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From Reader Review Timebends: A Life for online ebook

Rik Booraem says

A single word to describe this book might be "honest." Miller looks back over his life as celebrated playwright, New York leftist, serious artist looking for important material, but also married man looking for love and understanding, and tries to analyze why he made the decisions that he did, also why things turned out as they did despite his objections. We learn a lot that is intensely believable about Broadway, Hollywood, Marilyn Monroe, the climate of politics during and after World War II. It's like *Thoughts on Everything* by a thoughtful grandparent. A lot of memoirs by older Jewish writers have this quality of authority bolstered by experience -- one thinks of Saul Bellow and Ben Hecht. I recommend it as a read not for the subject matter but for the quality of the thought.

Tom Schulte says

While this was published in 1989, it really ends in the late 60s with Miller's involvement with PEN and draws a curtain over his family life in Connecticut with photographer Inge Morath, who he married in February 1962. The meat of this autobiography is professional and artistic development from U of M and NYC dock workers before the plays: *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible* foreshadowing his haunting by HUAC and the growth of *A View from the Bridge* from one-act to full, successful play. Of course, much is given over to the marriage to Marilyn Monroe and *The Misfits* where Miller felt she was lethally overpowered by her insecurity and the complications of Paula Strasberg manipulating involvement.

A small part of this story quite stuck me. In 1955, Miller was stuck with the influx of narcotics into New York City neighborhoods, rather recalling *Manchild in the Promised Land* that I recently read. Anyway, he felt this was "symptomatic of a wider but impossible-to-define disorientation that far transcended the gangs." One evening at dinner with sociologist Richard Cloward of the Columbia University School of Social Work and James McCarthy both of Mobilization for Youth (MFY), "the question arose as to how this generation of youth differed from our own of the Thirties." The hopeful, progressive, leftist Miller hoped for a Thirties-style approach of a community of people caught in a common problem and dealing with it by mutual action and responsibility:

"If common action of this kind is out, how are people going to visualize their evolution?" I asked Cloward in particular, since he was more the theoretician than McCarthy or I.

"The question is going to be lifestyle," he replied.

I had never heard the expression before. "What's that mean?"

"There will be competing styles of life, symbolic and essentially meaningless differences in clothing, speech patterns, tastes in food, cars, and so forth. The class struggle is over for now, and maybe even the conception of rank-and-file organizing. People are less and less interested in common action, which even now is getting to seem strange and kind of pointless. Identification will be more and more in terms of style—the self-image will be politically neutralized that way. It's going to be style-conscious, not class-conscious."

That seems to me remarkably prescient for describing the society we live in, now. Reminds me of "The 'revolution' of the future will not be driven by politics, but by aesthetics." This being a prediction made by J.G. Ballard.

Pauline Butcher Bird says

The trouble with autobiographies is that only part of most people's lives is interesting. So it is here. I wanted to read about Marilyn Monroe but we get only small parts out of two chapters. Miller glosses over the breakup of his first marriage and the formation of his relationship with the most famous sex-goddess of the 20th century. You have to piece together in your own mind how and why she married a dry, not particularly attractive man, or indeed why he took the major step to marry her. Then also, I wanted to know how much sex played in her life. After all she represented the sexual dreams of most men at that time. I don't need details but some indication - she maybe have been indifferent to sex, or gloried in it. She clearly suffered sexual abuse through her climb up the Hollywood ladder, so how did this affect her? I can't believe that Miller, with all his insights into every other aspect of his and people's lives, was not curious about this himself.

His prose is often vague and rambling, eg: "Glamour is a youth's form of blindness that lets in light, incoherent color, but nothing defined."

If you want to learn about the world of theater in the Fifties and Sixties, or the political climate during that time, including the extensive fear of Communism and the McCarthy trials, then this book is for you.

