

BREWED IN 'THE CRUCIBLE'

By ARTHUR MILLER

Author of "The Crucible," which will be revived at the Martinique Theatre on Tuesday.

ONE afternoon last week I attended a rehearsal of the imminent off-Broadway production of "The Crucible." For the first time in the five years since its opening on Broadway I heard its dialogue and the experience awakened not merely memories but the desire to fire a discussion among us of certain questions a play like this ought to have raised.

Notoriously, there is what is called a chemistry in the theatre, a fusion of play, performance and audience temper which, if it does not take place, leaves the elements of an explosion cold and to one side of art. For the critics this seems to be what happened with "The Crucible." It was not condemned, it was set aside. A cold thing, mainly, it lay to one side of entertainment, to say nothing of art. In a word I was told that I had not written another "Death of a Salesman."

It is perhaps beyond my powers to make clear, but I had no desire to write another "Salesman," and not because I lack love for that play but for some wider, less easily defined reasons that have to do with this whole question of cold and heat, and, indeed, with the future of our drama altogether. It is the question of whether we—playwrights and audiences and critics—are to declare that we have reached the end, the last development of dramatic form. More specifically, the play designed to draw a tear; the play designed to "identify" the audience with its characters in the usual sense; the play that takes as its highest challenge the emotional relations of the family, for that as it turns out is what it comes to.

Warmer Climate

I was disappointed in the reaction to "The Crucible" not only for the obvious reasons but because no critic seemed to sense what I was after. In 1953 McCarthyism probably helped to make it appear that the play was bounded on all sides by its arraignment of the witch hunt. The political trajectory was so clear—a fact of which I am a little proud—that what to me were equally if not more important elements were totally ignored. The new production, appearing in a warmer climate, may, I hope, flower, and these inner petals may make their appropriate appearance.

What I say now may appear

Author Cites Reasons For Having Written Play in 1953

more technical than a writer has any business talking about in public. But I do not think it merely a question of technique to say that with all its excellences the kind of play we have come to accept without effort or question is standing at a dead end. What "moves" us is coming to be a narrower and narrower esthetic fragment of life. I have shown, I think, that I am not unaware of psychology or immune to the fascinations of the neurotic hero, but I believe that it is no longer possible to contain the truth of the human situation so totally within a single man's guts as the bulk of our plays presuppose. The documentation of man's loneliness is not in itself and for itself ultimate wisdom, and the form this documentation inevitably assumes in playwriting is not the ultimate dramatic form.

I was drawn to write "The Crucible" not merely as a response to McCarthyism. It is



BY O'NEILL—Eileen Heckart in "Before Breakfast," opening at the Theatre de Lys on Tuesday afternoon.

not any more an attempt to cure witch hunts than "Salesman" is a plea for the improvement of conditions for traveling men, "All My Sons" a plea for better inspection of airplane parts, or "A View From the Bridge" an attack upon the Immigration Bureau. "The Crucible" is, internally, "Salesman's" blood brother. It is examining the questions I was absorbed with before—the conflict between a man's raw deeds and his conception of himself; the question of whether con-

science is in fact an organic part of the human being, and what happens when it is handed over not merely to the state or the mores of the time but to one's friend or wife. The big difference, I think, is that "The Crucible" sought to include a higher degree of consciousness than the earlier plays.

Larger Units

I believe that the wider the awareness, the felt knowledge evoked by a play, the higher it must stand as art. I think our drama is far behind our lives in this respect. There is a lot wrong with the twentieth century, but one thing is right with it—we are aware as no generation was before of the larger units that help make us and destroy us. The city, the nation, the world, and now the universe are never far beyond our most intimate sense of life. The vast majority of us know now—not merely as knowledge but as feeling, feeling capable of expression in art—that we are being formed, that our alternatives in life are not absolutely our own, as the romantic play inevitably must presuppose. But the response of our plays, of our dramatic form itself, is to faint, so to speak, before the intricacies of man's wider relationships and to define him further and redefine him as essentially alone in a world he never made.

The form, the shape, the meaning of "The Crucible" were all compounded out of the faith of those who were hanged. They were asked to be lonely and they refused. They were asked to deny their belief in a God of all men, not merely a god each individual could manipulate to his interests. They were asked to call a phantom real and to deny their touch with reality. It was not good to cast this play, to form it so that the psyche of the hero should emerge so "commonly" as to wipe out of mind the process itself, the spectacle of that faith and the knowing will which these people paid for with their lives.

The "heat" infusing this play is therefore of a different order than that which draws tears and the common identifications. And it was designed to be of a different order. In a sense, I felt, our situation had thrown us willy-nilly into a new classical period. Classical in the sense that the social scheme, as of old, had reached the point of rigidity where it had become inplacable as a consciously known force working in us and upon us. Analytical psychology, when so intensely exploited as



"THE CRUCIBLE"—Ford Rainey and Eileen Heckart in a revival of Arthur Miller's play. It will open at the off-Broadway Martinique Theatre on Tuesday.

to reduce the world to the size of a man's abdomen and his fate equated with his neurosis, is a re-emergence of romanticism. It is inclined to deny all outer forces until man is only his complex. It presupposes an autonomy in the human character that, in a word, is false. A neurosis is not a fate but an effect. There is a higher wisdom, and if truly there is not, there is still no esthetic point in repeating something so utterly known, nor in doing better what has been done so well before.

For me "The Crucible" was a new beginning, the beginning of an attempt to embrace a wider field of vision, a field wide enough to contain the whole of our current awareness. It was not so much to move ahead of the audience but to catch up with what it commonly knows about the way things are and how they get that way. In a word, we commonly know so much more than our plays let on. When we can put together what we do know with what we feel, we shall find a new kind of theatre in our hands. "The Crucible" was written as it was in order to bring me, and the audience, closer to that theatre and what I imagine can be an art more ample than any of us has dared to strive for, the art of Man among men, Man amid his works.

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Patachou singing tec music halls nces, elsew nent and in Jan. 3, 19 debut in No pire Room Astoria. S single tie, cries of d entele, the back for engagemer Unlike chanteuse siren of suffer, li she sing