

The Sense of Isolation in Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*:

A Postmodernist Study

LE SENS D'ISOLEMENT DANS TOUS MES FILS D'ARTHUR MILLER :

UNE ÉTUDE DE POST-MODERNISTE

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Abstract: Miller's *All my Sons* no doubt can be considered an outstanding masterpiece which shows not only the nature of the Second World War but also the nature and the multifaceted features of business targeted and politicized wars which do not seem to come to a stoppage. Lots of researchers have worked on this play, but this study aims at having a postmodern look at *All my Sons*. It makes an attempt to break the shackles of the so-called logical reasoning and calculations of modernism and bring the issue in a free and honest bedrock. It tries to give a postmodern disclosure to the isolation and alienation of man, which have been inherited from the calculating modern world of enlightenment and rationalism.

Key words: Arthur Miller; Isolation; Postmodern; Research; Alienation

Resumé: Il n'y a aucun doute qu'on peut considérer que "Tous mes Fils" de Miller un chef-d'œuvre remarquable (qui montre non seulement la nature de la Seconde guerre mondiale, mais aussi la nature et les caractéristique à facettes multiples d'affaire qui ont

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été cibles et politisées de guerres qui ne semblent pas venir à une interruption. Beaucoup de chercheurs a travaillé sur ce sujet, mais cette étude vise à avoir un regard de post-moderne dans "Tous mes Fils". Il fait une tentative de casser les chaînes du raisonnement logique prétendu et des calculs de modernisme et apporte la question dans un socle rocheux libre et honnête. Il essaye de donner une révélation post-moderne à l'isolement et à l'aliénation d'homme, qui a été hérité du monde moderne prévoyant d'éclaircissement et le rationalisme.

Mots-clés: Arthur Miller; Isolement; Post-moderne; Recherche; Aliénation

INTRODUCTION

This study deals with the interpretation and analysis of isolation in Miller's *All My Sons* in the light of postmodern study. To this aim, first the Isolated Family in *All My Sons* is briefly analyzed, then Postmodernism is introduced, which is followed by a close postmodern study of the play, and finally the study comes to its conclusion by displaying the significance of the postmodern traits applied in the play showing the sense of isolation.

ISOLATED FAMILY IN *ALL MY SONS*

All my Sons is one of Arthur Miller's well-remembered plays. Miller has been inspired from a true story. As Hooti and Maleki (2009, pp.45-57) quote from Miller that,

The source of inspiration of *All My Sons* was from a story told by a pious lady from the Middle West about a neighborhood family that had been destroyed when the daughter turned the father in to the authorities on discovering that he had been selling faulty machinery to the Army during World War II.

Miller in his play shows the isolation of the Kellers by giving the stage a feeling of isolation: "The stage is hedged on right and left by tall, closely planted poplars which lend the yard a secluded atmosphere" (Miller, 1947, p. 58, henceforth Miller). For Joe Keller, there is no outside world beyond his family and his job. His yard is surrounded by picket fence. Then we can see his bounded world. There is no comprehension for him of what is going on in the outside world. If he is guilty, it is not because of his evil intentions, but because of his ignorance.

Our feeling at the beginning of the play is that self-made Joe, devoted Kate and loving Chris appear to be a perfect family. Their self-deception and guilt is laid bare as the play develops. Their nature is revealed as they react to the crisis that arises "whenever the hand of the distant past reaches out of its grave . . . to reveal some unreadable hidden order behind the amoral chaos of events." "That emergence," says Miller (1973), "is the point of *All My Sons* – that there are times when things do indeed cohere" (vii).

The only outside world for Keller is his business. Therefore, he is reflecting the values of this world. The business world does not have human values. Thus Miller puts part of blame for Keller's action on the consumer society and business world which its values are fake. In this kind of world human values have no place.

Miller in his *Collected Plays* says: "Joe Keller's trouble, in a word, is not that he cannot tell right from wrong but that his cast of mind cannot admit that he, personally has any viable connection with his world, his universe, or his society" (1947, p. 19). As Miller implies, the capitalistic business community fails to implement these values into its members. May be in the same choice that Keller faced most people would do what he did.

George has a major role in the play. He can be called as the broken promise of the past messenger of truth. Because he brings back terrible past that eventually pushes Joe to suicide. Without George, Frank's past would have never been brought to the surface and Chris would have never been able to push his father to his inevitable demise. Without Frank, Kate would have not been able to hold on to her hope.

POSTMODERNISM: NEW WAY OF SEEING THE WORLD

Nobody has reached a convincing conclusion on the real meaning of the label of postmodernism. Hooti and Shoostarian comment that,

In very general terms, postmodernism is connected with a cognitive change that stressed the termination of philosophical foundationalism and consequently epistemological uncertainty with the pluralization of "legitimate" knowledge from both within and outside of the predominant cultures of advanced industrial societies, originating from a crisis of legitimation; with hybridization, namely, the subversion or moderation of traditional boundaries between high culture, mass culture and vernacular culture, and with the increase in cultural oppositions between the first and the third world. (2010, p. 14)

The term postmodern has become one of the most used and abused terms in language; it is an ambiguous and misleading word. No one is even sure what modernism means, let alone in what sense we have recently gone beyond it, or rejected it, or developed from it. "Postmodernism is perhaps just a convenient label for a set of attitudes, values, beliefs and feelings about what it means to be living in the late 20th century" (Robinson, 2000, p. 35). Some theories have suggested that it is as much a mood or attitude of mind as anything else. Hutcheon states:

For some it was a mere 'moment', while for others it was a more general 'condition'. Some denigrated it to just a 'style'; still others elevated it to a historical 'period'. These variations do not only signal differences in critics' perspectives, however; they also mark the multiplicity and complexity of the cultural phenomena gathered together under this heading. (qtd. In Malpas, 2005, p.115)

Sim regards postmodernism as a "rejection for many cultural certainties of Western culture over the last couple of centuries" (2002, p. vii). It is certain of its uncertainty and it also analyzes a late capitalist cultural condition of postmodernity.

