

# A Fruitful Two Way Relationship: Arthur Miller and Irish Theatre

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Arthur Miller's *Two Way Mirror*, a double bill comprising two short plays, *Elegy for a Lady* and *Some Kind of Love Story*, had its premiere in Ireland in 1996. Reviewing the event in *The Irish Times*, Gerry Colgan fine-tunes his article, stressing that "[t] here is a penetrating truth even in the lesser works of Miller, and the two one-act plays under the composite title of *Two Way Mirror* are no exception. Each has only two characters, whose situations are pitched in a world of illusion and interdependence." Following a brief summary of the respective plots and appreciating the high-standard work of the actor (Pepe Roche) and actress (Antoinette Guiney) involved in both pieces, the reviewer concludes that "Anthony Davey directs this debut production of the X Ray Theatre Company; a good start" (Colgan). A small company making its debut with one of Miller's rarely played "lesser" works after many years of its world premiere in the USA in 1982, can be regarded as a telling sign of the strong respect for the American playwright in Ireland. In this essay, I am going to investigate the mutual relationship between Miller and Irish theatre life under a title that takes its cue from *Two Way Mirror*, attempting to highlight the number of ways in which the two sides, mirror-like, reflect on each other. I believe that considering them together may illuminate certain, not so obvious aspects or components of both while suggesting new paths for research.

As it is widely documented, early in the last century, modern American drama, just beginning its long journey, tended to draw inspiration from the work of Irish playwrights, companies, and performers. The Irish-American Eugene O'Neill is a primary example of this; he was a young man when the Abbey Theatre of Dublin made its first tour in the United States in 1911. Watching the plays staged in New York, he especially admired those of J. M. Synge. Péter Egri points out that Synge's influence on O'Neill's whole work shows itself in "theme, treatment, mood and motif" (268), and the critic identifies several instances of comparability. For illustration, Egri highlights that "[a]s in Synge's *Rider to the Sea*, in O'Neill's *Ile*, too, the sea is not only a medium of fate but also a mediator of destiny" (263). Further on, having charted the multiple connections between Synge's *The Well of the Saints* (1905) and *The Iceman Cometh* (1939) by O'Neill, Egri concludes: "Synge's play implies the hope of the Irish Revival at the beginning of the century; O'Neill's drama expresses the hopeless hope of humanity alienated from itself and tottering in the ruins of World War II" (268). The connection between Synge and O'Neill can also be seen in the broader context of international modernism and the complexity of its systems of dialogue with national developments. As Joe Cleary argues, Irish-American writers and artists

like O'Neill, Henry Cowell, Louis Henry Sullivan, F. Scott Fitzgerald and others "are now, properly, claimed for American modernism, but they were all conscious of the achievements of the Irish Revival and indeed of Irish émigré figures such as Wilde and Shaw in London and later of Joyce in Paris, and to this extent at least there are ways in which Ireland and Irish culture were significant to the wider history of European and American modernisms" (6-7).

The reverse process, according to Stephen Watt, is the noticeable influence of O'Neill on recent Irish theatre. In *The Night Alive* (2013), Watt claims that "[Conor] McPherson offers a variation on these longstanding themes of escape and exodus, steady employment and economic security, expanding the genre of melodrama O'Neill complicates in *A Touch of the Poet*" (280). Regarding other American playwrights, the possible impact of Tennessee Williams, especially that of the technique of deploying a narrator in *The Glass Menagerie* (1945), can be detected in the respective works of Irish authors Brian Friel and Marina Carr. A more recent example in the long line of apparent resonances, parallels, and borrowings is provided by Martin McDonagh. The title of *The Lonesome West* (1998), one of his plays in the Leenane trilogy, exploits a Syngean intertext from *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) while it also carries an echo of the title of Sam Shepard's *True West* (1980).

Matthew Martin's study, "Arthur Miller's Dialogue with Ireland," emphasizes that the playwright always followed the developments in Irish drama with great interest (100). In his essays, interviews, and the autobiography *Timebends* (1987), Miller mentions some Irish playwrights and speaks or writes about two of them, G. B. Shaw and Sean O'Casey, at some length. Furnished with the title "Morality and Modern Drama," Miller gave an interview to Phillip Gelb in 1958, in which the starting point is *Death of a Salesman* and its protagonist's tragic fate due to "the want of some positive, viable human value" (190). With *Salesman* in mind, the interviewer and interviewee discuss aspects of morality or the lack of it in other modern playwrights' work. About Shaw's strategies of characterization, Miller says:

Shaw is always eliminating the insignificant background, and it's possibly because he had so much to say and there was so little time to say it. . . . I think, in general, aside from the women, it *is* the minor characters who are most realistically drawn [by Shaw]. The major characters are too completely obsessed with the issues that are being set forth. . . . You read Shaw's plays and see how rarely people get off the subject; and that's what I mean when I say that it isn't psychology he is following, it is the theme. (emphasis in the original; Miller and Gelb 194)

However, this does not imply a critique of Shaw on the part of Miller. In fact, he does Shaw justice when discussing the writers' idiosyncratic choices in general terms: literature is "always partial; it's always partisan, and it's always incomplete . . . by generating that intensity [possessed by a great literary work] you are blinding yourself to what does not fit into some preconceived pattern in your own mind" (196). Hence the difference between Shaw and Tennessee Williams, for instance, as Miller's answers to Gelb suggest, although without ranking the achievement of the two on any scale to mark one as better than the other (195).

Sean O'Casey features in *Timebends* primarily, in the context of Miller's and other leftist literati's unpleasant or even threatening experiences during the McCarthy period when, Miller confesses, "I was possibly more scared than others because I was scared of being scared" (322-23). The American playwright comments on the planned but eventually canceled production of O'Casey's comic fantasy play, the anticlerical *Cock-a-doodle Dandy* (1949), as follows:

[After] it was announced for New York production, . . . the American Legion promptly threatened to picket the theatre. . . . No doubt it was anticlerical, although not anti-Catholic, but the Legion was probably more interested in O'Casey's custom of wearing a hammer-and-sickle button in the lapel of his rumpled jacket, proclaiming that Communism had captured his Irish heart. . . . In any case, given the gorgeousness of some of his plays and his wonderful autobiography, I was outraged that this genius should be hounded by Legion thuggery. When the producer of the play appealed for help from the Dramatists Guild—the Legion's threats having dried up his money sources, menacing the production altogether—I cooked up a motion and presented it to my fellow Guild officers one afternoon. (*Timebends* 321-22)

Despite his efforts, Miller was not able to save the freedom of the theatre because the Guild officers themselves turned out to be divided over whether to confront the aggressive Legion directly or not; therefore, *Cock-a-doodle Dandy* could not have its American premiere in the early 1950s. Miller's work was also attacked by the extremists. As he reports: "I had already had a taste of the Legion's power, for they had not only threatened the movie version of *Salesman* but had managed in two or three towns to close down the road company production with Thomas Mitchell as Willy, Darren McGavin as Happy, Kevin McCarthy as Biff, and June Walker as Linda—what the Boston critics had called the best Irish play ever" (*Timebends* 322). The last reference to his masterpiece being spoken about as an honorary Irish work might have enhanced the solidarity Miller felt towards O'Casey. Moreover, while Miller admired the New York Group Theatre's productions (for instance of Clifford Odets's plays), in *Timebends*, he claims that "[the] closest to these productions that I ever saw was the Abbey Theatre's *Juno and the Paycock* with Sara Allgood and Barry Fitzgerald, who humbled the heart as though before the unalterable truth" (230).

In his monograph on Miller Martin Gottfried asserts that O'Casey was the only Irish writer who possibly influenced him, to be discerned in *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955) first of all, a play set during the time of Depression in a car parts warehouse with most of its characters coming from an Irish background (249-52). It has autobiographical resonances because Miller himself used to work in a place of that kind for a short time before embarking on a career of writing. A distinguishing mark of the play is the lyrical as well as surrealist tone; Miller subtitles it as "A Poem," and a pivotal character, the Irish Kenneth, often quotes lines from a nineteenth-century ballad by the Irish romantic poet Thomas Moore. Miller had a further, indirect connection with O'Casey through his appreciation of the contemporary fellow American playwright Clifford Odets. The latter Miller considered to be a

particular voice of the thirties: with “*Waiting for Lefty*, followed by *Awake and Sing!*, Odets had sprung forth, a new phenomenon, a leftist challenge to the system, but even more, the poet suddenly leaping unto the stage and disposing of middle-class gentility, screaming and yelling and cursing like somebody off the Manhattan streets” (*Timebends* 229). In his book on Odets, George Weales argues that, because of the social commitment the two playwrights shared, some critics started to label Odets as the “Sean O’Casey of America,” confirmed by director Harold Clurman who called attention to the comparable features of *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *Awake and Sing!* (1935) (qtd. in Kurdi, “Parallels” 110).

