

The Arthur Miller Society

Newsletter

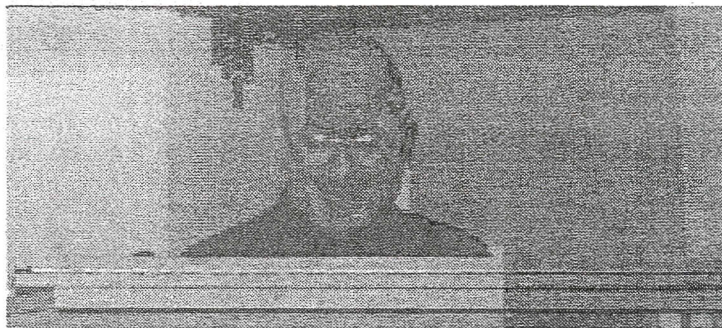
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Words from the Society's President



Lew Livesay at the 10th Arthur Miller Society conference

Remembering our Mentor, Arthur Miller

By Lew Livesay, Saint Francis College

No man is an island. entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thy own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. - John Donne

Our humanity feels greatly diminished with the loss of Arthur Miller. In his essay "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud tells us that, in grieving over the loss of a loved one, what we are doing is grieving over the way in which we have internalized that person and now cannot cope with how a piece of ourselves, in which we have invested, has been lost. We are grieving for that void within that cannot be readily filled. This insight parallels the Hopkins' poem that concludes, "It is the blight man was born for / It is Margaret you mourn for" ("Spring and Fall, To a Young Child"). Each one has to learn how to live with considerable losses throughout time. The death of Arthur Miller is considerable, and one point — that became apparent at the Majestic Theater Memorial on May 9 — involves how this loss registers so differently on each person. From Tony Kushner's beautiful homage to Edward Albee's heated outrage at *The New Criterion*, each one remembers in a way to attempt to fill the void. All of the remembrances at the Memorial were beautiful and true. They all helped us to move forward properly. Many of the presenters opted simply to read Miller's own words for a good reason.

Our chief consolation in this sad time is that Miller has helped prepare us to live with this loss because we continue to read his words that deal so frequently with the complexity of loss, grief, and death. For people who have cultivated imagination as our way of being-in-the-world, we will always have those creative works that Miller has given us, allowing us to continue to engage him in the very way that all of the members of our Society came first to know him — through words printed on a page — through that seismic shock that each of us first felt so vividly when Willy says, "Nothing's

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Erratum: Last issue erroneously gave the date for Miller's Memorial as June 9th; it was of course May 9th. Also apologies for leaving out the figure nos. in Steve Marino's "Brooklyn" article and failing to acknowledge the photographer, Jane Dominik.

Note from the Editor

This is my final issue of the *Arthur Miller Society Newsletter* as we look forward to the new journal next year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed over the years to what has been, I think, an excellent and informative publication. Jane Dominik was the erstwhile editor of the first six volumes, and handed over the reins to me for the next six, but we could not have put this together without your help. I hope you will consider continuing these valuable contributions to Steve and his gang for the Arthur Miller Journal. I shall be editing Production Reviews, so if you attend any interesting performances of Miller's plays, do send me a review for consideration--my e-mail is sabbotson@ric.edu or abbotson@hotmail.com.

We have not skimmed on this final issue and you will find our usual mix of reports, articles and reviews, beginning with the full text of Lew Livesay's speech on Miller which he delivered at the last conference. Lew had written this for the last newsletter, but sadly missed the deadline, but it is still a timely piece. Thankyou for the opportunity to be your editor for the past three years.

Sue Abbotson

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Remembering Our Mentor contd.

planted. I don't have a thing in the ground." Over all the years, the resonance of that line never diminishes. It's just one "earthquake" among several in a play that endlessly rocks us. What Miller makes us feel when that imaginative "clod" of earth, the imagined dust that is Willy, gets washed away — in all of his eternally childish, self-absorbed pathos — is that we are genuinely the less. For two and a half hours we become rooted in Willy's world, and then his suicide washes it away, and we feel the less. It's a leveling lesson about humanity, about our equality, about the stunning epiphany of how we are all connected in a certain human way, despite what we do to ignore this quintessential basis of our existence in each other. Any death diminishes us. And yet, we live in an age of genocide when powerful nations sit back and allow tens of thousands to be killed in a month. After witnessing the Rwandan genocide, the U.N. peacekeeper Roméo Dallaire was asked if there were any lessons here to be learned, and he responded in simple but profound words sounding very like they could have come from a Miller play: "All humans are human. There are no humans more human than others. That's it."

For those of us in academe, something cosmic has happened, something that signals the close of the literary period into which we were born — that literary period that began towards the end of the Nineteenth Century and dominated much of the Twentieth Century and became known as Modernism. Most classic American writing, in this period, came from about ten people. Being the last of that innovative and productive group of giants, Miller can affectionately be called The Last of the Modernists. These people were indeed giants; they altered the way we see, think, and feel; and we will not see the likes of them again for some time.

Modernism begins with Henry James and has its roots clearly in descriptive narration. James' disastrous attempts at drama show how entrenched he was in the realist novel. There are stories of James standing out back of a London theatre where one of his plays was not going well, and staring, with stiff-upper-lip envy, across the alley toward a theatre where the house was rollicking with another Oscar Wilde triumph. James could just never make that transition to dialogue. By contrast, Miller, who excelled at narrative, obviously opted for the theatre, because as Miller said, during a televised interview with Charlie Rose, "The difference with a novelist is usually the novelist is not an actor. So he doesn't hear language, whereas a playwright hears language. Playwriting is an auditory skill, rather than a literary one. You've got to hear what you write."

As Modernism evolved, it shifted from reliance on the outward eye toward the inner ear. Even Conrad, a descriptive talent if ever, with that mimetic impulse that Leavis described as an "adjectival insistence," is moving toward the interior when Charlie Marlow describes Kurtz simply as "a voice." Miller excelled at creating an array of voices,

from the acrobatic persiflage of Willy Loman — "a salesman always full of words, and better yet, a man who could never cease trying, like Adam, to name himself and the world's wonders" (*Timebends* 182) — to Mr. Peters who proclaims that God "invented all the different languages to keep people from talking to each other so much" (35). For literary people, Miller makes a huge contribution to our world in how we hear and understand the language that allows us to share interaction. In Miller, it becomes poetic, and we owe a debt to Steve Marino for helping us to understand that Arthur is as poetic in his way as Tennessee was in his.

Miller has also altered how we grasp time. In general, this is one of the great contributions of Modernism. We live in an age where people take-for-granted that the future is open to all sorts of unimaginable possibilities. However, Modernism is forever preaching, mostly to deaf ears, that our sense of time is very much out of joint. In a television interview from about a dozen years ago, Toni Morrison made the lesson of Modernism quite vivid when she said that the future is extremely limited; by contrast, according to Morrison, "The past is infinite." In his magisterial *Arthur Miller: A Critical Study*, Chris Bigsby makes this point in the chapter "Arthur Miller: Time Traveller," especially when he alludes to Faulkner's line that, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." Bigsby helps us to grasp how Miller frees us from clock time. We hear another echo of this same Modernist theme when Fitzgerald's closes *Gatsby* with the line: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." Miller evolves into his conception of Modernist time when he finds ways to free himself from the mimetic pull of Ibsen who is still controlling the time-line in realistic plays like *All My Sons* and *The Price*. Miller explores how past becomes synchronous with the present, the unconscious, and the mythic, most of all in *Salesman* and *After the Fall*, and then Miller proceeds to build his last two decades of work on this rich and deep theme of temporal exploration: "The past, I saw, is a formality, merely a dimmer present, for everything we are is at every moment alive in us. How fantastic a play would be that did not still the mind's simultaneity, did not allow a man to 'forget' and turned him to see present through past and past through present" (*Timebends* 131). In this regard, Miller is doing in the theatre something like what Wallace Stevens and T.S. Eliot did in their late poetry. One thinks of Eliot's line at the end of "East Coker" in the *Quartets*: "Old men ought to be explorers." In his later years, Miller became this "Time Traveller," although he was never interested in the sorts of exploration that Eliot and Stevens made with their incorporeal flights of imagination with "Ambiguous undulations as they sink, / Downward to darkness, on extended wings" ("Sunday Morning"). If Miller were a dancer, he would clearly opt for the gravity of weighted contact with terra firma that defines the barefoot modern dancer, in contrast to the ethereal ballet dancer who soars upwards into the air as if having attained weightlessness. A commitment to tangible human experience is simply a different aesthetic than what we get in the genius of Eliot or Stevens. Miller seeks to remain

rooted in experience and never wanders into the linguistic labyrinths where many postmodern writers rack up their frequent flyer miles.

