

Original Article

## SOCIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN ARTHUR MILLER'S THE MAN WHO HAD ALL THE LUCK

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores complex sociological and psychological themes, especially through the fate and struggle of its protagonist David Beeves. The play integrates ideas of luck, merit, identity and existential anxiety within a shifting social landscape marked by the American Dream and the aftermath of the Great Depression. Arthur Miller's plays critically explore the intricate interplay between sociological and psychological dimensions in shaping human experience. Sociologically, Miller focuses on the impact of societal structures, economic realities and cultural expectations particularly the pressures of the American Dream on individual identity and social relationships. His characters often navigate alienation, materialism and familial duty within turbulent social contexts. Psychologically, Miller delves into the inner lives of his characters, emphasizing themes of anxiety, guilt, self doubt and existential crisis. Miller's work reveals how external social conditions and internal psychological struggles are interwoven illustrating the complexity of human dignity, morality and belonging. This dual focus highlights that individual tragedy often results from the failure to reconcile personal identity with social demands, making his dreams poignant critiques of both societal norms and the human conditions. The play situates its themes within the context of the Great Depression, revealing the social insecurity and economic hardships of the era. David Beeves is portrayed as "a man who has all the luck" in a time when many around him suffer from poverty and failure. David's success and widespread hardship mirrors the societal disorientation and moral questioning of what success really means in such turbulent times. Together, these perspectives show how Miller's work probes the complex interplay between individual psychology and social forces, emphasizing the unpredictability of life, the burden of luck, and the quest for meaning and responsibility in a challenging world.

**Keywords:** Identity, Anxiety, Great Depression, Morality

### INTRODUCTION

Arthur Miller was born in a New York Jewish family on 17 October 1915. He graduated from the Abraham Lincoln High school in 1932 and attended the University of Michigan. There, he worked for the Michigan 'Daily' the student paper. He wrote his first play, *No Villiam* during his sophomore year, for which he won the Avery Hopwood Award. He joined the Federal theatre Project, in 1938 after his graduation, when the project closed the next year, he joined the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and continued writing radio play. His second play, "*The Man Who Had All the Luck*" was produced in 1940. It won the theatre Guild's National Award. In 1941, he commenced writing "*All My Sons*". It opened on Broadway at the cornet theatre in January 1947, and it was a huge success Miller won the Tony Award for the Best Author and established his reputation as a playwright.

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Miller was awarded the National Medal of Arts in 1993. In 1998, he won the PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for theatre Award for a Master American Dramatist. But that was not all. Miller went on to win various other prestigious awards and prizes, including Model for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters in 2001. Miller died on 10 February 2005 aged 89, after suffering from bladder cancer and congestive heart failure. Regarded as one of the greatest dramatist of the twentieth-century American theatre, Miller successfully asserted the necessity of theatrical art to dramatize the intricacies of the human mind.

Arthur Miller insists that the dramatist must not conceive of man as a private entity and his social relations as something thrown at him, but rather he must come to see that "Society is inside of man and man is inside society and you cannot even create a truthfully drawn psychological entity on the stage until you understand his social relations and their power to make him what he is and to prevent him from being what he is not. Miller in his plays successfully fuses together the social and the psychological. Neither the society nor the individual is there as a priority. The society is not a background against which the personal relationships are studied nor are the individuals merely illustrations of aspects of the way of life. Every aspect of personal life is seen at both individual and the society is seen as belonging to each other to a continuous and inseparable process. Miller wanted to fuse the social with the psychological. He once said that a play mixes "I" with "We" in a significantly original way. His early plays are formulated in the mould of his own definitions and observations. Miller does not see tragedy devoid of society but neither the society nor the individual alone is responsible for tragedy. Partly it is the flaw in the character and partly it is something in the society that causes tragedy. The true social drama the "whole drama" as he calls it, must recognize that man has both a subjective and an objective existence that he belongs not only to himself but to the world beyond.

