Exploring the Morality of Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan to Show How It Affected Their Work, Friendship and Society

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EXPLORING THE MORALITY OF ARTHUR MILLER AND ELIA KAZAN TO
SHOW HOW IT AFFECTED THEIR WORK, FRIENDSHIP AND SOCIETY

By

Dale D. Parry

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the moral convictions, or the lack of same, in the personal character of Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan and to show how those convictions affected not only their work and personal friendship but society as well. They first met in 1946 when Harold Clurman of the Group Theater passed to Kazan a Miller play that he had read entitled *All My Sons*. With the success of the play, the two became fast friends and collaborators in profession and ideology. Each had in common the Great Depression, problem fathers, marital instability and Communism. For a short period during the 1930s, both men belonged to the Communist Party. Kazan was deeply committed to the cause, whereas Miller preferred to watch from a distance and take notes that may eventually become the basis for a future play. Miller’s was a more intellectual approach to Communism while Kazan was a pro-active member of the rank and file. They disdained capitalism and considered the business world, in Kazan’s word, “antihuman”. They worked well together and in 1949 did *Death of a Salesman*. Its theme could be interpreted as the anti-American dream. For both men, Miller’s plays served as a sounding board for what they considered to be a social injustice.

On stage and in the movies they confronted the mores of the time. Eventually what they wrote and produced would come under the scrutiny of the federal government. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) investigated them. Senator Joseph McCarthy had predicated his senate investigation on the subversive anti-American, anti-Christian immorality and atheism of Communism that he thought was intent on overthrowing America. He attacked the theater and entertainment industry in an
effort to rid it and America of what became known as “slanted writing”—plays and movies that contained hints of Communist doctrine. McCarthy accused some of America’s finest artists of subversion and demanded they confess their Communist connections and name the names of their comrades or “fellow travelers” as they came to be known. Though their short three-year friendship was strong and binding, it would not, and could not, survive this attack. It could not survive because Kazan had violated Miller’s personal values. When the HUAC asked Miller to give them the names of his fellow travelers, he refused and was convicted of contempt of Congress. However, Kazan named names; including Miller’s. It would be almost 10 years before they would speak again. In the interim, they spoke to each other and the world through their work, specifically Miller’s *The Crucible* and Kazan’s *On the Waterfront*. Proctor, the adulterous protagonist of *The Crucible*, would rather be hanged than betray himself by confessing to something he didn’t do. Terry Malloy, the stool pigeon of *Waterfront* becomes a state witness for the prosecution in the conviction of corrupt union bosses on the docks.

In their own way, and in their best style, Miller and Kazan tried to explain and justify their actions. Each thought what they did was the morally right thing to do. This paper will explore how the character convictions of Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan determined their HUAC testimony and how what they said and did affected the American culture and the world in general.
# Table of Contents

Abstract iii  
Table of Contents v  
List of Figures vi  

**Chapter 1: House Un-American Activities Congressional Investigations: The McCarthy Era**  
1  

**Chapter 2 Historical Background of Kazan and Miller**  
10  

**Chapter 3 Molly**  
16  

**Chapter 4 Arthur Miller Meets Marilyn Monroe Causing a Moral Struggle**  
23  

**Chapter 5 *The Crucible***  
30  

**Chapter 6 Betrayal**  
35  

Conclusion 43  

Bibliography 46  

Works Cited 49  

Curriculum Vitae 51
List of Figures

Figure 1 – Page 1 of McCarthy’s telegram to President Truman 6
Figure 2 – Page 2 of McCarthy’s telegram to President Truman 6
Figure 3 – Page 3 of McCarthy’s telegram to President Truman 7
Figure 4 – Page 4 of McCarthy’s telegram to President Truman 7
Figure 5 – Page 5 of McCarthy’s telegram to President Truman 8
Figure 6 – Page 6 of McCarthy’s telegram to President Truman 8
Figure 7 – Response from President Truman 9
Chapter One

House Un-American Activities Congressional Investigations: The McCarthy Era

In the mid-1970s, when director Anne Bogart (co-founder and Artistic Director of SITI Company of Saratoga Springs, New York) began researching influences upon the American theater, she was immediately stymied. She recounts this in her book *A Director Prepares*:

The most immediate influences were easily accessible. During the late 1960s, theatre in the United States underwent an eruption, almost a revolution. I moved to New York City in 1974 and the atmosphere was still vertiginous. This cultural insurrection and its practitioners were a rich source of ideas and passion: the Living Theater, the Open Theater, the Manhattan Theater Project, the Performance Group, the Bread and Puppet Theater, the dancers at the Judson Church and individuals such as Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman and Meredith Monk. These artists felt almost present in my rehearsals. I was inspired and encouraged by their example and by their methods. They were the shoulders upon which I stood.

(Bogart 23)

What she was to discover was that the “cultural insurrection” that she described stood on no one’s shoulders. It stood alone. There were no historical, socio-political shoulders of a previous theater for them to stand on, and for good reason. Bogart continues:

... it was the search beyond these immediate influences that became problematic. Much to my surprise and frustration, I discovered a serious blockage of information from earlier years. I could trace influences back
to about 1968 and then everything stopped. I had difficulty channeling previous generations in any concrete way. I could not feel them ‘in the room’ with me. I wasn’t using them in my rehearsals. I was not fed by them ideologically, technically, aesthetically or personally in a way that felt substantive or practical . . . I was aware of the political engagement and aesthetic breakthroughs of the Federal Theater Project, the Mercury Theater, the Group Theater, the Civic Theater, the Living Newspaper and individuals such as Eva Le Gallienne, Josh Logan, Hallie Flannagan, Orson Welles, Jose Ferrer, Elia Kazan, Clifford Odets and so many others, but why did I have so much trouble accessing their wisdom? Why could I not use and own their manifest political engagement and passionate relationship to social issues that so clearly influenced how they worked and what they accomplished? Other than the stale influence of a watered-down version of the Stanislavsky system, why could I not feel these people in the room with me? I felt cut off from their passion and commitment. I found it impossible to stand upon their values and ideals. Why could I not stand securely upon their shoulders? What happened?

(25)

What had happened she found was that:

. . . between the years 1949 and 1952, the theatre community in the United States was struck by a cataclysmic event: the McCarthy era. This political attack forced everyone to radically alter or adjust their lives and values. Some fled the country never to return, some were blacklisted and
forced to stop working, and others just changed, recanted, disengaged and
shut up. Today we barely remember the McCarthy era and most of us are
not aware of the serious consequences of that forgotten catalyst. Through
a brutally effective mechanism, artists were directed to disengage from
issues facing the real world. (25)

Professor Bogart had discovered the devastation that Senator Joseph McCarthy had
wreaked upon the entertainment community of America. His overly zealous anti-
communist machinations ultimately led to the humiliating blacklisting, imprisonment
and, in some cases the deaths, of famous and revered American artists, writers and
entertainers. To help understand what motivated the Junior Senator from Wisconsin,
McCarthy’s lawyer, Roy Cohn, in his memoir *McCarthy*, best describes how the senator
came to his fateful decision to rout out and prosecute, if not persecute, any and all
American citizens, regardless of their station, or status, who were or ever were affiliated
with the Communist Party. Cohn reports:

Joe McCarthy bought Communism in much the same way as other people
purchase a new automobile. The salesman showed him the model; he
looked at it with interest, examined it more closely, kicked at the tires, sat
at the wheel, squiggled in the seat, asked some questions, and bought. It
was just as cold as that. (Cohn 8)

Cohn states McCarthy was shown a comprehensive report on “subversion” compiled by
the FBI that had been kicking around Washington for 2 years. No Congressman wanted
to take it on until one day a determined group of men approached the Republican Junior
Senator with the report. Cohn states that McCarthy talked with the men for several
hours; then told Cohn, “After a couple hours’ sleep, I got dressed and went to the office. I made up my mind—I was going to take it on. It was fantastic, unbelievable. Take any spy story you ever read, any movie about international intrigue, and this was more startling.” He then called one of the men “and told him I was buying the package.” (10)

McCarthy then presented his package to the world in a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia on February 9, 1950. In it he stated his case:

“Ladies and gentlemen, can there be anyone tonight who is so blind as to say that the war is not on? Can there by anyone who fails to realize that the Communist world has said the time is now? . . . that this is the time for the show-down between the democratic Christian world and the communistic atheistic world?” (McCarthy)

Two days later he sent a telegram to Harry Truman who was president at the time telling him that, “the state department harbors a nest of Communist and Communist sympathizers who are helping to shape our foreign policy. I further stated that I have in my possession the names of 57 Communists who are in the State Department at present,”. (See figures 1-6) The president fired back a searing note berating him for being insolent and disrespectful. (See figure 7)

Fundamentally, McCarthy’s war was one of morality and faith against what he called: “immoralism”. It pitted Christian against atheist. As he said in his speech:

“The real, basic difference, however, lies in the religion of immoralism . . . invented by Marx, preached feverishly by Lenin, and carried to unimaginable extremes by Stalin. This religion of immoralism, if the Red half of the world triumphs—and well it may, gentlemen—this religion of
immoralism will more deeply wound and damage mankind than any conceivable economic or political system.” (McCarthy)

Ironically, the end results of his efforts were and are to this day considered to be truly un-American and repugnanty immoral. His investigations began in 1947 and continued until December 2, 1957, when the senate voted to censure him. During that time he inflicted considerable damage to the lives and careers of many great artists; the likes of Lillian Hellman and her husband Dashiell Hammet, actors John Garfield, Zero Mostel and Lee Grant. It literally destroyed the friendship and professional relationship between director Elia Kazan and playwright Arthur Miller.
THE PRESIDENT

THE WHITE HOUSE

IN A LINCOLN DAY SPEECH AT WHEELING THURSDAY NIGHT

I STATED THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT HARBORS A NEST OF

COMMUNISTS AND COMMunist SYmpATHIZERS WHO ARE HELPING TO

SHAPE OUR FOREIGN POLICY. I FURTHER STATED THAT I HAVE IN

MY POSSESSION THE NAMES OF 57 COMMUNISTS WHO ARE IN THE

STATE DEPARTMENT AT PRESENT. A STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN

DENIALLY DENIED THIS AND CLAIMED THAT THERE IS NOT A SINGLE

COMMUNIST IN THE DEPARTMENT. YOU CAN CONVINCE YOURSELF OF

THE FALSITY OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT CLAIM VERY EASILY.

YOU WILL RECALL THAT YOU PERSONALLY APPOINTED A BOARD TO

SCREEN STATE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES FOR THE PURPOSE OF

REMOVALS AND TRAVELERs. YOUR BOARD DID A PAINstaking

JOB. AND NAMED HUNDREDS WHICH IT LISTED AS "DANGEROUS TO

THE SECURITY OF THE NATION", BECAUSE OF COMMUNISTIC

CONNECTIONS.

WHILE THE RECORDS ARE NOT AVAILABLE TO ME, I KNOW
Figure 3 – Page 3 of McCarthy’s telegram to President Truman

Figure 4 – Page 4 of McCarthy’s telegram to President Truman
(1) That you demand that Acheson give you and the proper Congressional committee the names and a complete report on all of those who were placed in the Department by Alger Hiss, and all of those still working in the State Department who were listed by your Board as bad security risks because of the communist connections.

(2) That under no circumstances could a Congressional committee obtain any information or help from the Executive Department in exposing communists.

Failure on your part will label the Democratic Party of being the bed-fellow of international communism. Certainly this label is not deserved by the hundreds of thousands of loyal American Democrats throughout the Nation, and by the sizable number of able loyal Democrats in both the Senate and the House.

Joe McCarthy U.S.S. Wis.
Figure 6 – Page 6 of McCarthy’s telegram to President Truman

Draft

My dear Senator:

I read your telegram of February eleventh from Reno, Nevada
with a great deal of interest and this is the first time in my experience,
and I was ten years in the Senate, that I ever heard of a Senator trying to
discredit his own Government before the world. You know that isn’t done
by honest public officials. Your telegram is not only not true and an
insolent approach to a situation that should have been worked out between
man and man but it shows conclusively that you are not even fit to have a
hand in the operation of the Government of the United States.

I am very sure that the people of Wisconsin are extremely sorry
that they are represented by a person who has as little sense of responsibility
as you have.

Sincerely yours,

[H.S. T]

Figure 7 – Response from President Truman
(http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/mccarthy-telegram/images/truman-reply.gif)
Chapter 2

Historical Background of Kazan and Miller

In order to understand the motivations of Miller and Kazan and their contributions to society as artists and citizens, it is necessary to retrace a little of their early life. In 1909 Elia Kazan was born in the Phanar district of Istanbul to Anatolian Greek parents who were originally from Kayseri in Anatolia. Later, when he was four, his father George and mother Athena Kazanjoglou, moved to America. He dearly loved his mother but grew to hate his father who was a rug merchant and a tyrant to the family. George frightened the young Elia, who in his autobiography *Elia Kazan: A Life* published in 1989, wrote at age 78: “I am still scared of him.” (Kazan) He goes on to tell us:

> When father had first come to America, he must have felt that he was still in a hostile and threatening environment—after all, he could not speak the language— he continued to behave in New York as he had among the Turks, guarding himself to be circumspect, always beyond criticism on the streets and in the marketplace, always ready with his smile of compliance. He’d learned to get by on his cleverness and never say anything that might be misinterpreted. He learned to survive by cunning, by guile, and by restraining his real reactions. He couldn’t afford to behave truly on the streets or in his store. He had to please and flatter his customers. A salesman has to sell himself before he can sell his goods. He preserved his life by pretending respect for what he feared and even despised. In Turkey, he’d learned what Anatolian Greeks learn: how it was necessary to be in order to survive. (11)
He adds that his father taught him:

As well as by the only spoken bits of advice he’d ever given me: “Mind your own business” and “Don’t start up arguments” and “Walk away from a fight.” Out in the world, Father couldn’t afford anger. When someone tried to involve him in a controversy, he’d escape by saying, “I know nothing.” (11)

Elia concludes: “All this technique of getting along Father had communicated to me by example. Despite everything, he’d been my model.” (11) It is possible that Elia’s father may have passed on to him that very same fear of feeling that he was in a hostile and threatening environment as previously quoted. For him to survive and succeed, Kazan would need to become his father who “... learned to survive by cunning, by guile, and by restraining his real reactions. He couldn’t afford to behave truly ...” (11)

