

STEVEN R. CENTOLA

All My Sons

Winner of the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for best play of 1947, *All My Sons* is the work that launched Arthur Miller's long and distinguished career in the theatre. While few would argue that it is Miller's best or most important play, no one would dispute the fact that *All My Sons* deserves a special place in the playwright's canon because it constitutes his first major theatrical achievement, displays his extraordinary skill in handling dramatic form, and presages even better things yet to come from one of America's greatest dramatists.

The critical and commercial success of *All My Sons* marks a major turning point in Miller's career, for it came at a time when the young writer was struggling to establish his identity as a literary artist. Having won several awards for playwriting while he was enrolled in undergraduate school at the University of Michigan, Miller continued to develop the texts of stage plays even while supporting himself by working at odd jobs and successfully writing radio plays for the Columbia Workshop (CBS) and the Cavalcade of America (NBC) between the years 1938 and 1943. During the next two years, however, several events occurred that both challenged his commitment to playwriting and advanced his career as a writer. In 1944, Miller was asked to tour army training camps and gather information that could be used to supplement Ernie Pyle's script for the film *The Story of G. I. Joe*. Miller conducted many interviews both with new recruits and veteran soldiers and published the record of his conversations in a book of reportage entitled *Situation Normal*. In the same year, his dream of staging a Broadway production of one of his plays was realized when *The Man Who Had All the Luck* was produced at the Forrest Theater. Unfortunately, the play lasted only four performances and yielded mostly unfavorable reviews from his critics. Although Miller had better luck when *Focus*, his novel attacking anti-semitism in American society, was published in 1945, his disastrous experience with *The Man Who Had All the Luck* caused him to question his ability to write for the stage. He even decided to quit

All My Sons

playwriting if he could not prove to himself with one last effort that he had the talent to write plays. Reflecting on his dissatisfaction with his achievement during the early phase of his career, Miller describes the ultimatum he gave himself:

I was turning thirty then, the author of perhaps a dozen plays, none of which I could truly believe were finished. I had written many scenes, but not a play. A play, I saw then, was an organism of which I had fashioned only certain parts. The decision formed to write one more, and if it turned out to be unrealizable, I would go into another line of work.¹

The play that resulted was *All My Sons*, and with its success and the subsequent acclaim won by both *Death of a Salesman* in 1949 and *The Crucible* in 1953, Miller secured his place as one of the leading dramatists to emerge from the post-World War II American theatre.

Miller's success with the dramatic form of *All My Sons*, ironically, had much to do with his failure with *The Man Who Had All the Luck*. According to Miller, one day while lying on the beach, he suddenly discovered how "a simple shift of relationships [in *The Man Who Had All the Luck*] . . . made at least two of the plays that followed possible, and a great deal else besides" (*Collected Plays*, pp. 14–15). What Miller realized was "that two of the characters, who had been friends in the previous drafts, were logically brothers and had the same father" (*Collected Plays*, p. 15). While this discovery could not help him save *The Man Who Had All the Luck* from its disaster, it did provide the basis for the drama in both *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. Miller explains:

in writing of the father-son relationship and of the son's search for his relatedness there was a fullness of feeling I had never known before; a crescendo was struck with a force I could almost touch. The crux of *All My Sons*, which would not be written until nearly three years later, was formed; and the roots of *Death of a Salesman* were sprouted. (*Collected Plays*, p. 15)

Operating from this powerful sense of purpose, Miller found it easy to tell a story with a clear line of causation issuing from "the gradual and remorseless crush of factual and psychological conflict" (*Collected Plays*, p. 15). As he wrote *All My Sons*, he knew that the play would explore the way in which choices and behavior in the past impinge upon, shape, and even give rise to unforeseen and inescapable consequences in the future. For Miller discovered early on the structural principle that he would repeatedly return to as a playwright – a principle that he has aphoristically stated throughout his career by saying: "the structure of a play is always the story of how the birds came home to roost."² In *All My Sons*, Miller builds and

reveals dramatic action that, by its very movement – by its creation, suspension, and resolution of tension; its inexorable rush toward tragic confrontation – proves that the past is always present and cannot be ignored, forgotten, or denied.

