

ARTHUR MILLER'S TRAGEDIES AND THE PSYCHOANALYTIC INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS AND REALITY

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Abstract

Tragedies by Arthur Miller, including "Death of a Salesman," "The Crucible," and "A View from the Bridge," deftly examine the psychological aspects of interpersonal strife, frequently via the prism of dreams and reality. This essay uses psychoanalytic theory—especially the theories of Freud and Jung—to analyze these works in order to identify the unconscious conflicts, fears, and wants that Miller's characters are motivated by. Through an examination of the internal conflicts and symbolic meanings associated with dreams in these plays, the study sheds light on the intricate relationship between individual goals and social influences, exposing the profound psychological foundations of Miller's tragic stories. Miller's examination of human nature and the intricacies of the psyche remains timeless, as demonstrated by this psychoanalytic viewpoint.

Keywords: Arthur Miller, Tragedies, Psychoanalytic Interpretation, Dreams and Reality.

1. INTRODUCTION

The great American dramatist Arthur Miller has created a body of work that explores the relationship between social constraints and individual goals, going deep into the human condition. His tragedies are intricate tapestries of existential struggle and psychological strife,

including groundbreaking pieces like *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*, and *A View from the Bridge*. These plays depict the inner workings of the characters' thoughts, frequently through the interaction of dreams and reality, in addition to reflecting the external problems of the characters. Psychoanalytic theory offers a strong framework for understanding these internal tensions, especially the theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. In addition to Jung's ideas on the collective unconscious and archetypes, Freud's theories on the unconscious mind, nightmares, and defense mechanisms provide important insights into the psychological aspects of Miller's characters. By using this lens, we can reveal the hidden motivations, anxieties, and unsolved issues that shape their behavior and ultimately lead to their sad outcomes.

This research study uses a psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams and reality to examine Arthur Miller's tragedies. Through an analysis of Miller's characters' ability to negotiate their inner desires and the worlds they live in, we can learn more about the psychological foundations of their tragic circumstances. In order to demonstrate the lasting relevance of Miller's examination of human nature and the intricacies of the psyche, this analysis will concentrate on important works, examining the characters' internal conflicts and the symbolic meaning of their dreams.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cortina, M.(2008) examined *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller from two distinct angles. We examine the various iterations of the American dream that are present in the play from a sociohistorical angle. We examine Willy Loman's specific family and personal relationships from a psychological standpoint. We look at how these two causes, along with societal ideas and personal psychodynamics, combine to form a perfect storm that drives Willy to despair and ultimately commit suicide. In the latter half of this article, we discuss the play's relationship to Miller's family background and the reasons Miller may not have understood it.

Hooti, N.(2011)explored to examine the essence of Self in *A View from the Bridge*, one of Miller's most well-known dramas. Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*, and *All My Sons* are briefly compared in order to highlight the analysis's attention on the private and public selves. To better grasp the depth of self in Miller's *A View from the Bridge*, the study's main

focus, a brief examination of the nature of self in Miller's previous plays will be conducted. In conclusion, the paper suggests that the only way to avoid this tragic duality of self is to acknowledge that trying to escape life's realities would be destructive to oneself. Therefore, tears of joy and sorrow should both be recognized as part of this complex and uncertain world of apathy, which is an essential aspect of human existence.

Jilani, S. H. A. (2023) tried to offer a psychoanalytic interpretation of *A View from the Bridge* by Arthur Miller. Character conflicts arise from the interaction of Freud's Id, Ego, and Super-Ego, the theoretical components of his Psychic Apparatus, in Arthur Miller's play *A View from the Bridge*. These conflicts suggest that the majority of the characters are naive, biased, confused, or cunning. Eddie, the main character, mostly deviates from his assumed social, relational, and familial obligations. Eddie's ego occasionally pushes him to act logically, but most of the time it consumes him, which is one of the main causes of his identity crisis. Eddie's troubled identity can also be examined using Erikson's psychological theory of identity crisis. Furthermore, almost all of the characters in the play are motivated by one of three principles: pleasure, realism, or morality.

Eklöf, N. (2020) examined the Loman family from *Death of a Salesman* through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis. The goal is to comprehend these characters' inner thoughts using Freud's Id, Ego, and Superego structural model of personality. The Loman family members are no longer content with their circumstances. It becomes clear that the family members weren't always acting sensibly and didn't take the right actions to make themselves happier. They are clueless as to why they are acting and feeling the way they are. The idea is that by examining the Loman family through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis of the personality and its defense mechanisms, we may understand why the family is responding in this particular way and what may have brought them to this realization.

3. PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY: AN OVERVIEW

Sigmund Freud created the psychology area of psychoanalysis in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It entails investigating the unconscious mind and how human behaviour, emotions, and thoughts are influenced by it. Psychoanalysis has been commended for its numerous

contributions to psychology and its significance in assisting people in improving their mental health, despite criticism for its dearth of empirical support and reliance on subjective interpretation. Healey states,

"The influence of psychoanalysis permeates this field, impacting the minds of individuals who have not received training in the field and, in fact, frequently of those who choose to minimize its ongoing development" (418).

Rand and Torok stated that:

"Freud is essential to our understanding of the world. Unconscious, symptomatic conflict, psychical geography, agencies, and dreamwork are among the concepts that shape our daily intellectual bread (568). Psychoanalysis has highlighted the unconscious mind. Freud believed that unconscious wants and conflicts drive many of our thoughts, emotions, and actions. Psychoanalysis can help people understand themselves and their behavior and overcome obstacles by studying unconscious motivations. Since psychoanalysis, human unconscious consciousness has been extensively explored to understand the mind. "Much of Freud's thought has been generally accepted as applicable to the manifestations of human behavior that we now call 'sublimation,' 'identification,' 'projection,' 'symbolization,' 'displacement,' etc." (420Healy)

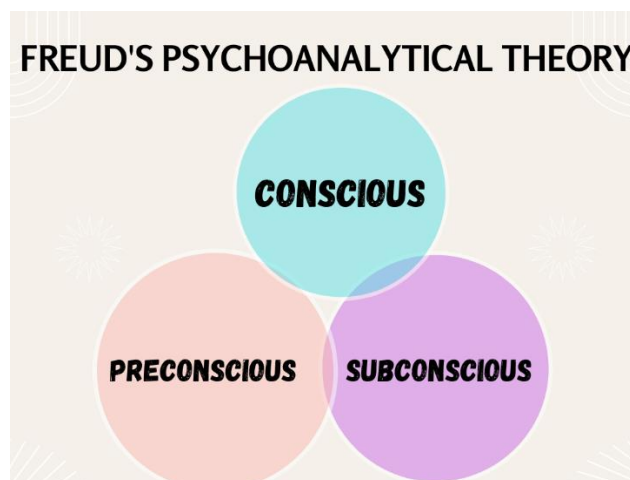


Figure 1: Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory

Psychoanalysis has also advanced our knowledge of personality and human development. For instance, Freud's theory of psychosexual development proposed that early events influence an individual's personality and behavior for the rest of their life. Even if Freud's theories have been updated or refuted throughout time, psychoanalytic thought still heavily relies on his emphasis on the significance of early events in determining our mental health and well-being.

4. DREAMS AND REALITY IN DEATH OF A SALESMAN

Psychoanalysis of the playwright's character and psychological factors could be used to analyze Arthur Miller's works. New light on Arthur Miller's works could be shed on the psychodynamics of the soul, its intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts, and the ensuing endeavor to find a new identity to deal with them in order to accomplish the emancipation of the soul. When psychological factors and character psychodynamics are considered, Arthur Miller's works reveal the various strategies the characters employ to resolve their conflicts and reach soul emancipation. These strategies are based on Freud's theories.

Miller's "Death of a Salesman" and earlier "All My Sons" both highlight the classic American spirit through one of the elements of the American dream: the capacity for prosperity. While Joe, the realist in "All My Sons," got along very well despite being somewhat influenced by ancient ideals as well, Willy Loman in "Death of a Salesman" could not keep up with the times and became fixated on the old values of the success dream in the past. Because of Willie's internal conflicts and his broken family, Death of a Salesman is a psychological play. Since Loman's diligent effort in sales has significantly contributed to his psychological regression, Arthur Miller wishes to use Loman as an example for America. Loman is an example of a person who is afflicted by the repression of his enjoyment principle. America's identity is founded on the ideals of American dreams, which Willie has always shared with his kid. These goals are centered upon the idea of improving oneself, primarily by economic means or by suppressing one's own desires in order to pursue something greater.

The scenario where Biff visits Willie at the hotel during his daydream at Frank's chop shop indicates that Willie suffers from a "pleasure principle" issue. The sanctity of Willie and Linda's

marriage would be broken by his liaison with another woman. Freud would concur that Willie's desire for pleasure and his desire to escape his domestic problems are the psychoanalytic reasons for these behaviors. He chooses to escape away from everything and steer clear of the issues he faces instead of confronting them head-on. Happy, Willie's second son, is impacted. Happy may have developed an Oedipal Complex as a result of his relationships with women and his opinions about them. Happy could have had a greater influence on his mother because he did not have a significant influence on his father.

