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The Degeneration of the Filial Relationship in Arthur Miller's play *All My Sons*

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الانحطاط في العلاقة الابنوية في مسرحية ارثر ملر كلهم ابنائي

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الملخص

آرثر ميلر هو احد الكتاب البارزين في القرن العشرين. أول مسرحية للكاتب هي مسرحية كلهم اولادي وهي اول نجاح له . في هذه المسرحية ، يصور ميلر النظام الرأسمالي لأمريكا ، هذا النظام هو المسبب الرئيسي في تدهور حياة الانسان ومعيشته .

يتناول هذا البحث دور الأب و وضعه كقائد للعائلة . يتاثر دور الأب بالظروف الاقتصادية والسياسية خلال الحرب العالمية الثانية . هذه الظروف اثرت على سلوك الأب ومعتقداته نتيجة لذلك تأ ثر دوره كأب وتأثرت علاقته مع أبنائه وعائلته.

يتناول البحث الصراع بين الاخلاقيات والماديات وكيفية تأثير هذا الصراع على العلاقة الابنوية ويوثر كذلك على الاواصر و الروابط الاسرية . من خلال شخصية الأب وابناءه ، يصور ميلر هذا الصراع.

تركز الدراسة على رجل الأعمال الذي انتشل من قيمه الاخلاقية من أجل المنافسة في عالم الأعمال. ان عمل الاب الذي تشوبه الشكوك وطمعه لجمع المال خلق اربال في العلاقة الاسرية .هزت الأفعال والسلوكيات السيئة للأب صورته كقائد للعائلة وكمعيل للأسرة . يركز ميلر على مسؤولية الأب. جو هو الشخصية الرئيسية في المسرحية ولديه مسؤولية جسمية تجاه أسرته ومجتمعه . يمارس الأب عمله من وجهة النظر الرأسمالية لكسب المال بغض النظر عن الوسيلة والمخاطر التي تواجهها العائلة .

الكلمات المفتاحية : النظام الرأسمالي ، ارثلر ملر ، العلاقة الابنوية ، التجارة ، القيم الاخلاقية ، الفساد .

Abstract

Arthur Miller is a significant playwright in the twentieth century . His play *All My Sons* is his first success . In this play Miller depicts the capitalist system of America , this system is the main cause of the corruption of the man's lives and the whole society .

The paper tackles the situation of the father as a head of the family who has beaten by the economic and the political circumstances after the Second World War .These circumstances affect the father's behaviors and beliefs . As a result his role as a father and his authority as a head of the family are shaken . The relationship between the father and his sons becomes quite difficult .

The research presents the clash between ethics and profit and how this conflict breaks the boundaries of the filial relationship and affects the whole family relationship . Through the character of the father and his sons , Miller depicts this clash .

The study focuses on a business man who reveals from his moral values in order to compete in the business world . The suspicious business of the father and his greed to gain money make confession in

the family relationship . The deeds and the bad behaviors of the father are shaken his image as a head of the family and as a breadwinner .

Miller focuses on the responsibility of the father . Joe is the head of the family and he has a great responsibility towards his family and his society .The father manages a capitalist view in his work to gain money regardless the mean and the risk that the family facing .

Keywords : Capitalist system ,Arthur Miller , filial relationship , business , moral values , the corruption .

Arthur Miller: Life , and Literary Contributions

Arthur Miller (1915–2005) was a preeminent American playwright of the 20th century , recognized for his socially and politically engaged dramas . His oeuvre frequently explored issues of morality , justice , and the American Dream .

Miller's writings occupies a significant place in the twentieth century literature . Mainly and significantly shaped by his personal experiences, historical occurrences, and the socio-political movements of his era. These events influenced his literary career.

His father, Isidore Miller, was a prosperous coat manufacturer, and his mother, Augusta, was an educator. The Great Depression (1929) ravaged the family's finances, necessitating their relocation from Harlem to a more humble residence in Brooklyn . ' 'The American century went into free fall . And among its many victims was the Miller family . ' ' [1] Money , wealth ,and possessions are important themes in Miller's writings as he witnessed the era of depression .

