

of planning future excitement, of seeing an escape from the restrictions of the present. At a time when the US was bogged down in Vietnam, getting to the moon meant a thrilling, innocent life ahead.

All but one of the interviewees would still jump at the chance of going there: many had kept their tickets safe like childhood ideals. Outside I'm in real estate, admitted a smartly dressed woman, inside I'm Buck Rogers. Some confessed to child-like visions of what it would be like. Like Disneyworld, said one ticket-holder. Another planned to leave a permanent footprint in the dust. What would you take with you, they were each asked. Potato chips, came back a typical reply.

Most knew they would never make it now that moon landings were out of fashion and PanAm

had gone bust. But some still looked wistfully at the moon at night, while a resident of New York thought it was hard enough just getting across town. A lawyer in a bow-tie described how as a single college student he had applied for two tickets – one for the wife he expected to have acquired. Now, married with kids, he still wanted to go so that he could have a couple of days to himself. As a symbol of wish fulfilment, the moon had clearly captivated him, if not our whole culture. And the only person you couldn't understand was the man who no longer wanted to go.

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Broken Glass

Roisin Kemp reviews a new play by Arthur Miller.

Is it possible for a Jewish woman in 1938 New York to develop hysterical paralysis of her legs in response to events in Nazi Germany? And how much are her symptoms a reaction to long-standing difficulties in her marriage to a man who is impotent, autocratic, subject to sporadic violent rages, and uncomfortable with his Jewish identity? Is it appropriate for an honest play which explores issues of prejudice, oppression, tyranny, and genocide to be simultaneously humorous and entertaining? What if at the end one feels almost as moved by the miserable (and dead) husband as the heroine, who finds the power to walk again only when her husband expires? These are the difficult questions posed by Arthur Miller in *Broken Glass*, his latest play recently in repertory at London's National Theatre. The weighty themes are leavened by the hallmark wry humour, sparkling dialogue and deft characterisation.

The title of the play places it in the days following *Kristallnacht* when Jewish shopfronts were smashed, and the streets covered in broken glass. The main characters presented are Philip Gellburg, his long-suffering wife, the lovely Sylvia, and Dr Hyman, the charismatic family practitioner. Sylvia is well-loved in the neighbourhood for her gentle personality and grace, and is unusual in Hyman's eyes for being remarkably well-informed. Hyman takes a personal interest in her case. Against the advice of

his wife and despite his professed ignorance of psychiatry, he embarks on *ad hoc* therapy, and becomes captivated by his patient who develops an equally strong attachment. Vanity prevents him from referring to a specialist even when he finds himself out of his depth.

His approach is rather unorthodox; "I want you to imagine that we've made love . . . and you begin to tell me some secret things. Things that are way down deep in your heart . . .". Naively he exhorts her to "send your thoughts down into your hips . . . tense those hips . . . do it for me . . .!" Following Dr Hyman's suggestions, Philip Gellburg sets about winning his wife back, greeting her with an uncharacteristic kiss on the cheek, holding her hand, promising to buy her a car, even suggesting the couple sit down with the good doctor "and maybe talk about, you know, everything . . .". Sylvia scornfully rejects his fumbling overtures. Frustrated and angry, Philip accuses his wife of duplicity, and begins to mistrust the debonair Hyman and his theories.

He cannot believe that Sylvia could be so deeply affected by the pictures in the papers from a place 3,000 miles away – old men with long beards scrubbing the pavements with toothbrushes, the jeering of onlookers, the rounds of arrests. Furthermore, he resents the German Jews because they come to the US and seem to want the best jobs. Philip boasts of being the only Jew who made it in his business, and that through the benevolence of his smug WASP boss, his only son Jerome is the only Jew at Westpoint



Henry Goodman (Philip Gellburg) and Margot Leicester (Sylvia Gellburg) in 'Broken Glass' Photograph Alastair Muir. Royal National Theatre.

Military Academy. In the recurring dream which she describes to Dr Hyman, Sylvia is stalked and attacked by a man in uniform. Although initially she says she does not see the man's face, with Dr Hyman's insistence she eventually agrees it is her husband

The image of broken glass serves as a fitting metaphor to convey the fragmentation of a society in an economic depression, whose moral and

spiritual fabric has been corroded. There is a symmetry between the use of denial on a personal and public level, and Sylvia's paralysis mirrors the insidious and stupefying inertia in her apparently more resilient contemporaries. Her symptoms challenge those around her to re-focus and in the denouement, her Philip finds himself on his deathbed following a heart attack, a broken man, frightened and seeing his life as a failure. He has lost the woman he adored, and wasted his energy all these years "foreclosing Brooklyn", only to be spurned by his ungrateful employer when he lost him the coveted site for a new clubhouse.

The excellent performance of Henry Goodman as the pent-up Gellburg dominates this production – the stiff outer composure barely containing his rage. Uncomfortably, the portrayal of Sylvia is less affecting. One wonders if this is due to casting, Miller's relative weakness in fleshing out his female characters, or a reflection of the reflex frustration the psychiatrist can feel when confronted with the hysteric.

Broken Glass has also had an off-stage denouement. After writing the play, Miller discovered that sudden paralysis among Jews in America became unusually frequent around this time.

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Corrigendum

In the fourth paragraph of the article 'The films of Wim Wenders' (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, November

1994, **18**, 689), Solveig Donmartin should have been referred to as Wenders' muse.

Ancient remedies

Melancholly. Eat oft Cream of Tarter mixt with Honey or Treacle. Meditate on your Sufferings.

Madness. Hold him under water till he is almost drown'd, then put him into Bed in a dark Room. Let his Diet be only Milk pottage and Water.

Raging madness. Keep the head close shaved, and wash it often with strong vinegar. Or, apply to the head often cloths dipped in very cold water.

In case a man be lunatic. Take skin of a mere-swine or porpoise, work it into a whip, swinge the man therewith, soon he wil be well. Amen.

Taken from *Curtous Cures* (Steyning Museum Trust).

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