

Preface

Arthur Miller has occupied a central place in the American theatre for more than four decades. The number of critical studies of his dramatic writings is not small, but the majority tend to underplay the complexity of his life-vision and his later achievements. Recent Miller scholarship has, at the most, distinguished between his early "social" plays and his later "psychological" plays.

Dennis Welland's Arthur Miller (1961) and Robert Hogan's Arthur Miller (1964), both written too early to examine more than a part of Miller's work, are naturally brief though valuable. Sheila Huftel's Arthur Miller : The Burning Glass (1965), Edward Murray's Arthur Miller, Dramatist (1967), Benjamin Nelson's Arthur Miller : Portrait of a Playwright (1970) and Ronald Hayman's Arthur Miller (1972) are definitely more perceptive, but could not probe beyond the middle plays because these books were all written before 1972. S.R. Centola's Freedom and Responsibility After the Fall : A Sartrean Perspective of Arthur Miller's Existential Humanism (1982) and E.N. Ngwang's Survival and Personal Identity in Arthur Miller's Major Plays (1987) are later in date, but limited in scope in one way or the other. Dennis Welland's Miller : A Study of His Plays (1979), Neil Carson's Arthur Miller (1982), and June Schlueter and James K. Flanagan's Arthur Miller (1987) are more or less comprehensive;

yet these might not be sufficient for a career as enormous as Miller's.

It is therefore worth examining Miller's dramatic career more thoroughly to bring out his changing view of life as reflected in his protagonists. The present study seeks to examine his varying treatment of the self and to trace the turning-points in his tragic perspective. It also attempts to show how he combines in his theatre such divergent elements as realism and liberalism, existentialism and humanism, ethics and metaphysics in order to achieve his artistic purpose.

The first chapter deals with the evolution of Miller's thought, defining the scope of this work. Of particular relevance to the chapter are his theatre essays and interviews which will help to trace the relation between Miller, the critic, and Miller, the artist. The next three chapters examine his plays of three separate, yet interrelated, periods -- each of which begins with an analysis of the context. The second chapter is devoted to the early plays with an accent on his social philosophy; the third to the middle plays indicating his drift towards existentialism; the fourth to the later plays steeped in the innate ironies of life. The concluding fifth chapter is a summary of the thesis and an evaluation of Miller's contribution to the American theatre.

By way of justifying selection and elimination, I may mention the reason for omitting from the scope of my study

The Man Who Had All the Luck (1944). It is an apprentice piece Miller himself got dissatisfied with and therefore refused to include in his Collected Plays. However, I have not ignored A Memory of Two Mondays (1955), a one act play dismissed summarily by the critical fraternity, because it is, in my opinion, another key to his art and ethics. The American Clock (1979) is examined in brief, for it is more reminiscent of Miller's early social plays than representative of his later development. His adaptations and screenplays are not also discussed at length : An Enemy of the People (1950), The Misfits (1961) and Playing for Time (1980) are treated as preparations for The Crucible (1953), After the Fall (1964) and The Archbishop's Ceiling (1984) respectively. The one - acters of the Eighties, which closed after a few performances, are studied with the single aim of showing the direction of Miller's current thinking. While referring to his latest production, The Ride Down Mount Morgan, I had to depend solely on a review because the play is yet to be published.

As regards parenthetical documentation and the bibliography, I have tried to keep close conformity with the style as outlined in the 1984 edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.

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