

## **Gender Dynamics and Societal Pressures: Exploring Women's Representation in Arthur Miller's *The Ride Down Mount Morgan***

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### **Abstract**

*In democratic nations, elections are seen as crucial junctures for political change and decision-making that may have a significant influence on public policy, government, and the general populace. Elections have always had a significant influence on the formulation of the political landscape and have been connected to changes in the prevalence of crime. The intricate link between criminal behavior and election processes has been analysed as a result of this interaction. In the framework of democratic practice, politicians, law enforcement officers, and academics are responsible for ensuring public safety; thus, they need to have a solid understanding of the crime trend. Using conceptual frameworks and actual data from diverse locations and election situations, the aim of this article is to present a comparative viewpoint on the analysis of crime and election time.*

**Keywords:** Patriarchal ideals, Miller, Lyman, American Dream, Clear haven Memorial Hospital.

The commercialization of women is a theme that Arthur Miller frequently explores in his works, showing how cultural expectations and financial constraints reduce female characters to little more than commodities. Miller encourages a critical analysis of the ways in which society diminishes women's autonomy and reduces them to simple commodities by bringing attention to these processes. A feminist interpretation of Arthur Miller's 1991 play *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* makes evident how many women were in the workforce in 1990s America. It's a horrifying image of a consumerist nation where the individual has become more important than society. Mauer asserts that Christopher Bigsby, a dramatist from the 1990s, saw a decline in the higher ideals in his environment. In the play under consideration, Miller paints a bleak image of the same situation. The central figure in *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* is a man, much like in his previous drama. This powerful male protagonist takes precedence over the feminine characters. The hero Lyman Felt's selfhood is what's in the forefront. Leah and Theo are two examples of female characters that are viewed more as toys for the intense sexual wants and desires of males than as real people.

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Patriarchal ideals are strongly ingrained in Miller's theatrical world, giving female characters little room to become independent or autonomous. Women still rely on their male colleagues for emotional support, social validation, and identity, even if women are employed. As their girlfriends, spouses, moms, or sisters, men treat them poorly. All of his plays show how women are marginalized. Nonetheless, *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* is characterized by a growing commodification of the feminine body and a corresponding coarsening of Miller's vocabulary. Miller explores the idea of the American Dream and the drive for achievement at any costs using Lyman's situation as a starting point. Lyman betrays the trust and compromises his morals in his quest of riches and pleasure. Miller asks the viewer to consider the morals of a society that puts monetary gain ahead of morality via Lyman's journey.

Lyman Felt plays the lead role in this two-act drama. He is a late forties married guy who commits bigamy by turning his romance into a covert liaison. He has a well-known insurance firm and is a very successful man. Lyman is a hedonist who believes that bigamous marriages are OK as long as they bring happiness to all parties involved. Susan Abbotson writes in *Student Companion to Arthur Miller*, "the father is a figure of hope and fear, inspiration and intimation his memory both encourages and restricts the sons." (Abbotson 141) His first wife Theodora and second wife Leah are kept in the dark about their true situation. The circumstance itself is a powerful statement about how disenfranchised women are in our culture. Lyman deceives both of the ladies to such an extent that, up until the disclosure, Leah thinks Lyman married her only after divorcing his first wife, and Theo feels like she is the sole wife. This deception of the two women lasts for a whole nine years. This demonstrates how naive these two ladies are, and how taken in by this brilliant, glib-talking salesperson who can captivate them. He views women as only necessary components to help him fulfil his own needs and ambitions. They are not given the respect due to being sentient, emotional human beings who can experience hurt and betrayal just like everyone else. The women obediently uphold the values that patriarchy has set for them.

At Clearhaven Memorial Hospital, where they had gone to visit their spouse, who had suffered a catastrophic accident while driving down a slope in a snowstorm, the two ladies finally meet. Their true identities, which eventually come to light, are unknown to them. After learning the truth, their bond shifts from sisters to rivalry. At this point, it also becomes clear that Miller has attempted to investigate the exploitative marriage structure, which traps women and prevents them from finding a workable way out of this societal norm.

Considering this, let's examine how Miller treats the female characters in this play. Lyman has a rather immoral outlook on life. He is a hedonist with a voracious hunger for everything, including women, life, and passion. In addition to fathering Benjamin from Leah and Bessie from Theo, he has also had previous affairs with women. With a third lady, he also produced a kid who is around seventeen years old, and there are reports of a few infrequent sex sessions. This demonstrates unequivocally Lyman's

extremely degrading attitude toward women. He views women as nothing more than toys or objects for sex.

