

Reviews for Arthur Miller 1915-1962

Bigsby has produced a thorough book that is unlikely to be surpassed in its wealth of detail.

--Toby Young (*Mail on Sunday* 20081207)

[A] colossal biography...This is a fat, endlessly informative book, the work of a lifetime...It is as definitive as we are likely to get, with plenty of new material. It also reveals much more than Miller did in his autobiography, *Timebends*. Above all, it is a book about the puzzle of politics and art and about the unreliable solution provided by sex--or Marilyn Monroe as it was once called.

--Bryan Appleyard (*Sunday Times* 20081214)

Christopher Bigsby's lengthy, sympathetic study contains electrifying new perspectives on its subject...The man who emerges from these pages is more of a showman than is usually credited and more of a modern hero, too.

--Vanessa Thorpe (*The Observer* 20081214)

Bigsby gives a remarkably full account of this complex and somewhat remote figure...A richly detailed, revealing look at the making of a playwright and a man. (*Kirkus Reviews* 20090415)

[A] multiperspective masterpiece, which surpasses all other Miller biographies, including his autobiography, *Timebends*. Bigsby gives the reader an intense and personal look at Miller's life, from his birth in 1915 to moderately affluent Jewish American parents and his college years working at a newspaper to his intense attraction and eventual marriage to Marilyn Monroe and his appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Everything is here, from the mundane to the revelatory. This detailed look at his life reveals his shared experiences as the basis for his sympathies for the common man.

--Mark Alan Williams (*Library Journal* 20090515)

Bigsby leaves no facet of playwright Arthur Miller's life, public or private, unexamined in this literally and figuratively weighty tome...Although this volume covers only the first 48 of Miller's 89 years, the book is a definite godsend to theater lovers and generations of students probing Miller's life and work.

--Jack Helbig (*Booklist (starred review)* 20090103)

A feature of this encyclopedic study of the first half of Miller's life is the excellence of the writing and the trans-Atlantic acuity of observation. Bigsby is always at home in Miller's America...Bigsby's extended defense of Miller's gut rejection of Kazan's apostasy is an intellectual triumph.

--David Caute (*Spectator* 20081214)

Contains electrifying new perspectives on its subject...Miller, it's clear, was not a dry, cerebral naive but a principled, passionate talent, who recognized imperfection in himself and in others. The man who emerges from these pages is more of a showman than is usually credited and more of a modern hero, too.

--Vanessa Thorpe (*The Observer* 20081214)

A landmark biography.

--Toby Young (*Independent on Sunday* 20081220)

A masterly biography of Miller.

--Tony Rennell (*Daily Mail* 20081221)

[A] magisterial biography...This is a must-read for anyone seriously interested in twentieth century theatre and particularly Miller's life and work...The author goes into remarkable detail based on years of research, to come to conclusions about the life of a man who at his best was perhaps the greatest American playwright of the last fifty years, or possibly ever.

--Philip Fisher (*British Theatre Guide* 20090603)

[A] meteor-size new biography...Bigsby's book is crammed with piquant details.

--Dwight Garner (*New York Times* 20090612)

Monumental...A portrait of a man with a passion for social (and racial) justice and a fierce belief in responsibility for one's own life, though Miller was often harder on himself than on others for not always living up to such ideals.

--James Hebert (*creators.com* 20090628)

Thanks to Bigsby's research, particularly into previously unseen material, his account of Miller trying to hang on to his soul in midcentury America shows that he was large not least in his contradictions...What the book makes newly clear, though, is how much of Miller's work reflects his own personal struggles.

--Jeremy McCarter (*New York Times Book Review* 20090101)

Christopher Bigsby has a perfect ear for the manners and motions of Miller's art, and he tells a gripping story of Miller's hunt for truth. There are mysteries to bear and ironies to become invested in--all good biographies must have their share--and yet the Miller who emerges from this book is ambiguous enough to become a beacon of the Cold War period...Bigsby's biography is so effective because it manages to locate Miller's art in terms both of the progression of his idealism and the regressions of his actual experience. There can't be many writers who appeared to live so much at the center of their times and who suffered so much from that seeming centrality...One of the coups of Bigsby's terrific biography is that it finally allows Miller to name the names he refused to name in 1956.