In its straightforward “revelation of process” (*Collected Plays*, p. 23), its linear progression of escalating crises building toward the explosive climax that in one shattering blow makes clear “the connections between the present and the past, between events and moral consequences, between the manifest and the hidden” (*Collected Plays*, p. 24), *All My Sons* exhibits the influence of one of Miller’s acknowledged inspirations: Henrik Ibsen. Miller openly credits Ibsen with teaching him how a play could be built upon “a factual bedrock. A situation in his plays is never stated but revealed in terms of hard actions, irrevocable deeds; and sentiment is never confused with the action it conceals” (*Collected Plays*, p. 19). In *All My Sons*, Miller adopts Ibsen’s technique of gradually “bringing the past into the present” (*Collected Plays*, p. 20), for one of the play’s central themes “is the question of actions and consequences, and a way had to be found to throw a long line into the past in order to make that kind of connection viable” (*Collected Plays*, p. 20). But, like his Norwegian predecessor, Ibsen, Miller realized that “valid causation” (*Collected Plays*, p. 21) could only be achieved if the play conveys the complexity in life that transcends and belies a plot’s tight lines and overt philosophical or social positions. *All My Sons* is indeed a tightly constructed play with ideas of importance, but the drama’s success derives more from Miller’s ability to capture the spirit and rhythm of a life not easily reducible to terse summary in a single assertion. In fact, one could even say that, despite its traditional form and adherence to the conventions of the realistic theatre, *All My Sons* resonates with ambiguity from the opening curtain to its powerful climactic close.

On its surface, the plot of *All My Sons* can easily be summarized. The play tells the story of a successful Mid-Western manufacturer of airplane parts who knowingly allows defective engines to be shipped to the United States Army during the Second World War. As a result, twenty-one American pilots die when the cracked cylinder heads cause their planes to malfunction and crash. Exonerated by the courts for his role in the catastrophe, Joe Keller, the play’s central character, triumphantly returns to his community and futilely attempts to return to a life of normalcy, pretending the crime never occurred. The semblance of family harmony is maintained until his son, Chris, himself under pressure as his fiancée’s brother forces him to acknowledge his own acquiescence, questions him about his role in the sordid business transaction. Chris, who had fought bravely in battle in the war and seen many of his troops perish under his

command, has a different outlook from his father on the question of an individual’s social responsibility. After several powerful scenes of intense debate about the individual’s relation to society, Chris finally discloses his father’s guilt and challenges him to accept responsibility for his actions. Until his son forces him to acknowledge his wrongdoing, Keller steadfastly maintains his innocence and justifies his anti-social behavior by proclaiming his right to keep the business from collapsing to ensure his family’s survival. Ultimately, Chris succeeds in convincing Keller that he has an obligation to others in society as well. Keller belatedly realizes that his decisions have consequences and that his responsibilities extend beyond the family. Tortured by his guilt and unable to deal with his shame in his son’s eyes, Keller tries to escape from his intolerable situation by putting a bullet in his head. The play ends with Chris facing with horror his own complicity in his father’s self-destruction, and with Keller’s death the play forcefully repudiates anti-social behavior that derives from the myth of privatism in American society.

While one could discuss this central theme in *All My Sons* exclusively in terms of its social context and its call for socially responsible behavior, reducing the play and Miller’s treatment of this issue to these terms alone fails to do justice to its complexity and fascinating exploration of universally significant questions about the enigmatic nature of the self’s relation to others. For as Christopher Bigsby accurately observes, while *All My Sons* is a play about our ability to connect with others and the world around us, it is also about more than our success or failure at achieving such a connection:

this is also a play about betrayal, about fathers and sons, about America, about self-deceit, about self-righteousness, about egotism presented as idealism, about a fear of mortality, about guilt, about domestic life as evasion, about the space between appearance and reality, about the suspect nature of language, about denial, about repression, about a kind of despair finessed into hope, about money, about an existence resistant to our needs, about a wish for innocence when, as Miller was later to say in his autobiography, innocence kills, about a need for completion, about the gulf between the times we live in and the people we wish to believe ourselves to be, about the fragility of what we take to be reality, about time as enemy and time as moral force and so on . . .³

Ultimately, *All My Sons* is a play about both paradox and denial – or to state it more precisely, it is about a theme that Miller has described as “the paradox of denial.”⁴ In his autobiography, Miller discusses the circumstances that led to his systematic exploration of this theme while developing the character Maggie in *After the Fall*:

It was after returning from Germany that I began to feel committed to the new play, possibly because its theme – the paradox of denial – seemed so eminently the theme of Germany, and Germany’s idealistically denied brutality emblematic of the human dilemma in our time . . . And so, bewildered and overwhelmed, she secretly came to side against herself, taking the world’s part as its cynicism toward her ground down her brittle self-regard, until denial finally began its work, leaving her all but totally innocent of insight into her own collaboration as well as her blind blows of retaliation . . . The complex process of denial in the great world thus reflected in an individual seemed a wonderfully illuminating thematic center . . .

