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## ABSTRACT

### RITUALS OF REASSURANCE: STUDIES IN WORLD WAR II AMERICAN DRAMA

By

Richard Lee Hasbany

This study investigates the American theatre during World War II. It uses the texts of selected plays produced between 1938 and 1945 and the contemporary reviews and comments of theatre critics to provide a history of the theatre's evolving reaction to this great and traumatic historical-cultural event. Terminology and concepts are largely suggested by Northrup Frye's Anatomy of Criticism and such cultural historians as Henry Nash Smith. The study's emphasis is on discovering the themes, images, and motifs that became dominant during the period.

The first chapter is an historical survey of Broadway's search for an appropriate role in a wartime culture. A few people in and out of government felt that the theatre should aid the war effort by producing propaganda and education plays. A few felt that playwrights should respond to the war with serious artistic, rather than propagandistic, considerations of the war. But most

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Chapter two focuses on the  
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observers doubted that theatre could or should fill any role in a war culture other than that of public entertainer. Chapter two focuses on three major playwrights of the period, Maxwell Anderson, Robert Sherwood, and Lillian Hellman, and traces their evolving dramatic and philosophic responses to the war. All three moved from a philosophic or dramatic vision in which the individual and his moral experience was of primary concern to a vision in which the individual moral destiny was linked to the communal destiny. In the plays this identification of individual and communal destinies is imaged in the figure of Christ, a figure having a poignant similarity to the contemporary soldier who also sacrificed his life to save the community.

Chapter three looks in depth at a single play, Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth. The play demonstrates the sophisticated use of such culturally meaningful figures as Adam, Noah, and Odysseus, to suggest concurrently Western man's long cultural heritage and the survival potential of man and civilized values. The chapter uses the tools of literary analysis to probe how Wilder uses the figures of Western myth and legend to create a dramatic form reminiscent of Brecht and a content that was topically relevant.

Wilder's play and the Christ figure of Anderson and Sherwood drew basically upon Western, Christian cultural images and motifs. The World War II theatre also sought a more specifically American image. The fourth chapter traces the development of this American local color image,

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nurtured originally by the W. P. A. Federal Theatre project and developing into the Americana-nostalgic images of wartime theatre. The fourth chapter notes as well the increased popularity and prevalence of the historical play during the war period. The increased incidence of such plays seems related to the increased desire for dramatic projection of American images and themes. The history plays also provide convenient vehicles for Americanizing universal or mythic hero-figures such as are described in Joseph Cambell's The Hero With a Thousand Faces. The ancient pattern of heroic adventures is shown to exist in the dramatically rendered adventures of American legendary figures.

The form that most successfully fused cultural myth with popular Broadway fare was the musical. The musical as exemplified by Oklahoma, flowered and reached a new peak of artistic quality during the war. The fifth chapter focuses on this musical genre, both as a theatrical form and as the clearest and most popular expression of the trends thus far noted. The musical after 1943 was dominated by nostalgic projections of the American past, featuring specifically American themes and figures. In the musicals America is depicted as nearly a pastoral paradise, virtuous, innocent, and strong against evil. The musicals identify the individual with community destiny as did Anderson in his Christ figure, but here the figure is identifiably American, often bearing strong similarities to R. W. B.

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Lewis's American Adam figure, and the tragic implications of the Christ mythos are absent. The final chapter returns to a survey approach to show the theatre emerging from the war, shifting from the celebration of American culture and heritage and looking more satirically and critically at America and its social problems.

The study suggests that the theatre did actually respond profoundly to the wartime home front culture. Its expression became attuned to the subconscious need in a wartime audience for projections of images suggesting a virtuous, powerful heritage and cultural identity. The dramas and musicals of the war period became rituals of reassurance, subtly celebrating American goals, characteristics, identity, and potency.

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RITUALS OF REASSURANCE: STUDIES IN  
WORLD WAR II AMERICAN DRAMA

By

Richard Lee Hasbany

A THESIS

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1973

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1973

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I am sincerely grateful to the  
Committee for their aid and  
encouragement, Dr. Victor Howard  
for his always sensible suggestions,  
and, not least, to Dr. Clarence  
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and to Dr. Jose  
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reading of the manuscript.  
My gratitude.

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## INTRODUCTION

The subject of the following study is the American theatre during those years, 1938-45, when global war threatened and engaged the American nation. The study is primarily a literary history, though it is not an inclusive history. It tries to record such significant events and trends as the opening of Oklahoma! on April 1, 1943, the subsequent flowering of musical drama and its ascendancy during the war over the musical comedy and revue. The central concern of the study, however, is an examination of the recurrent themes and figures and the possible reasons for their dominance in the wartime theatre.

I was introduced to the study of theatre as a cultural phenomenon in a seminar with Dr. Victor Howard at Michigan State University. The seminar's topic was World War II home front culture. In my research on the American musical theatre during the war years, I found what I thought to be an intriguing relationship between literary or theatrical works and non-literary events. The fact that there was a war on did seem to influence what went on in theatre in a more profound way than was represented by the

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very visible American Theatre Wing Service activities. Significant as the Lunchtime Follies, free tickets to servicemen project, and Stage Door Canteen may have been, they were only the tip of the iceberg of theatre's response to the wartime conditions. A more significant response came in the very heart of the theatre, its dramatic and musical events. In addition to the usual escapist fare that made only the most superficial recognition that war was on, I found trends emerging in the musicals that signalled direct creative reaction to a wartime culture and audience. Treatments of Americana themes abounded, and the theme dominated the most successful musical dramas from 1943 till the end of the conflict. The nostalgic image of a fresh, pastoral, confident America made a powerful appeal to the wartime audience. Why these themes and images at this particular time?

In this most public of the traditional literary genres, what the audience wants or needs determines somewhat directly what is produced. The eccentric play has less chance of being successful than the eccentric poem or novel. The poet or novelist writes for the individual reader. If the eccentric poem creates a meaningful experience for a single individual, it is a success. If a play creates such experience for only scattered individuals, it is a theatrical failure. A playwright must keep an eye on the crowd and its probable responses. Thus, the musicals and plays of the war at least indirectly reflect and

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suggest something about the wartime audience that paid money to see them. When certain themes and images recurred, we may infer that those themes and images were especially poignant or meaningful to the American wartime audience. If those themes and images tended to dissipate after the war, as they did, we might infer that the war milieu helped create a rather unique cluster of tastes or needs in the theatre audience, a cluster of needs and expectations that changed as the war ended. An increasingly complex and interesting relationship became evident between the literary-theatrical event, the historical context, and the audience psychology.

The present study allowed me to pursue this interesting cluster relationship more extensively. The scope has been broadened to include non-musical as well as musical drama. The period under study includes the entire war period rather than just the four years of United States involvement that were covered in the seminar research. The increased scope and time span provided a clearer sense of context. The local color, Americana impulse was not unique to the war period; it began in the W. P. A. Federal Theatre. But it flourished and gained dominance only during the war years. The musical revue and musical comedy had been evolving into more sophisticated forms during the thirties, and they achieved their apotheosis in Oklahoma! in 1943. The theatre can more easily be seen in the broadened context as an organic body, evolving according to its own

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genetic heritage. But as the dominance of certain themes and figures during the war suggested, it was an organism also responding to its environment.

In trying to identify those responses and speculate on the reasons for those particular responses, I decided that a purely chronological approach was inadequate. Though the following chapters are arranged in a roughly chronological order, they may make more sense if seen as separate studies employing varying perspectives to view the problem of the culture-audience-theatre relationship. The first chapter is a basic historical survey of the American theatre's seeking and adjusting to a wartime role. The second chapter focusses on three major playwrights of the period, Maxwell Anderson, Robert Sherwood, and Lillian Hellman. The chapter tries to trace their evolving responses to the historical crisis. The third chapter uses literary criticism's tools to discuss a single play, Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth. The analysis finds in the eccentric, integrative techniques of that play the same impulses toward myth and culturally pregnant figures that were found in the ideas and works of Anderson, Sherwood, and Hellman. The fourth chapter looks at a movement or theme, local color, and at the hero and historical figure in war period drama. The fifth chapter traces the development and thematic content of a theatrical form, the musical. The final chapter returns to an historical perspective in an attempt to describe the theatre's

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emergence from its wartime character, and to suggest the possible nature of the cultural-audience-historical-theatrical relationship.

The critic most helpful to me in considering the relationship has been Northrup Frye and his Anatomy of Criticism. Implicit in his theory of myth and genre is the idea that literary expression is actually the expression of profoundly deep human responses to the threats and joys of existence. Narrative is the recounting of basic mythic patterns that have their ground in man's dreams of power and control, and conversely in his recognition of man's always incipient defeat by natural and human forces. These basic mythic patterns become displaced, i.e., are disguised, made more credible and polite for the contemporary, largely middle class theatre audience, but the underlying patterns remain recognizable because human dreams and fears remain the same. Frye's premise and terminology seem to me especially appropriate in a study which tries to investigate the relation of literary expression to the subjective needs of its audience. His work provides categories and terms and a broad human and literary context with which to view the theme and image patterns of World War II American theatre. Frye's inclusive view of literature allows us to see the popular musical, for instance, as essentially ritual celebration of community, i.e., as the masque. Using Frye, then, to help identify form and the deeper subjective and communal implications of form, it may be

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possible to make tentative comments about the intriguing cluster relationship I first noted in the seminar research. If the masque, the folk tale and folk hero, and the Christ figure are dominant in the theatre literature of the war period, there is suggested a communal need for public, almost ritual affirmation of the community's heritage, power and righteousness. Also suggested is the poignant recognition of the tragic need for sacrifice, and of the mythic affinities and communal significance of that sacrifice.

Frye's methodology is not followed rigorously. In fact, the methodology for the study may be fairly called eclectic, using as the study does the various tools of history, literary criticism, and cultural or anthropological speculation. Such eclecticism may be accused of lacking scholarly rigor. But it seems appropriate given the multiple focus of the study, i.e., the drama, the audience, the historical period and the relationship of all three. Frye and his work remains the one constant critical strand throughout, however, because he provides a broad human and formal framework for looking at literature. Literary history needs to be more than the history of plays or poems in isolation. It must also take into account the historical, psychological milieu of those plays or poems. The study of structures without human context may lead to the acquisition of truth without enlightenment. Literary history, to be enlightening, should be the study of man exposing and

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expressing his deepest self. Literary history should be a history of man. I hope that is what the following may in some measure be.

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I. ELUSIVE JUSTIFICATION: THE  
THEATRE SEEKS A ROLE

A Wilderness of Voices

All we need is to break out of the minuteness of the modern drama into some of the big social themes that the last decade has been grimly accumulating.

Brooks Atkinson, "New Forms for Old,"  
February, 1941

I believe it is the solemn duty of producers of plays these days to seek out such plays as would arouse the public to the dangers and calamities that confront us.

I. Einstein, letter in the New York Times,  
March 9, 1941

Whatever the judgment about them in a distant future . . . these playwrights have had to face an almost insurmountable problem.

Ernst Schwartzert, "Notes on the Theatre during the War"

The war period began with at least one portion of the American theatre being called on to justify its existence. On the evening of June 16, 1939, Everett Dirksen rose from his seat in the United States House of Representatives. After making a preliminary concession to the cultural value of the theatre, he declared that "there comes a time when the theatre can be prostituted by suggestion and otherwise, and I think that has been done by the theatre project under W. P. A."<sup>1</sup> In his deep voice,

using the dry irony for  
Dirksen read through  
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using the dry irony for which he became famous, Representative Dirksen read through a list of the titles presented by the Federal Theatre, including A New Deal for Mary, Up in Mabel's Room, and A New Kind of Love. "I wonder what that can be?" he asked. "It smacks somewhat of the Soviet."<sup>2</sup> Dirksen's attack was not the first nor the last as the Congress debated whether or not to exclude the Federal Theatre from the Work Progress Administration Art Project appropriations. But his remarks, which his House colleagues found highly amusing, were representative of political attacks on the theatre project in particular and implicitly on the theatre in general.

The assaults on the most public of literary forms were a confusion of political, racial, and moral motives and fears. The bulk of votes for denying the Federal Theatre further appropriations came from Republicans and Southern Democrats. The Republicans doubtless were not opposed to discrediting the Roosevelt administration by suggesting communist influence, while some Southern representatives and senators were upset by the theatre project's integration of blacks and whites. Senator Robert Reynolds of Ashville, North Carolina spoke to his colleagues, when the bill reached that body, of certain directors of a W. P. A. theatre group who attempted to persuade a white girl to date a negro man. In a curious amalgam of mixed metaphors, Senator Reynolds was able to associate all the contemporary devils with the theatre.