No place brought the reality of that lesson more home to him than Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. During his years there he felt like an outsider. He was not rushed to pledge a fraternity, which hurt him deeply. He says for four years: “I never said hello to anyone; others had to speak to me first. I kept my eyes straight ahead and usually on the ground. I became stoop shouldered.” Years later he was able to say, “Now looking back, I laugh and I tell myself I was lucky not to be “pledged,” but how crushing that silence was in ‘26. It hurt for four dark, cold years, and in the blackest part of my heart I still haven’t forgiven the men who rejected me.” (41)

From that soul searing, still smoldering rejection came the defining heat of abiding and comforting revenge and a certain knowledge.
I only knew I’d been turned away and that the streets seemed darker at night. I’d have to “eat” what had happened and find my own way to get what I envied. I began to exercise violence in daydreams and in impulses that I thwarted: broke down doors, climbed through window guards, stole, ran, punched, kicked, slammed heads on hard wood floors. Above all, I realized that I now had to persist with my own strength and my special cunning. From that week in 1926 on, I knew what I was. An outsider. An Anatolian, not an American. (41)

Cleverly, if not somewhat masochistically, the avowed “outsider” hired on as a fraternity houseboy and would deliberately work extra time at the parties because,

The girls I dreamed about were at the Zeta Psi house party, the same girls I didn’t have in high school. Now fully matured, they had an aggressive playfulness I rarely see in older women. They were far livelier, far bolder, as well as far prettier. Standing at service over the two punch bowls, one spiked, the other not, I’d select the girl I wanted most and keep my eyes on her all evening, observe where she went, whom she danced with, particularly those boys not her date. Did she like someone better than the big man on campus who’d brought her? Good! “Just you wait, kid! My turn’s coming!” (43)

His needs and wants became more and more entrenched as his:

Desire blended with anger. I’d do extra service, come back at dawn over the crackling snow crust and rearrange the dining room to serve breakfast. I’d find the girls, still in their party frocks, sprawled in disorder over the
living room and in the corners under the stairs, the boys alongside, and
everywhere the smell of stale applejack. I’d look for the girl whom I’d
been following with my eyes the night before and from her position and
company, re-create the story of her night. My face, serving breakfast, was
the face Puerto Ricans call the face of stone. No one could have guessed
what I was thinking and feeling. It wasn’t friendly. I was quickly
developing the mask that I was to wear the rest of my life. (43)

He surmised that:

It was there, I suppose, that revenge began to be a motive in my life. It
was at these parties that my obsessive attraction to other men’s women
was born and my need, it amounted to that, to take them away. (43)

Over the years he very well succeeded in this respect. Though he considered himself
rather homely, his power to seduce women was enormous. Walter Bernstein shares an
observation in his book *Inside Out*:

I had seen Kazan as a mesmerizing actor on the stage. He was short, with
a big nose, and he was the most seductive man I had ever met. He made
you feel wanted and cared for. He understood you and passed no
judgment. (Bernstein 16)

Though he married early he enjoyed the company and sexual pleasures of many
mistresses and casual acquaintances including the aspiring actress Norma Jeane Baker.
His personal outsider moral code placed no restrictions like adultery on his ability to
fulfill his needs and wants. Later he would refine and edify his moral code.
Upon being graduated from Williams, Kazan had received more than a liberal education. What he had endured for four long, cold years was in fact the impetus to dedicate himself to the Communist Party. On graduation day he said:

... I had the fever of the malcontent now and my sights were set on another course.

I walked into Chapin Hall with my fellow seniors for our final ceremony, sat with them shoulder to shoulder, and wanted what they had: their style, their looks, their clothes, their cars, their money, the jobs they had waiting for them, and the girls they had waiting for them. I wanted all that, and I wanted it soon. Every time I saw privilege from then on, I wanted to tear it down or to possess it. During those cold, dark years at Williams, the emotional groundwork for me to join the Communist Party was laid down.

But what I wanted was not equality, not of any sort. I wanted the full rewards of the system I’d been on the outskirts of for four years, the rewards I hadn’t had. I wanted, as my political associates-to-be would say, to take over. And years later, for a time, I suppose I did “take over”, not with comrades,” but all by myself (Kazan 44)

This is the same Communist Party that years later Senator Joseph McCarthy would refer to in his famous speech as the “religion of immoralism”. After leaving school Kazan immersed himself into the rank and file of the Communist party when he joined the Group Theater. Within a year and a half he rebelled against its dictatorial stance and left. He left because, as quoted above, “I wanted was not equality, not of any sort. I wanted
the full rewards of the system.” He craved to live a totally amoral life with no restrictions, no guilt, no respect for any societal conventions. The question was how.

The answer is—and here’s the bad part—duplicity. That’s the solution I arrived at . . . almost fifty years ago. What I decided . . . was to cut myself loose from the plague of guilt, from society’s approved restrictions and morality. Secretly, quietly, I scorned them and went my way, pulling out of life the pleasure and adventures I craved. . . . What I decided, without knowing it, was that I would live in conflict and confusion. I knew what that would mean; I’d have to sneak, cheat, lie, fake, dissemble—all shameful, all humiliating, all necessary if you want to have what I’ve called “both.” I’d decided to take that step” (178)

This life changing epiphany came to him when he was 25 years old and had been married to his wife, Molly for about 4 years. They were married in 1932. His wife was the direct antithesis of his liberating philosophy to cut loose “from the plague of guilt”.

Chapter Three

Molly

Molly Kazan, nee Mary Thatcher, the daughter of Alfred Beaumont Thatcher and Emma Cecelia Erkenbrecher, was Elia’s wife, who was instrumental in many of his artistic and personal life decisions. He says about her in *Elia Kazan: A Life*:

I’ve met a few people in the theatre who’ve been absolutely truthful at all times. Just as I was an outsider by birth and by family history, Molly was an insider. She never doubted her place in life. For her there were never two possibilities; there was only one. (Kazan 73)

They met at Yale when Molly visited her boyfriend who was Kazan’s roommate, but she fell in love with Elia. To him it was as if:

Molly came as a miracle. It had taken me some time after my graduation from Williams to realize that the purpose of that college was not to instill information but to create a certain type of elite individual. (54)

Even so, it seems Kazan had a chip on his shoulder about being an outsider, “by birth and by family” and considered to be a second-class citizen. He was only four years old when he came to America and yet according to Jeff Young in his book *Kazan on Kazan*:

Already Elia had developed his own version of the “Anatolian smile” that he had inherited from his ancestors. It was a smile that hid everything—fear, rage, resentment, frustration, even love and joy. It was a smile that allowed him to get along in the world, to avoid being beaten up because he was an outsider. It was a smile that hid his feelings of insecurity, of not belonging, of feeling foreign, unattractive, different. It was a smile that
defined him as a person constantly at war with himself. Behind that mask he could plot his revenge, develop a means of proving he was better than any of “them.” (Young 9)

Kazan was always concerned about his worth and acceptance. When Molly came along she changed all that for him. He discovered he could lead a dual life. Her circle of friends readily welcomed him yet he continued to live a double life. He says what Molly . . . meant to me was acceptance by an indifferent and foreign society, racial and social acceptance. She completely relieved me of the impression, ground into me over the years, that I was a member of an inferior group, lucky to be where I was, lucky to be accepted at all, a freak, a mutt, a boy whose clothes smelled of dishwater. When I was with Molly I wasn’t an outsider. (Kazan 54)