Although literature has had a long history behind it, postmodernism deals with literary masterpieces from a new outlook which shatters traditional perspectives. In this way postmodernism is a new horizon to see the world. The complexity behind the terms has attracted many critics and literary readers alike. In this research, some aspects of postmodernism will be discussed.

According to Lyotard (1984) social order is very important and each society must have order. In ancient time, myth was created in order to give social order and then religion substituted myth to give social order. After Renaissance, Grand narratives took the place of religion. Then after two wars, TV as mass media gives images without any originality. Also, people are bombarded by advertisements of mass media like newspapers, magazines, TV, radio. They are means of power in the hand of capitalist societies. Reality is lost because of these images. They force people to buy something which they do not need. Therefore people buy goods not because they need them, but they buy for prestige and joy. I Think then I Am change to I Buy then I Am. Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) says:

I see it [postmodernism] as an ongoing cultural process or activity, and I think that what we need, more than a fixed and fixing definition, is a "poetics", an open, ever-changing theoretical structure by which to order both our cultural knowledge and our critical procedures (p.54).

Lyotard (1984) defines postmodernism as "incredulity toward metanarrative. A metanarrative sets out the rules of narratives and language games" (p.24). The postmodernist authors flout these metanarratives as ideologically constructed so, postmodernism is deconstructionist by nature. Also postmodernism can be used as referring to aspects of a more general human condition in the 'late capitalist' world of the post 1950s which have an all-embracing effect on life, culture, ideology and art.

PROMINENT FIGURES

Some prominent critics such as Ihab Hassan, Linda Hutcheon, Foucault, Brian McHale, Barry Lewis have dedicated their time to the clarification of the postmodern subject. The leading figures of this movement include: Jorge Luis Borges, Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon and Ronald Barthes. They mix literary genres, cultural and stylistic levels, comedy and tragedy, fiction and reality to such extent that classifying them according to traditional forms is impossible. The critics who will be influential in this study include Jean Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, and Jacques Derrida.

JEAN FRANCOIS LYOTARD AND THE FALL OF GRAND NARRATIVES IN THE POSTMODERN CONDITION

Jean Francois Lyotard in 1979 published the most famous philosophical formulation of postmodernism. He in *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Trans. (1984) defines postmodernism as “incredulity regarding Meta narratives,” grand stories about the world and the place of inquiry in it. Lyotard claims that in postmodern era our social “language game” no longer requires metanarratives to justify the utterances made in them. The modernist notions of justification, system proof, and the unity of science no longer hold. He analyzes the production of knowledge by science, as well as the discourse of everyday social life, in terms of discontinuity. Lyotard (1984), believes, “Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's parody” (p. 32).

Lyotard believes in social order for social bound among people. For having social society, social order is necessary. Therefore social bounds can give order to society. In Traditional time it was the work of Myth that made social order for social bounds. Therefore, Mythology is system of social order. It defines the relation between man and supernatural. By passing of time people did not believe in myth. After myth it was religion established social order, but after Renaissance people lost their beliefs in religion. Then in modern era Grand narrative takes the place of religion to establish social order. Grand narrative means general theory, a narrative which intends to give full account of other one, of another event. There are two famous metanarratives; First one is Hegelian: Totality of knowledge, the idea of progress; the history is linear to destination or the idea of progress. Another one is Marxism: the emancipation of humanity to explain economic, philosophy, art, music and everything.

But after 1950s nobody believed in Grand narrative. Marxism became dictatorship and Hegelian idea failed because of a lot of diseases, war and future was not better or rosy; as a result, postmodernism does not believe in Meta narrative. Lyotard suggests instead of Metanarrative we should have language game or local game. Here language means symbolic action shared among participants of a game. Lyotard(1984) explains:

In contemporary society and culture - postindustrial society, postmodern culture- the question of the legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation (p. 38).

There are two major versions of the narrative of legitimation; one is more political, the other more philosophical; both are of great importance in modern history, in particular in the history of knowledge and its institutions. The subject of the first of these versions is humanity as the hero of liberty. All people have right to science. With the second narrative of legitimation, the relation among science, the nation, and the State develops quite differently. These Grandnarratives are what Lyotard calls “metanarratives, philosophical stories which legitimate all other discourse” (p. 31). Lyotard proposes a multiplicity of different histories and local narratives, which are incapable. He explicates:

We no longer have recourse to the grand narratives— we can resort neither to the dialectic of spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity as a validation for postmodern scientific discourse. But as we have just seen, the little narrative remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention, most particularly in science (p. 64).

JEAN BAUDRILLARD: THE REVOLUTION OF THE VALUES AND THE LOSS OF THE REALITY

Jean Baudrillard as a French cultural and sociologist has a unique analysis of contemporary culture. He in his *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976) argues that the culture of electronic media replaces earlier senses of reality with the new “hyperreality”.