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Project raises

The only persons who have been going to town have been the communists who are disguising their red pills with salacious coverings so as to lure, like a siren, all who can hear. The titles [Up in Mabel's Room, etc.] speak for themselves; and I judge that the only literature ever read by those in charge of the W. P. A. theatre project was written by Boccaccio or bore the name of Cassanova. . . . Through such materials the cardinal keystone of communism--free love and racial equality--is being spread at the expense of the God-fearing, home loving American taxpayer who must pay the bills for all this dangerous business.<sup>3</sup>

The Federal Theatre was not without support among the Congressmen. It was defended by the New Yorkers--Representative Sirovich, Senators Wagner and Cellers, and also by Congressmen from such hinterlands as Florida (Senator Pepper), and Nevada (Senator McCarran). Theatre's spokesmen defended it for its aesthetic value. Senator Henry F. Ashurst of Prescott, Arizona rose on June 28, 1939 to speak. "I hope the Senate will not go on record as censoring art. The stage is art. Art is truth, and in the final sum of worldly things, only art endures. . . ."<sup>4</sup> But most defenders felt their strongest appeal lay in pointing out the project's practical role in society, i.e., as an absolutely necessary relief function serving between 7,000 and 9,000 unemployed theatre people. Neither appeal could carry the day. The Senate did allow continued funds for the theatre project, but when adamant House members in conference committee refused to permit the funds, the Senate acquiesced. The Federal Theatre was dead.

Congressional opposition and the demise of the project raises several interesting questions about the

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theatre's role in American culture. What, if any, is the potential social value of the theatre to a culture in crisis, be that crisis a depression, or, of more interest here, a war? What, if any, is the responsibility of art to the culture in which it finds itself and from which it springs? Is it to be a mirror to events or a proponent of attitudes about those events? Hallie Flanagan saw the Federal Theatre as a microcosm and mirror in its composition and functioning; it was an expression of the period's liberal tendencies. "The Federal Theatre cost money; it represented labor unions, old and new; it did not bar aliens or members of minorities. In other words, Federal Theatre presented a small but graphic example of the administration's characteristics, which were regarded, of course, as defects by all enemies of that administration. It was perhaps the triumph as well as the tragedy of our actors that they became indeed the abstract and brief chronicles of the time."<sup>5</sup>

Because it reflected the characteristics of a particular outlook and administration, the Federal Theatre's opponents could say it became politically and socially functional; it could become a too valuable political asset to whichever faction controlled it. The debate in Congress demonstrated the apparent consensus among lawmakers concerning the potential power and influence of theatre over the minds of its audience. Observers commenting about the theatre of the thirties have generally continued to

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see it as a truly formative influence on the opinion of the general public. Caspar H. Nannes in Politics in the American Drama sees the anti-nazi dramas of the '30s playing an important persuasive role. The anti-nazi plays, he claims, "made a reluctant nation aware there was a demonic force loose in the world and impressed upon audiences that this satanic power was not content to remain overseas. . . . Newspapers and magazine accounts, scenes in newsreels, and even the hourly radio reports failed to bring home the menace facing the world. . . . It remained for an evening in the theatre, with the immediacy of footlight impact, to awaken a somnolent America to the danger."<sup>6</sup> It would seem that Nannes overestimates theatre's power to persuade. The public opinion polls of the period do not show the American public ever really waking up to the alarms sounding the Axis threat, whether those alarms were from the theatre or some other source. In February, 1940 a Gallup poll described 77% of its sample declaring that the United States should not take up arms against Europe even if England and France were losing.<sup>7</sup> Even as late as August, 1941, Gallup found 83% of its sample against sending an expeditionary force to Europe.<sup>8</sup> If Americans were awakened, they still were not ready to stir.

Within the theatre itself there was no consensus either as to the correct role for the theatre in external political affairs, or how potent the theatre might be in influencing those external events. This state of internal

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uncertainty and division was demonstrated quite clearly in the Finnish relief controversy.

On November 30, 1939, Russian troops invaded Finland. The Finns made a remarkably strong resistance and were able to hold out against the Eastern Goliath until March 12, 1940 when a peace agreement was signed. There was much sympathy for Finland in America. Herbert Hoover lead the Finnish Relief Fund, Inc., a fund designed to give aid to the 700,000 refugees. My January 17, 1940 Hoover announced that 500,000 Americans had each given \$1.00 to the fund.<sup>9</sup> The support, then, was broad. It included moral and financial support from the American theatre community. Robert Sherwood's There Shall be No Night, a play about the Russo-Finnish war, appeared while the fighting went on and was one of the most successful and sympathetically received plays of the 1938-40 season.

On January 13, 1940, various producers and stars including Katharine Hepburn, Tallulah Bankhead, and Eddie Dowling, met at the Algonquin Hotel to plan for theatre's help in aiding the refugees. Helen Hayes, chairman of the fund's Amusement Committee, announced a goal of at least \$500,000. Lee Shubert pledged that any or all of his theatres could be used for benefit performances. Shows already promising such performances included The Philadelphia Story, Hellzapoppin, Pins and Needles, Du Barry was a Lady, and The Little Foxes. Miss Hayes further announced that she and Jean Hersholt hoped for a radio show in which

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Greta Garbo would overcome her aversion to microphones and read a plea for Finnish refugee relief.<sup>10</sup>

The mood at the Algonquin was one of confidence and serenity; what the theatre folk were about to do was unquestionably correct and beneficent. The serenity was soon shattered. All involved in the ensuing controversy implicitly felt the theatre to be a powerful and influential medium. Such a medium must be very careful about the impact of its deeds, even its good deeds. Consequently, not everyone felt the theatre should get involved in the Russo-Finnish War. Conflict broke into the open when producers Oscar Serlin (Life With Father) and Herman Shumlin (The Little Foxes) refused to allow benefit performances of their productions. Shumlin and Lillian Hellman, author of Foxes, became spokesmen for those against the performances, and their rationale attested to their belief in the theatre's power as an attitude influencer. Shumlin said the benefits demonstrated a "war hysteria" to which the theatre should not contribute, and further suggested an "unneutral attitude" at odds with the government's official policy.<sup>11</sup> If relief went anywhere it should go to needy Americans, especially stage people.

Charges arose that Shumlin and Hellman's and others' reluctance to help the Relief Fund came not so much from a desire to keep the theatre neutral and aloof as from sympathy for the Russian invaders. The Amusement Committee of the Fund issued a statement signed by John Shubert,

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Eddie Dowling, John Golden and others, charging that "Communist cunning masked in the phoney cloak of Americanism, in the manner of the German Bund, is solely responsible for the controversy that has arisen in the theatre over the benefit performances for Finnish non-combatants."<sup>12</sup>

Tallulah Bankhead, who played Regina in The Little Foxes, and who had refused to play a benefit performance of that play for Spanish Loyalists, added further heat to the controversy with her intimations of Hellman's and Shumlin's pro-Soviet bias. Hellman answered that such aid might "mask a pre-war movement in the United States," and that it could add to the war spirit. She went on to explain her attempts to aid Spanish Loyalists. A Republican victory in Spain, she had reasoned, would forestall a general European war. Now that the war had come, her hope was to keep from enflaming war sympathies in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

Whether one accepted Miss Hellman's somewhat intricate reasoning or not, one could not help but note that theatre people generally known to be leftwing in orientation (Odets, Clurman, Shumlin) were creating a counter-benefit group urging restoration of the W. P. A. Federal Theatre to aid needy theatre people.<sup>14</sup> It was hard not to connect liberal/leftist sentiments with reluctance to aid Finland's refugees.

In this controversy, which grew so hot that back-stage arguments even began to affect performances on stage, Equity decided to stick with democracy, hoping

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thereby to please the majority. The Association's council stated that any actor could refuse to perform in a benefit, and individual casts could decide for themselves if their show would give such performances. If a minority felt they wanted pay, they might get their regular wages.<sup>15</sup> So the benefits began after a picture was circulated of Alfred Lunt (of Taming of the Shrew) putting the first contribution into a jar held by Gertrude Lawrence (of Skylark). Finnish women dressed in native costumes solicited relief funds in the lobbies. With some bitterness, name calling, and anxiety, the American theatre had made its first stand during the war, a stand more of good will than of ideological clarity. To an extent this stand would prove prophetic of theatre's role throughout the war--a role always poised tenuously between, on the one hand, purely professional concerns, great good will, and devotion to the cause that was to become clear after December 7, 1941, and on the other hand, an uncertainty whether it should discuss ideology, and if it should, how it should.

But there was another side to the theatre's problem of finding its role in American culture in these war years of 1939-1945. Broadway, though convinced of its propagandistic powers, i.e., its ability to plead a case, create a sympathy for a particular cause, saw itself primarily as an entertainment rather than an educational medium. The debate that ensued as 1940 turned into 1941 and war drew ever closer became less specific than the Finnish Relief

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 best by forsaking its childish ways, or by doing exactly  
 the reverse and emphasizing them? World War I theatre  
 provided no real answer. It had spawned, said Rosamond  
 Gilder in 1939, "A spate of war-tinged plays of no intrinsic  
 value," and provided as spectacle the warrior-chorus girl  
 and the patriotic tableaux. The hits of that war were the  
 usual comedies and melodramas, such as Daddy Long Legs and  
 Elmer Rice's On Trial.<sup>16</sup> But much had happened in the  
 American theatre since then--O'Neill, Freud's arrival on  
 Broadway, The Theatre Guild, the Group Theatre with its  
 superb acting. Broadway had matured. So World War I  
 theatre's response was not really relevant. Certainly post-  
 Depression theatre's greater maturity should be reflected  
 in its responses to this second war crisis of the century.

In early 1942 the role of the theatre in American  
 life once again became the subject of Congressional debate.  
 Though inspired by such mundane matters as draft deferments  
 and Melvyn Douglas's salary at the Office of Civilian  
 Defense, the debate's scope encompassed the profession's  
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was a highly visible institution with well known figures who would, for better or worse, be watched and noted by citizens in New York City and across the nation. Here was a reservoir of talent and competence capable of producing spectacles that could, perhaps, influence a people's feelings and opinions. And it might be capable of even greater influence during a war than before, for there would probably be the usual wartime seeking of amusement, and certainly there would be more money to enable people to go to the theatres. What was the nature of the influence to be then? More Tobacco Roads, murder melodramas like Angel Street, fast moving, somewhat bawdy revues and nonsensical musical comedies? Or an unofficial arm of the government to be used for propaganda and "education?"

As usual when Congress started discussing the theatre's priority and value, the debate grew warm, the polemics and rhetoric rich and bitter. Recreation is essential, said Roosevelt. How essential? asked Congress. Some members of the House were upset at what they felt was preferential treatment afforded members of the entertainment industry. The nation had to settle the question of who was to be deferred from serving in the armed forces. As far back as December, 1940, theatre people had asked for special consideration. At that time New York City Selective Service director, Col. Arthur V. McDermott was asked to grant several performers in Hellzapoppin a deferment until the show closed.<sup>17</sup> Prospects were that each case would

have to be decided by individual draft boards. But that was 1940; the United States was not at war, and the numbers getting preferential treatment were few.