Over the years Elia grew to depend on Molly’s intellect and keen literary perceptions. She was to become more than a wife to me; she was, for many years, a talisman of success. A deep and lasting artistic partnership was being born. I came to rely on her judgment in scripts. She made up for my lacks in taste and savvy. (54)

Arthur Miller writes in *Timebends* that,

He relied, although by no means as totally as was rumored, on his wife Molly’s analytic capacities in this. In my experience, she was very good at tracing the lines of force of a play’s story and character structures but sometimes tended to crop excrescences dangerously close to a play’s nerve. Kazan was far more the poet but was sometimes uncertain whether
to unleash a play’s fancifulness or scramble back for safety to its main plot lines. In a sense, nevertheless, and not only in the theatre, Molly was his conscience, a figure he had both to rely on and to slyly evade on occasion. (Miller 273)

Elia confesses in his autobiography that he:

\[ \ldots \] slipped around the edges of conflicts; Molly stood upright in the center of storms. I learned to compromise when I was young and to avoid confrontation. Molly’s principles permitted no deviation from her obligation to what was right. She felt it was her business to speak out on anything she felt. I was born knowing that things could never be perfect. Perfection was Molly’s standard for her life. She never wavered and she never changed, (Kazan 73)

Molly protected him with, as Miller called them, her “analytical capacities”, even to the extent of aiding in re-writes of a play Kazan was to direct for Irene Selznick. It was for a production of a new play by George Tabori, *Flight into Egypt*. The re-writes were designed to make sure there were no hints of Communism—at the time Kazan was being investigated by the HUAC. Richard Schickel writes in his biography *Elia Kazan: A Biography*:

Selznick, in her memoirs, accuses Kazan of softening the play and attributes this to his HUAC problems. He had come to her in December, confessed his former Communist Party membership and said that he would soon be compelled to testify. He assured her he would not give up any names, and induced her to read the left-wing press (including the
Daily Worker), which he said exactly represented his views on the committee. But Selznick also observed that he brought Molly along to their first meeting and that she accompanied him on the play’s tryout run in Boston. He said to her that Molly would see to it that the play would be “politically safe.” This, Selznick later wrote, puzzled her. She did not see anything controversial in Tabori’s work. But Molly remained a presence throughout this production and Selznick implies, encouraged the weakening re-writes Kazan insisted upon. (Schickel 252)

Kazan writes that:

Because of Molly, I began to appreciate the qualities of those Puritans: a live conscience, a stubborn mind, common decency, independence of thought, a lively and unremitting concern for our nation’s future, respect for democracy as a political institution, plus and ideal of service in its behalf. Molly was the first person I’d met who lived with an obligation to causes bigger than herself. (Kazan 54)

But when it came to making a decision about testifying before the HUAC his appreciation of these Puritan qualities of “causes bigger than himself” hadn’t quite peaked. His moral compass still deviated from true north. He remembers that:

I’d expressed anger at being hauled down to Washington to answer questions to which I was sure they knew the answers. “All they want is to make a spectacle of me,” I said, and my scrupulous and ornery wife, who didn’t admire the tactics of the committee or its members, burst out with one of her contrary opinions. “I can’t say much for their procedures,”
she’d said, “but it’s the duty of this Congress to find out all there is to find out about the Party and what they’re up to and to ask people like you what you know. I hope you tell them the truth.” (447)

Kazan knew all too well what the party was up to. He and Molly were comrades in the Communist rank and file during the 1930s. In fact, Elia was a prime force to organize the Group Theater into a Communist collective of actors. He says that, “the Group cell had been meeting every Tuesday night after the performance in Joe Bromberg’s dressing room.” (120)

Movie star Robert Vaughn in his book *Only Victims: A Study of Show Business* Blacklisting reports that,

Kazan appeared initially before a private executive session of the committee on January 14, 1952, and then again in executive session on Thursday, April 10, 1952. In the latter appearance Kazan submitted a statement declaring that he had been a member of the Communist Party and announced: “I want to tell you everything I know about it. “His statement told about his nineteen month membership in the Communist Party, 1934-36, the names of the members of the Group Theatre who were Communists, and how he came to leave the party. (Vaughn 160)

He did as Molly instructed. Vaughn continues with:

Kazan described the duties of CP members as fourfold:

1. To “educate” ourselves in Marxist and party doctrine;
2. To help the party get a foothold in the Actors Equity Association;
3. To support various “front” organizations of the party;
4. To try to capture the Group Theatre and make it a Communist mouthpiece.

The witness’s statement noted that numbers two and four were failures and numbers one and three only semi-successful. (160)

To explain his position, with the help and urging of Molly, Kazan wrote an article for the New York Times. He concluded it by saying:

It also left me with the passionate conviction that we must never let the Communists get away with the pretense that they stand for the very things which they kill in their own countries. I am talking about free speech, a free press, the rights of property, the rights of labor, racial equality and, above all, individual rights. I value these things. I take them seriously. I value peace, too, when it is not bought at the price of fundamental decencies. I believe these things must be fought for wherever they are not fully honored and protected whenever they are threatened. The motion pictures I have made and the plays I have chosen to direct represent my convictions. I expect to continue to make the same kinds of pictures and to direct the same kinds of plays. (Kazan)

Molly’s Puritan ethic had begun to infect Elia. He seemed to be speaking of what he had earlier ascribed to Molly, that she had “an obligation to causes bigger than herself.” Or was it pure Molly? His speech was not popularly accepted by the left, nor was his testimony. He lived the next half century branded as an “outsider” by Hollywood. Molly stayed with him enjoying his successes and enduring his failures. She also endured his
multiple extramarital affairs and filed for divorce twice. In December of 1963 she died in New York City of a cerebral hemorrhage at age 56.

As an interesting side note and perhaps an insight into the young and ambitious Elia Kazan, while at Yale and while courting his Molly, she became pregnant. About that he wrote, “I felt . . .”caught”. I regarded her pregnancy as a threat to my freedom.” Abortions in the ‘30s were illegal and expensive. Molly’s child was aborted for $300 in a back room. (Kazan 69) Later she wrote him that she wanted to commit suicide after the abortion. He wrote back,

“I am a companion, not a solution. It gets me sore when you depend on me so. I’m no reason for you to commit suicide. You’ve got to want yourself more than you want me. One of the few things you could do that I’d detest you for is kill yourself.” (85)
Chapter Four
Arthur Miller Meets Marilyn Monroe Causing a Moral Struggle

Kazan and Miller were teenagers during the liberating “roaring twenties” in America. The war to end all wars, WWI, had ended. For some the war had loosened moral corsets while others were tightened. Prohibition was declared in 1919 and continued through the ‘20s until 1933. It was a time of gangsters and radical leftists trying to organize the unions. It was a time of flapper girls and industrial development. People worked, got paid a decent wage and were optimistic about the future. In the world of cinema, talkies had replaced silent films.

At the same time some people wanted to isolate themselves from the world. There was a splintering of moral convictions. The culture suffered from a philosophical schizophrenia. There were the religious faithful who wanted to get back to basics and the bible. In contrast were those who preached “live every day to the fullest” as it might be your last. It all ended in October of 1929 when the stock market crashed; for some it was their last day. Miller’s father was all but wiped-out as was Kazan’s. By that time Kazan had spent four years at Williams College. He would then spend two more years at Yale. There he must have thought himself blessed by his first sexual encounter, a rabbi’s wife. He says, “This lady overcame my hesitations and my shyness, and turned up some passion in me.” (Kazan 52) After his time at Yale, where he met Molly, he joined the Group Theater.

