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## The role of friendship in Arthur Miller: A study of friendship in his major dramatic and non-dramatic writing

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his major dramatic and non-dramatic writing**

**Campo, Carlos Alejandro, Ph.D.**

**University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1993**

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THE ROLE OF FRIENDSHIP IN ARTHUR MILLER: A STUDY OF  
FRIENDSHIP IN HIS MAJOR DRAMATIC AND  
NON-DRAMATIC WRITING

by

Carlos A. Campo

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

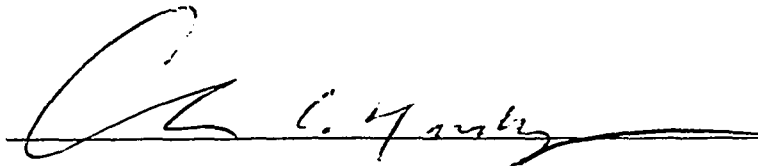
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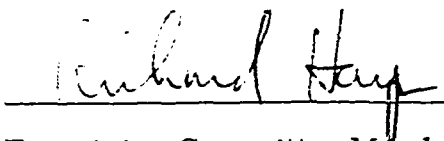
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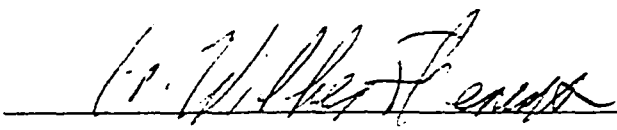
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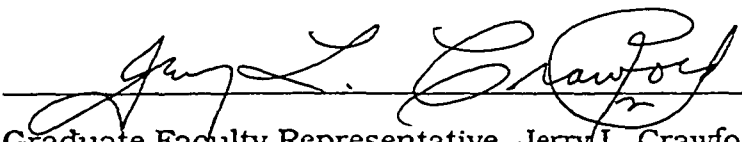
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April 1993

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of friendship in Arthur Miller's work from his book of reportage, *Situation Normal* to his latest play, *The Ride Down Mount Morgan*, attempting to show that friendship is a central and recurrent topic in Miller's work, both dramatic and non-dramatic.

In chapter 1, the "Introduction," I trace Miller's ideas about friendship, which were framed during the Depression and solidified through his study of American training bases in WWII. Miller seems to contend that if all members of society could respond through friendship as the men in the military did, we would eliminate many social ills and parallel Aristotle's *polis*, which was unified through friendship.

Chapter 2, "*Focus*," investigates friendship in Miller's only novel, concluding that the protagonist, Lawrence Newman is isolated from his community until he is motivated through friendship to reach beyond his once complacent and now-threatened existence.

Chapter 3 "*I Don't Need You Any More*," traces friendship in Miller's collected short stories, focusing on "Monte Sant' Angelo" and "Fitter's Night," which both indicate that through friendship, one can "connect" with others and find a place in the community.

Chapter 4, "Friendship in the Early Drama," looks at friendship in *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. In this chapter I consider the ways that friendship dominates Chris Keller's vision for a better world, and analyze *Salesman* as a play that details the failure of friendship.



Chapter 5, "*After The Fall*," examines Quentin's struggle with his past, determining that his "journey" features the death and resurrection of friendship as a positive social force.

Chapter 6, "Friendship in the Later Drama," concludes that while Miller's view of friendship is shattered as a result of the McCarthy era, his later drama continues to portray friendship as a means to unify our increasingly individual society.

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## **Foreword: How it all Began**

This study began in the fall of 1990, when during a phone conversation with my uncle, the now late actor and director José Ferrer, he mentioned that he had known and worked with many contemporary playwrights, and would be more than happy to contact any one of them to initiate correspondence that may lead to a topic of study for my doctoral dissertation. While he mentioned several names, a few that are legendary in the theater, when I heard Arthur Miller's name, it was as though he had stopped speaking. I had just completed a study of friendship in Ben Jonson's plays, and the friendship connection seemed to click immediately in reference to Miller's work. At that moment, I had no idea how central the friendship connection was. After one year of reading Miller's works closely, and studying the criticism of his texts, it was clear that friendship was a prominent thematic topic that was almost completely ignored by Miller scholars--a perfect combination for a hopeful student.

My uncle did write to Miller, and after I followed up with a letter detailing my study, Mr. Miller cordially responded; he has written three times since, graciously answering questions that were important to this work. I now understand why every Miller interviewer seems to comment about his generosity and kindness.

As C.S. Lewis pointed out in his seminal study, *The Four Loves*, friendship; regarded as among the virtues during classical times, has seemingly lost its importance in modern society. Ronald A. Sharp, in *Friendship and Literature*, went on to note that nowhere is the devaluation of friendship more evident than in modern literature. Despite a growing tendency to undervalue the importance of friendship, there has been a “renaissance” of sorts regarding friendship by modern philosophers, as pointed out by Michael Pakaluk in his book, *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*.

Miller's work illustrates the importance of friendship to him personally. Miller, like many writers of the thirties and forties, believed that if the community joined in friendship, they could solve the ills of the Depression. His view of friendship was solidified when he visited military training bases in America as background work for a screenplay. In the military, Miller saw an active model for his beliefs about friendships ability to bring justice and a clear sense of community to society. The model that emerges is very much like the model that Aristotle espoused in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he determined that friendship was the basis for a virtuous life, and provided justice in the community, or *polis*. Aristotle's model of friendship then, is employed in this study as a basis for comparison. Miller's work confirms Aristotle's thesis: where friendship thrives, justice abounds; where friendship diminishes, justice disappears.

This study hopes not only to trace the element of friendship in Miller's best known plays, but also to show that friendship is important to his non-theatrical writing as well. By examining works like Miller's novel *Focus* and his short story anthology, *I Don't Need You Anymore*, I

hope to fill a void in current Miller criticism, namely the close examination of his non-dramatic work, which has received very little critical attention. Through the examination of friendship in Miller's work generally, I hope to shed new light on specific works, and introduce friendship as the basis for new discussion and insight into his important body of literature.

I would like to express my gratitude to the members of my dissertation committee for their guidance and support. To Dr. Jerry Crawford, many thanks for your sense of humor and insight, not to mention your positive comments and encouragement. Dr. Wilbur Stevens, I will always cherish your mesmerizing recollections of the "glory days" of theater, may they live on in our memories. Dr. Richard Harp, thank you for initiating my interest in the subject of friendship. You have shown me friendship through your support of my work, and your unfailing cooperation and guidance. And finally, to my Chairman, who toiled over each word of this document, thank you Dr. Christopher Hudgins for convincing me to return to college and achieve a goal I'd never dreamed was realizable. Your honesty and counsel have been inspirational; your judgment and advice impeccable.

As I look back at the writing of this dissertation on friendship, I am struck by the fact that I have been blessed with many wonderful friends--thank you all. To my extraordinary family, I love you all with my whole being. Joette, thank you for all your love, baby-sitting and prayers. To Eric and T, you have been a part of my life through good and bad, and your undying love for me has given me strength even in the hardest times to pursue my goals, including this work. Dr. Patrick Leary, you have been an inspiration to me as a person and professor for as long as I can

remember, and you have taught me the meaning of friendship through giving of yourself unconditionally--I love you Pa. To my mother Betty, could you ever have known that reading *Huck Finn* and *Robinson Crusoe* at my bedside would have led to this, mom? This work is dedicated to your memory, one that I will take with me until we meet again. To my father, Pupi Campo, thank you for your love and concern for me throughout my life. Your son will remember you with pride and love forever, and this work is a result of your caring love for me. To my sister Cari, you have been an inspiration and a driving force in my life and education always--I will always love you for your goodness to me. To my sister Cathi, thank you for being a shelter and a refuge to me throughout my life, your love for me is beyond expression's ability to define. To my baby sister Cristi, we have been together through heartache and joy, and I am so thankful for the love you have shown me always. My love and devotion to you will never change, your prayers and support have helped me reach this goal. And last, to my children, Brett, Vanessa and Brandon, thank you for sacrificing so much so that Daddy could be a Doctor. I cannot imagine a father being more proud than I am today, and my love and support for you will never change. To my wife Karen, you have been a rock of patience and love through it all; the love and understanding you have shown me in these years has been remarkable--I love you. To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, all the glory and praise for eternal strength and perseverance.

**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION:**

**Miller and Friendship: Some Definitions**

“How do you get to know somebody, kid? I can't make a landing. And I can't get up to God, either. Help me. I never said help me in my life. I don't know anybody. Will you give me a little time? Say yes” (Miller, CPII 80). These words, spoken by Guido the pilot in *The Misfits*, seem to express the helpless isolation of many of Arthur Miller's characters. They not only exist in a God-less world, but more importantly for Miller, in a world where man is inevitably separated from men, hopelessly unable to “connect” with his society.

Miller and commentators like Daniel Walden make much of this subject of connection, which is closely related to Miller's view of “community.” Writing of *All My Sons*, Walden asserts, “the conflict” follows Miller's “essential thinking and orientation.” Walden recounts Joe Keller's final realization that the pilots who died as a result of Keller's faulty engine parts were “all my sons.” He concludes, “in pointing to the

theme relating to 'all my sons,' Miller was searching for a way to deliver his message, but in a more universal context" (193). Miller adds that "Joe Keller's trouble, in a word, is...that his cast of mind cannot admit that he, personally, has any viable connection with his world, his universe, or his society" (*Essays* 130-31). Many write of Miller as a "highly moral" writer with a strong sense of "social responsibility," emphasizing "man's relationship to society." Miller has said that "I don't see how you can write anything decent without using the question of right and wrong as the basis" (*Essays* xvii). Leonard Moss expresses a similar perspective by writing, "Arthur Miller has focused upon a single subject--"the struggle...of the individual attempting to gain his 'rightful' position in his society" (79).

As one reads the body of Miller's work, the persistent question becomes how does Joe Keller, or Guido or Willy Loman make that personal connection or gain their rightful position? Why are they thwarted time and again in their efforts? As Willy Loman says, "Today, it's all cut and dried, and there's no chance for bringing friendship to bear...They don't know me any more" (Miller, *CP* 235). Although there is no simple solution for Miller's alienated characters, he seems to propose in his work that friendship may be a way for his characters to "connect," or "gain their rightful place in society."

Of course, "social" dramatists are typically concerned with friendship. Both "social" and "society" share the same root, "socius." "Socia," though now obsolete, is defined by the OED as "a female friend or companion." The etymology of the word "society" in the OED reveals the following: [ad. OF. "société" (mod.F. "société," =It. "societas," f. "socius" friend, companion, etc.) The first definition explains:



“Association with one's fellow man, esp. in a friendly and intimate manner; companionship or fellowship.” Thus, the first example, which states: “Society, without which man's life is unpleasant and full of anguish” (907). Most of Miller's characters are “without Society,” and suffer the anguish of injustice that the absence of friendship implies. While friendship and society are clearly related, many questions remain about the relationship of friendship and Miller's work.

What is the role of friendship in Miller's writing? Does it serve as the connection between members of society which forms the basis for community? Is it one of the “basic human values” that Willy Loman and other Miller characters are seeking? Might it provide a place of refuge against the “cut and dried” nature of modern society? Are Miller's characters the victims of social injustice due in part to the disappearance of friendship?

This study will try to answer these and other questions about friendship in Arthur Miller by closely examining how the subject emerges in his work. Because Miller's view of friendship seems so closely related to a classical view, where justice and friendship and society are united, Aristotle's views provide an apt basis for comparison. From this perspective, I will analyze friendship not only in Miller's heralded drama, but also his novel, short stories and screenplays. A comprehensive look at Miller's writings reveals friendship as a major thematic topic that unifies his work and provides insights into his view of society.

### **Defining the Aristotelian Model and Applying it to Miller**

Friendship is a term that defies easy definition. The ancients revered it as a virtue, coexistent with justice in the community. C.S. Lewis called it “that luminous, tranquil, rational world of relationships freely chosen” (89). While Lewis’ description may be a bit flowery, his definition is certainly preferable to typical sociological attempts like: “A self interacting with an other, where the self is oriented toward the other and toward itself in a form of openness through which exchange relationships can take place” (Hutter 231). Ronald A. Sharp, in his recent book on friendship in literature, realizes the difficulty in simply defining friendship. He writes, “Dr. Johnson’s quip about poetry seems to me the better part of wisdom about friendship as well: ‘What is poetry?’ Boswell asks him in his *Life*. ‘Why, sir,’ Johnson replies, ‘it is much easier to say what it is not. We all *know* what light is; but it is not easy to *tell* what it is’” (9).

In determining my own definition of friendship, I was struck by the inability of words to capture what is best defined through action. The Reverend Bernie Newton defined friendship in action for me during the recent Los Angeles riots, which were sparked by the Rodney King verdict.

Reverend Newton went into the streets in hopes of calming the raging violence. Fidel Lopez, an innocent victim of a mindless, violent beating, was near death when Reverend Newton came upon him. Realizing that Lopez would be beaten to death without someone's intervention, Reverend Newton became a "human shield," protecting Lopez from the mindless hatred that threatened his life, and calling out, "if you want him dead, you'll have to kill me too" to the crowd that battered Lopez. Reverend Newton held the mob at bay until help arrived, saving Lopez, a complete stranger, from certain death (MPI Video). Reverend Newton's commitment to treating all men as friends called him from stained-glass security to the brutal danger of the streets. The ability to respond in friendship to strangers is central to Miller's vision of friendship as well. Miller writes about people struggling to make "the vastness" of the world "a home" (*Essays* 73). Active friendship like Bernie Newton's has the power to do just that.

Michael Pakaluk, who recently compiled a volume on philosophers' views of friendship writes, "There is currently a vigorous renewal of interest in the topic of friendship among philosophers" (vii). Pakaluk points out that some philosophers have recently revived Aristotle's view, that "ethics is largely about human virtue and vice" (x). Pakaluk concludes that friendship can help develop an "adequate social philosophy" which solves the conflict of individual pursuit of virtue and the pursuit of virtue by others. "Friendship appears to be the bridge that can link together the individual and the various groups to which he belongs, once virtue is taken as fundamental in the moral life" (xi).

Two elements in Miller's works, previously mentioned, clearly link them to Pakaluk's remarks. First, Miller is centrally concerned with "the

individual and the various groups to which he belongs,” or, “the struggle to gain one's rightful position in society.” Second, Miller sees “the idea of value, of right and wrong, good and bad” as the subject of “literature in general” (Gelb 190). In other words, “human virtue and vice” has always been of critical importance to Miller's canon. A close textual study of his work also reveals that friendship is a “bridge that can link together the individual and the various groups to which he belongs.”

History has provided numerous advocates of friendship, who have been quick to proclaim its virtues. Francis Bacon wrote in his treatise *Of Friendship*, that “A Principall Fruit of *Frendship* is the Ease and Discharge of the Fulnesse and Swellings of the Heart” (181). Ecclesiastes reminds us “Two are better than one; because they have good reward for their labor./ For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up” (4: 9-10). To be sure, scripture says all of creation was deemed “very good,” but, “it is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2: 18). Milton elaborates beautifully as Adam requests a companion from God: “In solitude / What happiness? Who can enjoy alone, / Or all enjoying, what contentment find?” (PL 8.364-6)

Robert R. Bell explains in his *Worlds of Friendship* that:

Anthropologists have long had an interest in friendship. Their concern has usually been with how friendship functions in society and the part it plays in the structure of social behavior....Some societies have even seen friendship as the most holy bond of society. This idea, or ones close to it, have been expressed for centuries. Plato, Aristotle,

Cicero, St. Francis, Montaigne, Descartes, Jeremy Taylor, and Adam Smith have all written treatises on friendship, discussing with more or less fervor the role of love and sympathy between friends in keeping society rolling. (9)

Steve Duck, focusing on the corporeal benefits of friendship, writes that friendship leads to a healthier life:

Researchers have now established that friendship problems go hand in hand with many different social problems such as alcoholism, violence and suicide...it is beginning to be realized that, for some reason, people with fewer friends are more prone to tonsillitis and cancer...And as final examples, people who are poor at making friends have been shown to have worse teeth and to get more serious illnesses. (7-8)

American playwright David Mamet's ideas parallel Duck's findings, though he describes a less tangible benefit of friendship: "to be in the Company of Men is a non elective aspect of a healthy life." Even a late night poker game can take on transcendent qualities: "There was an atmosphere of *being involved* in a *communal* activity--that by *sitting there*, we, these men, were, perhaps upholding, perhaps ratifying, perhaps creating or re-creating some important aspect of our community" (90-1).

Although one may find proponents of friendship during any age, any modern study of friendship should begin with classical writings on the subject, which relate significantly to Miller's view. For one, both views seem to share the same sense of community. Horst Hutter, in his

*Politics as Friendship*, summarizes classical attitudes about friendship and community:

Friendship in ancient Greece, far from being a private matter, was a major cause of war and one of the strongest bonds between men. It was one of the chief relationships of the public life of the *polis*....Later, with the universalization of Greek philosophy...friendship was seen to encompass all of humanity, *philia* became *philanthropia*. Just as previously the free members of the *polis* had been considered to be one another's friends, so now all of mankind was seen to be related in friendship. From being a particularistic relationship, friendship came to be thought of as a universal bond of nature. (25-6)

Miller, in his essay "On Social Plays," confirms that his notion of an ideal community is based on the classical model:

The preoccupation of the Greek drama with ultimate law, with the Grand Design, so to speak, was therefore an expression of a basic assumption of the people, who could not yet conceive, luckily, that any man could long prosper unless his *polis* prospered. The individual was at one with his society; his conflicts with it were, in our terms, like family conflicts the opposing sides of which nevertheless shared a mutuality of feeling and responsibility. (*Essays* 52)

The disintegration of this ideal of community not only limits the universality of drama, but has also led to the “extreme individualism” and alienation of modern society, the antithesis of friendship:

We are so atomized socially that no character in a play can conceivably stand as our vanguard, our heroic questioner. Our society--and I am speaking of every industrialized society in the world--is so complex, each person being so specialized an integer, that the moment any individual is dramatically characterized and set forth as a hero, our common sense reduces him to the size of a complainer, a misfit. (*Essays* 58)

Miller’s “misfits” live in a world of paradox: they reveal the lack of “bonds between men,” while believing that all of mankind are “related.” Because “friendship cannot be brought to bear” in the lives of Miller’s characters, they are alienated from the very society that they yearn to be a part of, victims of social injustice.

Miller argues not only for a “new social drama” in this essay, but implicitly for a new society as well:

The new social drama will be Greek in that it will face man as a social animal and yet without a petty partisanship of so much of past drama. It will be Greek in that the ‘men’ dealt with in its scenes--the psychology and the characterizations--will be more than ends in themselves and once again parts of a whole, a whole that is social, a whole that is Man. The

world, in a word, is moving into the same boat. For a time, their greatest time, the Greek people were in the same boat--their polis. Our drama, like theirs, will, as it must, ask the same questions, the largest ones. Where are we going now that we're together? (*Essays* 64)

Writing this essay in 1956, Miller hoped that the world would follow the Greek example of community, and see themselves "together, moving into the same boat." Miller sees the *polis* as his ideal social model, embodying his personal and professional vision of community. Personally, the *polis* appeals to Miller because it was linked through friendship, and had a clear vision of the common good. For Miller, modern society lacks both elements, as do so many of his characters. As we have noted, Miller sees his characters' actions as an attempt to convert the "vastness" of the world into a "home." The model of the *polis* reduces the vastness of modern society, and perhaps promises a home for Miller's characters. Professionally, Miller finds the classical society attractive because it allowed the playwright to address the entire community through drama. Miller despairs that the modern playwright and his "atomized" heroes reflect only a fragment of the mirror that was once intact, and able to reflect an entire community. As Francis Fergusson expressed so eloquently in his *The Idea of a Theatre*, modern playwrights have difficulty communicating with their audience or community because modern society lacks the unifying elements inherent in Sophoclean or even Shakespearean society (122).

For Miller, friendship seems to be a possible unifying element that crosses the fragmented borders of modern society. Though Miller does



not make the explicit connection in this essay, inherent in the Greek view of community is friendship; the “universal bond of nature,” which provided justice, the means of keeping society together. Miller, in his novel, plays, short stories and screenplays clearly shows that members of our society not only lack a sense of community, but also fail to communicate or connect in friendship, which leads to injustice. Through these negative examples, Miller hopes to lead his audience to recognize the need for a better model of friendship--basically, the classical model.<sup>1</sup>

Paul Wadell, elucidating the Aristotelian view of friendship writes:

Friendship is the soil for virtue, the relationship in which a goodness not possible within society-at-large can be attained....Without the community of friendship, the city-state would have no hope, but without the city-state, friendships would become too private, friends would be inclined to think their friendships exist for their own sake, and not for the city-state to which they are to summon justice. (50)

Miller uses the Greek model, the one he obviously aspires toward, to contrast and condemn the injustice of our own society. In Greek society, man and his community are one; in our own, man is an alienated “integer.” In Greek society, friendship is “the soil for virtue;” in our own, “there’s no chance for bringing friendship to bear.” In Greek society, “relations are characterized by *philia*; perfect justice prevails in perfect friendship” (Hutter 110); in our own, friendship is lacking; injustice prevails.

This injustice and the alienation that it produces are central to Miller's work. As Raymond Williams suggests: "it is with alienation, both in a social action and in a personality, that Miller is ultimately concerned" (167). When his characters fail to achieve a sense of community of through friendship, they become victims of injustice. When, in a very few instances, they succeed in their quest for friendship, they break free from social alienation and injustice.

While many commentators have explored Miller's view of social responsibility and community, to my knowledge, none have fully investigated the role of friendship in his work. This is surprising, since friendship is a recurrent and prominent thematic topic in Miller's work. Moreover, Miller's canon is filled with characters that are unable to connect, and replete with situations where friendship has become an impossibility, and justice, inextricably linked to friendship, is non-existent. As Philip Gelb records in an interview with Miller, Reverend John Bachman commented about Miller's work, there is a "moral, negative witness" (190) about it; or as Miller said, "I think that the drama, at least mine, is not so much an attack but an exposition, so to speak, of the want of value, and you can only do this if the audience itself is constantly trying to supply what is missing" (Gelb 195). Friendship is most often "what is missing" in Miller's work, and if audiences don't recognize that omission and rectify it, justice cannot function in their world any more than it does on Miller's stage.

Alasdair MacIntyre, in books like *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* has argued for a new system of ethics with friendship playing a major role. In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre depicts a society that is devoid of virtue, and calls for "the construction of new forms of

community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive" (244). Also relevant here, Jeffrey Reiman, in *Justice and Modern Moral Philosophy*, writes that "Unless truths of morality can be identified by reason, moral conflicts are only clashes between people with different unverifiable beliefs" (ix). Sounding very much like both writers, Miller, in an interview with Philip Gelb, says, "the bulk of literature, not only on the stage but elsewhere, is an exposition of man's failure: his failure to assert his sense of civilized and moral life" (198). Friendship, and the justice it brings, may be the foundation for the construction of a society that allows its citizens to function morally as these men describe. Miller has written that "All the plays that we call great...are ultimately involved with some aspect of a single problem. It is this: How may man make for himself a home in that vastness of strangers and how may he transform that vastness into a home?" (Martin 73). Arthur Miller's literature answers that perhaps friendship can "transform the vastness of strangers," and provide a "home" to the lonely and alone.

### **Miller and Friendship: Some Formative Events**

Arthur Miller says that he has spent much of his life practicing a “defiant loneliness.” As a youth, he was attracted to the “lonely grandeur and the cult of the autonomous hero-author,” comparing himself to Moses, who climbed the mountain to receive the law--“alone” (TB 63). Even today, Miller’s sprawling, secluded home in Roxbury, Connecticut further fuels this image of Miller as a loner. There is much to contradict this image as well. Miller says that his father refused “to attribute naturally superior virtues to all Jews and anti-Semitism to all gentiles,” which set up an expectation in him of “universal emotions and ideas” (TB 62). Miller sees his writing as an attempt to liberate his characters from injustice by making them “more human, which is to say, less alone” (Martin 123). *Arthur Miller and Company*, published in 1990 to commemorate Miller’s 75th birthday, is filled with commentary from fellow artists and friends who laud his professional and personal commitment to freedom for artists everywhere (Bigsby). Miller’s work as president of PEN led Harold Clurman to write that “Miller’s presidency was eminently successful in the causes of international understanding through literature and of freedom for writers” (x).

Despite Miller’s obvious place as a writer and figure in contemporary theatre, misconceptions about Miller’s character abound

even today, often emphasizing one side at the expense of the other. The specter of McCarthyism and his notorious marriage to Marilyn Monroe are two sources of continued distortion. Tracing friendship in his personal life borders on the impossible, as fact and fiction blend to blur our vision of "America's greatest living dramatist." Simply recounting the major events of Miller's life seems of little value to this study, yet, facts which relate specifically to friendship and community may help to deepen our understanding of his views about them. Later, when focusing on specific works, we will examine relevant historical information in greater detail. For now, two major events or periods, the Great Depression and McCarthyism, require a special focus. Because Miller's post-Depression social vision included Marxist sympathies for a short time, the HUAC committee would some twenty years later seize the opportunity to label Miller a "Red subversive." Therefore, Miller saw the two periods as directly related, the former a time of "moral solidarity," where his ideas of "human brotherhood" were formed, the latter a time of "moral confusion," where friendships were "sundered" forever.

Arthur Miller was born in Harlem, Manhattan, on October 17, 1915, where he lived until he was fourteen. Harlem was then a fairly well-to-do middle-class area of mixed ethnic groups, though Miller "imagined the whole world was Jewish except maybe for Lefty the cop" (TB 23) until he entered school at six.

It was at this age that Miller had an unforgettable run-in with a local librarian, which he recounts in his 1987 autobiography, *Timebends*. Jealous that his older brother Kermit had just gotten a library card, Miller "had to have one too." The young Miller began dutifully answering the perfunctory questions of the "sacred" librarian, until he was asked to

give the names of his parents. He managed to “disguise” his mother’s name, Augusta (“though no one ever called her anything but Gus or Gussie”), but was unable to speak his father’s “so Jewish name, Isidore.” Little Arthur was “paralyzed,” and with cheeks aflame, finally managed to respond with “Iz.” “Is?” she asked. I nodded. “Is what?” Miller rushed out into the street in horror. Though a seemingly innocuous episode, Miller writes that the librarian had suddenly challenged him “to identify myself as a candidate for victimization, and I fled.” Miller retrospectively realized that the librarian meant no harm, but he had been taught to “recognize danger--even where it did not exist--but not how to defend against it.” To “defend against” such injustice, Miller writes that he “tried to locate in the human species a counterforce to the randomness of victimization” (23-7). Friendship, and the justice it promises, is often that counter force in Miller’s life and literature.

In 1928, the early stages of the Depression forced the Millers to move to Brooklyn, where Miller’s sense of community deepened. As Schleuter and Flanagan assert:

Miller found the change from the swarming streets of Manhattan to the almost rural atmosphere of Brooklyn to be a move to a different world: it was his first experience with a social unit larger than the family but nevertheless still small enough to comprehend. In marked contrast to the unending streets and crowds of Manhattan, Brooklyn suggested self-containment and a spirit of community identity. (1)

Brooklyn offered Miller “peace and stability in a time of social and economic confusion” (Schleuter 1), and friendship was clearly part of this sense of constancy.

The community of Brooklyn was Miller's backdrop during the Great Depression, which Miller has repeatedly called “the most influential event” in his life. Despite the economic hardship, the Depression was a time of solidarity for Miller, as it was for many Americans. United in their economic despair and resilient hope for better days to come, many looked to one another as a “defense” against an impersonal government and its failed economic system. A communal spirit of “relatedness” seem to flourish during this era. As one writer commented about this era, “There was an ever-growing inclination to discover and celebrate something that could lead humans through the calamity” (Peeler 3). It was during that time that Miller, disillusioned with the “broken promise” of the Depression, came to the conclusion that:

The *true* condition of man...was the complete opposite of the competitive system I had assumed was normal, with all its mutual hatreds and conniving. Life could be a comradely embrace, people helping one another rather than looking for ways to trip each other up. (TB 111)

In a recent letter to Miller, I commented that he “seemed to suggest that there was a true sense of community friendship during this period, one that [he] came to see as indispensable. Was there something about this period that made it more conducive to friendship?” Miller answered:

There was the reality and there was the myth of solidarity during the Depression. The latter was beautiful, but most of the time it was dog-eat-dog in reality. But myths are important, and that one challenged the brutal individualism of our system and gave us a scale to weigh sociopathic behaviour. That scale is just about vanished, with every man for himself. (Letter)

Miller emerged from the Depression era with the belief that a new sense of community was needed to unify the country. Miller writes that “around 1936--for the first time unpolitical people began thinking about common action as a way out of their impossible conditions” (TB 264-5). As one of Miller’s characters from his play *The American Clock* says about the time of the Depression, “It was ridiculous--how could you only think of yourself when fellows with advanced degrees were out on the block throwing footballs around all day!” (31). Miller, and many other artists of the thirties and forties, felt that the United States had been largely an individualistic country, a land of entrepreneurs whose dogged devotion to capital produced the Depression. David P. Peeler explains in his book, *Hope Among Us Yet*, that novelists of this period like Richard Wright, Josephine Herbst and John Steinbeck believed:

*Community* was the answer to Americans' Depression problems and the means by which their protagonists escaped misery. Through communities of varying sizes, these writers granted their protagonists a sense of identity, the satisfaction of family-like affection, and a love for others



that would replace the hatred responsible for social evils.  
(185)

Wright went so far as to say that the “problem of human unity” deserved more attention than hunger or poverty, that it was “more important than life itself” (186). These writers, like Miller, “proposed to bring their characters closer together, to mesh them so that the distance between the self and the other became infinitesimal” (188). The role of friendship is the central one in “meshing” the community:

Since few creatures willingly harm themselves, and since there would be little distinction between the self and the community, people would supposedly stop hurting each other. If the communities were as large as the universal ones that Herbst, Wright, and Steinbeck proposed, then *all* oppression would end. (188)

Wright's words almost eerily echo Aristotle's ideas about community as Hutter explains in *Politics as Friendship*:

While the virtuous man can be the close and intimate friend of only a few in his lifetime, he will nevertheless approach everyone of his fellow citizens as though he were a friend, as having the potential of being a close friend. His harmonious character and his sense of justice enable him to both form deep and lasting friendships with a few like-minded

individuals and to approach everyone else--the men of the multitude--with kindness and fairness. (116)

This view most clearly reflects Miller's ideal view of friendship operating in the community. If all members of the community were treated with "kindness and fairness," justice would be an inherent element of social life. Justice fails to operate because of the "brutal individualism" that has led to the "every man for himself" way of life, which destroys the spirit of "philia" needed in a just community. It is precisely because Miller's characters do not find such justice that they are trapped within the confines of the self, alienated from their families, their society and themselves. Just as William Blake wrote in his "The Human Abstract": "Pity would be no more / If we did not make somebody Poor" (164), Miller suggests that injustice "no more could be" if kindness and justice flourished.

Miller's ideological connection with the social novelists above seems clear enough. The Joad's conclusion at the end of *The Grapes of Wrath* that "all folks are kin," and Joe Keller's final confession that the boys who lost their lives because of his faulty engine parts were "all my sons," is only one example of this connection. Interestingly, these writers are implicitly arguing against the type of protagonist that would come to dominate American literature. As Paul Nisly asserts:

Although a few authors have celebrated the rugged individualism of the American who takes charge of his own destiny...many others portray the dangers of an exaggerated emphasis on the self which leads to imprisonment within the

self....Disregarding others, the solitary person becomes finally cut off from the community through his hypnotic 'self-regard.' (49)

Although some of Miller's protagonists seem to fit this description of rugged individualism, Miller consistently balances his view by emphasizing the importance of community in his work.

Miller's work-related experiences in the thirties only exacerbated his feelings of isolation, and the need for friendship. He worked for two years in an auto parts warehouse, but had no effect on the lives of the men there, and never "connected" with them through friendship. Miller's experience at the warehouse became *A Memory of Two Mondays*, which was a critical failure, but always one of his favorite plays. The inability of these men to respond in friendship pervades this play, as does the inherent difficulty of maintaining friendship in a competitive atmosphere.

After attending the University of Michigan, where he studied playwriting under Professor Kenneth Rowe, Miller worked for a short time in the Federal Theater Project (Carson 7-9). When the FTP failed, Miller was unable to join the army because of a high school football injury, and went to work in a Navy Yard as a ship's fitter. Miller sums up his experiences at the shipyard and the auto warehouse in his autobiography with:

There was the same anonymous scent of steel as on my first arrival and my departure, a scent that reminded me of the Navy Yard and the factories, and one that I would always find stimulating, promising a kind of comradeship of makers

and builders, but depressing in the end as each man is left exactly where he began--alone. (222)

Miller struggled with his rejection by the army as he “was walking through the city in wartime feeling the inevitable unease of the survivor” (TB 223). Once again, Miller is an outcast, alienated from his community: “I seemed to be part of nothing, no class, no influential group” (223). Miller was able to identify with soldiers during this period early in the forties, as he did some investigative reporting for a screenplay he was working on, *The Story of G.I. Joe*. Though the film was completed without Miller's screenplay being used, his investigation of American training bases led to a book of reportage, *Situation Normal* (TB 223).

Miller's goal was to go out “among the men...to know what made them tick,” so that he could help make a film that gave “a true picture of the war” (*Normal* 3). Miller realized that “you cannot make a true picture of this war until you make up your mind as to what this war is about” (*Normal* 5). In a quote that seems to foreshadow the crisis of the Vietnam veterans, Miller argued that until the American people “come to agreement on some basic credo which will explain and justify this war, they are going to injure and sometimes destroy the minds of a host of returning veterans” (*Normal* 5).

It was not until Miller met a soldier named “Watson” that he “suddenly realized what seemed to lie at the bottom of everything” he was searching for (*Normal* 155). Watson was a young soldier who had seen active duty, and came to believe that:

Friendship is the greatest thing out there. I mean real friendship, not because a guy can give you something you want. I tell you the truth: I would die for any one of thirty of forty men out there just as easy as I'd flick out his match. I swear that's the truth. I don't expect you to understand it, but I swear it. It never seemed a terrible thing or a sacrifice after a while. I would die for them. I love them with everything in my heart. (*Normal* 145)

When Watson met Miller, the private felt that he was betraying his unit because he alone had been sent home for officer training, but that all of the men "had a right to go and wanted to" (*Normal* 149). Miller believed that Watson represented a "nearly classic extreme of a state of mind found in all men who have been in actual battle" (*Normal* 155). Miller goes on to explain that "For want of a better word--this one has sneering connotations--Watson was in love, in love with his comrades in arms....His avowal that he would die for any of them was truer than I had imagined" (*Normal* 155-56). Miller was concerned about what happens to Watson and others like him when he returns to America. Miller saw a potential dilemma in that:

Many hundreds of thousands of men are going to return from terrible battles and in some degree they will have shared Watson's feeling of love and identity with their particular comrades and units. And in differing degrees they are going to have to transfer that love to other--civilian--

'units' or be forever in that restless, aimless state of emotional thirst. (*Normal* 156)

Miller understands that the "transfer" of this love, which Watson has already identified as friendship, is crucial to the emotional survival of the returning soldier. Unless the soldier can experience the "unity of feeling" (*Normal* 157) at home that he came to know in the Army, he is in danger of insulating himself against an uncaring society, finding himself "alone. Cut off from mankind and that great movement of mankind he once was part of" (*Normal* 162). Conversely, if the soldier finds that his community is:

working together toward a common goal, the problem might hardly exist for him. With each citizen protecting his neighbor, as he does in time of danger, and all divisions of race, economic and social position melted away in the face of peril, the veteran would find himself strangely at home among his people. (*Normal* 157)

The "military model" of community that Miller describes comes closest to paralleling Aristotle's ideal community. For Aristotle, the "common goal" was striving toward the good and virtuous, which led to justice in the community: If everyone strives for what is good and aims at doing what is best, the whole community will satisfy its needs and each member will possess the best of goods, since virtue is the best good" (NE IX. L.IX:C 1875). The goal in the military was to protect and support

one another as equals, as friends. If the civilian community can be bound by a common goal that can be attained through friendship, as Aristotle's *polis* or Miller's military, then men like Watson (and presumably all people) can be fulfilled members of the community.

Miller's experience with the men of the armed services solidified his belief in the value and power of friendship which the Depression had etched in his mind. The group was small enough to provide Miller with an identifiable community, not a theorized replica of the *polis*, but a real assembly of people working toward a common good through friendship. Despite the obvious limitations of this idealized community, Miller witnessed a community that was not based on the "brutal individualism" that leads to alienation and isolation. Instead, these men were liberated through their common bond, joined in the belief that their goal of winning the war was moral and good. Miller suggests that the freedom the soldiers found is available to all members of society, yet is often denied them because friendship is missing. *Situation Normal* clearly suggests that if communities across America would adopt the view of friendship and community he witnessed in the military, that all people could be a "united part of the race, as a man who is fighting with and for those he loved" (*Normal* 162). Just as the soldier must "transfer" his feelings of love from his unit to his community to thrive emotionally, so must civilians, the modern *polis*, express feelings of love and friendship toward each other. If this does not occur, the soldier "must live unto himself, for his own selfish welfare. Half of him, in a sense must die, and with it must pass away half the thrill he knew in being alive" (*Normal* 157). Friendship, the selfless expression of love that soldiers "lived for" is

continually threatened by a community rife with “its little prejudices, its hates, its tiny aims” (*Normal* 157).