Miller is one of the most playwrights who portrays the dark side of the war and the condition of man during the war . The failure of Miller's father business sparks him to write . [2] The economic hardships endured by his family during this time profoundly affected Miller's life and later shaping his perspectives on capitalism and financial insecurity, subjects that are strongly reflected in his subsequent works, especially "*Death of a Salesman*" (1949).

In his adolescence , Miller undertook several menial jobs , including employment at an auto parts warehouse, which provided him with direct insight into the challenges faced by the working class . His initial encounters with economic adversity and social stratification significantly influenced his literary work .

' 'Miller grew up during the year of the Depression in America , and this was the most important single factor which determined his work .'' [3] He dramatized the human psychological and social problems produced by the miserable situation of that period and by the war .

The father and the son's relationship , Family relationship , the individual and the society problems are current themes in his writings .For Miller ' 'The true social drama , which he calls the ' 'Whole Drama ''must recognize that man has both a subjective and an objective existence , that he belongs not only to himself and his family but to the world beyond . [4]

He is a social dramatist , he deals with social themes in most his plays . He calls and asserts on the rightful position of the individual in the society . The family economic situations and the circumstances of the period have a great impact on his writings .

Academic Background and Initial Writing Career

Miller graduated from high school , but none of his family attended the ceremony because of the bad economic circumstances . After his graduation from high school , he spent two years later earning income at an auto parts company this experience was later memorialize *in A Memory of Two Mondays* .

After briefly working in his father's coat factory, Miller pursued higher education and was conditionally admitted to the University of Michigan, where he developed an interest in playwriting despite having no formal training. Influenced by Eugene O'Neill, whom he admired for his theatrical style, Miller was often compared to him . He also drew inspiration from Henrik Ibsen's realism and the stylistic impact of Tennessee Williams.

Arthur Miller became interested in writing when he enrolled at the University of Michigan. ' ' In the first year he dedicated himself to his work and to writing for the Michigan Daily , the student newspaper .'' [5] Later on ,he initially pursued journalism before transitioning to playwriting. His inaugural play, "*No Villain*" (1936), received the university's Hopwood Award for Drama. This initial piece presented themes of

economic hardship and ethical conflicts . Later on these themes became crucial in his subsequent plays .

After several unsuccessful attempts, Miller achieved his first major success with *All My Sons* (1947), widely considered a masterpiece. *Death of a Salesman* (1949) won him the Pulitzer Prize, cementing his status among America's greatest playwrights. Other notable works include *The Crucible* (1953), *A View from the Bridge* (1955), *After the Fall* (1964), *The Price* (1968), *The American Clock* (1980), and *Broken Glass* (1995).

Upon graduation in 1938, Miller was employed by the Federal Theatre Project , a government-sponsored initiative designed to offer employment opportunities for playwrights during the Great Depression.

In his personal life, Miller faced challenges. His first marriage to Mary Slattery, with whom he had two children , ended in divorce in 1956 . He then married Marilyn Monroe the same year. Reflecting on their marriage in 1992 , he described Monroe as "highly self-destructive" and admitted that his efforts to help her were largely unsuccessful. [6]

Significant Works and Their Societal Context

"*Death of a Salesman*" (1949) , this play solidified his standing . The hero of this play is a man at the age of eighty –four , secure in his dream . The American dream of success and be rich .

This drama narrates the tale of Willy , a beleaguered salesman who cannot confront the truth of his inadequacy. The drama challenges the American Dream myth, emphasizing the pressures of capitalism and the emotional consequences of material achievement . Miller utilized Willy to embody the disillusionment of average Americans pursuing prosperity, influenced by his father's economic failures .[7]

Miller composed "*The Crucible*" (1953), a historical drama situated in the context of the Salem Witch Trials of 1692 , in response to this milieu. The drama functioned as an allegory for McCarthyism, paralleling the witch hunts of the 17th century with the political persecution of the 1950. [8]

"*A View from the Bridge*" (1955) examines immigration, justice, and betrayal among an Italian-American society. The society protects illegal immigrants . The protagonist , Eddie Carbone is a victim of the social system .