Arthur Miller's play "*The Man Who Had All the Luck*" can be analysed through both sociological and psychological perspectives. Sociologically the play explores themes of success, fate and societal expectations focusing on how the protagonist's relationship with his community and societal values shapes his perceptions of fortune and failure. Psychologically the play defines into the protagonist's internal struggle with self-worth, anxiety and the anticipation of doom rooted in his understanding of success as defined by external social standards. Arthur Miller's play "*The Man Who Had All the Luck*" offers a deep exploration of human experience through both sociological and psychological lenses, examining themes of fate, the American Dream, social responsibility and the individual's internal struggle with success and identity. The play uses a sociological perspective to critique societal values and the broadest American context of the early to mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century Miller scrutinizes the American Dream portraying a society obsessed with success, wealth and status. The protagonist, David Beeves, achieves immense success (in love, business and family) seemingly without effort or risk, while those around him struggle with the everyday failures of a capitalist society, such as redundancy and infertility. The play suggests that this pursuit of success can lead to a moral vacuum and a sense of disconnection.

A central theme is the tension between an individual's personal ambitions and their responsibility to the community David's success, which seems to come at no cost to himself, makes him feel increasingly alienated from his community. The play implicitly questions a social structure that rewards one man excessively by chance while others suffer, highlighting issues of fairness and communal well-being. Miller explores how luck and circumstances determined one's place in society. The play delves into the internal lives and mental states of its characters, exploring the psychological impacts of for meaning. David Beeves despite his "luck" experiences profound psychological distress and a deep sense of guilt. His effortless success makes him question his own worth and the fairness of life. This guilt leads to a form of social alienation the more he prospers the more isolated he feels from the common struggles that connect other people.

David Beeves the protagonist, achieves immense professional and personal success with apparent ease. This good fortune rather than bringing happiness, highlights the arbitrariness of success in a capitalist society. The play suggests that the American Dream, as an ideology of guaranteed success through hard work, is a potentially flawed and destructive myth if it ignores the role of chance and societal forces. A Core theme in the play is the conflict between personal freedom and societal expectations. David's belief that he "must earn" his success reflects a societal pressure to be self-made. When his luck seems to negate his sense of agency, he withdraws from his family and community illustrating the tension between the individual's inner world and external social reality. Miller's play is famous in comparison to the novel, because of his talent. He presents his protagonist as an inspiration to the modern period. Luck, personal agencies and fate are the central themes of the play. David Beeves is the central character of the play who is a very lucky man because he achieves everything without any risk while others are struggling. The play is the real picture of modern times where everyone is struggling for good, fortune. Some people believed that success is completely dependent on Fate but psychologically, it is not the whole truth because our success or failure depends on our choices or decisions. David finds success in his love, business and in his married life in comparison to others in his life like J.B. Feller, Shory and Amos. There are many facts in the play which prove the reality of fate and the choices of man.

In "*The Man Who Had All the Luck*", we can see everyone calls him a lucky man. Amos, his brother tells him, "You're moving' like a daisy cutter, Dave, you know how to do"(11). Amos fails to be a successful base ball pitcher but, David is a successful mechanic. That's why Amos calls him a lucky man but Amos ignores the reality behind his failure. In the middle of the play, David's psychology is affected by the depression of his friends because his friends always call him a lucky man. David feels anxious because of the failure of his friends. Miller's play reflects concern for the common man and critiques societal values related to success and materialism. The protagonist, David Beeves, feels alienated because he internalizes society's valuation of success, which causes him anxiety about whether his luck will hold. The play illustrates how societal pressure and community judgement impact an individual's sense of

identity and destiny. Miller's work often highlights the clash between individual aspirations and social expectations, demonstrating how societal structure influence personal outcomes. The play also critiques capitalist values, showing the isolating effect material wealth can have on familial and social relationships.

