Chapter VII

Summing Up
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The thesis, entitled, The Plays of Arthur Miller: A Critical Analysis of Class Consciousness, Social Determinism, Success Myth, and Crafted Dramaturgy," fully concentrates on "Arthur Miller's All My Sons and The Death of a Salesman and examines the other plays in passing, and establishes Arthur Miller as one of the outstanding American dramatists of the twentieth century.

Writing drama in American English has been the forte of Arthur Miller, and he has established his reputation as the socially conscious artist. Both his plays are excellent social documents. And the critical analysis of Arthur Miller's All My Sons and The Death of a Salesman is the most challenging area of study, with great applicability on examination of American experience and American social consciousness.

The key terms in this Doctoral Thesis are carefully, and methodically analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated. The method adopted is one of close analysis. Moreover, there is a sincere and studied attempt to analyze, synthesize, interpret and evaluate the plays of Arthur Miller on their dramaturgical excellence, thematic importance, relevance, and consequence, and on their form, structure and organization - the Gestalt.
Matters of the sociological and the psychological significance, relevance, and consequence related to the life, mind, and art of Arthur Miller receive critical attention. This Doctoral Thesis carefully and analytically examines and studies the plays, *All My Sons* and *The Death of a Salesman*, of Arthur Miller and projects him as the committed artist. He is chiefly concerned with creativity in art, the loss of values because of the dollar spinning spree, paranoid money craze, failure of the American Dream, existential suffering, and technically perfect dramaturgy.

The literary works of Arthur Miller have earned for him a lasting fame. In fact, the reputation of Arthur Miller is always on the ascendancy. But then Arthur Miller had to strive hard to earn the recognition of the American Academes and critics. And perceptive and critically oriented readers and critics have come to accept the fact that literary aristocracy, verbal brilliance, and technical excellence mark the tomes of Arthur Miller.

Arthur Miller is subjected to a close critical study in this Dissertation because he is quite an impressive playwright. It is an acknowledged fact that his mindset as a creative artist is of an outstanding caliber and high artistic maturation. Yet again, the literary products of Arthur Miller are qualified by contextual relevance, structural finesse, and organizational tightness, and verbal brilliance, and artistic control.

At this juncture, it is stressed that this Doctoral Dissertation indisputably identifies Arthur Miller as the outstanding and remarkable artistic genius, who has
contributed immensely to the growth, development, and relevance of American Drama in American English, and by extension to World Literature. Furthermore, the literary products of Arthur Miller lasting value mainly because they reflect 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. In fact, life precedes literature as far as Arthur Miller is concerned.

Yet again, Arthur Miller places the accent in a balanced manner, on the elements of drama and the rhetorical requirements, which overlap one another. There is the proper description of the milieu, Zeitgeist, and the race, class and gender. Arthur Miller demonstrates his artistic capability for enclosing the old and the new. Arthur Miller has richly contributed by his dramas, All My Sons, and Death of a Salesman, to the strength, significance, transcendence, wide reach, and consequence of American Literature.

Arthur Miller, the creative writer, with verve and vitality, absorbs and expresses everything that he witnesses in the society and establishment of his period. In a way, his dramas can be termed as so many revealing social documents, without the least trace of propaganda literature. They sound at times as protest literature, but never get reduced to the level of propaganda.

The flawless triumph of Arthur Miller’s art 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.

Drama requires a material basis to work upon. The main channels by which drama approaches the mind are the sense of sight and the sense of hearing. Above all the most important is how the mind of the dramatist communicates with the mind of the spectator. In fact, drama has a quality, which is addressed to and perceived by the mind over and above the quality or qualities, which are perceived by the senses. Drama, then, is the presentation of the real in its mental aspect.

The important aspect of drama that ought to be noted is that the mental aspect of the fact of life and the scenes of external nature are presented by the ideas, or combination of ideas, of which words are the symbols. Drama speaks directly to the mind. And ideas and mental pictures are the material of the dramatist.