Baudrillard (1983) explicates four basic phases of the sign. In the first phase the basic reality is represented faithfully. In the second phase, this reality or truth still exists, but it is perverted and distorted through representation. The distorted reality is gone in the third phase, while people try to cling to it, by hiding its disappearance through representation. Finally in the fourth phase, there is nothing real to reflect and there is no relationship between the sign and reality. Then Baudrillard asserts that humankind has interned the fourth phase of “hyperreal”. In this phase or the order of simulation hyperreality takes the position of reality. Thus hyperreality is nothing but the direct result of advances in technologies.

Baudrillard has been criticizing those economic theories such as Marxism, which made the function of the economy the determining factor in social life. He argues social analysis must learn to understand the primary role of social signs, codes, and language in contemporary society. Robinson in *Nietzsche and Postmodernism*(2000) states:

Our postmodern world seems very likely to become one of spiritual emptiness and cultural superficiality, in which social practices are endlessly repeated and parodied, a fragmented world of alienated individuals with no sense of self or history, tuned into a thousand different TV channels. This is certainly the vision of both present and future offered to us by the postmodernist Jean Baudrillard. For him, this postmodern world is one of simulacra in which there is no longer any difference between reality and surface. Modern citizens will not be ‘Overpeople’ – just consumers of media in a world of signs without signifiers (p. 43).

FREDRIC JAMESON AND THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF THE LATE CAPITALISM IN CONSUMER SOCIETY

Jameson as professor of comparative literature has commented widely on contemporary literature, art, and culture. In his essay, published originally in 1984, he asserts postmodernism is an expression of the current state of capitalist society, “Late capitalism”. Jameson (1991, p. 87) refers to surprisingly inverse effect brought about by postmodernism, namely:

The prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself can be said to have become cultural, but consumer culture.

He believes “society has moved past the industrial age and into the information age” (p. 88). People are inundated with information and technology as a central focus in many lives. According to Jameson the aesthetic forms and techniques of the avant-garde and modernism are at the service of consumerism in postmodern world. Advertisers attack the history of art which is massive cultural canon in order to search a new seize on a product. Jameson (1991) states that, the development of lifestyle choice in advertising has changed to be the real business of television and other kinds of mass media ;therefore, in postmodern society ,the goods are not bought for the sake of need but they are bought because You Are What You Buy, and You Buy Then You Are.

DAVID HARVEY AND MARKET PLACE

Harvey (1980) sees postmodernism condition as the result of intensification of the very energies of transformation and dissolution which had been associated with modern capitalism, energies which, in assimilating more and more areas of life to the logic of the market place, had caused a radical undermining of previously stable values, beliefs and economic forms. Life is suppressed by logic of the market place.

Postmodern situation brings about an undermining of the very forms of social and political organization which had supplanted traditional forms of modernity. The Global economy of it is characterized by: impermanence of interests or changeability of tastes; volatility of economic conditions; insecurity in patterns of employment; plurality of class and political identification. Harvey focuses in particular upon the “space-time compression” brought about by acceleration in travel and telecommunication. Space dissolves into time. Under these conditions, profit is not measured in terms of material increase, but in the rate of consumption.

JACQUES DERRIDA: DECONSTRUCTION OF LANGUAGE AS AN INNOCENT MEDIUM

Algerian born French philosopher, Jacques Derrida is one of the most famous postmodern philosophers, more accurately poststructuralists. Derrida in 1967 reexamined the fundamentals of writing and its consequences on philosophy in general, sought to undermine the language of western metaphysics. Derrida by use of deconstruction shows that any collection of linguistic signs can always produce different sorts of meanings, many of which may be wholly unintentional. Therefore; there can be no presence of stable meaning when communication takes place between writer and reader, speaker and listener. Derrida’s conclusion is that language is always metaphorical. Robinson (2000) explicates:

Language can never penetrate the inner meaning or pin down the ‘essences’ of concepts like ‘truth’ or ‘knowledge’... Derrida is a critical of the belief that language can somehow prevent change and fixed ideas, a belief he calls ‘logocentricity’. The conviction that language can generate stable and ‘total’ certainties is dangerous as well as misguided. Language can only be made to do this by repressing alternative readings or by excluding whatever is considered to be ‘other’. Postmodernists like Derrida celebrate difference, diversity and the marginal, those things that flourish in a pluralist and tolerant democracy (p. 39).

The central argument for deconstruction depends on relativism, by which it means the view that truth itself is always relative to the differing standpoints and predisposing intellectual frameworks of the judging subject. Derrida goes on from this venerable form of conceptual relativism to suggest ways in which all conceptual frameworks can be criticized. This is his key contribution to the postmodernist attitude. Derrida sees all conceptual systems as prone to a falsifying, distorting, hierarchization. Also, he believes man’s knowledge of the world entirely relatives to the scope of conceptual systems, but people have been all too confident about the ways in which the central categories within those systems work to organize their experience.

ARGUMENT

Miller’s concern with the past and its connection with the present, is his basic of moral logic which is obvious in his *All My Sons*. In his drama the past is never dead. Miller is more interested in the reaction which follows understanding. In Miller, the moment of awareness is always preparation for a moment of choice.

This play illustrates the fundamental problems of modern and postmodern man. These problems are occasioned by the false and materialistic values. The false values are selfishness, self-indulgence, and self-interest.

