigan. Although much of the information contained in this file was blacked out on its release, Christopher Bigsby notes in his biography on Miller that 'his membership of the American Youth Congress and sponsorship of the American Relief Ship for Spain' first attracted the interest of the investigating committee (2008, 144). Miller's circumspect status became public knowledge when he was

photographed by *Life* magazine at the controversial Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in 1949. While his attendance was widely regarded as his symbolic display of unity with the Soviet Union, Miller was already experiencing feelings of disillusionment with his socialist sympathies.

In 1954, Miller penned a scathing satirical article in *The Nation*. Over the course of his career, Miller chose to address the political climate in satirical essays. Entitled 'A Modest Proposal for the Pacification of the Public Temper,' the piece vented Miller's frustration at the absurdity of having to symbolically prove loyalty to the nation. He proposed the institution of an initiative that would biennially classify citizens into either 'Action or Conceptual Traitors' based on whether their disloyalty was deemed active or cognitive. He drew on the fact that while neither of these punitive stances was illegal, they could not be considered as 'Positively Conducive to the Defence of the Nation against the Enemy' (Miller, 2000, 40, *Echoes*). In order to eliminate suspicion, those found to be treacherous would be issued with an appropriate 'Identity Card.' He claimed that by assuming each individual guilty, 'everyone will have the opportunity of being...Discovered, but as a Patriot...' (Miller, 2000, 45, *Echoes*). Miller likened compliance with this process as akin to the patriotism involved in serving the nation in war: 'It may as well be said that if an American boy is good enough to fight he is good enough to go to jail for the peace of mind of his Country' (Miller, 2000, 44, *Echoes*). The initiative placed special emphasis on the fact that 'Accredited members of any Investigating Committee of the Congress of the United

States' would naturally be exempt from suspicion or investigation (Miller, 2000, 43, *Echoes*).

The fact of Miller's belated subpoena was thus reducible to his relationship with Monroe. By 1956, the Committee was on the wane and required an act of publicity to regain its stature. The Committee made no attempt to conceal its intentions, and indeed the Chairman offered to cancel Miller's hearing if Monroe agreed to be photographed shaking his hand. The incident prompted Miller to draw a parallel between politics and the social arts that he returned to over the course of his career: 'how fundamentally simple politics was – just as in show business you kept your name in the paper no matter what' (Miller, 1999, 406).

However, Miller was not above such acts of opportunism in exploiting the media attention that surrounded his relationship with Marilyn Monroe. On the day of his hearing before the Committee, Miller and Monroe publically announced their engagement. The move was strategic and helped to deflect attention away from the destructive potential of his hearing. David Savran viewed the announcement as a means to mitigate the damage that Miller's decision not to co-operate inflicted:

Miller, like the fictional John Proctor, had tried to capitalize on the rhetorical force granted the release of withheld information about a sexual liaison, using his relationship with a powerful and bewitching woman to vindicate a controversial political stand. (1992, 27)

Miller's FBI dossier finally amassed 654 pages and included lists of petitions that he had signed and was called to account for at his hearing (Bigsby, 2008, 144). It also included analyses of his plays that reduced them to works of communist propaganda (Bigsby, 2008, 264). The playwright was classified as a 'fellow-traveller,' a term used to describe those that expressed communist sympathies without being an active member of the Communist Party (Bigsby, 2008, 349).

Before the Committee, Miller declined to inform for reasons of his own integrity. He stated his belief that any individual that he could name represented no threat in any form to the state of freedom in America. In words reminiscent of John Proctor, he refused to name names and confirm whether certain individuals were present at a meeting of communist writers:

Mr. Chairman, I understand the philosophy behind this question and I want you to understand mine. When I say this I want you to understand that I am not protecting the Communists or the Communist Party. I am trying to and I will protect my sense of myself. I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him. (Bentley, 1972, 820, *Thirty Years*)

Miller's moral stance before the Committee was compounded by the fact that he chose to invoke the First Amendment, and not the Fifth Amendment taken by the majority of those that resisted HUAC. The Fifth Amendment was a safeguard against self-incrimination, while the First was a guarantee of free speech. Miller's choice of the First Amendment reflected the fact that freedom of speech extended to the right to silence (Navasky, 2003, 216).

