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**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific
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Historical Heritage in Arthur Miller's

The American clock

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by

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ
إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا
وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ
مُعْرِضُونَ

سوره البقرة إيه: 83

**((And (remember) when We took a covenant from the Children
of Israel, (saying): Worship none but Allah (Alone) and be dutiful
and good to parents, and to kindred, and to orphans and Al-
Masâkîn (the poor), and speak good to people[i.e. enjoin
righteousness and forbid evil, and say the truth about Muhammad
,and perform As-Salât (Iqâmat-as-Salât), and give Zakat. Then
you slid back, except a few of you, while you are backsliders))
God almighty has spoken the truth**

cow Verse [83]

https://quranenc.com/ar/browse/english_hilali_khan/2

Dedication

To my Family

And

To my Friend

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Abstract

The American Clock is a play by Arthur Miller. The play is about 1930s America during The Great Depression. It is based in part on Studs Terkel's Hard Times: An oral history of the great depression. This study consists of three chapters the first one is tackled the bibliography and career of miller and a summary about the play The American Clock , chapter two is the historical heritage in Arthur Miller's The American Clock, and this study ends with a conclusion that sum up the research paper.

Chapter One

1.1 The Bibliography and Career of Miller

Miller was born and raised in New York City, the son of a prosperous businessman who lost his wealth during the Great Depression. A mediocre high school student with little interest in academic pursuits, Miller was rejected upon his initial application to the University of Michigan. He was eventually accepted at the university, however, and there began writing for the stage, showing distinct promise as a dramatist and winning several student awards. For a short time after college, he was employed writing scripts for radio plays. While he found the demands of broadcast writing restrictive, this period, together with his college years, served as a valuable apprenticeship for Miller. His first Broadway play, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, was produced in 1944. Although it lasted only four performances, the play nevertheless won a Theater Guild award and established Miller as an important young playwright. (Judith, 1998:67)

Miller synthesized elements from social and psychological realism to depict the individual's search for identity within a society that inhibits such endeavors. Although his later works are generally considered inferior to his early masterpieces,

Miller remains among the most important and influential dramatists to emerge in the United States since World War II. Critics praise his effective use of vernacular, his moral insight, and his strong sense of social responsibility. June Schlueter commented: "When the twentieth century is history and American drama viewed in perspective, the plays of Arthur Miller will undoubtedly be preserved in the annals of dramatic literature.(Ibid.)

Throughout his career, Miller continually addressed several distinct but related issues in both his dramatic and expository writings. In his early plays and in series of essays published in the 1940s and '50s, Miller first outlined a form of tragedy applicable to modern times and contemporary characters, challenging traditional notions suggesting that only kings, queens, princes, and other members of the nobility can be suitable subjects for tragedy. In "Tragedy and the Common Man," Miller asserts that the "underlying struggle" of all such dramas "is that of the individual attempting to gain his `rightful' position in society." Consequently, "the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing--his sense of personal dignity" within a society that inhibits such endeavors. According to this view, even ordinary people—like Willy Loman, the protagonist of *Death of a Salesman*--can achieve truly tragic stature. It is this issue of the individual's relationship

to society, and its representation on stage, that forms the second of Miller's abiding concerns. Throughout his work, Miller has sought to fuse the moral and political messages of "social" plays with the realism and intensity of psychological dramas that focus on the individual. In work after work, from *All My Sons* and *The Crucible* to *Incident at Vichy*, Miller presented dilemmas in which a character's sense of personal integrity or self-interest conflicts with his or her responsibility to society or its representatives. Finally, Miller has repeatedly returned to the theme of family relations, particularly interactions between fathers and sons. The families depicted in Miller's plays often serve as vehicles for the author's analyses of the broader relations between individuals and society. (Ibid.)

In the 1980s, Miller produced a number of short pieces. *The American Clock* is based on Studs Terkel's oral history of the Great Depression, *Hard Times*, and is structured as a series of vignettes that chronicle the hardship and suffering that occurred during that period. *Elegy for a Lady* and *Some Kind of Love Story* are two one-act plays that were staged together in 1982. Similarly, *Danger, Memory!* (1986) comprises the short pieces *I Can't Remember Anything* and *Clara*. Reviewers have generally regarded these later plays as minor works, inferior to Miller's early masterpieces. (Ibid.)

1.2 The American Clock

The American Clock premiered in 1980 and is set during the Great Depression of the 1930s. It is loosely based on Studs Terkel's *Hard Times; An Oral History of the Great Depression*. The plot centers around the Baum family, who have lost everything in the financial crash and have been forced to move from Manhattan to a one bedroom apartment in Brooklyn. Moe Baum has declared himself bankrupt and his wife, Rose, struggles with their newfound poverty and weak social status. Their son, Lee, narrates the story, along with Arthur Robertson, a savvy businessman who survived the crash but witnessed the majority of his contemporaries fall around him. As the timeframe jumps back and forth, a large ensemble cast make up the characters who drift in and out of Lee & Arthur Robertson's lives. Some have survived the crash but most have been wiped out by depression and are struggling to find a way forward. Miller's thought-provoking drama depicts a hard period in America's history that forged the way for the social change that was so desperately needed.) Alexandra,2020)