Gordon Prescott says

Timebends by Arthur Miller is a long-winded autobiography that incoherently jumps back and forth. I struggled to get to the good stuff about his landmark plays Death of a Salesman, The Crucible, All my Sons, etc. The overwriting poetic language becomes tiresome after a hundred pages. I skipped over long passages that held little interest to me.

Annie says

Arthur Miller has a unique perspective on the twentieth century, because, well, he is Arthur Miller. He took McCarthyism by the balls. He singlehandedly congealed a major part of the consciousness about the twentieth century American anti-hero through the image of Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman. Oh, and he married Marilyn Monroe.

Miller's grasp on prose is not like his flawlessly balanced plays, but it has a genius of its own. Sprawling, informative, non-linear, almost like an old man telling you like it was. If you're not a fan of his, you can skip over the endless sections of detailed descriptions of the writing of his plays, his interactions with Elia Kazan and Hollywood, but you would still gain prescient historical and personal insight from a truly original soul.

Ranjan says

It took me four months to read this voluminous autobiography of one of the greatest literary figures of the world who spanned the entire 20th century, but the journey was worth every page. He was born in 1915 and died in 2005; so in a way it is also the history of 20th century America, starting from its pre-Depression era, the influx of European migrants to US in search of better livelihoods, the Great Depression of the 30s, waterfront unionism backed by the Mob, the rise of Fascism, coping with anti-Semitism, indoctrination to Marxism, the throbbing intellectual climate of New York, experiments with his craft, flirting with Hollywood, strong-arm tactics of studio bosses and representatives, McCarthy era clampdown on artists suspected of communist sympathies including himself, his own dealings with HUAC, friendship with Elia Kazan and its dissolution because of Kazan's great betrayal before the Committee, Marilyn Monroe, John F. Kennedy, Vietnam fiasco in the 60s and 70s, chairing PEN... Within its 600 pages it packs in all in a fluid, but sometimes dense non-linear narrative... A life lived to the fullest... A must read!

Ali says

Timesbend, a life

A beautiful autobiography as if a man is standing in front of the world, but talking to himself...

[illegible]

Elizabeth Periale says

<http://xoxoxoe.blogspot.com/2012/07/a...>

"In *Timebends* Miller writes about her poetically enough, but Marilyn, his conception of Marilyn, rarely comes across as a real person. She is still a muse to his words, almost thirty years after their break-up and her death. Perhaps that is all she really ever was to him."

Suzanne says

Great autobiography by one of the best playwrights In American theater. If you like his works than you'll enjoy this.

Joe Mossa says

i love reading of writers writing but he nevers tells us when or why he chose to become a writer. i loved marilyn monroe as a teen,my first love. i can t wait till he writes of her. he began to write of her on pg 308 with much more to come. the, waiting for marilyn part, is motivating me to read on through the deep thinking of arthur miller.

it was very slow in parts especially the part about his presidency of PEN,the international writers organization. it was fascinating to hear of the roots of many of his important plays. i was disappointed that he didn t write of his sex life with marilyn but he was a gentleman .

Isaac says

Middle-class jew from harlem comes up in the depression, goes to school, writes some of the best plays ever and marries Marilyn Monroe. He is genuinely perplexed by it all. Worth reading for the odd marriage of ego and contrition; he is aware that he one of the elect, in his talent and in his life, and he is troubled by it. The best of the book is in the first two or three hundo, comprising as it does a very engaging and thoughtful oral history of the 30s and 40s, here and abroad; as Miller gets more famous, and as America flies off into cloud cuckoo land, things become murkier, and lessons begin to unlearn themselves. By the end of the book you find yourself trapped in a forced, false nostalgia for the days when there was a right thing to do and if you could get on a boat to spain to fight Franco you did it; it's a nostalgia that Miller himself eschews, but I found myself drawn back to the dockyards, back to an era when you didn't have to worry about cameras eating your soul.

