



The Arthur Miller Society Newsletter

In Association with The Arthur Miller Centre, University of East Anglia

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December 2003

Words from the Society's President

I am pleased to present you the latest fine edition of the Arthur Miller Society Newsletter. I would like to thank Susan Abbotson for her efforts as editor for which I remain grateful.

I must recognize former society president Paula Langteau for her sterling job as conference chair at the 8th society conference at Nicolet College in Rhinelander, Wisconsin on October 3-4. All who attended benefited from sessions which provided new insights into Miller's work. The highlights of the conference were Chris Bigsby's keynote address in which Chris surprised the audience with a taped recording of a young Arthur Miller singing in a powerful tenor voice, Steve Centola's moving closing remarks which considered the breadth of Miller's life accomplishments, and a first rate preview performance of "The Last Yankee." Paula and the community at Nicolet College certainly conveyed the warmth of Middle America. Abstracts from the conference papers are included in this edition of the newsletter. We look forward to Paula's publication of the conference proceedings in her collection of essays, *Miller and Middle America*.

I am pleased that the society will return to my home institution, St. Francis College in Brooklyn, for our next conference on April 23-24, 2004. (See the "Call for Papers" inside.) I hope to see many of you in the neighborhood where Miller spent his years as a young playwright, husband, and father in the 1940s and 50s. I have invited him to attend and he has indicated to me that he would like to come home to Brooklyn if his schedule permits. I will contact him in February for a definite commitment. I will keep you informed.

This year's ALA will return to the West Coast, in San Francisco, on Memorial Day Weekend 2004. We would like again to sponsor two panels, so please send any papers to Sue. (See the "Call for Papers" inside.) We are also always looking for ideas for future panels, so if you have an aspect of Miller you feel has been overly neglected, please let us know.

My term as society president will end in September 2004, and, as dictated by the society by-laws, Carlos Campos, as the current vice-president, will assume the presidency. Nominations (including self-nominations) are encouraged as soon as possible to fill the upcoming open position of vice-president--please send to George Castellitto, our current secretary.

This edition of the newsletter again offers reviews of recent publications in Miller scholarship and productions of Miller plays, "Notes from New York," and abstracts from the Wisconsin conference.. We also have some responses to our new feature, "Notes and Queries," which prints brief items of interesting ideas for us to share; we hope you will send in pieces to allow this to continue as a regular column in the newsletter.

Please continue to send Sue information about productions of Miller plays, publications, or related links for her to post on the website and/or include in our next edition.

Enjoy the winter holidays. See you in Brooklyn in the spring.

—Steve

Miller and Middle America

Inside are abstracts from papers presented at the 8th International Arthur Miller Conference, directed by Paula Langteau at Nicolet College, in Rhinelander, WI

over October 3-4, 2003. While around 150 attended, we hope to have an even greater attendance at next year's conference in Brooklyn--more details inside.

“Physician Heal Thyself”:

Arthur Miller’s Portrayal of Doctors

In his new work, *The Temptation of Innocence in the Dramas of Arthur Miller*, Terry Otten points out how any reader of Miller knows how his work is filled with references to jail, crime, and the law. Consequently, many of his plays contain lawyers as both major and minor characters. Of course, the most notable examples are George Deever in *All My Sons*, Bernard in *Salesman*, Alfieri in *A View From the Bridge*, Quentin in *After the Fall*, and Tom Wilson in *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*. These attorneys have been the subject of significant critical scrutiny which focuses on their action as conduits to the moral truth that the particular play illustrates.

However, Miller also has filled his plays with a substantial number of doctors as both major and minor characters. And unlike the somewhat consistent depiction of lawyers as moral arbiters, Miller’s physicians often have personal conflicts which impinge upon their professional lives. Some are trusted by their patients; others doubted; one approaches a violation of his Hippocratic Oath. Most have difficulty, certainly much more than Miller’s lawyers, in discerning the relevance of truth to themselves. They seem most conflicted by their personal and public roles, and their debt to the self and society, struggles which Miller himself consistently has pointed out are at the center of all the great plays.

This paper examines the significant role that doctors have played in Arthur Miller’s dramatic canon.

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Paula Langteau, conference director, greets the attendees at the college theater

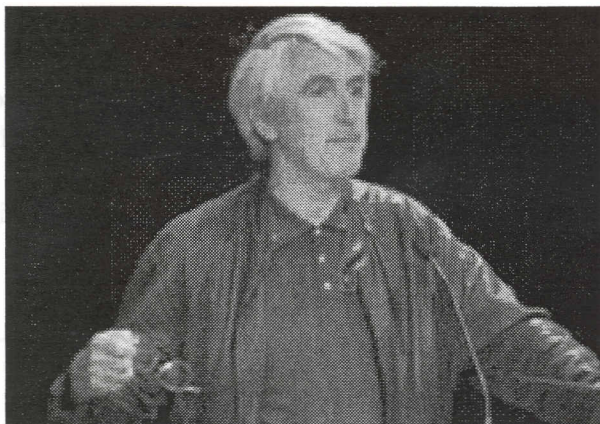
Paper Abstracts for the Eighth International Arthur Miller Conference

Keynote Address:

Listening to America

Playing audio tapes from Miller’s voice recordings made in Wilmington, NC for a 1940 project to capture the accents of America, parts of a recording of Miller’s reactions listening to these tapes 62 years on, and extracts from recordings of some of Miller’s early radio plays, the importance of Miller’s early experiences, including his radio work as a training ground for his later work is usefully emphasized. (no abstract)

Presented by Christopher Bigsby
University of East Anglia



Photographs of Christopher Bigsby and Paula Langteau by Sarah Marquardt

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*Photograph of the Current Officers at WI by Susan Abbotson
L to R Carlos, Sue, Steve, George in front of a Hodag!*

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Subscription Information

Membership and Subscription are available for
\$20 per year for individuals in the U.S. and Canada;
\$10 for students; \$25/year for joint memberships;
\$25/year for overseas members; \$30/year for libraries,
and \$45/year for institutions. Membership and sub-
scription address: The Arthur Miller Society,
c/o George Castellitto,
28 Elizabeth St., Dover, NJ 07801.