Miller was found in contempt of congress by a vote of 373 to 9 (Bigsby, 2008, 565), and he feared a jail sentence due to his notoriety. He believed that the Committee would choose to make an example of him to justify their purpose (Miller, 1999, 449). Miller's lawyer intended to contest the charge of contempt, and produced an expert witness at the hearing. Harry P. Cain was a former authority on communists who had worked for McCarthy (Miller, 1999, 452-3). Synonymous with *The Crucible's* Reverend Hale, Cain had become disconcerted with McCarthy's 'paranoid vindictiveness' (Miller, 1999, 453). He had reported to Eisenhower that the Loyalty Board was incompatible with the notion of political liberty, and was promptly fired (Miller, 2005, 12-13). Cain countered the contents of Miller's dossier and testified that his plays were too politically contradictory to have been written under the discipline of the Communist Party (Miller, 1999, 454). Miller received a five hundred dollar fine and a month's suspended sentence, a verdict reversed only months later through an appeals process (Abbotson, 2007, 14).

The shift in the political climate and the reversal of fate that the future exacted on HUAC informers proved difficult for many to accommodate. Navasky highlighted the irony in the fact that those 'who claimed their right to silence then, now miss no opportunity to tell their tales, whereas many...who talked at the time, citing the compulsion of history, today invoke their preference for silence' (2003, 221). Miller's newfound status as the nation's moral conscience was not wholly embraced and incited resentment in the community of the Left that had already been divided by the Committee. This bitterness was present not only in cooperative witnesses like Elia Kazan, but amongst fellow resisters. Although Miller refused to succumb to HUAC's

dictates, he was nonetheless denigrated by those that felt that his testimony did not adopt a sufficiently virulent position.

Miller's testimony was respectful and facilitating, his politeness earning him appreciation from the Chairman, Francis E. Walter. Christopher Bigsby's biography alludes to the fact that 'Despite his disdain for it, Miller was treated by the Committee with a degree of respect and responded, for the most part, in as open and rational a way as possible, while protecting those he was invited to betray' (2008, 565). Miller was quite accommodating at his hearing, and the more aggressive attitude toward HUAC for which he became known was predominantly expressed outside of his hearing.

In the course of his testimony, Miller commented that 'I have had to go to hell to meet the Devil' (Bentley, 1972, 824, *Thirty Years*), and this was seized on by the fellow playwright and uncooperative witness Lillian Hellman. As Navasky writes, Hellman joked that Miller must have went to hell as a tourist, for 'he was too cozy with the Committee for her taste, too willing to grant their right to ask the questions in the first place' (2003, 423). Moreover, as Christopher Bigsby alludes, Miller's defence of his former Marxist alignment as being symptomatic of his generation reads almost as a negation of personal responsibility (2008, 553).

Some of the resentment towards Miller for the attitude that he adopted toward informers appears justified. A certain loftiness resided in his comments, when fundamentally Miller's career was never placed in the same danger as the informers toward whom he directed such vitriol. Irrespective of the verdict conferred by the Committee, Miller would have been able to continue to work, for the theatre was never dominated by the blacklist that plagued Hollywood. Miller did however have some sympathy for the informer, but it was selective and did not extend toward Kazan.

The pair experienced a much-publicised fallout following Kazan's decision to testify before HUAC in 1952. They were surrounded by media attention as they became adopted as symbolic models of the opposing sides of the debate for the wider public. As the tide of McCarthyism turned and the myth of the informer as moral paragon disappeared, Kazan was denigrated as the 'quintessential informer' whilst Miller was lauded as the 'risk-taking conscience of the times' (Navasky, 2003, 199). At the time of his testimony, Kazan was a Hollywood powerhouse, commanding much esteem in both the filmic and theatrical realm. Accordingly, there was an implied assumption that Kazan had the symbolic power to break the blacklist (Navasky, 2003, 200). The social content of Kazan's work stood as the cornerstone of his reputation, and so his actions before the Committee were particularly devastating to the Left. Indeed, part of Miller's own disillusionment with Kazan seems rooted in the fact that he also believed him to hold the power to oppose the Committee. Miller viewed Kazan's actions as a personal slight akin to a fraternal betrayal, yet their relationship was further complicated by the fact of Kazan's former intimate relationship with Monroe.

Kazan remained ambivalent in his attitude towards his own actions before the Committee, his autobiography at once expressing regret and reading like an act of self-justification.