

Abstract

The Theme of betrayal in selected plays of . زينب لطيف عباس . Arthere Miller (رسالة ماجستير) . بغداد: الجامعة المستنصرية:كلية الاداب :قسم اللغة الانكليزية ، ٢٠١٠

Arthur Miller(١٩١٥-٢٠٠٥), as an American dramatist, will always occupy a position of high significance in any balanced study of twentieth-century American drama. This significance is essentially and justly earned by his success in dramatizing the mood of post-war America in such a particular vividness and insight.

Miller's significance is also generated from two aspects by which his dramatic output has been approached. The first aspect is his belief that the dramatist has a moral responsibility toward his audience. Accordingly, Miller always takes a stand more moral than strictly ideological. This moral responsibility does not necessarily mean to set forth a pattern of moral values that should be followed. To Miller, a dramatist's moral task is rather the exposition of what happens when there are no values. Through this exposition the audience are compelled toward an intense quest for values that are missing.

The second aspect is the fact that Miller is one of the most socially conscious of almost all major American dramatists. Most of his plays stress the connection between society and the individual and the influential nature of this connection. The conflict within the familial range of connection becomes the core of many of Miller's plays. This conflict, however, is not intended to delineate the emotional ties between family members. Miller sees the family as one of the ways in which the individual is related to his community. The family is taken to be the microcosm for the large society.

The question Miller poses in his dramatic works is how the individual may transform the outside world into a home. He wonders about the possibility of making one family joined by an overwhelming sense of solidarity. To answer this question, Miller tackles many themes that he felt necessary and influential to the relationship between the individual and his society.

Betrayal as a conduct has a crucial importance to the main objective of Miller's drama, i.e., to make a home out of the outside world. Because betrayal means the breaking or violation of a social contract, trust, or confidence that produces a moral and psychological conflict within a relationship among individuals, between organizations or between individuals and organizations, it becomes one of the recurrent themes in Miller's plays. Almost all kinds of betrayal are tackled in his plays: social, political, and personal. The discussion of these kinds of betrayal is the concern of this thesis, which is divided into three Chapters and a Conclusion, followed by a Bibliography.

Chapter One is introductory and divided into five Sections. The First Section is devoted to the impact of the Depression and World War II on American society, and how those two events affected and changed the life of the American individual so deeply. Section Two discusses post-war American drama. It covers the period between 1940 and 1960, and tackles the most prominent dramatists of this particular period. Section Three of this Chapter discusses Miller's life and examines the main influences, private and public, that had a great share in the formation of his views as a dramatist. Sections Four and Five are devoted to the definition of the term "betrayal," discussing it as a recurrent theme in many of his plays and how he has dealt with it.

Chapter Two analyzes two of Miller's plays: *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949). The former play evolves around Joe Keller, an industrialist who allows faulty engine parts to be forwarded to the Air Force in order not to lose his contract. This play deals with the betrayal of society by the individual. This betrayal is seen as an inevitable product of the economic system (Capitalism) and the new success ethic. Betrayal of the family and friends by the individual is also discussed. As for *Death of a Salesman*, it concerns a man who is betrayed by his own hollow values and those of the American society.

Chapter Three deals with *The Crucible* (1953) and *After the Fall* (1964). The former play retells the story of the Salem witch hunts in the seventeenth century, and presents those who preferred to die rather than to lie. This play focuses on the Individual's betrayal by his own community and the judicial system. As for the latter play, though written in the sixties, it is haunted with the impact of the Second World War and the Depression of the 1930s. In this play, Miller combines betrayal in private and public life, and examines the influences of each one on the characters. In these two plays the betrayal of the state, politically speaking, is analyzed. Finally, the thesis ends with a Conclusion, which sums up the main findings of the study, followed by a Bibliography.