He rejects the idea that the cosmos serves any moral purpose. While talking to Tom Wilson, his lawyer, he gives a glimpse into his psyche:

Lyman: (a sigh). I know. - Look, we're all the same; a man is a fourteen room house- in the bedroom he's asleep with his intelligent wife, in the living room he's rolling around with some bare ass girl, in the library he's paying his taxes, in the yard he's raising tomatoes, and in the cellar he's making a bomb to blow it all up. And nobody's different... Except you, may be. Are you? (P. 95)

This further portrays him as a casual observer of the institution of marriage. He views women more as entertainment than as fellow humans. Men should detonate these sex bombs. Lyman has an unquenchable need for libido and is hypersexual. Speaking with Hogan, the hospital nurse, makes his promiscuity and fixation with sex abundantly evident:

Lyman: I just never felt such jealousy, for one thing, and I've known a lot of women. And she had a fantastic smell; Leah smelled like a ripe, pink, slightly musty cantaloupe. And her smile - when she showed her teeth her clothes seemed to drop off. I don't know, we had some prehistoric kind of connection - I swear, if I was blindfolded and a dozen women walked past me on a sidewalk I could pick out the clack of her heels. I even loved lying in bed listening to the quiet splash of her bath water. And of course slipping into her soft cathedral.... (P. 92)

Since it's a memory play, time and location change frequently, and Lyman's father appears briefly. He is heard speaking quite disparagingly about his wife. Lyman himself thinks of women as goods to be bought and sold. The conversation mentioned above is a good example of elegant language turning into vulgar speech. It is a purposeful downgrading of Miller's previous elegant, nearly lyrical style into the vulgar, "Henry Miller" style of language.

The vocabulary employed in his older plays from the 1940s and 1950s is notably courteous, sensitive, politically correct, and very urbane in its sensibility. No four-letter term or deliberate reduction of the female body to its reproductive components is mentioned. By the 1990s, nevertheless, Miller had embraced a vibrant American pulp English that was used in popular culture to shock and test the limits of human decency.

The vocabulary he uses to convey the changed reality in the current play is quite violent at times, bordering on the obscene. An example of a different exchange: Lyman opens with his eyes still closed, speaking as though he is addressing a large assembly. In a reverie, he begins:

Lyman: (For a moment he sleeps, snores, then). Today I'd like you to consider life insurance from a different perspective. I want you to look at the whole economic system as one enormous tit.

NURSE. Well, now! (Embarrassed laugh.) LYMAN. So the job of the individual is to get a good place in line for a suck. Which accidentally gives us the word 'suckcess'or... or not. (Snores deeply.) (p. 45)

And further:

Lyman: Don't take this wrong- but you know what I find terrifically sexy about you?

Leah: What?

Lyman: Your financial independence. Horrible, huh?

Leah: Why? - (Wryly.) Whatever helps, helps. Lyman: You don't sound married, are you? Leah: It's a hell of a time to ask! (They laugh, come closer.)

I can't see myself getting married..., not yet anyway. -Inci- dentally, have you been listening to me?

Lyman: Yes, but my attention keeps wandering toward a warm and furry place... (P.75)

It is unexpected to read such rhetoric coming from a Marxist like Miller. Rather of objecting to this obscene treatment of women, we see him caving in to the cultural pressures:

Theo: There was a strange interview some years back with Isaac Bashevis Singer, the novelist? The interviewer was a woman whose husband had left her for another woman and she couldn't understand why. And Singer said, 'Maybe he liked her hole better.' I was shocked at the time, really outraged-you know, that he'd gotten a Nobel; but now I think it was courageous to have said that, be- cause it's probably true. Courage... courage is always the main thing! Everyone knows that, of course, but suddenly it is so... so clear...

Theo: - Do you remember that young English instructor whose wife had walked out on him you about sex? and his advice to

LYMAN: An English instructor?

THEO: 'Bend it in half,' he said, 'and tie a rubber band around it. (P. 12)

Later in the hospital, Lyman in an unabashed manner demonstrates his lecherous feelings in the following way:

THEO: And what would you say...