Arthur Miller Society Website

www.biblio.org/miller/

Webmaster: Susan C.W. Abbotson

abbotson@hotmail.com

It surveys the large number of physicians who appear in Miller's plays, first making distinctions between major and minor characters, and between medical doctors and psychiatrists. The discussion then focuses on Peter Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*, Walter in *The Price*, Leduc in *Incident at Vichy*, and Harry Hyman in *Broken Glass*. It concludes with a brief discussion of the significance of absent doctors in the plays. Leduc's self-analysis at the end of *Incident at Vichy*, "In my profession one gets the habit of looking at oneself quite impersonally (65)" is the touchstone for the discussion.

*Presented by Stephen Marino
St. Francis College, Brooklyn*

Miller, Marriage, and Middle America: An Uneasy Embrace.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines "Middle America" as: "1. That part of the U.S. middle class thought of as being average in income and education and moderately conservative in values and attitudes." This paper will trace Miller's attitude toward marriage and "Middle America" in several works, including his plays, essays and autobiography. The paper will generally assert that failure in marriage reflects an underlying failure of American values. Furthermore, I hope to reveal an inherent tension in Miller's work between success and failure in marriage and middle American attitudes and values which parallels the underlying duality of the success myth and others in America.

*Presented by Carlos Campo
Community College of South Nevada, Las Vegas*

"Faith-in Life" in Three Arthur Miller Plays and in His Non-fiction Prose

The paper considers the "faith-in-life" (a term pioneered in *Depression and the Body*) issues of Miller's plays *Broken Glass*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*. In the first, is a woman paralyzed by depression due to a bad marriage to a man fearing that her fulfillment would cause his death, a victim of his refusals of her fulfillment and nurture initiatives and of his violence, of his long term sexual impotence, and his crisis as a Holocaust-era Jew is "healed" as much by her therapist's romantic aggression and lovingkindness as by her own desperate attempt to save her husband's life, which brings her beyond paralysis. She is a character with more than one external life-force support at the point when she reverts to a personal competence which she formerly enjoyed and takes the miraculous risk. This

play is closer to the research with blockages due to faith-in-life crises done in the 60's by Alexander Lowen than the others. Because of the ethics of Dr. Hyman, chosen for the healing task by the dead man, it is possible that the play might be read as one of two plays—this is true also in *The Last Yankee*—only one of them about psychotherapy. Phillip Gellburg not only initiates his wife's therapy, he also ruins himself at his job with various persistences connected to self esteem and the beginning of Jewish group-consciousness. His wife has had a role in this in her obsession with trans-Atlantic Holocaust reports of the degrading of old Jews made to scrub the pavements with toothbrushes. Even though paralyzed, she is still the voice of faith-in life as reflected in anaclitic love and communal care and common decency.

In *Death of a Salesman*, one finds the death of Ben, the focus of Willy's "compensatory grandeur" linked to his suicidal financial woes and his "compulsion to evaluate himself justly" (Miller), the return of his sons, the failure of loyalty due ("bask and blast" scenario of Richman and Flaherty) and earlier betrayal. Both *Broken Glass* and this play are provider plays which end with the deaths of providers. The boys fantasize about being providers, but because they only part way evaluate themselves justly, they do not live authentic lives. The images of success in the play require active involvement, except for inheriting the business. And because of Willy's life long predictable merging of the languages of business and affection (see Lew Hyde's *The Gift*) and his infecting of his sons with it the illusion-reality crisis is an important part of the dramatic action. Their success options are love and caring and loyalty. Linda is the chorus of Willy's demise as an old man. All the people seen are in the group of mourners of Willy. But only Willy is the mourner inheritor. If Happy lives maybe he will be, too. When grief succeeds in mourning ritual it ends with it. When it is lived as a "faith-in-life" part of the demise of the protagonist it tries to save the person. As false teacher, Willy is seen with pity by his criers: Linda, Charley, and Biff intervene. They bring "faith-in-life" to bear upon Willy because they care. As for his ending, Willy still cares pitifully if positively for the plants and the woods. His caring for respect is tainted and violent. I believe having the neighbors be successful in business and in school and law is an affirmative model to offset against the model of image management rejected by Bif and still espoused by Happy. I believe they are Linda's community and they will take care of her. Only Luck

will save the boys. Or "a smile and a shoeshine." Charley has the worldly knowledge and success to mediate their adulthood, if they do not scatter to the winds.

The Ride Down Mt. Morgan is set in liminal space due to the wreck of Lyman Felt's bigamy scheme. Here, the twist on the "faith-in-life" crisis is that the maxi provider ends up in a regression to a competence issue: will he be able to be alone. His dependent double wives dump him for the right reasons without too much trouble: they have the right responses, as non-sadists do. He is in a place of transition. I think we view his resolve with irony rather than with anger. Can a relationship addict go cold turkey except in enforced solitude? He's even hit on his nurse already, to a certain extent. It would be likelier that he'd flee with cash to an unspecified Bahamas of the mind after a period of remorse. Possibly it is Winnicott's research on the linkage of the mother role to the later capacities of children to be alone in play which reappears in Miller's *Timebends* in comments about his own authorial situation. Also, the comments about how the likes of Hollywood moguls have such sexual privilege. Maybe Lyman Felt was meant to get someone with too many wives—someone in Hollywood.

Arthur Miller has linked, in these plays, "faith-in-life" to selfishness and to sexuality and to liminality and to loyalty. Selfishness ranging from degrees of interpersonal exploitativeness (see Richman and Flaherty) or escape from relationship to whole persons and narcissistic self-objects by providers, especially due to violence and absence. This changes with changes of class or status. One sees unfaithfulness as linked to being liked; one sees bigamy as the refusal to choose between goods; one sees impotence as a refusal of performance of the life bond by a provider; these are set in liminal states created by deaths (see Letzler Cole) or by suicidal accidents or by overwhelming conditions of extremity. Who is loyal to whom and how authentic this loyalty is depends on what loyalty means.

