



## MYTH AND ALLEGORY: SELECT ONE-ACT PLAYS OF THORNTON WILDER

**M. SATHYARAJ**

Research Scholar in English,  
Thiruvalluvar University  
Vellore (TN) INDIA

**B. KATHIRESAN**

Associate Professor and Head i/c  
Thiruvalluvar University  
Vellore (TN) INDIA

### ABSTRACT

*The present study proposes to explore myth and allegory in the select plays of Thornton Wilder. In Wilder's plays myth and allegory act as agents that convey the theme of the plays. Inspired by the Bible, Wilder finds allegory as an effective medium to convey the Christian myth. This article is divided into different parts. The first is the introductory. It briefly talks briefly about American Literature. The first section is concluded with the establishment of the scope of analysis. The next segment is a close analysis of allegory in the plays of Thornton Wilder. The third part examines mythical relevance to the title. The consequent part focuses on the complementary nature of myth and allegory. It analyses how they help one to interpret the plays. The last part is a final part which concludes the major arguments of the paper.*

**Key words:** Myth, Allegory, Style.

### INTRODUCTION

Thornton Wilder is an American symbol, and a globally well known dramatist. Until the present time, his works are perused, performed and increased in value by gatherings of people worldwide. Wilder was born in Madison, Wisconsin on April 17, 1897, as the child of Amos Parker Wilder and Isabella Niven Wilder. His twin sibling kicked the bucket during childbirth, and Wilder grew up with a more established sibling, Amos, and three more youthful sisters, Charlotte, Isabel, and Janet. This multi-skilled family lived in China for a period, where Amos Parker Wilder was an U.S. emissary general to Hong Kong and Shanghai. Thornton Wilder started writing his plays from his teenage. He completed secondary school in California, went to Oberlin College in Ohio, and got his college degree at Yale and his graduate degree at Princeton. Thornton Wilder is a classicist in his responsibility regarding workmanship and life. His creative ability and natural drive as an essayist and

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furthermore as a man makes progress toward looking for security and a feeling of progression of the current establishments. He is a connoisseur profoundly, who delights in "training" the universe of the more prominent ethics and morals. His concept of "profound quality" does not depend on the feeling of being correct or off-base. For him "profound quality" means trying to locate an inward concordance and flawless "arrange" in the lives of the people and things in this world. Consequently, his craft is a perfect articulation of the feeling of excellence in perpetually finding this congruity and adjust of brain and things in Nature. A traditional restriction instigates the bounteous eagerness and incessant movement to improve in his craft and creative ability. A profound feeling of sad disappointment, refutation, and negative mind underlie his obviously delicate and smooth human instinct. The trouble and despairing are conceived out of an unavoidable responsibility regarding the absolute and idealize.

The introductory part is followed by a critical estimation of all his plays. It offers a bird's-eye view of the plays of the writer. This helps to establish an overview of the themes, style, motif and context of the playwright. *Love and How to Cure It* has been first scripted in November 25, 1931, at the Yale University theater in New Haven, Connecticut, by the Yale Dramatic Association and the Vassar College Philalethis, with *The Long Christmas Dinner*, *Such Things Only Happen in Books*, and *The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden*.

Propelled by Shakespeare's celebrated monologue about the periods of life, Wilder set out to compose seven short plays chronicling the human adventure from early stages through extraordinary maturity. The initial two pieces, *Infancy* and *Childhood*, are delightful comedies which have been broadly staged. In any case, Wilder never distributed the rest of the plays of his arrangement. After his demise in 1973, two extra plays planned for this cycle, "Youth" and "The Rivers under the Earth," are found among the dramatist's incomplete papers. *The Ages of Man* is an accumulation of four short plays: "Infancy," "Childhood," "Youth" and "Rivers under the Earth." *The Long Christmas Dinner*— nine decades long— exhibits the lives of a few ages of the Bayard family, and some of their Christmas suppers. This play critically examines the nature Christmas suppers and how its cherished and relished. It acknowledges the role played by time. The part also proceeds to justify the selection of the plays. The plays which are mythically significant and the plays that epitomize allegory are chosen for the study. The part rationalizes the choice of the texts, which are carefully chosen. The texts are chosen in a way that they offer an overall understanding of myth and allegory employed by the playwright.