(*Timebends*, pp. 526–27)

While he may not have had the benefit of observing the Nuremberg Trials at the time he wrote *All My Sons*, he did witness the Second World War and was fully aware of the crimes against humanity evident in the Holocaust. Perhaps this background to the drama had as much to do with his writing a play about a guilty individual’s betrayal of trust through war-profiteering crimes as the Nuremberg Trials and Germany’s denial had later on his creation of *After the Fall*.

Beyond such speculation, however, other factors justify applying Miller’s comments about Maggie and *After the Fall* to Joe Keller and *All My Sons*. Even though they differ stylistically, both plays are about choices and the paradox inherent in making choices. The paradox Miller describes in his Foreword to *After the Fall* is also evident in *All My Sons*:

there [is] . . . always the choice, always the conflict between his own needs and the desires and the impediments others put in his way. Always, and from the beginning, the panorama of human beings raising up in him and in each other the temptation of the final solution to the problem of being a self at all – the solution of obliterating whatever stands in the way, thus destroying what is loved as well.⁵

The crimes against society committed by Joe Keller derive from the same instinct for self-preservation and self-assertion that foster the adoption of a counterfeit innocence and the illusion of one’s being a victim at the hands of others. Like Maggie, Keller prefers to see himself as a victim of others. Instead of acknowledging his complicity in the crime that sends unsuspecting pilots to their deaths, he lies about his involvement and denies his personal culpability so that he can preserve his false image of himself and maintain the illusion that he has regained his rightful place in society. Like Maggie, Keller denies his connection to the disaster because he blinds himself to the impulses that make him a danger to himself as well as to others. Keller cannot face what Miller calls “the murder in him, the sly and

Essays, p. 256). For this reason, Miller says, “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” (*Collected Plays*, p. 19). Hence, *All My Sons* “lays siege to . . . the fortress of unrelatedness” and shows why an individual’s betrayal of trust and refusal to accept responsibility for others, if left uncensured by society, “can mean a jungle existence for all of us . . .” (*Collected Plays*, p. 19). Paradoxically, the very denial that is designed to protect him from prosecution and incarceration sets in motion the chain of events that lead to Keller’s own self-imprisonment and self-imposed execution. Therefore, the paradox of denial in *All My Sons* is that not only does denial dehumanize, by nullifying the value of the social contract through the justification of indefensible anti-social acts, but it also intensifies the personal anguish and the irremediable alienation that plunge an individual into despair and bring about his tragic suicide.

Keller’s anguish is in evidence throughout much of the play. He appears both “shamed” and “alarmed” early in Act One when his wife, Kate, reprimands him for telling children in the neighborhood that he has a jail hidden in his basement.⁶ Defensively snapping, “What have I got to hide?” (*Collected Plays*, p. 74), Keller suggests not only that he begrudges Kate’s condescending treatment of him, but also that he resents her veiled reminder that he does, indeed, have something to hide. The jail reference is repeated throughout the play to bring the past into the present and thereby strengthen the association between Keller’s crime and his guilt. This motif underlines the fact that Keller’s actions have consequences while also serving to illustrate the problem of setting oneself apart from and above the outer world. As though he were confined in a jail, Keller views the world as having “a forty-foot front . . . [that] ended at the building line” (p. 121). He denies his relation to society so that he can excuse unethical business practices that keep his manufacturing company fiscally sound and his family financially secure. So long as he acts to preserve the welfare of his family, Keller believes that anything he does can be justified. He convinces himself that his sole responsibility in life is to be successful so that he can support his wife and children. For Keller, “Nothin’ is bigger” (p. 120) than the family.

Even the setting of the play is designed to reveal and comment on Keller’s myopic world view. The entire play takes place in the “back yard of the Keller home . . . The stage is hedged on right and left by tall, closely planted poplars which lend the yard a secluded atmosphere” (p. 58). This scenic image successfully augments the stage action as gradual disclosures of family secrets and repressed feelings surface in the dialogue.