Presented by Katherine L. Basham of University of Minnesota, Duluth

The Late Plays of Arthur Miller: Problematizing the Real

Reality is more problematic in the plays of Arthur Miller than has been generally conceded. In the early work, the real—clouded by personal delusions and public myths—eventually shines out with one's acceptance of responsibility for the consequence of one's action. But in

the later plays beginning with *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977[1984]), it is beyond either simple definition or full recovery. With his increasing probe into the complexities of the postmodern condition. Miller has, on his own admission, "become more and more fascinated by...the question of reality and...whether there is any." If *Ceiling* shows the problem of authentic behavior under the pressure of invisible power, *Two-Way Mirror* (1984) presents the unreal as an agony to be accepted as life's condition. If *Danger: Memory!* (1987) questions the ideal of representation and with it the human capacity to generate systems to order experience, *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991) dramatizes personal history as a narrative constructed from the fragments of memory and desire. And *Broken Glass* (1994), the last of the plays under discussion here, deals with the mystery of a sociopolitical dilemma that threatens one's sense of reality. In the absence of stable realities, any certainties the characters seem to have are at best positional since they are derived from what may be called complex networks of local and contingent conditions. With the focus steadily shifting on to the multiplicity of self and truth, meaning becomes provisional and indeterminate in Miller. Yet the playwright is interested "in the balance of forces". Even when the real cannot be ascertained, he believes in the obligation of trying to do so, for, to give it up is to create "a kind of anarchy of the senses." And the question of reality, for Miller, is "a moral issue, finally." His late plays suggest that there are still urgencies beneath all contingency, which provide the impetus to recuperate value and meaning.

*Presented on behalf of Ashis Sengupta
Reader in English at the University of North Bengal
(INDIA).*

The Dangers of Memory in Arthur Miller's "I Can't Remember Anything"

There exist two printed versions of "I Can't Remember Anything," one published by Grove in 1986, and another by the Dramatists Play Service in 1987. While both versions deal with that perennial Miller concern, the necessity for people to acknowledge their past as an active part of their current existence, this reading is based on the later of the published texts, which offers a substantially different ending.

Nothing can be more important to our placing of the past in our lives than the concept of memory, but as Miller recognizes, especially in the later version of the play, memory holds many dangers, some of which he attempts to illustrate in "I Can't," which (ironically, given its title), shows the dangers of overindulging in

memories of the past. In the play, Leo and Leonora are encouraged to remember everything they have been in the past, to help them to define who they are in the present. Leo and Leonora find a comfort in their routine companionship, but this is suddenly destroyed when Leo chooses to change their relationship. His motivation lies buried in his refusal to accept the real past and his preference for a fake past he has created in his imagination; this selfish decision hurts both himself and his old friend Leonora.

*Presented by Susan Abbotsen
Rhode Island College*

A Lethal Legacy of Liberal Posturing in Arthur Miller's *Clara*

In a contemporary America overwrought with racism, classism and homophobia, and in the face of pressure to do what is right with regard to the "Other"—granting full rights to all people—Arthur Miller's 1986 short play, *Clara*, suggests a new kind of danger—the danger of adopting a politically correct posture that on the surface seems liberal but which does not penetrate underlying values. The play is about the aftermath of the brutal murder of Clara Kroll, and the struggle of her father to come to terms with the part his *own* values (which he instilled in Clara) played in bringing about her death. Many scholars have suggested that Kroll's liberalism, adopted by Clara, jeopardized her safety, but this paper asserts that an interrogation of Kroll's values reveals that what proves dangerous in them is *not* that they are liberal but that they *are*, and seem *always to have been*, *superficial*, based upon assumptions and stereotypes of people rather than on behaviors of, and experience with, distinct individuals. They don't penetrate beyond a surface categorizing of people, a surface political correctness disguising underlying prejudice and, in fact, an opportunity for self-aggrandizement.

This paper examines how Kroll confronts the "Other" as *representation* rather than as *individual*. He neatly categorizes people by the *kind of people they are*, and, by extension, by the way *those kind of people* act and the way *those kind of people* think. This categorization, or *typing*, of people distances him in a way that serves not only to make the "Other" less human than he is but allows him to cast himself as heroic in comparison. Emulation of that response to people is what ultimately jeopardized Clara's life.

In the end, Kroll recognizes that his liberalism has been a facade, that he has never truly embraced the

Calls for Papers

The Ninth International Arthur Miller Conference

St. Francis College
Brooklyn, New York
April 23-24, 2004

Conference Topic:

Arthur Miller: The Man Who Had All The Luck

The Arthur Miller Society's 2004 conference will highlight the 60th anniversary of the beginning of Arthur Miller's Broadway career with the 1944 premier of *The Man Who Had All The Luck*. The conference invites papers on any aspect of Miller's life and career, including discussions of individual works in his dramatic and non-dramatic canon. Of particular interest are essays that evaluate the scope of Miller's eight decades of writing and his connection to other playwrights. Papers linking Miller to social, historical, political, and aesthetic issues are also welcomed.

Please forward abstracts or completed manuscripts for a presentation not to exceed twenty minutes to:

Stephen Marino
English Department
St. Francis College
180 Remsen Street
Brooklyn, New York 11202

Documents may also be sent as MS WORD email attachments to:

smarino@stfranciscollege.edu

The deadline for submission is January 31, 2004

ALA 2004

ALA 2004 will be held at the Hyatt Regency (Embarcadero Center) in **San Francisco, CA, May 27-30, 2004**. Please send ideas, abstracts, or papers to Sue Abbotson <abbotson@hotmail.com>, or mail to 15 Concord Ave., Cranston, RI 02910, **by January 20th, 2004**. With the success of this year's teaching panel we would be open to something similar again, if we have people who would like to participate.

"Acting America: The Plays and Players."

2nd International Conference on American Theater and Drama

Taking place in Málaga, Spain from May 18-20, 2004, with Key Note speakers: Chris Bigsby, Bonnie Marranca, Marc Maufort, Matthew Roudané, David Savran, and Susan Harris Smith. Organized by the Departments of English of the Universidad de Málaga, Georgia State University, Atlanta, and Department of Modern Languages, Université Libre de Bruxelles.