Miller writes that “to possess the past is to achieve importance!” (*Timebends* 232). As we begin to grapple better with what we call the metaphysics of time, for lack of a more homely phrase, we will come to understand how *The Ride Down Mount Morgan*, *Broken Glass*, and *Mr. Peters’ Connections* represent explorations of time that recover personal and ancestral meanings concealed in memory. In *Timebends*, Miller repeatedly emphasizes, sounding very much like Heidegger, how the thinking process is one of undoing concealment. It is time that conceals us from ourselves. Miller says, “. . . one of the strongest urges in the writer’s heart, and perhaps most especially the American’s, is to reveal what has been hidden and denied, to rend the veil” (*Timebends* 63). That’s a biblical way of putting it because time is not just historical, but it also has these other mythic qualities that operate in other registers, and these registers coexist as ways of sometimes concealing the world from our view. Miller advises, “. . . a writer has first to respect what exists or else abandon the idea of unearthing the hidden operating principles of his age” (*Timebends* 237). This notion of returning from time travel to bring back a truth about our human identity can be seen in *Quentin*, just as the failure to attain it can be seen in *Mr. Peters*, as Steve Centola’s recent “Arthur Miller and the Art of the Possible” argues so intently. *Quentin*’s quest is a journey to establish connections with others. If *Proctor* is Miller’s most ideal character, *Quentin* is his most real. He tells us in one of his most painful revelations that “we conspired to violate the past, and the past is holy and its horrors are holiest of all” (*After the Fall* 87). The entire play is an unearthing of very human betrayals, missed connections, and what the play calls separation: “We are all separate people. I tried not to be, but finally one is — a separate person” (*After the Fall* 104). Of course, the world is still not ready to deal with the brilliance contained in that play, because for literal-minded people, transit beyond the immediate proves difficult. In all but a few rare exceptions, and Steve Centola has taken the lead in showing us legitimate “possibilities” here, this play inevitably gets read in terms of Miller’s life. And the results have been disastrous — for the reviewers most of all. If people would only listen to Miller himself, they could escape the prison-house of the present and the literal: “No work of any interest has a single source, any more than a person psychologically exists in only one place at any one time” (*Timebends* 223). The ultimate point is that each person is connected to all others, in all of our moments. To be angry at another is simply to contaminate the humanity inside oneself that we all have to share with each other. In a world from which innocence has been stripped, we just cannot afford the superiority of assuming that one person is inherently more important than another — that one person’s life or one nation’s welfare can be arranged at other human expense. *Quentin* is struggling with epic endurance to overcome “the tenuousness of human connection” (*Timebends* 264). We can only

heed this endeavor and encourage that more people would give others a chance, and that they would themselves undertake *Quentin*’s interior quest to explore our human shortcomings and culpability!

The big problem with *After the Fall* — and I am simply trying to make the point that this is only one of Miller’s plays that we are a long way from appreciating in a true fashion — is that *Maggie* is associated in the public mind with MM. It’s very interesting to stop and realize that in Philip Roth’s recent novel *The Human Stain*, he has created what may well be his best female character to date in Faunia Farley. Faunia is remarkably a progeny of *Maggie*. She is a blond who claims that she can barely read, and she has a long history of having been mistreated by men. Her older lover depicts her with this description: “Faunia is the unforeseen. Intertwined orgasmically with the unforeseen, and convention unendurable. Upright principles unendurable” (170–71). Now if that line somehow got entangled in the public mind with a well known actress of iconic stature, Roth’s novel would be read, like *After the Fall* was read by most of its reviewers, in all the wrong ways. Any notion of a “willing suspension of disbelief” would totally be canceled by the prurient predators of sensationalism. Only when *Maggie* can someday be read as a literary character, like Faunia Farley, who is a character struggling to make sense of her victimization as a woman, then perhaps *After the Fall* can be appreciated for all that it has to teach us about connection, memory, and responsibility for each other. As Steve Centola said in his testimonial to Miller, this play may be the great undiscovered Miller gem. Or as Jane Dominick has said, it may be *Broken Glass*. Or as Martin Gottfried said, in an inspired moment, it may be *Playing for Time*.

The Mission Statement of the Society is quite clear and appropriate in defining our purpose, which is “to promote the study of Arthur Miller and his work. Additional objectives include the promotion of productions of Miller’s plays and the fostering of continued interest in Miller’s work.” Given that Miller is, by most accounts, one of the ten or so most significant American literary figures of the Twentieth Century, we are committed to a noble enterprise. Miller’s treatment of language, identity, and time represent a body of work from which the potential for increased awareness and reading pleasure are only confined by our willingness to work. Our key focus is upon the creative texts that Miller leaves us. That *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible* stand as towering classics is widely accepted. We are committed not just to those classic works, but to all the other plays, stories, and essays that have not yet been fully appreciated. We also remain committed to a wide range of interpretations, but at the same time, none of us believes that Miller’s works are what many post-structuralists call self-generating textual machines, unconsciously proliferating endless arrays of interpretive reconfigurations. We believe that Miller composed his works with an intention, and that our mission is to be true to that basically humanist intention.

I would close with two final points: it is important, first of all, to emphasize that Miller is indeed a humanist.

He developed himself inside that commitment to what Faulkner called “the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed — love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice.” Miller believed in these very values. In *Timebends*, Miller makes quite clear his bottom-line belief that “. . . without ideals there is no life” (359). To me, that’s a touchstone line that can help explain to the world how we should read his work and how we should see Arthur Miller as a man. Miller’s ideals are encased in his belief in human solidarity — his belief that “every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.” Our responsibility in the Miller Society, during coming years, is to continue to help young people understand what it means for someone to rise above the Great Depression, the Holocaust, the Red Scare, and the Cold War to assert, over and over, his affirmative belief in human kind. Compared to those stupendous social events at the heart of the Twentieth Century, an insensitive review pales indeed. Miller did more than survive events of enormous magnitude; he lived to discover meanings within them. His courage is unimpeachable. He *prevailed*, and in this, Miller inspires. Our responsibility is to help others who have not yet been fortunate to engage and enjoy the trove of riches that our mentor has left us.

Finally, the last point that I would make is that we also bear a responsibility not just to the artist, but to the man. Many of us were blessed to have met Arthur Miller and spend time with him. Steve Centola shared a twenty-five year relationship with Mr. Miller, and Chris Bigsby has shared a thirty year relationship with Mr. Miller. Clearly, Miller gave much, and he had a loyal and wide audience, as evidenced by the turnout for the Memorial at the Majestic.

We can commit ourselves to helping students understand how Miller’s imagination developed from American language, history, and political definitions of identity that he saw and confronted in his time. He is as American as it gets, while at the same time transcending any sense of human identity defined in nationalist terms. He said in the Charlie Rose interview that a regret might have been not having had a more receptive theatre culture, because then he might have produced even more work. Gottfried, for one, is perplexed at why Miller never relocated. For all of his respect for the British and his appreciation of their openness to his work, England was not the answer. That something of the British love of theatre could have been brought here might have created better working conditions. In any case, Miller was not leaving. The essay that Jeffrey Meyers wrote about Miller in *Privileged Moments* provides a sense of Miller’s attraction and resistance to England. (Apparently, Meyers would have liked to have written a biography on Miller, and while Miller kept inviting him back to talk, they never reached a point of mutual trust so that Miller would allow Meyers access to his personal papers. For Miller, private man that he was, that access would equate to a sacred bond.) In any event, Miller stayed here and confronted the difficult conditions surrounding reception of his work. He never bent his work to those conditions. Like every great artist, he wrote

for the first and last audience to whom he had to answer, himself. America is the place and American English is the idiom in which his creativity took root. To explain to young people how and why Miller planted seeds in America is important. He apparently planted a forest of trees on his beloved Roxbury land, and I would guess “there’s more of him in that [forest]” than we might readily suspect.

Understanding these aspects of the man can only come from personal contact. All of us share a concern that because Miller was political, his legacy will be under attack from powerful elitists who congenitally oppose the ideal of human solidarity. That is something we must anticipate. Perhaps, Edward Albee has already sounded the trumpet with his plea for decency after the unthinkable attack in *The New Criterion*, which was then prolonged on their website. Miller will be a target for those who promote an ideology of social inequality for their own furtive advance. Miller will also be a target for gossip mongers who want to turn his life into capital by manipulating that segment of a puritanical public that perversely enjoys seeing successful people, as Roth put it in *The Human Stain*, treated “sanctimoniously.” With Miller’s own words, we can readily help to defend his legacy from the political elites, and with our own narratives of personal connection, we can help others to see what a generous and caring individual was Arthur Miller.

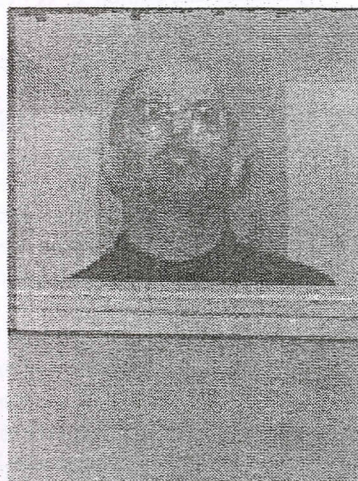
By way of an example, we can recall how many were upset with the Gottfried biography, and apparently Miller himself was as astounded as any of us. An account like that makes it sound as if Miller spent the second half of his life embittered and buried under an avalanche of unfavorable reviews. All of us know how and why Miller’s refusal to pander to the current Broadway scene distanced him from a mainstream audience that wants sheer entertainment, and we know how Miller remained faithful, with *grace under pressure*, to his own vision of the artist as a social and personal explorer of ideals. Miller never sold out. He worked on his terms and to those terms was faithful to the end.

Gottfried does make one almost apt comparison when he writes, “As Philip Roth considers it hopeless to make sense of one’s life, Arthur Miller considers it essential” (433). This time Gottfried gets the Miller point right, but he’s wrong at Roth’s expense. Roth is someone we should watch because his indebtedness to Miller represents one of the creative ways in which Miller’s genius lives on in others. We all know the three page homage to Miller’s *Focus* contained, as Gottfried reminds us, in *I Married a Communist*. That novel about the Red Scare, much like *The Human Stain* in its way, has considerable resonance with *After the Fall*. And Roth’s simply brilliant *The Dying Animal* has resonance with Lyman Felt. It’s as if Roth is reinventing himself very late in life with Miller as a guide. Miller tells us at the beginning of *Timebends*: “The desire to move on, to metamorphose — or perhaps it is a talent for being contemporary — was given me as life’s inevitable and rightful condition. To keep becoming, always to stay involved in transition” (4). Miller metamorphoses in Roth, and Miller metamorphoses in us with all of the different times and ways that we do our writ-

ing through trying to make sense of these magnificent plays with which we have been blessed. Many of us have written three, four, or more interpretations of *Salesman*, and there is no reason to believe that we will stop. In addition, we have all these other plays, as I am urging, that we have to continue exploring. Look at how critical tide turned in appreciating *The Man Who Had All the Luck* once that play received a serious production. And now the play is a project in development with hopes of becoming a film.