From a psychological perspective, the protagonist David Beeves struggles with feelings of guilt and insecurity despite his apparent good luck and success. He questions whether his achievements are due to merit or just fortune, leading to internal conflict and anxiety. This reflects a theme of existential uncertainty and the "terror of failure" especially poignant during the economic insecurities of the Great Depression era. David's psychological burden is compounded by the contrast with his brother Amo's failure, which intensifies his guilt and fear that his luck might run out. His emotional dynamics showcase the complexity of ambitions, Desire, hope and familial responsibility revealing how individual identity and self-worth are psychologically affected by perceived luck and failure. Psychologically, David struggles with the burden of his luck, feeling unearned fortune and fearing inevitable downfall. This creates inner conflict and doubt, as he cannot fully trust or accept his success. The play delves into the psychological strain caused by feeling like an outsider or "a lost soul," and the anxiety over when his luck will run out. His eventual choice to live and accept responsibility rather succumb to despair suggests a psychological resilience and the recognition of his role in shaping his own life beyond fate.

The psychological turmoil also incorporates themes of guilt, fear of loss and the human need for control and meaning in life events.

Sociologically, Miller explores how individuals are deeply embedded with societal structure and relationships. He portrays man as part of society, emphasizing that social relations shape identity and sustain or enable individual actions. In the play, the societal back drop of the Great Depression create an environment of insecurity and instability, influencing the character's moral and behaviour. The play suggests that success and failure cannot be understood only on an individual level but must be seen in the context of broadest social pressure and collective realities. David's struggles symbolizes man's attempt to reconcile his internal self with external social forces, norms and the American Dream ideology, which was particularly fragile in the Depression period Miller stresses that individuals are intestine with society and this relations influences tragedies and personal struggle as seen in David's uneasy relationship with his luck and societal expectations. David's feelings of terror and guilt for his success, along with his hope for the death of his baby, symbolically represented his alienation within society. The echoes sociological themes of estrangement and identity crisis, where the individual feels disconnected from the social world that both celebrates and isolates him. This alienation is exacerbated by the economic depression, framing the psychological drama in a broadest social and economic context. This sociological perspective reveals Miller's deep engagement with social realities, presenting the protagonist's personal dilemmas as reflections of wades societal issues during the challenging period of the Great Depression. The protagonist, David Beeves comes from a modest, working class background yet experiences an uncanny streak of good luck and success that alienates him from his community, which is affected by widespread economic hardship. This creates a conflict between his relative prosperity and the struggles of those around him, highlighting disparities in wealth and opportunity within social classes. The day also exposes the psychological and moral tensions assign from class differences. David's guilt and insecurity about him fortune reflect the social pressures and expectations tied to class identity – where success may be seem as luck rather than merit, and where economic status in influences relationships and self-worth. His family's dynamics, especially the contrast between his cautions father and his more ambitions relatives, underscore class-based attitudes toward ambition, risk and social mobility. The play explores the moral responsibility of individuals toward their community. David's unmerited success makes him feel guilty and anxious, as he perceives his good fortune in the context of the tragedies befalling those around him. This internal conflict emphasizes the idea that a purely individualistic pursuit of success, without regard for the collective, can lead to a sense of moral.

In conclusion, Miller's pay uses David's experience to illustrate the complex interplay between sociological forces such as luck, social inequality and community and psychological experiences including alienation anxiety and personal responsibility. The ending emphasizes that while external circumstances influences like it is ultimately one's response and actions that define the individual offering a nuanced perspective on success, fate and human agency within society. In summary "*The Man Who Had All the Luck*" presents a fusion of psychological introspection focused on the protagonist's guilt, fear and identity crisis and sociological concerns, highlighting the influence of societal forces, family and historical context on individual destiny and self-perception. Ultimately, the play serves as a social study that explores the tension between an individual's character and external forces, revealing the psychological impact of a society that struggles to reconcile personal effort with the arbitrary nature of fortune.

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