It was now 1942; the United States was at war, yet it had taken Brigadier General Lewis B. Hershey, director of Selective Service, only four days after the request was made to sanction draft deferred status for actors, writers, directors, producers, cameramen, sound engineers, and other technicians. Why, demanded Representative August H. Andersen of Minnesota on February 9, 1942, could not Hershey move on a six month old request to get deferments for farmers?<sup>18</sup> Andersen's question was echoed bitterly by Rep. Clevenger of Ohio, who raised again in his attack the traditional specter of theatre's immoral influence. "May not sugar," he asked, "milk, canned fruit, and vegetables, meats, and grain be more essential than a lot of this salacious bedroom drama, low comedy, and propaganda so generously interlarded into legitimate entertainment?"<sup>19</sup>

The question of entertainers' relative wealth became an issue in the 1942 debate. On February 6, 1942, Rep. John Taber of New York spoke against the parasites on the Federal payrolls, and noted especially actor Melvyn Douglas's \$8,000 a year appointment in the Office of Civilian Defense. Rep. Charles Fabbis of Pennsylvania drew a comparison that is illustrative of the attitude held by many about the relative value of the entertainer in a war culture. The salary drawn by Douglas would be, Fabbis

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began, "as much as we are paying that matchless and heroic soldier, General Douglas MacArthur, when he is battling in the forests of the Philippines everyday, every hour--yes even every minute--in danger of his life, to preserve the fate of the white race in the Orient."<sup>20</sup> Douglas' leftist political reputation of the '30s certainly helped provoke this attack, and hovering in the background of the debate remained remnants of suspicion about actors' political and national loyalties.<sup>21</sup>

After a considerable amount of such rhetoric and sentiment, the bill under discussion, the Deficiency Appropriations Bill, was passed on February 9, 1942 by a margin of more than two to one. The bill included an amendment forbidding the Office of Civilian Defense from spending money for "the employment of persons, the rent of facilities, or the purchase of equipment and supplies to promote, produce, or carry on instruction or to direct instruction in physical fitness by dancers, fan dancing, street shows, theatrical performances, or other public entertainments."<sup>22</sup> What the amendment amounted to was a refusal by Congress to have any official relations with the theatre, a refusal to recognize any serious contribution that the theatre could make to the nation at this period, even if the suspect profession was disposed to do so. Yet, even with this financial hand-slapping, the watchful and hostile attitudes in Washington were probably less pronounced in World War II than they had been in



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World War I. During that war Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer investigated the Broadway theatre to make sure no German propaganda would be disseminated through plays and that no income could go indirectly into German hands.<sup>23</sup>

But whether the attacks were less blatant or not, actors responded with anger to the attacks on the loyalty and good will of the theatre industry. Eddie Cantor, Ole Olsen, and Chick Johnson sent a telegram on February 9, 1942 to the heads of the A. F. of L. and C. I. O. asking them to lend the actors their prestige against "any attempt to segregate [actors] from the rest of labor's energetic role in the war effort and thereby help achieve the unity of all sections of the population, which is essential to final victory." The telegram went on: "Need we remind the politicians that only a week or so before this malicious attack upon the entertainment profession the United States Congress lowered its heads in mourning for our dearly beloved Carole Lombard, killed while returning from a government mission."<sup>24</sup> The telegrams that flowed from enraged theatre people in response to the Congressional sentiments and actions suggested two roles for the profession and its workers in a wartime society. Both are seen in the Cantor-Olsen-Johnson telegram. There was first the personal effort of stars like Carole Lombard, adding visibility and glamor to certain government activities. Second, there was a useful, ideological, attitude-creating function that even the mere entertainment industry could

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perform. Congress seemed to have ignored the possibility, dominated as it was by suspicions that theatre and movies were at best frivolous and perhaps immoral, and at worst an industry packed with people who would gladly use its power in politically dangerous ways.

In this atmosphere of mutual hostility, Emmanuel Celler rose to suggest the useful function that the theatre could serve. The date, July 7, 1942; the occasion, a Broadway soldier production. The show was This is the Army, a revue produced and cast entirely by soldiers, with words and music by Irving Berlin. Celler's enthusiasm was almost embarrassingly intense. "It [This is the Army] is a sheer pageant of patriotism. . . . You are lifted out of your seat with enthusiasm. You feel like throwing your living arms around our army. Do not fail to see it. It is a great gloom antidote."<sup>25</sup> Celler's remarks included more than praise for that specific show alone, however. He suggested that Athens, a symbol of democracy, had been helped during its war with Sparta by one of Euripides' plays.<sup>26</sup> Here was another side to the coin. The theatre might not be just a parasite sucking the enriched blood of the fully employed home front; it might even be of some indirect value to the war effort.

There was a party to the debate that saw a potential in the theatre for patriotic excitation and information. This party, which included theatre and non-theatre people, wanted to see a conscious development of a patriotic,

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educational theatre. The argument for a theatre expressing the ideals behind the Allies' war effort were summarized in an article in the December, 1942 Current History, by John Gassner. First, the advocates of a war theatre cited a need for public education. Unlike World War I, this war "involved basic issues essential to a victorious conclusion of the war and a settlement of past-war problems for which it [was] not too soon to educate the nation."<sup>27</sup> Gassner drew attention in his article to a statement released by the Office of War Information in the summer of 1942 that had given some startling statistics. According to the statement, one-third of the American people would have accepted at that time a negotiated peace with German army leaders. Americans were not sensitive, the statement implied, to the real evil that the German nation and movement represented and that must be destroyed. Fifty percent of the American people admitted that they were not sure what the war was about, and so it was necessary, said the War Information Office statement, to "carry into the everyday consciousness of every citizen the realities, the horror and menace of which they are so dangerously unaware."<sup>28</sup>

The logical result of such a demand for a patriotic and educational treatre would have been, of course, a government inspired, directed, and produced theatre, and certain critics did at times draw attention to the effective Government theatres of Russia and China, both of which were

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producing anti-fascist dramas for civilian and military consumption. As far as is known, no one actually suggested that the United States government either dictate to the American theatre industry or get into the sponsorship and production of dramas itself. Even the plans for a national theatre advocated by various people, such as Robert Sherwood, Brooks Atkinson, and Edith J. R. Isaacs of Theatre Arts, called for a theatre safely protected from any direct government dictation.

Of course, service productions, such as This is the Army, may be said to be indirectly government productions. In fact, the government did send three shows out on the road in 1942 to, as Variety put it, hypo "U. S. morale to a fever fighting and production pitch." Stars of the first show, United Nations Hero Parade, were military figures such as Bigadier General James Doolittle, British fliers, and eight American soldiers and sailor cited for bravery. The men were to tell about their experiences before big rallies. The second show, The Army War Show, was to include exhibits of equipment and 1,200 enlisted men and officers staging a "battle" every evening.<sup>29</sup> The somewhat epic affairs were similar to the Nazi-produced Thingspiel (from Thing, a Teutonic tribal assembly). In Thingspiels citizens watched S. A. or Hitler youth battalions stage battles, saw other examples of military skills displayed, and heard choric declamations.<sup>30</sup> But the U. S. government's involvement in theatre spectacles was short-lived, somewhat to the chagrin



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of people wanting a perhaps less epic, but more relevant and ideological theatre than appeared in the offing.

"If America is the leader of the ideological war," they asked, "why is it not taking steps to use theatre's powerful arsenal in the struggle."<sup>31</sup>

Without directives coming from a central, powerful agency of some kind, the theatre was left to find its way in the encircling gloom of dimmed-out midtown Manhattan. The issues surrounding theatre's wartime role were very real to theatre people, but were often necessarily reduced from such grand conceptions as the power of art and entertainment to strengthen and idealize democracy to the more immediate problems of which shows would first get investors and then audiences. Producers had to live with the fact, and probably were grateful, that American theatre was not government subsidized as was the Russian. As Rosamund Gilder noted in Theatre Arts in 1943, the American Broadway show must pay its way first. It must get people into the theatre and then do what patriotic thing it could.<sup>32</sup>

The rule of economic necessity on Broadway has long been lamented and continued to be so lamented during the war years.<sup>33</sup> The first problem for a producer to settle was what would attract enough people into his theatre and grosses into his till. Thus, among practicing theatre people (as opposed to critics and theatre columnists), the debate about the theatre shifted from what it should do to what it must do. In 1943 Martha Dreiblatt of the New York

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Times went to several theatre veterans to discover their views of what the theatre must do. Often the categories of "must" and "should" merged, and a neat metaphysical proposition was formed: necessity (what Broadway must do) equalled goodness and virtue (what Broadway rightfully should do). John Golden, producer of Claudia, reported to Miss Dreiblatt: "In my experience people don't want the war in their theatrical entertainment. They want escape. Also, the best war plays are written after the perspective comes, not during the heat of battle."<sup>34</sup> Golden's second comment displays a commonly held explanation of the lack of good war plays during World War II. F. Hugh Robert, author of Kiss and Tell commented. "The majority of war plays so far produced have met with the general opinion that the things they say are trite and obvious. I still think the function of the theatre today is to provide not sheer escapist entertainment, perhaps, but entertainment. The crowds milling around on Broadway these evenings at showtime want to spend the money in their pockets to buy entertainment and forgetfulness of the day's work."<sup>35</sup> So, often the theatre audience was envisioned as a crowd wistfully seeking a lotus land behind the dim marquees.

Did the audience want only escape? Would it accept war dramas? Coe Ladd concluded in 1942 "that the nearer a country comes to getting into war the less threatgoers are attracted to plays having to do with international conflict."<sup>36</sup> In the allied industry of motion pictures,

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executives of Warner Brothers wanted to do more than guess about what the public wanted and would pay for, so it took a straw vote in 1942 of film editors in forty U. S. cities. Votes tallied indicated that the studio should schedule more comedies, fewer serious dramas, and fewer war pictures for production in the coming year.<sup>37</sup> Variety reported on March 18, 1942 that there would be fifty "filmusicals" during the year and that this number would top even those vintage years of the early thirties.<sup>38</sup> The mood of the American audience seemed evident, and in response the entertainment industry seemed definitely pointed in the direction of melody and sweetness.

But for individual playwrights serious about their work and the implications of its content, acceptance of role of entertainer often came hard. As the next chapter will show at some length, the war period forced playwright after playwright to define for himself the role he should play, forced him to balance somehow the demands of artist, entertainer, and citizen, and to find a content which would be both congenial to his individual talent and relevant to the world realities outside him.

Perhaps no clearer expression of role uncertainty exists than S. N. Behrman's No Time for Comedy. In this 1939 play starring Katharine Cornell and Laurence Olivier, Behrman seems to have been writing autobiography of a kind, though the playwright made no claims of being the model for his character. The play concerns Gay Esterbrook, a writer

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of fashionable social comedies. Suddenly, with the help of Amanda, a woman angling for both an affair and distinction by bringing him to serious achievement, Gay grows disgusted with himself for not having faced the real and horrible world. He says to Linda, his wife and the star of most of his successful comedies, "you expect me to sit in my room contriving stage situations for you to be witty in! Or I go to Hollywood and sit in endless conferences agonizing over novel methods for boy to meet girl. I tell you it's all an irrelevance, an anachronism, a callous acquiescence."<sup>39</sup> Amanda does inspire Gay to write a rather absurd play about immortality, but by doing so seems to force him into betraying his own best talent. Behrman appeared to be dealing with the conflicting forces within the psyche of the comedy writer. Amanda, on the one hand, suggests and stirs in him the vague but profound feelings that respond to the ugly realities. Under the influence of Amanda and these sincere but vague emotions Gay rejects his previous mode of drama in one of Behrman's most strongly felt speeches. "No I'm sick of it, sick of my work, sick of myself. I want something clear and outside myself to be enlisted for. I'm sick of the triviality, sick of ringing changes on what I've already written, sick of the futility. I swear to God, I want it shot out of myself" (p. 189).

Opposed to the deeply felt need to respond emotionally to the immediate world stands Linda, suggesting the hard and objective parts of Gay's psyche, those parts



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that allow him to write sharply observed and witty comedy. She begs him not to ignore his natural comic talent, and she states what may be seen as an attempt by Behrman to justify the social comedy he had written, and what could become justification for Broadway's wartime emphasis on escape. "I gather," she tells Gay, "the besieged Spaniards love the American films. If they enjoy seeing our glamor boys pursue our glamor girls before they're knocked to bits, why grudge them? . . . The eternities are a bore. They're inhuman. You can't take them in. We can only laugh at our plight. That's what distinguishes us from the animals and from the savages you're so excited about. They can't laugh" (p. 49). The playwright is poised between the two women and the two sides of his mind. He opts for wife and natural gift. To deny that is to create a false art, flatly untrue because dramatically unembodied. The play ne wrote under Amanda's influence, he later judges, "was inadequate to its idea. . . . I wasn't equipped to do it--signation without form--passion without authority-- . . . not tragic but thin and petulant" (p. 188).