We can work together to keep Miller alive by teaching his works and supporting productions of his works. We can also continue to tell the Miller story truthfully in intimate detail as we know it, for he led an exemplary life of courage and achievement. In the process we can set straight the version that Gottfried has established in the public mind. There are more dimensions to Miller than are dreamt of in Gottfried's portrayal. Here is one minor point. Gottfried briefly mentions Miller's interest in carpentry. He says that at one point, as an outlet from this supposed mountain of critical rejections, Miller decided to hide out in his wood-working shop: "Shrinking from that hostility, Miller started building a nine-foot-long cherry dining table — 'an elliptical thing,' he said. 'Suddenly, I don't know why the hell I'm doing it'" (385). First of all, can you imagine Miller "shrinking" from anything? Shrinking was never in the man's repertoire of responses. Miller basically always knew what he was doing: he was living and working as an artist. It was Will Smith's paper at the eighth Miller Conference about the symbolic significance of wood in *Salesman* that would leave no doubt in anyone's mind that working in wood would be for Miller a passionate avocation, practiced over a lifetime, as a way of expressing oneself with the shaping of one's world — something Willy Loman never managed to do. Chris Bigsby's testimonial to Miller in *The Independent* also talks about a table: "He was a carpenter and took as much pleasure in fashioning furniture from the wood as he did from creating plays from his words. He made the table from which he ate, consulting a professor of mathematics to get the angles right. What he wanted to create was a table at which 12 people could engage in the same conversation. Maybe that was how he saw the stage." Bigsby brings the table alive to us; it now has a purpose and therefore a meaning. Because Bigsby knew and loved Miller, the table becomes a lot less *elliptical* when we understand that it was never about shrinking, but about sharing conversation with loved ones over a meal. The wood associates with paying attention to others. Wood provides the stage for food and talk, just as it provides the paper on which we compose the stories of our struggles and our lives. Miller's last published piece in his lifetime, a story that appeared in January of 2005 in *Esquire's* February issue is entitled "Beavers." It is about a man who has to take back his "green woods" from a pair of beavers who are deforesting this property with their little engineering projects, which the man admires but resents deeply. The narrator has to enlist a mason neighbor who specializes in making stone walls. This plot certainly resonates with Robert Frost. The neighbor helps the narrator reclaim his land and his pond.

With the beavers shot, maybe the neighbor will have a hat made from the pelts to replace "the certain straw hat that he had worn cocked to the left side in heat and snow for at least the last ten years." Miller ends his writing career sounding a theme of preservation. This theme is very important to Miller. There are values and ideals worth preserving, just like the woods are worth preserving. This *significant soil* is where Miller has planted his seeds. The people who knew him best have these wonderful stories and insights to share. We need to remember those stories so that future generations can understand how an artist can lead a life of integrity. Bigsby's account of the wood, the carpentry, and the people around the table sounds a lot more (than Gottfried's account) like the Arthur Miller we knew — the man who took us seriously and supported our teaching and critical endeavors, even though at times he remained somewhat skeptical of the entire academic enterprise. What Arthur Miller did for us was to treat us with respect and allow us to find our way through his work on honest terms. In a sense he pulled a chair up to our table and talked with us. Toward that mutual respect that we established together, I would like to end, one more time, with the words, containing an echo of *The Crucible*, which formed the Society's acknowledgment of Mr. Miller in our *New York Times* obituary notice: The Arthur Miller Society recognizes the artistry, moral authority, and human solidarity of our mentor. We thank Arthur Miller because you leave us our name and social mission. We all will do our best to honor this pledge of our continuing affection, simply because Arthur Miller will always keep us "involved in mankind."



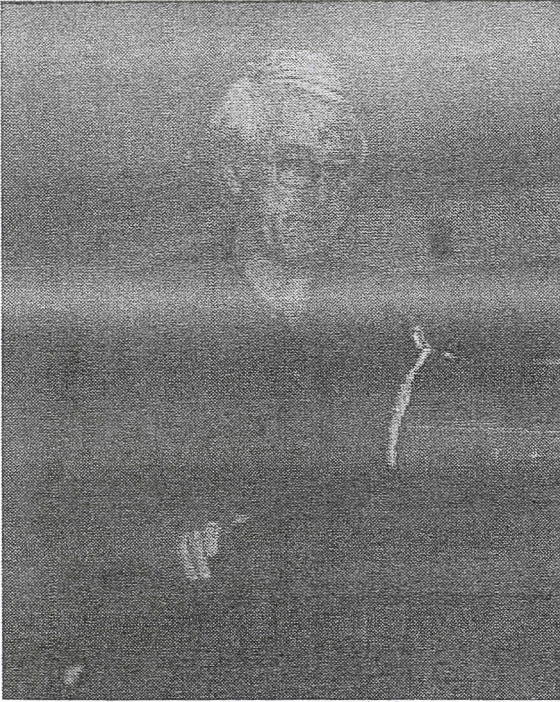
Lew Livesay giving this speech at the 10th Arthur Miller Society Conference at Saint Peter's College

We are currently looking for nominations for a Secretary/Treasurer—please contact Steve Marino if you are interested in the position.
Phone: (718) 848-3875.
e-mail: smarino@stfranciscollege.edu

Report on the 10th Arthur Miller Society Conference

By William Smith, Drew University

Despite a weekend of driving rainstorms, the Tenth International Arthur Miller Conference took place at St. Peter's College in Jersey City, New Jersey on October 8th and 9th. While a small gathering of presenters and other Miller fans united on Friday night to begin the conference with pizza and a film screening, the conference events officially began on October 8th, a day packed with



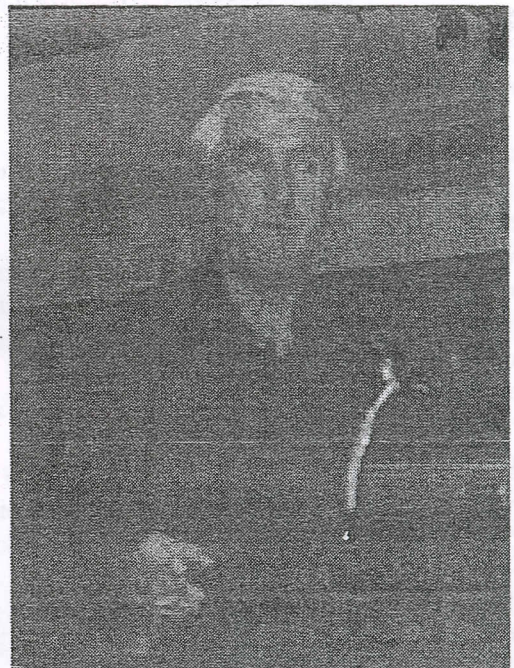
panels and concluded by a keynote address from noted Miller biographer and critic, Christopher Bigsby.

Loosely built upon the foundation of Miller's interest in social justice and his projected voice of moral authority, many of the first presenters examined social themes and connections between Miller's fictional work and the contemporary world. One panel looked specifically at the teaching of Miller's works and at his use of comedy in the recent production of *Resurrection Blues*. After a brief lunch break, three panels filled the afternoon with curious explications of Miller's work through philosophical lenses, in conversation with other works, and illuminated by Miller's own biography.

Following a reception Saturday evening, conference attendees were treated to a dinner where Stephen Marino launched the new Miller Journal and incoming society president, Jane Dominik, handed out thanks and signed copies of various Miller books (generously donated by Christopher Bigsby) to

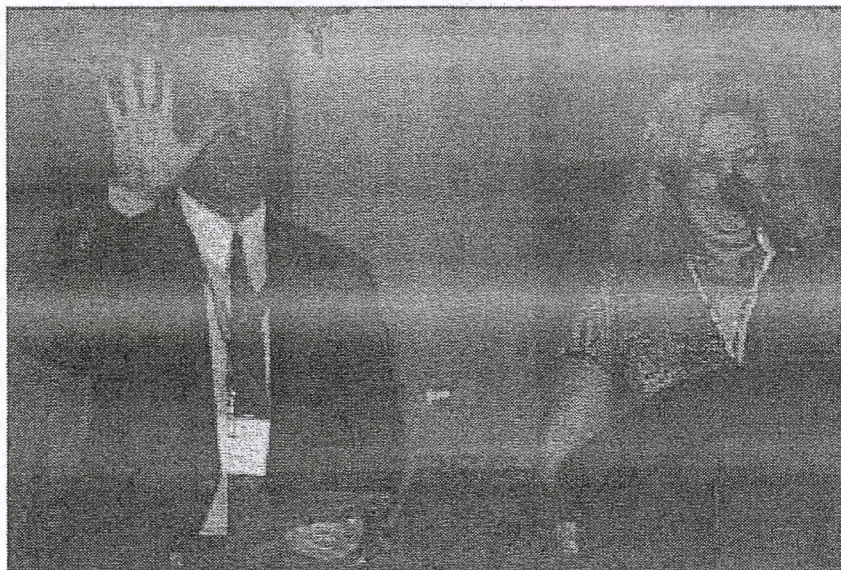
Stephen Marino, George Castellitto, and Susan Abbotson for their past service to the society.