Miller wrote his way through the University of Michigan garnering awards, confidence, Marxism and Mary Slattery whom he married in 1940. Molly and Mary were very much alike in temperament. Mary was a devout Catholic, and Molly was a
New Englander, descended from strong Congregational Protestants dedicated to what was right and perfect. (73) Neither would accept their husband’s philandering. Twice Molly threatened Elia with divorce, and twice she changed her mind. Mary ultimately divorced Arthur and Kazan revealed:

I believe Mary Miller blamed her husband’s moral “deterioration” on me. I suppose I did give him a gentle shove down the slope into the jungle of turpitude. She said to me one day—and this is exact, because I quickly wrote it down—“Art is acquiring all of your bad habits and none of your good ones.” (368)

Mary didn’t realize that she was dealing with a man who had his own moral code. Rather he had one code, which was to be true to himself. He had cut himself loose from the plague of guilt, from society’s approved restrictions and morality. He lived by his rule that:

Marriage and sexual love are not the same. The requirements are mixed. Lovers often release the inhibited part of a person’s life. Marriage is an opposite need. What you look for in a marriage partner is that he or she be a stable person, a homemaker, a mother or father candidate, that above all.

(178)

Fidelity, loyalty, morality had no real meaning for him when it came to sexual adventures. Paradoxically he says that in fact,

Promiscuity for an artist is an education, a great source of confidence, and a spur to work. Ironically, it can also promote true marital fidelity. It’s
healthier than licentious dreams and unrealized yearnings. And guilt. These lead to secret resentment and hatred; they sour a life. (178)

Kazan met Miller when Harold Clurman of the Group Theater asked him to read a play, *All My Sons*, by the young Miller. He says that,

I immediately felt close to Art. He’d been inspired to write plays by the Group Theatre, we were both out of the Depression, both left-wingers, both had had problems with our fathers, considered their business worlds Anti-human. We were soon exchanging every intimacy. I was to find that Art had many problems similar to my own in his home life; he was martially unsteady, as I had been all my married life, but he’d been bound down by inhibitions. (319)

The two were very close since collaborating on Miller’s first successful Broadway play; *All My Sons*, which won a Pulitzer Prize. During the years that followed they worked together on *Death of a Salesman* and began doing research in a small New York village called Red Hook in preparation for a play Miller was writing called *The Hook*. It never got written, per se. At about this time the House Un-American Activities Committee began to intensify their investigation of both Miller and Kazan. At the same time Miller and Kazan were in Hollywood pitching *The Hook* to Hollywood moguls. The moguls were not as receptive as Kazan had hoped; because he and Miller were known to be Communist sympathizers. When they were asked to change the villains from mafia to communists they refused and Miller left for New York.

However, while he was in L.A., Kazan had set up Miller for a blind date with a young and unknown actress by the name of Norma Jeane Baker, soon to become Marilyn
Monroe, showgirl, movie star, and immortal icon. Kazan first met her on the set of *As Young As You Feel* being directed by his old friend and former associate Harmon Jones. She was in mourning. Johnny Hyde, the man who had been “keeping” her, as Kazan reports, had just died and she was grieving his loss. She was inconsolable and would run off to a dark corner between scenes to cry. (406) He tells us to:

Relieve your mind now of the images you have of this person. When I met her, she was a simple, eager young woman who rode a bike to classes she was taking, a decent-hearted kid whom Hollywood brought down, legs parted. She had a thin skin and a soul that hungered for acceptance by people she might look up to. Like many girls out of that kind of experience, she sought her self-respect through the men she was able to attract. (407)

Kazan also tells us that,

The girl had little education and no knowledge except the knowledge of her own experience; of that she had a great deal, and for an actor, that is the important kind of knowledge. For her, I found, everything was either completely meaningless or completely personal. She had no interest in abstract, formal, or impersonal concepts but was passionately devoted to her own life’s experiences. What she needed above all was to have her sense of worth affirmed. (407)

Kazan set about to make her feel worthy simply by being there.

People talk of the technique of seduction as if it’s an art. In my experience it consisted of listening, paying attention, affording true sympathy and
letting some time pass; that is to say, being human and not pressing. All young actresses in that time and place were thought of as prey, to be overwhelmed and topped by the male. A genuine interest, which I did have, would produce results. I’m still surprised at how quickly women will empty the most intimate secrets of their lives into a sympathetic ear.

Kazan invited his good friend Arthur to partake of his personal “movable feast.” He was to take Miss Monroe to a party but at the last minute arranged for Arthur to take her in his stead. Kazan says:

When I arrived, I could see that need had met need and the lovely light of desire was in their eyes. I watched them dance; Art was a good dancer. And how happy she was in his arms! Not only was he tall and handsome in Lincolnesque way, but he was a Pulitzer Prize playwright. All her doubts about her worth were being satisfied in one package . . . The party thinned out the three of us sat on a sofa, and if my memory is correct, I did the right thing, said I was awfully tired and would Art take her home. Marilyn glowed. I don’t know what happened later that night, but Marilyn, without going into specifics, said that Art was shy and this pleased her too after all mauling she’d taken. She also said that Art was terribly unhappy in his life. She’d certainly opened him up. (409)

What happened that night was nothing. Colin Clark in his memoir *My Week With Marilyn* says according to Marilyn the “shy” Pulitzer Prize winner was different. She said that:
Arthur was always different from all the rest. Why, he wouldn’t even sleep with me on the first date. He treated me like I was a real person. He was so wise. He didn’t speak much . . . but somehow you knew how smart he was just from looking at him. And he was so sexy. I really fell in love with Arthur, and I still am. (Clark 84)

Marilyn accompanied him to the airport when he left for New York. He was truly smitten by her. In his heart he knew he had to get away from her. He says in *Timebends*:

. . . I knew that I must flee or walk into a doom beyond all knowing. With all her radiance she was surrounded by a darkness that perplexed me. I could not yet imagine that in my very shyness she saw some safety, release from the detached and centerless and invaded life she had been given; instead, I hated my lifelong timidity, but there was no changing it now. When we parted I kissed her cheek and she sucked in a surprised breath. I started to laugh at her overacting until the solemnity of feeling in her eyes shocked me into remorse, and I hurried backwards toward the plane. It was not duty alone that called me; I had to escape her childish voracity, something like my own unruly appetite for self-gratification, which had both created what art I had managed to make and disgusted me with its stain of irresponsibility. A retreat to the safety of morals, to be sure, but not necessarily to truthfulness. Flying homeward, her scent still on my hands, I knew my innocence was technical merely, and the fact blackened my heart, but along with it came the certainty that I could, after all, lose myself in sensuality. This novel secret entered me like a radiating
force, and I welcomed it as a sort of proof that I would write again, (Miller 307)

That was in the spring of 1951. Elia wrote in his autobiography that:

I was still seeing her at night from time to but she had a violent crush on
Arthur and couldn’t talk about much. He was also stuck on her, and I
believed the time was coming for me gallantly step aside. But I wasn’t
sure how much time Art was making her. He was not an aggressive man
in this area. Marilyn had stars in eyes when she talked about him, but they
were the stars of romance. (Kazan 409)