These first fourth plays involve moral , political , and social issues of the period . Miller deeply . He deeply criticizes the modern American society , the American dream , and the conflict between individual rights and the profit . Miller constantly displays family relationship and father – son conflict and the guilt of fathers in his plays .

Miller's play "*After the Fall*" (1964) is commonly perceived as a manifestation of his guilt and mental turmoil stemming from his relationship with Marilyn Monroe. The protagonist, Quentin, is a dramatist who contends with issues of love, betrayal, and self-destruction .

"*The Price*" (1968) explores familial discord and the ramifications of decisions. "*The American Clock*" (1980) examines the effects of the Great Depression on American society.

Although his latter works did not attain the same degree of success as his early pieces, they preserved his characteristic examination of moral quandaries, societal inequity, and human frailty.

Arthur Miller continued to be an influential writer and public intellectual until his demise on February 10, 2005. His legacy persists through his plays, which are still produced globally and analyzed for their enduring critiques of society, politics, and human nature.

His influence transcends the theatre, informing dialogues on political repression, capitalism , and the shortcomings of the American Dream. His audacity in confronting power, whether via HUAC or his theatrical works, establishes him as a pivotal voice in contemporary American writing.

All My Sons : An Introduction

All My Sons (1947) is a family and a social play . It is a three act play . The play is Miller's first success . It is awarded The Tony Award for Best Author and for Best direction of the play . Miller's ascendance is marked with this play . The play is adopted for film in 1948 and 1987 .

Miller is a social dramatist , his works deal with social issues and human condition . The play illustrates how the love of money can create a lifetime of misery and leads to the corruption of the family relationship .

In all his plays , the recurring theme is the family relationship and the relation between individual and society . ' 'Miller planted his characters firmly within a family structure which reflected in turn the pressures of society at large . The guilty passion of the hero became significant only when it was finally challenged by some broader commitment ;the latter invariably transcended both private will and social sanction . This is the essential dramatic situation in all of Miller's plays .'' [9]

The play is based on a true story during the war time . *All My Sons* ' 'was an immediate and considerable success . It ran for 328 performances at New York's Coronet Theatre .'' [10] The play is an embodiment of the capitalist system . The idea of the American Dream and making money even in an illegal way is very important subjects in his writings.

Miller is considered a socialist dramatist due to the social issues his plays deal with . Miller always emphasizes on moral crisis and social responsibility in his writings , as well as the dream of success and the idea of the American Dream and making money are very important matters in his writing .

The conflict between ethics and profits . The family economic difficulties and his personal experiences are a representative factors in the play .The play is about the loss , the loss of value , the loss of the correct path of live and the loss of the true family relationship .

The play is a voice of ironic which criticizes the greed of people who exploits the society through filthy means to achieve their goals . Miller ' 'exposes the human tendency to puts one's self above all else , which causes confusion and suffering .'' [11]

The circumstances of the depression ended with the advent of the Second World War . Gaining money is the first concern for man in that period even this greedy concern has a negative impact on the society . Miller has a great concern with politics and a great estimate to the working class .

All My Sons explores the struggle for control between a father and his two sons in various ways. The core issue of *All My Sons* revolves around the father-son relationship .The conflict in this relationship is intricately tied to the play's central themes .

Joe Keller is the father , he has dishonest business .This suspicious business has resulted in the death of innocent American fighter pilots and the demise of his younger son, Larry. The current revelation of this abuse incites outrage in the surviving son, Chris, whose accusations ultimately contribute to his father's suicide. The play seems to reject the father's authority and the respect of the father –son relationship .

The economic turmoil of the 1930s instilled in dramatist Miller a profound social awareness and compelled him to investigate the origins of societal evil and human complicity in the society .