Behrman was apparently forecasting his own dramatic direction, and it was to be a direction similar to if not exactly the one he had been traveling in. But the forecast was wrong. The Talley Method, 1941, shows Behrman attempting less detached characterization--he more clearly takes sides and allows only the morally suspect to be foolish. The sensitive and good are very sensitive and very good;

they are never foolish. Dr. Axton Talley, renowned surgeon, is the scientific man, precisely rational to the point of inhumanity. He is the kind of figure Behrman's Playwright's Co. associates, Maxwell Anderson and Robert Sherwood, suggested as prototypically fascist. Indeed, there are unmistakable suggestions that Dr. Talley is a Hitler in attitude. He is scornful of Manfred, a German refugee who had been imprisoned because he had lacked the brutal energy necessary to kill and thereby effect a successful putsch against the nazis in Bavaria. When Talley converses with Manfred, he displays both the lack of understanding that isolates him from people, including his children, and the near obsession with rigorous pursuit of a goal that deprives him of any moral base. "When you are undertaking a job that require ruthlessness--you must be ruthless," he tells the less rigorous Manfred.<sup>40</sup>

Enid, a former patient of Dr. Talley's and a sensitive poet, often unsure of personal direction and purpose, is attracted to the doctor's assurance and strength, that is until she sees how that strength and obsessive rigor has sapped his human sympathy and understanding. In Dr. Talley she sees the implications of the man so obsessed by efficiency that all human weakness, opposition, and simple slackness must be eliminated. Seeing this she refuses to marry him. The play has a thematic seriousness perhaps lacking in earlier plays, and a structure of character analogies that are both somewhat obvious and

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destructive of convincingly full characterizations. Dr. Talley is the totalitarian type; Manfred, the sensitive, martyred victim of a Talley dominated world; Enid, the thoughtful person, perhaps the America of 1941, who must make the morally weighty choice between the two. Oh, where is the Behrman of yesteryear? Brooks Atkinson found him hiding behind the mask of a "writer of diffuse platitudes about human nature."<sup>41</sup>

In reviewing The Talley Method, Atkinson praised No Time for Comedy as a serious but funny study of the comedy playwright's dilemma. He regretted that Behrman had decided to take Gay Esterbrook's need to be relevant so seriously. In doing so the playwright had abandoned his talent and had, in fact, written a play (Talley) of "indignation without form--passion without authority." In the review, Atkinson finds a real rationale for comedy in

war time. "As our foremost writer of the comedy of manners, Behrman has talent that is sorely needed. Although the grand expressions of tragedy are outside his orbit . . . let us not underestimate the therapeutic value of comedy today." He nearly echoes Linda of No Time for Comedy. "It [comedy] represents the application of intelligence to a world that is engulfed in anger and despair."<sup>42</sup> Whether Behrman was influenced by Atkinson's comments, or by The Talley Method's relatively short run for a Behrman play (only fifty-six performances), is uncertain. His next play, however, abandoned any pretense of weight and

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relevance. The Pirate, opening in November, 1942, was a light comedy, full of colorful, pseudo-Caribbean costumes; it was a vehicle really for Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. It ran 177 performances.

What we see in Behrman's experience and Atkinson's comments on that experience, is in miniature the debate that went on explicitly and implicitly throughout the period of this study--1938-45. A congress sceptical of both the theatre's possible value to a nation at war and even, at times, of its ideological soundness, serious playwrights who questioned the value of their own art, critics and non-professionals who charged the theatre with missing its great missions, all these tended to make the American theatre introspective and defensive. On the one hand there were the voices suggesting perhaps impossibly grand roles. Maurice Schwartz, director in the Yiddish Art Theatre: "As an aesthetic and moral guide [theatre] stands as pathfinder for humanity at the crossroads."<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, there were the indictments. Private citizen P. W. T. Mess in a letter to the New York Times: "The reason the theatre is not the propagation of thought and controller of decisions . . . is that, owing to the undemocratic and commercial hands it has got into, it is no longer a temple of culture."<sup>44</sup>

Into the confusion came the voice of Brooks Atkinson, reviewer for the New York Times and probably the foremost critic of the period. Atkinson, in a series of

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articles appearing at various times from June, 1940 to September, 1942, attempted to speak to the theatre as a teacher and guide. He tried to define the essential and creative role it should take in response to a world falling to shambles. He, like John Gassner and others, demanded a socially relevant role. But he, as many others did not, sought to recognize both the theatre's natural proclivities and its diversity. In short, he took both the times and the theatre seriously and sought to find a suitable relationship between them. He felt the fall of France in 1940 to be the great crisis that would force the nation politically and culturally to find direction and commitment. "None of the other victims of conquest . . . has cracked the structure of democratic thought quite so deeply as the quick collapse of this great and venerated nation."<sup>45</sup> The crisis of democratic culture was at hand, and people would have to turn from their individual pursuits and develop a willingness to serve the few states left fighting tyranny. Theatre was one of the "active forces of culture" and the death of creative theatre in Italy, Russia, and Germany was "a symptom of cultural death that democracy cannot survive."<sup>46</sup> In other words, Atkinson saw cultural vitality and democracy as inseparable. Thus dramatists had a mission to keep alive an active and innovative theatre. Such a theatre, Atkinson pointed out in this attempt to suggest the theatre's place in the contemporary situation, need not eschew its role as entertainer. "There is no

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reason why that cheerful function . . . should ever change. Nor need it be contemptuously dismissed as an escapist retreat from maturity. . . . To regard unpretentious amusements like comedies and musical shows as forms of escape is to be sophomoric and to turn cultural morality upside down."<sup>47</sup> Apparently he felt in 1940 as Linda Esterbrook had in 1939 that the ability to use hard objective consciousness to laugh at oneself and one's state was a civilized trait, one necessary to save a culture from barbaric self-seriousness. By December 14, 1941, the Sunday after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Atkinson had shifted a bit. The role of entertainer for the theatre? "Although it is not dishonorable, it is not sublime," he said.<sup>48</sup>

The June, 1940 article was hopeful; Atkinson felt that American theatre could and would respond creatively. But the article was also vague. The subject of theatre's was dealt with in only the most general terms. Later articles attempted to be more specific--first dealing with general problems of subject matter, but by March, 1942 with specific problems of composing war plays. In December, 1940 he declared the relevant subjects for dramatic treatment to be "Man and the hopes of his soul. . . ."<sup>49</sup> In the article he asked only for dramas of integrity and insight no matter what their subject. "The dramatist need not snatch his topic out of the current whirlwind and his characters need not wear uniforms or pick up shell fragments

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in a home bombed from the skies. . . . To regard [the war] as a self-contained conflict between the military machines of Germany and Great Britain is to underestimate the staggering size of the battle. The total warfare is . . . against man and the hopes of his soul."<sup>50</sup>

After the United State's entry into the war in 1941 and doubts about theatre's value to the American effort were heard from Congress and elsewhere, Atkinson continued to defend the theatre, but he began to define theatre's role a bit more narrowly. He never denied the validity and cultural value of good dramas no matter what their content, but he increasingly called for dramas that somehow created meaningful images of the contemporary conflict. In a September 6, 1942 article he affirmed that "art has a practical function in wartime. It works in the common cause. [The artist] can pull together all the scattered details of war-making and give them an eloquent meaning."<sup>51</sup> Increasingly he suggested a direct dealing with the war.

In this Atkinson represented a trend in wartime criticism. On Broadway there were few enough war dramas, and the number, and to some extent, the quality of those dramas was the criteria used by critics and commentators to gauge the moral and social health of the theatre. The critics and columnists did not accept Broadway producers' identification of economic necessity with social and moral responsibility. Reading through the columns in which observers discuss war drama production during the four

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years of the war is a bit like examining a hospital patient's chart. Disregarding the occasional musical revues with war themes, such as This is the Army and Of V We Sing, the medical diagnosticians could see little progress toward social relevance and health in their patient.

In November, 1942 Brooks Atkinson left for Africa to fill a new role as war correspondent. He was replaced on the Times for the duration by Lewis Nichols. Immediately after Atkinson's departure, December, 1942, Nichols surveyed the Broadway scene for productions that dealt seriously with the war. He found that only two of the twenty-nine shows open "thoughtfully considered the times."<sup>52</sup> Though he found the statistics for that date "curiously bad," he took heart in the fact that Maxwell Anderson's The Eve of St. Mark was coming up for production, and further, that if one looked back to the previous war he would find the statistics not much better. In April, 1918, at the end of the first year of American involvement, only six of forty-six shows dealt with war. Nichols seemed in this 1942 column to have some faith that the public would accept more than mere escape, but it would not accept war plays unless they were good.

It is interesting, then, to compare this momentarily embarrassed but hopeful column of December, 1942 with one of Nichols written just before the end of the war. The hope has disappeared and the embarrassment has modulated into bitterness. "The war was affecting everyone last

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week--" he writes on March 11, 1945, "everyone except the theatre. That was retaining the position, now grown a little undignified, that its sole function was to entertain, and neither to report the facts of the present nor discuss plans for the future."<sup>53</sup> He feels justified in his original faith in the public; they support such good war plays as A Bell for Adano. But the theatre. . . . He has become a man of little faith. If it failed in wartime to take part in a "news symposium of the time," it may fail to establish relevance after the war. He writes shortly after the end of the war: "The world has had enough of war and warriors and the theatre admittedly should offer its best efforts on behalf of peace and a decent society. But just as it sat out the war, it may through caution and inertia decide to sit out the new world."<sup>54</sup> Broadway, as judged by its closest watchers, had done little except entertain, and to entertain was, according to the critics, a subordinate role during wartime. Refusing to approach the world crisis in an attitude of high seriousness earned the industry the disappointment and disillusionment of its professional critics and commentators. It was just a public entertainer, and as for the role of public entertainer, most critics would concur with Brooks Atkinson's 1941 evaluation --"although it is not dishonorable, it is not sublime."

So the American theatre stood generally condemned for its lack of social awareness and ideological guidance-- for its abundance of Junior Misses and Claudias and By

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Jupiters and its dearth of A Bell for Adanos and Winter Soldiers. But others were ready to condemn the theatre if it resorted to high seriousness. Note, for instance, the letter from "theatre-goer" in December 1, 1940's New York Times. "Must a play always be a smash hit full of this and that significance and written on high? Or might we not have just an attractive offering with no pretensions to being an exercise for a critic's undoubted learning, but merely . . . to being a 'amusing evening.' It used to be like that when the theatre was something."<sup>55</sup> And the same newspaper, in a November 6, 1940 editorial noting the escapism of the 1940-41 season, suggested that the absence of socially relevant and significant plays might be a natural, "desperate and successful attempt at escape from plays of social significance."<sup>56</sup>

Here and there even critics defended theatre's propensity for froth. George Jean Nathan spoke with his usual vociferousness against the critical demands for a theatre of "soapboxes full of grease paint."<sup>57</sup> Nathan, who could applaud the unpretentious fun of a song and dance show as well as applaud superb tragedy, found the critical demands for discursive relevance a malignant force in Broadway theatre, possibly one that would halt the advance of American drama. He praised O'Neill for standing aside and not being pushed into writing the kind of play he considered "dubious journalism," and felt in Anderson's analogies in Journey to Jerusalem, Rice's discursive

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discussions of ideologies in Flight to the West, and Sherwood's race with the headlines in There Shall be No Night a deterioration of American playwrighting. And to what avail, this artistic deterioration?

Why . . . this belief that there is no place in the world today for men and women who steadfastly hold themselves professionally, if mayhaps not personally, aloof from the current confusion and who steadfastly hope and try to keep alive the inspiriting old artistic traditions. . . . No one . . . wants to see Naziism beaten and liberty and democracy preserved more than I do . . . but I'll be good and bedamned if I can see how it is going to be done, or even helped to be done, by the simple process of converting the fine arts into PM editorials.<sup>58</sup>

It was Nathan's "so there" to Dorothy Thompson et al. and his plea for artistic integrity and Wordsworthian tranquility. For he felt, as did many others, that the war could be dealt with really only after the emotional upheaval of fighting had dissipated. "Meditation and reflection have thus distilled [in previous wars] what was mere stark propaganda into the tincture of philosophical dramatic literature. Heat makes reporters; calm makes poets."<sup>59</sup>

Everybody wanted to make or remake Broadway. Broadway was caught in the middle, self conscious and feeling a little guilty in this wilderness of accusations, suspicions, pleas for mission, economic realities, and war realities to which everyone expected it to respond.

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### The Practical Response

The theatre is mighty slow in settling its own private critical problems, but come disaster, pestilence, hell and high water and German or Jap, and it is the first to knuckle down and do a job.