Christopher Bigsby offered a rousing keynote address on Miller's remarkable and productive life. Bigsby reflected upon Miller's life and times, recounting several meetings with the author. Bigsby's speech urged listeners to keep in mind Miller's context within the fabric of the United States and the world's literary and political community. Citing Miller's extraordinarily lengthy and prolific career, Bigsby reminded the audience that at no time since 1949 has there been a day when a Miller play was not in production somewhere in the world. Further, Bigsby stressed that Miller was in fact more productive in his later years than in the years that garnered him great fame and acclaim. Near enough to Miller to offer a sense of how Miller viewed the post 9/11 world and the United States' role in international politics, Bigsby gave a true sense of the moralistic and hopeful man behind the works celebrated by the conference. Perhaps most touching was



Bigsby's note that despite being a dyed-in-the-wool New Yorker, Miller really found peace in his rural Connecticut home. Nowhere was that fact more apparent than in an anecdote shared about Miller's final hours, during which he asked for a glass of water drawn from his well on the property.

The conference concluded with two panels of papers delivered on Sunday morning, the final paper, written by Steven Centola, with Mr. Bigsby the co-founder of the Arthur Miller Society, which recounted several of his encounters with the author during his career as a Miller scholar.



Steve Marino being thanked by Jane Dominik prior to his announcement about the new *Arthur Miller Journal*. Photographs on previous page are of Christopher Bigsby giving his keynote speech

Notes and Queries

Our final chance--any answers to the following short queries, please e-mail to sabbotson@ric.edu and I'll pass them on.

Dear Miller Society,

It is certainly possible that Miller would have known about the existence of the parable of the prodigal son, given his claim to have read *The Brothers Karamazov* in the 1930s. There is a passage in that novel which reads, "Quite the contrary, they thought they had every right, for Richard had been given to them as a chattel, and they did not even see the necessity of feeding him. Richard himself describes how in those years, like the Prodigal Son in the Gospel, he longed to eat of the mash given to the pigs, which were fattened for sale." But I am a bit leery of believing that a young man reading quickly through a long novel would pause and look up something that he did not recognize. So this does not seem like definitive proof. If anyone can furnish me

with anything more tangible that Miller's definitely knew about Jesus's parable of the prodigal son prior to 1948/9 I would be very grateful. Thanks.

Phillip Whidden
ansrl@yahoo.com

From Ed Riggins:

A friend of mine saw *The Price* on stage and loved it. I've been looking for a production that I can see - I would even be willing to travel if necessary - but haven't come up with anything. Do you know anywhere I could purchase something in video format of this work - movie or stage?

And finally:

One member sent in the following link to hear a song written last March titled, "The Death of Arthur Miller" in memory of our mentor:
http://www.sonaweek.com/lyrics/02152005_thedeathofarthurmiller.asp

Abstracts from The Tenth International Arthur Miller Society Conference Saint Peter's College, 7-9 October 2005

While every effort was made to get abstracts on all of the papers delivered, (and all of their titles are included below), sadly several participants were unable to provide anything in time for publication of the newsletter.



Elizabeth Reavey and Jane Dominik

Interfacing Otherness in *Incident at Vichy*: Miller and Levinas toward Infinity Lew Livesay, Saint Peter's College

Steve Biko, Social Justice, and Self-Sacrifice in Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy* Elizabeth Reavey, Saint Peter's College

When Racial Stereotyping Appears to be Fine: Miller's *Clara* and Targeting the Scapegoat Alexis Smith, Saint Peter's College

Real-World Lessons in the Literature Classroom: Using Arthur Miller to Teach Critical Thinking, Social Consciousness, and Humanity (A Presentation)

Teachers of literature and humanities in general frequently go beyond the bounds of their actual subject matter, often touching on issues which impact student ability to think critically and judge the world around them. To teach high school English is more than teaching commas, Shakespeare, *The Crucible*, and the new SAT essay. True education is more; it is the idea that students are leaving school with the ability to take in new information, process it, form opinions, support beliefs, debate, tolerate, and live with others.

The idea of teaching literature and English is not only teaching plot, character, literary features, and writer's style, but it often involves a complex discussion of theme and it is during the thematic discussion which often leads the educator into the realm of the real world lesson, social

consciousness, and yes, humanity. It is during these exchanges that students often question the world around them and debate much larger issues such as right and wrong or good and evil. Students evaluate society's ills and triumphs. They become active learners and active participants in the discussion going on around them. The high achiever and the lower level learner are equals in the classroom; they are both members of the human race.

As Arthur Miller was a believer in social justice, he is uniquely suited to the educational goals outlined above. Using three Miller's plays - *A View from the Bridge*, *Incident at Vichy*, and *Death of a Salesman*, this presentation will explore methods for approaching the teaching of critical thinking, ethics, justice, and humanity. In addition, the presentation will offer ideas for teaching students critical thinking skills and initiating an examination of social consciousness.

Kimberley Jenkins, Fairfax High School

Willy Loman: *His Boys and Mine* John Rouse, Saint Peter's College

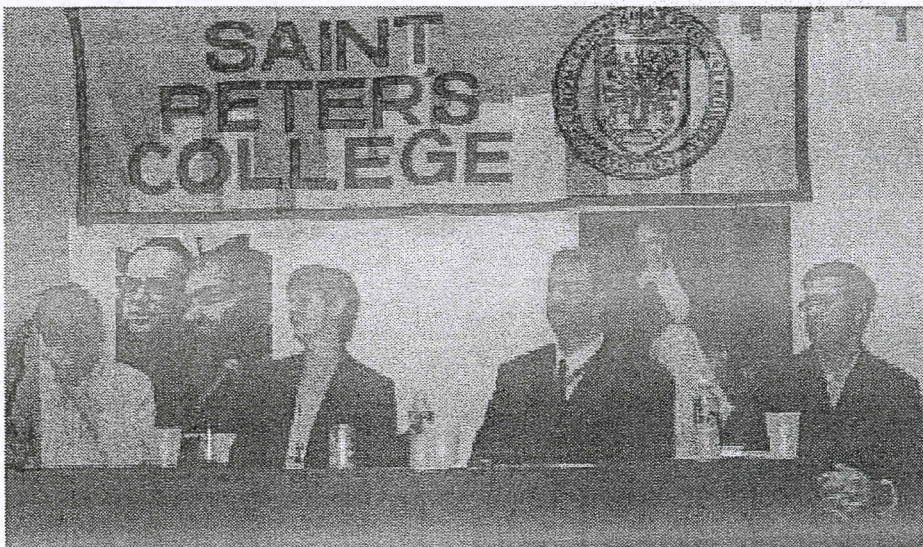
Comedy that Draws Blood in *Resurrection Blues*

Theatre-goers and literary scholars for decades have rightly esteemed Arthur Miller's venerable stature as a powerfully dramatic tragedian and as theatre's moral conscience. Miller has indisputably written some of theatre's most strikingly intelligent and emotionally fierce dramas. Yet in *Resurrection Blues* (2002), Miller has crafted a genuinely funny satire, no less intelligent and no less emotionally evocative. What's more, comedy is nothing new to Miller's canon; he has employed humor throughout his writing career.

Both in its choice of biblical source material and in its use of humor to explore thought-provoking observations, the clearest antecedent to *Resurrection Blues* is likely Miller's *The Creation of the World and Other Business* (1972). *Creation of the World* is widely considered Miller's first stage comedy and its characters include God, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, several angels, and Lucifer. *Creation of the World* is a frequently funny play and, without didactically answering them, poses some reasonably weighty religious and philosophical questions, at least for the Broadway stage.

In much the same way, in *Resurrection Blues* Miller utilizes a section of the Bible—this time not Genesis—but the life, death and resurrection of Christ, or at least a Christ-like character, as inspiration to convey his commentary on modern society and on universal human nature. In the realm of Miller's *Resurrection Blues*, the millennium does not approach; it recedes into the forgotten past with lessons unlearned, as the human race plunges headlong into the brave new world of the 21st century where the CEO is the new monarch and capitalism is king. In *Resurrection Blues*, Miller steadfastly suggests that the emperor, in spite of everything, still has no clothes.

Joseph Kane, Jerstad-Agerholm



**A Revolt of Possibility: A Symbolic Reading of Miller's
*Incident at Vichy***

Joshua Polster, Washington University

Tituba: The Marginalized Figure in Miller's *The Crucible*

Tania Gray, Saint Peter's College

**Improvising through the Thirties: Vaudeville, Epic
Theatricalism, and *The American Clock***

Janet Balakian, Keane University

**Meliorism and Miller: A Jamesian Reading of *The Man
Who Had All the Luck***

The Man Who Had All the Luck, at first glance, seems to exemplify the helplessness of humanity against the capricious whims of fate but on a deeper inspection, examines the delicate and intricate interplay between ourselves and the world. In bringing out this relationship, this paper will give a reading of this work from the perspective of the philosophy of William James, relying on three primary texts of this thinker: *The Principles of Psychology*, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, and *Pragmatism*. In order to construct the necessary philosophical background, I will present James's notions of the interaction and relation between the individual and the world in experiential terms, in addition to some of his ideas regarding consciousness and personal identity. Following from this, James argues that in any experience of the world, the "human contribution" to one's perception of the world, one's actions in the world, and the judgments one places on it, cannot be separated from the interaction as such. This, combined with the world's essential dynamism, results in James's meliorism—the belief that the salvation of the world is possible but will only come about through our agency. This paper will apply these concepts to the brothers David and Amos Beeves, illustrating that an interpretation from the perspectives of meliorism and James's idea of consciousness

is strongly merited and explanatory of David's and Amos's respective reactions to their situations. To wit, part of the frustration David feels is explained by James's analysis of personal identity in which our personal projects and products of our labor are, in some sense, a part of us, and by contrapositive implication, when we receive things that are not a product of our efforts, then we feel as though these things do not really belong to us. Meliorism, with its heavy emphasis on personal responsibility for human agency, emerges by the end of the play, in which David, admittedly the recipient of extraordinary luck, has begun to grasp that the world is not final or determined and can thus effect his own salvation, as opposed to Amos, who interprets the world as a closed and finished system, thus preventing any efficacious agency he once had.