ISOLATION IN CONSUMER SOCIETY AND FALL OF GRAND NARRATIVES

Miller in *All My Sons* directly challenges the fall of Grand narratives and the place of moral values in consumer society. *All My Sons* is a critique of what Lyotard calls it “postmodern condition”. The following part presents this play in frame work of postmodern interpretation and fall of grand narratives and logic of consumer culture.

A MAN AMONG THE MEN

Miller carefully gains our sympathy for Keller before he reveals his crime. He comments that it is important to have sympathy for Joe Keller. He describes Joe Keller as a good husband and a loving, sensible father who is sincerely devoted to his dear family, and as a man “whose judgment must be dredged out of experience. A man among men”(Miller: 37). Joe is a man who no one could dislike him. He is nearing sixty and he has a big house and a bulging wallet. He is a successful, pragmatic, and self-made person. Joe cares about his family and puts them at a high priority. However, his lack in education and a peasant-like common sense resulted in his minimal insight and judgment of the world and the things around him. Joe Keller is not a strange person. Miller represented a pragmatism which somehow co-existed with the language and fact of idealism. As Miller remarks in the *Introduction to the Collected Plays* (1978), when he wrote the play:

Everybody knew that a lot of hanky-panky was going on . . . a lot of illicit fortunes were being made, a lot of junk was being sold to the armed services, we all knew that. The average person was violating rationing. All the rules were being violated every day but you wanted not to mention it (p. 10).

By this view, if Keller violated grand narratives and fundamental principles of capitalism society he also embodied other values equally observable in an ill and corrupted society as dedicated to material achievement as to a utopian vision. Capitalism creates false needs; satisfaction of these needs depend on denying moral roles, identity, and change them with the economic relations. Miller says:

All My Sons was conceived when all public voices were announcing the arrival of that great day when industry and labor were one, my personal experience was daily demonstrating that beneath the slogans nothing had changed. The play was thus an unveiling of what I believed everybody knew but nobody publicly said (p. 134).

When Keller gives the order to repair the hair line cracks in the cylinder heads he has taken a decision based on choosing between bad and worse, a conflict of responsibilities; on one hand he has the pressure of army to fast produce of aircraft parts, and his contract and may be the risk of crash of aircrafts; on the other his company which provides for his family, and secures the future of his sons in materialistic society. His reason for sending defective cylinder heads is not a villainous intention. It is the last remedy for a man's failure to understand the terms of the social contract.

Miller in *Ibsen and the Drama of Today* (1994) explains that the justification that Joe Keller makes is that you do what you have to do in order to survive a defense which is always understandable and always unacceptable. Even Chris admits that they live in a “dog eat dog” world and that Keller did what he did to keep his business. So in one sense, Joe Keller is as much a victim as a victimizer. The pressure that Joe Keller was under is tangible. We might have collapsed too. We do not stand apart entirely from it because we know we are, as Miller says, “vulnerable.”

Lyotard (1984), says that all of the “grand narratives” of Western civilization have now been demolished. There have always been many different but related “stories” or total explanations of human nature and history, like those of Christianity, the Enlightenment transcendent values. He further, insists that the essentialist foundations of all these “grand narratives” can no longer be accepted. We can see materialism

makes Joe deny transcendent values in order not to be the victim of capitalism. Bigsby (2005), argues Joe as:

This was a man, neither worker nor bourgeois, corrupted by 'opportunity', and there is in the play...a conviction that idealism and justice shatter on materialism and corruptions which seem to shadow a desire for success. Joe Keller denies transcendent values. The irony is that his son, who insists upon them, becomes as much a killer as the father to whom he presents his idealistic demands (p. 78).

As Bigsby refers, Keller public denials are matched by his private ones. When Kate asks if Chris has discussed marrying Ann his reply is "he didn't tell me any more than he told you"(106), though we have just witnessed such a discussion. Having practiced private deceits, he seems to have internalized his own denials. Urging Ann to persuade her father to return to the neighborhood after his imprisonment he says, "Listen, you do like I did and you'll be all right" (p. 115). The fact is that he is far from all right, but at this stage in the play we are in no position to know this, though already there are sufficient hints to undermine the assurance he displays (p. 87).

He insists, apparently with conviction, that he had himself deliberately chosen to return and confront his skeptical neighbors:

None of them believed I was innocent. The story was, I pulled a fast one getting myself exonerated... The beast! I was the beast; the guy who sold cracked cylinder heads to the Army Air Force; the guy who made twenty one P40s crash in Australia... Except I wasn't, and there was a court paper in my pocket to prove I wasn't (p. 115).

Life is full of many hard decisions that people have to take, often on the spur of the moment. Some of them are right others turn horribly wrong. Joe Keller, the tragic hero, is no different. His whole life is dedicated to his family and their well being but all his plans are undone by one fatally flawed decision and in the end he has to pay the ultimate price. Miller puts forward the idea of 'birds coming home to roost'. Meaning that Joe was always going to have to pay for what he did in the long run.

Joe and Kate Keller epitomize the ideology that rationalizes family as the center of the world and justifies anything done morally or immorally for the wealth and success of the family. Joe proudly asserts:

You gotta appreciate what was doin' in that shop in the war... It was a madhouse. Every half hour the Major callin' for cylinder heads, they were whippin' us with the telephone. The trucks were hauling them away hot... try to see it human, see it human. All of a sudden a batch comes out with a crack. That happens, that's the business. A fine, hairline crack... so he's a little man... he takes out his tools and he... covers over the cracks(p. 132).