Edward Raquello, head of survey for the War Production Training Committee

The Broadway theatre responded in two ways to its American wartime environment. First, theatre people devoted hours of their time to patriotic activities such as fund drives and U. S. O. shows. The second, the creative response, was more oblique, more diverse and more difficult to trace. Each playwright, producer, each genre of Broadway production, such as the musical comedy, reacted to the war in ways determined by a complex relationship of historical event, personal philosophy, an intuition of audience taste, and in the case of the musical, its own point of development as a theatre form. An examination of this second, creative response will constitute the bulk of this study. But a brief survey of Theatre people's practical service activities during the war years must be included if a full picture of World War II American theatre is to be drawn.

As if to refute Congressional innuendoes concerning the patriotism of the profession, actors, producers, stagehands, and others engaged in literally dozens of patriotic projects and jobs. Maxwell Anderson became involved in local civil defense, and in 1942 he toured parts of northern Africa in preparation for a play on the

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war front there. Moss Hart traveled 28,000 miles getting ready to write his documentary-like play of becoming a flyer in the Air Corps, Winged Victory. Robert Sherwood immediately became a speechwriter for President Roosevelt, then served as assistant to the Secretary of the Navy, and finally acted as overseas director of the Office of War Information.

For those willing to work in cooperative projects, the coordinating agency was the American Theatre Wing, which had been active even before the United States entered the conflict. On February 21, 1941, the Wing, at that time a society of stage women only, staged a Radio City Music Hall spectacular for the benefit of the British War Relief Fund. During the first hour a radio hook-up with London brought American listeners the voices of Laurence Olivier and Viven Leigh, Leslie Howard, Beatrice Lillie, Maurice Evens reading Shakespeare, and Gracie Fields singing "There Will Always be an England." American performers in the Music Hall itself included Ed Wynn, Ethel Merman, Burns and Allen, Victor Moore, George M. Cohan, and Olsen and Johnson.<sup>60</sup>

By July of 1941, The Defense Recreation Committee, a part of the Wing, started a program that continued throughout the war, providing servicemen with free tickets to Broadway shows. The idea came to producer John Golden when he spotted five servicemen standing under the marquee of the St. James Theatre. He approached them and found that they had no money and no place to go. Golden, recalling

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Mayor La Guardia's campaign to make New York City a good experience for servicemen spending time there, took the men to this current production, Claudia. Four of them saw the show free; the fifth was a movie lover and refused to enter the legitimate theatre.<sup>61</sup> The idea of free tickets to shows was approved by the committee and on July 16, 1941 over a thousand soliders saw Claudia, Hellzapoppin, My Sister Eileen, and Separate Rooms.<sup>62</sup>

The list of Wing sponsored activities grew in number and ambition. The Wing provided a workroom where theatre people with the appropriate skills could make clothes for children. It organized Red Cross blood donor drives among entertainers. It established a speaker's bureau that trained entertainers to use their visibility and influence for the promotion of war projects. The Wing's Manpower Conversion Project started by sending out 27,000 questionnaires to people in the theatre industry in an attempt to get information on the skills and resources within the industry. The information helped place hundreds of unemployed, overage and draft exempt theatre people into war production work.<sup>63</sup> The project had its benefits to the theatre just as had the free ticket project. Getting servicemen into the theatre might help create a new audience for the stage after the war. Putting show people in war production plants, in additions to helping the war effort, was said also to dispel the stereotype of the lazy and weak actor.

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For projects using specifically theatrical skills, the United Theatrical War Activities Committee was set up. The Committee helped direct the dancer or comedian to the touring camp show whose dancer had just sprained an ankle or comedian had come down with the flu. It assigned the people to the Lunchtime Follies program where singers, comedians, and musicians went into various war production plants in their area to give brief revue-like shows to workmen during their lunch break. For this particular program the performers were paid by the theatre organization. The program hoped to become self-supporting by proving so valuable in maintaining factory morale and in promoting production that owners would pay to have the Follies presented at their plants.<sup>64</sup> And, of course, there were the U. S. O. shows and canteens where show people served to help entertain and sustain allied military personnel.

This is the Army proved the ability of a show business venture to earn money for the war. The show was a reworking by Irving Berlin of his popular World War I show, Yip Yip Yaphank, and included Berlin singing his famous song from that earlier production, "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning." The cast for this revue consisted entirely of soldiers, 60 percent of whom had never been on stage before. Others, however, had been enlisted from their jobs in show business. The soldier-actors were assembled at Camp Upton where they were directed by

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Sergeant Ezra Stone, better known as "Henry" of the Aldrich Family radio series.

The show may not have been ideologically significant in the war effort, but it was financially viable. Berlin, himself, would accept no money from the proceeds, and he ultimately gave over \$1,000,000 revenue from the show and his patriotic songs to the government.<sup>65</sup> The show received much press ballyhoo. Supporting the production became a way for prominent and famous citizens to demonstrate their patriotism. Kate Smith sent in \$10,000 for two tickets to the opening night performance.<sup>66</sup> Less wealthy and less visible folks paid \$27.50 top for opening night seats. A total of \$45,000 came into the till that first evening. Later Warner Brothers paid \$250,000 for movie rights. After its stint on Broadway, and its tour of army camps, and the making of the movie, This is the Army went to England. Eisenhower saw the show and was so impressed that he recommended that it tour all the theatres of operation. Everywhere it went, nearly everyone loved it. It was funny and stirring, and particularly because Berlin had used indirection to avoid a rowdiness and triteness common to patriotic, "incantation"-like revues. "It is Irving," wrote George Jean Nathan, "who seems to have mastered the salesmanship of patriotism as no one else has in his time."<sup>67</sup> He sold well. By the time the show had closed in Honolulu on October 22, 1945, it had earned \$10,000,000 for the Army Emergency Relief Fund and

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\$350,000 for the British War Charities. Variety reported in May, 1942 that 35 percent of the "coin" for Army and Navy relief funds were to come from show business; it probably was anticipating the receipts from This is The Army.<sup>68</sup>

Broadway financial facts allow only the investors of the relatively few big hits to breath easily. The question was whether these investors would permit their always somewhat precarious returns to be diverted from their pockets and those of their creditors into the pockets of Uncle Sam. During the Seventh War Bond Drive some investors did, indeed, allow this diversion of cash, but the shows involved were only the big ones, the successes that promised to pay off investments even after money from part of the potential audience had been given to the government. Also note that the greatest sacrifices of time and energy came from the performers.

On June 17, 1945, late in the war, the New York Times announced that the casts of fifteen leading shows planned to present special matinee performances from June 25, 1945 to July 5. Eighteen thousand tickets ranging from \$25.00 to \$5,000.00 bonds were to be sold, and the special performances were expected to result in the sale of \$10,000,000 worth of series E, F, and G bonds. The shows participating were the leading ones on Broadway and included, in drama, Harvey, The Glass Menagerie, A Bell for Adano, and I Remember Mama. Among musicals there were Carousel, Song of Norway, Bloomer Girl, Up in Central Park,

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Dark of the Moon. Conspicuously absent from the list of shows was Oklahoma!, which had planned to participate in the project but could not when over two-thirds of the show's musicians refused to work without regular pay.<sup>69</sup> The Times reported only two days after the special performances began that the sales for five shows totaled \$3,506,105, and that Carousel alone had sold \$1,287,400 worth of bonds.<sup>70</sup> Carousel's cast iced their cake of honor following the August 30, 1945 performance when a representative of the U. S. Treasury gave Jan Clayton a citation recognizing the cast's oversubscribing to the Seventh War Bond Drive by more than 200 percent.<sup>71</sup> Though critics might see the central symbols of Broadway musicals to be merry-go-rounds and marvelous rabbits rather than simulated howitzers or refugee camps, they could not deny the personal commitment shown by many Broadway folk.

Probably the most famous and glamorous emblem for show people's personal involvement in war activities had little to do with fundraising or even U. S. O. shows. This emblem was the Stage Door Canteen. The Canteen was the American Theatre Wing's primary and most successful project, and its success spurred the opening of similar canteens at the Philadelphia Academy of Music, the Belasco Theatre in Washington, and in Cleveland and Newark.<sup>72</sup> The New York Canteen was located downstairs in the 44th Street Theatre. All were open to Allied servicemen, and the one in New York offered a place to go for the soldier or sailor who had

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missed getting a free ticket to a show. For everyone it provided a place to go after the show. Here the pimply boy from a sugar beet farm in Michigan's thumb could actually see stars, get his cup of coffee handed to him by Katharine Cornell, still in the make-up from the show she had just performed. He might glimpse Alfred Lunt separating garbage out in the kitchen. And the piano he heard had been sent over by Irving Berlin. (Berlin actually sent over two. When he heard that the first one he had donated was out of tune, he sent another.) The Canteen opened in March, 1942, and the 1,200 servicemen per night who came down that first week saw the biggest stars of the musicals perform numbers from their shows. On Monday Gertrude Lawrence performed numbers from Lady in the Dark. On Tuesday night Best Foot Forward was featured. On Wednesday the vaudeville-like team of Olsen and Johnson, so popular throughout the war, did bits from their current success, Songs O' Fun. On Thursday it was Danny Kaye from Let's Face It and on Friday, Eddie Cantor from Banjo Eyes.<sup>73</sup> The cream. The next week over 10,000 servicemen were entertained by Tallulah Bankhead and Lynn Fontanne.<sup>74</sup> Such large numbers of men made expansion of the Canteen absolutely necessary. So in 1944 a \$25,000 renovation project added fifty feet to the dance floor as well as swanky mirrors to the Canteen's plaster columns and a mural of Allied flags.<sup>75</sup>

Stars and servicemen felt a momentary unity in this basement place. And this sense of unity and good fellow

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feeling may have been able to divert the soldiers' thoughts from their knowledge that the only meaning New York had for them was imminent embarkation. Such was the hope. What theatre persons thought about the Canteen, and what they felt it demonstrated about theatre people, is seen in the curiously sentimental and defensive full page ad in Variety for the movie, Stage Door Canteen.

A print of the picture will be placed in a vault in our National Capitol . . . so that people a hundred years from now can know a few straight facts about show people and how they worked and gave of themselves as hostesses, bus boys, entertaining on the Canteen stage, or otherwise waiting on the soldiers of all the United Nations. Yes, how they played their part in helping thousands of boys at the Stage Door Canteen find a few brief hours of happiness before they sailed away to battle.<sup>76</sup>

### The Creative Response

This is a people's war. We must find out what we are going to die for or not die for, and state and restate that cogently in the theatre.

Shepard Traube, co-producer of Angel Street and director of Winter Soldiers

Wartime is not a time to inspire good create work.  
Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1941-42.

The creative response is a more difficult one to chart. It cannot be described in terms of numbers of free tickets to servicemen, or in terms of bonds sold, or even in terms of numbers of plays produced. If one sets up a simplistic criterion, such as the number of war plays produced, then one can count those plays and evaluate the

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degree and success of Broadway's response to the war. But what exactly constitutes a war play? One in which a character wears a uniform or the plot exploits the war situations and so identifies the setting as somewhere between 1941-45? Then A Connecticut Yankee is a war play, for the Yankee sported a naval uniform, and The Doughgirls is a war situation comedy based on the Washington housing shortage. Certainly such plays show a superficial response to the war, if there is any response evident at all. Is a war play one wherein battle conditions are simulated? Such a play must be considered a war drama, but does defining one so then exclude such a play as Tomorrow the World, a play showing the painful adjustment of a child born and indoctrinated in Germany when he is brought to the United States to be raised? Must a war play have a Nazi or fascist or Japanese in it? Must it be set in the present century even? If so, we must exclude such plays as Harriett and Oklahoma! and The Skin of Our Teeth, each of which actually shows the influences of wartime.

The creative response to crisis, especially perhaps a cultural crisis, may take many forms depending upon the particular playwright's personality, philosophy, and energy. He need not create a play about Bataan to be responding to the war. He need only show in some way that the events of the external situation have entered his consciousness and so moved it that his work somehow comments on it or tries to satisfy a need in the culture's

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(i.e., his audience's) war conditioned psyche. Such a definition of a war play is vague and perhaps allows every play written during the war years to be included under its broad wings. I think not, however. Angel Street was a huge success during the first part of the war, but the play registers no awareness of war problems, only an awareness of audience's need for entertainment--a need, after all, pretty constant and not confined to periods of stress. Claudia, by Rose Franken, another fine success of the period, may create a charming child/wife character and in the process create one cultural image of the desirable woman and wife, but it is an image and theme as relevant to the '20s or '30s or '50s as to the period between 1938 and 1945. Oklahoma!, on the other hand, though far removed in time and setting from the Second World War speaks to certain needs in the psychological make-up of a world war and cold war audience. It is an example, and perhaps one of the finest examples, of playwrights, composers, and a genre's creative response to the genetic and external environment. But before dealing with the subtle kinds of responses, it is worthwhile to look at the immediate and explicit reactions of playwrights to the evolving war crisis.