Charles S. Lassiter, Fordham University

Twelve Angry Men: The Arthur Miller Connection

Arthur Miller's death in 2005 was the death of one of the last exponents of a singularly exciting and creative period in American theatre, television, and film—roughly, the late 1940's to the early 1960's. In all three dramatic media, a combination of realism and expressionism was the norm, exemplified by Miller, as well as by such writers for film and television as Paddy Chayefsky, Rod Serling, and Reginald Rose. During Miller's most prolific years, many of the same actors could be seen in all three media. For example, Lee J. Cobb, the original Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, co-starred in the 1954 movie *On the Waterfront* and acted in plays written for television. One of Cobb's greatest movies of the period was Rose's *12 Angry Men*, in which he played the Loman-like character of Juror #3. Among his co-stars were four actors—E.G. Marshall, Joseph Sweeney, Ed Begley, and Jack Warden—who also originated important Miller roles and a fifth—Jack Klugman—who later played Loman to acclaim. Parallels exist between the actors' respective Miller characters and their characters in *12 Angry Men*; the parallels between Loman and Juror #3 are

especially striking, showing the far-reaching impact of *Salesman*. In the end, the work of Miller the playwright is shown to have a connection with that of the film and TV dramatists of his era, a connection that might be emphasized in future studies of Miller.

Nicole De Sapia, George Mason University

Neurosis, the Gift, and Friendship: A Phenomenological Reading of Miller's *Elegy for a Lady*

In this paper, I attempt to draw the links between Miller's *Elegy for a Lady* and Derrida's analysis of the problem of the gift and of giving in *Given Time* and *The Gift of Death*. In his play, Miller's characters are engaged in a conversation about giving in the light of a (possible) death, while dancing around (and on) the possibility that the person dying might very well be one of the protagonists. Derrida, in analyzing the problematic of the gift and of death, dances in a similar way. Derrida asks the following: Is it possible to give when all gifts are pulled into the system of economic exchange? Is it "not" possible to give when faced with a recognition of our deaths as mutually affecting us? Ultimately the paper attempts to speak about what the characters of Miller's play are doing—and perhaps successfully doing—namely, articulating what friendship is through articulating the possibility of finding the perfect gift at a boutique. Can a friendship between Miller and Derrida be formed after they have both died and left us their texts to compare to one another?

Peter Costello, Providence College

From *Ingenioso Hidalgo de la Mancha* to *Salesman in Beijing*: Desengaño, Dreaming, and the Discontents of Empire

Mark DeStephano, S.J., Saint Peter's College

Uneasy Collaboration: Miller, Kazan, and *After the Fall*

This paper is a study of the collaboration of Miller and Elia Kazan on the original production of *After the Fall*, the first

theater production of the newly established Lincoln Center in 1964. Focusing particularly on the controversy over the resemblance to Marilyn Monroe in Barbara Loden's performance as Maggie, the essay examines the contention that Kazan overstepped his role as director in imposing his interpretation on the play

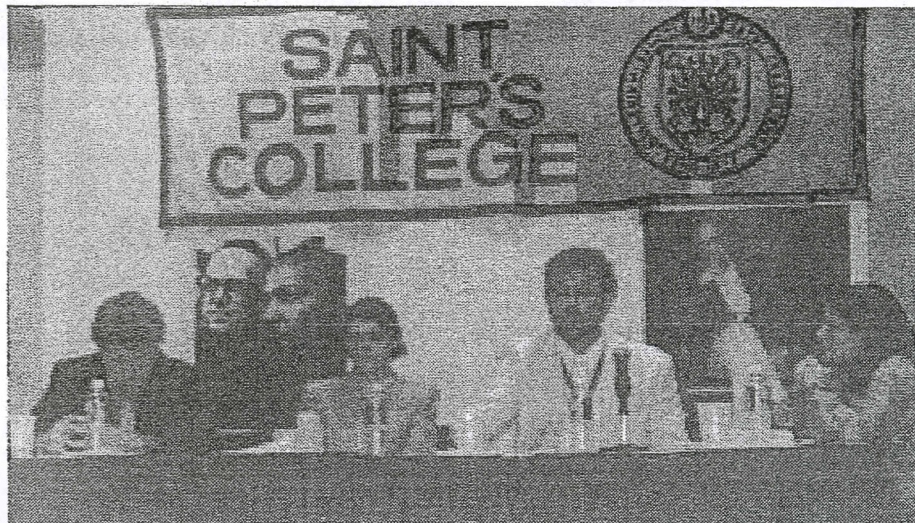
Brenda Murphy, University of Connecticut

Homely Girl, A Life: The Landscape of Manhattan

Literary critics have long focused on how certain writers create geographical locations which function as central settings throughout many of the works in their canons. Of notable example are Thomas Hardy's Wessex, James Joyce's Dublin, Saul Bellow's Chicago, and William Faulkner's American South. For these novelists, the cultural, political, social, and religious histories of the geographical regions in which they were born and/or lived became the subject of their work: the raw material of real places transformed into fictional landscapes.

In the same way, Arthur Miller used his native New York City and its surrounding environs as the central focus of many of his major dramas and fiction. Throughout his career, Miller transformed the defining experiences of his youth and early adulthood formed primarily on the streets and neighborhoods of the New York boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn and created a dramatic landscape where his characters encounter the cultures, ethnic, religious, and economic issues indigenous in twentieth century New York City.

The amount of work in which Miller used New York locations is staggering. Miller placed nine of his major plays in New York. *Death of a Salesman*, *A Memory of Two Mondays*, *A View From the Bridge*, *After the Fall*, *The Price*, *The American Clock*, *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*, *Broken Glass*, *Mr. Peter's Connections* all have settings in which the characters' interactions with the cityscape significantly determine the events of the plays. Much of the action of Miller's only novel, *Focus*, occurs in the borough of Queens, and boldly confronts for the first time in American literature



Conference panel with Charles Lassiter, Nicole De Sapia, Peter Costello and Anna Brown as Chair

the issue of anti-Semitism. In addition, much of Miller's short fiction depicts New York settings which are catalysts in the main characters' conflicts.

Perhaps none of Miller's work depicts the geographical sweep of the city more than, *Homely Girl, A Life*. The 1992 novella relates the story of Janice Sessions, the homely girl of the title, as she traces through memory and time her life as a "plain girl" (the title of the work in England) living in New York from the 1930's to the late 1970's. The plot details how Janice, cast as unattractive by her own mother, searches for an identity in the political and social milieu that constituted Manhattan through the Depression, the war years, and the post war decades. Raised in the middle-class materialism of her Jewish parents, she marries a radical communist sympathizer, Sam Fink, alternately embracing then rejecting both him and his politics. When she meets a blind classical musician, Charles, a man who cannot see her homeliness, she ultimately "lives into beauty."

In few other plays or pieces of fiction in Miller's canon is the setting in Manhattan as central to the text. In the 50 year time span of the narrative, Janice traverses the borough's streets from the East side to the West side, from riverside to riverside, from upper Broadway to the Village. She occupies residences in its distinctive neighborhoods, and visits its bars, restaurants, schools, theaters, and retail stores. The story blatantly points out scores of location in Manhattan: Greenwich Village, picket lines at Columbia, the 90 Church Street recruitment office, the piers on the Hudson, dusty Irish bars, movies on Irving Place. Janice attends school at Hunter College, she and Sam live on East 32nd St., she frequently "strolls" the city streets: from the dead East side to the tenements on slummy Sixth Avenue; she shops on Madison Avenue. Her experiences in these Manhattan haunts become the central to her character—the identifying mark of her existence. Miller uses the streets and buildings of Manhattan to create a literary landscape as significant as Gustave Aschnebach's Venice or Leopold Bloom's Dublin. Janice's story is the story of death and the city, sex and the city, ugliness and the city, all intimately connected to her identity—which at the end of the story she herself realizes when she declares, "I love this city!" In Janice's New York,

sex becomes love, homeliness becomes beauty, and death becomes life.

Steven A. Marino, St. Francis College

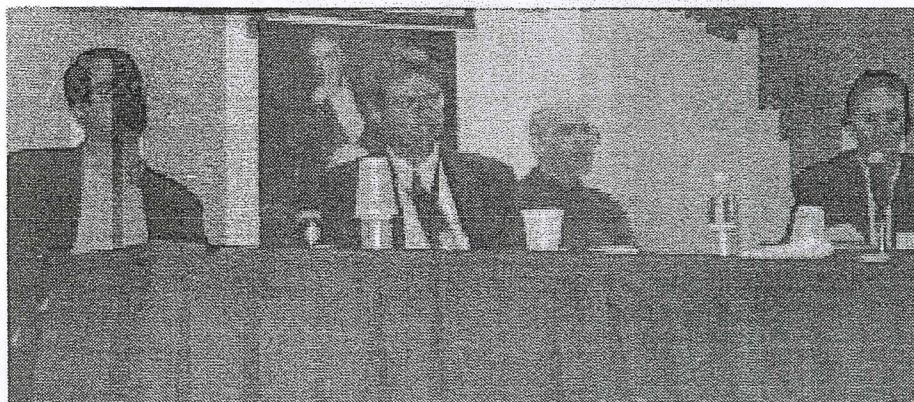
Keynote Address

Christopher Bigsby, University of East Anglia

The Construction of a Period Dialect: Arthur Miller's Language Sources for *The Crucible*

This paper considers Arthur Miller's period language devised for *The Crucible* in terms of its donor sources and its underlying ideologies. My contribution to the language of Arthur Miller is based on the following assumptions:

- To create a new and unconventional mode of speaking for his Puritan colonists, Arthur Miller borrowed 'nonstandard' language, partly unexploited within historical fiction, from a diversity of sources, of which the most influential ones were the following:
- The Salem Witchcraft Papers, in particular the numerous 'close-to-oral' records (court examinations, witness depositions).
- In spite of their 'orality', the Salem Witchcraft Papers contain rather formal speech styles, given the field, mode and tenor of discourse characteristic of court proceedings. In order to create a language that should sound more 'life-like' and suitable for a wide range of discourse situations, Miller imported grammar and vocabulary from additional materials, in particular:
- Early Modern English sources pertaining to the genre of fiction, dating from the Elizabethan and the Stuart period: the playwright's overt predilection for William Shakespeare makes the latter the most evident source of inspiration, and a profuse one.
- Eugene O'Neill's New England plays: Brooklyn-born Arthur Miller had to approach a cultural region and speech area alien to his background and language habits. Miller thus relied on the said contemporary dramatist because he regarded him as a 'faithful' recorder of the old-fashioned Downeaster speech ways.
- Unlike many 19th century American novelists/dramatists writing about New England's colonial past, Miller consciously avoided diction reminiscent of Nathaniel



Conference panel with Adrian Pablé, Rick Tharp, Lew Livesay and George Castellitto as Chair

Hawthorne, the great poetic father of American historical fiction.