Matthew Roudané has offered to organize a panel on Arthur Miller, and is open to papers on any aspect of Arthur Miller's theater. Please send a 500 word abstract, with a brief cv, before December 15 to: Matthew Roudané, Professor and Chair, Department of English, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA 30303. e-mail: mroudane@gsu.edu, or phone: 404 651 2900

idealism of his seemingly politically correct values, and that his daughter's emulation of that liberal posturing cost her her life. This recognition indicts him, at a subconscious level, for her death. It also sends a message pertinent for all of us in modern society, challenging us to ask: What are *truly* "liberal" values? How do we, as a country, get beyond our categorizing and typing of people? Can we translate politically correct attitudes into action on an *individual* level? How do we protect ourselves from danger without succumbing to prejudice and paranoia? And, finally, what are the consequences of our failure to open a discourse about who and what is really dangerous?

*Presented by Paula Langteau
Nicolet College, Rhinelander, WI*

Arthur Miller and the Language of Middle America

Arthur Miller's plays invariably and consistently depict characters moving, shifting, and repositioning themselves in particularly American landscapes. As those characters involve themselves in the conflicts that comprise the various plays and as their dialogue progresses, the reader and the viewer/listener of Miller's drama is able to perceive the dialects and the idioms of the American psyche. A number of Miller's plays (*Death of a Salesman*, *A View from the Bridge*, *The Price*) depict the particular idioms of urban and cosmopolitan America, but underlying and underpinning those urban expressions are the psychological and sociological tenets of Middle America resonating and resounding throughout and within the various speeches of the characters.

Utilizing some of the parameters of the attributes of language as outlined in the discourses of Mikhail Bakhtin and relying on some of the assertions about semiotics delineated in the writings of Jacques Derrida, this paper will discuss the language of middle America as it appears intuitively in selected Miller plays by concentrating on both the psychological and sociological aspects of that language.

*Presented by George P. Castellitto
Felician College, NJ*

Figuring Our Past and Present in Wood: Wood Imagery in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and *Death of a Salesman*

Arthur Miller's plays repeatedly examine the human struggle against a flawed, overly commercial society which denies the freedoms of its members. In these examinations, Miller uses pastoral images to

signify a lost, pure world of our ancestors, rooted in the nature that surrounded them. This application of pastoral imagery features innovative wood figurations which represent the instinct to escape the machinations of a corrupt modern society and return to our instinctual desire to work with our hands, immersed in nature.

In *The Crucible*, Miller identifies those characters who challenge the corrupt Puritan fundamentalism of Salem and ties them most closely to the wood that resides at the heart of colonial life. Those who stand in support of the oppressive fundamentalism are depicted battling against the wild, untamed forests which hold the devil's temptations. Skillfully capitalizing upon the subtleties between the wild and the shaped, the natural and the unnatural, the creative and the uniform, Miller captures the essence of maintaining one's freedoms against overwhelming pressures to conform.

In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller ties wood to Willy Loman's pastoral longings and his desire to work with his hands. The wood of the natural world meets the bricks and glass of modern society, impersonal and without the natural elements necessary for the survival of the common man. Willy and his son long for the freedom of a rural lifestyle, each idealizing an environment where they can build, create and shape the natural world around them. The variety of wood figurations in the play combines to provide the framework for Miller's larger investigation of the theme of the difficult search for community.

*Presented by Will Smith
Drew University*

Damn Yankee! Leroy Hamilton Crafts Wood With Passion and Honesty, But Who in Modern America Cares?

Vigilant about exposing the flaws of our modern society which corrupts the natural instincts of the individual and forces upon him a mechanical and profit-driven culture to which he must adapt, Miller, in *The Last Yankee*, encapsulates the economic development of the late 20th century as it moved away from the manual labor market and into the high technology and corporate arenas. The middle class worker, here Leroy Hamilton, represents the last of an American breed, struggling to maintain his strong moralistic view while simultaneously competing against and within the increasingly immoral business culture which surrounds him. Leroy's incompatibility with the dominant culture is clear. He is far too honest and passionate about his

work. As a carpenter, he has a direct link to the frontiersman past which valued manual labor and creation from wood.

Leroy, trapped with one foot in the capitalistic *win-at-any-cost* culture and his other foot firmly planted in the world of his ancestors—finding joy and self-satisfaction in manual work—captures the essence of the modern condition. Not wholly successful in either sphere, Leroy is bifurcated and reveals that the closer one can get to a complete dissolution into the world of our ancestors—the world which can sustain us and enrich our lives—the less likely he will fall victim to the pitfalls of modern social and economic structures. Sadly, the organic connection which Miller suggests is essential to our well-being (as apparently it is to his own) is increasingly denied to us.

*Presented by Will Smith
Drew University*

Hegemony, Hatred and the Scapegoat Mechanism in *The Crucible* and *Playing for Time*

(no abstract)

*Presented by Lew Livesay
Saint Peter's College*

“Somewhere down deep where the sources are”: Traces of the Snyder/Gray Murder Trial of 1927 in *Death of a Salesman*?

Having just had the occasion to read about the notorious Snyder/Gray case and not having come across any comment about it in Miller's writings or the critical literature about them, I offer some thoughts on the case as one possible source for the play.

On March 20, 1927 Ruth Snyder and her lover Judd Gray killed Ruth's husband Albert in the Snyders' house in Queens. On January 12, 1928 the murderers died in Sing-Sing's electric chair (all pertinent information is from Karl W. Schweizer, *Seeds of Evil: The Gray/Snyder Murder Case*, 2001). In *Only Yesterday* (1931), Frederick Lewis Allen mentions the case among other unsavory ones in his chapter “The Ballyhoo Years”: “[T]he only excuses for putting the Snyder-Gray trial on the front page were that it involved a sex triangle and that the Snyders were ordinary people living in an ordinary New York suburb—the sort of people with whom the ordinary reader could easily identify himself.”

One might think that a boy turning twelve during the time of the trial might have heard or read about the case, but Miller makes no mention of it in *Timebends*. Yet he shares the story there of how, when he had made

“preliminary sketches of scenes and ideas for a salesman play,” he went to see—again—Fritz Lang's *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*, “was drawn into the astounding tale, gradually recalling it from the past” and finally remembered that Willy's name had come to him by way of the Parisian police chief's name in the film, “Lohmann” (177-9).