Many or even most major playwrights of the period showed a real awareness of the unfolding events in Europe in the '30s. Angered by the regime and the circumstances of his wife, Dorothy Thompson's expulsion from Germany,

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Sinclair Lewis wrote the novel, It Can't Happen Here in 1935. Later he dramatized it for the Federal Theatre, hoping to awaken the American people to the dangers of naziism. By 1940, after her play, Margin for Error, Clare Boothe Luce went to Europe to see the situation for herself. The result was an at least semi-interventionist report called Europe in the Spring. Lillian Hellman had spent more time in Spain with Spanish Republicans and Loyalists. The playwrights were, if for no other reason that their greater mobility and contacts, more cognizant of the dangerous situation and more apt to call for action than their still isolationist-minded countrymen. When war began in earnest in Europe, some playwrights felt more strongly than ever the need to educate their audience. The results included Sherwood's There Shall be No Night. And when the war began to seem nearly inevitable for the United States, the need to help somehow became an absolute necessity for most theatre people.

The help of actors, producers, etc., has already been detailed. Some playwrights put their verbal skills to use trying to inspire, educate, and move those within hearing. Broadway could not reach the broadest audience. So a group of distinguished American writers, including Maxwell Anderson, William Saroyan, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and Paul Green formed an organization called the Free Company. Each member was to contribute without pay his services to a series of radio plays designed not to exhort

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but to remind the American people of their possession. James Boyd in describing the formation of the company noted the necessity of this reminder. "The mechanics and intelligence of the country were unimpaired and fully operating [in the fall of 1940] but it was as though the spirit which alone could give them meaning hung on dead centre."<sup>77</sup> The plays, stressing the Bill of Rights as bedrock of the American system were to awaken the spirit, but not by blatant propaganda. "We did not wish to preach or argue, we wanted to present. . . . We would follow the method of the Bible parables, of Aesop's fables. . . ."<sup>78</sup> The goal of parabolic expression of cultural values and traditions recognized that American audiences would not be moved by bald statements. Even in the most minor of forms, e.g., these radio plays, some transmuting of message into art was necessary. And it became clear, with such exceptions as Moss Hart's Winged Victory, that the less transmuted, the less successful was the play. The journalistic, naturalistic plays that Anderson and Sherwood wrote late in the war (Storm Operation and The Rugged Path) were among those playwrights' least successful plays. For some reason the direct approach to the issues and images of war simply were not imaginatively satisfying to audiences.

Handling the subject of war and American values was simply a difficult if not impossible task to approach directly. Perhaps the problem was psychological and

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philosophical. So suggested Rosamond Gilder in the June, 1942 issue of Theatre Arts. "A war hits hardest at the serious playwright. His faiths, his formulas are shattered, or perhaps more correctly in this war, his non-faiths, his denials prove inadequate anchorage in stormy seas."<sup>79</sup> The same suggestion of a world too distracting and chaotic for creative rendering and interpreting had come in April from Brooks Atkinson. "It seems to me undeniable that the chaos of the contemporary world scatters the intellectual and emotional forces of which plays are normally written."<sup>80</sup>

How, then, could one handle, if one could at all, the subject of a world of nations battling one another? The scope was too great, too epic for the four walls of a theatre and realistic presentation.\* And if the subject was war, why tell the story at all? Lewis Nichols suggested that only three of the twenty-two war related plays and revues on Broadway between December, 1941 and October, 1943 succeeded because the other nineteen "came too near the headlines and sought to tell a story more simply told in a factual report than upon the stage."<sup>81</sup> The stage was the wrong medium for fact; fact, if respected, must be stated. The stage, whose proper realm lay in imaginative constructs, dealt more successfully in metaphor and myth. Further,

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\*The terms realistic and naturalistic in this study will refer to the kind of stage presentation usually associated with Ibsen, a presentation trying for undistorted rendering of ordinary appearances and manners.

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the physical spectacle of World War II, its war machine, its vast theatres of war, its astronomical numbers of men assembled as armies, all these things made any attempt for realistic portrayal on stage almost laughable. Better able to deal with battle was the Elizabethan playwright and playgoer who understood and could respond to synecdochal suggestion of a battlefield. Further, bald statement of patriotic tenets, especially again, in the play composed in the realistic mode, seemed sophomoric, obvious. As Brooks Atkinson noted in 1942 in one of his attempts to locate and diagnose the problems in writing war dramas, "the war is a tremendous theme. It distorts dramatic proportions. It throws everything out of balance." When not handled delicately the subject grows blatantly propagandistic or clichéd. "But," he goes on, "there must be a way to write about war without paddling in the shallows or sounding amateurish."<sup>82</sup>

Many ways were tried. Atkinson felt the secret of a successful war play, at least one in the realistic mode, was the creation of full characters. Jordan Y. Miller concurred years later in a fine survey of plays whose subject was the Second World War. "The better plays of the 1940's, though disappointingly few in number, follow the lead of What Price Glory? as they turn for their primary dramatic source to the individual human being who is forced to exist under war's inhuman tensions."<sup>83</sup> With psychological realism as the key to treating the war,

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Miller finds The Eve of St. Mark, Arthur Laurents' Home of the Brave, 1945, a play about a soldier's guilt and shock after he has left his wounded buddy to die, Command Decision, 1947, and possibly Sherwood's There Shall be No Night and Hellman's Watch on the Rhine as the only really memorable war plays. All had successful runs. But not all plays of psychological realism were successful.

John Steinbeck's early 1942 dramatization of his best selling novel, The Moon is Down, apparently tried too hard to dramatize the individual's pressures of existing *under* war's tensions, that is, he tried too hard to dramatize a German officer's pressures as well as the pressures on those suffering from aggression. It appeared that objectivity applied to the enemy was unacceptable to the critics and audience of spring, 1942. The result of this objective portrayal carried too far was a critical, popular, and even international controversy that demonstrated the complex relation between dramatic art and cultural expectations during periods of crisis.

Like so many of the plays of the war, The Moon is Down is a synthesis of styles. In depiction of character it is in the realistic mode; its settings are also realistic. In its approach to its subject it is more parabolic. The story concerns a village of some unnamed northern country as it is occupied by an aggressor army. The democratically governed village, though quite obviously Norwegian, remains nameless in the manner of Jesus's

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parable kings, and it suggests all free peoples who are threatened by totalitarian aggression. The village, its villagers and their mayor, Mr. Orden, spokesman par excellence for democratic ideals becomes symbols of a sort. Thematically and ideologically, the play seems absolutely acceptable to an American critic and audience. Steinbeck was attempting to depict the psychology of the free people and especially of Mayor Orden, a man torn between resistance and collaboration. If he collaborates and helps stifle acts of sabotage, he also protects his villagers from brutal reprisals. He believes, however, that a free people's spirit and resistance cannot be crushed by momentary defeat because they have known freedom. They will ultimately, at the very least, outlast their aggressors. Collaboration would only protract the resistance that his people will inevitably make.

But Steinbeck went beyond creating a fairly complex yet representative character in the sympathetic mayor. He created also in Col. Lanser a complex German officer, one quite unlike the Nazi monsters in Margin for Error, Flight to the West, Liberty Jones, and Candle in the Wind. Colonel Lanser is a cultured man, a man who in the original version silently mouthed the words of Socrates' denunciation as Mayor Orden speaks them just before his execution for not helping to stop the sabotage. Otto Kruger, who played Lanser on Broadway, persuaded Steinbeck to cut this business, arguing that it made the Colonel too civilized.

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He was already too human, too real, said Kruger, "which we found very dangerous from the audience point of view. This is a very bad time for it and I'm trying very hard to get away from any sympathy."<sup>84</sup>

But Steinbeck had written complexity and sympathy into the part. The Colonel respects the villagers; he is simply a tired functionary instinctively repelled by the actions he must take because of his position. "We just want to do our job," he wearily tells the mayor as orderly occupation seems threatened by acts of sabotage. "Our <sup>in</sup>structions are to get along with your people. I'm very tired sir. I must have some sleep. Please co-operate with us for the good of all."<sup>85</sup> And on top of this almost appealing colonel, Steinbeck creates an occupying army so desperate for human warmth and acceptance that certain of its members find the villagers' coldness to them maddening. Lieutenant Tonder, though certainly neurotically needful of warmth, makes a pathetic and sympathetic attempt to approach the widow of a miner killed by the occupiers. "I want you to like me," he tells the widow, Molly. "A man needs love. A man dies without love. His insides shrivel, and his chest feels like a dry chip. I'm lonely" (p. 97). Tonder does not try to molest Molly. He does want her to like him. She stabs him with a pair of scissors.

The novel and play caused probably the sharpest critical controversy of the war (with the possible exception of that surrounding The Skin of Our Teeth).

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Pro-Steinbeck forces, lead by John Chamberlain and called the greens because, said opponents, Steinbeck's moon was made of green cheese, faced the blues lead by Clifton Fadiman and James Thurber. The spring, 1942 issues of The New Republic provide a fairly complete record of the issues and progress of the debate, and reveal the problematic autonomy of art in wartime. James Thurber's March 16 review of the novel threw down the gambit. "This little book needs more guts and less moon," he began.<sup>86</sup> The problem was that the novel, and subsequently the play, did not portray evil men in black enough colors and did not portray their strength. "If the German Lieutenants of today are really like Lieutenant Tonder, then American Moores of [What Price Glory?] and British Hibbets will be able to rout the pussycats merely by shouting 'Boo!'"<sup>87</sup> Here was one of the hearts of the matter. Critics of the play and novel's portrayal of the enemy were alarmed at what they felt to be the complacent assumption that the enemy was weak. The novel and play had the practical dysfunction of not steeling American's for a long hard struggle. In the March 30 The New Republic, Thurber declared that "nothing would help more toward [possibly losing the war] than for Americans to believe Steinbeck's version of Nazi conquest. . . ."<sup>88</sup>

Letters flowed in debating whether or not the author's portraits were realistic. A Norwegian English professor, who had been held in Möllergaten, a Gestapo

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prison for seven months testified: "Steinbeck's account of what has happened to their souls is the truest picture I have yet found of both German and Norwegians under the occupation of Norway."<sup>89</sup> But in a semi-official reaction to the play, Hans Olav, counselor in the Royal Norwegian Legation in Washington, found the effect of the fine portraits of the villagers marred by the faculty picture of the enemy. The Germans, he wrote, actually are "tough, brutal, cynical and ignorant men with a fine flair for perversion and sadism. We deeply regret that John Steinbeck did not dip his pen in the vitriolic inkstand of . . . The Grapes of Wrath and paint a picture of conquerors as they really are."<sup>90</sup>

The controversy shifted ground back and forth from how successfully the writer created character to how beneficial the creations were regardless of how good. The controversy and its indictment of the play did seem to have some effect on its Broadway run--only fifty-five performances--though the novel sold very well and movie rights were purchased for \$300,000, a record high to be equalled shortly when Hollywood bought Anderson's The Eve of St. Mark.<sup>91</sup> The critical issues were, first, the freedom to create works perhaps not useful to the nation's attitudes about the war, and there were those who smelt implicit calls for censorship in the negative comments about The Moon is Down. A closely related issue was finding proper critical standards during a war. Were works of art to be

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judged by intrinsic or extrinsic criteria. Brooks Atkinson stated and commented on the problem. "Since when must we determine the merits of a play or a novel according to its effects upon public opinion? . . . Who is to determine just how much to condition public opinion and in which direction to swing it, and who is to draw up the rules under which an author must write for public consumption? The criticism of The Moon is Down in terms of political tactics repeats the totalitarian attitude toward literature."<sup>92</sup>