As Derrida believes language is not reliable means of communication. Derrida says "Language can never penetrate the inner meaning or pin down the 'essences' of concepts like 'truth' or 'knowledge'." (Robinson, 2000, p.39) If he has anything more to say, he can only speak in action, and he is a man of action. So he shoots and explodes himself out of the world with a bang.

For a man who has "lost his tongue" to his own son, who wants "to tear the tongue out" of his mouth, his silence is his loudest articulation. By clashing the extreme low, the silent articulation, against the extreme high, the loud explosion of the gun-shot, Miller with his "under-expression" actually brilliantly forges an extreme climax, whose tension overwhelms and sweeps the whole play to a sharp stop.

Joe says about Chris, "I should've put him out when he was ten like I was put out, and make him earn his keep. Then he'd know how a buck is made in this world" (Miller: 127). It is Joe's ideology through his own bitter life experience that he would not want his sons to have his bitterness that he wants his sons to have an affluent family where the Father really assumes his duty to provide and protect. His family is his conviction and religion, his sole universe and his life because "I'm his father and he's my son". When Chris presses for the truth, he pulls all the excuses he could have in eloquence, and Chris, his "only accomplishment" wants "to tear the tongue out" of his mouth.

According to Foucault's (1984) idea of power, here the power situation has seriously subverted. Joe has lost his articulation and his power. His whole being is denied by his son Chris, his "only accomplishment,"

He feels the intense cold of isolation in his family. When he finds he has lost his last accomplishment, he feels isolated in himself. His world has tumbled down and this is the end of communication.

When Joe talks to his family about why he did that crime, he asserts that he was acting like the others in the world of business and that he should not be judged in a different way:

Who worked for nothin` in that war? When they work for nothin`, I'll work for nothin`. Did they ship a gun or a truck outa Detroit before they got their price? Is that clean? It's dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace, it's nickels and dimes, what`s clean? Haif the goddam country is gotten go if I go (Miller, p. 125)!

Joe claims that almost all the businesses involved in the war, made a profit from it and if that is considered dirty, then nobody is clean. Chris says that is exactly why he is so upset. "I know you're no worse than most men but I thought you were better. I never saw you as a man. I saw you as my father." (p. 67) Chris expected his father to be better than most men. "What the hell do you mean, you did it for me? Don't you have a country? What the hell are you? You're not even an animal, no animal kills his own, what are you?" (p. 59)

Joe has been morally misled by the mores of an abhorrent society, a society that Chris comes to describe as "the land of the great big dogs." Keller has been taught that it is the winner who continues to play the game and that society can turn a blind eye to moral concerns so long as the production line keeps rolling, this is the essence of capitalism.

I HAVE MONEY THEN I AM

In the competitive industrialized and postmodern society which if you have money then you are, ordinary people can realize success dream, but the social system no longer allows everybody to reach a success on his own. Only a selected people can become wealthy. And here we can be witnesses of cruel rules in the spirit of competitive society.

In consumer society money seems to be the key factor that drives society to this level of corruption. Also fall of Grand narratives is obvious. Moral and humanistic values are captured by false needs and business language games. *I Think then I am* changes to *I Have Money then I Am, I Buy then I Am*.

The word "money" recurs throughout *All My Sons* as a kind of counterpoint to the idealism of the war. Character after character thinks about it. Money is a dirty lovely thing for them. A next-door neighbor, a doctor, has abandoned medical research because of his wife's insistence "You wanted money, so I made money" (Miller, p. 162). Frank, another neighbor is financially secure as a result of not serving in the war. Joe's wife, Kate, also stresses money. Joe complains that his son, Chris, 'don't understand money', Keller asserts his actions are usual in competitive society. If a soldier as soldier has to fight perfectly in war then a business man has to be a successful businessman and try to protect his business like a soldier in war who tries to protect his country. Business is business: "Did they ship a gun or a truck outa Detroit before they got their price? Is that clean? It's dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace, it's nickels and dimes". (p. 168)

In the society that having knowledge worth nothing then we can see in this capitalism society when Frank suggests that Tommy might have the makings of a doctor, Jim Bayliss, Tommy's father, who is himself a doctor strenuously objects, suggesting that the life of a doctor holds no rewards. It is clear that Jim and his wife, Sue, are unhappy with his job as a doctor. According to Harvey (1980), modern capitalism by assimilating more and more areas of life to the logic of the market place, had caused a radical undermining of previously stable values, beliefs and economic forms. Life is suppressed by logic of the market place. In *All My Sons*, Miller makes it apparent that society in general values money and profit more than human life. Bigsby (2005) indicates:

The play may express regret, through several characters, that money has become a primary determinant, but it is money that Chris promises to Ann. What is at stake is a model of human relationships which turns on mutual dependency, mutual responsibility. (p. 93)

THE FALL OF ENLIGHTENMENT AND AMERICAN DREAM

Lyotard attacks the thought of Jurgen Habermas, who argued the beliefs of Enlightenment, Pragmatics and what Lyotard calls “paralogy” triumph over idealism and totalization. In *All My Sons* the fall of Enlightenment and rosy days of American Dream is clear. Miller points out the flaw with a merely economic interpretation of the American Dream as business success alone. Keller sacrifices other parts of the American Dream for simple economic success. Miller suggests the flaws of a capitalist who has no grounding in cultural or social morals. While Keller accepted the idea that a good businessman like himself should patch over the flawed shipment, Miller critiques a system that would encourage profit and greed at the expense of human life and happiness. The American Dream promises of comfort and happy life in the strong economic system. For example George deserts his hometown for big city success. There is a gap in the Bayliss marriage over Dr. Bayliss's desire to do unprofitable research, because his wife wants him to make more money instead of do what he enjoys and what will help others.