Arthur Miller's *The American Clock*, is a microscope of the Great Depression, covering an entire society over many years, yet zeroing in on a few select lives as they climb a mountain of despair and reach for fresh air through the crushing

underbelly of a crumbling society. Miller elevates the resilient spirit of everyday people through song and story, during the nation's worst crisis of the 20th century. It was a time when people tried to make the best of it by gathering together to sing songs of hope and joy. Only one original song called "Sittin' Around," was included in the script. Arthur Miller suggests other songs from the era but the final music selection is unique to every production. This production includes "Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries," "On the Sunny Side of the Street," "I'm Sittin' on Top of the World," and more. The American Clock is not a musical. It's a play with music that emerges from the souls of individuals who long for a ray of sunshine during the bleakest of times. (Bigsby, 1984:76)

Chapter Two

The Historical Heritage in Arthur Miller's *The American Clock*

The *American Clock* is one of Miller's less well-known works and it has had a less successful legacy than works such as *The Crucible*, *Death of a Salesman* and *A View From the Bridge*. The play premiered in May 1980 in the US at the Spoleto Festival and then premiered on Broadway on November 11th 1980. Despite full houses, the show closed after only eleven previews and twelve performances — a fact Miller partly attributed to the fact that the play's producer had no money left with which to advertise the show. The National Theatre, with whom the creative team of this production has worked closely in the early stages of preparation of the 2019 version, premiered *The American Clock* at the Cottesloe Theatre (now called the Dorfman Theatre) — the smallest of the National's three theatres — in August 1986. It became so successful, however, that the show transferred to the venue's largest theatre, the Olivier, in December that year. It was directed by Peter Wood and utilised the idea of a jazz band, included songs from the period and even incorporated a moving spotlight to match the vaudevillian style of the piece indicated in the script. In his autobiography *Timebends*, Miller is appreciative of the British way of presenting this play. Plays at the National Theatre had (and continue to have) a limited season, and is therefore less

financially uncertain than the Broadway residencies of productions. It is ironic, therefore, that the play's original failure on Broadway was due to financial concerns, and that only the financial certainty at the National Theatre could help exploit the piece's potential. (Safford,1985:166)

Miller describes his vision of *The American Clock* as 'an epic style, like a mural...a profusion of individual images woven around a broad social or religious theme.'

It was this information that Peter Wood used to inform the National Theatre production. Miller told him, 'We should feel, along with the textures of a massive social and human tragedy, a renewed awareness of the American's improvisational strength, his almost subliminal faith that things can and must be made to work out.'(Ibid.)

By creating this idea of a mural, Miller is suggesting that we can see the story from both up close — the story of the individuals caught up in the Crash and Depression — and from standing further back, considering and contemplating the greater implications of the falls from grace, the falls from power and the humiliation involved as the clock ticks and the cycle continues.(Ibid.)

In this 2019 production, the family is played by three different sets of actors in order to demonstrate the on-going

relevance of the family's story to different time periods and cultures. Music plays an even more significant role than originally with classic 1930s music from the American Song Book being blended with much more contemporary and experimental sounds. The audience is asked to consider how this story, which is based in the late 1920s onwards, has far reaching implications and issues that we grapple with today. How do we look after those who are most in need? How do we plan to keep our families safe in times of political and economic uncertainty? At a very uncertain time for Britain in particular, how do we protect our own assets but also take the necessary risks for growth and development? Lee admits to Robertson that 'I didn't know there was a system. I thought that if a man was — say, like my father — hard-working and making the right goods, he got to be well-off.' The American Clock is a timely reminder that we should examine the systems with which we run our own lives, and countries, and ensure that no-one takes what they have for granted.(Ibid.)

As a writer whose formative years took place during The Great Depression, this cataclysmic economic, social and cultural event deeply informs all of Miller's work. Several of Miller's plays have been set during the Depression years, but none takes a closer look than his 1980 masterpiece, *The American Clock: part autobiography, part vaudeville, part tutorial*. For Miller, the Depression was the dark night of the American soul, a waking

nightmare for those who lived through it, and a dour lesson for times to come. Miller rejects those who paint the period with rose-tinted glasses and nostalgically speak of its welcome camaraderie after a period of intense self-interest. One of Miller's greatest legacies must surely be the timely lesson he encapsulates within *The American Clock*, which is reiterated elsewhere in his work, but receives its most pointed expression in this highly creative, though too often overlooked, play.'(Susan,2006)

The play depicts the forces of optimism and a commitment to life pitted against those of death and despair, invoked through memories of the Depression. In one sense it is as Peter Ferran describes, a "dramatically mythopoetic chapter of America's own biography" (163). But it does more than simply recreate a bygone age, it uses the Depression as an extended metaphor as to how to create a better world for the future. Miller shows characters' attempts to restore a sense of community alongside asserting their necessity for individuality, for it is through community and individuality combined that they will find the strength to deny the chaos they observe surrounding them. This is Miller's central lesson for the ages-and it is one of survival and hope, born, ironically, from his depiction of what he feels was one of the worst periods in American history.(Ibid.)

Conclusion

In the 1980s, Miller produced a number of short pieces. The American Clock is based on Studs Terkel's oral history of the Great Depression, Hard Times, and is structured as a series of vignettes that chronicle the hardship and suffering that occurred during that period.

The Baum family—father Moe, mother Rose and son Lee are trying to cope during the Great Depression of the 1930s. They were wealthy but lost their money during the Depression. They are forced to move from their home in Manhattan to live with relatives in Brooklyn.

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