As evidence supporting the said assumptions, I shall enrich my exposition with numerous examples taken from the sources and anti-sources mentioned above.

Adrian Pablé, University of Berne

“I want to help you drive out these . . . these thieves.”:

Another Look at Miller and Informers

One of the themes in Arthur Miller's writing is the relationship of the individual to society. It is not always a tranquil and harmonious relationship, in fiction or in the real world. Tensions often arise primarily due to one side attempting to impose its own terms on the other in the delicate process of negotiation. It is a process in which each side agrees, either explicitly or implicitly, to abide by certain codes of behavior. It is a process both grounded in trust as well as dynamic and continuous. Miller recognized both the tensions and the process in much of his dramatic writing. This paper looks at two instances in Miller's early career in which tensions within this process resulted in an individual informing on others.

The works in question are a 1942 radio play, “The Battle of the Ovens,” and a short agitprop play, “That They May Win,” which premiered in late 1943. This paper argues that these plays are instances in which Miller uses the informer as a character attempting to reclaim a reputation or salvage a promising future life. Like most human behavior the act of informing on another is never all good or all bad. This is something most of us learned as children but forget as adults. It is one thing to tell on a bully who is terrorizing the playground. It is quite another to taint a friend's reputation by discussing his or her activities that some may believe to be unpatriotic or immoral but are open to debate. Even at the beginning of his career, Miller had his characters recognize a bully when they saw one. And he made certain they knew what to do.

Richard K. Tharpe, University of Maryland

Remembering Our Mentor, Arthur Miller

This is the essay printed in its entirety in this issue as our retiring President's address.

Lew Livesay, Saint Peter's College

Changing Views of an Attic: Designing Miller's *The Price*

Based on portions of a chapter in Dominik's doctoral dissertation, *Image and Word: The Stages of Arthur Miller's Drama*, and an upcoming review of the Aurora Theatre's production of *The Price*, “Changing Views of an Attic” examines five set designs of the play: Boris Aronson's for the play's premiere in 1968, Fran Thompson's at the Young Vic in 1990, her second at the Guthrie Theatre in 1997, Michael Brown's for the Broadway revival based on a Williamstown production in 1999, and Richard Olmstead's for Berkeley's Aurora Theatre this past fall. The paper traces Miller's early ideas for the set to the conflicts between

director Grosbard's realistic propensities and Aronson's Constructivist ones. Thompson's two designs offered vastly different metaphors of Victor's and Walter's emotional responses toward their inheritance, while Brown exaggerated the plethora of furniture. Olmstead managed to effectively convey the “ten rooms of furniture squeezed into this one” in a 150-seat black box theatre, proving the flexibility of the play's setting. Both for its Broadway premiere and revival, the play and the set designs received appropriately strongly favorable reviews. *The Price* remains one of Miller's greatest plays; its set offers a significant example of his approach to staging. The paper was complemented by production photographs.

Jane K. Dominik, San Joaquin Delta College

**The Trouble with Reality in Arthur Miller's
*Some Kind of Love Story***

In *Some Kind of Love Story*, as in other plays he has written, Miller explores and challenges our conception of reality and how it is perceived. As Christopher Bigsby has pointed out *Some Kind* is, “on the face of it, a detective story but, like John Fowles' *The Enigma*, it is simultaneously a parody of the genre. The model of concealed truth slowly exposed by rational process defers to an account of the problematic nature of reality and the complex motives of those who imagine themselves to be concerned to recover it” (“Afterword” 67). Through the dialogue between his two characters, Miller exposes a wider society with various demands on them both, and we watch as Tom and Angela each struggle to recognize their own individual (and frequently opposed) motives against these demands. The paper explores how each struggles with the problem of a reality that needs to be simultaneously embraced and rejected for each to survive. What the play ultimately asserts is the process by which we all sustain our lives through a complex mix of reality and fiction which allows us to forge connections and accept responsibilities both tangible and intangible, in order to assert our humanity, and provide ourselves with those necessities for survival: a sense of security, a sense of morality, and a sense of life.

Susan C. W. Abbotson, Rhode Island College

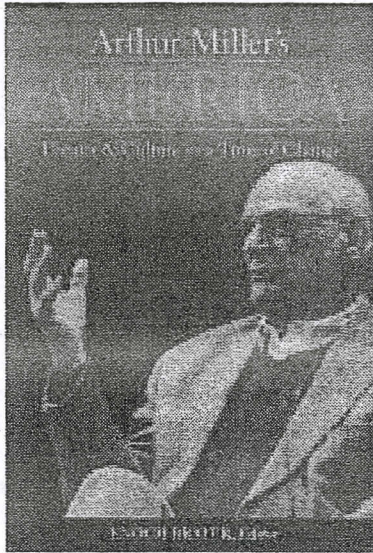
Miller Reminiscences (in absentia)

Steven R. Centola, Millersville University

The society would like to extend a sincere thankyou to Lew Livesay, who single-handedly organized this excellent conference. It is a lot of hard work to put on one of these events and Lew was tireless in his efforts. It is all due to him that the conference went so smoothly and was such a resounding success!

Arthur Miller's America:
Theater & Culture in a Time of Change
by Enoch Brater Ed.

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005. xii;
268pp.



Reviewed by Susan C. W. Abbotson, Rhode Island College

It's a sort of catch-all title, which is what is needed here as the twenty essays, interviews and opinion pieces gathered here are something of a mish-mash, uneven in depth and importance. They largely came out of a symposium held at the University of Michigan in 2000 to celebrate Miller's 85th year. Despite their unevenness, and while having no clear over-arching viewpoint, this collection still does good service and includes some gems well worth the read. The majority of the essays deal either generally or specifically with Miller's less canonical texts and later plays. When *Death of a Salesman* is approached some effort is at least made to find a new angle. There is a prescient sense to the volume given that it was written and edited before Miller's death in that so many of the contributors seem to be summing up Miller's legacy, as does Mel Gussow, quite literally in the final piece where he sums up Miller's greatest contribution as being his "sense of correcting injustice wherever he finds it—in business, art, politics, the courts, the court of public opinion," and concludes that Miller's plays are "both timely and timeless." Almost unintentionally this makes this book a fitting tribute of a kind, in its collective endeavor to uncover for what Miller stood, and for what he may best be remembered.

As editor, Enoch Brater contributes a pair of interviews—one with Miller and another with composer William Bolcom—and a piece on Miller's early days at the University of Michigan. This latter piece contributes some

new information regarding Miller's undergraduate writing beyond his drama, and nicely extends Christopher Bigsby's observations of Miller over this same period in the *Cambridge Companion* edition. The interviews are fairly standard. The one with Miller was done during the symposium and runs as a general retrospective of his major plays with a few audience questions tacked on the end. The one with Bolcom offers information regarding the challenges and decisions developing *A View from the Bridge* from play to opera.

Only four essays deal specifically with the traditionally major plays. Patricia D. Denison looks at *All My Sons*, taking us beyond the simplistic moral underpinning of the play to explore how Miller balances ideas of "both causality and contingency" in the play, which complicates its moral lines. Giving Ann a lot more attention than usual, Denison reaches some interesting conclusions. Austin Quigley draws the connection between the psychological set-up of *Salesman* and *After the Fall*, which has been done before by Dennis Welland, but is done astutely here, and his focus on the Requiem scene in *Salesman* is revealing. Two more essays consider *Salesman*, but each selects a fairly original approach.

Deborah R. Geis looks at plays by other playwrights, and explores how they relate to *Salesman*. Though she mentions in passing the obvious connections to playwrights such as Sam Shepard, David Mamet, and August Wilson, her essay makes some new connections, showing how Rosalyn Drexler's *Room 17C*, Paula Vogel's *The Oldest Profession* and Donald Margulies's *The Loman Family Picnic* "make [*Salesman*'s] familiarity strange and yet nurture the seeds that Willy planted . . . into new and intricate creations." Elinor Fuchs relates a teaching experience in which groups of drama students led by a dramaturg use *Salesman* in an exercise to familiarize themselves with post-contemporary dramatic theories. Thus feminist, gender as performance, race, queer, and post-colonial theories are applied to the play. The results are pretty much what one would expect, as Fuchs admits: Miller presents "women's oppression on stage in order to critique it," Happy is a borderline rapist, Bernard is Jewish, Biff is queer, and Ben is a colonial oppressor. But as she concludes, "That Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* should survive the cultural shifts of the past half century to earn the reverence of students in their twenties and thirties is surely one mark of its emergence as a 'classic.'"