And no medium is so powerful to affect the imagination as language. Incidentally, in representing reality the dramatist is absolutely limited by the very conditions of his art to the mental aspect of the external existence, which he portrays. Drama reproduces external reality in its mental aspect. It employs representations of the objective aspects and reality to assist in the presentation of the mental aspect. But it concerns itself with the subjective outlook of the world also.
Drama, then, in its widest sense, is the record of the impressions made by external realities of every kind upon great dramatists such as Arthur Miller, and of the reflections, which these dramatists have made upon them. The subject matter of drama covers a whole range of human life and activity, as well as every known manifestation of the physical nature. For not only are actual events and the doings and sayings of actual persons reproduced in it, but the rules deduced from the observation of the conditions of man’s life are included in its records.

Similarly, it presents to the readers and viewers not merely what individual dramatists have found to interest them in particular countries in particular epochs, but also the general laws, which have been gradually formulated by long-continued observation of the processes of nature.

And so dramas play a very important role in the lives of men and women. In fine, drama is the brain of humanity. It is with such an understanding one analyzes Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. As such, external realities, the society and the establishment affect Arthur Miller, and he intends and wants his dramas to have social relevance and consequence. Moreover, he wishes that his dramas provide the necessary and needed correctives, and the healthy and definitive prescriptions so that the society and the establishment would mend and alter for the better. It ought to be stressed that realism plays a big role in defining the plays of Arthur Miller. Realism can be defined as the representation of
everyday life in literature. Concerned with the average, the commonplace, the ordinary, realism employs theatrical conventions to create the illusion of everyday life.

Arthur Miller emphasizes the natural and spontaneous quality of the writing and this becomes apparent from a study of his plays particularly *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. Although there was nothing remarkable about *All My Sons* it made a strong appeal to the audience for its brutal frankness and hard-hitting language. The play tends to expose the evil of capitalism and the strange behaviour of capitalists who lose their moral values for the sake of money. Had Joe Keller not been so greedy for money, he would not have sold the defective cylinders and his son would not have died. It is in this context that early in his writing career, Miller acquired the label of a 'committed' playwright.

In *Death of a Salesman* Miller departed from realism in at least one sense. The realist mode in drama generally depicts the action in a linear design. The action follows the pattern of a beginning, a middle and an end. In this play Miller only describes the last day in Willy's memories and day dreams. It was because of this that Miller had at first given this play the title, "The Inside of His Head". And because of the technique he employs, the play is said to be written in expressionistic style. The style and various themes of the play will be discussed at length later on.
Miller's next play *The Crucible* makes use of history as allegory to depict a contemporary situation. The cold war between America and Russia during the period following the second world war was marked in America by widespread suspicion and fear of communism. Senator McCarthy had set up committee to investigate un-American activities and all over the country people began to suspect their neighbours, friends and colleagues. The story of *The Crucible* takes one back to the America of the 17th Century when there was widespread fear of witchcraft. Though this play is dealing with historical incidents in reality it is a contemporary play in which Miller indirectly comments on the climate of fear prevailing in his own day.

*A Memory of Two Mondays* is a short biographical piece of Miller based on his days of struggle during his early days when he had to take up all sorts of jobs for his livelihood. Miller had stated that he is particularly fond of this play because of his nostalgia for the period in which the play is set that is during the depression. Moreover the play does not directly deal with theme of social justice and exploitation. On the other hand it deals with a young boy's hopes and dreams and aspirations in the midst of a very depressing situation.

Miller's next play *A View from the Bridge* is a drama of passion in which Miller introduced a new aspect of human personality the hidden forces of instinct and passion. What he is suggesting is that just as in the earlier plays man is sometimes shown to be a victim of outside forces beyond his control. Similarly he
can also be a slave of the mysterious forces working from within his body. From the point of view of technique also Miller introduced here a new element of narrative.