Miller skillfully works exposition into the plot that increases dramatic tension while simultaneously disclosing incriminating clues about Keller's guilt. For example, while reminiscing about his trial and the day he was released from prison, Keller describes himself parading in front of his neighbors after being exonerated and intentionally suffering their accusing stares while holding "a court paper in [his] pocket to prove" his innocence (p. 80). As George Deever, the embittered son of Keller's incarcerated partner, later tells the Keller family, the court paper really proves nothing since Keller won his trial on a technicality: the prosecution simply could not prove conclusively that Keller ordered his partner over the telephone to conceal the cracks and sell the faulty equipment. Nevertheless, by acting as if the court paper were proof of his innocence, Keller denies any connection to the crime and to the community whose trust he has violated. His denial of personal culpability shows not only his complete lack of remorse, but also his complete unwillingness to face the consequences of his actions. Paradoxically, by suggesting that only his possession of a court paper proves his innocence, Keller also unconsciously incriminates himself, for the audience knows that his innocence should derive solely from his awareness of the inaccuracy of the accusation against him. Keller's denial, therefore, has the opposite effect on his audience that it is designed to achieve.

Later, when Keller pleads with his son, Chris, to take his money and use it "without shame . . . with joy" (p. 87), Keller again unwittingly reveals his guilt. He knows that he has used unsavory means to build his fortune and that his son would have nothing to do with the family business if he knew that it prospered only because of the death of innocent pilots. Fearing that George Deever and his sister, Ann, will reveal the truth and turn Chris away from him, Keller tries to convince his son that the fortune earned is "good money, there's nothing wrong with that money" (p. 87). His insistence again produces unanticipated results. Instead of gaining Chris's confidence, Keller arouses his suspicion as Chris backs away from such unwanted suggestive conversation. The performance *didascalia* – "a little frightened" (p. 87) – that characterize Chris's apprehension over his father's unctuous appeal suggest that he is hesitant to understand too fully the implication of his father's entreaty. Like his father, Chris initially shows little interest in testing the strength of the bonds of family relationships with the uncomfortable truth.

When the truth about his role in the crime is finally revealed in Act Two, Keller tries to mitigate his guilt by portraying himself as the victim of forces beyond his control. He has convinced himself, and futilely tries to persuade Chris, that, given the limited choices available at the time, he made the best

I'm in business, a man is in business; a hundred and twenty cracked, you're out of business; you got a process, the process don't work you're out of business; you don't know how to operate, your stuff is no good; they close you up, they tear up your contracts, what the hell's it to them? 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? (p. 115)

- ② Keller first tries to rationalize the crime by explaining that he only let the defective machinery leave the shop because he hoped the parts would perform satisfactorily. However, after Chris forces him to admit that he knew the planes were likely to crash with the faulty engines, Keller justifies his decision by pretending that it was consonant with the code of ethics prevalent in American business transactions during the war:

Who worked for nothin' in that war? When they work for nothin', I'll work for nothin'. Did they ship a gun or a truck outa Detroit before they got their price? Is that clean? It's dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace, it's nickels and dimes, what's clean? Half the Goddam country is gotta go if I go! (p. 125)

Instead of assuaging his guilt and restoring his son's lost respect and love, Keller's denial of wrongdoing only serves to exacerbate the family crisis and intensify his anguish and alienation. *After 3 denials.*

Keller's crime is magnified in his son's eyes because he has all too successfully manufactured the illusion that he is the infallible father figure. By attempting to fulfill the inhuman demands of perfection that this mythic, almost godlike, presence demands, Keller unwittingly sets himself up for a fall. Like Miller's most popular father, Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, Keller never realizes that his effort to project and confirm in his family's eyes his self-chosen image has contributed to his downfall. He blinds himself to the truth because his role play is motivated by an insecurity that comes from being "put out . . . [to] earn his keep" (p. 120) when he was only ten years old. As Barry Gross points out, "There is no zealot like a convert and there is probably no more devoted parent than a neglected or an abandoned child."⁷ Keller devotes himself to his family to compensate for his childhood losses. However, instead of ensuring that the problems of the past are not perpetually reenacted, his actions have the obverse effect and cause a complete breakdown of the family unit.

One of the playwright's trademarks is his uncompromising honesty in the investigation of the role each person plays in his own tragedy. Much of the success of *All My Sons* has to do with Miller's complex vision of the Kellers' shared guilt and complicity in the family's collapse. For Joe Keller is not solely responsible for the Keller family's troubles. Like his husband

cf Aristotle, Friedmann

Excuses

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zero?