When Miller composed *All My Sons*, the economic depression had nearly faded from memory, and the world war had further undermine the foundations of a society reliant on familial hierarchy. Miller's plays predominantly center on the family unit, encompassing a man, a woman, and their two boys, and their interrelations and obligations to one another and to society.[12]

In his high school, Miller read a detective story to Dostoyevskys' *The Brothers Karamazov* , this appears Miller 's interest in the theme of father – son conflict . ' ' I think it was because of the father and conflict, but something more . It was always probing beyond its particular scenes and characters for the hidden law . '' [13]

The theme of father – son conflict and the guilt of the father are current themes in Miller's plays . In addition to these themes , Miller tackles the personal and the social requirements and also the moral crisis . ' 'Theater is not only a social form but has a social function . '' [14]

The play is a battle between a father and his sons . The issue of relationship of the father and his son , and the abuse of authority is the central theme in the play .

Miller expresses his personal experience and his attitude towards his father during the Depression . He states :

> Wish to acknowledge that the lives of ordinary
> People were charged with significance but
> Because he wanted in some way to celebrate
> Their struggle with the given . He had , after
> all , seen his own father ruined by commitment
> to a false idea , an American dream rooted ... .[15]

All My Sons is a panorama of tragedy . It is a drama of family relationship . The father is Joe Killer , the elder son ,Larry is a pilot and his ideal son , Chris are the main characters in the play .

In this play ' 'as in his other early plays , Miller represents capitalism as creating an exploitative system which denies individual identity. Capitalism, according to Miller , creates false needs and implies that the satisfaction of those needs would resolve a longing which is in truth spiritual in origin .'' [16]

For Miller , the events of the period and the economic depression are crucial events that affect the American society . Miller main concern is the society and the individual , and how the capitalist system corrupting the society .

The economic situation of his family is retrogression during the years of the Great Depression , so by the money gained from this play , Miller bought a farm house in a small town . In this play , Miller is writing out of his own experience and the circumstances during that period .

He believes that dramatist must bring the problems of the society to the stage and give a solution to these problems . This is the main principle of his writings and it is the main task for the dramatist .

The Degeneration of the Filial Relationship in *All My Sons*

Miller narrates a story of a family during the war . The father is rising from poor condition to be an owner of a factory . He becomes a successful business man in the society by his own efforts . By this position , he asserts his authority against his sons . This authority gives him the right to deal with any matter without relating to his sons .

The events of the play revolves around Joe Keller the father of two sons and his partner Steve . They sell faulty air parts to the army . Joe Keller collects a sufficient amount of money during the years of depression , and he insists to gain money in any mean and whatever the price .

Miller displays the greed of individual for power and success through the character of the father and his sons .

> The play around the relationship between a father and son implies a historical logic whereby the assumption of capitalism are challenged defeated and replaced by a new generation whose values , forged in a war time are now to be socially and morally operative in peace .[17]

Joe Keller denied his knowledge of selling faulty cylinder heads to the army which caused on the death of 21 pilots . He puts all the responsibility on his partner Steve . He claimed that Steve is responsible for this deal .

> *All My Sons* is a play in part about the individual's responsibility for his own action and in part about the obligation he has to his society . The crime at its centre raises in stark form the clash between self – interest and human solidarity .[18]

The play is not merely about father son –relationship . It is about the awareness of individual towards his people ,his society and his country . Man must put a great attention and a great responsibility to his people and his society. Keller puts a great consideration to his family rather than to his society . This subject leads to the conflict between the sons and their father .

Keller puts his responsibility towards his family at the first position . " *All My Sons* is about a man who places survival above value , self above the group , pragmatism above the ideal , loyalty to family above responsibility to society . It is also , however , about the loss , loss of a sense of common humanity .'' [19]

The first scene of the play is a normal day , an ordinary setting of people who involve in their daily life style . " It is set a suburban world in which people are involved in cutting the lawn and painting the house and keeping the oil – burner running ; the petty business of life in the suburbs. " [20]

From this silence and from these quietness , Miller greats extraordinary catastrophe . Keller is uneducated man , for him family is his main concern . The father uses dishonest means to achieve financial victory and to gain money like the supplying of defective equipment .