Miller's next play After the Fall after a lapse of nine years is perhaps the most autobiographical of all his plays. All of its action takes place in the mind of the protagonist Quentin and thus the stage is supposed to be the mind of the hero where other characters walk in and out just as memories and ideas are projected in the mind without any apparent connection. Throughout the play there are scenes of unhappy childhood, conjugal relationships and the innermost fortune of protagonist's soul come to the surface.

Still there are many more plays written by Miller which brought him name and fame to him. He has acquired the status of being one of the intellectual leaders of his country. He is much sought after to give lectures and address seminars all over the USA. His critical writings have much to add on such various aspects of literature as realism, drama and its various theories, the writer's role in today's society and the individual's responsibility in a complex society.

With the arrival of the realistic, there has been the beginning of the study and depiction of subjects close to the lives of middle-class people: work, marriage, and family life. From this standpoint Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman is more realistic than Shakespeare's Othello, and Sophocles's Oedipus Rex.
The plays of Arthur Miller, particularly *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, possess a true to life quality, and operate according to American dramaturgical conventions. Royal personages, gods, military heroes, and exalted language are absent from Arthur Miller’s plays, *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, and as a modern American dramatist turns to an approximation of the daily life of the lower and middle classes.

One means by which realistic dramas such as Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, create the illusion of everyday life is through setting. Whereas writing consists primarily of painted backdrops in Moliere’s plays, and are often established by dialogue in Shakespeare’s dramas, the settings of Arthur Miller’s plays, *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, are designed to look authentic. Moreover, settings in Arthur Miller’s plays, *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, function symbolically. The elaborately detailed settings symbolize the very nature and embody the profound pressures played on the material and social conditions of the everyday realistic world of Arthur Miller. In fact, Arthur Miller provides extensive and detailed stage directions.

Other conventions designed to create and sustain the illusion that the audience is watching a slice of domestic life include the following. They are in the first place, the use of a three-walled room with an open fourth into which the audience peers to view the action, and overhear the conversation. Secondly, there is the dialogue that approximates the idiom of everyday discourse, polished to be
sure, but designed especially to sound like speech rather than poetry. In fact, Arthur Miller displays his verbal brilliance, verbal strategies, and mastery over American English while creating effectual dialogues that are persuasive and quite convincing. In the third place the plots that, though highly contrived, seem to turn on a series of casually related actions. Finally, the subjects are not from mythology or history, but from the concerns of ordinary life.

Of the two plays under discussion, Arthur Miller’s drama, Death of a Salesman, is his 'magnum opus'. Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman is the most famous and notable America play. Produced and published in 1949. Suddenly it attracted a large crowd and the people began to throng the theaters in groups. After a original and long Broadway run, the play was revived in 1984. Willy Loman's part was played by Dustin Hoffman who was already a popular actor became the talk of the town.

The play is in the tradition of social realism inaugurated by Ibsen, and continued by Chekhov, Strinberg, and Shaw. The dialogue of the characters, their financial and emotional problems, and their behaviour are all indicative of a typically realistic drama.

Like Ibsen’s A Doll’s House, Arthur Miller’s A Death of a Salesman raises questions about social values and attitudes. In the case of Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman, the pursuit of success and how it ends in failures and frustrations, and the American Dream, and the explosion of the American Dream as a mere myth serve as
the gist of the play. Like Checkov's tone in *The Cherry Orchard*, Arthur Miller's tone in *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* mixes sympathy and judgment, criticism and compassion. Arthur Miller furnishes information about the lives his characters lead, giving the perceptive and critically oriented readers a better sense of their past.

These realistic touches blend, however, with other dramatic elements that are less realistic and that which is termed as expressionistic. Expressionistic playwrights attempt to dramatize a subjective picture of reality as seen by an individual consciousness. As an expressionistic dramatist, Arthur Miller attempts to show the inner life of a character, portraying external reality as he or she sees it.

The plays of Arthur Miller *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* are concerned with suicide as the result of conflict between self and society. He is the significant American dramatist of alienation whose theatre is willful self-destruction. He has dramatized the ways in which man alienates himself from his society and fights to get back into it, and he has fused his public and social theme to show the failure of integrity the hero must commit. He deals with the conflict of confused national and personal life of America without abstraction which may require a rethinking of the nation.