Here is some Snyder/Gray material which might have similarly buried itself in Miller's mind. Gray was a corset salesman whose beat was New York State and Pennsylvania. *Salesman* never tells what is in Willy's sample cases, but it might as well be stockings as not. Gray charged the corset he gave Ruth in an intimate scene to stock; Happy tells Miss Forsythe: “I sell champagne, and I'd like you to try my brand. . . It's all company money” (*Collected Plays* I, 194). Gray was oedipally tied to his mother, as is Biff to Linda. Ruth once tried to kill Albert by making him drunk as carbon monoxide collected in the garage where he was working on his car, and another time by knocking the cap off the gas heating tube in the room where Albert was taking a nap; Willy, of course, has rigged the gas heater for his suicide. Finally, Ruth had fraudulently taken out a huge double indemnity insurance policy on Albert; Willy's suicidal and therefore fraudulent gift to Biff is *his* sizeable insurance policy.

Surely each one of these parallels is so ordinary as to raise nobody's eyebrow, but I submit that the cluster helps the ordinary viewer or reader of *Salesman* identify with the Lomans as ordinary people living in an ordinary neighborhood, just as ordinary—so Miller might have remembered—as were the Snyders and the Grays.

*Presented by Frank Bergmann
Utica College, NY*

Discussing *A View from the Bridge* and Arthur Miller in a Post-9/11 World

As a firm believer in creating classrooms that combine the study of literature and history, I have often pursued research interests that take me into the life of the writer and his world. This has been the case in my pursuit of knowledge concerning Arthur Miller and a grant I received from the National Endowment for the Humanities. As I conducted research and wrote materials, I focused on an academic study of *A View from the Bridge* and a character study of Eddie Carbone, hoping to simply broaden my students' understanding of an American playwright. The events of September 11, 2001 changed that focus to a discussion of ethics and diversity in addition to a re-examination of *A View from the Bridge* and a study of Eddie as a “regular” American man. As I taught the play in both New Jersey and

Virginia, with students who were geographically close to the sites of the terror attacks, my curriculum project took on different implications and evolved from a simple study of an additional work to a study of broader issues and current events.

*Presented by Kimberley Jenkins
Thomas A. Edison High School*

Linda Loman: Reading Between the Lines

An investigation of Linda as a subversively antagonistic wife who has designs on Willy's life. (*no abstract*)

Presented on behalf of Nicole Whitman, Southern Connecticut State University Graduate Student

Roundtable discussion by Nicolet Students

This took the form of a feminist examination of The Crucible and Death of a Salesman. Katharine MacKenzie (Cooper School) served as moderator for Shandra Hubertis, Mary Kay Mullins, Melissa Schallock, Martha Walentowski, Christy Biermier, Trish Goverville, and Kristin Bassett. The students concluded that Arthur Miller had written these plays to demonstrate the catastrophic affects on two different societies, for treating women as second class citizens.



Photograph of the Student panel by Susan Abbotson

Closing Address:

Arthur Miller: Guardian of the American Dream

This paper considers important connections between Arthur Miller's political activism and his interest in social drama. While musing unhappily about the lack of seriousness of the Broadway theater in an essay published in the *New York Times* in February 2003, tellingly entitled "Looking for a Conscience," Miller adeptly links his critique of the Broadway theater to an indictment of officials in the United States Government who label critics of the current administration as unpatriotic. At root in such commentary by Miller, as well as in his plays exploring social issues and themes

that center on the cultural myths associated with the American experience, is Miller's implicit definition of the central role—the crucial, inevitable, and pivotal role—for the literary artist in a free society. That role, according to Miller, is to serve as the voice of the people who are silenced by fear and intolerance; to ask the challenging and difficult questions of a government, a society, a people that prefers self-congratulatory praise to unflinching moral self-scrutiny; to be the conscience of a nation that finds it uncomfortable to undergo the rigorous examination of the dark recesses of the national psyche and individual soul that earnest and honest self-evaluation necessitate. With his protest against the War with Iraq, and through his continued effort to use literary art to prick the conscience of a nation too easily cowed by the politics of intimidation and blind obedience to corrupt authority, Miller provides firm testimony to his persistent commitment to social justice and human decency and the rights of all people to live with dignity and in peace. Art is deeply connected to life, for Arthur Miller. Art not only derives from life experience, but it must also respond to life and improve the conditions of life and living for humanity. For this reason, Miller frequently describes all great drama as inherently social in nature. The intertwined moral and aesthetic imperatives that inspire and animate Miller's art result in his creation of a body of work that speaks below the surface of the overt drama with a resonance, a highly charged subtext and equally rich cultural context, about the possibility and failure of America—America as a concept, an ideal, a cluster of myths and cultural stereotypes, a nation, a government and governance system, a people, a character, and an impossible, forever elusive, but always inspiring, dream. Miller's critique and celebration of America underlies and informs every facet of his plays and places this great playwright in a long procession of significant American writers who have responded similarly to the challenge and the glory of this dream called America. Standing tall in the procession of great American writers who have wrestled with the shifting and oftentimes contradictory meaning and reality of the American experience, Miller has repeatedly given audiences of his drama a vision of hope and possibility that is the true legacy of the dream, the promise, the idea that is America. That extraordinary achievement, more than anything else, is the lasting legacy of Arthur Miller: guardian of the dream of America.

*Presented by Steve Centola
Millersville University*

The Last Yankee by the Nicolet Players

A Review by George P. Castellitto, Felician College

As a fitting and appropriate close to The Eighth Arthur Miller Conference held at Nicolet Area Technical College in Rhinelander, Wisconsin on October 3-4, 2003, The Nicolet Players presented a preview of their upcoming production of *The Last Yankee* for conference participants. Miller's play literally comes alive on the stage as the 54 minutes of the drama progresses; the interaction between the Frick couple and the Hamilton couple emerges even more effectively than it does throughout the play's pages in the skillful and controlled performances of the actors.