--Andrew O'Hagan (*London Review of Books* 20090607)

[A] monumental new biography...Miller's art was a constant, arduous and often soul-searing process of working through themes from his life....[Bigsby's] book is a portrait of a man with a passion for social (and racial) justice and a fierce belief in responsibility for one's own life, though Miller was often harder on himself than on others for not always living up to such ideals.

--James Hebert (*San Diego Union-Tribune* 20090731)

Christopher Bigsby is the first to offer a serious biography since Miller's death.

--Robert Birnbaum (*The Morning News* 20090719)

Christopher Bigsby has very likely written the definitive biography of Miller...Bigsby

has assiduously read countless unfinished scripts, unpublished stories, and drafts of Miller's plays, and he supplies abundant context so that the reader can compare Miller's views and social situations with those of his contemporaries. Bigsby takes extraordinary pains to explain how each play evolved and how it was received. He persuasively argues that Miller's career was shaped by a profound conviction that the theater could play a meaningful role in changing the world. Even if that belief appears overly hopeful, Miller's plays stand as a testament to his courageous capacity to explore dilemmas of civic conscience and the human heart.

--Michael Kammen (*Boston Globe*)

Reviews for Arthur Miller 1962-2005

'Bigsby's landmark biography...draws on many hours of conversation with Miller and a substantial archive of unpublished work...it is rich, authoritative, deeply thought, widely informed and responsive to the power and dignity of Miller's art. It will not be superseded.' (John Carey *THE SUNDAY TIMES*)

'This second half of Christopher Bigsby's masterly and illuminating biography has all the virtues of the first. Rich in compelling detail, comprehensive in its coverage of his subject's private and public life, it tells Miller's tale with a fine narrative sweep and a sure grasp of the changing political background...superb testament to a great playwright and a fascinating human being' (*THE SPECTATOR*)

'a world statesman on equal terms with iconic figures such as Mandela, Gorbachev and Castro. Miller's life and work have become a metaphor for the 20th century. There will be other biographies, but Bigsby's will stand as the foundation stone' (*THE TIMES*)

'Together, both volumes of Bigsby's biography cement Miller's status, in Britain at least if not America, probably best described by the British director David Thacker, with whom Miller collaborated: "A little lower than Shakespeare and a little higher than God."' (*JEWISH CHRONICLE*)

'Arthur Miller, 1915-1962, the first volume of Bigsby's biography of the writer, was remarkable because it cast new light on those long-familiar aspects of his life. In contrast this second volume is important because it demands that we stop neglecting his many achievements after 1962. What emerges is a fascinating portrait of a man who was certainly flawed but whose attempt to find common ground between art and activism was astonishingly courageous.' (*IRISH TIMES*)

'This is the second instalment in Bigsby's biography of Miller. Running to 520 pages (excluding notes and index) it takes up just after his split with Monroe, as he begins his much more stable and lasting relationship with Morath. Bigsby's research is thorough and he has crafted the book with care' (*IRISH INDEPENDENT*)

'The most touching sections of Bigsby's book concern Miller's life on his estate in Connecticut, where he planted trees, cut grass for hay, drove a tractor, made furniture for the house, and even attempted in vain to invent a bird feeder that would outwit the

foraging local squirrels.' (*THE OBSERVER*)

'Christopher Bigsby's well-written and very readable biography...does an excellent job of locating Miller within his intellectual and political context...provides a stimulating dimension to Miller criticism beyond the sycophancy with which a new Miller production is often received, particularly in this country...Christopher Bigsby's book is a welcome addition to our understanding of Miller the man, the playwright and the intellectual.' (*LITERARY REVIEW*)

'readers can now delight in the second volume of Arthur Miller scholar Christopher Bigsby's biography...Bigsby's first volume was as invaluable as it was readable; this second will not disappoint...Bigsby writes with care, affection and admirable detachment about an author who was also a friend...Miller lived for 89 years; he wrote for most of them. He changed the theatre, which is more than most playwrights...He probably saved more than a few lives. Best of all, he lived a great love story.'
(*FINANCIAL TIMES*)