Keller makes a great efforts to secure the well –being of his family ,but the means in do so is illegal and caused in the death of twenty –one American pilots . This incident leads his elder son to death . ' ' This leads Larry to kill himself for shame at what his father has done . '' [21]

Larry has a great attention to his people and his country . He is shaken by his father crime , so he cannot stand the situation and he prefer death than to live with a criminal father . Larry is a pilot and a soldier in the air force . He has a great awareness towards his country and his society , so he finds himself in a position of the responsibility of the death of the twenty –one pilots . Larry prefers death in order to make his father be conscious about the extent of the crime towards his people .

The play is around " the relationship between a father and a son implies a historical logic whereby the assumption of capitalism are challenged , defeated and replaced by a new generation whose values forged in wartime , are now to be socially and morally operative in peace . '' [22]

The father image is shaken by the father's bad deeds .The mistakes and the deeds of the father lead to the corruption of the family relationship and cost him the life of his son . The father's greed leads to the death of his elder son .

Keller always justifies his deeds and he has full satisfaction in his business and success . The father finds money as a protection to his family and a kind of security . The mother finds that Joe Keller is right in this point of view and she indicates that in her speech despite she knows the truth of her husband's business :

Mother : Joe ,Joe , please , you 'II be all right ,
Nothing is going to happen .
Keller : For you ,Kate , for both of you , that 's
All I ever lived for …
Mother : I know , darling , I know .[23](Act 111 p.50)

The mother has a great believe that what the father does is for the sake of his sons and his wife and also as a duty towards his family . The mother words also admits that :

The only defense , in her mind ,for Joe Keller' s action
is that it was done in the name of the sons . If one is not
returning and the other may defect , then it stands stripped
even of this justification .[24]

Not only the father justifies his action in the name of the family and his responsibility to secure the family demands , the mother also . Keller ' 'cedes his position as head of house , living in temporal void enforced by his wife . Her desperate need to deny the possibility of her son's death , understandable in its own terms , also derives from her desire to deny the terrible rhyme between that death and her husband 's crime . '' [25]

All the characters in the play are hypocrites . The mother wants to hide the fact of her husband's business , even she knows well that this business causes in the death of her son . The father's relationship with his sons and wife are consistently related to money .

Money is the motive for all the characters in the play even Chris the ideal son . He tells Ann I will make money for you . Miller represents his view about the capitalism system through the voice of his characters . ' 'Indeed the word 'money ' recurs throughout the play , as a kind of counter- point to the idealism generated by the war . Character after character invokes it as a reason for relinquishing ideals or hopes . '' [26]

The father main concern is money and how to collect a big amount in any price . Money is the core of Keller's filial relationship . The father is very satisfied with his work and he keeps on with his business . He has never been conscious of his responsibility towards his society and his people .

Through the course of the play , Chris is proud of his father , he always believes that his father is innocent . George is the son of Keller 's partner reveals the truth . He tells Chris that his father is responsible about the deal of shipping the faulty cylinder and he denies that in the court .

Chris ' suspicious begins to grow . There is a doubt in the mind of the ideal son about the father innocence . When the truth comes out , the son cannot stand his father , he is shaken by the deeds of his father . Chris cries angrily :

Chris : For me ! …… I was dying every day
and you were killing my boys and you
did it for me ? …….. What the hell
Do you mean , you did it for me ?
Don't you have a country ? (11 , p. 60)

Chris has his decision to go away for ever . He cannot bear the shame of his father crime .The ideal son finds the situation very terrible . The mother tries to calm her son , she tells him that his father will confess about his crime and he will send to prison . The son finds there is no meaning in sending his father to prison , with agony , he tells his mother :

Chris : Do I raise the dead when I put him behind bars ?
…….. This is the land of the great big dogs , you
Don't love a man here , you eat him ! That is the
Principle , ……. . This is a zoo , a zoo ! (111,p .67)

The son is at the opposite side of his father's beliefs . Chris is a solider , he fights bravely in war . He has the beliefs that everyone has a duty towards his country and his society . Christopher views Chris :

Chris ……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 action .[27]

The father tries to defend his action by arguing that many businessmen do the same things . Keller is proud of being a successful man who secures his family living and their future . Chris doesn't find any excuse for his father deeds , so the father is obliged to confess his crime .The son talks with his father without any respect . The son denounces his father behavior , saying :