Sheila Huftel acknowledges the importance of *Situation Normal* to Miller's drama; not only its obvious influence in *All My Sons*, a play about a former soldier trying to find the friendship and love he knew from his men, but that Miller “remains concerned with how the world can be made less alien; we will meet this concern again over Willy Loman. In *After The Fall* Quentin, outside the concentration camp, nails the idea behind *Situation Normal* ...to one line: 'And I without belief stand here disarmed'" (87). A pervasive message in Miller's work is that friendship is the driving force that makes man's world “less alien.”

Miller realized that friendship and sacrifice were a way of life in the military community, and he carries this ideal vision with him to this day. He defines this in *Timebends* in the following way:

The city I knew was incoherent, yet its throttled speech seemed to implore some significance for the sacrifices that drenched the papers every day. And psychologically situated as I was--a young, fit man barred from a war others were dying in, equipped with a lifelong anguish of self-blame that sometimes verged on a pathological sense of responsibility--it was probably inevitable that the selfishness, cheating, and economic rapacity on the home front should have cut into me with its contrast to the soldiers' sacrifices and the holiness of the Allied cause. (223)



While Miller may have been disillusioned about the “Allied cause,” the armed forces community impressed upon him the possibility of a “world” of virtue based on sacrifice and friendship.

On a personal level, Miller’s hopes for a virtuous community exercising justice through friendship would be severely shaken in the coming years. “I still feel--kind of temporary about myself,” one of Willy’s central lines from *Death of a Salesman*, “summed up” for Miller his own condition “throughout life” (TB 69). Despite the critical and commercial successes of *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, despite his participation in the community-minded Group Theater and “culture of antifascism that united artists everywhere in the world” (TB 274), Miller felt himself “moving alone” through the “unnaturalness of fame--the other side of loneliness” (TB 194). As Miller expressed about that time, “It can take a long time to accept that celebrity is merely a different form of loneliness” (TB 275). He moved into the decade of the fifties with a mixed sense of acceptance and rejection, personally and professionally, although nothing could have prepared him for the shattering times ahead.

Perhaps the first rumbling of the darkness to come was Columbia Pictures’ rejection of his screenplay *Hook*, in 1951. The story was about a young idealist’s failed attempt to overthrow the feudal gangsterism of the New York waterfront. After initially showing some interest, studio boss Harry Cohn informed Miller that the script required “some changes,” namely, that the bad guys in the story, the union crooks and their gangster protectors, should be Communist. Miller called the changes “idiotic,” and withdrew the screenplay. The next morning he received a telegram: “ITS INTERESTING HOW THE MINUTE WE TRY TO

MAKE THE SCRIPT PRO-AMERICAN YOU PULL OUT. HARRY COHN" (TB 308). The insanity had begun.

Miller watched in disbelief as friends and associates in the artistic community were ruined by the HUAC committee, who forced them to grovel in perverse confessions. None affected Miller as deeply as the "cooperation" of his friend Elia Kazan, who, of course, had directed *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. Miller recalls the "rainy Connecticut morning in early April 1952" when he met with Kazan at his home "under dripping branches amid the odor of decay and regeneration" (TB 332-3). Kazan told Miller of his plan to "testify fully in executive session" naming about a dozen people he remembered from his "months" in the Party long ago. Kazan would later write, "I'd had every good reason to believe that the Party should be driven out of its many hiding places into the light of scrutiny" (297). Despite the fact that Miller saw Kazan's confession as moral depravity, it was clearly secondary to the larger issue--the dissolution of friendship. Miller writes painfully of the breakup that Kazan "had entered into my dreams like a brother, and there we had exchanged a smile of understanding that blocked others out" (TB 333). That Kazan would have sacrificed even Miller if necessary, destroy years of friendship to continue his career, was something that Miller simply "could not get past":

That all relationships had become relationships of advantage or disadvantage. That this was what it all came to anyway and there was nothing new here. That one stayed as long as it was useful to stay, believed as long as it was not too inconvenient, and that we were fish in a tank cruising with

upslanted gaze for the descending crumbs that kept us alive. I could only say that I thought this would pass and that it had to pass because it would devour the glue that kept the country together. (333-4)

These words are something of an elegy to friendship, the “glue” that binds us to one another. The period that followed was devastating for Miller, as the “tawdry tribune of moralistic vote-snatchers” victimized him personally and professionally. The McCarthy era was a turning point in Miller’s views of friendship, community and justice, as those concepts seemed empty in the face of the “imploded community that distrust and paranoia had killed” (TB 339). Miller considered isolating himself and “exulting in aloneness,” like Ibsen’s Doctor Stockmann, but felt that “private salvation was something close to sin.” Instead, he continued to believe that “One’s truth must add its push to the evolution of public justice and mercy, must transform the spirit of the city” (TB 314).

Interestingly, Aristotle also came to a place of despair regarding the community of Athens, “the barbarians who live as they please,” yet similarly turned to the truth of friendship as a way to summon justice in an age of growing darkness. In fact, Paul J. Wadell, in his *Friendship and the Moral Life*, argues that there is a distinct shift at the end of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* “from the *polis* to friendship” (46). Although Wadell asserts that Aristotle did not want to contrast the *polis* with friendship because “for him (Aristotle) the *polis* ought to be friendship, this shift occurred because Athens had lost sight of the “common good”:

Precisely because the city-state no longer enables but actually frustrates the acquisition and nurturing of the virtues, Aristotle searches for another way to develop them, and his search takes him to friendship. By the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, friendship has replaced the *polis* as the context in which the virtues are learned and embodied. (49)

Miller clearly sees our world as a modern-day Athens, which has lost sight of the common good as well. While he may not explicitly turn to friendship as the basis for an entire ethical system, there is little question that Miller sees friendship as a “basic human value” which can solidify and bring justice to the community.

In the early fifties, Miller's world “seemed to be colliding with itself.” His marriage was breaking up, his relationship with Marilyn Monroe was developing, and the personal attacks becoming furious. In 1953, his passport application, sought in order to attend the premiere of *The Crucible* in Brussels, was denied as “not in the national interest” (TB 356). A few months later, Miller, by now labeled by New York mayor Wagner as a “subversive, un-American presence,” was “hammered” by another attack. He had been working on a film about juvenile delinquency entitled “Bridge to a Savage World,” when a HUAC investigator named “Mrs. Scotti” warned city administrators to disassociate themselves with Miller who “was going to be destroyed” (TB 357-8). Miller felt strongly about the film's subject matter, which centered on young boys who “have been told from birth that they are nothing, that their parents are nothing, that their hopes are nothing”

(Huftel 31). The boys go on a camping trip with a Youth Board worker, and before the film is over, band together in friendship to "discover their innate worth." Miller's film was subjected to a "political means test" by a new city agency, the Mobilization for Youth, at a hearing to determine whether or not Miller should be allowed to write the screenplay. At the hearing, Miller refused to discuss his political views "in order to gain a right with which I had been born." The board, by a single vote, voted against the film, which Miller described as "a happy and even invigorating surprise at that moment in history. Such were the times" (TB 358).

And times were getting even more complicated. In 1956, Miller divorced his wife, Mary Grace Slattery, and in June of that year, married Marilyn Monroe. The same month, the HUAC subpoenaed him to appear; he refused to "name names," and was cited for contempt of Congress. In May of 1957, he was convicted of contempt, and found himself blacklisted by the motion picture industry and by many in theater as well. Marilyn's pregnancy, a source of joy for the Millers, was tubal; she lost the child late in the year, which resulted in severe depression that lasted until her death in August of 1962 (Schleuter 10-14).

Marilyn's senseless death and the savagery of critics' reaction to *After The Fall*, Miller's first play in some ten years, only convinced Miller that he was destined to be isolated if he were to survive. *After The Fall* was almost universally condemned as Miller's lurid exploitation of his relationship with Marilyn. Actress Barbara Loden, playing the role of "Maggie," uncannily resembled Marilyn, which only fueled the fire. Even long-time Miller supporters like Lillian Hellman were savage in their

harsh reaction to the play. John Simon dubbed the play an “imposing dramatic gossip column...washing one's clean linen in public” (234). While some argue that Miller has never recovered from the criticism of this period, later events suggest that he has been able to move beyond that difficult time.

Miller's marriage to Inge Morath in 1962, successful productions of all his major plays, and the healing perspective of time, have helped him transcend the limitations of the past, and confirmed his view--that friendship is still able to bridge the gulf of alienation and provide justice in the community. Morath's strength and independence were refreshing to Miller after Marilyn's agonizing dependency, and for the first time in years, he experienced moments with his new wife “when you realize that you are friends and may separate or come together and part again quite happily, with no dependency” (TB 499).

Twenty five years after the events that would have produced an insular bitterness in a lesser man, Miller is able to write, “Maybe Ibsen had been wrong: he is not strongest who is most alone, he is just lonelier” (TB 502). *The Truth Drug*, a film scenario that Miller toyed with in the seventies, is a further illustration of his determined insistence that friendship leads to justice in the community. A musician stumbles onto a chemical that transforms the naturally aggressive wolverine into a “loving beast.” The concoction apparently stimulates a part of the brain involved in “empathic identification” rather than sex. Of course, the brew finds its way to the masses, and the results are predictably comical, but pointed, as subway passengers refuse to push their way onto cars, and air force crews flee into the jungles rather than bomb anyone. (TB 553-4) As simplistic as the story may seem, it points to Miller's unfailing belief

that “empathic identification,” the matrix of friendship, is a viable means of ameliorating social injustice.

Miller's work as former President and active member of PEN has led to greater freedom for many artists, including playwrights Wole Soyinka and Fernando Arrabal. Miller continues to be active politically, seemingly forever on the side of those, like himself at the age of six before the terrifying librarian, “candidates for victimization.” Miller closes his autobiography with a refrain that pervades his life and work: “we are all connected, watching one another. Even the trees” (TB 599). Despite the fact that Miller has seen the foundation for friendship crumble in his life, and while his later work despairs more than it affirms, friendship is still central to the “connection” in Miller's world, the “glue” that should hold society together.

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#### Notes to the Introduction

<sup>1</sup> For a complete discussion of the breakdown of community in modern industrial societies, see Robert A. Nisbet's *The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom*. Oxford, 1953. The following is one of many insightful comments Nisbet makes on the subject: “The modern release of the individual from traditional ties of class, religion, and kinship has made him free; but, on the testimony of innumerable works in our age, this freedom is accompanied not by the sense of creative release, but by the sense of disenchantment and alienation. The alienation of man from historic moral certitudes has been followed by the sense of man's alienation from fellow man” (10).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **FOCUS**

After the critical and financial failure of his first Broadway play, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, Arthur Miller wrote his only novel, *Focus*, hoping to recover some of his losses. Though Miller has said that fiction seems “too infinite” as a genre, and he prefers the “three dimensional” quality of drama, *Focus* sold “a surprising number of copies,” and was published in several countries only a few years after its US. publication in 1945. Early reviews of *Focus* were largely positive, yet later criticism has labeled the novel as didactic and immature. Iris Barry wrote in 1945 that the novel was “a first-rate horror story, cleverly as well as passionately devised” (4), and that it was sure to “make a lot of people furiously angry” (4). Alfred Butterfield, while not quite so enthusiastic, wrote that same year that *Focus* “is a novel about anti-Semitism, a strong, sincere book bursting with indignation and holding the reader's attention despite its many faults” (15). Neil Carson presents the more modern view when he asserts: “The novel is rather too contrived to be entirely believable psychologically” (96). While critics, even those that



have done fairly comprehensive studies of Miller's work, almost never fully consider the novel, it reveals his early and fundamental preoccupation with the role of friendship and justice in society.

Critics most often describe the novel as "a study of the destructive power of anti-Semitism" (Schleuter 8), yet such reductive summaries fail to get at the heart of the work. The novel details the life of one Lawrence Newman: a smug, meticulous, middle-class, anti-Semitic personnel director, who mistakenly becomes the object of anti-Semitism. Newman is reprimanded by his boss, Mr. Gargan, for hiring a "Miss Kapp," who is "obviously not our company's kind of person." His punishment for hiring a Jew is "take the day and get some glasses," to avoid such ocular errors in the future. The glasses alter his appearance so much that he is now "mistaken as a Jew" by the company's vice-president, who orders Newman's immediate demotion. Newman will not endure the disgrace, and resigns. Out of work, Newman begins to realize his aloneness, and looks to his neighbors to fill his emptiness. They are involved in "cleaning up the neighborhood," by getting rid of the only Jew, a "Mr. Finkelstein." They include Newman in their group, the Christian Front. Newman welcomes the "friendship" they offer, yet is slightly disapproving of their techniques. The group senses his ambivalence, and labels him a Jew--Newman now becomes the object of their ignorant hate. Newman's wife, a woman whom he once refused to hire because she "looked like a Jew," pleads with him to assert his innocence and appease his fascist neighbors. Newman cannot support his neighbors' violent solutions, and reluctantly refuses to join them. Newman is then attacked, along with Finkelstein, by a gang from the Front. The two join forces to ward off the hoodlums, and they are both beaten badly. The novel ends as Newman

identifies with Finkelstein so completely that he metaphorically becomes a Jew himself, as he fails to correct the investigating officer who links Newman and Finkelstein as the only Jews on the block.

As this synopsis may indicate, Miller's novel is not a complex, compelling work of art. David Mesher goes so far as to call *Focus* "In some ways bad art" which "confuses metaphor and fact" and "may be overly simplistic in explaining the sources of Newman's hatred" (478). Sheila Huftel was more than kind to call *Focus* "a dramatist's novel: tense in construction and dynamic in climax" (55). While the novel is not consistently tense or dynamic, Miller does examine how friendship and justice operate in the community throughout this novel. Lawrence Newman moves from a contentedly solitary man to an alienated object, and only finds fulfillment when he joins a fellow human being who was once his "enemy," as they fight together against the blind hatred of their community.

*Focus* opens with a scene that outlines many of Miller's ideas about friendship. Newman is dreaming of an "amusement park" that is deserted, yet a large carousel moves eerily in the darkness. Newman "grows frightened" as he begins to realize that there is "a gigantic machine...a factory" operating under the carousel. Hearing a sound growing from it, a cry, "Aleese! Aleese! Aleese!" Startled out of his dream, Newman soon realizes that the continuing sound is coming from a Puerto Rican woman who is being attacked just outside his window, and the cry is for "Police! Police! Please, police!" Newman considers interceding for a moment, but he is "in his bare feet; without slippers he could not be expected to go out and stop this" (1-2).

Mesher writes that beginning the novel with an attack on a Puerto Rican woman is “an obvious authorial attempt to universalize and legitimize Jewish suffering” (478). Mesher's statement describes a fundamental aspect of Miller's writing: his constant attempt to universalize his characters and their situations. This has led some critics to the conclusion that Miller deliberately “hides” his Jewishness, by depicting characters that are ostensibly Jewish (Willy Loman is most often cited), yet are not specifically Jews. Leslie Fielder writes that Miller and Paddy Chayefsky “create crypto-Jewish characters; characters who are in habit, speech, and condition of life typically Jewish-American, but who are presented as something else--general-American say, as in *Death of a Salesman*, or Italo-American, as in *Marty*. Fielder calls this “a loss of artistic faith, a failure to remember that the inhabitants of Dante's Hell or Joyce's Dublin are more universal as they are more Florentine or Irish” (91). In an interview with Robert A Martin, Miller answers this charge in typical fashion:

I've written about twenty full-length plays and maybe fifteen one-acters and can't go through them all now, but I imagine two or three of these were about Jews as Jews. This is Fielder's problem, not mine. Where the theme seems to me to require a Jew to act somehow in terms of his Jewishness, he does so. Where it seems to me irrelevant what the religious or cultural background of a character may be, it is treated as such. (312)

Miller solidifies his defense by mentioning *Focus* later in the interview: "I take all this [criticism] as an accusation that somehow I'm 'passing' for non-Jewish. Well, I happen to have written the first book about anti-Semitism in this country in this recent time" (314). Enoch Brater supports Miller in his view, writing that, as he developed as a writer:

Ethics, not ethnicity, became Miller's special forte. 'There is work to be done,' he would observe later during the scoundrel time of McCarthyism, 'this is no time to go to sleep.' He was a universalist from the very outset of his professional career, a writer not interested not merely in the family, but in the family of man. (125)

Brater concludes that "Social responsibility, man's behavior to man, becomes the universal theme Miller inherits from the Old Testament" (125). Considering the importance of friendship in ethical systems from Aristotle to Kierkegaard to the present day, Brater's comments are especially significant as they identify Miller's "special forte." In addition, man's behavior to man in the Old Testament is summed up in Leviticus: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord" (19:18). Jesus called the last half of this verse the "second greatest commandment," and it is perhaps the finest definition of friendship in the Old Testament. Friendship figures centrally in Miller's ethics, and man's behavior to man through friendship is a thematic topic in *Focus*, where Lawrence Newman is not only called to "love his neighbor as

himself," but forced to see his neighbor as himself- the first step in initiating a friendship.

In addition to universalizing the suffering by opening the novel with a Puerto Rican woman, Miller seems to make several other points through his introduction. First, he emphasizes that the menacing "factory" is always below the surface, yet this subterranean force is the engine that controls or moves what's on the surface--in this case, the carousel. The carousel, on one level, is perhaps simple, day-to-day routine, serves to hide the ominous operation of the factory and distract others generally from the dehumanizing presence beneath. This contention will always be an important one for Miller--that society is often controlled and always dehumanized by "factories" and the capitalistic competition they represent. Joe Keller, reduced to a "jungle existence" as a result of his business mentality in *All My Sons*, and Willy Loman, alienated by the inhuman routine in *Salesman*, are two obvious examples. Of course, in the novel, the "factory" seems to manufacture prejudice and hatred, and not tangible goods. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the carousel muffles a cry for help, an urgent call for justice through friendship. The voice appeals to the civil representatives of justice with "Police!", yet Miller's word choice adds complexity. The initial outcry is "Aleese!", which not only mimics the woman's Latin accent, but the word could be "translated" as "please" or "Police," or both. The point is, that the woman implores not only for justice from the state, but from any human being within earshot. Lawrence Newman is completely unable to provide justice, because he cannot act in *philia*, which Aristotle demands in a just society, toward this stranger. If Newman were able to extend himself to her, justice would be exercised in

the community. Instead, he simply “turned in the dark and went out of the room” (3).

Interestingly, some twelve years later, Miller would read Camus' novel, *The Fall*, as “the (ethical) dilemma of how one can ever judge another person once one has committed the iniquitous act of indifference to a stranger's call for help” (TB 484). Camus' protagonist fails to respond to a young girl drowning in the Seine, and her words “have never ceased echoing through <his> nights” (147). Of course, this indifference becomes a central concern in Miller's play based on Camus' novel, *After The Fall*, and here; Lawrence Newman's commission of a similar “iniquitous act” at the beginning of *Focus* sets the stage for the climactic reversal at the close of this novel.

Newman not only fails to provide justice at this point in the novel, but is an instrument of injustice on the job. As a personnel director dedicated to the prejudices of his company, he judges applicants on arbitrary externalities alone: a last name perhaps, the “turn of a nose,” something in the posture, a “shiny black dress,” anything that would alert him to the “Jew” across the desk. Newman never approaches prospective hires in a friendly manner, that might lead to an egregious error of judgment.

The situation rapidly changes for Mr. Newman, as he becomes the object of mindless injustice. Mr. Lorsch, the company vice-president “doesn't like what he sees” in Newman's new look, now that he has been forced to wear spectacles. Perceived by Lorsch as a Jew, Newman is dismissed as readily as he dismissed countless applicants. Neither Lorsch, nor Newman's immediate supervisor, Gargan are operating with friendship in mind. Instead, Gargan exhibits the pretenses of friendship,

which only add to Newman's sense of inequity. Gargan calls him by his first name, "LAWRENCE" for "the first time" as he explains the reasons for Newman's demotion. He goes on to say that "Frankly, Newman, I didn't notice anything until Mr. Lorsch made me realize. But I can see his point...I don't know what else there is to say, fella" (38-9). The word "fella" is "the ominous final gesture at friendship between them," and literally takes Newman's breath away. The hollow sound of the word as a replacement for "friend" or an equivalent is a death knell for Newman, and "fella" also recalls Miller's use of just these kinds of words in *Death of a Salesman*, perhaps most notably the inane, "pal," often on Biff's lips when he addresses his mother.

Newman resigns in the face of Gargan's injustice, as he begins to sense his isolation. His isolation was once a pleasant hedge, but now simply confirms his worthlessness. To combat these feelings, Newman turns to his neighbors, who are carrying out their own injustices as members of the Christian Front, an organization similar to the White Shirts of the 30's and the Ku Klux Klan. Their current "project" is forcing Finkelstein, the only Jew on the block, out of the neighborhood, using a variety of strong-arm tactics. Newman joins "in a new comradeship" with his neighbors to ameliorate his growing sense of isolation. He buys his newspaper from a young tough "planted" by the Front, shunning Finkelstein's corner store. His actions fill him with a "strange power," as "a sense of comradeship suffused him" (56).

Of course, Newman has not discovered friendship through his neighbors, but instead, has entered what C.S. Lewis calls the "Inner Ring." Lewis explains that "in all men's lives at certain periods...one of the most dominant elements is the desire to be inside the local Ring and

the terror of being left outside" (642). Down in his neighbor Carlson's basement, Newman has replicated Lewis' vision of "the sacred little attic or studio, the heads bent together, the fog of tobacco smoke, and the delicious knowledge that we...are the people who *know*" (643). Newman desperately wants to belong, and the insidious "Inner Ring" of his neighbors lures him in because, as so often is the case, he "cannot bear to be thrust back into the cold outer world" (646). Friendship, seen from without, may appear to look exactly like an Inner Ring, yet, as Lewis points out:

The difference is that [friendship's] secrecy is accidental, and its exclusiveness a by-product, and no one was led thither by the lure of the esoteric: for it is only four or five people who like one another meeting to do the things they like. This is friendship. Aristotle placed it among the virtues. It causes perhaps half of all the happiness in the world, and no Inner Ring can ever have it. (647)

Newman can never be fully accepted into his neighbors' Inner Ring, as they seem to suspect him as a "disguised" Jew from the first. Fred and Carlson, his nearest neighbors, fail to acknowledge him when he shouts out a greeting, and later that day Newman finds the first ominous sign of his failed "friendship." "His garbage pail was lying on its side in the middle of the gutter" (75). As Aristotle wrote, "the friendship of base people turns out to be vicious. For they are unstable, and share base pursuits; and by becoming similar to each other, they grow vicious" (IX,



XIV 1950). Newman has now become a target of his neighbors' viciousness.

After another humiliating incident, Newman inexplicably begins to turn to Finkelstein for understanding. Almost against his own will, Newman is drawn to this man, the cause of all the "problems" in the neighborhood, the target of his own hatred in the past. His wife, Gertrude, pleads with Newman to disassociate himself with Finkelstein, and "go to the meetings" with Fred and Carlson. But he is in a quandary: "Why did everyone know what to do except him? Why suddenly was it such a horror to him? What right had the man <Finkelstein> here in the first place? Why was he acting as though the man...?" (135). It is tempting to fill in Miller's ellipsis here, "as though the man was his friend?" which may be "stretching" the text a bit, yet it seems clear that Newman is certainly acting as though Finkelstein has a right to participate in the community, and that alone is a major step for Newman.

Miller illustrates the change in Newman's sense of justice in the next scene. He is awakened by what he thought was the sound of the crucifix that his wife had hung on the wall hitting the floor (136). While one might suggest that the crucifix, a symbol of forgiveness and justice, has "fallen" in this corrupt community, the crucifix more likely reflects Gertrude's pathetic attempt to "show" their neighbors that they are not Jews. And Newman's initial thought is wrong. The sound was not the falling crucifix at all, but, he now thinks, a still familiar cry from long ago: "Aleese...!" The call for justice, then, comes to Newman once again. He thinks it may be Finkelstein, being attacked by members of the Front, but realizes that he was mistaken, and Newman is:

Relieved, because he did not know what he would do if he saw the man being beaten up out there...or rather, because he did know he would do nothing, but that it would bother him for a long time. No, he would call the police. That was it. Simply call the police and not have to leave his house.  
(136-7)

In brutal reality, the sound was actually two young thugs dumping garbage on his lawn once again, but the passage's imagined sounds show a significant change in Newman. Although he is still unable to exercise justice personally through friendship toward Finkelstein, he does decide to call upon the representatives of justice in the community-- which is much more than he was willing to do for the Puerto Rican woman at the beginning of the novel. This change points to Newman's moral development away from his fascist neighbors and toward Finkelstein, despite his longing for acceptance from the former.

Newman, perhaps in a final, desperate attempt to fit in, attends a Christian Front meeting where "he might be making acquaintances who would be important to him" (153). Right away, Newman senses that something is wrong, as he "felt a funereal mood spreading over him" (154). The night is stifling, "for nearly forty days the city had had no rain," the tension is palpable as crowds press together. Newman "scanned the faces in the rows around him. No one he knew. He felt disappointed and foolish..." (155). Newman feels dazed as he watches and listens to the hateful chanting of the crowd, who with clenched fists call for "Action" against "The Jews." Suddenly, Newman feels a hand on

his shoulder, "he turned in horror and saw a crease-faced man, wild and pouring sweat, staring into his face" (160-1). Newman is slapped and pushed, punched and thrown out of the meeting because "He didn't clap once!" and "He's a Jew, for Christ's sake!" (161). Newman frantically tries to explain his innocence because "He did not want to be left alone by them. He did not want to be alone at all" (162). This admission by Newman emphasizes his consuming desire to "connect" with his community, to find a link to others through friendship. Although his attempt is misguided, it reveals man's desire to be a part of his community, a desire that leads Newman to this pitiable state.

Newman realizes the emptiness offered by the Front, and turns to Finkelstein in a remarkable episode that leads to the novel's climax. Finkelstein watched as Newman was senselessly beaten, and as Newman is walking home, Finkelstein asks, "Could I help you?" (164). This simple phrase is perhaps a preface to all friendships, a selfless moment where one considers the good of another before his own. Newman resists Finkelstein's offer of help, but as they walk together in silence Newman admits that, "Despite himself he felt drawn to this man." Newman sees Finkelstein as "controlled and fortified" while Newman "was circling in confusion in search of a formula through which he could again find his dignity" (165).

Finkelstein now asks Newman to explain "Why do you want I shall get out of the neighborhood?" (167). Newman pathetically tries to justify his position with "It's not what *you've* done, it's what others of your people have done." After "staring at him a long time," Finkelstein responds, "in other words, when you look at me you don't see me" (168).

This innocuous passage forms the climax of the novel, because it is at this point that Newman and Finkelstein become the same person, joined as objects of hate. This reverses all previous action because Newman's motivation, his unfounded vilification of Finkelstein, is also reversed as Newman completely identifies with his Jewish neighbor. Although they are unique individuals, they share the same injustice, as both are innocent of the blind hatred brought against them.

Finkelstein's words echo Newman's when he was misjudged because of his eyeglasses, and Newman has felt the same emotions since he was demoted unjustly by his boss: "Nobody had the right to dismiss him like that because of his face. Nobody! He was *him*, a human being with a certain definite history" (67). Miller would later write similarly of his most famous character, with Linda declaring that "attention must be paid" to Willy Loman, who is increasingly "dismissed" as insignificant. If either Finkelstein or Newman or Willy had been seen for who they were, if they had been treated as "friends" by their community, they would not have known the injustice that they came to face. Sensing that he and Finkelstein are united in some strange way, Newman admits that "his idea of him altered. Where once he had seen a rather comical, ugly, and obsequious face, now he found a man" (169). The moment is important for Newman, because he has seen through his own objectification of Finkelstein, and seen his life reflected in Finkelstein's.

Newman realizes that he has no legitimate reason for not wanting Finkelstein on the block, and simply walks away from him into the comforting darkness. Finkelstein's eyes are on Newman's back, "hurting him," making him wish that Finkelstein would just disappear: "just go away and let everybody be the same! The same, the same, let us all be

the same!" (170) Newman's desperate wish might find its fulfillment in friendship, which promises to obliterate the differences that separate us and see all men equally. As Aristotle asserts, "friendship's aim is to dispel civil conflict, which is enmity" (Pakaluk 30). At this stage, Newman's insular nature resists Finkelstein's implicit invitation to a "saving" friendship.

As he continues to separate himself, Newman realizes that there is an inherent danger in his isolation. He asks, "Who would come out in the darkness of the night to fight off thugs for his sake?" (177). As he ponders this question, he is "held by the terror of his old dream," which began the novel. Newman now understands what was "being manufactured beneath the innocent merry-go-round" (178). It is that "murderous monster" of prejudice that "would burst through the walls of these houses and surely find him" (179). Though Newman concludes that "there is no truth to erect against it," Finkelstein disagrees.

Finkelstein knows that he is about to be beaten out of his neighborhood, but like Newman, he vows to fight. The old man figures that if there aren't "too many" he might be able to take care of himself, but "if there's too many I wouldn't do so good" (180). Finkelstein says that if "a delegation" went to the police it might do some good, but they won't listen to his single voice. "If a couple of men on the block would...would..." (181). Finkelstein cannot complete the sentence because he has witnessed the impossibility of true friendship or the spirit of amity in this community that has been perverted by injustice. Even now, Newman cannot risk befriending Finkelstein, and instead suggests that he "think about moving." Finkelstein is crushed by Newman's betrayal, saying that, "I thought no matter what you did you were my

friend because you are a man with intelligence" (182). In Aristotle's view, reasonable men pursue the virtuous life, which includes friendship, and there can be no person of virtue without others in relationship to whom such a life can be pursued (VIII, III 1574-77). But, as is so often the case in Miller's work, "persons of virtue" cannot be found, and the community degenerates as a result.

As the novel draws to a close, Newman tries to find words that describe his growing alienation: "He was at a loss as to his role in the city now...How could a man fight alone, so terribly alone?" (185). His wife reminds him that "you haven't got a friend" (190), as Newman rues his cowardly rejection of Finkelstein's understanding and friendship. The moment of confrontation is clearly established, as characters define their loyalties. Newman's wife, Gertrude, is frustrated by her husband's relationship with Finkelstein: "You've been talking to him too much...!" (204). Newman refuses to bend to her reasoning, standing firm in his conviction that "it's just not right to have people going around beating up on them" (204).

After Newman and his wife leave a movie house one evening, Newman hears "the gentle tapping of soles on the pavement" (204). They pass Finkelstein's store, and Newman is sure that the men behind him plan only to attack the old man-- Newman is safe. Then, suddenly, "He felt a hand on his back" (206), and he instantly realized that he was a victim as well. As "a clear moment opened before him" (207), Newman realizes that his wife has abandoned him without even a cry for help, her high heels clacking against the pavement as a heavy-soled shoe comes crashing down on his stomach (208). Finkelstein emerges from his store howling in fury, flailing away with a baseball bat in each hand. Although

the young attackers were “fencing him away from Finkelstein” (208), Newman “went straight on toward Finkelstein, yelling for recognition” (208). These are significant lines in that they seem to sum up the action of the last hundred pages: Newman's unjust neighbors try to “fence him away” from the only Jew on the block, yet Newman is drawn to this man, “straight toward” him, as he “yells for recognition” from a man who has lived with injustice all his life. In fulfillment of what has been seemingly destined since the beginning of the story, Newman and Finkelstein are now joined even more forcefully than before, with “their backs nearly touching” (209), against the thugs' attack.

At this moment, the young hoodlums retreat, and the two men are left alone on the dark street. C.S. Lewis, in *The Four Loves*, writes:

Two persons discover one another when, whether with immense difficulties and semi-articulate fumbblings or with what would seem to us amazing and elliptical speed, they share their vision--it is then that Friendship is born. And instantly they stand together in an immense solitude. (97)

Newman and Finkelstein have shared such a moment, and as the bloodied pair move together after their painful ordeal, there is a poignancy in their relationship:

At his touch, Finkelstein rose. His heavy arm was quivering and wet. The blood was even spreading the stain that was covering the whole front of his shirt. Newman held onto his arm and they walked to the door and out of the store.

Finkelstein waited dumbly on the sidewalk while Newman snapped the lock and pulled the door shut. The lights stayed on. Newman led his friend along the sidewalk and up the path of his house and onto the porch, where he opened the front door for him. (211)

This is the first time in the novel that the word “friend” is used to describe Newman's relationship to Finkelstein, and it points to a major shift in emphasis in the novel. Lawrence Newman has provided justice for Finkelstein--his former enemy, the object of his derision--by becoming his friend. The novel opened with a call for justice with the frenzied cry of the Puerto Rican woman, and has ended with an answer to a cry for justice, as Newman defends the Jew, Finkelstein. In the interim between those two events, Newman has been the victim of injustice, and has realized that friendship is a simple, yet profound approach to solving the dilemma of injustice and the alienation it brings.

As the novel ends, Newman is reporting the crime he and Finkelstein have endured to a policeman. The officer links the two men as the only Jews on the street. Newman is about to deny the officer's incorrect assumption, but realizes that “to make the denial was to repudiate and soil his own cleansing fury of a few moments ago” (217). Instead, Newman “longs deeply” for “a fiery stroke that would break away the categories of people and change them so that it would not be important to them what tribe they sprang from” (217). Instead of correcting the policeman, Newman refers to the Finkelsteins and himself as the “only ones on the block.” As Newman tells his story to the officer,



"he felt as though he were setting down a weight which for some reason he had been carrying and carrying" (217).

Newman is freed not only from the weight of prejudice that has stifled him for so long, but he is also released from the weight of isolation and loneliness. Newman has discovered one of the virtues of friendship, that sharing one's life with another also means sharing one's hardships and fears. Newman was always afraid of his own vulnerability being revealed through friendship with Finkelstein. But when Finkelstein accepted Newman's fears and failings, as a human being, worthy of friendship, "a weight" was lifted from Newman's life forever.

In this novel, with all its overt messages and flawed narration, Miller not only cites the dangers in a society where friendship does not exist, but also indicates how friendship and justice are inextricably related. Lawrence Newman is condemned for his smug isolation, and its inevitable negative effect. Miller reveals the danger of a man who perceives that he is unrelated to his society, a danger that he describes as a theme in *All My Sons*, and one that he probes in several other works, including *After The Fall*. In addition, Miller depicts the power of two seemingly insignificant men joined against unthinking masses that seek to strip them of their humanity.

Lawrence Newman is a man who discovers the need for justice only when he is personally threatened by injustice. He realizes the need for friendship when he is completely alone and in need. Yet, he finds that Emerson's proverb is true, "The only reward of virtue is virtue; the only way to have a friend is to be one" (Enright 349). Newman's recognition leads to his sense of justice and fulfillment at the end of the story.

The novel's final image sums up the power of friendship in the face of a depersonalized world. Newman is "telling his story" to the police, who have been a symbol of failed justice throughout the story. They did not hear the despairing cry of the Puerto Rican woman. They could not deter Newman's boss from demoting him unfairly. They were unable to stop the Christian Front from attacking and demeaning Newman and Finkelstein. *Philia*, the spirit of brotherly love, could have prevailed over all these injustices, yet the community described in the novel is unable to respond in friendship. Then Newman befriends, of all people, his one-time enemy Finkelstein, and friendship's potential is revealed. Neither man calls out for the police during the attack, they rely on each other. Even after the brutal incident, they respond to one another in kindness and caring. Newman may be telling the policeman his story at the novel's close, but he no longer pleads for justice from the officer, he has found it through friendship.

The power of friendship is rarely revealed so openly in Miller's work, more often, he asks the audience to provide "what's missing" in his writing. Tetsumaro Hayashi, a leading Miller scholar, writes that Miller's minor works are "so seldom evaluated" by Miller critics, and so rarely mentioned by bibliographers, that students of Miller have "failed to comprehend the dimension of his works." Despite the fact that Miller has "become a part of our contemporary culture," few people know what he has written outside of *Death of a Salesman*. Hayashi concludes that: "In order to understand him as a playwright, as an artist, as an individual, as a social and theater critic, and as a contemporary thinker, serious Miller scholars must study his works as a whole" (v-vi).

*Focus* is an immature work by a writer who had little or no experience with the genre. *Focus* also provides an outlet for the “passionate moralist” in Miller, who has been described as “all but rabbinical in his ethical vision” (Bloom 5). While his moralizing may lessen his art, his ethical vision, which includes friendship, is introduced here and reverberates in much of his more mature writing. *Focus* is an important example of Miller's view of friendship albeit an obvious one. We must bear in mind and see the relationship of the treatment of friendship in this novel as we look for more subtle glimpses of it in his other more aesthetically sophisticated works.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### ***I DON'T NEED YOU ANY MORE***

"I feel I know Chekov better from his stories than from his plays," writes Arthur Miller in the introduction to his collection of short stories. Miller goes on to call the short story genre "a friendly and familiar form of art," where he finds himself "feeling some connection with the reader, with strangers" (*Don't* xi). Most of Miller's stories are highly autobiographical, and cover a variety of subjects important to him, including friendship. In these stories we perhaps do "connect" with Miller, and, as with Chekov, "know him better" through this anthology than through his more well-known plays.

*I Don't Need You Any More* is a collection of nine stories written by Miller over fifteen years, 1951-1966. Of all of Miller's non-theatrical writing, this collection has been generally characterized as his best work. Allen Shepherd remarks that the stories have received "considerable critical acclaim," though Miller almost seems "guilty" for writing anything less than drama (37). As Miller commented in 1966, "I think I reserve for plays those things which take a kind of excruciating effort."