CHRIS AS AN IDEALIST

In *All My Sons*, Miller considers the fate of those who would return from the war and re-enter a world whose values would be fundamentally different from those operative in battle. As Miller said of Watson, the soldier who would soon be returning to civilian life in *Situation Normal*:

He must lop off at once that onetime feeling of exhilaration he got from the knowledge that whatever the insignificance of his job, it was helping an enormous mass of men toward a great and worthy goal . . . Now he must live unto himself, for his own selfish welfare. Half of him, in a sense, must die, and with it must pass away half the thrill he knew to being alive. He must, in short, become a civilian again. There is a great and deep sense of loss in that. (1944, p. 33)

This issue is undoubtedly reflected in *All My Sons*. Centola (1990) asserts:

Many hundreds of thousands of men are going to return from terrible battles, and in some degree they will have shared Watson's feelings of love and identity with their particular comrades and units. And in differing degrees they are going to have to transfer that love to other – civilian –units . . . They walk out of the circle of imperative order, out of the unity of feeling they had known in the Army. They go home. (qtd. in Bloom, 1990, p. 32)

Such people are liable to find themselves in an alien world. It is surely this feeling that lies behind *All My Sons* and in particular the character of Chris Keller, back from the war to a family concerned primarily with its own future and the business of making money, a society in which his neighbors, too, seem to have put idealism aside in the name of a post-war pragmatism. The business of consumer society is, indeed, it seems business.

The play is seen as a study of the death of the ideal, fall of Grand narratives, fall of Enlightenment, the failure of society, as it is constituted, to offer the meaning which the individual seeks.

Chris as an idealistic person feels he is isolated and alone in society today, because his comrades are not with him, the men he loves and society offers him no great social goal. He must live only his own little life and do his own unimportant job. He must begin again the stale and deadly competition with his father for rewards that now seem colorless, even if necessary for his survival.

When Chris and Ann both finally willing and able to proclaim their love for each other and then kiss, Ann says that Chris kissed her as Larry's brother and not as himself. Chris says there was, adds that his shame is tied up with a lot of things, and then speaks at length about his time in combat –about how in spite of seeing so many good men killed:

One time it'd been raining several days and this kid came up to me, and gave me his last pair of dry socks. That's only a little thing...but that's the kind of guys I had. They didn't die; they killed themselves for each other. I mean that exactly; a little more selfish and they'd've been here today. And I got an idea-watching them go down. Everything was being destroyed, see, but it seemed to

me one new thing was being made. A kind of...responsibility. Man for man. You understand me? And then I came home and it was incredible. There was no meaning in it here; the whole thing to them was a kind of a bus accident. I went to work with Dad, and that rat-race again. I felt...what you said...ashamed somehow. Because nobody was changed at all (Miller, p. 114).

Flaws in Chris's character are also shown when we examine the love of Chris's life, Ann. Ann, who has become Chris's fiancée, was previously also Chris's dead brother, Larry's fiancée. One must wonder what kind of morals Chris must have if he wants to marry his deceased brother's fiancée. Chris knows that marrying Annie will destroy his mother. As Joe tells Chris, "From mother's point of view he is not dead and you have no right to take his girl"(p. 116). Yet despite the wishes of his parents, Chris still intends on marrying Annie.

To Kate's horror, Chris insists that he plans to marry Ann and that Larry is dead. As Keller tries to support his son, Kate declares that they have to believe that Larry is alive because if he was dead, then his own father killed him. Chris sees the implication of Keller's guilt in this and finally accepts the truth: His father knew about the faulty parts. Chris turns on his father who breaks down and confesses, trying to justify what he did, but his excuses seem feeble next to the moral implications of the act. Trying to convince Chris that he did it for him, thinking that this will make it all right, just angers Chris further. Chris As a socialist condemns his father and calling him worse than an animal, "You can be better! Once and for all you can know there's a universe of people outside and you're responsible to it, and unless you know that, you threw away your son because that's why he died". (p.166)

For all his idealism, Chris is not perfect. His insistence that Kate face the truth of Larry's death is a purely selfish one, for he sees that as the only way that she will accept his marriage to Ann. Chris feels the loss of the idealized picture that he has held for so long of his father. Ann forces the situation by giving Chris Larry's letter before Kate can stop her.

The moral punishment that Chris forces to Keller is the loss of his sons. Chris finds his father guilty of social irresponsibility and demands that he must be sent to jail to pay legally for his crime. Keller's suicide can be read as either the desperate response of a man who is left with no way out or as a just act of self-immolation in recognition of objection to the dog eats dog world.