Five years later Miller divorced Mary and married Marilyn. He wrote in Timebends that,

“A character is defined . . . by the kinds of challenges he cannot walk away from. And
by those he has walked away from that cause him remorse.” (Miller 367)
Chapter Five

The Crucible

From the wreckage of the House Un-American Activities Committee investigations came Arthur Miller’s now classic play The Crucible. Had it not been for the investigations and the finger pointing of his best friend Elia Kazan in all probability the play would never have been written. As Mel Gussow points out in his Conversations with Miller he:

. . . could not have written The Crucible simply because he wanted to write a play about blacklisting—or about the Salem witch hunts. The center of the play is “the guilt of John Proctor and the working out of that guilt,” and it exemplifies the “guilt of man in general.” In other words, there is a moral as well as social and political base to his work, and it is that sense of morality, of conscience, that distinguishes him from other important playwrights. (Gussow 7)

Martin Gottfried in his book Arthur Miller: His life and Works tells us that when Miller had finished the play to his satisfaction:

. . . he handed over to Kermit Bloomgarden for production, both knowing that their choice for its director was the last person they would ask. On July 28, 1952 the New York Times, playing the game of false naivete, offered no theory to why Elia Kazan would not be directing Those Familiar Spirits, as the play was still being called. Severed is the Damon and Pythias collaboration of Elia Kazan . . . and Arthur Miller. Despite his refusal to assign any reason, it is known that a disagreement—nothing
to do with the play though—exists between them that would make their future association incompatible. (Gottfried 212)

The challenge now was to find someone as great as Elia Kazan to direct what was to become *The Crucible*. Miller admits that: “After two productions with Kazan and our sharing of ideas about plays and life, finding a new director was a hard thing to face.”

Lillian Hellman began lobbying for the directing assignment on behalf of her current lover (aside, that is, from Dashiell Hammett, who lived with her) the infamous Jed Harris. Once the theater’s “wonder boy,” virtually the inventor of Broadway, the “meteor” who had shot to fame and the cover of *Time Magazine* at the age of twenty-eight with four consecutive hits in the 1920s, Harris had crash-landed into oblivion. He was consumed by a director’s psychology in extremis, driven to control, operate, dominate and then to destroy the very actors and playwrights who were essential to his success. This compulsion rendered useless his considerable talents as a producer and director. Ever since his landmark 1938 production of *Our Town* he’d had no luck on Broadway, with the singular exception of Ruth and Augustus Goetz’s *The Heiress*. (Miller 212)

Arthur Miller recalls in *Timebends*:

Jim Proctor, who had done the publicity for *All My Sons* and *Salesman*, was old enough to recall, as I was not, the string of triumphs Harris had directed in the late twenties and early thirties, when, as sometimes happened on a Broadway that still had dozens of straight plays running at
the same time, a star director would rise to spin off show after show for years and even decades and dominate an era with his personality. Harris had produced *Coquette* with the ingenue Helen Hayes, *Broadway, The Royal Family*, and *The Front Page*, and had directed *Uncle Vanya, The Inspector General, A Doll’s House, Our Town*, and Sartre’s *Red Gloves*, among others, but by the fifties his legend had all but faded. A couple of years earlier, however, he had taken over and revised a failing production of *The Turn of the Screw*, retitled it *Washington Square*, and turned it into a success. (342)

Unfortunately for Miller:

Indeed, Harris saw the production as a “Dutch painting,” a classical play that had to be nobly performed—an invitation to slumber . . . There was little spontaneity in the performances, and I knew that the players were simply scared of Harris, who would sometimes break into a scene to ridicule an actor nastily for moving beyond a certain fixed point on the stage. He would even mouth their lines to emphasize a vowel, or turn them bodily so that whole passages were performed without their looking at one another, this to underline some classical depersonalized restraint he insisted on imposing. The whole thing was becoming an absurd exercise not in passion but in discipline. It would not work. (344)

Evidently, Harris was more concerned about technique and old time theatrical convention than the more substantive qualities of the sub-text that Kazan would have pursued. In his essay, “Brewed in *The Crucible*”, Miller points out that *The Crucible*:

Evidently, Harris was more concerned about technique and old time theatrical convention than the more substantive qualities of the sub-text that Kazan would have pursued. In his essay, “Brewed in *The Crucible*”, Miller points out that *The Crucible*:
. . . is examining the questions I was absorbed with before the conflict between a man’s raw deeds and his conception of himself; the question of whether conscience is in fact an organic part of the human being, and what happens when it is handed over not merely to the state or the mores of the time but to one’s friend or wife. (Miller, et al 173)

By conscience here Miller implies morality or a person’s moral conscience. An inference can be drawn too, that he is concerned about trust issues. Could he trust his wife or his friend with personal revelations of his soul? Did they share his same convictions? Miller found that Kazan did not share his when Kazan named him to the HUAC.

After that they did not speak for ten years. In 1962, Arthur Miller was approached by Bob Whitehead to write a play for him. Whitehead had been asked to head up the repertory theater that was to be housed at the soon to be Lincoln Center. However, the artistic director was to be Elia Kazan and Whitehead wondered if Miller could work with Kazan once again. Miller’s immediate thought was:

I did not know if we could, in fact, work together; for my part, I had not changed my opinion that his testimony before the Un-American Activities Committee had diserved both himself and the cause of freedom, and I had no doubt that he still thought himself justified. . . .What it came down to now was whether his political stance and even moral defection, if one liked, should permanently bar him from working in the theatre, especially this particular kind of publicly supported theatre. (Miller 529)
Even after the passing of ten years Arthur Miller couldn’t forgive him. That is how severe the rift between them was. Or could it be that Miller was envisioning having to deal with another Jed Harris when he thinks that:

If I still felt a certain distaste for Kazan’s renouncing his past under duress, I was not at all sure that he should be excluded from a position for which he was superbly qualified by his talent and his invaluable experience with the Group. Nor could I be sure that I was not merely rationalizing my belief that he was the best director for this complex play; but to reject him, I thought, was to reject the hope for a national theatre in this time. (530)
Chapter Six

Betrayal

Miller was absolutely guilt ridden about leaving his first wife Mary and his children. His play *The Crucible* very well may be his public expression of guilt and a plea for expiation. The domestic situation of John Proctor and his wife Elizabeth does mirror that of his own marriage. To Arthur, Mary was cold and unforgiving and not easy to love. She may have had good reason just as Elizabeth Proctor did. Kazan reports that:

One weekend during a gathering of intellectuals for political deliberation, Art did something his wife Mary thought he should not have done. Considering the boredom that hangs like a fog over these events, perhaps his wife might have excused his “sin.” But he told me Mary was unyielding. What astonished me was that Art appeared to agree with his wife. He paid for his “lapse” without resentment strong enough to cause a rebellion. (Kazan 366)

Evidently Arthur was dutifully contrite about what he had done. He felt sufficiently guilty, morally wrong, and accepted his punishment with little complaint; notice Kazan was astonished by Miller’s actions. He surrounds the word sin with quotation marks and the same with lapse as if to say what Arthur had done was neither a sin nor a lapse but a man’s right and duty to himself to fulfill his quest for adventure and pleasure. Then he concludes:

If we are to judge solely from his next play, *The Crucible*, we would have to say that Art did think of himself as a sinner; the central character in it expresses contrition for a single act of infidelity. (367)
Proctor asks for forgiveness and understanding for his transgressions. However insignificant his “single act of infidelity” appears to be to Kazan, like Miller, John sees himself as a sinner, as any moral God-fearing man with a conscience would. Miller says the crux or theme of the play is:

... the conflict between a man’s raw deeds and his conception of himself; the question of whether conscience is in fact an organic part of the human being, and what happens when it is handed over not merely to the state or the mores of the time but to one’s friend or wife. The big difference, I think, is that *The Crucible* sought to include a higher degree of consciousness than the earlier plays. (Miller et al 173)

The writing of *The Crucible* was an exercise by Miller to concretize an unconscionable and, to him, an immoral act of betrayal with all its consequences and ramifications and to show that character dictates action. On the list of elements necessary in the construction of a tragedy in Aristotle’s *Poetics* character is second only to plot. In the play John Proctor made a fatal and tragic mistake when he seduced his servant girl Abigail. His guilt drove him to confess his infidelity to his wife. Then he made a more serious mistake when he placed his faith and trust in the steadfast virtuous character and conscience of his devoutly religious always truthful wife. To take her revenge upon Elizabeth, Abigail reported her as a witch. To save his wife from the hangman’s rope, Proctor confessed publicly to his lechery. He told the prosecutor Deputy Governor Danforth that he had sex with Abigail, “In the proper place—where my beasts are bedded.” (*The Crucible*, Act 3 110)
DANFORTH: blanched, in horror, turning to Abigail. You deny every scrap and tittle of this?

ABIGAIL: If I must answer that, I will leave and I will not come back again!

Danforth seems unsteady.

PROCTOR: I have made a bell of my honor! I have rung the doom of my good name—you will believe me, Mr. Danforth! My wife is innocent, except she knew a whore when she saw one!

ABIGAIL, stepping up to Danforth: What look do you give me?

Danforth cannot speak. I'll not have such looks! She turns and starts for the door.

DANFORTH: You will remain where you are! Herrick steps into her path. She comes up short, fire in her eyes. Mr. Parris, go into the court and bring Goodwife Proctor out.

PARRIS: objecting: Your Honor, this is all a—

DANFORTH: sharply to Parris: Bring her out! And tell her not one word of what’s been spoken here. And let you knock before you enter.

Parris goes out. Now we shall touch the bottom of this swamp. To Proctor: Your wife, you say, is an honest woman.

PROCTOR: In her life, sir, she have never lied. There are them that cannot sing, and them that cannot weep—my wife cannot lie. I have paid much to learn it, sir.
DANFORTH: And when she put this girl out of your house, she put her out for a harlot?
PROCTOR: Aye, sir.
DANFORTH: And knew her for a harlot?
PROCTOR: Aye, sir, she knew her for a harlot. (The Crucible, Act 3 111)

Once again, Proctor said: “In her life, sir, she have never lied. There are them that cannot sing, and them that cannot weep—my wife cannot lie. I have paid much to learn it, sir.” Then the Governor asked Elizabeth about her husband’s infidelity:

DANFORTH: Then he did not turn from you?
ELIZABETH: starting to glance at Proctor: He—
DANFORTH: reaches out and holds her face, then: Look at me! To your own knowledge, has John Proctor ever committed the crime of lechery?
In a crisis of indecision she cannot speak. Answer my question! Is your husband a lecher?
ELIZABETH: faintly: No, sir.
DANFORTHTH: Remove her, Marshal.
PROCTOR: Elizabeth, tell the truth!
DANFORTH: She has spoken. Remove her!
PROCTOR: crying out: Elizabeth, I have confessed it!
ELIZABETH: Oh, God! The door closes behind her.
PROCTOR: She only thought to save my name! (The Crucible, Act 3 113)
Going against her character she lied. She didn’t wish to dishonor his name, as he was a good man. Being true to his character he brought dishonor upon himself to save his pregnant wife. Some spousal sacrifices are not as simple as a pawned gold watch or shorn golden tresses. As a pious practicing Christian, Elizabeth Proctor deliberately violated the ninth commandment and herself when she lied to protect John who believed in her more strongly than he did himself. Her misbegotten gift of denial that threatened her mortal soul condemned him to death. John’s rejected public confession served only to confirm suspicions that he was possessed by the devil. He was commanded to admit to being a witch and to give up the names of other witches. If not he surely would swing from the gibbet. John refused to belie himself by confessing to something he was not, nor did he name the names of other suspected witches. He was hanged.

In *Timebends* Miller wrote: “In effect, it came down to a governmental decree of moral guilt that could easily be made to disappear by ritual speech: intoning names of fellow sinners and recanting former beliefs.” (Miller 331) He was not speaking of *The Crucible*. He continues with:

It was this immaterial element, the surreal spiritual transaction, that now fascinated me, for the rituals of guilt and confession followed all the forms of a religious inquisition, except, of course, that the offended parties were not God and his ministers but a congressional committee. (331)

The moral guilt Miller is referring to, as deemed by Congress, was being a member of the Communist Party. When asked to admit they were, Miller refused. Kazan complied. That act of compliance is the substance of Miller’s inquiry. What was it that motivated Kazan to betray his good friend Arthur and many others? What was it that moved others,
like Miller, to disobey Congress and not comply with the order? That “immaterial
element, the surreal spiritual transaction” for Miller, was simply moral character.
However, morality remains spiritually intangible until a particular action manifests it to
consequential substance. When Kazan named his good friend as a Communist they both
suffered the consequences. Kazan was scorned by the progressive left for the rest of his
life—more than fifty years. Miller was convicted of contempt of Congress and ultimately
became a literary iconic hero. The two men didn’t speak for ten years. At the heart of
the rift was Kazan’s disloyalty and betrayal that Miller saw to be immoral. Kazan
thought otherwise. He saw Miller’s *Crucible* as nothing more than a woman scorned.
Not “the conflict between a man’s raw deeds and his conception of himself”—as Miller
saw it to be. Kazan’s “conception” of himself is not very complicated. In fact it
bordered on being Machiavellian.

In 1515 Niccolo Machiavelli published *The Prince*. It is, in effect, a blueprint for
gaining and keeping power. It is all in appearance. A prince need only appear to be
“merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright.” He goes on to point out that:

> . . . it is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them. And I shall dare to say this also, that to have them and always to observe them is injurious, and that to appear to have them is useful; to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind so framed that should you require not to be so, you may be able and know how to change to the opposite. (Machiavelli)

Machiavelli concludes:
For my part I consider that it is better to be adventurous than cautious, because fortune is a woman, and if you wish to keep her under it is necessary to beat and ill-use her; and it is seen that she allows herself to be mastered by the adventurous rather than by those who go to work more coldly. She is, therefore, always, woman-like, a lover of young men, because they are less cautious, more violent, and with more audacity command her. (Machiavelli)

If Elia Kazan never read it then he was *The Prince* incarnate. His instincts were unerring. He was the master dissembler. In fact, throughout his autobiography he continually makes reference to his dissembling almost as a badge of honor, if not courage. One can only conclude that his decision to inform on his friends came easily.