Kate also lives in denial and resorts to lies and self-deception as a means of contending with her anguish and sorrow. Unable to accept the death of her elder son, Larry, in the war, Kate deludes herself into believing that he is still alive and will one day return home. To fortify her conviction, she adopts a blind faith in religion and obstinately argues that "God does not let a son be killed by his father" (*Collected Plays*, p. 114). Beyond all reason, she also succumbs to a superstitious reliance on astrology and maintains that Larry's horoscope contradicts everyone's suspicion that he died in the war. Kate prefers to believe that external forces – the stars – determine her son's destiny and not individual free choice. She futilely tries to deceive herself into believing that Larry could not deliberately crash his plane in a sincere effort to atone for his father's criminal act. However, when Ann Deever produces the incriminating letter from Larry that explains the motive for his suicide, Kate suffers no terrific shock. She has always known, while constantly denying, that Larry had died in the war.

Kate also plays a significant role in the cover-up of her husband's war-profiteering crime. Instead of encouraging him to face his responsibilities honestly, she protects him from prosecution by falsely verifying his lie. Ironically, however, her loyalty to her husband only serves to widen the gulf between them because their knowledge of their deception makes them feel uncomfortable in each other's presence. Both experience guilt and shame beneath the other's accusing stare. Therefore, by denying the facts and by conspiring to withhold the truth from their community, Joe and Kate Keller sentence themselves to a lonely and unhappy marriage.

Chris Keller is also responsible for his family's dilemma. The idealistic youth who energetically professes to detest dishonesty is as guilty as his parents of attempting to hide from reality. Though he persists in pushing his mother toward an acceptance of his brother's death, he does so for his own selfish reasons and not because he thinks it is in her best interest to be able to face reality. Likewise, even though he adopts a high moral tone and energetically indicts his father for his criminal irresponsibility, Chris knows that his words ring hollow because he has long suspected his father's guilt but deliberately avoided confronting the truth – again for purely selfish motives. At some level, Chris fears that, if he allows himself to see his father's human imperfections, he will also have to recognize his own limitations – and his experiences in the war make him dread that confrontation.

Having watched heroic young men under his command die selflessly in battle to save their comrades, Chris feels guilty for failing them and surviving the war. His guilt is the guilt of the survivor – the guilt, as Holga tells Quentin in *After the Fall*, that derives from knowing "no one is

innocent they did not kill."⁸ Chris desperately wants to escape from this guilt and the anguish it produces, so, when given the chance, he tries to find relief by disguising his disgust with himself as contempt for his father. His father becomes his scapegoat, and Chris casts all his own feelings of guilt and self-loathing onto his father in the hope that, by destroying his father, he can somehow expiate his own sins and escape from his own personal torment. It is hard, therefore, not to see and condemn the hypocrisy behind the zeal that leads to Keller's suicide. Miller effectively raises questions about Chris's real motives for bringing his father to justice and suggests that Chris's own denial at least partially accounts for his condemnation of his father.

A different sort of denial also helps to bring about his father's death. In a revealing comment, Chris tells his father why he is outraged by his socially irresponsible act: "I know you're no worse than most men but I thought you were better. I never saw you as a man. I saw you as my father" (*Collected Plays*, p. 125). By buying into the ideal father myth, Chris perpetuates the lie that his father is anything more than just a man. Such self-deception not only fosters Keller's illusions, but also paves the way for Chris's eventual, and inevitable, disillusionment. He demands the impossible – perfection from the imperfect – and inadvertently reinforces Keller's absurd conception of himself as above the law and his society. Paradoxically, when faced with the unmistakable proof that this unshakable image of his father has been nothing but an illusion, Chris unrealistically expects and demands the kind of noble gesture that is inconsistent with his father's badly flawed character. As Benjamin Nelson suggests, both father and son pay heavily for their denial: "Each man bears the burden of responsibility – Joe for casting himself in a role he cannot fulfill, and Chris for adamantly maintaining his adolescent adoration of an impossible idol – and each pays for the dichotomy between reality and the illusion he has fostered."⁹

Even minor characters in the play – Ann Deever, Jim Bayliss, and Sue Bayliss, specifically – demonstrate through their denial the adverse and oftentimes ironic effects of dishonest behavior. Like the Kellers, these characters withhold the truth from each other and themselves to sustain their illusions and protect their tenuous happiness. Ann Deever at least suspects Keller's guilt because of the letter she received from Larry before his suicide; however, she refrains from impeaching Keller until she feels compelled to do so in order to save her relationship with Chris. Her motives are selfish, governed primarily by a fundamental drive for self-preservation. Jim and Sue Bayliss also suspect Keller's guilt, yet they relinquish all sense of personal responsibility for ensuring that justice

Agree?