The investigation of the style and language of a writer serves two purposes. On the one hand. It leads to a superior comprehension of the writer's contribution and artistic talent, along with the material to investigate the history of the language. The two ways to deal with an abstract work are nearly interlaced and one aides the other. The utilization which any writer makes of

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a language is a piece of the historical backdrop of the same, and, if the writer's works are generally read, his semantic propensities are probably going to apply a critical impact on other people who utilize the language. Then again, learning the condition of a language is absolutely critical in understanding what the writer has implied. Without that learning paperers are in peril of ascribing meaning to his words which he did not mean. Time and style are two imperative gadgets to the author to adjust a procedure would be appropriate for his work.

American Drama has stood up with religious threatening vibe until the post-world war I and afterward by monetary need and scholastic aloofness. The drama has attempted to make its mark as a scholarly type at home and as a power on remote stages. Walter J. observes that a typical of American artistic history is that the dramas denote "America's full-scale landing into the cutting edge dramatization of western progress. (123)"

Kenneth Macgowan claims, "When American play at last made its mark, every decade from there on left its one of a kind stamp in front of an audience history. In the 1920's, Eugene O'Neill 's elaborate investigations started a time of dangerous development and rich assortment" (56). In the 1930's, the social challenge dramatizations of Clifford Odets and his peers sensationalized the individual clashes of people and families inconsistent with themselves and with the conditions in the nation. In the 1940's, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller rose at the bleeding edge of post-World War II authors, and worried about mental and good quandaries of people in a general public, rearranging to a peacetime economy and Cold War strategy. Their temperament proceeded into the 1950's in the Beckettian plays of Edward Albee, with his distressing vision of American culture and its distanced or dismantled characters. Albee, Miller, and Williams proceeded into the next decades, while social-challenge screenwriters such as prosper the Open Theater, the Living Theater, Café La Mama, the American Place Theater, and the Public Theater. In spite of the fact that the last years of the twentieth century witnessed a gradual growth in minority theater by gay, women's activist, and dark screenwriters. It is Sam Sheppard, with his expressionistic use of the cowhand myth, and David Mamet, portrayed by Ruby Cohn as the essayist with "the most thought American stage discourse since Edward Albee,"(Ruby Cohn, 76) caught the basic consideration as writers with the possibility to join the positions of O'Neill, Williams, Miller, and Albee.

A myth is a unique customary story. Myth does not mean recorded or logical truth, but rather it is a different methodology. It regularly does not help to clarify wonders adequately or seriously in any case. Legends in another sense are accumulations of facts, regardless of whether they explore or explain. This is a mixed up and deplorable thought of a myth, a hindrance to human effective perception of mythology. Religion is too simple to state that

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one individual's religion is someone else's myth. Religion cannot be the centre for investigation of myth as it convicts the principles and customs of a religion.

Myth means an effective customary story that a culture uses to unfurl its own particular perspective and convictions, or its clarification for characteristic marvels. Idealists would state that "folklore" an investigation of myth(s), is discovered helpful as alluding to a culture's arrangement of myths and its interrelated arrangement of stories. "The Introduction of Athena," is a myth and the Greek Pantheons and their contribution in the Trojan War are all myth. Myth is a profoundly representative sort, According to Joesph Campbell who defines it as "Mythology helps you to identify the mysteries of the energies pouring through you. Therein lies your eternity." (Campbell, 40). He also states that "Myth makes a connection between our waking consciousness and the mystery of the universe. It gives us a map or a picture of the universe and allows us to see ourselves in relationship to nature" (Campbell, 56).