Jim admires Chris deeply as a man of principle. He sadly expects that Chris will not be able to send his father to jail and will end up compromising his idealism. But Chris stays true to his principles, willing to sacrifice his own father for moral justice, to show just how hard it has become to be a man of principle in this society. Abbotson(2007), believes:

His friends and neighbors view Chris as a moral idealist, which is a hard role to fulfill. There are those, like Sue, who despise him for this, but others look to him to determine how they should behave—he inspires Jim to want to become a medical researcher, and the Deever children to believe in Keller's innocence and their own father's guilt. But Chris is unsure as to what he wants to do for himself. The road of the idealist is never easy. He feels torn between keeping his father happy by staying in the family business and refusing to be caught up in the morally suspect world of commerce. (p.51)

Chris says to his father "What the hell are you? You're not even an animal, no animal kills his own, what are you? What must I do to you? I ought to tear the tongue out of your mouth, what must I do" (Miller, p. 166). This is the point where Chris becomes isolated from his family. His father is guilty of doing the crime, and his mother is guilty of hiding the information. He sees his parents now as evil people rather than role models. He now believes that everyone in society is only looking out for his interest.

Chris is a man, we begin to realize, who sees himself as a martyr, an idealist, yet the suspicion grows that this is an image behind which he hides. Bigsby (2005) asserts:

Doubts are swallowed up in his self-conscious presentation of himself as an honest man doing nothing more than demand honesty, a self-denier only now able to assert his rights. He presents himself, to himself, as serving truth; truth, however, not only places him at risk but, as we see, becomes a means of directing attention away from himself and his own moral failings. (p.85)

Chris is another example of Young Good Man Brown. His beliefs are on extremes, totally good or bad, and have no balance. At first he believes his father is not guilty for any crime, and puts blames on Steve

Deever, then after coming George and unfolding the secret he loses his faith to his father. The moral values that have been instilled in Chris blocked him from believing that his father was capable of anything else but good and he is a man among men. At the end of the play Chris' idealism and his moral outrage comes across powerfully as he realized that his father is guilty. The solid connection between father and son has been broken.

After Joe's death Chris says "Mother I didn't mean to..." (Miller, p. 167) he feels that because he had pressured Joe into accepting his responsibility, to the universe and the people in it, he is to blame for Joe's suicide. This remorse demonstrates that although Chris is deeply angry and sad by his father's guilt, he still loves him. For the soldier, Miller explains, in an echo of *Situation Normal*:

Aman is good according to the severity of his wounds. ... And the best of all, the most honored and honorable – the only heroes – are the dead. They're the only heroes, the only ones who are utterly true, without a chance to become petty again, and corrupt and selfish. Only they will not betray what they fought for. They weren't given the chance. (1944, p. 93)

This is a speech which suggests that Chris's flaw lies in something more than his association with a tainted company. Part of the guilt he feels is that of the survivor. The above speech suggests the extent to which Chris embraces an idealism too implacable to be sustained, an idealism not without its own deflating absurdity. Sacrifice demands a subject worthy of itself, a myth that can validate an ultimate act. But the code of war is too uncompromising to survive the moment. It proposes a standard whose logic is not finally extendable into peace time. Chris is good soldier in war time, but he isn't good in war of life.

Gross (1979), suggests:

It is clear he cannot look at his father as no better than most because he cannot look at himself as no better than most, he had never seen his father as a man because he has not wanted to see himself as one. (p. 13)

At the end of the play, we see that Chris has come to a realization of what he has become. He has become a man, something he never wanted to see himself or his father as. He says:

I could jail him! I could jail him, if I were human any more. But I'm like everybody else now. I'm practical now. You made me practical.. Only the dead ones weren't practical. But now I'm practical, and I spit on myself. I'm going away. I'm going now (Miller, p. 161).

Chris has become what he never wanted to be, a practical man. He tells his mother:

You can do better! Once and for all you can know there's a universe of people outside and you're responsible to it, and unless you know that you threw away your son because that's why he died. (p. 152)

The clash between Joe and Chris and Larry arises from the difference in their values. Then a clash between them is inevitable. In this conflict between father and son we witness the fall of one of the Grand narrative sand also changing power from father to son that forces Joe to commit suicide. Bigsby (2005) indicates:

On the face of it, Miller's decision to structure the play around the relationship between a father and son implies a historical logic whereby the assumptions 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. Larry died in order to draw a line across a certain historical development. (p. 91)

It can be seen as the end of Enlightenment and smashing of Grand narratives. Chris forces Joe to die for much the same thing. His argument with capitalism seems to dissolve into a generalized assault on a system in which self-interest is the only operative principle and in which, therefore, justice is mocked:

Do I raise the dead when I put him behind bars? Then what'll I do it for? We used to shoot a dog, but honour was real there, you were protecting something. But here? This is the land of the great big dogs, you don't love a man here, you eat him! That's the principle; the only one we live by – it just happened to kill a few people this time, that's all. The world's that way, how can I take it out on him? What sense does that make? This is a zoo, a zoo! (Miller, p. 167)

THE LOSS OF THE REALITY

Postmodern society is one in which experience and reality are codified and mentioned to such a point as to have been irretrievable in themselves. Our contemporary world has seen the domination of the "simulacrum" the image that bears no relationship to any reality and is pure simulacrum. Baudrillard (1983) declares postmodern world is defined by a move into hyperreality in which simulations have replaced the real. He explains simulation involves "feign[ing] to have what one hasn't" (p. 5). This masking of reality, especially in the case of Kate, is very obvious in *All my Sons*. Another important effect of hyperreality is the role of mass media and advertisements which show the things that are not real. In *All my Son* Joe keller is always in search of newspapers' advertisements.