Miller tries to account for the realistic surface of life as well as man's intense need to symbolize the meaning of what he experienced. In all his plays the central creating force is the character. The women character in his plays are very complex. These women are of necessity auxiliaries to the action, which is carried
by the male characters. Although some of his characters may be suggested by his own life and experience, Miller insists that they are dramatic entities, created for the stage and existing only in their life there.

In Miller's plays, individuals upset social equilibrium by enforcing the exaggerated demands of a narrow egoism. For instance, in *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, Joe Keller and Willy Loman adopt popular standards, but that become estranged from both family and society because of their uncompromising self-will. His characters are undistinguished citizens who do not understand themselves or the overwhelming social causes which destroys them. This is however, essentially social in nature and rarely touches the larger sphere beyond it. They tend to forget performing their responsibilities, since they are motivated by the external forces that give importance to materialistic wealth.

The tremendous and complicated development of the material civilization, the multiplicity and variety of social forms involve a lot in the development of Miller's protagonists. It is noting but the representation of the contemporary American society. The concept of private life and social conduct has been advocated by many critics. Miller dramatizes the longings and disappointments of a little man in America and the inhuman attitude of the business world towards a man not useful to the organization along with his focus on the credibility gap between the American dream and the American reality. Variety of theatrical
activity had set new records in American drama that influenced Arthur Miller to analyze the family and social responsibilities of an individual who constitutes himself as an entity of the society.

Economic and political democracy has extended its freedom to almost everyone and the new drama of ordinary life started creating literary interest in realism that was intimate photographic and naturalistic, which altered the design of the play houses and the machinery of the stage.

Like Ibsen's social plays, Miller's plays are economical since all of his characters have an integral relation to theme. He is realistic and makes his protagonists realize their position in the family and in the society. His protagonists are positive and real entities without doubt in their own existence.

In All My Sons Miller demonstrates the cruelty of the idealist without attempting to understand its cause; he draw a picture of a war-profiteer without questioning the human nature which could be an evidence for such cruelty and deceit. In Death of a Salesman Willy is fatally in illusion but discovers a little about the true nature of reality. Miller describes the last days of a man who is forced to face the terrible fact that he is a failure; that his vague ideal of success has crumbled; that his sons, on whose respect and success he has counted, have only contempt for him.

Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman is expressionistic in that it dramatizes Willy Loman’s subjective sense of things, rather than exhibiting a concern for a strict and exact representation of external detail. The play, Death of a Salesman, is
particularly expressionistic in its memory scenes, in which Willy Loman recalls events from the past in such a way that he reenacts rather than merely remembers them. In these scenes, different places, and states of mind fluctuate and merge as Arthur Miller reveals Willy Loman’s thoughts, attitudes and beliefs, his inflated hopes and deflated dreams. The expressionistic quality of the play is enhanced by lighting and music that signal flashbacks and contribute to its mood.

The central event of Arthur Miller’s play, *All My Sons*, is a businessman’s evasion of responsibility for a decision in wartime, which led to the loss of twenty-one lives. Joe Keller, who has a contract for the manufacture of airplane cylinder heads, knows that he is guilty, his wife knows it, the neighbours know it, even his son Chris Keller suspects it but cannot face the fact that he does. Arthur Miller’s concern with large social issues is the key to our understanding of the play, *All My Sons*. In the play, family relations are predominant. To Joe Keller nothing is bigger than the family. It is everything to him.

When Chris Keller discovers his father’s complicity in the sale of defective cylinder heads to the Army Air Force, he turns against him. Rather than living, Joe Keller shoots himself. Joe Keller’s death is a parable and through the play, Arthur Miller points out inescapable social responsibilities. Any evasiveness or refusal is severely punished. Plays such as Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons* are therefore, specially relevant today. It is with such a background that one examines and analyses the dramas of Arthur Miller, *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. 