



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

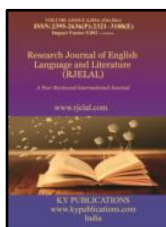
2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

ILLUSION VERSUS REALITY IN THE SELECT PLAYS OF ARTHUR MILLER

A.ANISHA

M.Phil.,English,PRIST University, Thanjavur.

G.Ambika: Research Advisor & Asst.prof.Dept.of English



ABSTRACT

A major theme and source of conflict throughout millor's play,Death of a salesman,is the Loman famil's inability to distinguish between reality and illusion. This is particularly evident in the father ,Willy Loman. Willy has created a fantasy World for himself and his family. In this world, he and his sons are men of greatness that "Have what it takes" to make it in the business environment. In reality, none of them can achieve greatness until they confront and deal with this illusion.

Arthur Miller uses the characters of Joe and chris keller to explore the theme of responsibility. Chris, the idealistic soldier, learned about personal responsibility in combat, whereas his father, joe, allowed his financial obligations to his family to take precedence over his ethics. At the end of the play, larry's letter forces joe to take responsibility for his action. One of the central themes of All My Sons is death .Both Joe keller and his son larry commit suicide, the latter because of his father's wrong doing and the former because of the latter. This chain of events links the themes of death and responsibility, making Joe's suicide an act of repentance, a way for him to accept responsibility for the deaths he caused. Like Miller's play Death of a Salesman, All My Sons examines the failures of the American Dream. Joe keller is a self-made man, a businessman who allows his greed to lead him astray. His suicide represents the often self-destructive nature of the American Dream, which seems to prize money above all else, even morality.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN DRAMA

Until the post-World War I era, American drama, confronted with religious hostility and then by economic necessity and academic indifference, struggled to come into its own as a respected literary genre at home and as a force that made itself felt on foreign stages. A commonplace of American literary history is that the plays of Eugene O'Neill, in Walter J. Meserve's words, marked "America's full-scale arrival into the modern drama of western civilization."

In an article in a 1907 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, John Corbin quoted Edmund Stedman, who proclaimed a literary declaration of

independence for American drama: "Quote boldly, then, I prophesy the dawn of the American drama; and quite confidently, too, for the drama has already dawned." Decrying the exhaustion of the European-influenced melodrama, Corbin applauded dramas by William Vaughn Moody and Percy MacKaye as plays "which challenge comparison with the best work of the modern stage in any country." Moody's *The Great Divide* (pr. 1906) and MacKaye's *Jeanne d'Arc* (pr. 1906) are hardly plays for which modern historians and critics would claim such eminence, but Corbin expressed an optimism about American drama that would become a reality in the post-World War I era in the dramas of O'Neill.

During the 20th cent., especially after World War I, Western drama became more internationally unified and less the product of separate national literary traditions. Throughout the century realism, naturalism, and symbolism (and various combinations of these) continued to inform important plays. Among the many 20th-century playwrights who have written what can be broadly termed naturalist dramas are Gerhart Hauptmann (German), John Galsworthy(English), John Millington Synge and Sean O'Casey (Irish), and Eugene O'Neill, Clifford Odets, and Lillian Hellman (American).

An important movement in early 20th-century drama was expressionism. Expressionist playwrights tried to convey the dehumanizing aspects of 20th-century technological society through such devices as minimal scenery, telegraphic dialogue, talking machines, and characters portrayed as types rather than individuals. Notable playwrights who wrote expressionist dramas include Ernst Toller and Georg Kaiser (German), Karel Čapek (Czech), and Elmer Rice and Eugene O'Neill (American). The 20th cent. also saw the attempted revival of drama in verse, but although such writers as William Butler Yeats, W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot, Christopher Fry, and Maxwell Anderson produced effective results, verse drama was no longer an important form in English. In Spanish, however, the poetic dramas of Federico García Lorca are placed among the great works of Spanish literature. Three vital figures of 20th-century drama are the American Eugene O'Neill, the German Bertolt Brecht, and the Italian Luigi Pirandello. O'Neill's body of plays in many forms—naturalistic, expressionist, symbolic, psychological—won him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1936 and the existentialist dramas of Jean-Paul Sartre, in the realistic and symbolic dramas of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Jean Anouilh, and in the surrealist plays of Jean Cocteau. Indicated the coming-of-age of American drama. Brecht wrote dramas of ideas, usually promulgating socialist or Marxist theory.

ILLUSION VERSUS REALITY

The reality versus illusion is a common theme of literature. Reality is the state of the world of how it really is, where as an illusion is erroneous

interpretation of reality. illusions often derail people from their sanity ,as they cause them to inadvertently live lives in accordance to false beliefs As a results out comes for these people and he people around them, are often atrocious the theme of illusion versus reality is excessively demonstrate.