Chris : you 're not even an animal , no animal
Kills his own , What are you ? …..
What must I do ? …… Jesus God , What
Must I do ? (11 , p .60)

The conversation between the son and the father goes out from the consideration of respect . The father 's respect is faded . There is no respect , no need for the father protection . The father authority fells down as his moral values fells down .Keller has no authority , his fatherhood is shaken , he states :

Keller : I'm asking you . What I , a stranger ?
I thought I had a family here .
What happened to my family ? (111 , p. 63)

The father fails to be the good father that the sons demands . Shame , pain and grief surrounding the filial relationship . The image of the fatherhood is shaken by the father 's deeds as a result of his behaviors the filial relationship is transformed into a hard relationship . Joe Keller achieves his goal to make fortune but he loses his sons 's respect and the true relationship

Conclusion

Arthur Miller is one of the preeminent playwrights of the 20th century . His oeuvre is profoundly influenced by his personal experiences, historical occurrences, and political convictions . His family's economic difficulties, and McCarthyism significantly influenced his artistic perspective.

He believes that every playwright has a social task to perform it . Miller is aware of the problems of the society . His incisive critiques of capitalism , political oppression, and personal are establishing him as a pioneer writer of the 20th century literature .

In this play , Miller portrays the family living after the Second World War and how the economic and the political circumstances effect the family 's relationship . He criticizes the capitalist system and the greed of the individual to gain money through the character of the father .

The father has a dishonest business . This business is a questionable as the shipping of the faulty parts which caused in the death of many pilots and his partner in jail . The father keeps on his business as he denies the truth of his crime in the court .

The main concern of the father is his business and how to gain money regardless the mean and the price . As the truth of the father ' s reveals , a great conflict between ethics and profits begins . The conflict between the ideal sons and the selfish father .

The deeds of the father break down the family unit and destroy the chain of the filial relationship . The relationship between the father and the son is transformed into a hardship relationship . The father doesn't put in his respect the irresponsible acts and behaviors .

The father achieves his goal to gain money , but he loses his respect and his family . The ties of the filial relationship are torn . Larry , the elder son has his decision to crash his airplane when he knows about his father 's crime . He cannot stand the shame of his father's deeds .

Chris , the ideal son announces his departure with a great agony . He cannot bear the terrible crime of his father . Keller puts himself and his family responsibility above all . He does not take in his account the importance of the responsibility towards his people and society .

All My Sons is a social warning of the risk of the capital system of the 20th century . It is Miller 's cry towards the capital system through the voices of his characters .

Notes

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2- Ibid , p.23
3- Arthur Miller ,***All My Sons ,a Critical Study*** (ed.Rama brothers, university of Delhi ,2009), P.1
4- Ibid P.6
5- Bigsby , P.6
6-Arthur Miller ,Rama brother ,P.3
7- Ibid P.7
8- Ibid P.9
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11- *Arthur Miller*, ***All My Sons*** ,ed.Nissim Ezikiel (madras :oxford university press, 1972),P.91
12- Dr. Rajesh Trived **, English Literature: views and Reviews ,** Saturday **,**
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13- Arthur Miller "**The shadows of Gods ''American playwrights on drama**, ed., Horst Frenz (New york: Hill and wang , 1965), P.138.
14- Bigsby P.23.
15- Ibid , p.99
16- Rama brothers P.14.
17- Bigsby P.92.
18- Ibid P.78.
19- Ibid P.80.
20- Matthew Roudane , *conversations with Arthur Miller* (Jackson ,1987), P.129.
21- Susan Abbotson ,*critical companion to Arthur Miller A Literary to his life and work*, (Facts on file / Inc :new york ,2007) P.63.
22- Bigsby P.92.
23- Arthur Miller , *All My Sons* (Word press .Com , 2013), p. 64 . All subsequent text and quotations will be taken from this book and indicated by Act, scene ,and page number in the body of this chapter.
24- Bigsby P.87.
25- Ibid P.86.
26- Ibid P.82.
27- Christopher Bigsby , *The combridge companion to Arthur Miller* ,(Cambridge: university press Uk ,1997) P.50.