

ARTHUR MILLER'S GLOBAL THEATER.

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Theatre and drama were already “globalized” before so much else was, a fact acknowledged by *Arthur Miller's Global Theater*, a collection of essays that look into the way Miller's work has been negotiated over the years in different countries. Edited by Enoch Brater, a professor at the University of Michigan and a recognized expert on Miller, the project is further proof of the sustained commitment of Michigan to its former student, to whom it dedicated an outstanding international conference in 2000, a “Global Miller” symposium in 2007, during which the idea for this book came up, and even a theatre.

In spite of the two-fold division, “Perspectives” and “Retrospectives,” for which I fail to see any justification, most of the essays are brief historical surveys of Miller's plays in different countries, namely Israel, Italy, South Africa, Germany, Spain, Argentina, Ireland, Japan, and Denmark. Some chapters deal mostly with a play, that being the case of Israel and its different renditions of *All My Sons*. Those on Italy and Argentina are larger in scope, but their brevity does not allow them to be more than sketches. Something similar happens with the piece on Spain, which is however rigorously documented.

Very interesting are the chapters on South Africa, Germany, Ireland, Japan, and Denmark, their focus not being so much the whole history of Miller in those countries, but rather specific aspects, which allows the narratives to be more fluent and conclusions to emerge much more distinctly. The chapter on South Africa inscribes Miller's productions within the history of a country whose promotion of

capitalism has meant depriving a play such as *Death of a Salesman* of its iconic status as a denunciation of capitalism (at least of a certain kind) and endowing it merely with broadly humanistic overtones. The piece on Japan posits the successful history of Miller's plays there as illustrating the possibilities of fruitful encounters between very diverse theatrical traditions (in spite of the difficulty of explaining to a Japanese citizen of the 1950s what a "salesman" was or what "witchcraft" was all about).

The chapters on Germany, Denmark, and Ireland reach the same conclusion through different paths. While mostly neglected in Germany (a country noted for its innovative, anti-realistic, director-oriented theatre throughout the second half of the twentieth century) because of its allegedly old-fashioned, almost dogmatic character, Miller's work was, for the very same reasons, enormously popular in both Ireland and Denmark. Irish audiences could, for example, enjoy three *Crucibles* in 1995, produced by different companies from Dublin, Waterford, and Belfast. The history of Miller in Ireland is not noted, however, for the inventiveness of its productions. In Denmark, innovative theatre has not had much appeal either, and because of that Miller is there second only to Ibsen and Strindberg as far as popular tastes are concerned. Dozens of Danish productions over the last twenty years bear witness to that fact, as well as a conspicuous presence in the curricula of secondary and college education, *Death of a Salesman* being "the seminal text of post-World War II drama in Denmark" (136).

Aside from an interview between Brater and Darryl V. Jones, who directed a US version of *A View from the Bridge* in 1995, replacing the Italian immigrants by Dominican ones, and pushing the setting to the mid-1960s, there are two more chapters, which, from my point of view, will be the most valuable for Miller's scholarship, as they do not so much add up to what is already known (as do the other chapters) as challenge established notions. "Traveling Man, Traveling Culture. *Death of a Salesman* and Post-Mao Chinese Theater" deconstructs the narratives surrounding Miller's own staging of *Death of a Salesman* in Beijing as neo-colonialist (unconsciously, for the most part), in trying to read the Chinese *Salesman* as bringing with it the superior values and illumination of western civilization to a primitive China. The chapter contends that Miller's play was far less "advanced" in formal matters than many other Chinese plays of that time, and far more conservative in its ideology (from a Chinese point of view) than the American playwright intimates in his own *Salesman in Beijing*.

"*The Crucible*. Three British Encounters" concerns itself only with one piece, and does not even try to cover its entire history in Britain. The first *Crucible* is the British premiere of the play in 1956, which the author of the chapter attended when he was a young man. Once he had become a BBC producer, he gravitated back to the play and decided to launch a TV production, for which he cast an unknown actor as Proctor, and well-known stars to do secondary roles, thus heightening "the sense of an ordinary man confronting the power and authority of a determined establishment"

(147). The third *Crucible* was not a new version but a mere screening of the BBC version before Miller and his wife. The playwright sat respectfully through it, and then stood up and left, without a word of regret or appreciation. It seems to be an apt conclusion to the volume, the famous dramatist silently aware perhaps that his work no longer belongs to him, and realizing that, whether he likes it or not, it will continue to be performed all over the world, to the liking of producers, directors, and hopefully also of audiences.

Fortunately over is the view that theatre was merely the authoritative staging of dramatic literature. The theatre is now regarded as a space where diverse artistic visions meet and cross-fertilize one another, in which the playwright (when there is one) is certainly honoured, but only as the starting point of processes which often surpass anything he could have envisaged. Because of that, *Arthur Miller's Global Theater* ties in well with current debates on the theatre, and makes an important contribution to broadening the scope of theatre studies (some more theoretical self-consciousness would have been welcomed, however). It is moreover a must for anyone interested in Miller. One misses things such as some illustrations (there are none). Anyway, it certainly maps out territory, and will hopefully lure others into settling it.