But quite apart from official determinations of a work's acceptability, the play's experience suggests another consideration for the artist, and playwright in particular. The playwright especially is concerned with presenting communally observed creations. Playwrights have sometimes noted that their work is not generally created as a part of the vanguard of thought or attitudes.<sup>93</sup> The play's success, not just commercially, but in the more fundamental act of simply communicating its vision, depends upon an atmosphere of familiarity. The forms, the ideas, its character types must be at least somewhat recognizable and acceptable if the play is to be given a hearing by an audience.<sup>94</sup> The audience must have some way of dealing with what is presented it. In wartime, when there is doubtless a rise in the sense of communal unity, a greater consciousness of communally held ideals, the deviation from such communal or culturally familiar ideas and images is less acceptable. The playwright must be aware of this closing

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of ranks, of this narrowing range of acceptable themes and images if he is to write to his audience. Commentators noted the lack of experimentation during the war period. In 1940 Brooks Atkinson lamented the absence of any groups comparable to the old Provincetown and Washington Square players.<sup>95</sup> In 1941 theatre patrons organized experimental Theatre, Inc., which apparently expired after three productions, the first of which was Euripides The Trojan Women. Equity did start the Theatre Workshop at Sixth Ave. and 39th Street as an experimental theatre and one to give untried young actors and actresses experience. But programs at the theatre were generally composed of revivals. A February, 1944 bill, for instance, lists "Ille," "In the Zone," and a short version of The Man Who Came to Dinner.<sup>96</sup> And the Studio Theatre in the New School for Social Research also tried some semi-experimental productions, such as Dan James' Winter Soldiers. But real experimental activity was scarce. The one truly innovative movement in theatre form during the war, the development of the musical drama, was acceptable because it was the result of long genre evolution, and because its initial successes, such as Oklahoma! and Bloomer Girl used effectively culturally familiar and dearly held beliefs. Quite apart, then, from writing to please any official set of criteria, the wartime playwright had to write for an audience feeling probably a closer intellectual and emotional identification with communal or cultural images. The most successful

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plays of the period seemed to recognize this and attempted to be either without much thought at all (Junior Miss, The Doughgirls, By Jupiter) or would tap the cultural reservoir of images, as in The Eve of St. Mark, Oklahoma! and the various American history plays.

This does not mean that the individual or collective audience grew less discriminating of quality or more primitive, naive, or child-like. The World War II audience despite its influx of prosperous but inexperienced war-worker theatregoers, was probably a more sophisticated audience than that which had applauded the patriotic songs and allegorical tableaux of the previous war. In Philip Barry's curious 1941 play, Liberty Jones, a mixture of simple and more obscure allegory is attempted. Liberty, a beautiful young woman lies ill in her Uncle Sam's Washington apartment and cannot be cured until Tom Smith, the young American liberal, loves her enough to die for her. The blatancy of this is countered by a complex and obscure plethora of other symbols. At one point the three shirts (Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin) hover over Liberty, large against the sky. Tom goes to defend her. This scene and others, are close in style and mode to the tableaux of World War I productions. The play, despite a lavish production by the Theatre Guild, was a popular and critical failure. In addition to the obscurity of some symbols and the static quality of the action, this blatant dealing with the international situation and American ideals seemed

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unacceptable to the contemporary audience, though in all fairness it should be noted that some members of the opening night audience did stand and applaud as Tom defended Liberty. Basically the play was a form of discursive writing. The new audience seemed to demand that is plays dealing with topical content (we should exclude patriotic revues here) take the trouble to transmute that content into forms both entertaining and somewhat subtle and indirect.

What the wartime audience apparently felt most moved by and comfortable with is described by Henry Nash Smith in Virgin Land as myth and by Northrup Frye in his Anatomy of Criticism as myth and folk tale. Most briefly defined, myth and folk tale are "abstract story patterns" that use communally shared, emotionally charged motifs and images. In America, then, the story of the rise from log cabin to White House or executive suite becomes a folk tale. Another is the pattern of movement to the free, pastoral West. Because of the basically Christian culture, the patterns of that mythos have been appropriated. The pattern of the good man sacrificed to save the community becomes an especially poignant folk or cultural pattern during a war. If any trend may be seen in the general response of American drama to its wartime environment, it is the marked use of folk patterns, and especially the marked use of folk motifs even in plays not drawing on folk patterns.

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The folk tale and folk motif presents the playwright with some problems during a period of realistic mode dominance because folk tales and motifs are not necessarily representations of life surfaces and life activities. They are broad patterns and suggestive of larger than life characters and activities. Frye notes the attraction of such expression and its problems. "Writers are interested in folk tales for the same reason that painters are interested in still-life arrangements; because they illustrate essential principles of story-telling. The writer who uses them has the essential problem of making them sufficiently plausible or credible to a sophisticated audience. When he succeeds, he produces not realism, but a distortion of realism in the interests of structure."<sup>97</sup> The musical drama may perhaps be a more congenial genre for the folk tale for its conventions of music, story, and dance first of all diminish the expectation of absolute fidelity to ordinary reality, and also suggest a kind of ritual--a playing out of communal expectations. The straight play presents more problems, especially when the audience has been nurtured on naturalistic character presentation, when contemporary critics should say, as did Brooks Atkinson in March, 1941, "The character [not the story or pattern] is the basis for everything,"<sup>98</sup> and when, to complicate the problem further, while demanding realism the war culture audience also shows a desire and even need for expressions of communally held beliefs and images. The techniques by

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which an author or playwright attempts to render his story credible or lifelike, Frye calls displacement. When the story pattern and motifs are displaced skillfully, as in The Eve of St. Mark, there is a tension and poignance that makes for emotionally satisfying art, if we may judge from reactions to and popularity of such a play. Behind the flesh and blood character on stages looms that larger than life idea, motif, that fuses into one metaphor so much of a culture's shared experience and beliefs. There exists a many leveled suggestiveness, with the final or deepest level being founded on what a member of the culture will usually consider to be truth. In its finest moments, such expression marked more than anything else the creative response of American drama to the Second World War.

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## II. PLAYWRIGHTS ADJUST: THE WAR AND ANARCHIC INDIVIDUALISM

### Maxwell Anderson, Christ, and the War

In his bout with the late war, [Anderson] has come out a bad second. It has been a valiantly persistent tussel on his part; he has not flinched for a moment in his efforts to triumph over it in script; but, like other of his buddies who have put on the gloves in an attempt to subdue it to their dramatic ends, he has not been equal to it.

George Jean Nathan, Theatre Book of the Year,  
1945-46

The complex and sometimes painful adjustment made by the theatre at large to war conditions was also observable in such individual playwrights as Maxwell Anderson, Robert Sherwood, and Lillian Hellman. For Anderson the road from anti-war satire to affirmation of war's purposes in Candle in the Wind, The Eve of St. Mark, and The Rugged Path proved a long and uneasy one, but also a somewhat inevitable route for a man with Anderson's earnest moral concern.

Anderson's first success as a playwright was a collaboration with World War I veteran, Laurence Stallings. It was a play about war, a play whose sincerity was founded

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in the experience and convictions of its creators. Stallings had lost the use of his legs in the Great War, and Anderson had a history of vociferous pacifism. So the play had a mission--to deglamorize. In a short prefatory note, Anderson and Stallings stated their missionary purpose. "What Price Glory? is a play of war as it is, not as it has been presented theatrically for thousands of years. The soldiers talk and act much as solidiers the world over. . . . In a theatre where war has been lied about, romantically effectively--and in a city where the war play has usually meant sugary dissimulation--What Price Glory? may seem bold."

The method of deglamorizing lay mostly in the profane, even obscene language that expressed the crude and violent reality of war. Sargeant Quirt and Captain Flagg were brawling, seemingly honorless but not vicious men, and were, above all, verbally violent and licentious. The soldier heroes--the Yankee Doodle Dandies of Cohan constuction--were nowhere to be seen. Even so, and despite the authors' hopes or fears on the subject, the production did not strike the Broadway audience of 1924 as too bold. Anderson and Stallings had remained true to their own beliefs and at the same time had expressed the popular assumptions of the twenties on the subject of war. The play was hard-hitting, sincere, and popular.

Thus began Anderson's remarkable career in the threatre. What Price Glory? was followed by two more

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collaborations with Stallings, First Flight, 1925, and The Buccaneer, 1925. Both were popular and critical failures. Then Anderson began to write on his own, and a long string of successes commenced with Saturday's Children, 1927, a play Anderson later confessed to being a pot boiler.<sup>1</sup> His excursions into poetry and historical tragedy in such plays as Elizabeth the Queen and Mary of Scotland were controversial, as was Winterset, 1935, a verse tragedy with a contemporary setting. But critically controversial or not, on the eve of American involvement in the world war, Anderson was probably America's leading and certainly its most produced dramatist. In 1932 he won the Pulitzer Price for Both Your Houses, and in 1936, though losing the Pulitzer to Sherwood's Idiot's Delight, he won the first Drama Critics Circle Award for Winterset. In 1937 he had three plays running simultaneously on Broadway, The Masque of Kings, High Tor (for which he won a second Drama Critics' Circle Award), and The Star Wagon. The three displayed not only Anderson's prodigious creative output, but also his range of styles and techniques. The Masque of Kings was an historical verse tragedy dealing with Rudolph of Hapsburg, High Tor a poetic, comic, satiric fantasy, The Star Wagon another fantasy, but one more philosophical and vague than High Tor. In 1938 Anderson joined forces with four other leading playwrights, Elmer Rice, Robert Sherwood, S. N. Behrman, and Sidney Howard, to form the highly successful Playwrights Co., an organization designed to

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produce or get produced the works of its members.<sup>2</sup> In the summer of 1939 the prestigious Pasadena Playhouse presented an Anderson festival. The playwright was active, productive, popular, and critically respected.

In 1938 Burns Mantel put him at "the head of our list of native dramatists. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Anderson's integrity and stature as a theorist were generally accepted. The expressions of philosophic faith that occurred in both his essays and plays had a certain passion about them and seemed doctrinally consistent. His passion was rewarded with respect. All critics, even those genuinely sceptical of Anderson's achievement, characterized the man and his work as personal and sincere. Marxist critic, Eleanor Flexnor sums up the consensus in 1938. "An Andersonian play, [the audience knows] is the expression of the author's ideas, uttered with candor and integrity; it represents the best he is capable of."<sup>4</sup> Flexnor was echoed ten years later by Harold Clurman in a not entirely positive estimate in The New Republic. Anderson, said Clurman, "is one of our few authentic dramatists in the sense that for twenty-five years he has supplied our stage with a steady stream of plays that all--good or bad--bear the stamp of his personality, his reaction to the world."<sup>5</sup> This universally accepted sincerity may be important to remember as the pacifistic What Price Glory? is mentally juxtaposed to the war-promoting plays and statements of the World War II period.

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According to Anderson critics the period just before the war appeared to be one of crisis for the playwright's thought. Anderson himself gave no indication of suffering from a crisis of belief and philosophy. But some response, some adjustment to the social and international realities pressing upon every person's consciousness was necessary. During the emerging world crisis of the late '30s, Anderson was active in stating formally his ideas about dramatic theory. For Anderson that theory probably served as a self sounding, a simultaneous statement and debate of esthetic and philosophic beliefs. As such, it makes a necessary study as we investigate the leading American dramatist's response to the war.

Anderson's series of theoretical statements began approximately with the 1935 Preface to Winterset, proceeded with an address for the Founder's Day event at Carnegie Institute in 1937 (published as "Whatever Hope We Have" in The Essence of Tragedy in 1939), continued in the form of addresses to the Modern Language Association meeting in 1938 ("The Essence of Tragedy") and to the Rutgers Seventeenth Anniversary Celebration, 1941, which appeared shortly thereafter in the New York Times. Often the addresses were later included in his published plays as prefaces. As Allan G. Halline suggests, however, the theorizing came after the creative work rather than before it, and was, to an extent, a description as well as a theory.<sup>6</sup> In using the descriptive/analytical approach, as

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in certain of the basic ideas, Anderson's essays look often to Aristotle's Poetics. He found in Aristotle's anagnorisis the single law of play construction. But as important to Anderson in his essays as the problems of construction, were philosophical statements concerning the nature of the universe, man, and the theatre's function in helping achieve the destiny of man.

Anderson's vision of the universe is amazingly consistent in both his discursive and creative work, thereby giving grounds for various critics' comments that Andersonian plays were cut to a formula. The vision is not a simple or single one. The dominant characteristic of the universe is that of utter mystery. In the Carnegie Founder's Day Address ("Whatever Hope We Have"), he puts it this way: "The human race . . . finds itself embarked on a curious voyage among the stars, riding a planet which must have set out from somewhere, but which was cut adrift so long ago that its origin is a matter of speculation and its future beyond prophecy."<sup>7</sup> One notices first the similarity in meaning to Esdras's final speech in Winterset, and in meaning and language to d'Alcala's musings near the end of Key Largo.