THEO. Blah. (To LYMAN.) And what would you say if one of us took another man to bed and asked you to lie next to him?

LYMAN (lifting off her glasses). Oh, I'd kill him, dear; but you're a lady, Theodora; the delicate sculpture of your noble eye, your girlish faith in your disillusion and me; your idealism and your unadmitted greed for wealth; the awkward tenderness of your wooden fingers, your incurably Protestant cooking; your

savoir faire and your sexual inexperience; your sensible shoes and devoted motherhood, your intolerant former radicalism and stal- wart love of country now-your Theodorism! Who can ever take your place!

LEAH (laughing). Why am I laughing!

LYMAN. Because you're a fucking anarchist, my darling! (He stretches out over both of them.) Oh what pleasure, what intensity! Your counter currents are like bare live wires! (Kisses each in turn). I'd have no problem defending both of you to death! Oh the double heat of two blessed wives- this is heaven! (P.73)

He comes out as a strong, domineering man who embodies every aspect of the patriarchal system and is well rooted in his community. He thinks he has every right to experience sensual pleasures with both of these women, even if he expects them to live up to the clichéd roles of a devout mother and faithful wife. He feels that even if a husband is engaging in infidelity, he is still doing his wife justice if he is giving her every financial convenience. In the play, Lyman's dishonesty and the physicality of relationships are made very evident. Lyman also acknowledges that at first, his connection with Leah was all flesh. Lyman has a romantic streak and is a sensualist. Despite being considerably older than his second wife, he has a strong fear of dying and wants to savour every last bit of his libidinal vitality before it runs out.

Theo and Leah are ignorant to reality because they are so infatuated with the sensualist Lyman. After all these years, Theo has spoken so highly of her husband to her daughter that she does not even suspect that she is being duped by him. At a later point, even Leah realizes she was a very foolish person for not pressing for him to read the divorce decree. She had taken Lyman's weak explanation—that he had thrown away the decree—like a dumbbell. He views women as a vehicle for achieving man's sexual desires and as a means of delivering children in second place. Another example of his masculine chauvinism is his desire for a male kid from Leah. Afterwards, in his testament, he recognizes this son as his legitimate heir but not Leah, as his legal wife.

And to top it all off, Lyman thinks Leah has more to do with this affair than he does. Put another way, Lyman fully assumes the role of the innocent guy, while Leah is a classic seductress. When Leah asks him, "Tell me the truth; it's okay if you don't, I just want to know-do you feel a responsibility or not?" Lyman flares up and retorts, "Now you listen-I know I'm wrong and I'm wrong and I'm wrong but I did not throw you both across my saddle to rape you in my tent! You knew I was married, and you tried to make me love you, so I'm not entirely... (P.113)

The play's conclusion emphasizes the idea of women being commodities even more. Lyman attempts to talk Theo and Leah out of leaving him. But in the end, they both choose to leave him, despite his optimistic thoughts. He is terribly sad and depressed. However, it appears that this sense of loss seems to be fleeting. A little while later, he asks nurse Hogan to sit next to his bed, and he says, clutching her hand, "A woman's warmth is the last sacredness, you're a piece of the sun."

The brief synopsis makes it quite evident that Arthur Miller viewed women in this play as nothing more than commodities and dehumanized them into objects of sex. He has not treated them with decency or respect. It seems that Miller does not hold progressive attitudes about women. The phrase "The Ride Down Mount Morgan" has a sexual connotation to it. This text, written by a man, perfectly captures the cultural perspective that American culture has for its women. It marginalizes them and regards them as less than. The women's voice and uniqueness are taken away. They are relegated to a supporting role in romantic relationships and are unable to leave this social structure. Arthur Miller, despite his brilliant insights into American real life, fails disastrously as a playwright who can compassionately engage with women and the issues related to them. He just re-mains a male author and fails to overcome the limitations of his gender in the rendering of American reality. Disillusioned and unloving, the women find themselves physically and emotionally used, with no consciousness-raising encounters that can prove releasing for them. This is a dark vision and highly disturbing, especially in the United States of America that has served a crucial role in the spread of feminism as a political and literary ideology. His stories force readers to consider the enduring injustices and the necessity of a cultural movement that values women's independence and uniqueness. Miller's writings are still important today since they raise these concerns and encourage further discussion and action in the direction of gender equality.

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