Karen says

The experience of reading this book is kind of like sitting down and having someone tell you story after story of their life. My Dad used to do that. And it made me miss him. I learned quite a bit reading this book. Especially regarding Marxism and the 30's. How it came to be popular and the aftermath. Mr. Miller had so much pain in his life. Marilyn Monroe was a tragic lady. The book is 600 pages and the last 100 pages I found myself fidgety and wanting it all to end. The same thing would happen with my Dad and his stories. But out of respect I never walked away. So I kept reading.

Kllrchrd says

I felt in the company of a 'big man' reading this, i am a slow reader, as slow as I talk and with Millers style of writing I had to re-read many sentences and paragraphs, in my meticulous craftsmans manner I wanted to leave nothing out.

It was a privelege to hear of decades past and all the problems that went with it. I originally bought this book twenty years ago but only got to page one hundred, now being older it holds me far more, what seemed a strange play such as 'Salesman' now seems very relevant. Also the film 'The Misfits' with Huston is an absolute 'must' and the film 'A View from the Bridge' Dir Sidney Lumet is outstanding.

For a Limey his writing can be less than easy, but listening to him on youtube makes him much easier to read. I finished the book yesterday, he lets you down easy at the end and just want to think about it now for a few days more. As several ppl have stated here its like having the grandfather you never had. I like his style and delivery, can get a bit tricky at times but then again you are in the company of a 'big man'.

Timothy Dymond says

Arthur Miller is one of those writers whose massive output means you have read and seen more of his stuff than you think you have. E.g. I've seen productions of 'The Crucible', but I didn't realise that he wrote the first draft of what became 'On the Waterfront' (the final version was written by Bud Schulberg).

Miller has his artistic origins in the New York left-wing literati set that included Clifford Odets, Lillian Helman, Dashell Hammat and (for a little while) Elia Kazan. His relationship with Kazan is a key part of the major drama in this meandering memoir - Miller's dealings with the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) during the 'McCarthy era' (which, as Miller makes clear, involved far more than just Joe McCarthy himself).

Unlike Kazan, Miller refused to name names of people he knew were in, or involved in, the Communist Party in the 1930s. He was actually tried for contempt of Congress - although he was able to ultimately beat the charges by demonstrating the HUAC had displayed the bad faith. Kazan seems to have been convinced that he would never have a film career if he didn't 'name names'. He gives Kazan a generous character reference, however Miller seems to have been able to have a successful career despite refusing to co-operate with HUAC (Broadway may have been a better place to have a post-McCarthy career than Hollywood).

One of the ways that HUAC 'convicted' people of being Communists, even when they denied it, was to bring in an 'Expert' on Communism who assessed people's words and deeds for Communist inclinations. In his trial defence Miller turned the tables on this approach by calling as a expert witness one of these 'Experts' who had repudiated this entire approach. He was an ex-Conservative politician and military man who was in charge of an office in the Eisenhower administration that received information from the public about who was a Red. Looking at the sheer volume of nonsensical 'denunciations' that were just score settling, misunderstandings, or lies; not to mention the cases of mistaken identity (woe betide you looking for work in the 1950s if you just had the same name as a 'Red'); not to mention the ridiculous level of parsing of opinions to determine if they were Marxist, or socialist, or liberal ideas - the Expert honestly arrived at the view that the whole process was dangerous and discredited.

A lot of the interest in this book would be driven by Marilyn Monroe, to whom Miller was married in the 1950s and 1960s. Those parts are probably the more difficult sections as I can't help thinking Miller is really an unreliable narrator on this point. I think this book is best read as a series of interesting stories - which of

course is what you should expect from a playwright.

Barbara Rubin says

Timebends by Arthur Miller is a long-winded autobiography that incoherently jumps back and forth. I struggled to get to the good stuff about his landmark plays Death of a Salesman, The Crucible, All my Sons, etc. The overwriting poetic language becomes tiresome after a hundred pages. I skipped over long passages that held little interest to me.