What comes easier goes into a short story" (201). Though John Wakeman labels the collection a "clear gain for fiction...exact, humane, knowledgeable writing" (4), Shepherd describes the stories as "notably uneven and collectively not distinguished" (49). The two stories that Shepherd describes as "the best" of the collection, "Monte Sant' Angelo" and "Fitter's Night," feature passages that develop Miller's ideas about friendship.

These stories are also important in that they refute arguments that claim that Miller's idealistic notions about friendship were limited to his early work. Commenting on Miller's non-theatrical writing, Neil Carson, in his book *Arthur Miller*, describes Miller's "ideal of male comradeship" (99). Carson traces this ideal to Miller's experiences recounted in his book *Situation Normal*, which described his investigation of American training bases, undertaken as a background for the screenplay of *The Story of G.I. Joe*. Carson describes the book as "a series of vivid sketches of officers and enlisted men, interspersed with reflections by the author" (93). One such reflection involves a veteran soldier, "Watson," who was "failing his officer's training course because of a sense of disorientation after combat" (93). Watson's comments reflect Miller's ideas about community and friendship:

You find out all about yourself out there, as if all the excuses you've always made for yourself were suddenly very silly. Friendship is the greatest thing out there....I tell you the truth: I would die for any one of thirty or forty men out there just as easy as I'd flick out this match. (*Normal* 145)

Carson goes on to say that Miller has “magnified” the “sense of loyalty and unit pride” between the men into “something more mystical” (94). What Carson fails to mention is that Miller has carried a strong sense of friendship solidifying the community since the Depression, and his experiences during the war reinforced his earlier beliefs. Carson quotes Miller as writing “No man has ever felt identity with a group more deeply and intimately than a soldier in battle” (94). It is this very sense of identity that many of Miller’s characters lack, because they lack the friendship which Watson described above. Carson notes that Miller is suggesting that in the state of “group identity”:

There is complete equality, a common aim, no little prejudices or selfish aims, and everyone gains a sense of 'exhilaration' from the knowledge that he is helping an enormous mass of men toward a great and worthy goal. The kind of purposeful and unified society produced by danger, he feels, can also be created by a 'commonality of Belief.'

(94)

Though Carson does not focus on the centrality of friendship to Miller’s ideal, he has just described essentially a classical view of the role of friendship in society. Friendship does ensure “complete equality,” through the justice inherent in treating every person as a friend, which Aristotle has described. In addition, it supplies a “common aim” which was pursuit of the virtuous life for Aristotle’s perfect community. Finally, friendship can create a “commonality of Belief” without restricting the freedom of others. As previously mentioned, Miller writes in his essay

"On Social Plays," that the lack of common belief in modern audiences has led to a petty drama that cannot address the community at large, because that community cannot be specifically defined as in the days of ancient Greece. Miller suggests, as Carson notes here, that through friendship and all that it entails, even our modern culture can perhaps repair the "broken glass" of community.

Carson concludes that Miller's "vision of common purpose" based on friendship "owes much to socialist idealism," and that "Miller comes to realize that these earlier views had been rather too simplistic" (99). Carson fails to realize that Miller's later drama persists in this "social idealism," and that the short story collection *I Don't Need You Anymore* actually picks up where his earlier prose works left off in describing the role of friendship in society. Because the stories span fifteen years in Miller's life, years that included the turmoil of McCarthyism and his marriage to and divorce from Marilyn Monroe, they demonstrate that Miller's belief that friendship could lead to positive social change was not limited to his early non-dramatic works, *Situation Normal* and *Focus*. Instead, through powerful images of friendship, the stories provide a unique counterpoint to the alienated, lonely figures generally associated with Miller's drama.

"Monte Sant' Angelo," the earliest published of the stories, is loosely based on Miller's experiences in Italy in 1948. Miller went to Italy with Vinny Longhi, a one-time politician who opposed the powerful Congressman John Rooney in '46, and lost a surprisingly close election. Determined to dislodge Rooney, Longhi decided to visit the homes of longshoremen in Calabria and Sicily, return with personal well-wishes, and take the predominantly Italian Twelfth District by storm. Though

Longhi's plan failed (Rooney won by a landslide), the trip provided Miller with "Italian images," that "hang behind my eyes like painted scenes." Miller, of course, returns to these images in *View from the Bridge*, and they also help to depict the scene in "Monte Sant' Angelo" (TB 148-176).

In "Monte Sant' Angelo," Vinny Longhi becomes "Vinny Appello," the "sensual" Italian who has returned to his homeland to "see all the places [he] came from" (55). Miller is "Bernstein," who accuses his friend of suffering from "some kind of ancestor complex," though he admits to himself that he is a bit envious of Vinny, who was "combining with this history, and it seemed to him that it made Vinny stronger, somehow less dead when the time would come for him to die" (56). Miller continues to probe how these two men relate to their past throughout the story, while emphasizing that as a result of coming to terms with their ancestry, Appello and Bernstein are able to relate to each other more completely as friends.

This is Bernstein's story; his struggle to define himself through his past, which then allows him to pursue a friendship with Appello. As the story opens, we learn that Appello is especially interested in locating "the Appello brothers," two monks buried in an ancient church in the area. The two men finally reach the vault of the church, where a priest "vaguely remembers" an Appello vault, but has no idea where it is. While Bernstein waits in the doorway, Appello gropes in the darkness of the "twisting corridors" of the crypts for half an hour, then they succumb to the cold and wet of the vault that has "soaked" their feet. As they emerge from the crypt, Vinny comments with "fascinated excitement": "I'm sure it's there, but you wouldn't want to stick out a search, would you?"



Despite Appello's "hopeful" question, Bernstein responds dully, "This is no place for me to get pneumonia" (60).

The vault becomes the point of focus in the story, not only because it houses two of Vinny's most revered ancestors, but it is also the place that the two men test and refine their friendship. Bernstein fails the first test with his refusal to "stick out a search" with his friend, who obviously wants to continue. It would seem that if Bernstein cared enough for his friend, if he saw him as a "second self," he would be more than willing to carry on despite the uncomfortable conditions. Aristotle wrote that "The excellent person is related to his friend in the same way as he is related to himself, since a friend is another himself" (VIII 1170b), but Bernstein does not see Appello in this way. Instead, Bernstein reflects that the two "were opposites. And they were drawn to each other's failings" (57). Appello's "linking" with his past leads Bernstein to sense an increasing distance between himself and his friend, and this first episode in the vault is an indication of that distancing.

The two men leave the vault and walk to the end of the street, where Vinny looks "raptly" over a precipice where armored Appello's "might have ridden horseback" (61). Bernstein cannot share in his friend's vision, and the gap between them widens, "He felt alone, desolate as the dried-out chalk sides of this broken pillar he stood upon. Certainly there had been no knights in his family" (61). Irving Jacobsen, in his article "The Vestigial Jews on 'Monte Sant' Angelo'" points out, "Bernstein cannot participate in someone else's emotions, particularly when they give him a sense of his own deficiency" (508).

Bernstein is reminded of his "deficiency" as he recalls his father's vision of his home town in Europe, "a common barrel of water, a town

idiot, a baron nearby." Bernstein has "no pride in it," as he realizes that "It had nothing to do with *him*" (61).

Appello and Bernstein go to a local restaurant for lunch, where Bernstein unexpectedly finds a link to his past in one of the patrons, Mauro di Benedetto. Bernstein has "an abrupt impression of familiarity with the man" (62) from the first, and as the meal progresses, Bernstein is sure he knows this stranger. Bernstein prods Appello into asking the man questions about his home; "not very far," his job; "I sell cloth" (as Miller's father did), and his name; "Mauro di Benedetto," or "Moses of the Blessed" (64-5). Bernstein now knows that Benedetto is a Jew, but it is not his name or occupation that tips Bernstein off, it's the way Benedetto ties a small bundle he's carrying. As Bernstein explains, "It's exactly the way my father used to tie a bundle--and my grandfather. The whole history is packing bundles and getting away" (65). After questioning Benedetto further, they realize that he has no idea what a Jew is, much less that he may be one himself. Bernstein is shocked that Benedetto is unaware of his ancestry, yet it is clear that Bernstein has shared that same ignorance--until now.

Once Bernstein makes the connection with Benedetto, he is a changed man, one who knows his past and is prepared to face the future. As Jacobsen asserts:

The similarity between his own neglected and Benedetto's vestigial Jewishness forms an emotional bridge between him and Europe. Revitalizing a positive sense of his own family past, the common ethnic background between Bernstein and Benedetto functions as Bernstein's equivalent for Appello's

family line, releasing his capacity for excitement and giving him a new sense of placement in the world. (509)

This “new sense of placement” now allows Bernstein to respond to Appello in a renewed friendship, one that draws from a sense of shared experiences, not of opposite attraction.

As they leave the restaurant, Bernstein pauses before they get in the car, his “eyelids seemed puffed,” as he says, “It’s early--if you still want to I’ll go back to the church with you. You can look for the boys” (68). With this statement, Bernstein not only reconciles his earlier failure to continue looking in the vault, but also extends himself to his friend in a new way. He has obviously felt the emotion of coming to terms with one’s heritage, and this new emotional insight allows him to react in “philia” toward Appello, seeking his friend’s good before his own.

Jacobsen explains the change in Bernstein:

The effect of the experience is to remove Bernstein from an isolation that has been, in part, self-imposed, and it places his life in the kind of context within which he can form relationships. This new sense of belonging makes it possible for him and Appello to achieve a kind of rapport, a new commonality of spirit. (510)

Jacobsen’s comments are insightful, yet he fails to define their relationship adequately. What exists between Bernstein and Appello is more than “a kind of rapport,” it is friendship. Connecting with his past surely makes Bernstein feel less isolated, but it is his friendship with

Appello that leads to a true sense of permanence in his life. Bernstein's episode with Benedetto gives his life new meaning, but if it does not lead to change in his life, his isolation and loneliness will undoubtedly return. Forming an "emotional bridge with Europe," may well be satisfying, but Bernstein is much more concerned with the gap that has existed between him and Appello. The fact that he is able to relate to Appello in a new way, emphasizes that the changes in Bernstein's life are positive and enduring.

Miller dramatizes the importance of the friendship between the two men in the next scene, when, on Bernstein's suggestion, the two men return to the vault in the ancient church. As they "descend" into the vault beneath the church, Bernstein remarks, "I feel like--at home in this place. I can't describe it" (68). These lines are remarkable, not only in the context of this story, but in reference to Miller's canon as well. Miller's characters do not "feel at home," they are "ships looking for a harbor," "Misfits," without "any viable connection with [their] world." Bernstein has found a "viable connection," and he finds it through friendship. He is standing at the doorway of an Italian vault that houses not a single member of his family, yet Bernstein feels "at home." This is because Bernstein has hit upon the interrelatedness of all men through Benedetto. Benedetto provides not only a bridge to Bernstein's Jewish ancestry, but a bridge to his Italian friend. Benedetto is certainly more Italian than Jew, and with Bernstein and Appello, he helps form a circle of humanity joined by history, perpetuated through friendship. Bernstein sees, as Lawrence Newman came to see in *Focus*, that it is the connection, and not the race, which is ultimately important. Newman realizes that to connect with Finkelstein, racial boundaries must be

abolished, Bernstein knows that to relate to Appello, racial histories must serve as points of connection, not borders of separation.

Bernstein has come to realize, through the irony of a "nameless traveler carrying home a warm bread on a Friday night--and kneeling in church on Sunday" (69), that he has a past and a history, one that serves to unite, not divide. Bernstein watches as Appello searches the "narrow corridors of the crypts," and somehow knew that "he would look differently into Vinny's eyes; his condescension had gone" (69). Here at the crypt, where Bernstein had hours earlier failed his friend because of his selfishness and isolation, the two men now share a simple moment that confirms their friendship. With "Vinny a yard away," Bernstein admits that "He felt loose, somehow the equal of his friend--and how odd that was when, if anything, he had thought of himself as superior" (69). Following Appello's announcement that he found the crypt, the two men seem to signify their new feelings of equality through friendship:

Vinny held still for an instant, catching Bernstein's respectful happiness, and saw there that his search was not worthless sentiment. He raised the candle to see Bernstein's face better, and then he laughed and gripped Bernstein's wrist and led the way toward the flight of steps that rose to the surface. Bernstein had never liked anyone grasping him, but from this touch of a hand in the darkness, strangely, there was no implication of a hateful weakness. (70)

It is clear that Bernstein has associated some kind of "hateful weakness" as an inherent part of friendship, or at least the physicality of friendship, but no longer senses weakness as part of their relationship.

This final scene between the two men is reminiscent of Bernstein's earlier comment that Appello would be "somehow less dead when the time would come for him to die." It is clear that because of his friendship with Appello, Bernstein would now somehow be "less dead" when his time came, if only because of the legacy of his simple friendship with Vinny. Appello seems to clearly reflect the enduring nature of their relationship as he literally leads his friend by the hand from a place of death, the place where their friendship was put to the test, failed, and was then "resurrected" to function in a new way.

"Monte Sant' Angelo," like Miller's novel *Focus*, is a clear example of a character breaking free from the bonds of isolation to find fulfillment through friendship. The story's final image of two men joined in friendship is contrasted by the isolation of Appello's village, Monte Sant' Angelo. The taxi driver jokes as he drives the two men up the steep road, "They are very far from everything. They all look like brothers up there. They don't know very much either" (54). Jacobsen concludes that the driver's comments suggest that "Isolation breeds abnormality, here associated with incest and idiocy" (508). Miller will continue to assert the contention that isolation does breed abnormality, and that its implied opposite, friendship, breeds the sense of fulfillment that Bernstein experiences at the end of "Monte Sant Angelo."

"Fitter's Night," one of the longest stories in the collection, is also based on events in Miller's life, reflecting his job as a steam fitter in the Brooklyn Navy Yard during World War II. The story uses Miller's former

boss, "Ipana Mike," as its source, a man who "had his morals, and when he really believed he was not being suckered he could turn into a phenomenally resourceful worker" (TB 200). Tony Calabrese is Miller's fictional recreation of Mike, right down to his toothless smile. The story is one of two that was chosen for the Viking anthology *The Portable Arthur Miller*, and it demonstrates Miller's effectiveness when dealing with colloquial language and sharply-drawn characters.

Tony's story is a familiar one: he calls himself "God's original patsy" (208), and his life is perhaps best described as one long, dirty trick. The story opens with Tony going into work at the mammoth shipyard as one of the few guys that knows where to go and what to do. He checks in with his boss, who likes Tony because he can work like a bull when needed, and even slips the head man a phone number of a "cute dame" from time to time. Tony finds a job for his crew to work on, while he seeks out a dark "cable passage" where he can "close his eyes to screw the government" (175-87). Safe from his bosses, Tony begins to daydream, reflecting on his life of failed opportunities. Tony's mother has tried vainly to keep the young tough in line, but he has bounced in and out of prison from the time that he was twelve. Her only consistent threat was that if "Grampa" ever came to America, he would "straighten out Tony for the rest of his life" with a "weeklong beating combined with an authoritative spiritual thundering" (188-9). Mama's fulminations become especially forceful when word comes that Grampa is finally making his long-awaited trip. Mama promises to reveal all of Tony's shortcomings unless he agrees to marry "Margaret," the respectable but plain girl-next-door. Tony consents when Grampa arrives with a strongbox that contains Tony's "inheritance," which will be Tony's only

when the marriage is consummated. Tony gives up his dream of marrying "Patty Moran," the red-haired bombshell that he is in love with, and settles for Grampa's arrangement. But the inheritance is slow in coming. Grampa is well aware of the leverage the money wields, and he uses it to control Tony like a marionette. Grampa uses the inheritance to ensure that Tony makes love to Margaret and stops carousing after work. He even sits behind the couple at the movie theater to make sure that Tony puts his arm around more than the back of Margaret's chair. When Margaret finally starts to "swell," Grampa at last seems satisfied, and the moment of inheritance seems imminent.

The night that Margaret gives birth to twins, Grampa gives Tony the key to the legendary trunk. But something has gone terribly wrong. Grampa is strangely clutching Tony's knees and weeping for forgiveness. Tony opens the trunk lid to find it half full of worthless lire, "zeros, fives, tens, colorful and tumbling under his searching hands. He knew, he already knew, he had known since the day he was born" (202-3). The "fortune" comes to \$1,739, which as Tony says, "is not like you got a right to come to a man and say go tie that girl around your neck and jump in the river you gonna come up rich" (203). Tony's life is over, his dreams crushed. With this inevitable disappointment, Tony is added to the list of Miller's characters who suffer disillusionment, which leads to despair.

The story now shifts to the present, as we learn that Tony has been called upon to straighten two bent depth charge rails on a destroyer on this frigid night. Tony knows that the job is hopeless, with the temperature near zero he'll never be able to heat the rails enough to make them bend when he strikes them with a sledge. He decides to



make the trip because the boss is pressuring him, but he is resolved to simply look it over, declare the job impossible, and return to the shipyard.

When Tony is greeted by a man he thinks to be the chief petty officer, Tony tells him to "go inside and tell the captain what kinda temperature we got here" (206). The officer replies, "I'm the captain. Stillwater" (206). Tony is stunned, as "all his previous estimates whirled around in his head" (206). Tony is not only honored that the captain met him personally, but that he has approached him without the condescension that Tony has come to expect. The two men engage in some small talk, and all the while Tony is looking for an opening to let the captain down. But he cannot:

Some unforeseen understanding with the captain seemed to loom; the man was taking him so seriously, bothering to explain why there were cockroaches, allowing himself to be diverted even for ten seconds from the problem of the rail, and, more promising than anything else, he seemed to be deferring to Tony's opinion about the possibility of working at all tonight. (207)

The captain, in a simple, honest way, exemplifies the spirit of friendship that Aristotle believed the man of virtue expressed to all members of the *polis*. It is this spirit of friendship that leads to justice and social change for Miller. It is the captain's "deference," surely a feature of any friendship that is "most promising" to Tony, who is only deferred to when someone needs a favor of him--never with the captain's

sincerity. Tony Calabrese has been frustrated at every turn in his life, and now, on this freezing night, the captain's expression of "philia" is convincing him that, maybe for the first time, he's not being "suckered." Tony finds that his world of disillusionment is tumbling down about him, and he isn't sure how to proceed: "Tony turned to look out at the damaged rail, but his eyes were not seeing clearly. The pleasure and pride of his familiarity with the captain, his sheer irreplaceability on this deck, were shattering his viewpoint" (208). Tony, like Bernstein from "Monte Sant' Angelo," connect in friendship to find fulfillment and acceptance, which neither had known before.

Despite the captain's graciousness, Tony continues his protest based on the icy weather and the danger involved. Suddenly, his words lack conviction:

'What I mean, I mean that...' What did he mean? Standing a few inches from the captain's boyish face, he saw for the first time that there was no blame there. No blame and no command either. The man was simply at a loss, in need. And he saw that there was no question of official blame for the captain either. Suddenly it was as clear as the cold that was freezing them where they stood--that they were both on a par, they were free...The captain had become a small point in his vision. For the first time in his life he had a kind of space around him in which to move freely, the first time, it seemed, that it was entirely up to him with no punishment if he said no, nor even a reward if he said yes. Gain and loss

had suddenly collapsed, and what was left standing was a favor asked that would profit nobody. (211)

These lines are unique in Miller's work, as they represent perhaps the clearest expression of his ideas regarding friendship. First, we have the recurrent notion that friendship leads to freedom. For Lawrence Newman, it meant the freedom to help a man he once viewed as an enemy. For Bernstein, it was the freedom to relate to Appello in a new way. For Tony, it is more generally the ability to choose freely, something he has done very little of in his life. For all three men, the inherent sense of justice found in the spirit of friendship leads to their newly-found freedom. Second, this passage includes words like "gain," "loss," and "profit," words which immediately lead readers and critics to Miller's "Marxist sympathies." Writing here in 1966, Miller seems to insist that even images of profit and loss "collapse" in the face of friendship. While Miller's first-hand experience during the Depression led him to understand the idea of "man as commodity" and the ruthlessness often expressed in our system of competition, he also learned during this period about the power of human kindness and brotherhood, ideas which persist in his work. Carlyle's dictum, "Love of men cannot be bought by cash-payment; and without love, men cannot endure to be together" (1009), is a much clearer expression of Miller's sentiments regarding men and their occupations than a simplistic Marxist interpretation of his work.

Even a brief comparison of Tony and Miller's most famous character, Willy Loman, provides a sharp contrast of one man being

touched by kindness, and Willy dying without ever knowing the "freedom" of being appraised as a friend, not in terms of "profit and loss."

Tony's dignity was battered before he realized that his love could not be "bought" by Grampa's inheritance. Since that failure, his hopes have given way to a bitterness that sours every part of his life. That is why the captain's reaction toward him is stunning, he is literally being jarred out of a way of life that he has come to accept as normal, while the captain opens a new world of kindness and equality to Tony.

Before Tony agrees to take on this outrageous task, which will suspend him over the freezing water as he tries to heat and bend the rails straight, he wants a guarantee from the captain that the ship will "move out" into battle immediately. The captain assures Tony that he will leave the moment the job is finished, and Tony is amazed that the captain is so eager to meet the "German subs" off the coast when he has a perfect opportunity to, as Tony says, "lay down in a hotel for a couple of days" (209). Tony realizes that through repairing the ship he is joining the captain in a "common aim," which further solidifies their relationship. This sequence is reminiscent of Miller's experiences which are described in *Situation Normal*, where Miller points to the inherent role of friendship in the military.

Tony agrees to try to fix the rails, the captain shakes his hand and offers a simple, "Thanks very much" (212). Tony "wanted to say something, something to equal the captain's speech of thanks. But it was impossible to admit that anything had changed in him" (212). Admit it or not, change, through the spirit of friendship, had occurred in Tony's life. The sense of justice which he had sought in vain is embodied in the captain's lack of condescension, his unswerving kindness and respect.

Despite the ruthless cold, Tony shimmies up the rails and beats them with a sledge, using a torch to heat the metal. It is a titanic effort, with Tony's blood pounding, and every muscle fatigued, while he coughs tobacco residue and phlegm out of his chest. Tony feels "all alone," as Miller depicts a visual image which sharply contrasts the one of Tony daydreaming in his tiny cable passage, isolated from the world. In his cable passage, Tony was self-absorbed, safe. Now, several stories above the frigid water, he is working for others, and risking his own life. He is friendship in action, not just toward the captain, but by extension, toward his country as well.

As his strength wanes, and his past glides past him like a mist, a voice calls out, "That looks good enough!" (221). Tony manages to get down from the "outthrust spine of steel" (212) and into the midships section, where the captain personally refills Tony's coffee cup. Once inside, Tony basks in the afterglow of accomplishment: "Tony saw the serious smiles of respect in the sailors' faces, and he saw the captain, uncapped now, the blond hair and the way he looked at him with love in his eyes" (222). These words are not characteristic of Miller's writing, though they provide a clear example of Miller's ideal of friendship. This episode seems to make up for the years of failed hopes Tony has known, isolation becomes acceptance--simply because someone took the time to appreciate him as an equal, to be his friend. Although the power of friendship that leads to positive change in this story is never replicated in Miller's writings as fully, many of Miller's characters seem to seek acceptance through friendship- the kind Tony has found.

Tony returns to his cable passage, and although he will, as always, be reluctant to admit that a change has occurred in him, the memory of

the captain "emerged behind his closed eyes." As Allen Shepherd notes in regards to the story's final image, "Tony is rewarded with a vision to replace that of Margaret and his Grandfather's lire" (46). Tony has long ago given up on the idea that he will be saved from his existence through money or love, his experience with his Grampa has dashed his dreams forever. Instead, he has found justice and hope in the captain, through what Chris Keller called "the love a man can have for a man" (CP 85). It is his friend, the captain's image that he focuses on as the story ends, but one guesses that the image will continue to fill Tony with pride:

The blond hair lit, the collar still raised, and the look in his eyes when he had poured Tony's coffee, his closeness, and his fine inability to speak. That face hung alone in an endless darkness. (223)

Miller's most famous short story, "The Misfits," became a motion picture starring Marilyn Monroe, Clark Gable and others. Shepherd writes that the title "The Misfits" might be seen as "generic" for the entire collection, as "in almost every story the protagonist feels himself to be standing alone, outside, cut off from other men or from himself" (37).

What many of these stories demonstrate is that this state of isolation can be a temporary one if friendship operates freely, if men are able to communicate through a spirit of compassion and kindness. While "The Misfits" might at first appear to be a suitable title for this collection, characters like Tony Calabrese and Bernstein are able to "connect" through friendship, and establish new relationships that help them feel like a part of their society once again. Miller has described part

of his technique as a dramatist as "an exposition of the want of value, and you can only do this if the audience itself is constantly trying to supply what's missing" ("Morality" 190). Miller's approach is decidedly different in his short stories, where *he* "supplies what's missing," and most often, what's missing is friendship. The images of friendship in Miller's short stories are expressed through powerful moments of insight and action. Conversely, Miller's drama often illustrates the disintegration of friendship, where characters long for friendship, but are often alienated and alone.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Friendship in the Early Drama: *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman***

*All My Sons*, while not generally recognized as Miller's finest drama, was perhaps most critical in determining his literary future. Based on the relative success of his novel, *Focus*, and the unequivocal failure of his first Broadway play, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, Miller "vowed to abandon playwriting if *All My Sons* failed" (TB 268). Despite Miller's trepidation, the play was a critical and commercial success: it ran for 328 performances, won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award by beating out O'Neill's long-awaited *The Iceman Cometh*, and established Miller as among the most promising playwrights in America (Schleuter 43).

Miller based the play on a story he heard from "a pious lady from the Middle West," who recounted to Miller that a family from her neighborhood had been destroyed when the daughter turned in her father for selling faulty machinery to the Army (CP 17). Charlotte Goodman posits that Miller converted the daughter into a son because he



“feared that critics would make invidious comparisons between his play and Hellman’s *The Little Foxes*” (140). Goodman goes on to claim that while Hellman’s influence is clear in *All My Sons*, Miller has refused to admit his debt to her (131). While Goodman’s article is provocative, and Hellman’s influence plausible in *All My Sons*, there is little to support her claim that Miller dramatized the Oedipal conflict between father and son because he feared writing a drama that would “concern the confrontation between a mother and daughter or the powerlessness of both mothers and daughters in a patriarchal society” (140). Miller simply states that he had “transformed” the daughter into a son before the “pious lady” finished her story (CP 17). There is nothing to suggest that Miller modified his play in any way because of Hellman’s former producer Herman Shumlin’s rejection of *All My Sons*. While he did refer to the disapproval as “a crisis” (TB 268), there is no evidence that *All My Sons* was altered as a result.

*All My Sons* also earned Miller the label of “Ibsenite” from critics who felt that Miller borrowed liberally from the Norwegian master’s style and form--a claim Miller has disputed for nearly fifty years. Raymond Williams’ evaluation is representative of this general view:

*All My Sons* has been described as an Ibsenite play, and certainly, if we restrict Ibsen to the kind of play he wrote between *The League of Youth* (1869) and *Rosmersholm* (1886), it is a relevant description. The similarities are indeed so striking that we could call *All My Sons* pastiche if the force of its conception were not so evident (75).

Miller, in an interview with Robert A. Martin, says that he “misled people” with *All My Sons*, which he describes as “a sport.” Miller goes on to explain that he had written a variety of plays, ranging in form from verse drama to realism to “pure symbolism,” but had “no success whatsoever with any of these things.” What troubled Miller most was that he had not “spoken clearly,” so he determined to “do something which is first of all clear.” As a result, *All My Sons* “inevitably reflected the Ibsen kind of narration, but I never cottoned to him in the way that is thought” (310).

The critical comparisons between Miller and Ibsen have been positive and negative. Some praise Miller’s “admirable construction” (Bloom 3) that “unfolds like a tautly written mystery story” (Carson 39), while others argue that the play “relies on coincidence and contrivance” (Schleuter 44). Tom F. Driver calls *All My Sons* “an old fashioned play of exposition, confrontation and climax” (36), while C. W. E. Bigsby refers to it as “a classically well-made play” (108). Perhaps the main point of contention with the play is the heavy-handedness of Ann’s “delayed revelation” in her production of the letter from Larry in Act III, which Dennis Welland terms “meretricious playmanship” (27). Many see Miller’s “mystery letter” as a typical nineteenth-century device employed by Ibsen and others. Miller defends his play’s “implausible coincidence” in an ingenious, though flawed, comparison to Oedipus:

If the appearance of this letter, logical though it might be, is too convenient for our tastes, I wondered what contemporary criticism would make of a play in which an infant, set out on a mountainside to die because it is predicted that he will murder his father, is rescued by a shepherd and then, some

two decades later, gets into an argument with a total stranger whom he kills--and who just happens to be not only his father but the king whose place he proceeds to take, exactly as prophesied. If the myth behind Oedipus allows us to stretch our commonsense judgment of its plausibility, the letter's appearance in *All My Sons* seems to me to spring out of Ann's character and situation and hence is far less difficult to accept than a naked stroke of fate. (TB 134)

What Miller's argument fails to take into consideration, among other things, is that *Oedipus* is a play that is vitally concerned with "fate" and all its "naked strokes," while *All My Sons* is certainly not a play about Ann's letter.

A fair amount of critical attention centers on Miller's debt to Ibsen as a social dramatist, focusing on *All My Sons* as social drama. Miller makes part of this relationship clear when he writes that :

I take it as a truth that the end of drama is the creation of a higher consciousness and not merely a subjective attack upon the audiences' nerves and feelings. What is precious in the Ibsen method is its insistence upon valid causation, and this cannot be dismissed as a wooden notion. (CP 21)

In *All My Sons*, part of the "higher consciousness" Miller is trying to create refers to the "relatedness" of mankind, which is at the heart of the play. In a frequently-quoted passage from his Introduction to the play, Miller asserts:

The fortress which *All My Sons* lays siege to is the fortress of unrelatedness....It is that the crime is seen as having roots in a certain relationship of the individual to society, and to a certain indoctrination he embodies, which, if dominant, can mean a jungle existence for all of us no matter how high our buildings soar. And it is in this sense that loneliness is socially meaningful in these plays. (CP19)

Miller plainly sees friendship as a fundamental tool that “lays siege” to unrelatedness and prevents the “jungle existence” Joe Keller embodies. Friendship helps man relate to his society through each individual; it is essential to being civilized, and to civilization. As Aristotle writes, “Concord then seems to be friendship among citizens” (IX, VI 1836).

Two opposing views of friendship, Chris’ and his father Joe’s, are central to *All My Sons*. Joe’s view of friendship is presented as the one that dominates in American culture, while Chris’ view, the one Miller obviously espouses, is in danger of being destroyed by Joe’s “jungle existence.”

Chris’ convictions about friendship were formed in the military, where he as a company commander, losing “just about all” of his men. At the end of Act I, Chris tells Ann something about the friendship he knew in his company, like how a “kid” gave up his last pair of dry socks to Chris after several days of rain. Chris explains how he feels about the selfless nature of his men in the play’s most moving speech about friendship, perhaps the most telling in all of Miller’s drama:

They didn't die; they killed themselves for each other. I mean that exactly; a little more selfish and they'd 've been here today. And I got an idea--watching them go down. Everything was being destroyed, see, but it seemed to me that one new thing was made. A kind of--responsibility. Man for man. You understand me?--To show that, to bring that onto the earth again like some kind of a monument and everyone would feel it standing there, behind him, and it would make a difference to him. (85)

Sacrifice, commitment, loyalty, responsibility and love are all features of the friendship Chris came to know on the battlefield, and these are the qualities that Chris cannot find when he returns to the "rat-race" after the war. With this speech, Chris declares his vision of friendship, but as the monologue continues, he illustrates the difficulty in maintaining such an idealistic view:

*Pause.* And then I came home and it was incredible. I--there was no meaning in it here; the whole thing to them was a kind of a--bus accident. I went to work with Dad, and that rat-race again. I felt--what you said--ashamed somehow. Because nobody was changed at all. It seemed to make suckers out of a lot of guys. I felt wrong to be alive, to open the bank-book, to drive the new car, to see the new refrigerator. I mean you can take those things out of a war, but when you drive that car you've got to know that it came out of the love a man can have for a man, you've got to be a

little better because of that. Otherwise what you have is really loot, and there's blood on it. (85)

Miller's *"Pause"* is not only the halfway mark in the speech, it also represents the transition from Chris' view of friendship, and the "worldly" view, which is rooted in Joe's business view of life. What Chris emphasizes most in this speech is the fact that friendship, "the love a man can have for a man," must lead to change. It cannot be only a lifeless "monument," but must also "make a difference," make one "be a little better" because of the example of sacrifice set by Chris' men.

Chris' "belief" about friendship is rooted in Miller's book, *Situation Normal*, which came from his experience in camps and training centers in America. In *Situation Normal*, Miller studies a man named "Watson," who returns from war to find that "half of him" has died. Miller explains that for Watson (and, by extension, for Chris):

the company is gone and all that the company meant. He must wall himself from his fellow man, he must live only his own little life and do his own unimportant, unsatisfying job...He is alone. Cut off from mankind and the great movement of mankind he was once part of. And the world is alien.... (162)

Miller saw friendship and the positive change it produced in the lives of soldiers. He hoped that the same spirit of friendship would produce similar change in the "alien world" that Chris and Watson had to face. Miller knew that soldiers understood the importance of friendship in the

survival of their community, and until the outside community made the same discovery, their existence would be reduced to the "rat-race" existence that leads to alienation and loneliness. Miller argues in *Situation Normal* that returning servicemen like Watson and Chris would have to "transfer" the love they felt for "their comrades and units" to "other--civilian--'units'" or be forever in that restless, aimless state of emotional thirst" (*Normal* 156). Because Chris is unable to transfer his expression of love, he becomes overly idealistic and even judgmental.

Miller's view of friendship was confirmed, not initiated, through his experience with the men in the American war camps. It was the Great Depression and its aftermath that led Miller to conclude that we had to embrace as brothers in order to survive. As in *All My Sons*, the capitalistic nature of society has led to the degradation of that society, a new vision of "relatedness" is needed. After scores of homeless wandered in and out of Miller's life and his boyhood home in the thirties, he decided that we had to look to one another as friends to exist as a community. The need for friendship in society was a fundamental realization for Miller, one that Miller suggests we have failed to learn in America, and one that he continues to reiterate.

Unfortunately, Chris' father Joe hasn't been changed by the sacrifice of war, though two of his sons participated. From his own perspective, Joe's "sin," shipping faulty cylinder heads for airplanes that led to the deaths of twenty-one men, was not "wrong," only part of what a man in business must do. As Joe desperately tries to justify himself to Chris, "You lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take forty years, let them take my life away?" (115). Even after Chris condemns his father's actions, Joe fails to

understand where he has failed. He explains to his wife Kate that "You wanted money, so I made money. What must I be forgiven?" Kate explains that Joe cannot use the family to excuse his actions, but Joe replies that there is "nothin' bigger" than the family: "I'm his father and he's my son, and if there's something bigger than that I'll put a bullet in my head!" (120). Joe not only sets up the terms of his suicide, but also reveals that he requires further "instruction" from Chris about responsibility to the community beyond the family before understanding the gravity of his actions.

Ostensibly, Miller has set up a modern morality play where a good man reveals to an evil man the treachery of his life of falsehood. Indeed, Miller's tendency to "moralize" in his drama generally has led to some scathing criticisms like the following by John Gassner:

he [Miller] has been rather over strenuous and obvious in his moralizations...He has not dropped anchor naturally and inconspicuously in a norm of values and then gone ahead with his business as an artist. He has felt impelled to proclaim his values as if Judaeo-Christianity and even Hellenism had not made them known long ago, and he has placed them at the top of his dramatic register. (704)

Miller counters Gassner's statement when he writes that "Surely there is no known philosophy which was first announced through a play, nor any ethical idea...As a matter of fact, it is highly unlikely that a new idea could be successfully launched through a play at all" (*Essays* 119-20). Instead, a play "enunciates not-yet-popular ideas which are already



in the air" (*Essays* 122). While the ideas and values in *All My Sons* have been "made known," this play is more than a sermon or tract. While Chris may see himself as a "Jesus," come to enlighten the masses to their moral ignorance, and Joe a "devil" who dismisses murder as a fine point of economics, the play reveals no such simplicity. Instead, there is little to support Chris' neighbors' view of him as "holy," and Joe's defense for his shipping the parts is not easily dismissed. *All My Sons*, despite its flaws, gives us a picture of two men travelling in opposite directions emotionally and philosophically, intersecting at the end of the play. As Arvin Wells points out that the play is more than "a simple triumph over right and wrong" in that: "The play in its entirety makes clear that Joe Keller has committed his crimes not out of cowardice, callousness or pure self-interest, but out of a too-exclusive regard for real though limited values, and that Chris, the idealist, is far from acting disinterestedly as he harrows his father to repentance" (47). Chris is less than the innocent, Christ-like figure he imagines, while Joe is not purely the ruthless business man who sacrifices lives for money.