Under the knowledgeable direction of Jim Nuttall, the players aptly portray the Fricks and the Hamiltons as each individual wrestles with his or her particular idiosyncrasies, inadequacies, and demons. Bill Roff plays a very restrained and somewhat puzzled Leroy Hamilton in the exact way that Miller seems to envision the character; his control and restraint ably demonstrate the character's prolonged frustration with Patricia as well as his inability to comprehend in its totality his responsibility for his wife's behavior. Calvin Dave Peters is an effective John Frick, displaying the false confidence and occasional bullishness of the character. Both Susan Burleigh (Patricia Hamilton) and Susan Sherwood (Karen Frick) are excellent in their performance and depiction of two women grappling with both their spouses' shortcomings and their own wavering sense of self-actualization as women. The silent patient, played by Laurie Jo Bruckner, is the consistently present reminder throughout the action of the play of the mental illness and possible catatonia that reside on the fringe of each character's consciousness, and Ms. Bruckner's silence itself is a fitting existential monologue.

In essence, the fine performances of all the actors and the informed direction of Mr. Nuttall produce a play that adeptly illustrates the themes inherent in Miller's work—the difficulty of assigning blame in relationships that waver, the possibility of redemption or condemnation in a simple word or action, and the dynamic of dialectic and movement that serves to emphasize the contradictoriness of the human enigma. Ω

Arthur Miller--His Life and Work

by Martin Gottfried.

Da Capo Press, 2003. 446 pp.

Reviewed by Will Smith, Drew University.

Author of the most comprehensive Miller biography to date, Martin Gottfried is remarkably candid in his introduction about the immediate weakness of his work. "Arthur Miller decided not to cooperate with the writing of this biography when he realized that it would deal with not only his work but his life" (x). Circumventing the uncooperative primary source with whom he had worked amicably before, Gottfried sought to validate his conviction that "There are...more than theatrical reasons for telling this life story" (x). Certainly plenty has been written about Miller's work, much of it by Miller himself. Gottfried labels Miller's 1987 autobiography *Timebends* "calculated," "selective," and "sometimes misleading" (x) and challenges its accuracy and honesty throughout this book. But according to Gottfried, "Arthur Miller's notion of a biography was a book about his plays" (ix). Over the course of his 446 pages, Gottfried rather successfully finds the man *beneath* the plays by attempting to find the man *in* the plays, ironically validating Miller's perception that an analysis of his work *is* a biography of him.

Miller's reluctance to reveal himself to Gottfried scars the work, repeatedly drawing attention to Gottfried's frustration with his subject. Actor Jason Robard's quip, "It's real difficult to get close to Arthur. He's always remote" (365), captures the Miller Gottfried chooses to present. Throughout, Gottfried labels Miller self-absorbed, self-analyzing, remote, moralistic, and emotionless—a man who approximates a smile only by tightening his cheek muscles. Gottfried offers some explanation for Miller's emotional distance, not the least of which is a dramatic fall from grace after the emasculation suffered by marrying and divorcing the most fantasized-about woman in America.

Perhaps playing to his audience, Gottfried devotes nearly 100 pages of his work to the unhappy life of Miller and Marilyn Monroe. At times sounding infatuated by the starlet himself, Gottfried writes at length about Monroe's life and career during her courtship and marriage with Miller, too frequently editorializing about her awe-inspiring beauty. Although Marilyn's inclusion in the work is essential, Gottfried's treatment of her and other subjects at

times borders on the salacious. He reports when Marilyn learned she was pregnant with Miller's child (she would later miscarry) that she was "fearful that her many abortions had made it impossible for her to carry to term" (313). Additionally, he rather weakly suggests that when writing *A View from the Bridge*, Miller became aware of "incestuous impulses in his relationship with this beloved daughter [Jane]" (260), only to discount what he'd written a paragraph later, "The subject probably says more about Miller's relationship with himself than with his daughter" (260). He also needlessly repeats an account of Arthur's teenage experience with a prostitute. Finally, and perhaps most revealingly, Gottfried notes that Miller's first child with his third wife, photographer Inge Morath, a son Daniel, was a Down Syndrome baby whom the couple sent to an institution where he would later die, never spoken of, or visited by, his father.

The pedagogical nature of Gottfried's approach overrides any sensationalism that escapes the individual chapters. At times sounding like a *Cliff's Notes* companion to the body of Miller's work, he offers long plot summaries of each play and infuses them with relevant elements from Miller's biography. Most of these explorations are forgettable with a few notable exceptions. Gottfried does a particularly good job with *All My Sons*, *The Crucible*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *After the Fall*, expertly tracing character, script, and theme in each. He shows evidence of thorough research into early drafts of the major works, offering a variety of extricated lines for our consideration. The *Salesman* chapters are so strongly told that we root for Miller's success with the play as he overcomes difficulties with production, titling, and actor selection, and awaits the early newspaper reviews from opening night.

Another highlight from the work is Gottfried's sensitive and perceptive reading of Miller's complex relationship with director Elia Kazan. Gottfried melds a host of sources to piece together the extraordinary successes of the pair and detail their subsequent parting following Kazan's appearance in front of the HUAC. In particular, Gottfried makes a convincing *quid pro quo* case tying Miller's silence about Kazan directing *On the Waterfront* (a work strikingly similar to Miller's *The Hook* which he and Kazan had pitched to Hollywood only years before) to Kazan's withholding of Miller's name at his testimony in front of the HUAC.

Gottfried's book is exceptionally well-timed. Miller has just celebrated his eighty-eighth birthday (though the book awkwardly presents him in past tense), Kazan was recently given an Academy Award and died only months ago, and PBS has been running specials on the McCarthy Era almost regularly for months. Gottfried's conclusion supports the case that American interest in Arthur Miller may be at its highest since the 1950s. Though Gottfried does not provide the American who knows Miller only as the author of *The Crucible* and the husband of Marilyn Monroe any new reasons to celebrate his life, seeing the playwright's works splayed across the page, one cannot help but acknowledge his unparalleled longevity in American drama.

Gottfried remarks that Miller, at 45, was considered an "American theatrical anachronism, with his...most produced and best-respected work—generally considered behind him" (308). Poignantly, Gottfried relays an account from 1968's Democratic National Convention where Miller looked out at the audience and remarked, "There was the American people....That's the audience I wish I had. They're not in my theater. And if they ever got into the theater, you would have something! You would have fever!" (384). Given that Miller so aptly captures the economic and social realities that Americans struggle under every day, there exists a painful irony in the fact that his best audiences reside overseas.