Ruby Cohn's informative piece begins discussing *Salesman in Beijing*, relating how the Chinese production of *Salesman* was put together, and considers other ways in which a stylized version of a Miller play helps inform on the original, such as the Wooster Group's attempted *L.S.D.*, and George Coates's production of *The Archbishop's*

Ceiling. Arnold Aronson hypothesizes that Miller has been more successful abroad (especially in Britain) because European scenic design, with its greater complexity and use of symbolism, better suits Miller's work. Rightly rejecting views of Miller as a realist he makes compelling arguments for Miller as a symbolist. This article is most notable for its detailed descriptions of various stage sets of Miller's plays, although Aronson's provocative suggestion that movie techniques may have influenced Miller's craft is sadly left hanging. Jonathan Freedman's lively piece may be worth the read simply for his description of the "new ideal-type of Jewish masculinity" he sees Miller as creating as "the pipe-smoking Jewish intellectual as star-marrying studmuffin." But Miller too often seems peripheral, other than as Marilyn's husband, and Freedman ultimately offers more insight into the mind and work of Philip Roth than Miller.

Several other essays deal with an assortment of plays, such as those by Mike Sell, Bruce J. Mann and Robert Scanlan. What is noticeable about these and other pieces is the way in which many of them try to show Miller's development through earlier plays like *All My Sons*, *Salesman* and *After the Fall* toward the later ones, which helps to place these later works in a more receptive framework, as evidently thoughtful developments of his earlier writing and so worthy of study, rather than botched pieces by a playwright on the wane as critics such as Robert Brustein would assert. Another interesting trend was how many of the essays dealt with what they see as a duality within Miller's work, evoking two distinctly different narratives or tropes within a single text, and help to highlight the possibility that Miller deals less with moral certainty than with irresolvable conflicts.


Sell's "Arthur Miller and the Drama of American Liberalism" suffers from too much jargon, and, as in Freedman's essay, Miller often feels peripheral to the debate, but this exploration of the precise mode of Miller's liberal base raises some good points, especially regarding Miller's connection to the Cold War period, although it seems ultimately incomplete. Mann's consideration of the "Unseen Presence" of symbols and characters in Miller's work, is again an interesting topic, but is done slant service here. Dealing with Larry (*All My Sons*), Father (*The Price*), Concentration Camp Tower (*After the Fall*), and American Dream (*Salesman*), Mann is covering well-worn territory and although the discussion has clarity, it shows no new insight. Robert Scanlan's piece is the best of these three, as he argues the strengths of plays such as *The Last Yankee*, *Broken Glass*, *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*, *Mr. Peters' Connections*, and the one-acts collected as *Danger: Memory!* dividing them into plays about "damaged wives" and "old age plays of puzzlement and retrospect." Some of

his remarks are a little ambivalent, which suggest he has yet to fully come to terms with these later works, but his discussion opens out some important issues regarding Miller's use of comedy and status as a playwright of denial. It is such discussion of the more neglected works that most attracts me in this collection.

Frank Gagliano's lighthearted discussion of *Timebends* is another such example, which offers an engaging hypothesis regarding the dramatic possibilities of Miller's autobiography. Laurence Goldstein suggests that since film is fixed in a way a play can never be, then Miller's movie version of *The Misfits* may be a great source to uncover Miller's pure vision unadulterated by directorial intervention. An argument that would work better if Miller had actually directed the movie, but can be forgiven given the welcome subsequent detailed analyses of the film's characters and themes that delve fruitfully into its "mythic substructure." Andrew Sofer focuses on *The Archbishop's Ceiling*, arguing that the play is less about "political repression" than "dramatic form itself." Of course, the play is about both, but Sofer's discussion of the play's relationship to technology and "metatheatrical" dimensions is useful. Sofer shows how *Archbishop* relates to earlier more canonical texts and offers interesting readings of the play's characters.

Peter W. Ferran exhibits a laudatory response to what he sees as one of Miller's most innovative plays, *The American Clock*, and offers the first of a pair of essays which consider the Vaudevillean aspects of Miller's work. The basic research for Ferran's article seems to have been his own experience in producing the play, and much of the piece consists of him sharing his rationale behind various directorial decisions that narrows the focus, but it is not without insight into the play. Toby Zinman's exploration of the vaudevillean aspects in Miller's work expand to *Mt. Morgan* and *Mr. Peters* as she considers Miller as a potential absurdist. Her reading of Lyman Felt as an alter-ego for Miller jars a little, but her depiction of Harry Peters as a man who discovers that the all-important subject is "a plea for the triumph of life over death" seems nearer the mark. Zinman follows her piece with a 2000 interview with Patrick Stewart, who played Lyman in both New York productions. Always articulate, Stewart shares his interpretation of the role, his interactions with Miller during rehearsals, and offers an eloquent insight into the mind of Lyman Felt, and the play itself as centered on "an attempt to find life." Indeed, that phrase may sum up this collection, though at times flawed, it remains a well-intentioned attempt to find life in numerous aspects of Miller's work, and does much to keep this discussion going. It is certainly not the final word, but in that may lay its biggest strength.

Report on the Upcoming Arthur Miller Journal



I am pleased to report that we are on schedule to publish the inaugural edition of the *Arthur Miller Journal* in April 2006.

Establishing the *Arthur Miller Journal* has been an eventual goal of the society since its inception ten years ago, and I am pleased that the publication finally is becoming a reality. I am particularly pleased that St. Francis College will house the journal. In my remarks on *Homely Girl* at our recent conference at St. Peter's, I discussed how the story inverts the process of life to death into death to life. I think the same may apply to the new life of the *Arthur Miller Journal*. I am not sure if all of this would have happened if Miller had not died last February. As you know, St. Francis was the site of our 1999 conference celebrating the 50th anniversary of *Salesman* and the site of the 2004 conference where Miller's conversation with Chris Bigsby was one of his last public appearances before he took ill. Dr. Frank Macchiarola, the President of St. Francis, has described Miller's appearance as one of the great events in the history of the college. Currently the college is undergoing an expansion of our physical plant and the humanities and arts division, and as part of all this, Edward Wesley, the chair of the English department, persuaded the college to fund the *Arthur Miller*

Journal. So I am happy that this has dropped into our laps at this time.

As I have communicated to you, we want the journal to provide a lasting legacy to Miller's significant contributions to American drama. The *Arthur Miller Journal* will be published under the auspices of the English department in cooperation with the Arthur Miller Society and the Arthur Miller Centre at the University of East Anglia. St. Francis College expects members of the society to be an integral part of the journal. We know we cannot produce a superior publication without the expertise of Miller scholars. Consequently, the governing structure of the journal includes St. Francis English department staff and Miller Society officers as the editorial board, and it is my hope that many of our honorary board members will continue in an advisory role. The chair of the department, Edward Wesley, has agreed to be the executive editor and I've enlisted the help of an assistant professor, Ian Maloney, to be the managing editor. The indefatigable Sue Abbotson has agreed to edit the performance review section.

I have spent much of the summer and fall getting organized. I have mailed an official journal announcement to the English and departments of colleges and universities throughout the country. The Miller Society distributed a flyer at ALA and will be doing the same at MLA. Ian Maloney sent a list serve announcement. Steve Centola's brother, Tom, has granted us permission to use his wonderful sketch of Miller, which has become the unofficial logo of the society, as part of the design of the front cover. In January, we will be mailing the subscription advertisement. At this point the college is projecting to publish twice a year. For your information, at the Miller Society meeting at the St. Peter's conference, we agreed that society members will receive their issues as part of the membership fees which for the time being remain unchanged.

I know that word is spreading about the journal because I already have been receiving submissions. As you know, we welcome essays on any aspect of Miller's life, work, and career, including discussions of individual works in his dramatic and non-dramatic canon. The journal invites all theoretical approaches. We also accept book and performance reviews as well as announcements of upcoming productions, events, and conferences. We are also interested in publishing teaching notes, reports on Miller in the high school, and short notes regarding new approaches to Miller and his work. Essays linking Miller to social, historical, political, and aesthetic issues are welcome, and we will include features from our first class newsletter such as the popular notes section, as well as abstracts from the annual Miller conferences.

Of course, I welcome essay contributions from society members, and I also need you to review essays. As experts, you will help assure that the *AMJ* includes material that will represent the best in Miller scholarship. In short, I need any assistance you can give. So, you can expect an email or phone call asking you to review an article. Sue Abbotson maintains a page for the journal on the *AMS* website, and we are establishing a link with the St. Francis College website.

Please submit two hard copies and a disk. Essays may also be sent as email attachments to: smarino@stfranciscollege.edu. Essays should conform to the *MLA Style Manual*. Essays should be no more than 6000 words. Essays will be blind vetted; include your name only on a front page. Hard copy essays will not be returned unless accompanied by a SASE.

Thanks for your support.

Sincerely,

Steve Marino
(Editor in Chief)

Robert Altman to direct British debut of *Resurrection Blues*

Report by Joseph Kane

Venerable film director Robert Altman is slated to direct the United Kingdom debut of Arthur Miller's penultimate play, *Resurrection Blues* (2002). The British production will be staged at the Old Vic Theatre in London from February 14 through April 22, 2006. The production will feature Neve Campbell in the role of Jeanine. The Canadian-born Campbell previously starred in Altman's last released film, *The Company*, in 2003. Other actors signed for the production include Jane Adams, Matthew Modine, John Wood, Peter McDonald, and Maximilian Schell. There is also some discussion that Altman intends to direct a film version of *Resurrection Blues*. Set design for the new production is by Robin Wagner.

The prolific Altman is known as a maverick filmmaker and a critic's favorite. In August 2005, the 80-year old director (he'll be 81 the week after *Resurrection Blues* opens) completed filming his most recent project, *A Prairie Home Companion*, inspired by Garrison Keillor's popular, long-running radio program. Altman's diverse body of films includes *MASH* (1970), *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971), *Nashville* (1975), *The Player* (1992), and *Gosford Park* (2001).