In *All My Sons*, it is Chris who must "preach" the message of changed lives through friendship, while it is clear that Chris has compromised this vision at the very least. In one of the first scenes in the play, Sue Bayliss, a neighbor, reveals to Ann some important information about Chris' character. She asks Ann to move away with Chris once they are married because "My husband is unhappy with Chris around... Chris makes people want to be better than it's possible to be." Though Ann tries to defend Chris, Sue continues, "[It isn't] as though Chris or anybody else isn't compromising" (93). The source of Chris' compromise is his business involvement with his father, who is still

suspected of wrongdoing despite a court ruling to the contrary. Sue punctuates her assessment of Chris by saying that she "resents living next door to the Holy Family" (94), the first of two references to Chris as Christ in the drama. Sue's comments not only reveal that Chris may be intransigent, but that he has subconsciously blinded himself to the truth that everybody on the block knows: "Joe pulled a fast one to get out of jail" (94). There are several plausible explanations for Chris' inability to see what everyone knows. Chris is now working in the factory that produced the fatal parts, and his future employment and wealth are directly tied to the success of the factory. If Chris were to face the truth about his father, he would undoubtedly be forced to resign, and the factory's reputation severely tarnished. By extension, this would also alter his marriage plans, as his "offer" to Ann is liberally punctuated with details of his future financial success. It seems most likely that the idealism that permeates his life extends to his father as well, blinding him to his father's failings. Chris' violent rejection of his father once he realizes the truth about him, indicates his idealistic attitude toward him. Chris knew that most men were corrupt, but believed that his father was "not like other men" (114). Biff Loman idealized his father to the point that when he learns the "truth" about him in a Boston hotel room, a bitterness develops between them for years. Biff represents a progression of sorts for Miller, as he is able to overcome his spite and forgive his father near the end of *Salesman*, while Chris' condemnation of his father drives Joe to suicide.

As the play develops, there are other indications that Chris' "ideal" has not effected any significant change in his life. Chris has not forgiven Joe's former partner, Steve Deever, who was convicted of the crime for

which his father should have been jailed. Chris suggests that any mitigation of the judgment against Deever is an implicit admission of his father's possible complicity. Joe, to assuage his guilt about Deever "taking the rap," tells Ann that he will provide her father with a job when he is released from prison. Chris fiercely repudiates his father's suggestion, telling him to "kick him in the teeth!" Despite Joe's ulterior motives, his attempt at reconciliation should be applauded by his "holy" son. Chris' obstinancy here presages his treatment of his father later in the play, and weakens his claims about learning from the sacrifice of his troops.

In Act II, Joe is forced to confess the truth to his son about his culpability in the shipment of the airplane parts and the resulting death of the pilots. He swears that he was only thinking of Chris' future, knowing that he would some day profit from the business. Chris, predictably, will hear none of it. With "burning fury" he rails at his father:

For me!--I was dying every day and you were killing my boys and you did it for me? What the hell do you think I was thinking of, the Goddam business? What is that, the world--the business? What the hell do you mean, you did it for me? Don't you have a country? Don't you live in the world? What the hell are you? You're not even an animal, no animal kills its own, what are you? What must I do to you? I ought to tear the tongue out of your mouth, what must I do? *With his fist he pounds down upon his father's shoulder. He stumbles*

*away, covering his face as he weeps. What must I do, Jesus God, what must I do? (115-6)*

Chris' reaction shows that he has learned only a half-truth regarding the friendship he knew in the military. Through his experience as a commander, he has learned that he is "connected" to not only his men, but all humanity, a lesson his father must be taught. But Chris has failed to realize that the "love a man can have for a man" must include forgiveness and compassion; which, on the basis of the speech above, are virtues he unquestionably lacks.

The act ends with Chris' question, "What must I do?" In Act III, Chris' question changes, as he says to his father, "It's not what I want to do, it's what you want to do" (124). Forcing his father to make a moral choice in turning himself in for the offences he is guilty of may simply be part of Chris' "mission" in rehabilitating his father's "moral ignorance." On another level, this shift also allows Chris to avoid the responsibility of taking moral action. There are two obvious answers to his persistent question, "What must I do?" Chris must either forgive his father in the spirit of compassionate friendship, or condemn his father, casting himself as a fiery idealist who equates his father's imprisonment with justice.

After reading Ann's letter from Larry, which reveals that Larry has committed suicide as a result of his father's crime, Chris continues his condemnation of his father with, "Now you tell me what you must do...This is how he died, now tell me where you belong." Joe replies, "Chris, a man can't be a Jesus in this world!" (125). This is the second explicit reference to Chris as Christ, not to mention the similarity in

name and Chris calling on "Jesus God" at the end of Act II to "tell him what he must do." The play does not reveal that what Joe says is true. Instead it seems to show that Chris will *not* "be a Jesus in this world." When Chris says that his men "killed themselves for each other," he is making an implicit reference to Christ's words about the true test of love: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15: 13). Chris goes on to say that such a sacrifice must "make a difference...you've got to be a little better because of that." Chris may be "a little better," he "tears his hair out" over a simple overcharge at his father's business, but there is no evidence that Chris is somehow more virtuous due to his experience with his men.

At the close of the play, Chris waits to take his father to jail as his mother pleads that Chris "tell him to stay." Chris is unrelenting, even when his mother says that prison will kill his father. The final dialogue between the two reveals Chris' presumptuous stubbornness:

MOTHER, *of Larry, the letter*: The war is over! Didn't you hear? It's over!

CHRIS: Then what was Larry to you? A stone that fell into the water? It's not enough for him to be sorry. Larry didn't kill himself to make you and Dad sorry.

MOTHER: What more can we be!

CHRIS: You can be better! Once and for all you can know there's a universe of people outside and you're responsible to it, and unless you know that, you threw away you're son because that's why he died. (126-7)

A shot is fired in the home, Joe's suicide is apparent, and Chris is "frozen" by the sound. Chris "comes out of the house, down to Mother's arms," and says, "Mother, I didn't mean to--" Kate replies, "Don't dear. Don't take it on yourself. Forget now. Live" (127). In those simple words, Kate expresses the kindness of a friend, precisely what Chris failed to communicate to his father. If Chris could have allowed his father to realize the "relatedness" of mankind through friendship, perhaps Joe wouldn't have found it necessary to kill himself. If Kate would have reacted in Chris' unforgiving manner, she would have more than enough cause to blame her son for driving his father to his death. Her loving forgiveness, even acceptance at the end of the play defines friendship in action, and undermines Chris' empty rhetoric: Kate is the friend to her son that he could never be to his father.

Barry Gross reacts strongly against Chris' "final words" as well, which, he believes, "point to the moral of the play." Gross writes that Chris uses "fine words, but they are cast into a silent void, because we know that, behind them, Chris is incapable of the commitment and love his father's suicide represents" (59-60). Gross indirectly answers Gassner's (and others') criticism of Miller's supposed didacticism in *All My Sons* with:

In *All My Sons* Miller is not guilty of presuming to teach, or even of presuming to preach, but of not doing it with sufficient force and directness, of not pinpointing with sufficient sharpness Chris's amorphous and formless sentiments. *That* the world should be reordered is not at issue; *how* it should is. (23)

Tom F. Driver sees Miller's "amorphous" morality as a weakness in much of his drama:

Miller is a playwright who wants morality without bothering to speak of a good in the light of which morality would make sense....But if we are to speak of 'moral sanctions' in drama or society, we must come to acknowledge that man is himself transcended by some truth that is not irrelevant to morality. Miller seems to flinch before that assertive act of the imagination which uncovers (or, in religious language, receives) the ontological ground upon which the truly meaningful act must stand. (41)

Both critics' points are well taken, but *All My Sons* does not fail on the basis of either criticism. Gross is correct in writing that Chris' sentiments are nebulous, but that can be seen as part of the complexity of his character. Chris would very likely appear to be one-dimensional if his character had fully integrated his idealism. More importantly, it is not the character Miller created. As Arvin Wells points out, many critics, "stumbling among subtleties of characterization, accuse the playwright of a confusion of values which belongs appropriately to the characters in their situations" (46). Chris displays a fully human tendency in mouthing truths that have not effected change in his own life. These half-truths may be Chris' way of dealing with the deaths of his men. He was unable to give his life to save them, he has not been changed as a result of their sacrifice, so he is reduced to saying what he thinks he and

others should feel as a result of his experiences. All truth must be tested to be real, and this is the process that Miller shows us through Chris. Chris has not yet come to terms with Driver's "transcendent" force, which is precisely why his morality does not make sense.

Perhaps through his father's death Chris can come to an understanding that would fully integrate the noble ideal he strives toward. Gross concedes that one may argue such a point, though he remains unconvinced of such a change in Chris:

Perhaps it is true that Chris is equipped to make the world begin again only after he learns that his brother killed himself and watches his father do the same thing. If so, that is a high price in human life--to Miller, perhaps because he is not Christian, the highest price imaginable--to rouse Chris Keller to action. And, judging from Chris's past record, one cannot be sure that these two deaths will have that effect.  
(27)

Gross, using a quote of Miller's as criterion, judges Chris "a bad man when *All My Sons* begins and no better when the play ends" (27). While Gross' assessment may be valid, Chris' growth parallels that of many of the heroes of Greek drama, who come to a full understanding of truth only after great suffering. As the chorus says of Creon at the end of *Antigone*, "The mighty words of the proud are paid In full with mighty blows of fate, and at long last those blows will teach us wisdom" (Mack 738). Arthur Boggs treats the play as a "tragedy of recognition" in the classical sense, but declares it a failure because it lacks the "bold sweep,



precise emphasis and simple focus of *Oedipus Rex*" (558). Granted, Chris does not reach the tragic heights or depths of an Oedipus or Creon; his realization is only hinted at as it comes too late in the play, but Miller does admit that he was strongly influenced as a writer by "Greek tragedies--which I was coming to love in the way a man at the bottom of a pit loves a ladder" (TB 94). Miller seems to invite this comparison when he writes that "From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his 'rightful' place in society" (Sylvester 98). Chris' attempt may result in tragic personal loss, but his struggle to know the truth about the "relatedness" of mankind may have taught him the difference between his "mighty words" and "wisdom."

Just as Chris is not a righteous prophet of truth, but a young man struggling to make his truth real, so Joe Keller is not a hardened criminal who feeds off of other's misery. Wells suggests that in *All My Sons*, "There is no simple opposition between those 'who know' and those who 'must learn,' between those who possess the truth and those who have failed to grasp it" (51). Miller identifies Joe's problem this way: "Joe Keller's trouble, in a word, is not that he cannot tell right from wrong but that his cast of mind cannot admit that he, personally, has any viable connection with his world, his universe, or his society. He is not a partner in society..." (CP 19). Joe is separated from "his world, universe, and society" because he has been unable to "connect" through friendship.

Joe's failure as a friend is first evidenced when he allows his then partner, Steve Deever, to take the blame for the manufacture and

shipment of the faulty airplane parts. Joe's twisted recollection to Steve's daughter Annie provides an interesting gloss on the events of that day:

I mean just try to see it human, see it human. All of a sudden a batch comes out with a crack. That happens, that's the business. A fine, hairline crack. All right, so--so he's a little man, your father, always scared of loud voices. What'll the Major say?--Half a day's production shot....What'll I say? You know what I mean? Human. *He pauses.* So he takes out his tools and he--covers over the cracks. All right--that's bad, it's wrong, but that's what a little man does. If I could have gone in that day I'd a told him--junk 'em Steve, we can afford it. But alone he was afraid. (CP 82)

This speech not only shows that Joe has "amended" the facts, but that the failure that he identifies in Steve is absolutely his own. Joe *did* have the power as a friend to advise and strengthen Steve at this moment of crisis, but he faltered as a partner and friend. Aristotle writes, "Friendship is in fact a partnership. And as a man is to himself so is he to his friend. But the consciousness of his own existence is desirable; and so, of his friend's existence." He continues, "The friendship of virtuous men is good and is increased by their conversation. Indeed they seem to become better by working and living together, by correcting each other's faults" (IX, XIV 1946-7, 1951). Joe's view of "partnership" is clearly a strict business view, it leads to the "jungle existence" that Miller

despises, or as Chris describes it, "The land of the great big dogs, you don't love a man here, you eat him!" (CP 124)

Joe compounds his mistake by allowing the parts to be shipped, but this is just a symptom of his "problem" of "unrelatedness." If Joe could view each member of his community as a friend, the way Chris' men saw one another, he could not have shipped those parts, and risk his friends' deaths. Aristotle comments that acts of injustice are "aggravated by being done to close friends," but that "Friendship and justice naturally increase at the same time as they exist between the same persons" (VIII, IX 1663-4). A recurrent topic which pervades Miller's writing--where friendship fails, justice cannot exist--appears in *All My Sons* as well.

The skewed sense of justice reveals itself in many ways in the play. First, we have an innocent man convicted of a crime he did not commit, and a guilty man who got off by "pulling a fast one." This central injustice does not allow people to relate openly in the play. The neighbors play cards with Joe, but they whisper about his guilt behind his back. Chris and Ann want to marry, but the spectre of Joe's act impedes them. George comes to reveal the truth about the past, but is quickly compromised in this unjust environment. Kate "can't stand all alone" (CP 74), yet her husband can't stand with her because of his guilt. Joe cannot shed his shame as he tries to wear a mask of innocence throughout. Joe has even convinced the neighborhood kids that he "has a jail" in his basement, and that he is going to "arrest" and imprison juvenile offenders. Joe sees this as a silly diversion for the children, but Kate understands that it is another subversion of justice, as she

"furiously" turns on Joe with, "There's no jail here! I want you to stop that jail business!" (CP 74).

Perhaps Joe has failed most completely in his friendship with his sons, though the play reveals that Joe, in his deluded way, has been true to his boys. Just as Chris has failed to realize that friendship involves compassion, so Joe not learned that his duty to his sons involves more than "working hard in the business." To Aristotle, the friendship of a father to a son is like a king to his subjects. Aquinas, in his commentary on the *Nichomachean Ethics*, expounds on Aristotle's statement with: "A father is the cause of the son's three greatest goods. First, by generation he is the cause of the son's existence (considered the greatest good); second, by upbringing, of his rearing; third, of his instruction" (VIII, IX 1691). As far as we know, Joe has played no part in the second and third "goods" a father bestows on his sons. But, as Gross makes clear, Joe has "kept the faith" in his misguided parental commitment to his sons (29). Wells agrees with, "He [Joe] had the peasant's insular loyalty to family which excludes more generalized responsibility to society at large or mankind in general" (47). What Joe did not realize was that his connection with society dramatically effected his relationship with his sons, and that the two worlds will inevitably clash as they do when Larry commits suicide and Chris rejects his father.

When Joe finally utters the play's signature line with, "Sure, he [Larry] was my son. But I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were" (CP 126), he has come to know that there is no dividing the "family of man." For Aristotle, one perceived the citizen as family through friendship. Miller seems to call for much the

same in this drama. At the close of the play, we have the intersection of Chris and Joe's philosophies about life and friendship. Chris has been forced to comprehend that true friendship is realized in action, not words. Joe comes to know that the downed pilots were "all his sons," or, ideally, all his friends.

Miller earned his first dramatic success through this play, which deals centrally with friendship in society. *All My Sons* develops many of the ideas Miller introduced in *Situation Normal* and his novel, *Focus*. More importantly, it lays a foundation for his most celebrated work, *Death of a Salesman*, which continues to probe the effects of the disintegration of friendship in our culture.

### **DEATH OF A SALESMAN**

The success of *All My Sons* was exhilarating for Miller, but it also led him to the realization that "celebrity is merely a different form of loneliness." Miller's fame made him feel "unnervingly artificial," to people he met on the street, as he began to feel that his "identification with life's failures was being menaced by fame." This led Miller to take a job for forty cents an hour (although his play was bringing in some two thousand a week) at the Long Island City factory assembling dividers in wooden beer boxes to "insure [his] continuity with the past." Miller lasted only a few days, then quit. He later surmised that "I was attempting to be part of a community instead of formally accepting my isolation, which was what fame seemed to hold" (TB 275-6).

Miller's next play would feature a friendless, isolated worker "attempting to be part of a community" and failing, but there was no clear transition for Miller from his factory work experience to the creation of Willy Loman. Instead, Miller had difficulty writing *Salesman*, and despaired that his "salesman play" was destined to remain unfinished, as he couldn't get beyond the opening lines: "Willy!" and "It's all right. I came back" (TB 183). The turning point came when Elia Kazan invited Miller to see Tennessee Williams' new play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The "vitality of the theatrical experience" opened a door for Miller: "Tennessee had printed a license to speak at full throat, and it helped strengthen me as I turned to Willy Loman, a salesman always full of words" (TB 182).

Willy's words are now among the most recognizable in American theater, as "the salesman's world has now become everybody's world, and, in some part, everybody has become a salesman" (Mills 161). Mills' words were not originally applied to Willy, but he has become such a fixture on the stage that he now pervades our very culture. Nearly every high school student is forced to trace and interpret the ineluctable downfall of our society's "Low-man," Willy Loman. Many critics have scoffed at Miller's obvious use of name-as-symbol, but Miller defends the name of his most famous character in his autobiography, *Timebends*. Miller recalls a "hard cold winter" day when he was headed for the subway for a "bit of warmth" when his eye caught a movie house marquee with the title of a film which "had become part of my own dream tissue and had the same intimacy as something I had invented myself," *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (177). The film features a scene in which a detective, sent to discover who is responsible for a series of fires and explosions in Paris, follows a suspect to an auditorium, only to find a phonograph playing a record of instructions to a motley group of Paris citizens. Horrified, the detective goes into a nearby office to call the chief, played by Otto Wernicke (who just happens to be a "massive actor the size of Lee J. Cobb"). As he "clamps the receiver to his ear and whispers, 'Hello? Hello! Lohmann? Lohmann!'" The light snaps out and the screen goes black before he can give his location" (178). The next shot finds the detective in an insane asylum, gripping a non-existent phone to his ear, repeating "Lohmann? Lohmann? Lohmann?" Miller writes:

My spine iced as I realized where I had gotten the name that had lodged so deep in me. It was more than five years since

I had last seen the film, and if I had been asked I never could have dredged up the name of the chief of the Sûreté in it. In later years I found it discouraging to observe the confidence with which some commentators on *Death of a Salesman* smirked at the heavy-handed symbolism of 'Low-man.' What the name really meant to me was a terror-stricken man calling into the void for help that will never come. (178-79)

As intriguing as this defense is, Miller's names have never been described as the most subtle in literature. A brief sampling will serve to illustrate the problem: Lawrence (from "laurel," wreaths which crowned victors) Newman from the novel *Focus* becomes a "victorious new man" as he defeats the anti-semitism of his neighbors and his own prejudice to emerge a changed man; Chris (Christ) Keller (Killer? Certainly true for his father Joe) of *All My Sons*; Biff and Happy, perhaps the two strangest names in Miller's canon, especially alongside such common ones as Bernard, Charley and Willy; Victor (complete with his foil, mask and gauntlets) Franz and Gregory Solomon (the "wise" furniture dealer) of *The Price*, and the list goes on. Miller's defense of Loman, though brilliant, sounds a bit like a serendipitous coincidence rather than an unconscious link to Fritz Lang's film.

The lore that surrounds *Death of a Salesman*, now an icon of American drama, extends to Miller's writing of the play. Miller recounts his creation of the drama in reverent phrases about "the tiny studio," on his Connecticut estate, which he describes as "unpainted and smelling of raw wood and sawdust," with the "April sun" pouring through his



windows as "the apple buds were moving on the wild trees, showing their first pale blue petals" (TB 183).

In such a conducive setting, Miller was able to finish Act I of *Salesman* overnight, and six weeks later, the entire play was finished. He sent the first copy to Kazan, who called Miller to say that it was "a great play," adding that Willy Loman *was* his father, "the first of many great men--and women--" who would tell Miller the same thing (TB 185). Once Kermit Bloomgarden (there is a subtle irony to this name, considering Willy's failures as a gardener) was secured as producer, casting began for the play. Though Miller envisioned Willy as a small man, the hulking Lee J. Cobb flew himself cross-country in his own plane to tell Miller and company that "This is my part. Nobody else can play this part. I know this man" (186).

Kazan added a former speech teacher, Mildred Dunnock, to the cast as Linda, and rehearsals were under way. Miller and Kazan began having doubts about Cobb's ability to pull off the role, as he "seemed to move about in a buffalo's stupefied trance, muttering his lines, plodding with deathly slowness from position to position." Two weeks into rehearsal, with Miller and Kazan looking on, Cobb:

Stood up as usual from the bedroom chair and turned to Mildred Dunnock and bawled, 'No, there's more people now....There's more people!' and, gesturing toward the empty upstage where the window was supposed to be, caused a block of apartment houses to spring up in my [Miller's] brain, and the air became sour with the smell of kitchens where once there had been only the odors of earth, and he

began to move frighteningly, with such ominous reality that my chest felt pressed down by an immense weight. (TB 187)

Miller wept at Cobb's "magical capacity to imagine," and from that moment, Kazan and Miller knew they "had it," the play's inevitable success became "a wave of unmistakable life moving across the air of the empty theatre" (TB 188).

During the play's first rehearsal with a live audience, Miller, for the "first and only time saw the play as others see it":

Then it seemed to me that we must be a terribly lonely people, cut off from each other by such massive pretense of self-sufficiency, machined down so fine we hardly touch any more. We are trying to save ourselves separately, and that is immoral, that is the corrosive among us. ("Birthday" 1)

These words, which echo Miller's sentiments about friendship expressed elsewhere, illustrate how important friendship is to *Salesman*. Though few have made the connection, Willy is clearly a "terribly lonely person" who is "cut off" as a result of his "massive pretense of self-sufficiency" which Miller describes. If Willy could be "touched" through friendship, or at least abandon his pretentiousness long enough to allow friendship to have an effect on him, perhaps the "corrosiveness" in the Loman family would be eliminated.

*Salesman* was first performed at the Locust Street Theatre in Philadelphia, where the Philadelphia Orchestra was playing Beethoven's Seventh Symphony in the afternoon of opening night. Miller and Kazan

took a rehearsal-weary Lee J. Cobb to the Symphony, "inviting him, as it were, to drink to the heroism of that music, to fling himself into his role tonight without holding back" (TB 190). Cobb and the play overwhelmed the audience, which was held in a stunned silence after the final curtain, "forgetting" to applaud as they spoke in hushed tones, bent over with hands in faces, while some wept openly. When the applause finally came, it was "thunderous" and "there was no end to it." To cap the force of the premiere performance, Bernard Gimbel, head of the department store chain, "that night gave an order that no one in his stores was to be fired for being overage" (191).

"It's the best play ever written," glowed Maxwell Anderson's wife Mab, following a Philadelphia performance. Miller "dared repeating" her phrase only because "it would be said so often in the next months" that it began to transform his life (TB 191). Brooks Atkinson's review of the New York premiere at the Morosco Theatre is only slightly less euphoric than Mab Anderson's assessment:

Writing like a man who understands people, Mr. Miller has no moral precepts to offer and no solutions of the salesman's problems. He is full of pity, but he brings no piety to it. Chronicler of one frowsy corner of the American scene, he evokes a wraith-like tragedy out of it that spins through the many scenes of his play and gradually envelops the audience....Mr. Miller's elegy of a Brooklyn sidestreet is superb. (23)

While *Salesman* was an enormous success, there were dissenting critical voices. Robert Brustein writes that he has "never been convinced that this [*Salesman*] is a very important work" (242). Frederick Morgan impugned the play as "pure Broadway" in perhaps the most virulent attack ever written on Miller's play:

Miller had the makings of some sort of play; but he was unfortunately unable to bring a single spark of dramatic intelligence to bear on his material. The terms in which he conceived of his theme are so trite and clumsy as to invalidate the entire play and render offensive its continual demand for the sympathy and indulgence of the audience. It proceeds, with unrelieved vulgarity, from cliché to stereotype...the tone of the play can best be described as a sustained snivel...On the basis of certain newspaper articles I presume that Miller considers his new play to be the Tragedy of the Common Man. It is not tragedy; nor is it, rightly speaking, about any man, common or uncommon. (272)

At the end of his critique, Morgan introduces the topic of a debate over *Salesman* which dominated critical theory about the play for years: "Is *Death of a Salesman* an Aristotelian tragedy?" The debate was most lively when it began, with Miller squaring off against the critics in his defense of the play as tragedy. On February 27, 1949, only two weeks or so after the opening of the play, Miller's most famous critical essay, "Tragedy and the Common Man" appeared in *The New York Times*.

Miller's argument was simple and direct: "I believe that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were" (1). Miller argued against what he saw as "clinging to the outward forms of tragedy" (3), insisting upon an arbitrary rank or nobility in the protagonist.

While dozens of articles delineate the positions of various critics on the subject, summarizing them here would be redundant.<sup>1</sup> The play-as-tragedy debate has long been played out; moreover, the debate rarely defined what Miller's play was "about." While no single view can account for the totality of the play, *Salesman* can be read fruitfully as a drama of failed friendships, and "a man superbly alone with his sense of not having touched love" (CP 30).

Miller's play defies easy classification, a fact that he discusses in his introduction to the play:

*Death of a Salesman* is a slippery play to categorize because nobody in it stops to make a speech objectively stating the great issues which I believe it embodies. If it were a worse play, less closely articulating its meanings with its actions, I think it would have more quickly satisfied a certain kind of criticism. But it was meant to be less a play than a fact. (CP 32)

In an interview with Robert Sylvester, Miller said that he had written a play "about a man who kills himself because he isn't liked" (98). While Miller is obviously off-handed in his remark, *Salesman* does feature

characters that discuss friendship; seem to reach out in friendship, and ultimately fail to connect through friendship.

"Be liked and you will never want" (CP 146). Willy's dictum for success becomes an ironic truth as the play develops: Willy is not liked and is wanting. He is wanting for love, dignity, friendship--a place in his world. Willy's incessant emphasis on being "well-liked," comes to symbolize his denial of his estrangement from others, and his inability to distinguish the difference between true friendship and his shallow, distorted image of friendship.

Miller, writing in his introduction to the play, says that *Salesman* "grew from simple images." Miller then enumerates these "images," many of which relate to some aspect of friendship. Analyzing these images, the foundations of the drama from Miller's perspective, reveals the fundamental importance of friendship to this play. The first image Miller discusses is the "little frame house" of the Loman's, which was filled with their sons' voices, then fell silent, and now is "finally occupied by strangers. Strangers who could not know with what conquistadorial joy Willy and his boys had one re-shingled the roof" (CP 29). In the play, this image of the house is transmuted into the "angular shapes" of the ominous apartment buildings which are filled with "strangers." The change in Willy's neighborhood is also linked to this image. Gone is the Brooklyn where one could hunt rabbits, where a carrot would flourish in the backyard, where great elms shaded the Loman home--a symbol of stability and protection in a definable community--all lost and replaced by images of isolation and sterility. The elms were removed by a greedy builder, the rabbits and snakes are replaced by concrete and brick, and

Willy can't get a single carrot to grow in his backyard that is hemmed in on all sides by the angular apartments.

Brian Parker comments that all of these images indicate that "Willy Loman is trapped in a society which prevents him establishing anything to outlast himself, ruining the lives of his sons as well as his own" (37). Richard T. Brucher voices a similar interpretation as he comments, "The son of a pioneer inventor and the slave to broken machines, Willy Loman seems to epitomize the victim of modern technology" (22). Barclay W. Bates adds, "Willy Loman was born as the American frontier era drew to a close. Growing up in a transitional period, he found no suitable identity" (172). These critics acknowledge that Willy is part of a changing society that is moving away from his idyllic rural dream of community to a harsher society of asphalt barrenness. Vance Packard sums up Willy's dilemma in the opening pages of his book, *A Nation of Strangers*:

While the footlooseness of Americans as pioneers was a source of vitality and charm, several of the new forms that the accelerating rootlessness of Americans is taking should be a cause for alarm. Great numbers of inhabitants feel unconnected to either people and places and throughout much of the nation there is a breakdown in community living. In fact there is a general shattering of small-group life. A number of forces are promoting social fragmentation. We are confronted with a society that is coming apart at the seams. And in the process we appear to be breeding a legacy of coldness in many of the coming generation. (1-2)

Packard's comments not only describe Willy's changing community, they also seem to outline aspects of Willy's life. Willy's father is described as a "footloose pioneer," a "wild-hearted man" who would "drive the team right across the country" (157). Barry Gross comments that Willy's father is the "exemplar of the Yankee peddler, who helps to explain, in large part, Willy's need for a frontier" (406). Lois Gordon notes that:

Willy's father not only ventured into a pioneer's wilderness with no security or assurance of success, but was also a creator, a man whose avocation was as well his vocation, a man who made flutes and high music. (276)

As Gordon suggests, there are two distinct, opposing features in Willy's image of his father: he is attracted to the "vitality and charm" of his father's lifestyle, but he recognizes that there is a "legacy of coldness" associated with it as well. Willy's father forsook him when he was only four, leaving him feeling "kind of temporary" (159) about himself. This inured view of his father is carried on in his father's incarnate spirit, brother Ben, who is the stereotype of the heartless conqueror. Willy understands that Ben's ruthlessness is inimical to the nurturing side of his personality, and refuses to adopt Ben's lifestyle as a result.

A second image that Miller refers to in the introduction is:

The image of aging and so many of your friends already gone and strangers in the seats of the mighty who do not know you or your triumphs or your incredible value....The image of



people turning into strangers who only evaluate one another.  
(CP 29)

Perhaps Willy never had any friends, but Miller's introduction and the play suggest that he once did, when his world was a very different place. Willy's friends are gone when the play opens, and he struggles to identify himself to strangers. In one of his many reminiscences, Willy tells his boys:

America is full of beautiful towns and fine, upstanding people. And they know me, boys, they know me up and down New England. The finest people. And when I bring you fellas up, there'll be open sesame for all of us, 'cause one thing boys: I have friends. (145)

Now, Willy is "laughed at," in those same towns, and as Linda tells her sons, "his old friends, the old buyers that loved him so and always found some order to hand him in a pinch--they're all dead, retired" (163). Linda's comments reinforce the image that Willy's world has changed: the people have changed, the cars have changed, the landscape has changed, even the cheese has changed; seemingly all has changed from a world of certitude and friendship to a world of confusion and strangeness.

The "stranger in the seat of the mighty" that Miller refers to in the Introduction is Howard, his boss, and the son of his former boss, Frank. When Willy visits with Howard to ask him to find "some spot in town" (179), so that Willy doesn't have to continue to go out on the road, we clearly see this image of Howard as stranger. Willy reminds Howard that

he had already requested a spot in town at the last Christmas party, and while it is certain that Howard has forgotten, he brushes Willy off with, "Oh, yeah, yeah. I remember. Well, I couldn't think of anything for you, Willy" (179). Howard is bored with Willy's ramblings, as Willy explains to Howard what led him into selling, instead of following brother Ben to Alaska--he met a man named Dave Singleman.

Singleman, an eighty-four year old salesman who can still make a living by just "picking up a phone," is Willy's ideal worker, but like Willy's elm trees, Singleman is part of an irretrievable past. Though Singleman's ability to earn a living attracts Willy, there are other qualities that influence him even more:

What could be more satisfying than to be able to go, at the age of eighty-four, into twenty or thirty different cities, and pick up a phone, and be remembered and loved and helped by so many different people? (180)

Willy ends this speech with an elegy to Singleman who "died the death of a salesman" with "hundreds of buyers and salesmen" at his funeral.

"There was respect, and comradeship, and gratitude in it" (180).

Singleman is not "well-liked," he is "loved." When there was "comradeship" or friendship in selling, one could be loved and helped and remembered. For Willy Loman, to be remembered, loved and helped is what would "satisfy" him most. To know respect, friendship and gratitude would make all the difference. It was what he hoped to know as a salesman, it is what he may have known as a salesman, but no longer. This was perhaps the most crucial event in Willy's adult life,

where he is presented with two images of success, one that includes love and friendship, and another that does not. Miller wrote that there are two "opposing systems" which "race for Willy's faith," the "system of love, and its opposite, the law of success" (CP 36). While salesmanship is rarely described as a "system of love," it is love and friendship that Willy admires and emphasizes most about Singleman's occupation. Willy does not estimate Singleman's annual income, he does not identify his success in terms of material wealth. Singleman may be part of a capitalistic system that is founded upon ruthless competition, but as Willy sees him, Singleman transcends the harsh qualities inherently part of his occupation. Faced with these two "systems," Willy chose the enduring values he associated with Singleman and salesmanship over the promise of gold and adventure with his brother, Ben.

Willy respects Ben, he looks to him for advice and answers to life's difficulties, but Ben seems to embody qualities that are the reverse of Singleman's. Ben is the symbol of the pioneer spirit, and the rootlessness that goes along with it. Leah Hadomi writes that "sentiment plays no part in the tough maxims he [Ben] tosses out in accounting for his successes" (160). He sees life as the jungle, one that needs to be conquered by ruthless men. Ben's grim nature is evidenced when he first comes to visit Willy in Brooklyn and asks, "Is Mother living with you?" (155), not aware of the fact that she died "long ago." Instead of playing baseball or talking to Biff and Happy on this visit, Ben engages Biff in what seems to be a playful sparring match. Then "suddenly," Ben trips Biff, and stands over him with "the point of his umbrella poised over Biff's eye." Ben counsels Biff: "Never fight fair with a stranger, boy. You'll never get out of the jungle that way" (158). The truth is, Ben is

not, or at least should not be a stranger. He is the boys' uncle, their father's only brother, but he is not a friend. Ben's lack of familiarity is even more distinct when Willy pleads with Ben only a few minutes later to "stay a few days":

You're just what I need, Ben, because I--I have a fine position here, but I--well, Dad left when I was such a baby and I never had a chance to talk to him and I still feel--kind of temporary about myself. (159)

Willy is reaching out for the love and help and remembrance that was only a telephone away from Dave Singleman--hoping to find it in his brother, but instead, he hears Ben's chilly response, "I'll be late for my train." Just as Willy's father left his son as a baby which led to a perpetual sense of impermanence, Ben leaves his brother once again in need. Ben has "all the answers" when it comes to striking it rich--and this Willy admires--but when it comes to friendship or moral guidance, Ben is silent.

No wonder that Willy rejects Ben's Alaskan frontier for Dave Singleman's "green velvet slippers" (180). Singleman has Ben's financial know-how without having to sacrifice lasting social values like love and friendship. Gordon sees the two men as "personifying" different aspects of the American dream. Ben is the "totally self-assured man who knew what he wanted and would brook no ethical interference"; Singleman is "the salesman who lived on trains and in strange cities, and who, by virtue of some incandescent, irresistible personal loveableness, built his

fame and fortune" (276). Irving Jacobson also notes that the differences between Ben and Singleman are fundamental:

Unlike Ben, Singleman achieved a success that presented him with a world of loyalty, aid, and love. His scope of action was spatially more limited in being national rather than international; but response to him was more personal....Singleman mastered his society not through the demonic qualities one perceives in Ben but through a synthesis of man's social and economic impulses. (249)

Willy is caught up in his euphoric description of Singleman when he realizes that, as with everything in his life, things have changed desperately: "Today, it's all cut and dried, and there's no chance for bringing friendship to bear" (180). Willy's words become prophetic, as the entire play reveals their truth--there is *no chance* for friendship in Willy Loman's world, he will never know the love and help that Dave Singleman knew.

Willy's presaging words about the failure of friendship are fully realized at the end of this scene, as Howard, whom *he* named, the stranger in the seat of the mighty, brings Willy's world down around him with: "I don't want you to represent us. I've been meaning to tell you for a long time now" (182). Howard, unlike his father (or at least Willy's image of his father), does not understand Willy's "incredible value." He is only as valuable as his last sale, and his worth as a human being cannot be weighed by a stranger. Howard goes out of the office, leaving Willy in

the silence and the solitude of himself, where Willy resides more and more often, a place of despair and suicide.

*Death of a Salesman* includes three progressive moments of immense solitude for Willy: when he first returns home and stands at the doorway exhausted, when Howard leaves him alone in the office, and when he is deserted by his sons at the "Chop House" while in a delusional state. The boys have planned to treat their dad to a big meal at one of their favorite spots, Frank's Chop House, though Willy comments upon entering, that he hadn't been there "in years" (197). After his disappointment with Howard, Willy is in need of some comfort from his sons, but instead (despite their hollow excuses), they leave him for two women they met only minutes before in the restaurant. Willy is stranded in the rest room of the Chop House as he recalls the painful events of Biff's unexpected visit to Boston, and his subsequent fall in the eyes of his teenage son. Willy emerges from the bathroom of the Chop House, mumbling incoherent phrases from the past, to find his boys gone, and only Stanley, a waiter, there to ask, "Can you make it?" The events of the play answer no, Willy cannot make it without friendship, without even his sons standing by him in a time of crisis. Willy "hurries out" of the restaurant, on his way to a hardware store in hopes of finding some seeds in a pathetic attempt to "get something planted" (209) to combat his isolation and rootlessness. Though Ben can tame the jungles of Africa on his own, Willy needs a little help to "make it" in his world.

At this moment of desertion, Willy joins many figures in modern literature, "a figure of modern loneliness, a man alienated from the deepest and most nourishing rhythms and values of human fellowship" (Sharp 3). Ronald A. Sharp here refers to Meursault, the hero of Camus'

*The Stranger*, who "takes his place alongside Kafka's Gregor Samsa and Eliot's Prufrock" (3). Willy Loman, the lonely drummer who runs from his reality of worthlessness, clearly fits Sharp's description as well. Like Prufrock, Willy has "known the eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase" (4), and the phrase that has been formulated by the world toward Willy is spoken by his son Biff: "Pop! I'm a dime a dozen and so are you!" (217). Like Gregor, perhaps the most famous traveling salesman in world literature, Willy is victimized by the limits of his profession: "the trouble of constant traveling, of worrying about train connections, the bed and irregular meals, casual acquaintances that are always new and never become intimate friends" (90).

One of Miller's last "simple images" from which the play grew is "always, throughout, the image of a private man in a world full of strangers" (CP 30). Examining friendship in *Salesman* inevitably leads one to question why Willy Loman personally fails in friendship. Miller's comments suggest that Willy's closest friends and family are truly "strangers." Leaving the issue of Willy's failure to adapt to a rapidly changing society aside, why does Willy fail to connect as a friend with Linda, Ben, Charley, Hap, or perhaps most importantly, Biff?

