

Preface

Stone Tower approaches the work of Arthur Miller from a certain vector. I know of at least a dozen fine books whose authors offer comprehensive studies of Miller's drama, and there are equally impressive collections of essays that also treat the playwright's corpus. In contrast, I've set careful boundaries, for I have built this book to argue that Miller created political theater, a goal that led me to make choices. Since I don't mean that everything Miller wrote qualifies as "political" even in the broad sense I've embraced, I'm exploring only those plays and other writings that suit my purpose and propel my discussion. I've also set limits on the extent to which I relate his work to his life outside the theater, so I analyze his efforts as advocate and social critic, but I don't try to connect his stories and characters with his family and friends. I was sorely tempted to include Marilyn Monroe in the chapter on women, but I feared that she, that irresistible, sad seductress and shooting star, might take over the entire enterprise. I look forward to the book that someone else will write on Miller's relationship with his most complicated lover and how his days with her came to inform his writing.

I remain a true student of the old scholar-director program in the Department of Dramatic Art at the University of California, Berkeley, and even though I don't intend this study to constitute a set of production notes, I find that I can't write about Miller's characters, moments, and concerns without imagining how I might stage them. Although I hope my ideas and critical analysis will stand on their own, I'll be pleased if my fellow theater artists find them useful, for Miller was, in the end, a man of the theater, one with a keen sense of the challenge and the delight of telling a story to a live audience.

I first presented some of my material in these articles and papers:

"Paper Dolls: Melodrama and Sexual Politics in Arthur Miller's Early Plays." *Feminist Rereadings of Modern American Drama*. Ed. June

Schlueter. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1989. 103–15. Earlier version delivered at the 1987 Modern Language Association convention in San Francisco.

“Arthur Miller’s Ironic Resurrection.” *Theatre Journal* 55 (2003): 657–77.

“Arthur Miller from Crisis to Negotiation.” Delivered at the 2004 Ninth International Arthur Miller Conference in Brooklyn.

“Arthur Miller’s Staging of the Threshold of Violence.” *Arthur Miller Journal* 1 (spring 2006): 31–48. Earlier version delivered at the 2004 American Literature Association conference in San Francisco.

I am grateful to the Office of Research and Faculty Development at the University of Oregon for the kind grant of a Summer Research Award, in 2002, that enabled and inspired me to complete a great deal of the necessary reading and to boost this project to the next level. For their help, support, and illumination, I thank Harry Elam, Steve Marino and my colleagues in the Arthur Miller Society, June Schlueter, Sheree Meyer, the cast and designers of the 2005 University of Oregon Department of Theatre Arts production of *A View from the Bridge*, and especially the students in my colloquium in the Robert D. Clark Honors College at the University of Oregon, who helped me test the ideas that form the spine of this book and provided the most rewarding teaching experience I’ve had the privilege to enjoy.

August 30, 2007