Because Altman films are known for big casts and swirling, overlapping dialogue, it may seem counterintuitive to imagine him directing a stage play. But his new film, based on Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion*—though it is a radio program—is performed as a stage show as well. And Altman's last film, *The Company* (2003), revolved around a dance company and featured lengthy stage performances. Moreover, during the 1980s, Altman directed quite a number of plays for film as well, for example Ed Graczyk's *Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean* (1982), David Rabe's *Streamers* (1983), Donald Freed and Arnold M. Stone's *Secret Honor* (1984), Marsha Norman's *The Laundromat* (1985), Sam Shepard's *Fool for Love* (1985), Christopher Durang's *Beyond Therapy* (1987), *Basements* (1987) (based on Harold Pinter's *The Room* and *The Dumb Waiter*), and Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial* (1988).

The world premiere of *Resurrection Blues* was at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis from August 3 through September 8, 2002. Set in a fictional Third World Latin American country, the social and political satire is sharply funny and ultimately moving. The despotic government, led by General Barriaux, is experiencing increasing unrest because the peasants are beginning to follow a man who may or may not be the second coming of Christ. The rebel is in custody at the beginning of the play and the military leader intends to make an example of him—through crucifixion. Introduced into the mix are two ugly Americans who have come to film the crucifixion for their

advertising corporation, who intends to televise it—with commercials. Predatory capitalism and military might are just two of Miller's targets in this mercurial comic satire.

Resurrection Blues is scheduled to be published by Penguin on February 7, 2006.

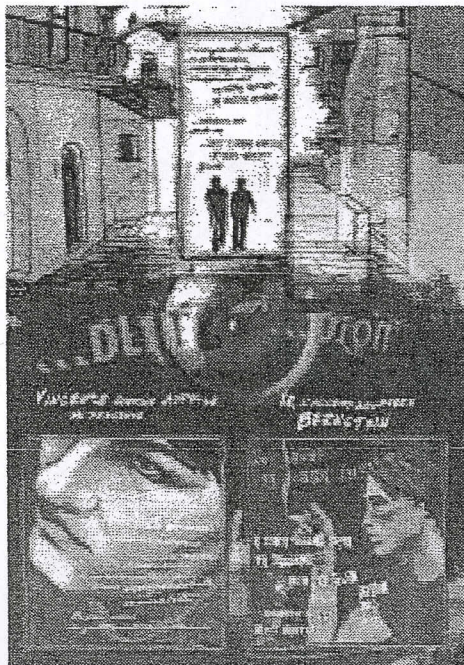
Mont Sant' Angelo Art Competition

Report by Susan Abbotson

The first Concorso Internazionale di Illustrazione in collaboration with Scuola Internazionale di comics, guided by Dea Furi, president of dell'Associazione Culturale Indaco, organized a competition that invited artists to submit ten illustrations of Arthur Miller's 1951 short story, "Mont Sant' Angelo," about a Jewish traveller discovering a new sense of identity in a remote Italian village. The winning entry, chosen at a round-table event and discussion of the story held in the actual township of Mont Sant' Angelo, Italy on 29th October 2005, will be developed into an animated movie short of the tale. At the request of the competition's organizers, the Arthur Miller Society sent a special congratulatory letter signed by the current society president to give to the winner. Below and over the page are samples from some of the contestants' entries.



More images overleaf >>>



Notes on Contributors

Susan C. W. Abbotson is the retiring editor of the *Arthur Miller Society Newsletter*. Still adjunct teaching at Rhode Island College looking somewhere for a full-time position in drama—still writing books on drama—*Masterpieces of Twentieth Century American Drama* came out last Fall from Greenwood, and she's hoping to have the *Critical Companion to Arthur Miller* in the presses at Facts on File by late 2006. Previous publications include *Understanding Death of a Salesman* (with Brenda Murphy), *The Student Companion to Arthur Miller*, and *Thematic Guide to Modern Drama* all for Greenwood Press.

Peter Costello currently teaches at Providence College as an Assistant Professor in the Philosophy Department. His dissertation at Penn State was on Husserl and intersubjectivity. His research interests concentrate on Continental philosophy—specifically Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger. This year he has delivered papers at conferences in New England, Canada, and Bulgaria where he talked about the phenomenology of gratitude and the relation between embodiment and politics.

Nicole De Sapio holds an M. A. from George Mason University. In her professional life, she works with many theatre organizations as a dramaturge. Among her favorite productions, she cites: Miller's *A View from the Bridge*, Ken Ludwig's *Lend Me a Tenor*, and Hugh Whitmore's *Pack of Lies*. She has a special interest in the realist films of the 1950s and 1960s. She envisions for herself a career as a professional writer. With Miller's passing, she went out and purchased a new copy of *Salesman* and put the copy that he autographed last year under lock and key.

Jane. K. Dominik has been an active member of the Arthur Miller Society and is now taking over its presidency. She has delivered well over a dozen conference papers, has an essay, "A View from *Death of a Salesman*" in Stephen Marino's *The Salesman Has a Birthday*, and recently completed her Ph.D. at the University of East Anglia with a dissertation titled *Image and Word: The Stages of Arthur Miller's Drama*. She currently teaches English at San Joaquin Delta College

Joseph Kane is a long-standing member of the Arthur Miller Society. Recently he has written about his interview with actor Eli Wallach for the *Miller Society Newsletter* and also for the upcoming *Arthur Miller Journal*. He is also the author of two chapters in the recent *Arthur Miller: The Twentieth Century Legend* (2006): "Arthur Miller's Life in Literature" and "Arthur Miller: Comedian."

Kimberley Jenkins has been teaching IB English A1 at Thomas Alva Edison High School in Virginia for the last three years. Prior to relocating in Virginia, she taught for seven years in New Jersey. She has completed two B.A.

degrees, one in Russian Languages and Literatures from the University of Delaware, and the other in Humanities from Saint Peter's College. She also holds a M. A. in Education from Saint Peter's. She has previously presented papers on Miller's journalistic endeavors and teaching *A View from the Bridge*. Her research interests include a focus on developing creative approaches for bringing Miller as a vital American presence into the secondary classroom.

Charles S. Lassiter was born and raised in northern Virginia. He graduated summa cum laude from Saint Peter's College in 2003 with a B.A. in Philosophy and English. Currently living with his wife Michele in New York City, he teaches developmental English at Monroe College in the Bronx and is enrolled in the doctoral program in philosophy at Fordham University. His primary academic interests are classical American philosophy, pragmatism, formal logic, philosophy of language and linguistic logic, modern American literature, and eighteenth century British literature.

Lew Livesay has taught for over twenty years at Saint Peter's College, working mainly with first generation college students who need academic and financial support to attend college. The E. O. F. Program at Saint Peter's has earned a reputation throughout New Jersey for its graduation rate and its success with promoting honor students. He hosted the 10th Miller Conference and is the outgoing president of the Arthur Miller Society.

Stephen A. Marino teaches modern American drama at St. Francis College, and he also serves as Chairperson of English at St. Francis Prep, the largest Catholic high school in America. He is the author of *Language Study of Arthur Miller's Plays: The Poetic in the Colloquial*. He is the editor of *Salesman Has a Birthday*, and Editor-in-Chief of the future *Arthur Miller Journal*. His conference paper was a chapter from his forthcoming book that examines the relationship between the geography of New York and Miller's imagination.

Brenda Murphy is Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor in English at the University of Connecticut. Her critical expertise spans most of modern American drama. Her work specifically on Miller includes: *Miller: Death of a Salesman* (in the *Cambridge Plays in Performance*

series), *Dramatizing McCarthyism on Stage, Film, and Television*, and *Understanding Death of a Salesman* (with Susan Abbotson). She has a wealth of knowledge about Kazan; one of her books is *Tennessee Williams and Elia Kazan: A Collaboration in the Theatre*. Her most recent work, *The Provincetown Players and the Culture of Modernity*, just came out from Cambridge UP.

Adrian Pablé holds his Masters from the University of Zurich and his Doctorate from the University of Berne. A specialist in dialectology and historical linguistics, he will be teaching at the universities of Neuchatel, Berne, and Lausanne. He also has a keen interest in the field of Translation Studies. He has published several articles, which include, "The Importance of Re-naming Ernest: Italian Translations of Oscar Wilde," *Target 17* (forthcoming). "Archaische Dialekte im Vergleich: das frühamerikanische in filmischen Adaptionen von N. Hawthornes *The Scarlet Letter* und A. Miller's *The Crucible*," in Irmeli Helin (Ed.) *Dialektuebersetzung und Dialekte in Multimedia*. Verlag: Lang, 2004: 75-92, "The Goodman and his Faith: Signals of Local Colour in Nathaniel Hawthorne, with Special Reference to Cultural Translation," *Babel 13.2* (2003), and *I nomo do luogo di Bellinzona. Aspetti sociolinguistici e di costume onomastico nella Città dei Castelli* (Bellinzona).

Will Smith is the Chairman of the English Department at Red Bank High School. He has delivered a number of papers at Miller Conferences over the years. He is an accomplished musician who believes that music and theatre must be a part of any vital community of people.

Richard K. Tharp is a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland, specializes in the evolving history of America's theatrical aesthetic. His dissertation specifically examines interactions between the Theatre Guild and mass media (TV/Radio) during the mid-Twentieth Century. He has delivered papers at several conferences and contributed essays on Miller's play *The Price* to *The American Drama Companion*, and John Ervine's Irish drama, *John Ferguson* to *The Encyclopedia of Modern Drama*. From 1980-89 he published *RERUNS, The Magazine of Television History*.

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The Arthur Miller Society

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The Arthur Miller Society

Newsletter c/o Susan C. W. Abbotson

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