Exploring parallels between Miller and Irish drama Tom Murphy’s *A Whistle in the Dark* (1961) can be found sharing themes and motifs with Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* to some degree. It also depicts a self-deceiving father and his sons, one of whom is making desperate efforts to free himself from the father’s destructive influence. In *A Whistle*, a one-time scene is recalled, in which the father stole a coat he did not need at all from the golf club and threw it over a wall as a frustration-driven act of revenge on the lucky and prosperous people. The motif is reminiscent of Biff’s narrated theft of the millionaire’s expensive pen, which functions as an equally desperate and meaningless act in *Salesman*. A younger playwright, the English-Hungarian Elizabeth Kuti, who had been based in Ireland for several years, claims that she constructed one of the protagonists, Eva’s monologues in *Treehouses* (2000) under the influence of Miller’s *After the Fall* (1964). Kuti places this similarity in a broader context by saying that “[I]ament and sadness (and guilt) about the past seem to be a big part of memory plays, and perhaps that’s common to Irish and to Jewish culture and literature” (Kurdi, “Interview with Elizabeth Kuti” 11). The evocation of the Holocaust in Miller’s play has its echo in Kuti’s work too. In *After the Fall*, the tower of a German concentration camp dominates the stage throughout, whereas the action takes place in the mind of the protagonist, Quentin. Paralleling this ubiquitous presence, Kuti’s drama refers to the Holocaust and its consequences in terms of loss, trauma, and remorse appearing in the enacted memories of the other protagonist, Old Magda, who used to shelter a Jewish boy (Eva’s father) for a time in their hayloft but eventually proved incapable of giving up her well-protected little world of comfort and safety to go with him.

Undoubtedly, for the study of Miller’s most visible and legible influence on Irish drama, the case of Brian Friel and his early work offer themselves. Quite early in his career, Friel wrote the play *This Doubtful Paradise* originally titled *the Francophile* (1959) for the Ulster Group Theatre, with a protagonist called Willie Logue, a father who reminds the reader/audience of Willy Loman not only by his name but by his nurturing false illusions about how his children should achieve success in life. However, unlike Miller’s, Friel’s drama does not end with the salesman’s tragic self-destruction; Willie Logue only makes himself ridiculous—Friel was attempting to experiment with the conventions of the Ulster comic traditions in the play (Roche 22-24). In 1963 Friel spent several months in Minneapolis, Minnesota, observing director Tyrone Guthrie’s methods of work and becoming acquainted with American theatre in general at the same time. Born in England by parents of British and Irish descent, Guthrie made his name as a director already in his home country and then was invited to work in North America as well. In 1963 he founded the Guthrie Theater in

Minneapolis and served as its artistic director until 1966. The significant experience of studying theatre practices close to an expert such as Guthrie is documented in Friel's autobiographical essay "Self-Portrait" in detail:

And now I found myself at thirty years of age embarked on a theatrical career and almost totally ignorant of the mechanics of play-writing and play-production apart from an intuitive knowledge. Like a painter who has never studied anatomy; like a composer with no training in harmony. So I packed my bags and with my wife and two children went to Minneapolis in Minnesota, where a new theatre was being created by Tyrone Guthrie, and there I lived for six months. ... I learned a great deal about the iron discipline of theatre, and I discovered a dedication and a nobility and a selflessness that one associates with a theoretical priesthood. But much more important than all these, those months in America gave me a sense of liberation – remember, this was my first parole from inbred claustrophobic Ireland – and that sense of liberation conferred on me a valuable self-confidence and a necessary perspective so that the first play I wrote immediately after I came home, *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, was a lot more assured than anything I had attempted before. (41-42)

During his stay in Minneapolis, Friel had the opportunity to watch Guthrie conduct the rehearsals and direct the staging of four plays, *Hamlet* and *Salesman*, among them. Therefore it can hardly be accidental that Friel's *Philadelphia* displays conspicuous resonances with Miller's masterpiece. Both plays are illustrative of what Miller states in his essay "The Family in Modern Drama": "Today the difficulty in creating a form that will unite both elements in full rather than partial onslaught on reality is the reflection of the deep split between the private life of man and his social life" (100).