Unlike Kazan, Miller refused to “belie” himself. His determination may well have been reinforced by his visit to Salem, Massachusetts and the research he did on the witch trials. Upon visiting the gibbet where the hangings took place Miller wrote in “Journey to *The Crucible*” that he had,

. . . a feeling of love at seeing Rebecca Nurse’s house on its gentle knoll; . . . And the great rock, standing mum over the bay, the splintered precipice on which the gibbet was built . . . here hung Rebecca, John Proctor, George Jacobs—people more real to me than the living can ever be. The sense of a terrible marvel again; that people could have such a belief in themselves and in the rightness of their consciences as to give their lives rather than say what they thought was false. Or, perhaps, they only feared Hell so much? Yet, Rebecca said, and it is written in the record, “I cannot
belie myself.” And she knew it would kill her. They knew who they were. (Miller et al 29)

The statement, “They knew who they were.” applies not only to those who would sacrifice their lives for what they believed in but also to those who would sacrifice their friends for their beliefs. Morality is conditional. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* says “Morality”:

. . . when used in a descriptive sense has an essential feature that “morality” in the normative sense does not have, namely, that it refers to codes of conduct that are actually put forward and accepted by some society, group, or individual. If one is not a member of that society or group, and is not that individual, accepting a descriptive definition of “morality” has no implications for how one should behave. If one accepts a moral theory’s account of rational persons and the specifications under which all rational persons would endorse a code of conduct as a moral code, then one accepts that moral theory’s normative definition of “morality.” Accepting a normative definition of “morality” commits a person to regarding some behavior as immoral, perhaps even behavior that one is tempted to perform. (Gert)

Therein lay the difference between Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan. While Miller was still searching for evidence that man had a conscience, Kazan had already negated it. He considered himself an outsider, and as such he saw no need to accept any code of conduct except his own.
Conclusion

Critically acclaimed theatrical productions, however great, are fleeting. Great directors become memories and subjects for textbooks for college courses. Even the names of playwrights become lost in the pages of time. But what they have written and done lives on to be rediscovered by new generations.

The works and personal philosophies of these two extraordinary showmen will endure in time immemorial. Playwright Arthur Miller and director Elia Kazan are linked for the ages. What Miller has written alone assures him a place in history. Similarly, what Kazan produced during his time on this earth reserves him a comparable place in history and what each did together—whether by mutual consent or in retaliation to another’s affront—was historical. Great drama was created. After years of the two collaborating on plays, Miller wrote, and Kazan directed, *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, and began work on another, *The Hook*. Kazan in 1952 betrayed Miller as a Communist to the House Un-America Activities Committee. From this clash of wills came Arthur Miller’s now classic play *The Crucible*. Had it not been for the HUAC investigation and the finger pointing by his best friend Elia Kazan, in all probability, the play would never have been written. *The Crucible* is a universal cultural phenomenon. It has become the voice for the oppressed.

Kazan pointed out that Arthur Miller didn’t make up stories but experienced them. Obviously he did too. His *On The Waterfront* could be seen as a romantic representation and justification of his testimony to the HUAC. In his way he dearly loved his wife Molly and tried to live up to her moral expectations. In no uncertain words, just as Edie expected Terry to do in *On The Waterfront*, she told him to go tell the federal
investigators all he knew about his Communist contacts. Similarly, Arthur Miller’s The Crucible could be seen as a plea for forgiveness from his wife Mary for his extra-marital affair.

The universal theme of man’s struggle with himself to do the morally correct thing preoccupied both men all their life. In their creations they struggled to illustrate what Miller described as, the conflict between a man’s raw deeds and his conception of himself—the question of whether conscience is in fact an organic part of the human being.

The impact their works and lives had on cultures of the world was profound. Miller’s The Crucible was and is to this day performed the world round. In Timebends, he said he could almost predict what a nation’s socio-political situation was depending on the popularity of a production of The Crucible. Kazan’s movies are considered to be icons of man’s struggle with his conscience and the dictates of society and government.

The rift in the friendship of Elia Kazan and Arthur Miller was more fundamental than a conflict in ideology or faith: it was a simple matter of, as Shakespeare’s Polonius said to Laertes, to thine own self be true. Miller, unlike Kazan, was a man of principle who respected himself and his beliefs—he refused to compromise—whereas Kazan did what was expedient and best for him, even though he admits that he did lie, cheat, and dissemble. He states in his autobiography that he considered himself rigorously moral. To some, being rigorously moral would imply having a conscience and consequently feeling remorse or regret for any moral or ethical infraction. However idealistic they were, the hypocrisy of their lives, lives after them. Miller, forever torn by his human shortcomings, took notes to put words into the mouths and convictions into the souls of
his fictional characters. Kazan took notes also, not to preach but to reveal the underbelly of the human being. He made no qualms about his immorality. After his congressional testimony he enjoyed an artistically successful career but was ostracized from the entertainment community. No one likes a quisling. Miller, on the other hand, enjoyed hero status. This brief alliance of two literary and cinematic geniuses spawned immortal, terribly flawed characters that reflect everyman.

Knowing that Kazan rejected all moral restrictions and knowing that Miller considered himself to be “chosen by God” as the moralist of his era, it follows that Miller had no choice but to sever relations with Kazan. Fortunately for us citizens of the world, their estrangement created great and enduring literature that enlightened our culture.
Bibliography


Works Cited


CIRRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

2012  Candidate for Masters of Arts – Theatre, Directing
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV

1969  Bachelor of Arts - Speech and Drama –Cum Laude
University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Taught: Mechanical Drawing

1974-1981  Proctor Academy, Andover, NH - Director of Drama
Taught: Acting, Directing, History of Theatre, Oral interpretation, Debate.
Plays directed at Proctor:
The Odd Couple
Goodbye Charlie
Hello Out There
M*A*S*H
Rms Riv Vu
The Lark
Death
Pippin
Blackboard Jungle
Firefly (original musical)
The Odd Couple
Biederman and The Firebugs

1969-1972  Associate Chairman of the Drama Department of Vermont Junior College – Montpelier, VT.
Taught – Directing – Acting, Oral Interpretation, Speech, Scenic Design and Stage Craft, English Composition.

1966-1967  University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH
Student Assistant – Stage Craft.
1963-1964  Queens College, Flushing, NY
Set construction instructor.

ACTING EXPERIENCE – FILM AND TELEVISION

1994-Present  Las Vegas SAG extra: – Con Air – Casino – The Watcher -


DIRECTING EXPERIENCE

2002  Reckless - Venture Theater – Billings, Montana


1986  Gorilla Kisses – Off Broadway NY, NY

1985  Blue Alley Jazz – Off Broadway NY, NY

1974-1981  Fantastiks, Guys and Dolls – Warner Resident Theater

1971  Summer stock – Advance Director - Boeing, Boeing
Starring Van Johnson

1971  You Know I Can’t Hear You When The Water’s Running
Don’t Drink The Water – Montpelier Little Theatre - Montpelier, VT

1970  A Delicate Balance – Profile Theater Portland, ME

ACTING EXPERIENCE – THEATER (Full list upon request)

2011  Anne Frank:  Mr. Van Daan – Jewish Repertory Theatre of Las Vegas
2011  Summers Of Fear:  Mr. O’Connor – UNLV

2010  Hot L Baltimore:  Mr. Morris – UNLV

1987  Hotel Paradiso:  Boniface – Off Broadway
Roundabout Conservatory