The connection between myth and writing has taken changing structures. The most evident frame has been the utilization of myth in the works of various writers. This thesis investigates the birthplace of mythic writing. It talks about the paperers who have hypothesized the examples that they have outlined in their paper work. Myths of all things considered are excessively shifted, making it impossible to share a plot, however normal plots have been proposed for particular sorts of myths, frequently for saint myths. Different classifications of myths, for example, creation myths, surge myths, myths of heaven, and myths without bounds, have demonstrated excessively unique for everything except the broadest shared traits.

Allegory, as a device of literature used effectively in order to bring in a social reality. The immediate end of an allegory is laughter but the ultimate end of an allegory is to give a chance for a person or community to correct the follies. This part examines allegory more closely, initially tracing the evolution and growth of allegory in literature. Allegory is a product of post-Elizabethan literature. Writers beginning with Spenser, Milton and Dryden, to the Romantic and Victorian writers treat allegory as a part of their work. They find allegory as an effective medium to yell and mock at the contemporary society. This paper estimates allegory as a literary device. It also proposes to analyze how effectively allegory is used in the plays of Wilder. It analyses the context in which the playwright uses allegories. The types of allegories namely the historical, and political are discussed in detail. A standout amongst the most celebrated cases allegory in history is Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, in which a gathering of individuals is fastened inside a buckle and sees just shadows of the outside world anticipated on the mass of the give in. One individual escapes the buckle and can see reality out of the blue. Be that as it may, after returning the give in and attempting to portray the

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outside world, the general population still anchored to the divider dismiss the other understanding and vision. Plato's purposeful anecdote is intended to symbolize the trouble of the logician's assignment while endeavoring to extend the perspective of a regular man. A modern example of an allegory is George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Orwell's account of a homestead in which the creatures kick out the people to wind up noticeably measure up to specialists, and the ascent of the pig Comrade Napoleon to subdue any plausibility of equity, reflects the Russian Revolution of 1917 intently. Confidant Napoleon is an image for Stalin, while other unmistakable pigs in the story speak of Lenin and Trotsky. This work was Orwell's first cognizant endeavour "to combine political reason and creative reason into one entirety. (123)."

Myth, which occupies a special status in literary discourse from the mid of 19<sup>th</sup> century, has unearthed many mysteries in the contemporary society. Such references find its reflections. Modern writers and critics have attempted to subvert mythology. In the literary arena writers tried to question mythology. There are numerous unmistakable natures of folklore which depict what a specific individual or society thinks within a time frame. Myths serve as a reason for human organizations, traditions and convictions. The mill folklore clarifies the mysteries behind the origin of the universe and its ethnology. Regularly, the setting is in a past proto-world and myth frequently spins around non-human or "extraordinary" individuals, for example, god, goddess, and powerful creatures. These stories clarify why things are and how they move toward becoming to be. It 'supports' human mindset; accommodate humans to reality and sets up our examples of life. Aside from the clarification of the production of the universe, legends try to clarify regular characteristic marvels. Certain myths clarify why the sun exists and why there is night and day. Some clarifies the existence of seasons: Spring, Winter, Summer and Autumn while others show of the compelling force of nature giving us sustenance and sanctuary. These myths recommend a method for understanding nature and arranging contemplations. Myth have been made by people for some reasons more than a number of years ago. They are a scholarly result of mankind and a rich asset for the thoughts and conviction of past ages.

Thornton Wilder is one of the writers who attempts to undo all the mythical references. Writers like, Wilder attempts to enforce that myths are not constructed tales. Wilder's plays have a substantial relevance to myth. He tries to enquire deep into the myths that are eluded from the Bible, such as Noah of Arc.

Myth and allegory are complementary in nature that allegory is used as a device to convey myth at times. For instance, an allegory is used as a device to interpret mythical factors hidden in the Bible. Similarly, Wilder makes use of allegory as a medium to interpret the myths in Bible. This part unfolds the way allegory and myth are used.

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