*Philadelphia* is structured by setting scenes in the present alternating with flashbacks that reveal crucial points and revelations in the protagonist, Public, and Private Gar's past, using a technique similar to Miller's juxtaposing the present and the past in *Salesman*. In his monograph on Friel, Christopher Murray detects parallels between the theatrical spaces used by the two plays and underscores certain similarities: both *Salesman* and *Philadelphia* divide the stage to represent a kitchen, a bedroom, and a frontal space (25). The father-son conflict is central to the action in both works, although with the difference that in *Philadelphia*, it is the son, Gar, divided into Public and Private, whose perspective remains dominant throughout, comparably to the father, Willy Loman's position in *Salesman*. However, at a climactic point, both plays challenge the persistent dominance of one viewpoint. In *Salesman*, this happens when Willy's elder son, Biff realizes that both his father and himself have been struggling with personal identity problems, and the emphasis shifts to Biff's expression of self-awakening. In contrast, in *Philadelphia*, it is the otherwise monosyllabic father who, responding to Gar's memories of the two of them once fishing in a blue boat, also recollects a shared event in a way that exposes his feelings about a lonely and barren future once his son is gone to America forever.

In Ireland, both *Salesman* and *Philadelphia* were first produced by the Gate Theatre in 1951 and 1964, respectively. The founders of the Gate Theatre (1928), the

English-born Hilton Edwards and Micheál MacLiammóir, who earned the nickname “the Boys” in the contemporary Dublin social discourse because of their bohemian attitudes and inseparability, embraced the mission to run a repertoire of modern Irish and foreign drama. Their productions often proved to be controversial for their artistic transgressions or sometimes merely for the very choice of a drama to be staged by the Gate. About the circumstances of their venturing the Irish premiere of *Salesman* Christopher Fitz-Simon writes:

Orson Welles, still working on *Othello*, did not come to Dublin to appear as Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, as had been hoped, so Hilton Edwards played the part. Noëlle Middleton felt that ‘his alleged “Jewishness” – the hooked nose and the mobile mouth, which was like rubber’ helped the physicality of the performance. Seamus Kelly of the *Irish Times* wrote of his ‘anguished clown’s face’; ‘when it comes to the death of the flabby, aging, broken-down commercial traveler, he catches the dignity of classical high tragedy.’ Here was the Gate company back again at the top of its form. It was also back again with its familiar trappings of controversy, for members of the Catholic Cinema and Theatre Patrons Society – of which no one seemed to have previously heard – distributed leaflets outside the theatre, quoting an American publication, which stated that the play was ‘one of a type which are hot-beds of left-wing agitation.’ There was a list of ‘red’ organizations in the United States, to one of which Arthur Miller was said to belong. Six members of the Garda Síochána were on duty in South King Street on the opening night, but their services were not needed. (167)

The above report offers a nuanced description of how Ireland, a rather conservative, priest-ridden country at that time, reacted to the cold war atmosphere of the early 1950s. As Martin sums up the causes of the failure of *Salesman*, “[t]he spiritual emptiness of Willy’s life, from the point of view of Ireland in the 1950s, is not in itself a tragedy; it is rather the obstacle preventing Willy’s dilemma from attaining tragic proportions. The great heroic Irish theatrical tradition does its best to bring stature to the play, but in vain” (104). However, Miller’s masterpiece did not become forgotten in the Dublin theatre world. In 1964 Alpho O’Reilly designed the setting for Friel’s *Philadelphia* in the mode of Arthur Miller’s strategic use of space, cutting “the house in half and revealed its internal ramification, upstairs and down” (Fitz-Simon 276).

Miller’s and Friel’s dramatic representation of clashing memories and construction of characters who observe and comment on the others’ conflict as outsiders also shows some parallels. In *The Price* (1968) by Miller, the two brothers, Victor and Walter, evoke diverging memories and express different opinions of their relationship with their father as well as their own respective choices of the kind of life they lived. A revelatory remark by Walter discloses the fiction-making that both have resorted to instead of facing the truth: “We invent ourselves, Vic, to wipe out what we know. You invent a life of self-sacrifice, a life of duty; but what never existed here cannot be upheld” (90). Friel’s technique of constructing separate monologues in *Faith Healer* (1979) also facilitates the characters’ inventing and fictionalizing not only their past but each other as well. Finishing her speech, Grace, the only female character of



Friel's play, voices the suspicion that she was probably only one of the fictions of the man she calls her husband and who never spoke about her as his wife. At the end of *The Price* Solomon, the old furniture dealer who has been watching the verbal fight of the two brothers from a distance remains alone on stage and starts listening to the Laughing Record on the phonograph. In Friel's play *Teddy*, the English manager, and sole survivor out of the three characters also puts on a record at the end of his monologue. These acts, thoroughly gestic in the Brechtian sense, invite the interpretation that here the individuals' doubts and groping for meaning are balanced by a signature of the continuity and self-contained magnitude of life beyond them.

