

## *Ibsen's influence on Miller*

All My Sons is a realistic social play, written by Arthur Miller to depict the American society during the world war and the Great Depression period. Miller is greatly influenced by Ibsen, the father of modern drama, in his way of writing.

Miller, like Ibsen, begins the play at the end of a chain of events. A calm surface is shown to conceal the disturbing tension till the ugly truth is revealed about what has happened years ago. This Ibsenian method produces dramatic excitement. By the end of the play, the story can be reconstructed as well as the chain of sequences. No chronological account is given because this will be less dramatic. Miller is very skilful in probing the past and in presenting conversation and behaviour in a realistic style.

He is also affected by Ibsen in using a lot of symbols in order to convey his message. For instance the broken tree, which starts in exploring the past, is a symbol of Larry who has died in the war. It is connected to Kate's nightmare about Larry's crash. Then, it leads forwards to Chris telling his mother that she has to accept Larry's death and to allow him to marry Ann. Another important symbol is the game that Keller plays with Berth. The image of the prison and the image of the gun and the policeman upset Kate. It is also considered to be a foreshadowing about what is going to happen later on. At the end of the play, Keller uses the gun to kill himself so as to escape from the bitter truth of his crime. It also indirectly refers to the crime and trial which are reality and not a game. Miller also uses a lot of symbolic names, just as Ibsen. The name Chris is an example, if the letter "t" is added, it will be "Christ" who is a symbol of idealism. Chris is considered to be idealistic so his name is symbolic. Keller is also another example, if the letter "e" is replaced by "i", it will be "Killer". This reveals the whole truth about Keller who has killed the twenty-one pilots. The reference to Kate as "mother" shows that she is like any other mother who does not believe that her son is dead. Kate's dream is also quite symbolic. The dream is so real that she can actually feel that she is touching Larry. Suddenly he fails which is a symbol of what had happened in reality.

One of Ibsen's techniques that Miller uses is the flash back. Both of them use the flash back technique in order to explain what has happened in the past. For instance, what Keller says about the situation back then inside the factory is a flash back. It allows the reader to understand all about that day. His explanation of his trial is also a flash back. It reveals the way he has managed to convince the judge of his innocence, however nobody has believed it. The flash back technique that both Ibsen and Miller use, allows the reader to know all about the past which is not present in the actions of the play but help reaching the climax.

Miller, like Ibsen, makes a tension which leads to the climax and uses an effective curtain at the end of each act. The conflict leads to the crisis as in Chris'

character. He is bitterly disillusioned by his father's image. He feels that he has been cheated all the time. Chris' conflict is between himself and his image. He has thought of himself as a courage soldier, but then he discovered that he is a coward. His idealism is totally destroyed and he finds himself trying to survive in a world like a zoo where a man hunts down one another like animals. On the other hand, Keller kills himself after the final realisation of the true meaning of moral responsibility and after his failure in preserving his image in the eyes of his son and also in his eyes.

Both Ibsen and Miller use tragic endings. For example, in A Doll's House, Ibsen ends the play with the sound of the door's shut, which indicates that Nora has gone. While in All My Sons, Miller ends the play with the sound of a gunshot which indicates that Keller has killed himself off stage. This is considered to be more dramatic. This also shows that Miller is greatly influenced by Ibsen's style of writing.