"The compromise is always made."

prevails. In fact, they continue to treat the Kellers as their best friends. Sue Bayliss even expresses admiration for Keller for pulling "a fast one to get out of jail" (*Collected Plays*, p. 94). Jim Bayliss goes one step further and tries to protect the Kellers from George Deever's hostile accusations and the family's ultimate confrontation over the truth. His interference, however, speaks loudly of his own insecurities and feeble effort to escape from reality. Jim tries to shield the family, particularly Chris, from the truth not only because he longs to protect them, but also because he needs to sustain the illusion of their perfection. He wants to keep alive the possibility for noble and decent behavior and believes the preservation of the Keller myth achieves this goal. Having already watched "The star of [his] honesty . . . go out," Jim knows he is lost "in the usual darkness" (p. 118). If he no longer has the illusory image of Chris's perfection to drive and inspire him, he will find it impossible "to remember the kind of man [he] wanted to be" (p. 118). Therefore, his denial has the same ironic impact as the self-deception and mendacity of the Keller family.

Even Larry's death shows the paradox of denial. His suicide is unmistakably a way of protesting and atoning for his father's crime. However, by choosing to die instead of returning home to bear the shame of his father's guilt, Larry fails to accept responsibility for bringing his father to justice for his crime. His death, like his father's eventual suicide, reflects an attempt to escape from the humiliation he would experience within his community. He dies to escape his anguish and therefore fails to transform guilt into responsibility. Only the nameless soldiers who die selflessly and valiantly in battle while fighting for the preservation of freedom and human dignity serve as a viable counterpart to the dishonorable and dishonored who walk the stage.

Particularly because of his treatment of the theme of the paradox of denial, Miller's play has a resonance that transcends its contemporary society and immediate situation. The catastrophe that affects the Keller family can occur anytime so long as people choose to embrace a counterfeit innocence that conceals their impulse to betray and dominate others. *All My Sons* proves that Miller's later indictment of Germany during the Nuremberg Trials in *After the Fall* can just as easily apply to any country which fosters illusions that elevate the native populace above the ostensibly menacing and inferior foreigners. In a country at war with an external threat, perhaps it is especially easy to succumb to such self-deception, and in that case, then, the background to *All My Sons* makes the play's drama that much more salient and relevant. In fact, one can even link the play to Miller's subsequent view of the phenomenon of the concentration camp as "the logical conclusion of contemporary life." Miller writes:

If you complain of people being shot down in the streets, of the absence of communication or social responsibility, of the rise of everyday violence which people have become accustomed to, and the dehumanization of feelings, then the ultimate development on an organized social level is the concentration camp. . . . The concentration camp is the final expression of human separateness and its ultimate consequence.¹⁰

In *All My Sons*, Miller shows how the impulse to betray and to deny responsibility for others, when left ungoverned, can run rampant and wreak havoc on the individual, his family, and his society – even, perhaps, civilization as a whole. The paradox of denial, therefore, is that the very defense mechanism that is employed to justify the rightness of a socially reprehensible act can ultimately become the exclusive means by which an individual self-destructs. The Kellers, and many of those around them, choose to blame everyone else for their dilemma, but only they are the authors of their destiny – and their failure to accept the tremendous burden of their freedom and responsibility is itself the cause of their personal tragedy.

NOTES

- 1 Arthur Miller, Introduction to *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays*, vol. I (New York: Viking Press, 1957), p. 16.
- 2 Arthur Miller, "The Shadows of the Gods," in Robert A. Martin (ed.), *The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 179.
- 3 Christopher Bigsby, "A British View of an American Playwright," in Steven R. Centola (ed.), *The Achievement of Arthur Miller: New Essays* (Dallas: Contemporary Research Associates, 1995).
- 4 Arthur Miller, *Timebends* (New York: Grove Press, 1987), p. 526.
- 5 Arthur Miller, Foreword to *After the Fall*, in Martin (ed.), *The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller*, p. 257.
- 6 Arthur Miller, *All My Sons*, in *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays*, vol. I, p. 78.
- 7 Barry Gross, "All My Sons and the Larger Context," *Modern Drama* 18 (1975): 17.
- 8 Arthur Miller, *After the Fall*, in *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays*, vol. II (New York: Viking Press, 1981), p. 240.
- 9 Benjamin Nelson, *Arthur Miller: Portrait of a Playwright* (New York: David McKay, 1970), p. 88.
- 10 Olga Carlisle and Rose Styron, "Arthur Miller: An Interview," in Martin (ed.), *The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller*, p. 289.