DENIAL AND SELF-DECEPTION

Two main facts about the Keller family must be confronted. One is Larry's death, and the other is Keller's responsibility for the shipment of defective parts. Mother denies the first while accepting the second and Keller accepts the first while denying the second. The result is that both characters live in a state of self-deception, willfully ignoring one of the truths so that the family can continue to function in acceptable ways.

When Joe Keller plays a game with the neighbor's children, Kate warns him that he must stop 'that whole jail business!' Joe utters, "What have I got to hide?"(Miller, p.74).This indicates that there is something to hide. According to Centolla(1990), Joe and Kate are "uncomfortable together because of their shared guilt and shame." One is over-confident and the other is anxious. However, he is self- deceived in his loneliness of "which the hedged in backyard is symbolic."(p. 130)

When the play begins, Keller is seen reading the 'wanted' ads in the Sunday newspaper. He no longer reads the news section, a news section, in which he would have found his own name only a few years before. As his neighbor remarks, 'it's all bad news' (90). Joe and his wife live in fear of bad news, about their son and about the crime they have conspired to deny, the two inevitable connected in their minds.

There is a layered consciousness in the play, a sense that each character contains within him or herself a debate about contending values, about competing versions of the moral world and of the real. This is another example of fall of Grand narratives. All the characters are drawn together by love, but that love becomes the source of a certain corruption. Bigsby(2005), insists:

Indeed, no one in this play is without culpability, without cruelty, without guilt. Kate's obsession with one son's fate makes her act with a callous disregard for the future of the other. Ann and George act in some degree out of guilt for the callousness with which they have treated their father. Even Joe Keller's suicide is, in part, an act of self-justification and 'a counterblow to his wife and son'. Like some Chinese who hang themselves in the doorways of the people who have offended them, and that many suicides are motivated by a desire to accuse or leave a residue of guilt. (p.89)

Miller sees Joe as laying before the wife and son he had invoked as justification for his actions, their own culpability. Certainly Chris would feel a burden of guilt to the end of his life. *All My Sons* is in eyes of Bigsby is:

A play about repression, about the compromises effected by individuals negotiating between private needs and public obligations. Joe is not the only character to substitute the story of his life for his life. They all construct fictions that enable them to justify themselves in their own eyes, as much as in the eyes of others. And this, it seems, is equally true of the neighbors and, beyond them, of a society that generates its own myths about innocence. What we witness is in part a collision of fictions which are mutually destructive, and, hence, their slow erosion, as what has been repressed begins to force its way to the surface. (p. 90)

As in Miller's later work, what seems to have fascinated him is the gap that opens up between action and the interpretation of action, between the self and its idealized projections. These are people who have an image of themselves which, in varying degrees, is at odds with the reality of their lives. It is very obvious

that all the character wear mask. We can see the gap between what they try to show and what they really are, the image of truth. Bigsby asserts, "Out of that discrepancy comes what elsewhere Miller would be tempted to call tragedy, but which might equally well be seen as irony, identity being placed at risk by the very strategies which have been devised to sustain it". (p.82)

LARRY THE PRESENT OF UNPRESENTABLE

In *All My Sons*, Larry has a big influence on the play. He is part of many of the problems shown in the play. Larry is Joe Keller's son and is reported missing three years before the time when the play is set. One of the first things mentioned is that Larry's tree had been broken down by a gust of wind. It symbolized something important.

Larry has a tangible presence on stage even though he had passed away three years ago. This palpability is partly achieved through the broken tree that is placed in Keller's yard to symbolize this presence but also through the memories of his family and friends. Though he never flew the type of plane for which Keller had sent the faulty parts, his death symbolizes those of the 21 pilots who died. Abbotson(2007), believes:

Keller ironically tries to convince himself that Larry would not have been as judgmental of his actions as Chris, but of the two sons, Larry's response was eventually and in many ways the harsher. While Chris wants to hold his father legally accountable and send him to jail, Larry insists on moral accountability by performing an action that will lead Keller to kill himself. If we view Larry's suicide as an act of responsibility and atonement for the family guilt, then so too might we view Keller's. (pp. 52-53)

CONCLUSION

Miller's *All My Sons*, which was analyzed in this study, dramatizes a situation in which the personal motives of the characters are in conflict with the arbitrary norms of society. Society forces man to put on false faces and live his life through inherently contradictory and false values. Postmodern man has to encounter the dilemma of creating an image of himself out of the illusory social life he is compelled to live. In order to succeed in public life, the individual desperately attempts to put on a socially acceptable mask and performs a role before the society. In this process, he becomes isolated from his own self.

In Miller, the moment of awareness is always preparation for a moment of choice. Human being can die a second time, the first time he dies is when his body dies and the second time is before the physical death, when he is forgotten and isolated in his chamber of his heart.

In Miller's drama we can hear unheard voice of Arthur Miller who tell us although effects of past on present is inevitable, in the ever changing world we can cherish good memories and values of the past, but nourish the present and go forward with the tic-tac of time, to avoid being suffocated in the ever flowing flood of time which never stops for us. May be the main problem in *All My Sons* is that its characters are always carrying the past to the Present and this leads to their sense of isolation.

The study tries to acquaint man with the postmodern traits, which can rescue him from the fearful and frustrating atmosphere of the modern world where man finds himself in the lurch.

The study comes to its conclusion by claiming that the only possible relief of man is to break the shackles of the legitimized modern beliefs, and enter the postmodern world, leaving behind all the fossilized biases and fanaticism, which have always been the retarding forces.

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