Toward those that are closest to him, Willy vacillates between worship and condemnation, two extremes which tend to inhibit rather than nurture friendship. Ben and Biff are worshipped, Charley and Hap most often condemned, while Linda is both praised and vilified. Willy places Ben on a pedestal from his first mention of him, as the man who knew "the answers" (155) throughout the play. Biff is the "young god" (171), the "magnificent star" (171) with the promise to be all that Willy has not been. Willy not only worships Biff, he wants Biff to reciprocate

with the same emotion. The play indicates that Biff did worship Willy before the betrayal in Boston, and Willy hopes that his insurance money will restore Biff's adoration: "Ben, he'll worship me for it!" (219). Charley is alternately called "disgusting" (154), "not a man" (154), and a "big ignoramus" (192), while Hap's pretentious promises of "retiring" Willy are obviously hollow to his father, "You'll retire me for life on seventy goddam dollars a week? And your women and your car and your apartment, and you'll retire me for life!" (152). Linda is told that she is "the best there is" (149), then summarily dismissed with "stop interrupting!" (168). In all of these relationships, Willy is trapped by the conflicting tendencies of worship and condemnation. Friendship, which exists somewhere between worship and condemnation, demands more than either.

Linda, Willy's "foundation and support" (135), is, unfortunately, not his friend. Critics have alternately blamed Willy and Linda for the collapse of their relationship and lives. Beverly Hume argues that Linda "absorbs Willy's success dream, an absorption that proves malignant, fatal" (14). From this perspective, Linda fails Willy as a friend because she is driven by a destructive "materialistic attitude" (14). Guerin Bliquez joins many who see Linda as the classic "enabler," who allows Willy to self-destruct without intervening for fear that she will disrupt their comfortable existence. Bliquez argues that Linda plays a central role in "her husband's pathetic downfall," adding that "Linda's facility for prodding Willy to his doom is what gives the play its direction" (383). Bliquez argues that Linda's failing is that she acquiesces morally to her husband's serious faults (384), and that she, like Willy, is "guilty of self-blindness and the refusal to know and accept" (386). The text refutes most of Bliquez's remarks. Linda, perhaps more than any other



character, understands Willy's moral flaws, but as Miller writes in the opening pages of the drama, Linda has repressed her "exceptions to Willy's behavior" because she "more than loves him" (131). She alone recognizes the seriousness of his suicidal desperation, and is "careful" and "delicate" with Willy throughout his most vulnerable times. Even Willy admits to Ben that "the woman has suffered" (212), which argues against Linda as "blind" or "refusing to know." Bliquez clearly misunderstands the play when he writes that Linda and Willy "never disagree," and that "all outward appearances demonstrate an intimate relationship and secure marriage" (383). Even the most superficial reading of the play reveals Willy's hostility toward his wife, and their "intimacy" is clear only to those that trust in "outward appearance."

Jeffrey Mason comments that "Linda's presence both obligates Willy and inhibits him. Ben is Willy's dream, but her nightmare; the diamonds would satisfy both of them, but Willy cannot risk the stability of his home to pursue the quest" (107). Gordon seems to agree with Mason's assessment, but goes on to express the duality of Linda's character when she writes that:

Linda, as the eternal wife and mother, is the fixed point of affection both given and received, the woman who suffers and endures, is, in many ways, the earth mother who embodies the play's ultimate moral value--love. But in the beautiful, ironic complexity of her creation, she is also Willy's and their sons' destroyer. In her love Linda has accepted Willy's greatness and his dream, but while in her admiration for Willy her love is powerful and moving, in her admiration

for his dreams, it is lethal. She encourages Willy's dream, yet she will not let him leave her for the New Continent, the only realm where the dream can be fulfilled. (280)

Gordon is referring to the passage in Act II where Ben offers Willy a job as an overseer of his "timberland in Alaska," and Linda seems to squelch Willy's "one opportunity" with "He's got a beautiful job here" (183). Linda is "frightened of Ben and angry at him" as she argues that Willy is "building something," and "must be on the right track" (184). The scene may imply that Linda is being selfish in not approving the plan, though it might just as easily suggest that she is being prudent in not trusting the words of a man who has already displayed some "frightening" tendencies toward her family. Perhaps Ben, true to the Loman tradition, is simply inflating his wealth and power, and that his invitation is as hollow as Willy's sales figures. If Ben is as wealthy as Willy and he suggest, then wouldn't he help Willy financially, even with his "seven sons"?

Kay Stanton, in one of the most complete essays on Linda's role in the play, argues that Linda's love is never "lethal." Instead, she provides Willy with a caring example of friendship, but is denied inclusion into his male-oriented world which "requires unacknowledged dependence upon women as well as women's subjugation and exploitation" (67). While the Loman men are "less than they hold themselves to be, Linda is more than she is credited to be" (75). While Linda holds the "facade of the family together," she is rudely interrupted and silenced by Willy, despite the fact that she "embodies the ideal of the model post-World War II wife, infinitely supportive of her man" (75). In many ways, Linda seeks to build the foundation that would make friendship possible in the Loman

home. She forces the boys to see the truth about Willy's destructive behavior, as well as realizing their own limitations as "ungrateful bastards" (163). Though Linda does encourage the boys to "talk hopefully" (169) to Willy, which may perpetuate the ruinous exaggeration in the home, her determined assault on her sons when they return from the Chop House leads to Biff's revelation and reconciliation with Willy. Linda calls them "a pair of animals! Not one living soul would have the cruelty to walk out on that man in a restaurant!" When she calls Biff a "louse," Biff responds with "Now you hit it on the nose!" (211), as he hurls the flowers he intended to give his mother to ease his failure and demands to see Willy in what leads to their final confrontation.

Linda emerges as the character in the play that accepts Willy most as a friend. Miller writes that she "more than loves him" (131), and she is the first and perhaps the only character to believe that "attention must be paid" to Willy despite the fact that he is "not the finest character that ever lived" (162). No other phrase in the drama expresses the heart of friendship more clearly. Commenting on this passage, Stanton writes that, "Linda thus articulates his value and notes the real worth beneath the sham presentation" (77). Linda, who knows "every thought in his mind" (165), is able to accept and love Willy with all of his flaws--as a committed wife and friend. Robert Garland writes that Linda is "the most poignant figure" (24) in the play. Garland concludes that Linda, "of all the Lomans, sees the salesman as he is. And loves him!" (24) She is most aware of his tenuous existence, and is even aware that he is on the verge of suicide near the end of the play, as she coaxes him to "come right up" to bed (218) in hopes she can dissuade Willy.

Linda's comments at Willy's grave are difficult to justify within the context of her friendship with Willy. The emphasis in the play's closing speech is on Linda's inability to understand Willy's motive for suicide. The person in the play that understood him best, knew his idiosyncrasies and the seriousness of his suicidal nature, now faces the audience alone and says, "I search and I search and I search and I can't understand it, Willy" (222). William B. Dillingham argues that the speech illustrates Linda's lack of understanding throughout:

Linda believed in the illusion of her husband as the successful salesman perhaps more than Willy himself did. And instead of encouraging him to be himself--to be a carpenter or a plumber or a bricklayer--and to identify himself with real and fundamental values, she urges him to remain as he is, 'alone, without the sense of having touched,' in the name of security. Linda's emphasis on material security and her failure in understanding are reflected in her final speech at Willy's graveside. (44)

Stanton counters that "two notes" alternate in Linda's speech--that she cannot cry and she cannot understand it. Stanton concludes that:

What Linda cannot yet sort out, perhaps, is that she could not cry for Willy because of her unconscious sense of his oppression of her and her sons. She will no longer have to bend under the burden of the masculine ego. Biff is free of

the patriarch now, and so is she: free and crying in the emotional intensity that her freedom releases. (95)

Dillingham and Stanton's arguments are interesting, but limited.

Dillingham states that Linda "believed in the illusion" of Willy's successful salesmanship, while the play indicates otherwise. It is Linda that illuminates Biff and Happy to the truth about Willy's failure--financial and otherwise--with no indication that she is deluded in the least. While, as Stanton suggests, Linda may have an "unconscious sense" of Willy's oppression, she tells Biff in Act I not to come to visit just to see her, because she loves Willy: "He's the dearest man in the world to me, and I won't have anyone making him feel unwanted" (162). Linda may be sublimating her sense of oppression here, but the play seems to verify the sincerity of her love.

Linda's remarks at the end of the play do reflect an emphasis on materialism, which is consistent with the play's subject matter throughout. But instead of suggesting that she has bought into an illusion about the system that pushed Willy to his death, Linda is suggesting that she and Willy would now be free from the oppression of the materialistic society that made Willy feel "unwanted." When Linda cries out "We're free" (222) at the end of the play, she understands the cruel irony that at this moment, when she and her husband might finally break free of the constraints of a society that devalued friendship and converted a human being into a commodity, she speaks only to Willy's grave. Now that their major financial goal of paying off their house has been achieved, Linda might be free to convince Willy of the one things

she already knew --the knowledge of a friend--that his worth went well beyond what he could sell.

Willy's failure to be his brother's friend is easy enough to explain. Fundamentally, Ben is never realized as a three-dimensional character. Sister M. Bettina calls him an important minor character, "a projection of his brother's [Willy's] personality rather than an individual human force" (412). Ben remains unrealized because he fails to extend himself to Willy as a human being; instead, when Willy most needs guidance and compassion, Ben only offers his pat, empty responses like, "when I walked into the jungle, I was seventeen. When I walked out I was twenty-one. And, by God, I was rich!" (159-60). Time is a necessary component in nurturing friendship, and Ben never has time for Willy. In every scene in which he appears, Ben stresses the fact that he hasn't much time for his younger brother, despite Willy's frantic pleas for him to stay. Ben is successful financially, but never expresses compassion, understanding or vulnerability, all necessary ingredients to friendship.

When Willy is on the verge of suicide, he turns to "the first person" that comes to mind when he is in a state of "personal distress" (Bettina 410), brother Ben. When Willy earlier asked Ben to stay in hopes that his brother could assuage his feelings of impermanence, Ben's disappears. As always, Ben can offer no wisdom, no "answers," no hope for his desperate brother. Instead, "the force which he [Ben] symbolizes draws Willy to suicide" (Bettina 410). Indeed, Ben's image drives Willy to his death in his final moments. Willy has never joined Ben in his exotic "adventures," but now prepares to join him in death. Yet, as Willy's tenuous life hangs in the balance, he cries out to his brother for help, and Ben is silent once again: "*Suddenly realizing he is alone: Ben! Ben,*

where do I...? *He makes a sudden movement of search.* Ben, how do I...?" (219). When Willy is most alone, moments from his suicide, most in need of a friend, Ben cannot respond. Willy has always struggled in the shadow of his brother's image, as Hap has in Biff's, but Ben has been unable to give his brother what he needs most: not diamonds or wealth, but love and friendship. Ben--the person potentially most able to reach Willy through friendship--fails, and this breakdown symbolizes the overall failure of friendship in Willy's life.

Charley, ostensibly Willy's closest friend, is perhaps the most enigmatic character in *Salesman*. Charley plays cards with Willy, gives him money regularly, offers him a job, and is the only member outside the family to attend Willy's funeral. In Act II, though, Charley says, "I know you don't like me, and nobody can say I'm in love with you" (192). Interpretations of Charley's character run the gamut of critical opinion. S.K. Bhatia sees Charley as a ruthless capitalist who manipulates Willy's friendship by lending him money, and demeans him by continually offering him a job when he already has one (121). D.L. Hoeveler calls Charley "a sort of double for Ben, [he] embodies the domestication of capitalism within the city" (51). Hadomi writes that Charley is "stolid, but honest and decent" (161). Parker asserts that Charley is "kindly, unpretentious, sensitive and helpful" (41). Edward Murray simply calls Charley "mature" (40), while most see him as Miller does, a kindly neighbor and Willy's only friend: "The most decent man in *Death of a Salesman* is a capitalist (Charley) whose aims are not different from Willy Loman's" (CP 37). Gordon embellishes Miller's comments with:

His [Charley's] loyalty to Willy has a sincere, saintly quality. Though he gets furious at Willy, calls him stupid, proud, and childish, he remains faithful to a man for whom he has affection. Despite his material success, which undoubtedly pleases him, he has never been corrupted by the myth of success, nor has he ever lost the sense of human relatedness. (277-78)

Charley does put up with Willy's cheating at cards and even his insults, but he is not engaged as a friend. Ruby Cohn writes:

While Willy tries to win friends and influence people, Charley insists that money talks; each of them voices a different aspect of the success dream. Willy is sufficiently sure of his dream to reject Charley--advice and money. But at the same time he is so insecure in his dream that he carries on a lifelong debate with his brother Ben. Both Ben and Charley--a small businessman and a ruthless adventurer--are foils for Willy. (112)

Charley may be a foil, but not a friend. Gross writes that Charley "seems so insensitive throughout to Willy's problems" (408). Charley seems unaware of Willy's suicidal tendencies until late in Act II, when his advice is friendly enough, "Willy, nobody's worth nothin' dead. *After a slight pause:* Did you hear what I said?" (192). It is clear that Willy has not heard, and if Charley is truly alarmed, we don't know it. C.W.E. Bigsby notes that:



The system [capitalism] of which he [Charley] is the most admirable representative can clearly accommodate itself to individual acts of charity provided that these don't threaten its structure. The fact is that Charley underwrites the system that destroys Willy (49).

Friendship threatens the system that destroys Willy; Charley does not.

When Charley says that his "salvation is that [he] never took any interest in anything," he may not be exaggerating. Sheila Huftel writes:

For Miller, the man who can remain passive, who can settle for half, is a flawed character, and the tragic flaw is no fault. Oedipus has no 'fault,' Creon has. The blemished character in *Death of a Salesman* is not Willy; it is Charley. In Miller the fault is compromise. (114)

Huftel seems to suggest that Creon's fault was his passivity related to avenging Laius' murder, but Oedipus is an active hero who must know (114).

Perhaps the most telling episode between Charley and Willy is during their card game in Act I where Charley advises Willy about Biff: "He won't starve. None a them starve. Forget about him. Willy, in poignant simplicity, says, "Then what have I got to remember?" (154). Charley has clearly lost his sense of the relatedness of human beings, despite Gordon's comments to the contrary--at least the relationship between this father and son. The most casual reader realizes that Willy

can't just forget Biff, as Charley says he has been able to do with Bernard. A friend would never go on to compare Biff, as Charley does; to a "broken deposit bottle" (154), instead they would encourage Willy to reconcile his relationship with Biff. Bigsby maintains that "Charley and Bernard are successful and humane, but they, too, live a life whose intimacies seem lacking. Where is the love between them?" (51).

Charley's never-took-an-interest attitude extends to Willy far enough for him to realize that he can never call Charley his friend. When Willy does say, "Charley, you're the only friend I got. Isn't that a remarkable thing," he is "on the verge of tears" (193). Willy has described the pathetic irony that his only friend is not his friend, only a man who has given up on the things that Willy will take to his grave.

Willy's competitive nature also excludes Charley as his friend. Willy sees Bernard and Biff as competing, saying that after his death and insurance payoff, Biff will "be ahead of Bernard again" (219). Charley says to Willy, "You been jealous of me all your life" (192), as he is amazed that Willy continues to refuse to work for Charley. While pride and jealousy influence Willy's decision, there seem to be other factors at work as well. Charley has just told Willy that "The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell" (192). Charley is confirming the lie that Willy is fighting: that man is a commodity. These words are as inimical to friendship as any in the play, as they embody "law of success" (CP 36) which Willy struggles to overcome. This philosophy stands in opposition to Singleman's world of remembrance and love, which has always been Willy's ideal. Willy cannot work for a man that espouses the same ideas that have led to his suicidal state. In so many words, this is precisely what Howard told him earlier in the day, these are the words that lead

Willy to "sell" the only thing he has left--his insurance policy. Instead of leading Willy from suicide as a friend, Charley has accepted the materialistic outlook of Howard and Ben, which drives Willy to his death.

Charley confirms that his view of Willy is impersonal at the funeral. In his renowned speech which begins "Nobody dast blame this man," Charley goes on to identify his image of Willy as salesman:

You don't understand: Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back--that's an earthquake....A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory. (221-2)

It's Charley who lacks understanding, not Biff. He has reduced a human being, however imperfect, to a job description--salesman. Willy was not a salesman, he *worked* as a salesman. Biff contradicts Charley's assessment with, "Charley, there's more of him in that front stoop than in all the sales he ever made" (221), but Charley isn't listening. Willy is "wonderful with his hands" (221), knows tools and flowers and carrots, but this part of his personality is crushed by the

thundering command to succeed as it ricocheted down the newspaper-lined canyons of his city, heard not a human voice, but a wind of a voice to which no human can reply in

kind, except to stare into the mirror at a failure. ("Birthday"  
3)

There was no "rock bottom" in Willy's life because people like Charley were equating him with his failed vocation, instead of offering him love and friendship which could have given him the stability he desperately sought. A salesman "don't put a bolt to a nut," but Willy certainly did, a fact that Charley should remember from Willy's indictment, "a man who can't handle tools is not a man" (154). If Willy could have returned to smiles and kindness and acceptance, those blank faces on the road would not have been the "earthquakes" they came to be for Willy. Willy had to dream because the Charleys of his world supported his belief that his reality had to be exaggerated to be worthwhile.

Willy fights against passing his father's "legacy of coldness" on to his sons, but is only partially successful. He has not physically deserted his sons, but spiritually and emotionally, both Biff and Hap are abandoned. Obsessed with "teaching them right" (159), Willy is unable to teach his sons anything moral. Instead, they learn how not to trust or admit the truth about themselves. On *Salesman's* first Anniversary, Miller wrote "We want to give of ourselves, and yet all we train for is to take" ("Birthday" 3), which aptly describes Willy's relationship with his sons. He genuinely wants to "give" to them, and does, but he "trains them to take," without understanding the consequences.

Hap learns that his father thanks "almighty God" that Hap is built like an "Adonis" (146), which results in Hap constantly looking for his father's approval of his appearance with his pathetic, "I'm losing weight, you notice, Pop?" (144). Willy doesn't notice Hap's weight loss, or relate

to Hap in a personal way. Hap grows up in Biff's shadow, very much like Willy seems to have been eclipsed by Ben.

Hap has also adopted many of his father's bad habits, like Willy's propensity for "inflating" the truth about his position in the company-- Hap is only an "assistant to the assistant buyer," not the assistant buyer he tells Biff he is. Hap also reflects his father's infidelity as his "overdeveloped sense of competition or something" leads him to sleep with executives' girlfriends, and then go to their weddings (144). Gayle Austin writes that Hap's "whoring may be an unconscious patterning after his father, which he can still do because he was not scarred" as Biff was by the "Boston hotel room scene" (62). Hap is full of empty promises about retiring Willy "for life" (152), which echo Willy's lies about how much he earned in sales on the road. Hap's weaknesses reveal that, like his father, he is a terribly insecure man who hides behind a smoke screen of denial and invention. Dennis Welland observes that:

Happy Loman has lost all the conscientious scruples of David [Beeves, the protagonist of Miller's early play *The Man Who Had All the Luck*] and Chris [Keller] to become as demoralised as his brother but in a more cynical way. Happy accepts his father's standards without fighting them. (24)

Hap's remarks at Willy's funeral confirm how deeply Hap has "accepted his father's standards"; he's gone so far as to embrace Willy's dreams: "Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have--to come out number-one man" (222). Hap

never realized that "to come out number-one man" was only part of this father's dream. Because Willy neglected Hap and reserved his love for Biff, Hap never knew that love was part of his father's dream as well. Ironically, Hap is the only member of the family that is "deeply angered" at the funeral, remarking that there was "no necessity" for Willy's suicide, because "we would've helped him" (221). Hap was constantly promising to help his father during his life, and he now repeats his hollow pledge in death. When Hap realized that his father's mental state is disintegrating, he is "so embarrassed" by it that he sends Willy to Florida (138), instead of helping his father as a committed son or friend. Hap, like many others in the play, never realized that the help Willy needed could come through the acceptance of friendship.

Hap is truly his father's son, and the "legacy of coldness" that Packard described has been fulfilled in Hap, who betrays his delusional father in the "Chop House" with, "No, that's not my father. He's just a guy" (205). As insensitive as Hap's comment may be, he is uttering a truth, Willy has not truly been a father to Hap, and in this scene we see how an abandoned son betrays his abandoned father.

Willy's failure to be a friend to his son Biff may be the most difficult failure to explain. Although friendship is modified somewhat between a father and son, it is the matrix of any filial relationship. Aristotle writes "Undoubtedly parents love their children as themselves, for their offspring are, as it were, the parents themselves existing separately" (VIII. L.XII:C 1711). Aquinas, commenting on this passage, writes "the son is a separated part of the father, so to speak. Consequently this friendship is nearest to the love of a man for himself, from which all friendship is derived" (765). Miller writes that "the roots of *Death of a Salesman* were

sprouted" when a "simple shift in relationships came to mind," and the father-son relationship between Biff and Willy was initiated (CP 14-15). Friendship, then, becomes the basis of their relationship, and its failure is at the heart of the breakdown between these two men.

We can see the weakness in Willy and Biff's friendship early on. When Biff steals lumber from the work site next door, or footballs from school, Willy fails to confront his son and deal with his problem as a friend and father. Similarly, when Biff has trouble with math, which jeopardizes his graduation, Willy once again evades meeting the dilemma directly, and instead instructs Bernard to "give him the answers" (151). Ellen Douglass Leyburn writes that "The lack of integrity which has made him [Willy] teach Biff to steal seems to be the result of inability to distinguish truth from falsehood rather than of deliberate dishonesty" (557). The play reveals otherwise. Willy doesn't "teach" Biff to steal, he alternately laughs about it, "*laughs with him [Biff] at the theft*: I want you to return that" (144), justifies it, "Sure, he's gotta practice with a regulation ball, doesn't he?" (144), or condemns Biff for it, "I'll whip him!...Where is he? Why is he taking everything?" (151). It is not that Willy has no moral sense, it is simply incoherent.

B.S. Field Jr. suggests that as a result of Willy's failure as an example, Biff and Happy are morally and socially "impotent":

Willy himself has no basis for making moral choices. It is not so much that he chooses or has chosen evil, but that he has no idea how to choose at all. Everyone, himself included, is constantly contradicting him. He lives in a morally incoherent universe, an incoherence that is the most

striking element of the play which describes his torment.

(23)

Field goes on to argue Biff has the makings of an "amoral punk" (20), and that Willy has made "moral eunuchs" (24) of his sons, and deserves to be forgotten and abandoned by them. As for Biff, he has his problems, but is not a "moral eunuch." Such a person would undoubtedly be incapable of Biff's revelation in Act II, which includes "teaching" his father a moral lesson about forgiveness and reconciliation. While it is true that Willy has been unable to provide moral instruction for his sons, Willy has been victimized by his society as well. No one can provide him with "the answers," much less show him friendship or love. If his father and older brother abandon him physically and morally, it should not be such a "striking element" to find that he passes this tradition of amorality on to his sons. In Willy's defense, he does have a moral conscience toward his family, however misguided. He is concerned about bringing up his sons right, though "right" is never defined for Willy, nor can he define it for his sons. As Miller says in an interview with Philip Gelb, "the bulk of literature, not only on the stage but elsewhere, is an exposition of man's failure: his failure to assert his sense of civilized and moral life" (198). If Willy has no moral sense, this failure in him cannot be exposed. In the same interview, Miller claims that his drama is "an exposition of the want of value":

In other words, when for instance, in *Death of a Salesman* we are shown a man who dies for the want of some positive, viable human value, the play implies, and it could not have



been written without the author's consciousness, that the audience did believe something different. In other words, by showing what happens when there are no values, I, at least, assume that the audience will be compelled and propelled toward a more intense quest for values that are missing.  
(190)

*Death of a Salesman* suggests that friendship, clearly a "positive, viable human value" is missing in society, and that without it and other transcendent values, the basis for the survival of morality and civility is lost.

When Biff "flunks math" and goes to Boston to tell his father, he is responding as a son and friend, one who wants to share fully not only his triumphs, but his adversity as well. When Willy is revealed as something less than the perfect man that Biff thought him to be, Willy's consistent pattern of "covering up" dominates his response to his son. Instead of risking vulnerability as a friend, sharing with his son that he is not perfect, but loves him enough to tell him the truth, he makes a bad situation much worse with his constant evasion. By avoiding the truth, Willy not only tells Biff that he is unfaithful and not the man his son thought, but he also tells him that he is either too young or not close enough as a friend to share the truth with him. Miller presents a role-reversal here, which he will replicate at the end of the play: Biff is mature enough at eighteen to share his failure with his father, and be willing to deal with the consequences, while his father, who should be providing Biff with an example of responsibility, can only run from the situation like a frightened boy.

This scene is most critical to Biff and Willy's friendship, because they come close to communicating as friends, but cannot. They will not share their emotions in the same way for another eighteen years, when Biff will show his father the way to friendship, and Willy pathetically tries to follow his son's lead. In the hotel room in Boston, Willy avoids dealing with his infidelity by "assuming command" of the situation with, "Now stop crying and do as I say. I gave you an order. Biff, I gave you an order! Is that what you do when I give you an order?" (208). Biff cannot follow his father's "order," and begins to "weep":

BIFF, *his weeping breaking from him*: Dad...

WILLY, *infected by it*: Oh, my boy...

BIFF: Dad...

WILLY: She's nothing to me, Biff. I was lonely, I was terribly lonely. (208)

Biff and Willy will not come closer to establishing a friendship between them until Biff returns at age thirty-four. Biff is able to share his sadness over his father's weakness, and Willy is "infected" by his son's emotion enough to perhaps treat Biff as his friend. Instead, Willy returns to his earlier theme with, "I gave you an order! Biff, come back here or I'll beat you!" (208). Similarly, Biff had earlier "ordered" his "friends" before his big game with, "Fellas! Everybody sweep out the furnace room!" (147). Linda is amazed by "the way they obey him!" (147), though it is clear that Biff is no more a friend to "George and Sam and Frank" (147) than Willy is to Biff when he gives him "an order." Willy has an opportunity in Boston to prove to Biff that his love for him extends

beyond the football field, and that love is bigger than either of their failures. Willy's failure here prevents his son from seeing him as a potential friend. Biff believed that with his father's help, he could overcome his failure as a student. Willy fails to recognize that with Biff's help, through their friendship, he might resolve his infidelity as a husband and father.

When Biff grows up, he bounces around from one job to another, and Packard's warning that we are "breeding a legacy of coldness" in our children may apply here to Biff. The play reveals not only Willy's isolation, but Biff's as well. If Biff has made a friend in the last sixteen years, he does not mention it, and when he does describe his life to Linda, it is a solitary existence. Neither man wants to face the truth about Boston--or their lives as failures. Instead, they spend the entire first act setting up elaborate schemes that mask the reality of their empty lives. Following his failure with Oliver, Biff is determined to face the truth and share it with his father, although Willy was unable to do the same in Boston. But the typical Loman pattern wins out, and Biff cannot tell his father the truth. In the Chop House Biff is able to call his dad "A fine, troubled prince. A hardworking, unappreciated prince. A pal, you understand? A good companion" (204), but the word "friend" is conspicuously absent in Biff's description. Biff uses his father's substitute for friend, "Now listen, pal, she's just a buyer" (208), which Willy used in the hotel room in Boston. Just as Willy failed Biff as a friend in Boston, Biff returns the favor: he leaves his father babbling in the rest room when Willy is most in need of a friend's understanding and help.

In their final scene together, the friendship between Biff and Willy is put to the test. Biff tries to tell Willy the truth about his appointment with Oliver, but Willy refuses to hear that his son, his "Adonis," is a failure, a thief. Biff can't explain his realization to this father, so he asks Willy to "shake hands" as a symbol of reconciliation. Willy won't cooperate; he wants Biff to admit that he is responsible for his failure, "you cut down your life for spite" (215). Willy "won't take the rap" for Biff's demise, and Biff answers his challenge with "All right phony! Then let's lay it on the line," as he takes out the rubber tube that Willy has reserved for his suicide (215). At this moment in the play, both men are pushed to identify the truth about themselves. In a house where the truth was "never told for ten minutes," Biff declares to his father, "you're going to hear the truth--what you are and what I am!" (216). Willy's infidelity, the crisis of the past, and Willy's suicide, the crisis of the present, join to force both men to face reality. One remembers that Matthew Arnold wrote:

Below the surface-stream, shallow and light,  
Of what we *say* we feel--below the stream,  
As light, of what we *think* we feel--there flows  
With noiseless current strong, obscure and deep  
The central stream of what we feel indeed. (483)

In this scene, both Biff and Willy are compelled to reveal the "central stream" of their lives.

For Biff, his father "blew [him] so full of hot air" (216) that he could not face the truth about himself: was he the the football hero his father

saw him as, or just an average young man who has problems with math, girls and honesty. Biff finally recognizes his own truth when he tells Willy that, "I'm not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you." At the "peak of his fury," Biff announces:

Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more. I'm just what I am, that's all. *Biff's fury has spent itself, and he breaks down, sobbing, holding on to Willy, who dumbly fumbles for Biff's face.* (216)

Biff cries to his father for the first time since the hotel room in Boston, and as in Boston, these two men have the opportunity to respond to one another as friends. Though Willy was unable to connect with his son through friendship eighteen years earlier, Biff now provides his father with an example of active friendship: the willingness of a friend to reveal his or her most painful realities with another, to "break down," and "hold on," not in shameful weakness, but in the strength of friendship. Unlike Chris Keller, who could not be a friend to his father, but accused and condemned him instead, Biff forgives and encourages his father without malice. Chris couldn't relinquish his "phony idealism" long enough to see his father's pain and humanity. Instead of forgiving as a friend, Chris punished Joe as his judge. Biff has judged his father a phony and a liar for years, but has now destroyed Willy's "phony dream," which allows Biff to accept his father as a friend. Biff has realized that Willy's false ideal wasn't just related to financial success, it also distorted Biff's image of himself, which he must face before he can extend himself as a

friend to anyone, even Willy. Now that Biff has seen and articulated the truth in himself, something we are never sure that Chris Keller does, he can accept his father's weaknesses through love.

Willy is challenged to match Biff's words and actions; to see the truth about himself, and respond in friendship to his son. Most critics agree with Gerald Weales' assessment that recognition never truly occurs in Willy because:

The distance between the actual Willy and the Willy as image is so great when the play opens that he can no longer lie to himself with conviction; what the play gives us is the final disintegration of a man who has not even approached his idea of what by rights he ought to have been....The play shows quite clearly that from the beginning of his career Willy has lied about the size of his sales, the warmth of his reception, the number of his friends. (9)

Countering Weales' contention that to Willy, "fact and fiction are one" (9), are Willy's moments of revelation in the play. We see a glimpse of Willy's honesty as the play opens, when Linda tries to blame "the Studebaker" for Willy's driving problems, but Willy admits, "No, it's me, it's me. Suddenly I realize that I'm goin' sixty miles an hour and I don't remember the last five minutes" (132). Later, he tells his wife "the trouble is, Linda, people don't seem to take to me." Linda, as always, tries to dissuade Willy, but he knows the truth: "They [the buyers] seem to laugh at me...I don't know the reason for it, but they just pass me by. I'm not noticed" (148-9). Weales admits that, "It is true that he

occasionally doubts himself, assumes that he is too noisy and undignified, that he is not handsome enough, but he usually rationalizes his failure" (9). Weales does not refer to Willy's most serious doubts, which are not about his weight or sense of humor. To be "unnoticed," simply "passed by" is what leads Willy to despair, and the despair of suicide cannot be termed a "rationalization." If Willy was able to rationalize his sense of worthlessness, he would not be buying rubber pipes and running his car off the road. It is because he is all too aware of his failure that his life becomes a rationalization--and his death the embodiment of his knowledge that he is worthless.

Weales sees Willy's final action as the last in a series of self-delusions:

When Biff tries to give him peace by making him realize, and accept the realization, that he is a failure and a mediocrity and see that it makes no difference, Willy hears only what he wants to hear. He takes Biff's tears not only as an evidence of love, which they are, but as a kind of testimonial, an assurance that Willy's way has been the right one all along. Once again secure in his dream ('that boy is going to be magnificent'), he goes to his suicide's death, convinced that, with the insurance money, Biff will be--to use Willy's favorite nouns--a hero, a prince. (9)

Though Weales' appraisal is shared by many critics, the play may suggest that Willy tries desperately to match both Biff's recognition of self and expression of love.

The first awareness that Willy comes to is that Biff loves him. "He cried! Cried to me. *He is choking with his love, and now cries out his promise: That boy--that boy is going to be magnificent*" (218). Love was what Dave Singleman could "pick up the phone and get"; it was love that drew Willy to Singleman and not his brother Ben. Biff's love is here equated with Singleman's; Biff's love is what makes Biff magnificent now and always. Love is what made Singleman magnificent; love is what Willy Loman, this abandoned, lonely child has seen as magnificent all along, not just money, gold, or diamonds, but love. It is Ben's image which comments that Biff will be magnificent "with twenty thousand behind him" (218), not Willy--Biff is magnificent because he is able to share his vulnerability and love his father despite Willy's faults. Willy, at the end of Act I, said about Biff, "God Almighty, he'll be great yet. A star like that, magnificent, can never really fade away!" (171). Willy spoke these words with the deluded hope that Biff would convince Oliver to back him in his sporting goods venture. At the end of the play, Willy is able to say that Biff is going to be magnificent despite the fact that he knows that Biff doesn't have an appointment, that he is a dime a dozen, that he has stolen and lied. But Biff's magnificence, like Singleman's, is linked to love, the system that Miller described earlier as opposing the system of success. The Biff at the end of the play is not a star, he's "a dime a dozen," with no appointments. Willy ordered his son not to cry in Boston; now he sees Biff's tears as the evidence of Biff's love, not weakness.

Willy wants to match Biff's act of love and friendship with one of his own, but what has he to offer his son? Although Willy does not verbally describe the process in the play, it is plausible that he first



considers all his options, and then realizes that he has nothing more to give. If we agree with Gordon's assessment, that "The entire play is a recognition scene" (276), Willy's final recognition may be that all he has left to give his son, to match Biff's "gift" of love, is his insurance money. Willy's frame of mind before his suicide is confused to say the least, as "*sounds, faces, voices, seem to be swarming in upon him*, as he cries out for silence (219). Willy cannot give Biff moral instruction, for he has never received any. He cannot offer his son real friendship, because as C.S. Lewis writes: "Pathetic people who simply 'want friends' can never have any....Those who have nothing can share nothing; those who are going nowhere can have no fellow-travellers" (98). Willy Loman, a desperate, empty man, can only offer what he has left--his insurance money. Willy's society has already told him that "the only thing you got in this world is what you can sell" (192), so his decision to give Biff money as his expression of love is perfectly logical. Willy has always confused the material with the spiritual, and here, in a misguided attempt to express love to his son, he chooses death and money over his failed life. Bigsby notes that, "Love, which Miller has said was in a race for Willy's soul, becomes the very mechanism that pulls him towards his death" (49). Furthermore, Willy's suicide is a confirmation that he is nothing, just as his son said. If he were someone, some thing, perhaps he could live on to share his worth with his son. As Willy says to Ben as he "goes through the ins and outs" (212) of his suicide plan, "Does it take more guts to stand here the rest of my life ringing up a zero?" (212). Miller calls Willy's suicide "a flight from emptiness" (CP 30); ironically, Willy turns to suicide as way to "get back to all the great times" that were "full of light, and comradeship" (213). Willy, untouched by

friendship in life perhaps hopes to regain it by joining his brother Ben in death.

Willy's suicide is his pathetic attempt to show love and friendship to his treasured son. Now knowing that Biff has love, as Dave Singleman had, Willy gives him the only other necessary ingredient for his twisted vision of success--money. Willy has now done as Biff asked; he has "burned" his "phony dream" (217) about Biff, and replaced it with a "realistic" goal--to give his "magnificent" son and friend twenty thousand dollars as a love-token. For Willy, the insurance money is the equivalent of Biff's declaration of love. Willy's suicide is not the perpetuation of a doomed dream; it is the realization that cash, tangible cash, is the only thing he can give to his son, Biff. This is not an appointment, it is not a phony dream, it is Willy's latest dream, realized through the sacrifice of a life that has already been declared worthless. Love and money have always been rivals in Willy's life; his suicide embodies his lifelong conflict between the "opposing forces" embodied in Dave Singleman and Ben, forces that mingled too often, depriving Willy of any real love or friendship.

In *All My Sons*, friendship fails between Chris and Joe Keller, despite the fact that Chris has witnessed a standard of friendship in the selfless actions of his men. In *Death of a Salesman*, no such standard for friendship exists, yet Biff is able to confront the truth about himself and his father, and respond to Willy as a friend. When Chris realizes the truth about his father, that he is "no worse than most men" (CP 125), he cannot accept it because he thought his dad was better: "I never saw you as a man. I saw you as my father. *Almost breaking*: I can't look at you this way, I can't look at myself" (125). Because Biff *can* look at Willy and

see himself, he can treat him as a friend. Biff, like Chris, once rejected his father as a failure, in the Boston hotel room. Years have taught Biff that he is, like his father, a lost man. Biff accepts his father's weaknesses as an equal, which allows him to be his friend. Chris seems to acknowledge that he sees himself in his father's failure, but his inability fully to admit his own shortcomings keeps him in a moral position above his father--and in that lofty place he can never reach his father as a friend. Miller describes Willy's final realization as "knowing in his last extremity that the love which had always been in the room unlocated was now found" (CP 30).