Gottfried presents Miller as a man looking to capture the human condition and in the process capture and understand himself. Reviewers of his later plays pilloried Miller for belaboring his biography in a way that they did not attack O'Neill and Williams. Gottfried identifies a complex group of factors that contributed to Miller's fall from American stardom including his emphasis on morality, adherence to theatrical realism when modernism came into fashion, and association with America's beauty, Marilyn Monroe. However, it is as likely that American audiences—the figurative sons and daughters of the HUAC that attempted to end Miller's career in the 1950s—have a limited appetite for introspection, self-flagellation, and brazen challenges to the American ideals so many of them unquestioningly hold so dear—the very elements that make Miller's life his work. Ω

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Notes From New York

by Stephen Marino

Having marked his 88th birthday on October 17, Arthur Miller continues his occasional appearances at literary events in New York. Among the most notable:

— On Wednesday, **November 19**, Miller appeared at the 92nd St Y, interviewed by Mel Gussow, long time drama critic of the *New York Times*. Originally scheduled for September 22, the event, along with a radio interview on New York's WBAI, was postponed because of Miller's brief hospitalization for pneumonia. Miller obviously has recovered because the interview was notable for some strong statements about the state of contemporary society which were covered in the New York press. He told the sold-out audience: "Violence is limitless now. In my new play, *Resurrection Blues*, a man is only crucified. This is modest compared to someone holding a baby out a window like Michael Jackson." Miller also reserved a few caustic remarks for Lee and Paula Strasberg, who he said "damaged people" and "made actors dependent." Describing them as self promoters, Miller remarked, "They said people were in the Actors Studio who happened to come in to get out of the rain."

— This season Arthur Miller will once again be a featured playwright as part of the "Food for Thought—Lunch Hour Theater," a lunch-time play reading series devoted to rarely produced one-act plays, which is held on Mondays, Wednesday, and Thursdays from 1 to 2 PM at the National Arts Club in Gramercy Park.

The series presents the lesser-known plays of established writers as well as the work of emerging writers. This season the series showcases plays by Arthur Miller, D.H. Lawrence, August Wilson, Noel Coward, G.B. Shaw, Steve Martin, Edward Pomerantz, Tennessee Williams, George Malko, William Saroyan, Joyce Carol Oates, David H. Hwang, and Charlotte, performed by an alternating repertory of Broadway and Off-Broadway actors. Last season, Miller directed Laila Robbins and Bob Dishy in a staged reading of his one act play, "Elegy for a Lady."

— Miller's new play, *Finishing the Picture*, has been garnering a significant amount of attention in the New York press and theater circles. In late September, a group of Miller's friends and associates attended a

reading of the play, which has been described as a "comedy," allegedly based on the making of *The Misfits*, which Miller wrote as a vehicle for Marilyn Monroe. The play focuses on the movie business in the early 1960s, and its major plot revolves around an actress not showing up for work on a film that is behind schedule. This character, named Kitty, is apparently having a nervous breakdown and has camped out in her hotel room wasted on pills and alcohol. The other characters, some of whom are based on real-life counterparts, are trying to get her to return to work.

Many notable personalities were involved in or attended the reading, among them David Richenthal, the producer of the 1999 revival of *Death of a Salesman*. Harris Yulin played a character modeled on John Huston; Brian Dennehy read the lines of a trucking company executive, who through a corporate merger, has acquired the studio which is making the troubled film. This character is said to be based on Steve Ross, the man who transformed his family's funeral parlor business into Time Warner; Sam Robards played the character who is supposedly Miller himself, a screenwriter who has recently broken his relationship with Kitty. Frank Langella and Tovah Feldshuh played characters based on Lee and Anna Strasberg, whom Miller has consistently criticized for their part in Monroe's downfall. Both actors were said to be particularly effective. One viewer described Langella as "pompous" and "creepy;" Feldshuh's was described as "hilarious" in her depiction of Kitty's acting coach, demanding limos and fancy hotel rooms. One observer remarked, "Arthur must have hated the Strasbergs. He really rakes them over the coals."

There are no definite plans yet for a New York production of *Finishing the Picture*. However, David Richenthal holds the rights to produce it and is in talks with the Goodman Theatre in Chicago for a production next year.

— To theatergoers who have yet to see a New York production of a Miller play this season came the great news that *After the Fall*, Miller's 1964 controversial play, will enjoy a major revival in 2004. The Roundabout Theatre will revive the play, the first major New York production since the original, directed by Michael Mayer. Previews begin **June 11**; the opening is set for **July 8**.

After the Fall completes the incredible string of New York revivals of Miller's major plays in the

last seven years.

— On a sad note. *The New York Times* posted an obituary for Kermit Miller, Arthur's older brother, Kermit Miller, who died on **October 17** in Southbury, Connecticut.

NOTES AND QUERIES

(A column through which we hope to share ideas, opinions, and ask questions--please send in anything you feel might be of interest to include in future editions)

* * * * *

— In response to “The Importance of Naming in The Ride Down Mt. Morgan” (Vol #7), Peter Hays (University of California, Davis) writes: I read with interest the explication of the names in *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*. The one that I have wrestled with is the one in the title. There is no Mt. Morgan near Elmira; in fact, there is no mountain near Elmira. Elmira Heights is 659 feet in altitude. Two interpretations are possible: Morgan refers to J.P. Morgan, and thus, indirectly, to Lyman's and America's lust for wealth. Or, it could refer to Mark Twain's Hank Morgan of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Twain had a farm near Elmira, and as his pen name reveals, he had a penchant for duplicity, like Lyman.

— In response to the question (vol.#7) regarding the suicide of David Beeves in *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, Chris Bigsby informs us that David Beeves did indeed commit suicide in the original novel, which Miller wrote prior to the play version, but while adapting it into play form, he eventually dropped the certainty of Beeves' suicide for a more ambiguous ending .