Over the years, Miller became acquainted and maintained fruitful relations with two Irish directors. Victoria White remarks that Miller's "links with Ireland date from the marriage of his daughter Rebecca to the [British-Irish] actor Daniel-Day Lewis." On a visit to Ireland, Miller got as far as Galway and saw Martin McDonagh's *The Lonesome West* (1997) there directed by Garry Hynes, renowned artistic manager of the Druid Theatre who, in 1998, got a Tony award for Best Director, the first woman to win that award. Impressed by her work immensely, Miller asked Hynes to direct the Off-Broadway premiere of his new drama, *Mr. Peters' Connections* (Martin 99). The event took place in the Signature Theatre in New York in early 1998, closing a run of Miller's plays there. Among the reviewers Simi Horwitz maintains that "[s] tarring Peter Falk as a retired pilot haunted by his past and puzzled by the present, the ambiguous work is set in a kind of afterlife holding cell where everyone is dead; or, it's a day in the life of an aging man suffering from some form of senility. In either case, it is told from Mr. Peters' fragmented perspective." The reviewer also quotes Hynes about the play: "What I find interesting is how many of the audience identify with him [Mr. Peters], the banal belligerence of life as it's lived today." This inclination to identify with the protagonist calls *Salesman* to mind, the not waning international success of which rests on a similar basis, reconfirming the thematic continuity in Miller's oeuvre. Horwitz's insight about the ambiguous nature of *Mr. Peters' Connections* is significant also because it is the very ambiguity produced by the play's dramaturgy that might provoke comparison with a widely acclaimed piece of contemporary Irish theatre, *The Steward of Christendom* (1995) by Sebastian Barry, which enjoyed much-applauded productions in America too. Rated high also by Hynes, in Barry's play, the old and demented protagonist, Thomas Dunne, is haunted by the past like Mr. Peters, often unable to distinguish its images from the present, but with the difference that Dunne's memories are enmeshed in traumatizing questions of national allegiance.

Commissioning Hynes to direct *Mr. Peters' Connections*, thus, was just the right thing to decide on for the above reasons. However, Hynes did not stop here in tying her name with that of Miller and meet the challenge of contributing to the production of plays by him for audiences in America. Early in 2015, the Miller centenary year, she directed *The Price*, another drama intensely concerned with the past, in the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Reviewer Charles McNulty writes that it "is an old-fashioned play that takes a fair amount of time to get going, but when it does—midway through the second act—it explodes with the thunderous moral inquiry that has earned the author a place on the Mt. Rushmore of American playwrighting." Staging Miller's ever so acute moral fervor, the flaws of the plot can, however, be overshadowed by

an ingenious production, which the play definitely received by Hynes who, McNulty says, “treats the text as though it were a castle of poetry when it is a foursquare house made of prose” with a carefully chosen, “first-rate” cast. The actors who play the two brothers (John Bedford Loyd as Walter, the surgeon, and Sam Robards as Victor, the policeman), McNulty highlights, “bring sharp clarity to the ambiguity of the brothers’ situation. Nothing is definitively settled – our sympathies are allowed to shuttle and it’s impossible to tell ultimately if a smile is truly heartfelt or smug – but the complexity of the picture is brought into focus.” The success of the production, according to another reviewer, Jordan Riefe, was also excellently served by Alan Mandell, the outstanding comedian, in the role of the old furniture dealer. Riefe sums up the values of both the play and Hynes’ 2015 production as follows: “With themes of social sacrifice and income inequality as relevant today as the day it was written, *The Price* represents a chance to see a high-caliber production of a rarely performed work by an American master.”

It is also in the context of the Miller centenary year that another Irish director, Joe Dowling’s relationship with Miller, can be discussed as intensely fruitful. From 1995 to 2015, Dowling worked as artistic manager of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis and met Miller during those years. As a significant event of the annual Dublin Theatre Festival in 2015, Dowling directed a new production of *A View from the Bridge* (1955), which became celebrated by both audience and critics for the high quality of staging its timeliness. In “The Programme Note” Dowling comments on the personal aspects of the play and its place in the master’s oeuvre as well as on how much he benefited from working with Miller:

Eddie Carbone in *A View from the Bridge* also demands that his good name in the community be restored before his ultimate tragic end. It was a constant theme in all of Miller’s great works and stemmed from watching his father decline from a position of great influence to a pitiful shadow of the man he once was. He had lost his name in the community because he had lost his wealth. His son restored that name by immortalizing the characters he created out of the whole cloth of his own life.