In both of these early successes, friendship touches the lives of the main characters, but fails to prevent their destruction. Despite the failure of friendship in these plays, there is an implicit hope that friendship may succeed in penetrating the pervasive loneliness of these dramas. Miller seemed to echo this hope in his essay commemorating *Salesman's* first anniversary:

So what is there to feel on this anniversary? Hope, for I know now that the people want to listen. A little fear that they want to listen so badly. And an old insistence--sometimes difficult to summon, but there none the less--that we will find a way beyond fear of each other, beyond bellicosity, a way into our humanity. ("Birthday" 3)

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Notes to Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup> For a summary of the various positions, see Helene Wickham Koon, "Introduction" to *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Death of a Salesman*, ed. Helene Wickham Koon (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983): 1-14.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **After the Fall: Friendship in Miller's Most Controversial Drama**

Playwriting has never been easy for Miller, but after *Death of a Salesman*, he enjoyed the most prolific time of his career, writing four plays in five years. The four plays, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Crucible*, *A Memory of Two Mondays* and *A View From the Bridge*, all deal with friendship in varying degrees, leading up to *After The Fall*, which centers on friendship more than any Miller play.

*A Memory of Two Mondays*, was Miller's retrospective of his work in an auto parts factory, where the men interacted side by side for years, but never engaged in a meaningful friendship. *An Enemy of the People* and *The Crucible* seem to focus on isolation rather than friendship, as one man opposes a community that has been destroyed as a result of the absence of friendship.

The only friendship that stands out in these two plays is that which develops between John and Elizabeth Proctor in *The Crucible*. While the couple has been emotionally separated since John's indiscretion with Abigail, in their final scene together, under the penalty of death, their friendship is revealed. Elizabeth, like Biff from *Salesman*, is able to forgive in friendship, which releases John from her condemnation, just as Biff frees Willy from his spite. She will not decide for her husband what he should do as he faces death, instead, as a friend, she liberates him through forgiveness to do what he knows is

right: "Do what you will. But let none be your judge. There be no higher judge under heaven than Proctor is! Forgive me, forgive me, John--I never knew such goodness in the world!" (CP 323). Elizabeth's friendship leads John to right action, an important development for Miller's drama. In early plays like *All My Sons* and *Salesman*, friendship was little more than an unrealized hope that failed to lead to a positive change. At the end of *The Crucible*, John Proctor does "have his goodness" (CP 329), and was able to come to that goodness through his wife's friendship. *The Crucible* is also Miller's first play that features a complex friendship between a man and woman. This signals an important shift away from Miller's exclusively male-dominated world of friendship.

*A View From the Bridge* centers on images of betrayal, which are linked to friendship, but the play does not deal with friendship as a central topic. The play does reveal the danger of Tony's betrayal, as he is condemned by his community as a result of his antisocial behavior. Alfieri, who tries to be a friend to Tony by saving him from himself, warns him not to go through with his plan to turn in his wife's cousins: "You won't have a friend in the world, Eddie! Even those who understand will turn against you, even the ones who feel the same will despise you!" (CP 246). Even when Rodolpho tries to reconcile his relationship as a friend late in the play, telling Eddie that Marco may relent "if we can tell him we are comrades now" (CP 259), Eddie refuses. He refuses to be touched by friendship, and will go to his death demanding his name--the very name he gave away as an informer.

Miller's next play appears eight years after *View*. In *After The Fall*, he returns to friendship as a central subject for his drama. Coming after *Crucible* and *Enemy*, two plays which depict protagonists often exulting

in their isolation, *After The Fall* reveals the death and resurrection of friendship in Quentin's life, as friendship becomes an integral part of the "hope" he awakens with each day. Of course, Miller had recently endured the death of many of his friendships during the McCarthy trials, a period when "grinning, killing, and feeding were the only signs of human life" (TB 299). *After The Fall* is nearly a dramatic treatise on friendship, a play that reveals the emptiness of a society devoid of friendship, as well as friendship's redemptive power.

While *Salesman* has received the public and critical accolades, *After The Fall* was years in the making, written when Miller was at the height of his career, both as a writer and personality, and was undoubtedly his most eagerly awaited drama. Moreover, as Edward Murray points out, "In the scope and seriousness of the themes involved, in sheer bulk and number of characters, perhaps even in technique, *After The Fall* is Miller's most ambitious work" (125). Harold Clurman felt that the play was a necessary psychological catharsis for Miller, who, "had he not written this play might never have been able to write another" (*Collection* 152). Ann Massa writes that *After The Fall* "is at the heart of the second half of Miller's oeuvre" (128), suggesting, as others do, that this play is pivotal for Miller.

No one could have envisioned the critical onslaught that *After The Fall* would receive; perhaps no modern play has been reviled as uniformly. John Simon lashed out with:

The megalomania! What are we to make of a play whose chief purpose, or, at any rate, only lively element, is the laying of Marilyn Monroe's ghost, but which cannot do this

without dragging in everything from McCarthy to Auschwitz, from the Communism of the Thirties to the Garden of Eden and a symbolic self-crucifixion? (234)

Leslie Hanscom in *Newsweek* remarked that although Miller was normally a "fugitive from familiarity," he had "written what is undoubtedly the most nakedly autobiographical drama ever put on public view" (50). Robert Brustein added that Miller "has created a shameless piece of tabloid gossip, an act of exhibitionism which makes us all voyeurs" (27). Walter Kerr noted that "*After The Fall* resembled a confessional which Arthur Miller entered as a penitent and from which he emerged as a priest" (214). Kerr went on to suggest that it was Miller's judgmental attitude, "with Jehovah's thunderbolt in hand" that was most objectionable. Comparing it to O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, Kerr writes that "The young O'Neill is the least assertive of the four major figures in *Journey*, a pale but observant wraith looking, looking, looking--and trying not to judge" (215). The play's director, Elia Kazan, writes that because of time pressures, he never honestly told Miller that he thought the play was weak:

While I plainly criticized the details of Art's play, I didn't tell him what I thought of the overall pseudoconfessional concept and particularly that of the first half of the play, which I didn't like then and like less in retrospect, or of the central figure, based, I had to believe, on Art himself. I found him a bore. (629-30)

An angry Miller tried in vain to answer the critics' charges, writing "That man up there isn't me, a playwright doesn't put himself on the stage, he only dramatizes certain forces within himself." Furthermore, he insisted, "the character of Maggie, which in great part seems to underlie the fuss, is not in fact Marilyn Monroe" (66). Sixteen years later, in a 1980 interview, Miller was still defensive about the play's alleged autobiographical tendencies: "The autobiographical element in any work is not a question of criticism, in any case, but of gossip....Needless to say, the play--rather than the gossip--remains to be reviewed" (Rajakrishnan 197, 199). Christopher Bigsby agrees that the play cannot be ruled a failure simply on its autobiographical nature: "If *After The Fall* fails, its failure does not lie in the intrusion of the personal, any more than it did in Strindberg's *The Father* (1887), but rather in Miller's failure to transmute the personal into art" (37).

Miller, in his 1987 autobiography, *Timebends*, discusses the play's critical evaluation candidly:

Coming so soon after Marilyn's death, *After The Fall* had to fail. With a few stubborn exceptions the reviews were about a scandal, not a play, with barely a mention of any theme, dramatic intention, or style, as though it were simply an attack on a dead woman. Altogether ignored was the fact that the counterattack on me was supplied by practically paraphrasing Quentin's acknowledgment of his own failings--by the play itself; it was as though the critics had witnessed an actual domestic quarrel and been challenged to come to Maggie's rescue. (TB 534)



Miller goes on to say that every one of his plays, except *Salesman*, had originally met with “a majority of indifferent, bad, or sneering notices.” He admits that “except for Brooks Atkinson and later Harold Clurman, I exist as a playwright without a major reviewer in my corner.” He concludes that Chekov’s remark has always stabilized his sense of reality: “If I had listened to the critics, I’d have died drunk in the gutter” (TB 534).

Some critics have seen the play in a more positive light. Clinton W. Trowbridge wrote what is perhaps *After The Fall’s* most favorable assessment: “Miller has forced this vision on us so relentlessly, with such dramatic intensity, that *After The Fall* can be said to be not only his greatest triumph but one of the few genuinely tragic plays of our time” (229). Clinton S. Burhans, Jr. agrees that *After The Fall* is Miller’s “most interesting and significant work.” Burhans finds the play “brilliantly constructed and universal in theme, its subtly unified form establishes a paradigm for modern tragedy” (3). Dennis Welland remarks that , *After The Fall*, for all its faults, merits respect greater than is sometimes accorded it” (103). Acknowledging that Quentin has been viewed as “synonymous with patriarchal convention,” Iska Alter believes that *After The Fall* displays a “complex vision of female power, albeit one inevitably determined by masculine necessity” (116). Arthur Ganz admits that:

Despite its structural flaws, *After The Fall* remains a compelling play, not only because it offers an intimate glimpse into the private life of a celebrated author but

because it marks a distinct shift in Miller's development as a playwright. (523)

Ganz goes on to explain that all of Miller's central characters prior to *Quentin* were patterned after Miller's "Rousseauistic view of man as in essence good." *Quentin* instead comes to "believe that he has felt in his own mind the impulse to genuine evil" (523). From this perspective *Quentin* is an anomaly for Miller, but like Willy Loman and Chris Keller, he looks to friendship as a corrective against an unfeeling society. While Massa argues that *After The Fall* embodies a shift from "relatedness to relationships" (128), the play reveals that Miller blends the two rather than choosing one over the other. *Quentin* must analyze the failed relationships of his past in order to determine whether or not "relatedness" is still possible. The fact that *Quentin* is able to believe once again in the restorative power of friendship at the end of the play, despite the evidence in his past to the contrary, is an especially important part of *Quentin's* journey. *Quentin* would seem to parallel Miller here, as the playwright also came to know the "death of love" through the trauma of the McCarthy period. In some ways, Miller and his characters will never again fully trust in the efficacy of friendship as Chris Keller did, but his work continues to suggest that friendship is a powerful possibility, even if its realization as a source of positive social change is in question because of the "brutal individualism" (Letter from Miller) of our society.

Much of the confusion about *After The Fall* was a direct result of critics' failure to understand the importance of Miller's inspiration for the play--Albert Camus' novel, *The Fall*. In 1960, producer Walter Wanger

came to Miller, hoping to convince him to write a screenplay based on *The Fall*. Miller wasn't interested in doing a screenplay, but he began to consider Camus' "beautifully carved story" as a possible drama (TB 483-4). Miller saw the novel as a story "about trouble with women," but adds that this theme is overshadowed by "the [ethical] dilemma of how one can ever judge another person once one has committed the iniquitous act of indifference to a stranger's call for help" (TB 484). The cry for help that Miller is referring to is a desperate one from a young girl who is drowning in the Seine. Camus protagonist, Clamence, hears her call, but fails to respond.

The "iniquitous act of indifference" is what friendship, by its very nature, prevents. That is why friendship is strongly tied to justice as well: if Joe Keller had exercised friendship toward his partner Steve Deever, Deever would not have been falsely imprisoned--a victim of Joe's indifference; if Willy Loman had known friendship instead of the indifference of the buyers, Howard, and Ben, he would not have known the injustice of anonymity. Quentin, a lawyer in a "world so wonderfully threatened by injustices I was born to correct" (22), looks to friendship to provide justice in his rapidly decaying community as well.

Miller saw the complexity of Camus' work, but felt that it "ended too soon, before the worst of the pain began" (TB 484). Miller wondered what if Clamence from *The Fall*, had attempted to save the young girl, but found that her salvation lay in herself, not him. Or worse, if he realized that his motivation was simply selfish, and that there was murder in his intent (484).

In light of the new information in Miller's autobiography, that Camus' novel was his play's central influence, a more comprehensive

critical comparison of the two works is needed. June Schleuter's 1987 book, *Arthur Miller*, an insightful work overall, does not even mention Camus, nor does Dennis Welland's respected *Miller The Playwright*, of 1985. Terry Otten's "The Fall and After" is perhaps the most complete side-by-side comparison, yet Otten writes, "The allusion to the Fall in Arthur Miller's *After The Fall* pertains to the Holocaust and to the political injustices of the McCarthy era" (133), which seems to indicate that he was not aware of the primary influence of Camus' novel. It would seem that Miller did not fully divulge the depth of the connection until he wrote his autobiography in 1987, but he did mention the correlation specifically in an interview with V. Rajakrishnan in 1980. <sup>1</sup>

Since Miller has established the direct correlation of the two works, a more thorough analysis of those elements of Camus' novel that form the basis for Miller's play seems necessary. The most obvious modification of current criticism would be a softening of the autobiographical charges leveled against the play, in lieu of the fact that Clamence, not Miller, was the primary role model for Quentin. While there is no character in *The Fall* that resembles the "Marilyn Monroe" character, Maggie, Miller's Quentin shares many similarities--many of which are negative--with Camus' protagonist, Clamence. This new model for Quentin clearly "distances" Miller a bit from the play and his protagonist, which enhances his defense that he did not put himself on the stage through Quentin. Feminist criticism that has labeled Quentin an egotistical womanizer must now take into account that he follows the pattern of his predecessor Clamence, whose comment, "women cost me dear" (80), sounds very much like Quentin's oft-criticized "These goddam women have injured me!" (5).

Camus' novel was also faulted as highly autobiographical, with Simone de Beauvoir claiming that, "In the first few pages I recognized the same Camus I had known in 1943: his gestures, his voice, his charm, and exact portrait" (349). The novel, like Miller's play, was written after the disintegration of a cherished friendship. Just as *After The Fall* was written after the rift between Miller and Kazan that led to the dissolution of their friendship, so does *The Fall* follow Camus' break-up with Sartre in 1952 (Lazere 189).

Two early reviewers made the connection between the two works, but dealt with them superficially. Allen J. Koppenhaver notes the similarity between the two works, then writes:

It is strange that an author dedicated to reproducing his personal misfortunes on the stage, as some critics argued, should deal with the same subject and materials that Camus, another writer in another life, dealt with in his novel....Is it, perhaps, that the subject and materials for revealing that subject are part of the modern everyman's experience and are not private to either Miller or Camus? (206)

The answer to Koppenhaver's question would seem to be no, at least for Miller, who admits that the idea for the play came to him only after he was urged to write a screenplay for Camus' novel. Koppenhaver then asks the reader to "consider the most superficial likenesses between the play and the novel," as he goes on to list them: both men are lawyers that have "button-holed a listener to whom he confesses his life and guilt"

(206); both men find it difficult to deal with the suicides that are central, painful incidents (207); each work is dominated by a central symbol, a bridge in *The Fall* and a tower from a concentration camp in *After The Fall* (207); both men have “withdrawn from life,” but are thrown back into life as a result of their confrontation with death (208). Some of Koppenhaver’s comments are perspicacious, but most, by his own admission, are “superficial.”

Leonard Moss also noticed the affinity between the two works (though he expresses his “indebtedness to Professor Carrol Coates of Harpur College” for making the connection), noting that: “Although Miller does not verify this [connection] in his Foreword, correspondences seem to marked to be coincidental” (39). Moss dedicates only a paragraph or so to the relationship between the two works, concluding that, “It would be a mistake to conclude that these similarities in idea, narrative structure, and phrasing represent a decisive debt to the French Nobel Prize winner” (40). In truth, it would be a mistake to conclude otherwise: Miller’s play and Camus’ novel display an obvious congruence, with friendship relevant to both.

Camus, writing to a friend in 1953, hints at the importance of friendship to him personally. He writes that his work has “enslaved” him, but he continues with it because “I prefer it to anything else, even liberty, wisdom, or true creativity, even, yes even, to friendship” (343). Camus discusses the role of friendship in his social vision more fully in an interview with Jean Delpech in 1945. There, he states in the interview that one must “accept the absurdity of everything around us,” but that it “should not become a dead end”:

It arouses a revolt that can become fruitful. An analysis of the idea of revolt could help us to discover ideas capable of restoring a relative meaning to existence, although a meaning that would always be in danger (346).

The remainder of the interview indicated that Camus, like Miller, sees friendship as a possible means of “restoring a relative meaning to existence”:

*J.D. Revolt takes a different form in every individual. Would it be possible to pacify it with notions valid for everyone?*

A.C. ...Yes, because if there is one fact that these last five years have brought out, it is the extreme solidarity of men with one another. Solidarity in crime for some, solidarity in the upsurge of resistance in others. Solidarity even between victims and executioners. When a Czech was shot, the life of a grocer in the *rue de Beaune* was in jeopardy.

*J.D. The individualism of the French makes it difficult for them to have a real experience of this solidarity.*

A.C. That remains to be proved. And besides, in a world whose absurdity appears to be so impenetrable, we simply must reach a greater degree of understanding among men, a greater sincerity. We must achieve this or perish. To do so, certain conditions must be fulfilled: men must be frank (falsehood confuses things), free (communication is impossible with slaves). Finally, they must feel a certain justice around them. (346-47)

Camus reveals his view of friendship or solidarity in this interview, and his belief that we must achieve a greater understanding through solidarity or perish is a recurrent motif in *The Fall*. Clamence realizes that salvation can only come through friendship, but friendship's demands, coupled with the realities of the Holocaust, have combined to strip him of any faith. Both Quentin and Clamence, then, come to similar understandings about human nature and society, but diverge in their response to changing either. As Otten writes:

The responses of Clamence and Quentin to their crises of will depict the final choice that finally must be made between being and nonbeing, between engagement in the human enterprise and unredemptive self-absorption. (113)

Otten identifies the basic difference in the works and their protagonists: Quentin comes to the realization that friendship is the key to “engagement” in society, while Clamence rejects friendship and its demands so that he can remain safely “above” society.

Clamence often describes his despair that has led him to withdraw from society, and hence, friendship: “I have no more friends; I have nothing but accomplices” (73). He is drinking gin when the novel opens, at a bar in Amsterdam called *Mexico City*, where he speaks in his ironic, typically informal fashion:



I live in the Jewish quarter, or what was called so until our Hitlerian brethren made room. What a cleanup! Seventy-five thousand Jews deported or assassinated; that's real vacuum-cleaning. I admire that diligence, that methodical patience! When one has no character, one *has* to apply a method. Here it did wonders incontrovertibly, and I am living on the site of one of the greatest crimes in history. Perhaps that's what helps me understand the ape [Clamence's nickname for the bartender at *Mexico City*] and his distrust. Thus I can struggle against my natural inclination carrying me toward fraternizing. When I see a new face, something in me sounds the alarm. 'Slow! Danger!' Even when the attraction is strongest, I am on my guard. (11)

Both Quentin and Clamence are victims of the Holocaust, in that the devastation and hatred of W.W.II have threatened to eliminate even the possibility of friendship. Clamence no longer believes in the efficacy of friendship. Instead, he is "on his guard" against "la sympathie," which O'Brien translates alternately as "fraternizing" and "attraction," both implying friendship. The Holocaust, and Clamence's inability to respond to a stranger's frantic cry for help have led him to abandon the idea that friendship can lead to positive social change. Quentin, even after his realization about the murder in his heart, "burning cities," and "the death of love" (114), knows that there is something in him "that could dare to love this world again!" (114).<sup>2</sup>

Clamence has also witnessed the death of friendship, and seems to realize the importance of restoring friendship in society. Quentin calls his "Listener" for a friend's objective advice, and Clamence admits early on to his "*cher monsieur*," that he needs his understanding (30). He goes on to ask him, "Have you never needed understanding, help, friendship?" Though Clamence admits that he has "learned to be satisfied with understanding" ("*la sympathie*" vs. friendship, "*l'amitie*"), he knows that friendship is "less simple":

It is long and hard to obtain, but when one has it there's no getting rid of it; one simply has to cope with it. Don't think for a minute that your friends will telephone you every evening, as they ought to, in order to find out if this doesn't happen to be the evening when you are deciding to commit suicide, or simply whether you don't need company, whether you are not in a mood to go out. No, don't worry, they'll ring you up the evening you are not alone, when life is beautiful. As for suicide, they would be more likely to push you to it, by virtue of what you owe to yourself, according to them. May heaven protect us, *cher monsieur*, from being set on a pedestal by our friends! (31)

Obviously, this passage relates to *After The Fall* as well, where Maggie and others put Quentin on a pedestal. Maggie will argue that she is also pushed to her death by Quentin, though he seemingly acts upon his good intentions. More importantly, this excerpt emphasizes the pervasive discussion of the inherent responsibility of friendship in *The*

*Fall*. Because Clamence understands too well that “there’s no getting rid” of friendship once you commit yourself to another, he chooses to remain in isolation.

Clamence is here interrupted by his companion, who apparently inquires about the fateful evening which Clamence has been hinting about, but continually evades. Clamence justifies his discussion of friendship here, as he notes that:

In a certain way I *am* sticking to my subject (the drowning of a young girl) with all that about friends and connections. You see, I’ve heard of a man whose friend slept on the floor of his room every night in order not to enjoy a comfort of which his friend had been deprived. Who, *cher monsieur*, will sleep on the floor for us? Whether I am capable of it myself? Look, I’d like to be and I shall be. Yes, we shall all be capable of it one day, and that will be salvation. (32)

This passage, though undercut by Clamence’s serio-comic tone, indicates that friendship and justice may benefit society in *The Fall* as it hearkens back not only to Aristotle’s vision of friendship transforming society, but also to Miller’s early work. Despite the fact that Clamence’s confession is pervasively ironic, this is one time when his words may denote Camus’ belief in friendship’s ability to add meaning to life, especially in light of the fact that Clamence will repeat this assertion at the end of the novel.<sup>3</sup> Clamence, like Aristotle and Miller, seems to believe that “salvation” will come when all are capable of the empathic identification of friendship applied to every individual of the city, whether

it be Amsterdam, New York or Athens. Though for Clamence friendship is little more than a distant hope, not the reality it was for Aristotle or the powerful force it is at times in Miller's work, he still implies that friendship may lead to positive social change.

Clamence first makes the connection between friendship society as he recalls his responsibility for the death of a girl whose cries he ignored. When Clamence says that when all are capable of friendship, salvation will come, he says it in the certainty that others will fail in friendship as he did--and that salvation will never come--because all share his selfish tendencies. Clamence is clearly an accomplice in the death of the girl whose cries he does not respond to, but like Quentin, he is reluctant to confront the suicidal event--though he must do so if he is to restore meaning in his life. The first hint of the suicide in *The Fall* comes when Clamence and his listener part at the end of the day, and Clamence refuses to cross a bridge at night, as "a result of a vow":

Suppose, after all, that someone should jump in the water. One of two things--either you do likewise to fish him out and, in cold weather, you run a great risk! Or you forsake him there and suppressed dives sometimes leave one strangely aching. (15)

Clamence's existence is plagued by a "strange ache," the knowledge that he is responsible for another's death, and fallen from innocence. Whereas Quentin moves from denial to acceptance that he has actively participated in "murder," Clamence spends his life trying to escape his guilt for this "murder" through justification and denial. Interestingly,

Holga, a symbol of redemptive hope in *After The Fall*, was rescued by a soldier when she attempted to commit suicide by leaping off a bridge in her despair over the atrocities of the Holocaust. It is as though Miller "resurrects" Clamence's victim, perhaps to indicate that if Clamence had acted upon his impulse to save, it may have led to other acts of friendship and "salvation." Holga, as one who has survived despair as a result of an act of friendship, now hopes to save Quentin from his despair over the death of love and restore meaning to his life through her friendship and love.

Clamence's "sin of omission" is reminiscent of Miller's novel *Focus*, in which, the protagonist, Lawrence Newman, similarly hears a victim's cry--a Puerto Rican woman being attacked--and does nothing to help. The essence of "social responsibility," the image of being "our brother's keeper" is expressed in these two novels. Newman becomes the friend of his one-time enemy, his Jewish neighbor; Clamence befriends no one, aware of the fact that there is a terrible accountability inherent in being an engaged member of society. As Clamence says, "we love friends who have just left us" because "with them there is no obligation" (32-3).

Clamence escapes his responsibility to society by maintaining an aloof superiority. He comments that "even in the details of daily life, I needed to feel *above*" (23). His profession satisfied his "vocation for summits," because as a lawyer, he was "cleansed of all bitterness toward my neighbor, whom I always obligated without ever owing him anything. It set me above the judge whom I judged in turn, above the defendant whom I forced to gratitude" (25).

Clamence now has a double profession, that of "judge-penitent" (10). His new vocation not only allows him to continue to soar above

others, but also enjoy the “other part of his nature” (20): to soothe and oblige. While Clamence flees the demands of friendship, he claims to have an “overriding love for mankind” (68).

Quentin follows Clamence's pattern of judge-penitent. He is praised by his mother, who “saw a star” when Quentin was born, and describes him as a “light in the world” (111). Maggie “adores” Quentin as well, taking his picture “lots of nights” as she “blesses” him (75). This Quentin-as-god motif reaches its apex when he is thinking of Felice, a girl who fixed her nose because of a single comment by Quentin:

When she left...I did a stupid thing. I don't understand it.  
There are two light fixtures on the wall of my hotel room...I noticed for the first time that they're...a curious distance apart. And I suddenly saw that if you stood between them--  
*He spreads out his arms--*you could reach out and rest your arms.

*Just before he completely spreads his arms, Maggie sits up, her breathing sounds.*

Maggie: Liar! Judge!

*He drops his arms, aborting the image; Maggie exits.*

(11)

Quentin, like Clamence, is the judge-penitent, able to assume the penitent image of a suffering Christ, but it is not long before someone from his past will destroy Quentin's facade and identify the darker side of his nature, that of a liar and judge. The difference between the two men is that Clamence uses his “vocation” to shield himself from his social

obligation, while Quentin hopes to probe the depths of his of his “posing” as either judge or penitent, so that he can “touch” society once again. As Otten writes, “whereas the truth finally sets Quentin free from servile self-condemnation, it locks Clamence in the inferno of his own making” (114).

The conclusions of each work illustrate the opposing vision of the two protagonists. At the end of Camus' novel, it begins snowing in Amsterdam, which Clamence says bring a “purity, even if fleeting, before tomorrow's mud” (145). The flakes are “huge,” which leads Clamence to imagine that the snow is actually the feathers of doves, come to “bring good news”:

Everyone will be saved, eh? --and not only the elect.  
Possessions and hardships will be shared and you, for  
example, from today on you will sleep every night on the  
ground for me. The whole shooting match, eh! (145)

Friendship, which has, in some ways, been Clamence's subject all along, becomes the focus here, where Clamence repeats his phrase uttered 100 pages earlier--that friendship and salvation are inherently linked.

Yet, salvation through friendship will never come for Clamence. The novel's final paragraph reveals that Clamence's “listener” is also a former Parisian lawyer, implying that Clamence has been engaged in a monologue throughout. Clamence seems to suggest that if the “listener” is himself, perhaps he can help Clamence recreate the events of a fateful night in the past, relieving him of the guilt that has led to his isolation:

Then please tell me what happened to you one night on the quays of the Seine and how you managed never to risk your life. You yourself utter the words that for years have never ceased echoing through my nights and that I shall at last say through your mouth: 'O young woman, throw yourself into the water again so that I may a second time have the chance of saving both of us!' A second time, eh, what a risky suggestion! Just suppose, *cher maitre*, that we should be taken literally? We'd have to go through with it. Brr...! The water's so cold! But let's not worry! It's too late now. It will always be too late. Fortunately! (147)

Clamence, with all his evasion and irony, suggests in this passage that he may have learned that the ultimate expression of friendship, risking your life to save another, leads to salvation for both victim and rescuer. Only through the selfless act of friendship can he atone for his earlier sin. When Clamence first heard her cries, he did not understand the full implications of her despair. Now, after years of living under the shame of his failure to act, he suggests that active friendship may be the path to salvation--not just for the young girl, but now for Clamence too. Just as he stated earlier in reference to a friend who might "sleep on the floor" as an act of friendship and salvation, he seems to realize that saving the girl may rescue him from his alienation and loneliness. Clamence's last words undermine his ability to pursue his salvation through friendship, but the possibility has been raised, even if in Clamence's reality, "it will always be too late" to respond in selfless love.



When Quentin recollects the fateful night when he realized his desire for Maggie's death, despite the fact that he had seen himself as her protector and savior, he is on the brink of entering Clamence's world of complete isolation. Quentin asks, "In whose name do you ever turn your back--*He looks out at the audience*--but in your own?" (112).

Quentin, like Clamence, has turned his back on a cry for help. Not only that, but he admits that in his effort to save, there was also the murderous desire to destroy. While Quentin seems to have as much, if not more evidence that would lead one to Clamence's despair and solitude, he instead believes that he can touch the world through the promise of friendship with another person who knows of the death of love--Holga. For Quentin, it is not "too late," one can still "forgive the idiot child of self" (113-4)--not in certainty--but enough so that one can engage in society once again. As Otten concludes, "Unlike Clamence, Quentin is able to emerge from the Erebus of his own soul with the slender but firm hope that truth can set him free from the consuming self absorption that claims Camus's 'empty prophet for shabby times'" (148). Friendship, specifically his friendship with Holga, is the object of Quentin's hope--as it was for Clamence, despite the latter's conviction that his "dream" about friendship would never be realized. Camus wrote that, "In the kingdom of humanity, men are bound by ties of affection, in the Empire of objects, men are unified by mutual accusation" (*Resistance* 239). While both protagonists long for the former kingdom, only Quentin has the strength to "love the world again" (113) in an attempt to regain it.

Miller writes in his Foreword to the play that *After The Fall* "is not 'about' something; hopefully, it is something." A few lines later, Miller later informs us that the play "is a trial; the trial of a man by his own

conscience, his own values, his own deeds" (32). The play then, is not "about" friendship, but Quentin determines his values and deeds only in relationship to his friendships, which he recalls as the play develops.

Quentin, who is in many ways Miller's most ambitious character, is not, like Willy Loman, pathetically seeking friendship in a society that has forgotten him. He is an "Everyman of the modern world" (Murray 128), journeying to restore meaning in his life that has been reduced to "this pointless litigation of existence before an empty bench. Which, of course, is another way of saying--despair" (3).

Critical opinion regarding Quentin follows the general criticism of the play: those that regard the play as a significant achievement laud Quentin as a modern tragic hero, others see the play as insignificant, and Quentin's an ordinary protagonist. Ganz argues that although Miller establishes that the universality of the "wish to kill," is analogous to the horrors of Nazism, Miller fails to convince the reader that these horrors are demonstrated in Quentin. Instead, for Ganz, Quentin is exonerated of his guilt throughout the play, so much so, that Miller has presented us with a hero that is "ultimately innocent, or at any rate with one whose guilts are quite inadequate as a correlative" for the mass murders of Nazism (529-30). Sontag concurs, writing that Miller "continually exonerates Quentin" (142). She concludes that "for all troubling decisions, and all excruciating memories, Miller issues Quentin the same moral solvent, the same consolation: I (we) am (are) *both* guilty and innocent, both responsible and not responsible" (143). Condemning Quentin on different grounds, William R. Brashear writes: "Quentin, as an objectified individual, who looks so much like Miller himself, is inadequate for the more ultimate encounters toward which his honest

questioning is leading....Quentin as a stalker of the universe seems sometimes silly" (277).

Murray calls Quentin "one of Miller's most interesting creations....Miller deserves credit for seeking to depict a figure fully rounded in terms of modern knowledge" (148). Trowbridge writes that Quentin is "more than just the most intellectual of Miller's protagonists. He is a portrait of thinking man in our society, his tragic flaw being his inability to lie to himself" (229). Neil Carson comments that Quentin is never fully realized as a character because the play "presents only Quentin's experience, and there are few unambiguous signposts to show where Miller's view as a playwright diverges from Quentin's as a protagonist" (120-21). Massa sees a "developing" Quentin, who is initially honest and naive, then "holier-than-thou," until finally, Holga teaches him "an appropriate cynicism" (132). Kazan comments that he was "amazed" that Miller "could write something as *un-self-favoring*" (689) as Quentin, then adds that Quentin's "turgid introspection" was "heavy going and not interesting" (630).

Despite the critical qualms with the drama, Miller's play clearly expresses his continuing fascination with the role of friendship in society. *After The Fall* begins and ends with the word "hello," even the two acts are separated by this word, which seems to frame the action in this play. The word "hello" is especially important, not only because it implies the initiation of any relationship, but also because Miller has identified it as the word that connects two people from the gulf of obscurity in *The Misfits*. The film, based on Miller's "cinema-novel," produced about two years before *After The Fall*, featured a scene in which Guido the pilot is "speeding on the dark highway" with Roslyn, when in fear she asks him

to slow down. Guido, who killed many as a bombardier in W.W.II, reassures her with, "Don't worry, kid, I never kill anybody I know....Say hello to me Roslyn." She answers, "Hello, Guido. Please, huh?" But the speedometer is pushing ninety as Guido continues, "I don't *know* anybody. Will you give me a little time? Say yes. At least say hello Guido." After the repetition of the request, as Roslyn hears the "murderous beating of wind against the car," she responds: "Yes. Hello, Guido." The cars slows as Guido says, "Hello, Roslyn" (CP 79-80).

Quentin's first "hello" is to the "Listener," whom Quentin has called "on the spur of the moment" because he has "a bit of a decision to make" (2). Quentin, after so many failed relationships, now faces the prospect of committing to another human being, a German woman named Holga, who understands the necessity of dealing with the past before facing the future. Quentin's has lived through the "Red Scare" of McCarthyism; Holga survived the Holocaust. Both events are linked in the play, and both threaten friendship.

The McCarthy era helped to solidify Miller's views of friendship, community and justice, although those concepts seemed empty in the face of the "imploded community that distrust and paranoia had killed" (TB 339). Miller's autobiography, *Timebends*, details the tragic fate of many of the victims of the Committee. One is the story of Pert Kelton, who had been in the Ziegfield Follies, and was the original Mrs. Kramden, the first TV wife of Jackie Gleason on *The Honeymooners*. While she was in Chicago recovering from a minor illness, she was informed by telegram that she had been dismissed from her role as the nationally known female star of the country's biggest TV show. A long series of inquiries revealed that Kelton had been let go because her husband, Ralph Bell,

had once participated in a May Day parade many years before. According to Miller, Bell had “no leftist connections whatever,” and Pert had “never even voted in her life.” Miller was shocked

By the brutal coldness with which she had been thrown down, as it were, which frightened her so deeply that she always thereafter seemed to have a reserve of furtiveness, even though she continued rather successfully in the theatre and in films long after the blacklisting madness had died away. (268-9)

Another well known victim was Louis Untermeyer, who was a regular on *What's My Line?* and according to Miller a close friend of many great American poets, including Robert Frost and William Carlos Williams. Untermeyer arrived as usual for the TV show, only to be informed by one of the producers that he was no longer on the program. He has been listed in *Life* magazine as “a sponsor of the Waldorf Conference,” which led to a letter of protest against him which scared advertisers into firing him. The producer, one of Untermeyer's former Lit students, regrettably informed him that “The problem is that we know that you've never had any left connections, so you have nothing to confess to, but they're not going to believe that. So it's going to seem that you're refusing to be a good American.” Untermeyer, a broken man, retreated into his Brooklyn Heights apartment, and did not leave this haven for a year and a half, taking a few phone calls, and seeing almost no one. Miller recalls:

An overwhelming and paralyzing fear had risen in him. More than a political fear, it was really that he had witnessed the tenuousness of human connection and it left him in terror. He had always loved a lot and been loved, especially on this TV program where his quips were vastly appreciated, and suddenly he had been thrown into the street, abolished. This was one of the feeds that went into the central theme of *After The Fall*, a play I would write almost ten years later. (263-4)

As a result of the inhuman cruelties he witnessed, Miller considered isolating himself and “exulting in aloneness,” like Ibsen's Doctor Stockmann, but felt that “private salvation was something close to sin.” Instead, he continued to believe that “One's truth must add its push to the evolution of public justice and mercy, must transform the spirit of the city” (TB 314). Lawrence D. Lowenthal writes, “Quite clearly, one presumes, the accumulated impact of international and personal tragedies has strained Miller's faith in man's ability to overcome social and spiritual diseases” (29). Brashear argues that Quentin, like Miller, has been “committed” to the “connection between man and man, and among men generally,” but sees the folly in these assumptions: “These commitments, and the deeply rooted presuppositions behind them, were also Miller's, and when Quentin steps beyond ‘morality’ he is dramatizing the same important step in Miller's development as a moral and social thinker” (271). Both Lowenthal and Brashear seem to imply that Miller's “development” is one that leads him away from an “earlier, immature” notion of the brotherhood of man. In truth, Miller's belief in the need to

respond to one another as brothers continues after his McCarthy experience. Like Camus, who stressed the increased need for solidarity in the midst of absurdity, Miller, after McCarthy, sees the "community of mankind" as even more of a necessity, and Quentin reflects that new insight.

Quentin's "journey begins with his knowledge that if he is to pursue a relationship with Holga, he must first confront his failure as a friend in past relationships with men and women. While Holga's friendship may be at the heart of Quentin's attempt to find meaning in his life, he must relive the agony of his past--especially the implications of Maggie's life and death--before he can begin again with Holga. William Penn once wrote that "She is but half a wife that is not, nor is capable of being, a friend" (Dunn 172). Quentin has been married to two "half-wives," and though he contributed to the demise of those relationships, Holga promises what Louise and Maggie could not--the friendship and understanding of one who, like Quentin, has suffered the death of love, yet sees hope in life.