—In an initial response to the discovery of the Dramatists Play Service edition of “I Can't Remember Anything,” from 1987, which ends in a very different fashion to the earlier Grove Press edition of 1986, Steve Centola writes:

I like the Dramatists Play Service version better because it resonates with greater suggestiveness and ambiguity at the play's end—and such open-endedness, for me, is simply a more accurate reflection of life's complexity. To me the “tension” we feel at the end of the Dramatists Play Service version—both between Leo and Leonora and within Leo (and possibly also within Leonora, given Leo's comments in their final telephone conversation that she again is pretending not to remember)—suggests

greater complexity in characterization and, I believe, a more realistic and accurate portrayal of the complexity of the feelings and situations affecting these two characters. The Grove Press version perhaps too conveniently offers the audience an implausible happy resolution to the tensions dividing these two characters at the play's end and, therefore, leaves us with the unrealistic conclusion that a definite solution has been achieved during this evening. The Dramatists Play Service version, on the other hand, suggests, to me at least, that no such resolution occurs—or perhaps can ever occur—for the individuals will continue to wrestle with their feelings and (in)ability to come to terms with their past, their values, their feelings, and their personal responsibility for the life lived and the situation that now serves as a challenge and a threat to them. To some degree, both characters continue to live in denial at the play's end. Leonora, perhaps disingenuously, still contends that she cannot remember anything, and Leo similarly pretends that he does not care about Leonora and wants to be freed from the burden of responsibility for her, while also deriving some consolation from the overly simplistic, and undeniably inaccurate, characterization of her as exclusively responsible for his own distress. Yet, simultaneously, the play's end shows that both obviously remain connected to each other.

I believe the fact that the play ends while they are talking, regardless of what they are saying, on the phone again reinforces the connections between them that are evident in their interactions this evening and revival of memories that are too important to be forgotten. Leo may be telling Leonora that he cannot continue to see her, but the fact is that he does continue to talk to her—a clear indication that his action belies his speech, in a manner that is reminiscent to me of Charley saying he never cared about another human being while he continues to give Willy Loman \$50 a week in “Death of a Salesman.”

In any event, for me, the Dramatists Play Service version is a better conclusion because it is riddled with the kind of ambiguity that speaks more insightfully about the complexities of life and human relations. The tension that reverberates in this ending compels our attention more so than if the play ended with a more definite resolution, and we inevitably find ourselves thinking long afterwards about Miller's themes, his characters, and the implications of their conflict for all of us. Ω

Present: Susan Abbotson, Frank Bergmann, Christopher Bigsby, Carlos Campo, George Castellitto, Steve Centola, Kim Jenkins, Joe Kane, Paula Langteau, Lew Livesay, Steve Marino, Will Smith

1. George Castellitto discussed the membership requirements for joining the Society and the cost of dues, and he encouraged new members to join. He then gave the Treasurer's report; the Society has a present balance of \$876. 22. The only anticipated expenses are the annual incorporation fee of \$50.00 due in December and \$130.00 due to Steve Marino for the publication of the last newsletter.
2. Susan Abbotson mentioned that she needs materials for the next newsletter: reviews, notes and queries, and any other Miller information that individuals may have.
3. Sue also mentioned that the next American Literature Association Conference will take place in California in May, and she is presently seeking papers for two panels.
4. Steve Marino mentioned that the next Miller conference will occur at St. Francis College in Brooklyn on April 23 to 24, 2004; the Brooklyn will include a high school student panel, a college student panel, and a scholar panel. The Las Vegas Conference, hosted by Carlos Campo, is tentatively scheduled for Fall 2005.
5. In September 2005, Steve Marino's term as President will expire, and Carlos will take over as President. Self-nominations are also allowed.
6. The members of the Society congratulated Paula Langteau for her efforts and fine work in coordinating the excellent conference that took place at Nicolet College.
7. Lew Livesay inquired about the possibility and status of a possible Miller journal. Steve Centola will approach the President of Millersville University about such a journal and will investigate the options and viability of a Miller journal.
8. Chris Bigsby asked about the possibility of combining the Miller Conference with another society's conference (e.g., Mamet, Williams,

O'Neill). The discussion arose about asking Brenda Murphy to combine our conference with an O'Neill conference.

9. Paula Langteau suggested that the film *The Reason Why* shown at the conference and supplied by Joe Kane could be included as a review in the next issue of the newsletter. [ED: Sadly no-one did this--anyone willing to do it for the next issue?] George Castellitto will be reviewing the performance of *The Last Yankee* that the society viewed at Nicolet College.
10. Lew asked if a location exists where newly discovered Miller materials could be archived. Steve Centola suggested that any new materials could be added to the present Michigan Special Collection.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
George Castellitto, Secretary



Photograph of the Society meeting by Susan Abbotson

Contributors

Susan C. W. Abbotson is an Adjunct Professor at Rhode Island College, and editor of the *Arthur Miller Society Newsletter*. Her latest book was *Thematic Guide to Modern Drama* (2003); she is currently working on *Masterpieces of Twentieth Century American Drama* for Greenwood Press.

Katherine Basham has taught English at University of Minnesota-Duluth since 1970, and has done extensive work in creative writing, she is currently working on Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, and her own poetry.

Frank Bergmann is Professor of English and German at Utica College of Syracuse University.

Carlos Campo teaches English and Drama at Community College Southern Nevada in Las Vegas. He has written extensively on Arthur Miller, and has been published in *English Language Notes* and the *Film/Literature Quarterly*. He is also the Arthur Miller Society's current Vice-President.

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c/o Susan C.W. Abbotson
15 Concord Avenue
Cranston, RI 02910

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Current Members

Sue Abbotson, Estelle Aden, Frank Bergmann, Martin Blank, Richard Brucher, Jackson R. Bryer, Carlos Campo, George Castellitto, Steve Centola, Allan Chavkin, Robert Combs, Jane K. Dominik, Robert Feldman, Herbert Goldstein, Harry R. Harder, Samuel Hatch, Peter Hays, Joseph Kane, Stefani Koorey, Lewis Livesay, Stephen Marino, Brenda Murphy, Beverly Newton, Ana Lúcia Moura Nouveais, Gerald O'Grady, Terry Otten,

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Phone: 401 461 1668 for further information

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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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