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**ABSTRACT**

Arthur Miller (1915 -2005) is considered one of the foremost American playwrights of the twentieth century who wrote a remarkable series of highly regarded pieces that reveal profound insight, humanism and empathy that are the hallmarks of his great dramatic works. Although quite voluminous, the critical work on Arthur Miller over the last seventy years turns out, on close reading, a set of repetitions in different vocabularies. The plays of Arthur Miller have an organic unity. Each play grows out of earlier ones or to return to familiar themes. Collectively his plays reveal his efforts to confront and find some intelligible meaning to the world witnessed by him. If this attempt has sometimes led to disillusionment, it has never led to defeat. It ought to be emphasized that Arthur Miller is fully aware of the three distinct and characteristic elements of excellence, the presence of which can be discerned in varying degrees in his plays. They are matter of presentment, manner of presentment and the capacity to promote aesthetic bliss. In the plays of Arthur Miller there is the fusion of the subjective and objective aspects of reality. At one level he concerns himself with the objective point of view and reproduces the elements of reality without his mind transference on to the reality that he witnesses. He adroitly marries the past with the present. His literary products are edifices whose every corner deserves the closest attention, and such an examination is invariably a rewarding experience. Thus, it is conclusively established that Arthur Miller is a creative writer, and his plays, particularly All My Sons and Death of a Salesman, have lasting value and they lend themselves to inexhaustible study.

**INTRODUCTION**

Arthur Miller (1915 -2005) is considered one of the foremost American playwrights of the twentieth century who wrote a remarkable series of highly regarded pieces that reveal profound insight, humanism and empathy that are the hallmarks of his great dramatic works. Although quite voluminous, the critical work on Arthur Miller over the last seventy years turns out, on close reading, a set of repetitions in different vocabularies. He has been variously described as a moralist, a playwright of ideas, a social dramatist or a Marxist. Arthur Miller looks forward to the world that would be perfect. He subjects the medium of drama to solve the societal problems. His single aim is to eradicate the social ills, follies and foibles that lie rampant in society. Like the Old Testament Prophets he protests vehemently against the social injustices. To a greater extent than most, perhaps, the dramas of Arthur Miller have always been a reflection of his life. His personal experiences have shaped his political and philosophical convictions.

Kenneth Burke has the following to say in this regard:

“It makes no difference what [that plot] is or where [the author] finds it. Let him [the author] present the story, translate it, if necessary, in terms of a background and kind of people he knows and understands. Then let him develop the play earnestly and sincerely in truth to the characters and to life as he sees it.”

An appropriate strategy to evaluate the work of a literary writer is to understand the milieu in which he works and the forces that shape and sharpen his creative vision.

“The dramatic milieu is the atmosphere in which the playwright works. It comprises the immediate cultural situation, dramatic conventions and traditions, and the heritage of western culture- in effect, all those attitudes, ideals and traditions that determine or affect values supply strategies and pattern human activities. (Porter)”

The plays of Arthur Miller have an organic unity. Each play grows out of earlier ones or to return to familiar themes. Collectively his plays reveal his efforts to confront and find some intelligible meaning to the world witnessed by him. If this attempt has sometimes led to disillusionment, it has never led to defeat. It ought to be emphasized that Arthur Miller is fully aware of the three distinct and characteristic elements of excellence, the presence of which can be discerned in varying degrees in his plays. They are matter of presentment, manner of presentment and the capacity to promote aesthetic bliss. In the plays of Arthur Miller there is the fusion of the subjective and objective aspects of reality. At one level he concerns himself with the objective point of view and reproduces the elements of reality without his mind transference on to the reality that he witnesses.

Clear thinking and great originality mark the creative art products of Arthur Miller. His literary products are qualified by contextual relevance, structural finesse, and organizational tightness, and verbal brilliance, and artistic control. At this
juncture, it is stressed that this thesis indisputably identifies Arthur Miller as the outstanding and remarkable artistic genius who has contributed immensely to the growth, strength, and relevance of American Literature, and by extension to World Literature. It is precisely because of Arthur Miller’s sound sense – phronesis – ethical stature – arête – and benevolence – eunoia – and by his art products being marked by depth and clarity of vision that he occupies the first shelf of American Literature. Arthur Miller’s plays particularly All My Sons and Death of a Salesman gain lasting value mainly because he reflects on the problems and issues of life, which are universally experienced by all in all ages in the past and also in the years to come. By introducing humanistic concerns and universals Arthur Miller ensures lasting value and quality to his Oeuvres.

As such he has grown into a great artist of significance and relevance. In his accent on Gestalt Arthur Miller merits a close, critical, and analytical study. He concentrates on the generic form, which is drama. Arthur Miller, as stated earlier, realizes the importance of balancing the form against the content. In other words, he does not sacrifice content for form. An art object like all other objects has two factors – form and content. As to the problem of mutual relation between these two factors, there are two contesting groups of aestheticians.

Incidentally, the literature of Arthur Miller speaks directly to the mind and heart of the reader. It is precisely because ideas or mental pictures are the material of this dramatist. In representing reality Arthur Miller is absolutely limited by the very conditions of the art of writing and by the elements of drama, to project the mental aspects of the external existence, which he portrays. In fine, Arthur Miller’s literary products reproduce external reality in its mental aspect. He employs the representation of the objective aspects of reality to assist in the presentation of this mental aspect. But then literature is not altogether objective, for there is a blend of the subjective element. In other words, the literary products of Arthur Miller are mainly objective in character but there is a controlled infusion of subjectivism in his objective representation of life that he witnesses around his own self in his period of life. Arthur Miller firmly believes that his mind transference is of real value and is of equal importance to objective reportage. As such, one detects Arthur Miller’s mind transference in his literary products.