Holga, unlike the women in Quentin's past, seems to care for him unconditionally. She loves her work as an anthropologist, and is not "a woman who must be reassured every minute" (13). In many ways, she is the first woman in Quentin's life that is able to love him as a friend first, ready to accept him despite his failure to "have lived in good faith" in the past (14). Holga is obviously worth the agony of recollecting the past for Quentin, especially so because she has suffered as he has, yet is full of the "hope" he is trying to locate. Emblematically, it is amazing that she is a survivor of the Holocaust, despite the fact that she was a "courier for the officers that were planning to assassinate Hitler" (15). Miller writes

that Quentin has found in Holga “a woman he feels he can love, and who loves him; he cannot take another life into his hands hounded as he is by self-doubt” (Foreword 32). Holga's offer of love and friendship elicits Quentin's quest for self-knowledge through his analysis of past relationships and the reasons for their failure. She is a symbol of constancy for Quentin, as he returns to her image after recollecting the failure of friendships in his past.

Holga is also one in a succession of female figures in Miller's drama that symbolize or point the way to friendship. Kate Keller admonished her son Chris to be less judgmental of his father, as she released both men through forgiveness; Linda Loman, who befriended Willy throughout the play despite her knowledge that he was less than perfect; Elizabeth Proctor epitomizes a good friend when she is able to admit her failings while forgiving her husband of his, and Rosalyn offers Gay Langland the understanding of a friend that leads him to “bless” her for her kindness toward him.

Though Albert Wertheim calls Holga “the play's most enlightened character” (23), critics like Dennis Welland most often complain that Holga is reduced to a symbol, too one-dimensional to be interesting or believable (98). Susan Sontag writes that Miller's depiction of Holga is “on the level of a left-wing newspaper cartoon. To pass muster at all, Quentin's young German girl friend--this in the mid-1950s--has to turn out to have been a courier for the 20th of July officer's plot; ‘they were all hanged’” (141). Murray echoes Sontag's objection with: “It is possible, of course, that Holga could be a part of an abortive anti-Hitler coup--but is it probable? More to the point, does Miller make it *seem* probable?” (155). Murray concludes that Holga's character, like others in the play,



is sacrificed to Miller's didactic message, "She remains merely another 'instance' to 'prove the theme'" (155).

While it is true that Holga is not a fully developed character, neither is she the focus of this play. She initiates Quentin's quest, and he returns to her image after his recollections of failure, but she remains part of Quentin's future, while the action of the drama concerns Quentin's past. If Holga is "too perfect" to be entirely believable, her character is entirely shaped by Quentin's view of her, which is clearly a limited, subjective one. Holga will not be remembered as Miller's most substantial character, but she is a sensitive, caring woman--and still central to the drama--however much she is idealized by Quentin.

Quentin's search first takes him to his parents. Parents are often sources of both conflict and identity in Miller's drama, and for Quentin, his relationship with his mother is strangely unresolved. Quentin recalls his mother's description of his father, which is reminiscent of Willy's description of himself to his sons: "To this day he walks into a room you want to bow! Any restaurant--one look at him and the waiters start moving tables around. *Because*, dear, people know that this is a *man*" (17). Quentin's mother, Rose, goes on to relate her shock when, two weeks after she was married, "Papa hands me a menu and asks me to read it to him. Couldn't *read*! I got so frightened I nearly ran away" (17). Rose's disillusionment about her husband is complete when, during the market crash of the Depression, he sells everything, including her bonds, "ninety-one thousand dollars" (19) worth. Rose reviles her husband, saying she should have "run" the day she met him, that he must be "some kind of moron," finally crushing him, and the young, ever-attentive Quentin with, "You are an idiot!" (20). The last phrase is a recurrent one

in the play, always signaling the end of a relationship, as Quentin's mind returns to Holga.

While Quentin's experience with his parents may have been something of a "rite of passage" for him, he keeps "looking back to when there seemed to be some duty in the sky...Remember--when there were good people and bad people? And how easy it was to tell!" (22). This "flashback" takes Quentin to his days with his first wife, and the dissolution of his friendships during the McCarthy era. We are introduced to Lou, a professor who is hoping to publish a book about Soviet law, which will "correct" a book he published in his Leftist youth, which was filled with lies to protect "the Party" (25). Lou has been recently questioned by "the Committee," and while not formally charged, he fears that his new book may lead to new allegations against him. Lou's wife, Elsie, alarmed by Quentin's advice that Lou publish despite the dangers, warns that Lou can't "function in the rough-and-tumble of private practice" because he's "a purely academic person, *incapable* of going out and--" (26). Elsie's insults lead Quentin to remember his mother's "You idiot!" as another inviolate relationship crumbles.

Lou's situation is further complicated when Mickey, a long-time friend of both Lou and Quentin, decides to meet again with the Committee, to "name names" in an attempt to "live a straight-forward, open life" (33). Mickey, most often described as a fictionalized Elia Kazan, argues that "we must try to separate our love for one another from this political morass," that solidarity is now only a "dream," and that--excepting Lou--he has "no solidarity" with the people he could name (35). Lou is outraged by Mickey's resolution, and tells him that "if everyone broke faith there would be no civilization!" (36). Recently, I

received a kindly response from Miller, who wrote to answer some of my questions about his view of friendship. In it, Miller expressed a sentiment similar to Lou's about "breaking faith": "It has always seemed to me that without some minimum trust between people no society is possible. This would seem a given to me" (8-10-91). Aristotle saw it as a "given as well, writing that "friendship is especially necessary for living, to the extent that no one, even though he had all other goods, would choose to live without friends" (VIII, I:1538). Quentin has believed in the necessity of friendship, but he now seems to be witnessing (as Miller did during McCarthyism) the destruction of any sense of "minimum trust."

Despite his friends' objections, Mickey is resolved to "confess," which leads Lou's wife, Elsie, to condemn Mickey as a "moral idiot!" (37). The Mickey-Lou episode seems to parallel Miller's break up with Kazan. Speaking of his decision to "confess," Kazan writes, "I'd had every good reason to believe that the Party should be driven out of its many hiding places into the light of scrutiny" (297). Despite the fact that Miller initially saw Kazan's confession as moral depravity, it was clearly secondary to the larger issue--the dissolution of friendship. Miller writes painfully of the breakup that Kazan "had entered into my dreams like a brother, and there we had exchanged a smile of understanding that blocked others out" (TB 333). That Kazan would have sacrificed even Miller if necessary, destroy years of friendship to continue his career, was something that Miller simply "could not get past" (334). Miller's anger toward Kazan would soften over the years, and his frustration would transfer to the American government, which "had no right to require anyone to be stronger than it had been him to be." Miller went on to question "who or what was now safer because this man in his human

weakness had been forced to humiliate himself?" (334). Kazan writes of *After The Fall*,

There is a character based on me and my testimony, and although that character is not how I thought of myself, Art must have considered it reasonable, even generous, and I was ready to accept it as how, looking back, he saw the events. He had a right to his version of that bit of history.  
(630)

Quentin's question, "Is it that I'm looking for some simple-minded constancy that never is and never was?" (38) is a fundamental one for Miller--if friendship cannot survive crises like the McCarthyistic one in the play, perhaps it cannot sustain the hope that Quentin seeks.

Quentin's next recollection focuses on Quentin's first wife, Louise. Louise is undergoing an "awakening" of sorts, she is "going into psychoanalysis" (31), and trying to come to terms with the discrepancy between Quentin's egotism and her needs. Louise complains that she has "demanded nothing for much too long," that Quentin is "silent, cold," and that all he wants is a woman to "provide an--atmosphere, in which there are never any issues, and you'll fly around in a bath of praise" (40-41). When Quentin wonders "what's wrong with praise?" Louise replies, "Quentin, I am not a praise machine! I am not a blur and I am not your mother! I am a separate person!" (41). Quentin cannot accept the implications of this phrase, as it contradicts his belief in the collective nature of society. Quentin counters Louise's remarks by saying that he "cannot bear to be--a separate person."

He adds that he has taken Lou's case in spite of the fact that he is now known as a "Red lawyer," because he cannot tell Lou that "if he doesn't change I consign him to hell because we are separate persons!" (41) Quentin says Mickey's failure as a friend was a result of his becoming "a separate person" (41) also. Quentin sees that his mother "almost became" (42) a separate person, as he cries out to Louise for an explanation: "I am asking you to explain this to me because this is when I go blind! When you've finally become a separate person, what the hell is there?" (42). Louise "unsteadily" answers, "Maturity" (42), but her words are hollow. Ganz argues that Quentin is "not justified" in assuming that Louise's desire for individual identity is "analogous to social irresponsibility." Moreover, when Louise "demands the right to be treated as an individual, that is as a 'separate person,' and Quentin replies in effect that separate persons are those who betray the sacred bond of human brotherhood," the "auditor" may sympathize with Louise, not Quentin (527). Ganz is clearly mocking when he writes "the sacred bond of human brotherhood," but Miller in his life and writing, sees friendship as nothing less than sacred.

Quentin isn't simply talking about "individual identity" here, "separate person" includes all those who are able to objectify a human being *because* the sacred bond of human brotherhood has been destroyed. Quentin later admits to Maggie that, "We are all separate people. I tried not to be, but finally one is--a separate person" (104). Quentin's words are undermined later that evening when he realizes that he has "separated" himself from Maggie to the point that he can wish her dead, as he did Lou. When Quentin sinks to this level of "separateness,"

it is clear that it is a destructive force--not an image of individual self-fulfillment.

Ganz fails to realize that for Miller, in the 46 years from his novel, *Focus* to his most recent work, *The Ride Down Mount Morgan*, the separate person is the sociopath, cut off from friends, an alien in society. Lawrence Newman is condemned to a life of bigotry and hatred until he relinquishes his image of himself as a separate person. Joe Keller sees himself as a separate person, which allows him to ship the faulty parts that lead to the death of his "sons." Willy Loman is driven to suicide upon the revelation that he was worth only what he could sell. John Proctor cannot mount the gibbet as a separate person; only when his wife and friend gives him back his sense of goodness can he face death. Eddie Carbone commits the sin of betrayal after he stands outside his community as a separate person. Gay Langland built his life around the mystique of the Western man being a separate person, but came to admit he was just a lonely man before Rosalyn changed his life with her love. Quentin now faces the implications of being a separate person, and rejects such a proposition as all of Miller's sympathetic characters must. Louise ends this scene by calling Quentin an idiot (42), which echoes Quentin's mother's earlier cry. Ganz admits that Quentin, "the observing adult" paralleled his mother's "totally estranged" scream with "the total alienation of the Nazi executioner from his victim" (525). It is interesting that Ganz does not comment that Quentin is "unjustified" by making such a connection, though the leap from Rose's cry of "idiot" to Nazi extermination seems greater than Quentin's association of Louise's "separate person" and the destruction of human brotherhood. In fact, all are clearly related, as the separation of individuals leads to the

estrangement that presages the destruction inherent in all three scenarios.

The difficulty with the term “separate person” in the play is that its meaning shifts for Quentin as he comes to realize the implications of this phrase. When Quentin first argues with Louise, he sees “separateness” as a destructive force that has led to apathy in Mickey and others towards their friends. Later, when speaking to Maggie, Quentin will admit that he has become a separate person, that it is an inevitable development--but he is not a completely integrated individual at this point. Quentin will not fully understand this phrase until the end of the drama, where his ability to become a separate person, clearly now seen as an individual identity, leads him to “love the world again” and return to Holga as an expression of that love.

Quentin meets Maggie, and tells Louise that he was struck by the fact that “she wasn’t defending anything, upholding anything, or accusing--she was just *there* like a tree or cat” (55). Louise is understandably nonplused by Quentin’s “confession,” which underscores the fact that their marriage has been fractured by their inability to trust or communicate. Quentin believes that he has tried to be honest, but later says that he should have pursued Louise with attention and not the truth. (60)

In the midst of his argument with Louise, Quentin gets a phone call, and a message that Lou is dead. Lou either “fell or jumped” (58) in front of a subway train. Quentin believes Lou’s death was a suicide, recalling something “dreadful” he had said the week before--that Quentin turned out to be “the only friend he had” (58). Quentin couldn’t admit to

Louise what was dreadful about Lou's statement, but he now is able to tell the "Listener":

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 proved it in the joy...the joy...the joy I felt now that my danger had spilled out on the subway track! (59)

The implications of Lou's death hearken back to Willy Loman's suicide, and his friendship with his neighbor Charley. In *Salesman*, Willy says, "Charley, you're the only friend I got. Isn't that a remarkable thing," as he is "on the verge of tears" (193). Willy, like Lou, is driven to suicide through the knowledge that he is friendless, that he is "ringing up a zero" (CP 212), that he just doesn't matter. Just as Quentin was relieved and dejected by Lou's death, it is plausible that Charley had similar feelings about the death of the little drummer who socked him for fifty a week. More importantly, Miller seems to indicate that Lou and Willy are victims of societies that are too comfortable to care, that no longer see--as Aristotle did--citizen and friend as potentially synonymous.

After Lou's death and Quentin's divorce, he explains to the "Listener" why he came, that is, why he began this exploration of his



past: "I think I still believe it. That underneath we're all profoundly friends! I can't believe this world; all this hatred isn't real to me!" (61). Nowhere in Miller's work is the classical view of friendship stated this clearly, though simply. As Hutter writes:

Friendship in ancient Greece, far from being a private matter, was a major cause of war and one of the strongest bonds between men. It was one of the chief relationships of the public life of the *polis*....Later, with the universalization of Greek philosophy...friendship was seen to encompass all of humanity, *philia* became *philanthropia*. Just as previously the free members of the *polis* had been considered to be one another's friends, so now all of mankind was seen to be related in friendship. From being a particularistic relationship, friendship came to be thought of as a universal bond of nature. (25-6)

Quentin implies that he has believed that this bond exists, despite the fact that his experiences indicate that friendship is illusory. Quentin, as a lawyer, is hoping to "prove" his case: that friendship can thrive regardless of the fact that it has failed him in the past.

Holga continues to be the symbol of hope for Quentin and friendship, but Quentin continues to doubt his ability to commit to her: "It's that the evidence is bad for promises. But how else do you touch the world--except with a promise? And yet, I must not forget the way I wake; I open up my eyes each morning like a boy, even now; even now. That's as true as anything I know, but where's the evidence?" (61)

Friendship is a promise that touches the world; it is Miller's bridge to a world of indifference and inequity. Quentin must uncover the "evidence" which supports his belief that "underneath we're all friends," before he can entrust himself to Holga as a friend.

The "Listener" now leaves the stage (a painfully arbitrary device to divide the acts), but Quentin tells him that he'll wait, because he wants to "settle this" (62). Act II opens with the familiar "Hello," and an image of Holga with open arms (63). The action quickly shifts to Maggie, who is the focus in this act, as Quentin comes to realize that he has not only failed as a friend in the past, but even more horribly, that he has perhaps driven friends to their death (implied in his relationship with Lou) in a guise of friendship.

The Maggie-as-Marilyn controversy has overshadowed serious analysis of her character, but some critics have been able to look beyond the uproar. Most critics, like Welland, agree that the play's second act, which centers on Quentin and Maggie's relationship, is much more effective dramatically (92). Miller wrote that Maggie "is in the play because she most perfectly exemplifies the self-destructiveness which finally comes when one views oneself as pure victim....and she comes so close to being a pure victim--of parents, of a Puritanical sexual code and of her exploitation as an entertainer" (*Life* 66).

Clurman describes Maggie as "one of the most perceptively delineated women in all of American drama...Maggie is woman, redemptively sensual intuitive, captivating, tormenting and tormented" (*Portable* xxii). Trowbridge identifies her as "Miller's most fully realized and completely human figure of pathos" (232). Massa suggests that Maggie is "as significant and tragic a figure in the Miller oeuvre as Willy

Loman and company....Miller for once indicates that he has decided to deal equally with men and women, and not to subsume women under the heading Man" (134). Kazan writes that the role launched Barbara Loden's career, and "despite her vengeful hysteria in the last scene," Maggie is "powerful, pitiable and tragic" (690).

Quentin initially identifies Maggie with Felice, who worshipped Quentin's opinion enough to give him the power to "influence a girl to change her nose, her life" (64). Maggie is flattered by Quentin's attention, and is astonished by the fact that Quentin even remembers her four years after their chance meeting in the park. Just as Willy Loman failed as a friend because of his insistence to worship (Biff and Ben) or be worshipped (by Linda and his sons), Quentin is trapped in the same pattern--adored by his mother, Felice and Maggie--which gives him power over them, not friendship with them. As Alter argues, the three main women in Quentin's life, his mother, Maggie and Holga, are instruments of betrayal, blessedness and a balance between the two extremes, respectively (135-142). Quentin's mother not only betrayed his father by publicly humiliating him, but she also left Quentin at home with a baby-sitter, tricking him into believing that she was just leaving for a little while. Maggie treats Quentin as nothing less than a god, amazed by his attention and thrilled by his intellect. Holga has known suffering, is independent, and offers Quentin love without any false expectations.

Maggie offers Quentin power, and in his vanity, he accepts. Though their relationship was based on "Fraud from the first five minutes" because Quentin was playing as a "cheap benefactor" (70), he did try to love Maggie despite his hypocrisy and pride. He wanted her to

be proud of herself, to escape her past mistreatment by other men and by her mother, who once tried to smother Maggie with a pillow so that Maggie wouldn't be cursed by her mother's sin (74).

Maggie becomes the focus of the play because Quentin realizes that if his love for such an innocent woman failed, then perhaps Quentin must face another difficult truth, that he could not love (109). Quentin discovers, as he has about each character in the play--himself and Maggie included--that none are innocent, which leads him to his ultimate realization about the culpability of mankind. Initially, Maggie is "all love" to Quentin (78). Even on their wedding day, he praises her with, "Oh, my darling. How perfect you are" (86). But Maggie assures him that he doesn't have to go through with it, confessing she was once "with two men...the same day." Quentin tries to shrug it off with "Sweetheart--an event itself is not important; it's what you took from it" (87), but Quentin later admits that at their first "house party": "I wasn't sure if any of them...had had you" (109). Maggie's insecurity and Quentin's inability to lie to her about his waning love lead him to admit that he has lost patience with Maggie, and that he "lied every day" (104).

Quentin soon learns that no amount of love can save Maggie from her insecurity and self-hate. As their relationship corrodes, Maggie begins drinking and using barbiturates. Realizing that he has failed another human being he sought to love, Quentin turns to the "Listener" and confesses: "It's that if there is love, it must be limitless" (100). Quentin understands that he has turned his back on Lou, which led to his suicide, and that he was betrayed by his mother when she sneaked away on a pretense to Atlantic City--leaving Quentin alone--which is one

element of his hatred for her. Recalling these two central events of betrayal leads Quentin back to his final agonizing night with Maggie.

Quentin has saved Maggie from two previous suicidal episodes, and has now “lost patience” with her to the point that he has now become a “separate person” to survive (104). Though Quentin earlier argued with Louise that becoming a separate person was tantamount to betrayal, he now admits that there are limits to love. As the couple waits for the doctor to arrive, Maggie suddenly asks “Quentin, what’s Lazarus?” (104) Quentin explains that “Jesus raised him from the dead” (105). Maggie, nearly catatonic from pills and alcohol says, “Jesus must have loved her” [Lazarus] (106). Quentin answers:

That’s right, yes! He...loved her enough to raise her from the dead. But He’s God, see...and 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. (107)

Just as Joe Keller cautions his “holy” son Chris that “you can’t be a Jesus in this world” (CP 121) and Alfieri warns Marco that only God provides justice in this world (CP 261), Quentin admits that he tried to be God in his attempt to “save” Maggie. John J. Stinson writes that “the love which Quentin describes can assuredly not be man’s but only Christ’s” (238), yet Christ “commanded” his disciples to “love one another *as I have loved you*” (Jn. 15:12), indicating that Christ’s love is not exclusively available to only Him. It is obvious that even love as limitless

as Christ's cannot save everyone. Those--like Maggie--that willfully choose destruction are beyond love's reach. Yet, Quentin's relationship with Maggie is quite often one of indulgence, and to even compare his love to Christ's is as silly as Quentin's posing as the savior.

Quentin's admission of the limitations of his love seems to "release" him to recollect his final confrontation with Maggie. He has demanded the pills from her because he knows that Maggie doesn't want his love any more, but his destruction. Quentin lunges for Maggie's throat as he attempts to take the pills from her, screaming "You won't kill me! You won't kill me!" (111) Quentin chokes Maggie, she *"falls back to the floor, his hands open in air"* (111). Quentin now recalls his mother's betrayal once more, and *"stands transfixed as Mother backs into his hand, which of its own volition, begins to squeeze her throat"* (111).

Quentin is guilty of the ultimate betrayal: the desire to murder in the name of love. He admits to the "Listener" that even when he hears Maggie's labored breaths that they were "like the footfalls of my coming peace--and knew...I wanted them. How is that possible? I loved that girl!" (112). Quentin immediately makes the connection between his "murderous" action and the carnage of the Holocaust. Although a tower from a concentration camp has loomed over the set from the opening of the play, Quentin has not fully understood its significance until now. He cries out, "What is the cure? Who can be innocent again on this mountain of skulls?" (113). Robert Hogan calls this statement, "remarkable," coming from:

The young Communist sympathizer of the 1940's holding aloft his white and unsullied banner. It is a statement to file

away with other hard-won, hard-boiled verities like Stephen Dedalus' courage to be wrong and Faulkner's 'They will endure.' It is not precisely a *Reader's Digest* kind of sentiment, but it is probably one of the few mature remarks ever made in an American play. (43)

Miller writes that, "in this play the question is, what is there between people that is indestructible? The concentration camp is the final expression of human separateness and its ultimate consequence" (*Essays* 289). Miller has always contended that friendship, true friendship may be that "indestructible" force that combats "human separateness." *After The Fall* follows this pattern in Miller's work, and as Quentin turns to Holga at the end of this play, he looks to her to provide the friendship that can lead him to hope once again.

Quentin's relationship with Holga is decidedly unique. Although Quentin knows although he is "adored again" by Holga, "there is something different here....with her there was some new permission...not to blind her to her own unhappiness. I saw that it belonged to her as it belonged to me. And suddenly there was only good will and a mystery" (65-66). As Wertheim comments, "For Holga acceptance replaces judgment: acceptance of the deformity and the idiocy of life; acceptance of the fact that the environs of Salzburg can house the disgrace of a concentration camp and the achievement of Mozart" (24). Quentin's recognition that he can openly trust and communicate with Holga, and that she has a right to her own life--even her unhappiness--is a major step in his development as a man, and his ability to be a friend.

Quentin believes, as he has all along, that Holga holds the “evidence” for hope, and he turns to her again. While trying to understand why Holga continues to hope despite living through the horrors of the Holocaust, Quentin seems to have a Joycean epiphany:

Or is it that--*Struck, to the Listener*--exactly why she hopes, because she knows? What burning cities have taught her and the death of love taught me: that we are very dangerous! *Staring, seeing his vision*: And that, that's why I wake each morning like a boy--even now, even now! I swear to you I could love the world again! Is the knowing all? To know, and even happily, that we meet unblessed; not in some garden of wax fruit and painted trees, that lie of Eden, but after, after the Fall, after many, many deaths. Is the knowing all? And the wish to kill is never killed, but with some gift of courage one may look into its face when it appears, and with a stroke of love--as to an idiot in the house--forgive it; again and again...forever? (113-4)

While Quentin earlier rejected the notion that one could love like Christ, ironically, he now describes a love that is founded upon Christian tradition. Just as Christ urged his followers to forgive “seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:22), Quentin sees that one must eternally forgive the “idiot” of self. In a play that details nearly every major character calling or being called an idiot, the protagonist now looks to cleanse all those who have uttered the vile word with a wave of forgiveness. As Welland observes, “Parabolically it embodies the ‘message’ of the play, perhaps a



little too sententiously, but there is real skill in this linking of the two themes: acceptance of the idiot child [of self] exorcises the 'Idiot!' [spoken in fury]" (101)

Quentin has described an inversion of part of Jesus' great commandment: to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). Quentin says we must love ourselves enough to forgive the "idiocy" of hatred, but this knowledge isn't "enough." The answer to Quentin's question, "Is the knowing all?" is no. Knowing that we have the capacity to hate and destroy isn't enough; the play does not end with Quentin's discovery. This knowledge must lead to active change--loving and forgiving your neighbor as yourself, as complete a definition for friendship as can be found. Just as Harry Keller's death is meaningful only if it leads the Keller family to "be better because of it," knowing that we can kill one another should not lead to the narcissistic isolation of Camus' Clamence, but instead to love, forgiveness and friendship.

Stinson asserts that in the play's conclusion, Miller "proposes a kind of finite version" of the "Mystical Body of Christ." He goes on to say that "to accept guilt which is not personally ours calls upon every human being who exists to be a Christ" (239). While this conclusion seems paradoxical in light of Quentin's statements about the limitations of man's love, the play's final emphasis on the necessity of loving like Christ can be defended. Quentin was unable to love like God because he was unable at that point to see his own truth. Quentin says, "God is what happened. God is what is," or in other words, God is truth. Once Quentin is able to face the truth: that the depths of murderous evil, evil equated with the carnage of the Holocaust dwells within him, he "falls" from his place as Judge and God over Maggie and the others. "After the

fall," he is on the same level (literally on the stage as well) as all the rest, and begins to move through "his people" (114), almost a metaphoric Christ, touching and healing through the restorative power of love.

Philip Rahv, writing about Miller's ending for his next play, *Incident at Vichy*, makes a comment that seems well applied here. Rahv complains that "nothing whatever in the play has prepared us for this exhibition of saintliness" at the end of *Vichy*. Miller's ending here in *After The Fall* also lacks adequate dramatic preparation. While Rahv concedes that "everything is possible in life," drama requires "the seeming inevitability of an end, however tragic, which is truly a conclusion vindicating the organizing principle as a whole" (227). Quentin's "apotheosis" at the close of the play, though important in that it emphasizes Miller's insistence that friendship is possible even after Quentin's ruinous past, does not seem to spring logically from the action that precedes his revelation.

Raymond Reno argues that because Miller "recognizes neither Paradise nor Paradise Regained, the Christhood of a Quentin is without historical significance and, unsynchronized with any concept of redemption in time, all the more meaningless" (1084). Reno believes that *After The Fall* illustrates the "locked irony of Miller's theology, for the only infinite love he can admit of--at least in *After The Fall*--is the love of Christ for himself, the love by which he eternally forgives himself, 'again and again forever'" (1084). Reno concludes that Miller, "even in undermining the Christian myth, can find no other repository of symbols for his own most intense concerns...To express his passionate conviction that there is an unseen web between people and a consequent necessity for mutual responsibility Miller can do nothing but draw a Christ figure"

(1085). If Miller's play were to end with Quentin's revelation about forgiveness, Reno's comments would be especially cogent. But Quentin goes on to "touch the world again" (114) by symbolically forgiving "his people," and by joining hands with Holga at the end of the play in an explicit symbol of touching the world through friendship. Because Quentin goes beyond forgiveness to action, he transcends Reno's image of Quentin as a solipsistic Christ that merely "forgives himself."

Stinson goes so far as to suggest that Maggie's death is a *felix culpa*, or "happy fault" for Quentin. Just as St. Augustine speaks of the sin of Adam and Eve as *felix culpa*, because it led to the miraculous redemptive incarnation of Christ, so does Maggie's death "prompt and enable Quentin to come to his vision" (239). While Stinson admits this is a bit of a stretch, it is consistent with the idea that Maggie's death does lead to a new vision of love and friendship for Quentin. While Quentin calls for a selfless love (*agape*, Christian love) that enables us to forgive, he blends this with friendship (*philia*), which can help him touch the world again. Though these two loves are often held to be exclusive, Paul Wadell contends that they can work in conjunction, as they seem to in the play: "*agape* is not a love that leaves friendship behind, but a love which describes the ever-widening scope of friendship whose members are trying to be like God. With *agape* we come, like God, to make friends with the world" (74).

This seems to be Quentin's attitude at the end of the play, as he comes, like God--not the God-as-judge of his past--but to make friends with the world. Quentin's revelation, that through love and courage we can learn eternally to forgive the urge to kill, allows him to "love the world again" starting with the characters in the play. As an illustration

of the fact that "the knowing isn't all," Quentin reconciles himself in friendship to the broken relationships of the past, as "*all his people face him*" (114). He goes to his Mother, "*gestures as though he touched her,*" and they smile at one another (114). He "magically" makes his dejected father and brother stand, then goes on to Felice, who "*is about to raise her hand in blessing*" when Quentin instead "*shakes her hand*" (114). Quentin's rejection of Felice's praise is an ostensibly simple act, but it signals an important change for him. Quentin recognizes that if he is going to make his belief--"underneath we're all profoundly friends" (61)--a reality, he must change from the man who demanded worship to a man who values women and men as equals. His gesture of a "handshake" to Felice indicates that he has changed, and that he can approach people on equal grounds, as a friend. Lou, Mickey and Maggie all follow Quentin as he "*climbs toward Holga*" (114). They greet one another with a "Hello," Quentin "*holding out his hand*" (114). They move away together, followed by Quentin's "people," and "darkness takes them all" (114).

The play's final image, of Quentin and Holga joined in a relationship founded on friendship, with Quentin "ascending" to her with hand outstretched in a gesture of friendship emphasizes the thematic importance of friendship in *After The Fall*. Miller seems consciously to avoid a passionate embrace between them, which would detract from his obvious emphasis on the couple's friendship. Alter calls Holga "balanced and integrated, the complete female self" (133), and many argue that Miller's wife, Ingeborg Morath, who Miller often describes as his dearest friend, is undoubtedly a model for Holga.<sup>4</sup> The fact that they have finally come together not only indicates that Quentin believes that

he can give himself to another person after experiencing the "death of love," but it also suggests that their relationship brings new meaning into Quentin's world. Innocence is dead in this post-Edenic world, but Quentin and Holga are symbolic of the regeneration that is possible "after the Fall." Otten writes that "Holga lends meaning to Quentin's long search and, at the end, validates his recovery, however tenuous, from the Fall" (147).

Otten's point that Quentin's new-found "recovery" is "tenuous" is well taken. Quentin is the first to admit that his past lacks the "evidence" to initiate a new relationship. After fully revealing the depths of his problems with Maggie, Quentin's ability to be Holga's friend may be illusory. This is especially true considering that the play does not feature the dramatic action that would justify Quentin's hope at the play's end.

For Quentin, "knowing" changes him from a man whose world had lost its meaning to a man that is willing to "touch the world again," specifically through his promise of friendship to Holga. Bigsby writes that *After The Fall* is a genuine aspect of a dialectic that sees confrontation as the necessary prelude to a renewed faith in the 'humanist heresy' of belief in man" (49). Perhaps Quentin now understands that though we may not all be friends, we are all capable of friendship through the love and forgiveness he has described.

Koppenhaver writes that Quentin has realized that "one must be concerned about one person, then he can in turn learn how to become concerned about others....near the end of the play, Quentin can say the right thing. He can affirm his being and reach out to the world once more" (209). Schleuter adds that Quentin emerges at the end of the play as "a participant in the moral relatedness of humankind" (100). While

Schleuter does not use the word friendship in her description, "the moral relatedness of humankind" is synonymous with Miller's view of friendship. If in *All My Sons* Miller laid "siege to the fortress of unrelatedness" (CP 131), *After The Fall* describes a fortress of relatedness, of friendship--which is courageously constructed only after the realization that it is tenuously built upon the ashes of Dachau and its predecessors.

While Miller has yet not since dealt with the subject of friendship as fully as in *After The Fall*, friendship, that force in society that allows people to "connect" through selfless love, continues to be an important element in his plays. *Incident at Vichy*, his next play, ends with an Austrian prince, Von Berg, giving his life for a Jew that is facing death in a sacrificial act of friendship unique to Miller's drama. Quentin admits that his discovery is "not certainty" (114), and Miller's characters are undoubtedly more tentative about initiating relationships, as long as they attempt to change the "vastness of the world into a home" (*Essays* 73), friendship will remain as a means of initiating that conversion.

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Notes to Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup> Rajakrishnan tells Miller that "Leonard Moss has quoted you as saying that Albert Camus' novel, *The Fall* provided the point of departure for *After The Fall*" (198) Miller goes on to explain the connection, but Moss' book on Miller, *Arthur Miller*, Twayne, 1967, deals with the connection only briefly. Moss, through the insight of a colleague, was one of the first critics to comment on the parallels in the two works. Bigsby discusses the connection as implicit in his book, *Confrontation and Commitment: A Study of Contemporary American Drama*, 44-47, as does Alfred Cismaru in his essay, "Before and After *The Fall*." *Forum* (Houston) 11 1974: 67-71.

<sup>2</sup> Critics have not chosen any version of *After The Fall* as a "definitive" text. The play was published originally in *The Saturday Evening Post*, but this version has been radically re-written, and is not a suitable text. The Viking edition, used here and throughout, is touted as "the final stage version," and seems to reflect Miller's changes in the version of that is included in his *Collected Plays, Volume II*.

<sup>3</sup> Lazere argues that Sartre and Camus share an ethic—that each individual is obliged, "as Dostoevsky put it, we are responsible to every man for every man"—to a point. The "main point of difference" is that for Sartre, that commitment must be "total," whereas for Camus, "in his wariness of any absolute value, such a commitment makes superhuman demands and must be moderated by some degree of self-fulfilling appreciation of life" (189-90). Lazere also comments that Camus was working against the "narcissistic obsession of modern literature for the self...which keep us from the communion necessary for meaningful action" (197). Lazere concludes that Camus "had the will to progress beyond the negative truth of *The Fall* toward a literature dramatically affirming social solidarity" (198). Perhaps an example of that kind of "affirmative" literature can be found in Camus' short story "The Growing Stone" (in the collection *Exile and the Kingdom*, which followed *The Fall*), in which the protagonist rejects official social institutions in favor of friendship, "the personal bond between men" (Lazere 208).

<sup>4</sup> Miller, who rarely acknowledges any autobiographical references in his work admits that Holga is "remarkably like" (140) Morath in his interview with Bigsby.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Friendship in Miller's Later Drama**

Miller's later drama has been generally been characterized as undistinguished, though a few of his later plays have been favorably received. Perhaps Miller's most successful work since *After The Fall* is *The Price* (1968), which many critics call Miller's best play since *The Crucible*. Miller has continued to experiment with form in the last thirty years or so, writing plays as divergent as "a vaudeville," *The American Clock* in 1980, his version of Genesis with *The Creation of the World and Other Business* in 1972, and two "memory plays" in 1986, entitled *Danger: Memory!* While, as Neil Carson suggests, "since the success of *the Price*, Miller has seen his American reputation begin to decline" (29), Miller is still a formidable figure in American drama.

*Incident at Vichy* is the last Miller play to receive major critical attention. Miller's own comment seem to mirror the lack of scholarly appraisal of his later work in his autobiography, *Timebends*. *All My Sons*, *The Death of a Salesman* and *After The Fall* yield 105 pages of comment, while *Incident at Vichy*, *The Price*, *The Creation of the World*



*and Other Business, The Archbishop's Ceiling, The American Clock, Elegy for a Lady, Some Kind of Love Story, I Can't Remember Anything* and *Clara* only merit a total of 24 pages. Though critics have been unable to place Miller's later plays within the context of his overall work, the underlying topic of friendship continues to be a coherent element in some of Miller's later drama.

Miller has called *Incident at Vichy* a "companion piece" (Hayman 14) for *After The Fall*, in that it explores the themes of guilt and responsibility related to the Holocaust. Miller makes the connection between the two plays clear when he states that *After The Fall* was "a battle against disintegration," that even after Quentin admits that "the connection" between people has "disintegrated," his "choice is still there, necessary and implicit." This choice, "to choose hope because you are alive and don't commit suicide, which implies a certain illusionism and so forth but the only hope there is nevertheless" (Hayman 14), is an integral part of *Vichy* as well, where Von Berg continues to hope that friendship is possible despite the depravity of Nazism.

*Vichy* takes place in "A place of detention...perhaps an armory, or part of a railroad station not used by the public" (CP II 245), where six men and a boy of fifteen await interrogation by the Germans to determine whether they are Jews. The interrogation takes place off stage, and while some of the men are taken and others released, the play focuses on three men: A German Major, Von Berg, an Austrian prince, and Leduc, a French doctor. As Lawrence D. Lowenthal writes, "the dramatic core of the play is the moral debate between the psychiatrist Leduc, the German Major, and Von Berg" (37).

Initially, Von Berg is a disinterested observer, as he knows that "If this is all to catch Jews they will let me go" (CP II 276). Gradually, the prince becomes engaged in the action as he empathizes with the fate of these men. When the "Boy" asks Von Berg to return his mother's wedding ring that the boy was hocking out of desperation, Von Berg is "*deeply affected*," and promises to try (279). After Von Berg's commitment, the Boy "*immediately stands*" and moves to the corridor in an attempt to escape (279). Leduc "*tries to draw him back*," saying "You can't, it'll take three men to..." (279) Leduc utters a fundamental truth for Miller here, that these prisoners must bind together as friends, or perish as individuals; just as the individual soldiers had to find unity through friendship to reach their goals in *Situation Normal*, and Chris Keller's father Joe had to understand his "connection" with "all his sons" to exist in a "civil" society.