The first time I met Arthur Miller was when he came to the Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis to see *The Price* in 1996. . . . Directing Miller’s work has been among the most satisfying experiences of my professional life. The plays are complex and yield up their secrets to great emotional effect. No matter what the political and social situation of the time, Miller’s work speaks to a universal and timeless reality. (5)

For the production of *A View* in 2015, Beowulf Boritt designed a setting which juxtaposed the internal space of the Carbone’s modest home in the front and the external space of Brooklyn Bridge and the dockyard colored black and white in the background as a constant presence in the life of the characters. Critic Sophie Gorman remarked that the excellence of *A View* lies in its nuances and small details, which came through in the Gate production very well although sometimes their staging turned out to be somewhat exaggerated in style. This implies the notion that Miller’s text is



highly charged emotionally, which tests the cast's ability to find the right tone. Eddie was played by American actor Scott Aiello, whose looks suggested Italian descent, enriching his brilliant acting of the socially framed psychic changes destroying the character with additional flair.

One would think that the modernist and realist Miller and the postmodern Irish playwright Martin McDonagh can hardly feature in an exploration of their parallel themes and approaches. Nonetheless, an article published by Eamonn Jordan compares the response to the ideological pressure the family transmits to and exercises on the children in *Salesman* and McDonagh's *The Pillowman* (2003). Both plays, according to Jordan, represent political and cultural narratives, whereas the family they depict is a site of violence and compulsive repetitions and unconscious imitations (45). The protagonists, Willy Loman and Katurian Katurian Katurian, are both authors and tellers of their fictions. Willy's stories are linked to the success-oriented propaganda of the American Dream: ". . . for every difficulty, he has a fiction or fantasy to disguise or contest" the bleakness and mercilessness of reality (Jordan 51). With his stories, he also aims to inspire his sons to follow the example of nurturing illusions he sets, fostering the false ambition to be well-liked. In the McDonagh play, "Katurian's stories are very much about abuse and violation, where the family, as a primary agent of socialization, discipline, and punishment, becomes the cruel arbiter of fates" (Jordan 54). In fact, Katurian's stories reflect a situation that "the parents of the Katurian family decide on totally different childhood realities for the two brothers: Katurian gets the privileged lifestyle, full of love, encouragement, and admiration, and Michal is gifted all the negative experiences, whereby he is ritually tortured and abused, as part of some grotesque artistic experiment" (Jordan 54).

In the context of the nuclear family, Willy's stories about easy success encourage his sons to re-enact them instead of searching for their own way of getting ahead in the world. The blood-soaking stories of Katurian modeled on parental violence mostly are replayed by his mentally handicapped brother, Michal, a victim of parental mistreatment, who tortures children to death, realizing the horrifying plot details of Katurian's stories. The fictions passed on to the children who enact them leads to tragedy in both plays: repeating their father's mistakes Willy's sons fail to acquire any stable position in life, whereas Katurian kills his brother by strangling him with a pillow to save him from a fate of horrors and he himself, in turn, is murdered by the representatives of authoritarian power (see Jordan 58). In his study on *The Pillowman*, Péter P. Müller also points out that "the most significant level of the play is neither the political nor the personal, but the parental one. The parental sphere connects the individual to society and vice versa. Furthermore, this is also the feature that relates the seemingly different world of *The Pillowman* set up in an East European dictatorship to the dominant world of McDonagh's other plays located in an Irish environment" (60). While *Salesman* remains a primarily cerebral play with manifestations of violence operating on the verbal level, *The Pillowman* presents a body politics which, as P. Müller asserts, "is of a kind that originates from the parental mistreatment of children and child abuse, which practice is adopted and exercised by the oppressive forces of dictatorial governing" (61). Miller's oeuvre, one

might conclude, functions as one of the most important reference points for an ever-renewing investigation of directions and developments in modern and postmodern Irish drama and theatre.

In 2015, the Miller centenary year, the Gate Theatre which had been the first to introduce Miller's work to Irish audiences, organized a celebratory festival where theater experts Christopher Bigsby and Enoch Brater, playwright Marina Carr, directors Joe Dowling and Garry Hynes as well as theatre critic Fintan O'Toole, among others, delivered talks in honor and respectful memory of the American playwright. Miller's presence in Irish theaters, it seems, has a remarkable continuity, his work posing a variety of challenges to generations of directors, actors, actresses, audiences, and critics.

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