The American Dream is no more. Willie believes that his family would be better off without him on a psychological level and that Biff no longer respects him. Willie employs a technique known as "regression," which he defines as the moment when thoughts are momentarily forced back into the unconscious. His daydreams serve as a valuable lesson in life. These elements in *Death of a Salesman* demonstrate why the play might be psychoanalytic. The drama incorporates elements of the Oedipus complex along with a combination of family issues and the way the mind processes information. The main characters created by Arthur Miller are driven by an obsession with self-justification. They radically establish their egos in order to fix their identities.

5. REPRESSED DESIRES IN A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Themes of betrayal, jealousy, and forbidden passion are explored in *A View from the Bridge*. Eddie Carbone, the main character, is a complicated person motivated by moral quandaries and suppressed impulses. Psychoanalytic theory can be used to examine his internal struggles and the resulting tragedy, paying particular attention to the Oedipal complex and the different protection mechanisms he uses.

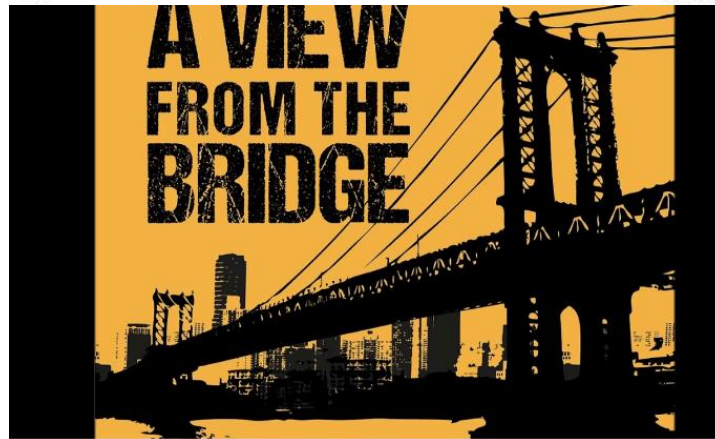


Figure 2: A View from the Bridge: A play by Arthur Miller

5.1.Oedipal Complex

Eddie's relationship with his niece Catherine can be analyzed through the lens of Freud's Oedipal complex theory. A child's unconscious sexual yearning for the parent of the opposite sex and their rivalry with the parent of the same sex are said to be components of the Oedipal complex, according to Freud. Eddie appears to be unable to admit an unconscious sexual desire, as seen by his excessive protectiveness and unreasonable jealousy toward Catherine and her admirer, Rodolpho. Eddie meets a catastrophic end as a result of his incapacity to identify and control these emotions.

Eddie's actions toward Catherine go beyond what one would expect from an uncle and niece. His deep-seated, unspoken wishes are reflected in his insistence on being in charge of her activities and his unease with her increasing independence. This internal conflict generates a tension that permeates the play and eventually has disastrous results.

5.2.Defense Mechanisms

Eddie uses protective mechanisms to manage his repressed desires. Eddie's main defenses are denial and displacement.

- Eddie denies unwanted sentiments for Catherine, explaining his actions as concern for her well-being. This denial lets him appear moral while avoiding the harsh truth of his impulses. Eddie's hostility and irrational behavior increase due to his incapacity to tackle these sentiments.
- Eddie vents his personal conflicts and frustrations through his aggressiveness towards Rodolpho. Eddie, unable to express his sexual yearning for Catherine, turns his hatred toward Rodolpho, his adversary. Eddie's obsession with Rodolpho's actions and unfounded accusations about his motives reflect this dislocation. Eddie's subconscious fight with forbidden urges drives his destructive behavior against Rodolpho.

6. CONCLUSION

Miller was a well-known American writer who followed the path of the involved intellectual. Miller gives his characters a feeling of humanity while allowing the play's narrative to deliver the moral punch—a sharp indictment of society's broken promises. Miller skillfully combines social mythology and generational strife to depict the sorrow of a family entangled in a web. The father who leaves his family behind in pursuit of an unattainable accomplishment and is idealized by his sons to help them deal with the loss creates the family myth. Together, the immigrant populations that came to America in search of a better future and who needed to believe that they could succeed with effort and hard work—a belief bolstered by the American ideology that success is guaranteed for anyone who is willing to try—created the social dreams and myths. Family history and the American dream are inextricably linked for Willy, as they are for many other Americans. *Death of a Salesman* is an American classic and a riveting play because of Miller's ability to portray Willy's tribulations within the framework of a critical view of society and to convincingly blend the past and present into one potent whole.

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