A Major walks in on their escape efforts to announce "That's impossible. Don't try it" (280). Leduc asks the Major to help get them out, and the two have an interesting debate, which illustrates their fundamental differences. Leduc argues that he is "better for the world" than the Major because he is "incapable of doing what you are doing" (280). While the Major insists that he "has feelings about" what he is forced to do, Leduc tells him that feelings make no difference whatever "unless you get us out of here" (280). Leduc promises that if the Major helps them, he will always remember him as "a decent German, an honorable German...I will love you as long as I live. Will anyone do that now?" (280) The Major asks, "That means so much to you--that someone love you?" Leduc: "That I be worthy of someone's love, yes. And respect." Major: It's amazing; you don't understand anything. Nothing of that kind

is left, don't you understand that yet?" Leduc: It is left in me." Major: "There are no persons anymore, don't you see that? There will never be persons again. What do I care if you love me? Are you out of your mind? What am I, a dog that I must be loved?" (280-1).

Lowenthal writes that "Responsibility and ethics in a fallen world become meaningless words to the Major" (38). Though the major tries to argue that he is a decent man, his "civilized instincts are nullified by his uncivilized acts" (Lowenthal 38). While the Major's moral impulses may be "deadened" as a result of his participation in the Nazi regime, Leduc's idealism is challenged as well. The Major asks, "if you were released, and the others were kept...would you refuse?" (281). Leduc is forced to admit that he would not refuse, and when pressed with "and walk out that door with a light heart?" he responds, "I don't know" (281).

Other men are called, and Leduc and Von Berg are left alone. Von Berg tells Leduc that he was "close to suicide in Austria" not only because the Nazis murdered his musicians, but also because "when I told the story to many of my friends there was hardly any reaction. That was almost worse. Do you understand such indifference?" (284). Von Berg's situation implicitly parallels Miller's experience during the McCarthy era, where many of his friends in the artistic community were "murdered" professionally through blacklisting. Just as Von Berg will be forced to realize his complicity with the Holocaust, Quentin had to admit that he was indifferent to the death of his friend Lou, and even may have wished for it. This theme of universal guilt is, of course, central to both *Vichy* and *After The Fall*.

Leduc tells Von Berg that "all this suffering" is "pointless" and must be "repeated again and again forever" because "it cannot be shared"

(CP II 285). Von Berg begins to realize (as he echoes Leduc's words) that perhaps through an act of friendship, a sharing can take place between the two men that may lead to a break in the cycle of pointless suffering. Knowing that he will be released, Von Berg, "*with great difficulty*" (CP II 289) says, "I would like to be able to part with your friendship. Is that possible?" Leduc responds with the kind of speech that led Robert Brustein to describe the entire work as "not so much a play as another solemn sermon on Human Responsibility" (26):

Prince, in my profession one gets the habit of looking at oneself quite impersonally. It is not you I am angry with. In one part of my mind, it is not even this Nazi. I am only angry that I should have been born before the day when man has accepted his own nature; that he is *not* reasonable, that he is full of murder, that his ideals are only the little tax he pays for the right to hate and kill with a clear conscience. I am only angry that, knowing this, I still deluded myself. That there was not time to truly make part of myself what I know, and to teach others the truth. (CP II 289)

Von Berg, determined to "prove himself" to Leduc, tells him that "there are people who would find it easier to die than stain one finger with this murder" (CP II 289). He again "desperately" asks for Leduc's "friendship" (CP II 289), yet seems to be asking for a superficial token of comradeship, and not active friendship. Leduc appears to sense this, realizing that if Von Berg truly wants his friendship, first Leduc must

force him to face reality (as a friend) because he “owes him the truth” (CP II 289).

The truth, from Leduc’s perspective, is that Von Berg has a “hidden” hatred for the Jews, that “each man has his Jew...the man whose death leaves you relieved that you are not him” and that Leduc is “not moved” by Von Berg’s thoughts of suicide, but calls him to action instead (CP II 290). If Von Berg could have realized that his cousin, one “Baron Kessler,” was a Nazi, and further, that “Kessler was in part...doing your will. You might have done something then, with your standing, aside from shooting yourself!” (CP II 290) Von Berg’s reaction is patently melodramatic, but sets the stage for his sacrificial act of friendship at the end of the play: “Von Berg, *in full horror, his face upthrust, calling: What can ever save us? He covers his face with his hands*” (CP II 290).

Of course, Leduc’s “truth” is Quentin’s truth, with only minor revisions. Quentin, full of hidden hatreds, came to realize that he was “relieved at the death” of his friend Lou, and even at Maggie’s. Quentin’s revelation of truth comes too late for Lou and Maggie, and his answer to Von Berg’s question, “What can ever save us?” is “the knowing,” which can lead one to “touch the world again.” *After The Fall* ends without Quentin acting on his knowledge any more than reaching out to touch Holga’s hand, which does not seem to compensate dramatically for the “murder” that he has participated in throughout the play.

In *Incident at Vichy*, Miller is dealing with the same “truths,” the same moral realities, yet Von Berg does more than reach out his hand to Leduc. He will give his life in an act of friendship, embodying the figure

of Christ that Quentin often posed as, but lacked the courage to truly emulate.

Lowenthal identifies, Von Berg's revelation as the drama's "crisis situation, when individual moral action can only be equated with self destruction and when evil is seen as a constant in human relations, all rational motives for decency decay and the world collapses into moral anarchy" (39). Lowenthal goes on to write that up to this point in the play, "Miller seems to have presented a nihilistic vision. Von Berg, however, is Miller's answer to despair" (39).

Von Berg returns from his interrogation with the Nazis with a "*white pass*" in his hand. He walks past Leduc, then "*suddenly turns*" and gives the pass to Leduc, with "Take it! Go!" (CP II 291). Leduc insists that he wasn't asking for such a sacrifice: "You don't owe me this!" (CP II 291). Von Berg had twice before asked for Leduc's friendship, now, through a sacrificial act of kindness, he has it. Von Berg, told minutes before by Leduc that "you cannot really put yourself in my place" (CP II 290), has done exactly that, and has fulfilled Jesus' definition of the greatest act of love--laying down your life for your friends (Jn. 15:13). Von Berg's action is undoubtedly the most powerful act of friendship in Miller's drama, and hearkens back to the forceful images of friendship found in Miller's novel and short stories, but most often lacking in his drama.

Philip Rahv undermines the potency of Von Berg's sacrifice, calling it "a melodramatic contrivance pure and simple, a sheer *coup de theatre*" (227). Rahv goes on to complain that "nothing whatever in the play has prepared us for this exhibition of saintliness," and though he concedes that "everything is possible in life," drama requires "the seeming

inevitability of an end, however tragic, which is truly a conclusion vindicating the organizing principle as a whole" (227). While Von Berg's actions are clearly not "inevitable," there is ample foreshadowing in the play that suggests that Von Berg may give his life, most specifically his assertion that "there are people who would find it easier to die than stain one finger with this murder" (CP II 289). Edward Murray argues that "Von Berg's climactic behavior is prepared for step-by-step, yet that preparation is never crude or transparent" (165). Rahv's comments seem more cogently applied to *After The Fall* (which he said was "so pretentious and defensive that virtually nothing good can be said about it" [225]), whose ending was even less a conclusion that "vindicated" the dramatic action that preceded it.

Shiela Huftel argues that "the prince's action transforms guilt into responsibility, into action" (236). Lowenthal adds that "Von Berg's act is absurd in that it has no rational basis for action, but it elevates him to moral authenticity" (39). Miller, when asked if Von Berg's act was "an implied answer to the ethical nihilism that threatened to overtake Europe during the Nazi era," answered:

I regard Von Berg's act...yes, it is an implied answer to the transvaluation of values that took place under Hitler....In *Incident at Vichy*, Von Berg defines himself through the act which in a way sets him apart from the rest of mankind. And that a saving act should come from what is normally regarded as a decadent personality (he represents a social class which, if not totally vanished, is certainly in decay) might sound strange. And, yet, there he is--for some ironical

reasons, he is the one who can make this kind of a gesture. What it says, I feel, is that humanity can not be programmed finally. The unexpected could happen. Who knows but that the world will be saved by a most unlikely personality...at the last moment. And if this happens we shall see that the reasons for it were unpredictable and obvious. (Rajakrihnan 200)

Miller's comments are remarkable in that they reveal that as late as 1980, he expresses an idealism that many critics believe left him after the Holocaust and his McCarthy experiences. His response also clearly states that Von Berg's act of friendship is a "saving" act, which further supports the thesis that Miller has always believed that friendship has the power to "save" society.

Lowenthal determines that "his [Von Berg's] act frees him from alienation and imposes a moral coherence upon his previously contingent world" (40). Though he never uses the word (nor does any other critic or reviewer seem to), Lowenthal has described in Von Berg's act an act of friendship. Throughout Miller's work, from his novel to short stories to dramas, friendship is able to do precisely what Lowenthal has described: free people from alienation and impose a moral coherence to an incoherent world.

In the novel *Focus*, Lawrence Newman's world becomes disordered when he is identified and victimized as a Jew simply because he began wearing eyeglasses. It is restored only when Newman, through friendship, reaches out to another in friendship, which reestablishes meaning. Tony Calabrese's world becomes incoherent when his hopes



about his grandfather's inheritance become an illusion. Through his friendship with a Navy captain, his purpose is restored as a worker and a person. Chris Keller was freed from alienation through the sacrifice of his men, but upon returning to civilian life, his alienation grows, as does life's incoherence, as he is unable to find similar acts of selflessness in his competitive community. In *Situation Normal* Miller wrote that many military men would be ruined if they were unable to transfer their emotions of love and friendship in civilian life. Willy Loman and Quentin both live in a morally incoherent world, which leads to alienation for both of them. Neither Willy or Quentin are freed through an act of sacrificial friendship, though Quentin hopes that his ability to forgive himself will lead to friendship with Holga.

*Incident at Vichy* is an important point of reference in Miller's later drama, because friendship will never again be as central a topic for his plays as it is in *Vichy*. While it is sometimes discussed, and at times important, as it is in *The Price*, it will not again reach the significance it does in *Vichy*. Though it may be impossible to agree with Howard Taubman's review, which argues that *Vichy* "returns the theatre to greatness" (44), or even Murray's concession to Taubman that *Vichy* is "one of the most important plays of our time" (178), *Vichy* does feature a dramatic act of sacrifice and friendship unmatched in any of Miller's subsequent plays.

After *The Fall* and *Incident at Vichy* were written for the Repertory Theater of Lincoln Center, a group of dedicated theatre people (including Kazan and Clurman) that hoped to compare with the best repertory companies in Europe. These hopes were shattered, when General Manager Robert Whitehead complained about budget deficiencies, and

left the company with Miller and Kazan when he discovered that the Board of Directors was searching for a new manager. *After The Fall* and *Vichy* ran 49 and 99 performances respectively, and while both dramas were successful at the box office, the critical assault battered Miller personally.

Miller writes that his experience with the Lincoln Center was positive in that it "seemed to indicate that had I been fortunate enough to live in a period when a high-level repertory or art theatre existed, I would certainly have written more plays than I had" (TB 538). On the other hand, Miller felt that the prospect of writing for the commercial theater "and the often frivolous junking of years of work after a single thoughtless review, have cast a pall of futility over the enterprise of writing plays, at least for me" (TB 538).

*The Price*, Miller's first play after *Vichy* seemed destined to fail after Jack Warden and David Burns, two original cast members, became ill and had to be replaced only weeks before the New York premiere. To complicate matters further, Miller and director Ulu Grosbard had a falling out that led to Miller taking over the direction for the last week of Broadway previews. Surprisingly, when the play finally opened, it was called Miller's most successful work in years<sup>1</sup>, ran for 425 performances in New York, and then moved to London, where it played for another year (Carson 29).

Miller returns to the family and friendship in *The Price*, as two sons, Victor and Walter Franz, meet some forty years after their father fell victim to the market crash of '29, to sell off some of the family's possessions "in the attic of a Manhattan brownstone soon to be torn down" (CP II 284). Walter left home to pursue his medical career, while

Victor stayed at home to support his father, giving up on his promising future as a scientist to become a policeman. As Alan Downer remarks, the Franz brothers are "the Loman brothers grown older: Happy (Walter) who single-mindedly settled for a successful career, Biff (Victor) who surrendered his ambitions to a life of domestic responsibility" (203).

The conflict in the play is easy enough to predict. Victor is resentful that Walter "deserted" the family to follow his selfish ambition; Walter reveals that their father had his own money stashed away in the bank and that Victor was aware of it. Walter maintains their father exploited Victor's love and used him as a source of income and help when he was obviously self-sufficient.

As he does so often, Miller employs the language of friendship in the play. When Victor says that he doesn't understand why Walter is bringing up events from the past, Victor's wife Esther answers, "I think he's being perfectly clear, Victor. He's asking for your friendship" (CP II 322). Victor is forced to admit that he knew that his father had money, and even asked him for some so that he could finish school, but his father just laughed, "like it was some kind of wild joke" (327). Victor walked out of the house in frustration, and wound up in "Bryant Park behind the public library" (327), where he witnessed a sight that is clearly out of Miller's youth:

The grass was covered with men. Like a battlefield; a big open-air flophouse. And not bums--some of them still had shined shoes and good hats, busted businessmen, lawyers, skilled mechanics. Which I'd seen a hundred times. But suddenly--you know?--I saw it. *Slight pause.* There was no

mercy. Anywhere. *Glancing at the chair at the end of the table:* One day you're the head of the house, at the end of the table, and suddenly you're shit. Overnight. And I tried to figure out that laugh--How could he be holding out on me when he loved me? (327)

Scenes like the one Victor describes above led Miller to view friendship as a way to ameliorate the suffering of others. In describing his own father's collapse during the Depression, Miller seems to be writing a prologue for *The Price*:

By the fall of 1932 it was no longer possible in our house to disguise our fears. Producing even the fifty-dollar-a-month mortgage payment was becoming a strain, and my brother had had to drop out of NYU to assist my father in another of his soon-to-fail coat businesses. There was an aching absence in the house of any ruling idea or leadership, my father by now having fallen into the habit of endlessly napping in his time at home. (TB 109)

Victor maintains that even though his father didn't need his finances, he needed his friendship. He says that his mother "kicked him in the face," and that his dad "couldn't believe in anybody anymore, and it was unbearable to me" (CP II 328). Victor, desperate to justify his actions before his wife, who has suffered financial hardship because of his decision, and his brother, who has become successful because he was never burdened by Victor's sense of responsibility, explains his

actions with: "I thought if I stuck with him, if he could see that somebody was still...I can't explain it; I wanted to...stop it from falling apart" (329) Walter can't let it go at that, he finds it necessary to "prove" to Victor that he has been manipulated, and wasted his life for an ideal that never was:

Is it really that something fell apart? Were we really brought up to believe in one another? We were brought up to succeed weren't we? Why else would he respect me so and not you? What fell apart? What was here to fall apart? Was there ever any love here? What was unbearable is not that it all fell apart, it was that there was never anything here.  
(329)

Victor refuses to accept his brother's perspective, and as is typical in Miller's drama, we have "opposing forces" that will never be fully reconciled. Despite Biff's attempts to get Willy to see the "truth," Willy goes to his grave without reconciliation. Quentin's question, "Is it that I'm looking for some simple-minded constancy that never is and never was?" (*Fall* 38), embodies the conflict between the Franz brothers. The Major in *Vichy* cries that humanity has collapsed with "there are no persons any more" (*CP II* 280), while Von Berg shows that moral action can lead to change. Miller writes that Victor and Walter cannot resolve their clash because "neither can accept that the world needs both of them--the dutiful man of order and the ambitious, selfish creator who invents new cures" (*TB* 542). While Miller sounds objective, by describing Walter as "selfish" and Victor (as if the name wasn't enough) "dutiful," Miller clearly leans toward the man that chooses friendship

over the man that chooses success at the expense of others. In an interview with Ronald Hayman Miller further clarifies his partiality for Victor: "What I was interested in in *The Price* was what it takes to be a person who refuses to be swept away and seduced to the values of the society. It is in one sense the price of integrity. In other words the policeman has refused to adopt the sex and success motives of the society" (1).

Whatever Miller's feelings about the Franz brothers, Victor's final statement regarding his decision to stay with his father after the Crash is justification enough: "I just didn't want him to end up on the grass. And he didn't. That's all it was, and I don't need anything any more" (CPII 330). Even though Walter must try to get the last word in with, "You lay down and quit, and that's the long and short of all your ideology" (330), we are clearly intended to assume that Victor responded in love and friendship by staying with his father. Even Victor's father cannot diminish the act by manipulating his son. Friendship and giving have their own rewards, and while Victor may not have received his occupational compensation, his life reflects the trust and commitment that he gave his father. The closing scene in Act I of Miller's *The American Clock* (1980) provides a gloss on Victor's relationship with his father. In *Clock*, the young man Lee (obviously based on Miller, right down to a stolen bike and mother named Rose) loans his dad a quarter so that he can buy himself a hot-dog for lunch (156). While Lee and his father, Moe, pretend nothing had happened, Lee admits something had: "By the time we got to Forty-second Street, the Depression was practically over! (*He laughs.*) And in a funny way it was-- (*He touches his breast*) --in here...even though I knew we had a long bad time ahead of

us" (156). The friendship between Lee and Moe "ended" the Depression, while Victor's friendship toward his father was an attempt to end his father's despair as well. Both *The Price* and *The American Clock* move away from the patricide inherent in *All My Sons*, and even the hostility of *Salesman*; offering an alternative image of love and reconciliation between father and son.

*The Price* ends with a wonderful moment that captures the essence of Victor's "victory" over Walter and the selfishness he represents. While Walter goes out alone out to the street, Victor tells Esther that they can "still make the picture, if you like" (331). They had been planning all night to take in a movie, and Victor brought along a suit to change into, to get out of his policemen's uniform. As Victor goes to "*rip the plastic wrapper off*," Esther says, "don't bother," takes his arms and "*walks out with her life*" (331). Esther's acceptance of Victor's "attire" is obviously an acceptance of the choices he made that brought him to his occupation--most importantly his commitment to his father. That commitment and kindness are now reflected in his dedication to his job and his family. Victor's rewards for his goodness are now obvious. The play's final image is simple, enduring, and life affirming. Downer calls it "peaceful...infinitely moving" (206).

The destruction that ruined Victor's father's life ended when Victor made a positive moral choice--to show love and friendship to his father. Similarly, Von Berg stopped the devastation, even if only temporarily, in Vichy through sacrifice. With its richly suggestive setting, frequent humor, and memorable characters (especially the furniture dealer Solomon), *The Price* is one of Miller's most enduring plays.

Friendship is mentioned in Miller's plays after *The Price*, but it does not function as a unifying theme or topic. *The Creation of the World and Other Business* opened in 1972, and Frank Rich's review summed up critical opinion about the play: "Arthur Miller created *The Creation of the World and Other Business*, and Broadway saw that it was not good." The play closed after a "brief and unprofitable run" (Carson 137). *Creation* adds nothing to Miller's preoccupation with friendship, and is generally considered Miller's weakest play, though some, like Schleuter, assert that the play "is an integral piece of the Miller canon" (120).

*The Archbishop's Ceiling* and *The American Clock* were published together in 1989 with an introduction that Miller entitled "Conditions of Freedom: Two Plays of the Seventies" (vii). Miller writes that "from the vantage point of the early seventies...we seemed to have lost awareness of community, of what we rightfully owe each other and what we owe ourselves" (xiii). This comment echoes Miller's sentiments from his essay "On Social Plays," written almost forty years earlier, in 1956. In it, Miller argued that contemporary drama could never reach the heights of Greek drama, because the nature of the community and how each person saw themselves as an integral part of that community, has changed dramatically:

The preoccupation of the Greek drama with ultimate law, with the Grand Design, so to speak, was therefore an expression of a basic assumption of the people, who could not yet conceive, luckily, that any man could long prosper unless his *polis* prospered. The individual was at one with his society; his conflicts with it were, in our terms, like family conflicts the opposing sides of which



nevertheless shared a mutuality of feeling and responsibility.  
(*Essays* 52)

In 1989, as in 1956, Miller hoped that the world would follow the Greek example of community, and see themselves "together, moving into the same boat." Miller sees the *polis* as his ideal social model, embodying his personal and professional vision of community. Personally, the *polis* appeals to Miller because it was linked through friendship, and had a clear vision of the common good. For Miller, modern society lacks both elements, as do so many of his characters. As we have noted, Miller sees his characters' actions as an attempt to convert the "vastness" of the world into a "home." The model of the *polis* reduces the vastness of modern society, and perhaps promises a home for Miller's characters.

None of the characters from *The Archbishop's Ceiling* or *The American Clock* are able to "connect" through friendship. Recalling the Depression days' memories of their youth, Sidney, a boyhood friend of Lee's in *The American Clock*, says, "I look back at it all now, and I don't know about you, but it seems it was friendlier. Am I right?" Lee answers, "I'm not sure it was friendlier. Maybe people just cared more" (202). While Lee's comments sound like an oxymoron, they seem to illustrate the tendency in Miller's drama to sentimentalize friendship into a vague longing for something long lost. Unlike Chris Keller's definition of friendship that led his men to die for one another, or the friendship portrayed in his novel and short stories, which frequently leads to positive change, Miller's dramas most often identify the disintegration of friendship--which has now been reduced to a lost memory.

*The Archbishop's Ceiling* clearly indicates the dissipation of friendship, in that none of the main characters, three of them prominent writers, can respond to each other through friendship. Sigmund, a novelist in a totalitarian state, has had his manuscript seized by his government because of its subversive content. Late in the play, word comes that the government is returning the manuscript. Adrian, Sigmund's American writer-friend, encourages Sigmund to go with him to America to seek asylum and publish his novel, but Sigmund, unable to trust anyone, is cautious. He fears that "in New York I will have only some terrible silence" (96). At the peak of his mistrust and frustration, Sigmund asks Adrian "Why have you come here? What do you want in this country?" Maya, a long-time friend of both men, speaking for Adrian, says, "For friendship! Oh, yes--his love for you. I believe it!" (100). Unfortunately, Sigmund does not believe it; in this room with possible microphones on the Ceiling "where rooms may or may not be bugged, where friends may or may not be trusted" (Schleuter 133), Sigmund decides to stay and face the consequences of his art.

Miller's wrote four one-acts in the 80's, *Some Kind of Love Story* (Later adapted for the screen by Miller as *Almost Everybody Wins*) *An Elegy for a Lady*, *I Can't Remember Anything* and *Clara*. All four plays are little more than sketches, but often displaying a lyrical quality rarely found in Miller. *I Can't Remember Anything*, which Miller wrote to express his love for two of his neighbors in Connecticut, Sandy and Louisa Calder (TB 503), is the only play of the four that deals specifically with friendship.

The play is a glimpse into the lives of two aged neighbors who share the better part of an afternoon discussing, often arguing, about

everything from chicken soup to their political predilections, but always expressing their gentle feelings of friendship. Their friendship is palpable throughout, from their initial greeting, "I saw you." "Well, that's a greeting, isn't it. I saw you" (4), to Leo's poignant phone call to Leonora to make sure she got home all right. Other Miller plays, most notably perhaps *Death of a Salesman*, discuss friendship at length, but in *I Can't Remember Anything*, Miller is able to capture the essence of friendship without using the word even once.

In simple acts like Leo preparing dinner for Leonora, or remembering that today is her birthday Miller crafts a play that may be ultimately unfulfilling dramatically, yet presents a lovely picture of two friends enduring life together. Despite the adverse reception of *I Can't Remember Anything* (appearing in 1986 with Clara as *Danger: Memory!*), which closed after 33 performances, the play has a lasting, heartfelt quality.

Miller's most recent play, *The Ride Down Mount Morgan*, is scheduled for its Broadway premiere this spring. The plot of Miller's play is a familiar one in film and print, a man with two wives is in an auto accident, which leads both wives to the hospital for their inevitable meeting. Lyman Felt, the wealthy, selfish insurance salesman at the center of this play, tries to justify his decisions throughout the play, but never manages to be convincing. Despite Miller's attempt to depict a man struggling with his all-too-human frailties, Lyman is really only an amoral user who has managed to love no one but himself.

At the end of Act I, Lyman, on the phone with his first wife, Theodora, abruptly asks her to "fly up" and meet him, because "it suddenly hit" him "how quickly it's all going by" (54). When Theodora

obviously declines, saying she has a "meeting," Lyman asks, "You ever have the feeling that you never got to really *know* anybody?" This line echoes Guido the pilot's words from *The Misfits*, who says to Marilyn Monroe's character, Rosalyn, "How do you get to know somebody, kid? I can't make a landing. And I can't get up to God, either. Help me. I never said help me in my life. I don't know anybody. Will you give me a little time? Say yes" (Miller, CP II 80). Guido, like many of Miller's characters, from Chris Keller, to now, Lyman Felt, struggles to find meaning through friendship. Though Chris was able to find friendship in the military, the brutal competition of civilian life seems to preclude it. As Miller's dramas develop, friendship is at best an infrequently realizable goal, as in *Incident at Vichy*, or most often, a hope that is longed for, but never attained.

*The Ride Down Mount Morgan* exemplifies the apparent futility of friendship in Miller's later drama. Lyman states that

We're all in a cave...where we entered to make love or money or fame. It's dark in here, as dark as sleep, and each one moves blindly, searching for another; to touch, hoping to touch and afraid; and hoping, and afraid. So now...now that we're here...what are we going to say? (55)

Lyman has tried to fill the emptiness implied in the lines above by marrying and having a son by his second wife, Leah, with whom he can express his "wilder" side through endless love-making, driving at high speeds in his Porsche and hunting wild game.

Miller seems to lead the reader to conclude that as immoral as Lyman's actions may seem, in truth, he has added so much to the lives of both his wives that they should be thankful. Leah admits that Lyman is

like a kid at a fair; a jelly apple here, a cotton candy there, and then a ride on the loop-the-loop...and it never lets up in him; and somehow it seemed as though he'd lived once before, another life that was completely deprived, and this time around he mustn't miss a single thing. And that's what's so attractive about him--to women, I mean--Lyman's mind is up your skirt but it's such a rare thing to be wanted like that--indifference is what most men feel now--I mean they have appetite but not hunger--and here is such a splendidly hungry man and it's simply...well...precious once you're past twenty-five. (38)

Amazingly, Leah identifies Lyman's most enduring trait as "splendid hunger," but leaves out qualities that are traditionally thought of as necessary in a thriving relationship, like trust, kindness, commitment, etc. As reverent as Leah is in her praise of her beloved Lyman, her words are as empty as Lyman's commitment to her.

Theo has her perfunctory speech that justifies Lyman's actions toward her with:

He had every right to resent me. What did I ever do but correct him? *To Leah:* You don't correct him, do you. You

like him as he is, even now, don't you. And that's the secret, isn't it. *To Lyman:* Well I can do that. I don't need to correct you...or rather pretend to...." (130)

It is obvious that Lyman has needed "correction" for some time, as Leah says, "one honest sentence" from Lyman, and "none of this would have happened" (131). Theo is pathetically hoping to reconcile the past and present, and in her desperation fails to realize what Lyman truly is. She later leaves him in the hospital wondering why she ever tolerated his behavior, saying she has nothing in her any more to give him (135).

Tom, Lyman's lawyer, who is also a Quaker (perhaps inserted to present a one-dimensional image of a holy man who pales in insignificance in comparison to Lyman's vitality), gives both women sound advice when he says: "There is no way to go forward. You must all [Lyman and Theo's daughter Bessie is in the room as well] stop loving him. You must, or he will destroy you. He is an endless string attached to nothing" (134). Lyman desperately shouts his defense, but his words are hollow: "Why? Am I not worthy? Who is not an endless string? A shout, but with the strain of his loss, his inability to connect. Who is attached to something in this world now?--I am human, I am proud of it!--of the glory and the shit!" (134).

Lyman's words align him with Joe Keller, another brash character who, as Miller wrote became aware that he had no "viable connection with his world, his universe, or his society" (*Essays* 130-31). When Joe Keller came to this realization, he went upstairs and put a bullet through his head, but Lyman continues to defend his actions: "In some miserable dark corner of my soul I'm not sure why I'm condemned" (*Ride* 139).

Clearly, one condemns Lyman more readily than Joe Keller, because he is not ashamed of his actions, but proud of them. As his friend Tom says, "Isn't a conscience human? Your shame is the best part of you, for God's sake" (134). Chris Keller calls his father an "animal" because he fails to recognize his connection with others, Lyman has descended to the bestial level as well, devoid of virtue or understanding.

By destroying the lives of those around him through deceit, Lyman becomes an amalgam of three of Miller's best known protagonists: Joe Keller, Willy Loman and Quentin. Like Joe Keller, he presages a "jungle existence," where one has no responsibility or connection with another. Lyman is a Willy Loman who has realized his dream of financial success, but like Willy, lacks the morality that would lead to fulfillment. Just as Willy desperately asked his brother Ben for "all the answers" to his moral dilemmas, Lyman asks Tom, "Is there an answer?" (29). Like Quentin, Lyman manipulates others in the name of love, only to realize that there is murder in his intent. Theodora describes an afternoon in Montauk, when Lyman only half-heartedly warned her of a shark he saw in the water, declaring that Lyman tried to kill her (64-66). This scene is reminiscent of Quentin's admission that he wished for Maggie's death.

Despite the fact that his character is not drawn in detail, Tom's friendship seems to be the only light of hope for Lyman, though Lyman rejects Tom's counsel. Lyman says he has "loved the truth" (78), and when Tom asks him "what's the truth?" (79), Lyman's answer depicts him as a man incapable of being touched by friendship, Tom's or otherwise: "A man can be faithful to himself or to other people--but not to both. At least not happily. We all know this, but it's immoral to admit it--the first law of life is betrayal; why else did those rabbis pick Cain and Abel to

open the Bible?" (79). Of course, the Bible "opens" with the creative act of God and is followed by the harmony of Paradise, but Lyman's theology is quite selective, as Tom points out. Tom states "the Bible doesn't end there, does it" (79), to which Lyman replies: "Jesus Christ? I can't worship self-denial; excuse me, but it's just not true for me, We're all ego kid, ego plus an occasional prayer" (79). Lyman, speaking for humanity in his typical fashion, has succeeded in defining his own limited truth, which is all he will acknowledge. Late in the play, in another attempt to "universalize" his moral corruption, Lyman tells Tom,

Look, we're all the same; a man is a fourteen room house--in the bedroom he's asleep with his intelligent wife, in the living room he's rolling around with some bare-ass girl, in the library he's paying his taxes, in the yard he's raising tomatoes, and in the cellar he's making a bomb to blow it all up. And nobody's different...Except you, maybe. (81)

The play shows that Tom is "not the same," has never cheated on his wife (29), and has a foundation of faith that gives him a quiet strength that Lyman can never fully understand. In fact, the play ends in a scene between Lyman and his nurse, Logan, who, like Tom, values her family. When Lyman asks her what she and her husband and son talk about when they go fishing, she mentions the new shoes they bought. The final scene in the play features Lyman, alone in his hospital bed, exclaiming with *"painful wonder and longing in his face, What a miracle everything is! Absolutely everything!...Imagine...three of them sitting out there together on that lake, talking about their shoes!"* (142).



While Lyman's lines are ambiguous, it is clear that Lyman may be "longing" for the simplicity and truth inherent in his picture of Nurse Logan and her family. Their harmonious life together is in direct contrast with Lyman's isolation and pain. Lyman, a man convinced that "the first law of life is betrayal," now faces the consequences of such a philosophy, perhaps inevitably--alone.

*The Ride Down Mount Morgan* follows the pattern of most of Miller's drama in that it depicts the injustice that prevails when friendship does not function in the lives of his characters. Miller has described part of his technique as a dramatist as "an exposition of the want of value, and you can only do this if the audience itself is constantly trying to supply what's missing" ("Morality" 190). *Mount Morgan*, through the ranting of Lyman Felt, becomes an exposition of the want of value, including friendship. The obvious danger in creating works of art that ask the audience to supply what's missing is that they may not, because many of them, like the author's characters, are unable to identify value in an increasingly alienating universe. Moreover, critics may suggest that Miller cannot supply what's missing because he cannot identify transcendent values.

Tom Driver identifies the weakness that "robs" Miller's work of stature as the following:

Miller deplores the loss of a 'universal moral sanction,' but he does nothing toward the discovery of a conceivable basis for one. In that respect he is, perhaps, no different from the majority of his contemporaries....Miller's strident moralism is a good example of what happens when ideals must be

maintained in an atmosphere of humanistic relativism. There being no objective good and evil, no imperative other than conscience, man himself must be made to bear the full burden of creating his values and living up to them. The immensity of this task is beyond human capacity, even genius. (37)

Henry Popkin voices a similar complaint, writing that the "positive" references in Miller's work are often "brief and not entirely coherent," concluding that "Miller barely *tells* us what the good is, but he is able to *show* us the bad" (59). Referring to *Incident at Vichy*, Lowenthal comes to Miller's defense against Driver's charge, writing that the "moral task" that Driver calls "beyond human capacity" is not, "since Von Berg succeeds in fulfilling it" (41) through his sacrifice at the end of the play. To be fair to Driver, his essay was written five years before *Vichy*, and Bigsby argues that Driver could write with "considerable justice" that Miller failed, "in many of his early plays, to trace moral and social failures to their source in the human character" (20). Bigsby goes on to write that Miller was much more successful in plays like *The Price* and *Vichy* in going beyond "the social and psychological rationalisations of earlier plays" (21).

Implicitly countering Driver's criticism of Miller's work, Barry Gross argues that Miller is "idealistic, to be sure," but that it is "an ideal and an illusion worthy of and necessary to anyone--Chris [Keller] or Miller--who believes in the even older ideal, the even greater illusion, that the world can be saved and that the individual can do something about saving it" (27).

Friendship in Miller's work is most powerful when it is a positive agent of transformation, if not capable of "saving" the world, certainly able to help lead humanity out of isolation and despair and into a "community" of friends. In *Incident at Vichy*, Von Berg answers his own question, "What can ever save us?" (CP II 290) by responding in friendship to Leduc. In Miller's novel, *Focus*, protagonist Lawrence Newman develops from an isolated man who refuses to help a neighbor being assaulted, to a friend who helps a neighbor in need. Friendship in Miller's work tends to degenerate from the heights it reaches in these works because, unlike the Aristotelian or Christian models of friendship, both of which he aspires towards at times, Miller's conception of friendship lacks the unchanging basis that unifies the former models. For Aristotle, all members of the *polis* responded in friendship, because they were all responding to an unchanging ideal of "the good." The good was the virtuous, and the virtuous man knew that friendship was an integral part of the perpetuation of the good life. Christ illustrated what it means to be a friend through His act of love and sacrifice for others, and this standard of sacrifice is immutable as well. For Miller, active, meaningful friendship that could lead to powerful social change was exemplified in the military, a standard he witnessed as he prepared for a screenplay for *The Story of GI. Joe*. Miller's military experiences are catalogued in his book *Situation Normal*, which clearly defines Miller's ideal of friendship. He came to believe that if the civilian community could parallel the military one, friendship would act as a "glue" that would keep society together. Because the men of the military believed in a common goal, and sacrificed for one another in friendship, their lives were filled with meaning and purpose. Miller hoped that America's

common "Belief," that all men are equal, would unify the civilian community, and lead to acts of justice through friendship.

After living through the Depression, Miller was especially aware of the need to support one another when our government had seemed to fail its people. As Miller became the target of the McCarthy Committee, he began to question whether or not friendship was even possible in the face of the betrayal that became pervasive in the artistic community. As friendship becomes increasingly rare for Miller personally, his characters seem to grope and long for the friendship that was a tangible reality in his earlier work. Although Miller does write a few notable exceptions to this growing tendency, like *Incident at Vichy*, most of Miller's later work, especially his drama, depicts the disintegration rather than the regenerative power of friendship.

Jacques Huisman calls Miller a "reverend kind of sage, a recorder of the tribulations of his period and his nation" (231), which may indicate that Miller's view of friendship ultimately reflects the lack of regard for friendship in our culture. In a society that tends to deify individual pursuits and accomplishments, friendship is perhaps sometimes seen as an unnecessary component of a "successful" life. But, however much Miller's representation of friendship may reflect our cultural disregard of it, Miller's work as a whole still clearly identifies friendship as a powerful agent of social change, able to help people struggling to transform "the vastness" of the world into "a home" (*Essays* 73).

Christopher Bigsby, perhaps the world's leading Miller scholar, recently described Miller's art:

He has never seen art as detached from the confused social and psychological world which we all inhabit. He acknowledges our capacity for self-deceit and the contingent nature of the values to which he subscribes. But somewhere, beneath the dulling routines of daily life, beyond the seductive simplicities of ideology or a self-justifying materialism, he insists that there are human necessities that cut across race, class or gender. It is out of those necessities, just as it is out of the near impossibility of perceiving or understanding them, that his theatre is born.

(xv)

From his novel *Focus* in 1944 to his play *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* 1993, friendship has been one of the "necessities" of Miller's art. Some of his characters, like Chris Keller, have been transformed by friendship, and they "preach" its value to any that will listen. Others, like Willy Loman, pathetically mourn the fact that "friendship can no longer be brought to bear" in their broken lives. Still others, like Quentin, shout their belief that "underneath we're all profoundly friends!" (61) only to find that belief shaken. Throughout his oeuvre, friendship is the barometer for social behavior, and when it is thriving in society, justice flourishes; when it is lacking, alienation and despair abide. Friendship, which Miller has referred to as "the glue that holds the country together" (TB 334), also is a unifying element in his works, which will always occupy a position of significance in American Literature.

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Notes to Chapter 5

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<sup>1</sup> Bigsby called *The Price* a "sharp improvement over his last two plays...there is some justification for feeling that Miller has at last emerged from the personal and artistic difficulties which he has experienced since the mid-fifties" (25)

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