The object of Arthur Miller is not merely to be intelligible, but also that his representations are more than clear and distinct. With this in mind he desires to make his ideas arouse in the reader or viewer vividly the feeling and thought that he is experiencing the true objective impressions produced by the physical originals of these ideas. In this context, Arthur Miller takes into serious consideration, while creating dramas of purpose and sense the following: subjective beauty, or the faculties to which man owes his consciousness of beauty; objective beauty, or the qualities, which respectively make an action, a thought, a person or a material object, beautiful; the nature of art, or the processes by which the beautiful in real existences is reproduced; and the means and therefore the aim, which respectively belong to drama. Yet again, the accent that this creative genius places is on high seriousness of absolute sincerity, and as such to present the greatest number of greater ideas.

Arthur Miller is a rare combination of an artist and an aesthetcian, whose aestheticism is rooted in his living experiences, thoughts, and feelings as a dramatist, and as a great creative artist. The flawless triumph of his dramas lies in his creative ability to give expression to adequately and admirably to his feelings, thoughts, and experiences in his literary products, and invest them with the balanced proportions, symmetry, perfection, cohesion, order and unity. The observation of William O’Connor is a pointer to the proper understanding and appreciations of Arthur Miller’s plays, particularly All My Sons and Death of a Salesman: “Society becomes the work of art. . .”

At this point, the pointed observation of C. W. E. Bigsby is worth mentioning for it argues to the point how the plays of Arthur Miller have the power to project the present and engage the mind of the reader and the viewer and generate thought-processes, and the interesting piece of criticism:

“Drama has always had the power to engage the present in a way that is less true of other genres. Unlike the novel it speaks in the present tense, and the sense of shared experience, which derives from this, makes it [American Drama] a sensitive instrument for plotting changes in cultural pressure, for responding to changing ideological, social and aesthetic moods. It is this characteristic, which makes it so valuable for the cultural critic, as it quite literally dramatizes the tensions and displays the public and private face of society. . .”

Arthur Miller’s disillusionment with the systems and structures of the American society and the Establishment, brought on by his traumatic experience with sudden poverty, coincided with his adolescence when even normally a certain amount of disillusionment inevitably comes along the process of growing up. Arthur Miller is ever conscious of the fact that the hidden forces of life are more powerful than the individual’s will or effort. N.S. Pradhan observes as follows:

The story of The Crucible takes us back to the America of the seventeenth century when there was widespread fear of witchcraft. Unlike the dominance of the Church several innocent persons were tortured and put to death. The hero of the play [The Crucible], John Procter is also falsely accused of witchcraft and there is a trial during which much of the evil and hypocrisy of the orthodox society are exposed. At the end when John Procter is given a chance to save his life by signing a confession of his complicity, he chooses to be sentenced to death rather than implicate his name in a falsehood that will wipe out his identity. The play [The Crucible], is thus more positive and heroic in tone than the previous plays. More clearly in The Crucible than in his earlier plays, Miller’s aim is to depict man as the victim of a widespread evil in society over which he has no control. . .

Arthur Miller’s theory of creativity is a kind of organic theory where all the factors are so interrelated that the meaning of one is not intelligible without reference to the other.

Intelligibility is an essential point in creativity. And the term, ‘creative’, cannot be applied to an activity, which does not result in a product having positive aesthetic or artistic value. Moreover, creative activity implies coherence and lucidity. Lack of coherence and lucidity is an evidence of lack of control. This charge cannot be applied to Arthur Miller’s crafted art.
In fact, critical control and inspiration make creative activity in Arthur Miller a resounding success. And in the creative process of Arthur Miller two moments are distinguished. One is the phase of inspiration, with the new suggestion that occurs in his consciousness. The moment of inspiration is sometimes accompanied by exalted feelings. And the other phase is the moment of development or elaboration. In this context, the significant observation of Richard Wollheim is worth quoting here:

First, that the work of art consists in an inner state or condition of the artist, called an intuition or an expression. Secondly, that this state is not immediate or given, but is the product of a process, which is peculiar to the artist, and which involves articulation, organization, and unification. Thirdly, that the intuition so developed may be externalized in a public form, in which case we have artifact, which is often but wrongly taken to be the work of art, and equally it need not be so. The ideal theory identifies work of art with an inner process. . .”

When form, technique and theme blend well, a literary masterpiece is born. Form and theme dictate the techniques and all the three in turn enhance the central idea lending it distinct and unique texture and tone. Delighting in language Miller has used it as the means of the artist for creating the art world and preserving it against time. John O. Stark’s observation becomes apt here: “In literature this bliss usually takes the form of wonder at the adroit use of man’s greatest invention, language, and this wonder is most intense when the wonderer is the linguistic master.”

One comes away from the plays of Arthur Miller, the great craftsman awed by many things but chiefly by the dazzling of verbal skill. Yet again, the love of Arthur Miller for the specific is one reason why his plays are endowed with such luminosity. In his hands the subject of the specific receives loving attention. Specificity, not reality, is reality. Arthur Miller is interested in style, beauty and quality. The subject of his art is life, and he understands it through imaginative leanings. He adroitly marries the past with the present. His literary products are edifices whose every corner deserves the closest attention, and such an examination is invariably a rewarding experience. Thus, it is conclusively established that Arthur Miller is a creative writer, and his plays, particularly All My Sons and Death of a Salesman, have lasting value and they lend themselves to inexhaustible study.

REFERENCES