Illusion versus reality forms a significant component of many works of literature some characters live their lives based on illusions that protect them from reality. Others are forced to face the reality of lives when the illusions are no longer believable. Other comes to realize too late that their whole lives have been meaningless because they never really lived at all. there is one of the common message that through accept your life for what it is and live of life authors offer this message in different ways but the overall message remains same addition these that include illusion versus reality as theme show that things are not allow what they seem on the surface two may appears to have a happy life on the outside while feelings empty inside of the contrast over characters may appears to have meaningless lives, while they actually living full lives believe what appears to be the case in others.

Do not judge based on how anyone else because for all you know appearance of just illusions. Four of that make these points are the story of hour by Kate Chopin, a rose for Emily by William Faulkner the yellow wood paper by charlotte Perkins and doll's house by henrys Ibsen. Each of the works will now be discussed to show how each illustrates the theme of illusion versus reality the overall message of each work will also described.

In Andrew and Larry wachowski's 1999 film, the matrix, and Plato's republic, on shadows realities reality and illusion are one in the same. The wachowski brothers allows the viewer to see how reality and illusion can be mistaken for the other, using a number of contrasting ideas found in Plato's analogy of the cave, showing that at times the dream world can be safer than real life the matrix is a simulation that creates an imaginary world where people are prisoners from reality, much like Plato's mythological the caves. the cave holds prisoners inside a dark cave, chained in way prohibiting them

from turning their heads ,only able to see is a wall that displays images of what appears to be of people or animal passing behind them these reflections or images are all the prisoners know of the world outside cave. They see only what the marionette players want them to see projections of objects that are not real but seem real because they have never seen them the real world people in the matrix only see what the machines shadow, making it difficult to wake up from a continuous dream show, trapped in an illusion world unable to be free.

Reality and illusion in death of salesman in Arthur miller's play. Death of salesman the major theme as well as the main source of conflict is willy's inability to distinguish between reality and illusion. Willy has created fantasy world for himself and his family, a world in hitch he and his sons are great men who "have what it takes" to make it in the context of business and free enterprise in reality none of them can achieve greatness until they confront and deal with this illusion .The play deals with the dreams and desires of willy loman an American salesman who had followed in vain the fascinating mirage of "success " actually willy loman seems to represent the quest of every American searching for his place in the world or society .

The gap between reality and illusion is buried in the play in the structure in Willy's mind and the minds of the other characters. Willy is a dreamer and dreams of a success that it is not possible for him to achieve. He constantly exaggerates his success averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in the year of 1928 and is totally unrealistic about what biff be able to achieve too. Willy's inability to face the truth of his situation, that he is merely ' a dime a dozen', rubs off on his sons .happy exaggerates how successful he is and biff only realizes in Oliver's office that he has been lying to himself for years about his position in the company.

All My Sons conflict between a pragmatic father and his idealistic son. Joe Keller, the father, is a "blue-collar" industrialist, a self-made man. Motivated by an extreme sense of loyalty to his family, Joe allowed the defective airline parts to leave his plant, an action that killed twenty-one pilots and led to the arrest and imprisonment of his

partner and friend, Steve Deever. Joe seeks to escape the past, to deny the fateful series of events that threatened his business, his family, and his freedom. On the other hand, Chris, his son, finds it impossible to escape the past.

During the war, Chris discovered a unique brotherhood among the men who sacrificed their lives for each other: "A kind of—responsibility. Man for man." On his return home, he finds "no meaning" in the shallow upper middle-class concerns or in the consumerism of post-war America.

CONCLUSION

To conclude I can say, The other characters in the play are less well-defined; nevertheless, they support what some believe is Miller's idea for survival: to face the often ugly reality of life. Ann and Sue, Jim Bayliss's wife, negotiate life on an everyday basis. Sue points out the contradictions and dangers inherent in Chris's idealism: "Chris makes people want to be better than it's possible to be." Kate, the sentimental mother who keeps alive an ideal image of her dead son, is not as successful as either Ann or Sue. Knowing the guilt of her husband, she has retreated into a world of horoscopes and memory. Jim, the weary physician, has abandoned his dreams and yielded to practical demands. These tensions and conflicts give depth to Miller's play, allowing the playwright to explore both the human and social dimensions of its central moral crisis.

WORKS CITED

Primary Source

Miller,Arthur Collected Plays With Introduction New York Viking 1957

Ramjilall,M.A. ,Educational publishers Thirty- Second Edition:2011

Secondary Source

Abbotson Susan C.W student companion to Arthur Miller. Westport: Greenwood,2000

Gould, Jean Modern American Playwrights. Bombay: Prakashan,1969

High,Peter B. An Outline of American Lliterature. New york:Longman,1986

Jean Gould. Modern American play wrights, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1966