We're all alone  
here on the surface of a turning sphere  
 . . . . .  
 Where this voyage started  
 we don't know, nor where it will end, nor whether  
 it has a meaning, nor whether there is good  
 or evil, whether man has a destiny  
 or happened here by chemical accident--  
 all this we never know.<sup>8</sup>

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More important than the consistency of imagery and expression are the concepts involved. Anderson is positing a universe that is unknown and unknowable to man. If that universe has meaning and patterns, they are beyond the ken of human understanding. Man plays out his life before a mindless, cosmic void. It is in the face of this void that man must existentially create his life, originate possible meaning and significance. Truth, or essence, occurs when human emotion and intellect coalesce in a recognition of the universe's apparent pointlessness, and in the further recognition that because no external touchstones or rules exist, the individual is responsible for the sum value and meaning of his being. After the recognition comes the decisions in which the individual now consciously creates meaning and personal significance. Anderson's plays and characters, especially King McCloud of Key Largo seem to suggest a paraphrase of Sartre's "life begins on the other side of despair." In Anderson's work the sentence would read, significant life begins on the other side of agonized anagnorisis.

But the language of d'Alcala's passage suggests qualifications and even apparent contradictions to its view of a directionless universe. Man exists in a gigantic mystery, yet he is "riding a planet," and is on a "voyage." The word "voyage" implies some kind of terminal at the end of the journey, some planned destiny. And so, held in

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tension with the meaningless blank that constitutes Anderson's vision is the paradoxical possibility of some kind of cosmic purpose, some cosmic destination. Maybe it does not exist--but possibly it does. The important thing in the world view presented is that man racially suspects that it does. "From the beginning of our story, men have insisted, despite the darkness and silence about them, that they had a destiny to fulfill--that they were part of a gigantic scheme which was understood somewhere, though they themselves might never understand it. There were no proofs of this."<sup>9</sup> After he has said that there are no proofs, the gigantic scheme or destiny seems accepted as an absolute reality. The proofs of the possible pre-existent universal significance lay in human faith.

Men racially suspect that the universe has a beneficent tendency. The cosmic destiny is the triumph of good.<sup>10</sup> Candle in the Wind ends with the heroine, Madeline Guest, confronting Nazi Colonel Erfurt. "We shall expect you and be ready for you," she tells him. "In the history of the world, there have been many wars between men and beasts. The beasts have always lost, and men have won."<sup>11</sup> There can be no doubt that we are to accept this statement as more than the romantic, wishful thinking of a brave and sorely tried woman. It is the affirmation of the play. In Key Largo, d'Alcala, the raisonneur, old man figure who find his way into several Anderson dramas, asserts a similar faith in universal control and pattern.

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Ultimately one cannot be entirely sure whether the beneficent tendency of the universe is actual or only a racial faith and collective desire. And the reader begins to suspect after reading the critical work and plays from 1935's Winterset through Storm Operation that the question is not important. Anderson and his characters are not, finally, concerned with truth; they are concerned with the quality of life here and now. They want to live a life with honor, dignity, and a sense or impression of meaning, whether or not that meaning actually exists. Thus science, with its corrosive materialism in which all truth must be expressed by observable facts or proofs, is a potential danger to the good human life. Life based upon a scientific/materialistic vision is a life where decisions are based upon non-human considerations like money, power, disinterested scientific research and discoveries. Decisions so based can lead to the abuse of human life and its energies.

In the Preface to Journey to Jerusalem, 1940, Anderson equates Hitler with the scientific/materialistic world view. In the piece finally appearing as Preface to Candle in the Wind he notes the inadequacy of science, which denying the old faiths and affirming only what it can see and hold, cannot deal with all the phenomena of the world--including the irrational and unseen but very real

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evil that exists. "We [of the scientific '20s] closed our eyes to smoking volcanoes of malignity, wondering foolishly how men would adjust themselves to a world in which there was no more hell fire" (p. v). The scientific view was, in short, inadequate because it did not, despite Freud, recognize the depths of the psychic needs and the psychic depravities and glories of the animal, man.

Anderson's work tries, then, to confront one of the major dilemmas of modern man. Nearly all events and contemporary attitudes point to a meaningless world, yet man must try to survive and make a life with some semblance of meaning. Joseph Wood Krutch defines the dilemma this way: "Because man is man, he cannot comfortably inhabit a meaningless universe in which good and evil are merely relative. Because he is modern man, he has nevertheless trained himself to think in ways which inevitably make him see the universe as meaningless and 'right' and 'wrong' as merely words."<sup>12</sup> In the tragedies from Winterset on, and in the three plays written during the war, the constant theme is how one finds meaning, honor, and sustenance through a Kierkegaardian leap of faith or a Camus-like commitment made after an experience of absurdity. The faith Anderson calls for is not necessarily a religious faith, though it may be, as the Preface to Journey to Jerusalem makes clear. "The only sources of human dignity and respect for the individual are the great arts, such as poetry, and the great religions, such as Christianity.

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These are the only bulwarks the race has ever had against despair."<sup>13</sup> The important thing is that a man, believe in something. "Even in our disillusioned era, when the fixed stars of belief fall from our sky like a rain of meteors, we find that men cling to what central verities they can rescue or manufacture, because without a core of belief neither man nor nation has courage to go on"<sup>14</sup> (my emphasis). And in the rescuing or manufacturing of verities and faith lies the function of the theatre for Anderson.

In Anderson's view the theatre was one of the creators of faith and meaning and the human sense of significance that derives from such faith. Anderson's metaphor in his critical writings is that the theatre is a church and the worship is the affirmation of human importance and meaning. He elaborates the function in the Preface to Candle in the Wind. "There is no doubt in my mind," he writes, "that our theatre . . . is as much of a worship as the theatre of the Greeks, and has exactly the same meaning in our lives" (pp. x-xi). Like the Greek theatre, the articles of faith in the Anderson church/theatre are essentially humanistic. "The purpose of the theatre is to find, and hold up to our regard, what is admirable in the human race. . . . The theatre is a religious institution devoted entirely to the exaltation of the spirit of man. . . . It is an attempt to prove that man has a dignity and a destiny, that his life is worth

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More specifically the articles of faith posit man as a divided creature--part animal, part god. In tragedy one sees the god in man struggling and suffering, but learning and improving. Anderson felt the single essential of play construction to be the recognition scene. In it man rejects the fault, or possibly the materialistic side of his nature, and the godlike triumphs, even though it may triumph in the apparent defeat of tragic catastrophe. The spiritual side of man is displayed to the audience. "From the point of view of the playwright, the essence of a tragedy, or even of a serious play, is the spiritual awakening, or regeneration, of his hero."<sup>15</sup> The serious drama, then, is a ritualistic presentation of man beset by the world, and man's transcending of both the besetting problems and his own nature. The image is of man evolving toward a higher, better state. Indeed, such a higher, better state is the promise the ritual-plays of Anderson's religion/theatre hold out to its audience. "The theatre is much older than the theory of evolution, but its one faith, as ever, again and again for every age and every year, is a faith in evolution, in the reaching and the climb of man toward distant horizon."<sup>16</sup>

So the Andersonian conflict is defined. The paradigm for the conflict is certainly found in Key Largo (1939). The play is, in the words of Edward Foster, "The

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fullest embodiment of the dramatist's conception of poetic tragedy and of his faith in the values of Western Civilization."<sup>17</sup> In the play, King McCloud takes the two options open to man. Leader of a band of men fighting with Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War, McCloud discovers the apparent dominance of evil and treachery. In the Prologue he and his band are to be left behind by loyalist forces in order to cover them as they make a retreat. It is apparent that all in the band will be killed by advancing fascists, that the band is being betrayed by fellow loyalists, and further that their heroism has made no difference and will make no difference; Franco's victory is assured. This is the war between men and beasts that Madeline Guest mentions, but it seems here, at least, to the animals belongs the victory. McCloud's reaction is despair and cynicism:

Franco will win in Spain, they'll see to that--  
but if he didn't, Stalin would win in Spain,  
and it's one blood purge or the other, but never justice,  
only the rat-men ratting on each other  
in a kind of rat despair.--I tell you it was a dream,  
all a dream we had, in a dream world,  
of brother who put out a helping hand  
to brother, and might save them (p. 22).

He will not sacrifice his life for a lost cause.

Victor d'Alcala provides the opposing view in the Prologue, and so within the Prologue Anderson presents the moral dilemma of the play. To McCloud's despair at men and at universal amorality Victor answers.

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If I die

then I know men will never give in;  
 then I'll know there's something in the race  
 of men, because even I had it, that hates injustice  
 more than it wants to live (p. 23).

Unmoved by Victor's speech, McCloud leaves the mountain and men to the dying cause, and devoid now of purpose and of belief in right or wrong, with no values but those Anderson might call materialistic ones, he joins Franco's forces. He joined, he later explains to Victor's sister, so they would not kill him.

Something broke inside me. My nerve maybe.  
 I was willing to eat dirt and be damned.  
 if I could live.  
 I ate dirt, and I'm damned (p. 63).

Damnation in an Anderson play is being forced to live in fear, without faith in any universal order and beneficent tendencies, but even more importantly in Sartrian anguish, i.g., in anxiety over the implications of one's action and one's cowardice in facing up to the responsibility to self and others. McCloud is forced to wander the earth, visiting the families of each of the men he deserted, telling the story of their deaths, and obviously seeking a kind of confession and expiation which will bring him peace. His final visit is to the father and sister of Victor, the spokesman for the alternative position in the play, that of Andersonian faith. It was from his father that Victor got his faith and courage for self-sacrifice. D'Alcala himself had earlier fought in Spain for freedom,

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and had sacrificed his eyes to the unsuccessful cause. So structurally the play proper mirrors in more detail and debate the moral dilemmas and problems of the Prologue. The international tyrants are transformed into a band of gangsters/tyrants who have taken over d'Alcala's motel, and the general corruption of the world is suggested by the corrupt sheriff. The debate between McCloud's position of guilt, despair, and acquiescence to evil (he is intimidated by Murillo as he was by Franco's forces) and d'Alcala's faith proceeds with d'Alcala as raisonneur.

**D'Alcala:**

Yet to take this dust  
and water and our range of appetities  
and build them toward some vision of a god  
of beauty and unselfishness and truth--  
could we ask better of the mud we are  
than to accept the challenge, and look up  
and search for god-head? If its true we came  
from the sin-water. . . .

we've come a long way;

so far there's no predicting what we'll be  
before we end (p. 112).

McCloud is forced to hear the terms of his moral and spiritual failure from this priest. First he hears of his failure of faith and then is given a chance to save himself. He must choose to let two Indians take the blame for a murder Murillo committed, or take it upon himself. It is another choice where the issue is self-sacrifice without apparent significant issue. Whatever McCloud chooses Murillo goes free and evil triumphs. His choice then is to kill Murillo, knowing he will provoke one of the

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gangsters to shoot him. The necessity of his own death is not quite clear, except that it provides ultimate penance and final expiration. It is the death he should have experienced in Spain. He provides a final image for himself and for the man of faith and integrity in general. He asks to die sitting up, as an Indian, for Indians in the play have been symbols of resistance to corruption and as lovers of liberty.

They say when they bury an Indian  
they bury him seated upright in his grave  
with his weapons around him. That's very sensible.  
Very sensible.. (p. 125).

McCloud also becomes a resistor of corruption, a combatant, apparently having learned some of the faith of Victor d'Alcala and his father. He has recognized his spiritual illness, made a decision and is ennobled and regenerated, though only through death.

it's more enviable . . .  
to fight where you can win, in a narrow room,  
and to win, dying (p. 124).

In addition to providing a model of the moral action and the thought of Anderson's dramas, Key Largo is also significant in being the playwright's first to deal specifically with the fascist menace in Europe. It would seem to suggest itself as the model for the war plays. There are certain adjustments of perspective that must occur before Anderson is ready to write these later plays,

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however. In some ways, Victor d'Alcala's speeches upon the mountain in Spain are nearly those of Quizz West on a Philippine Island in the 1942 play, The Eve of St. Mark. But Key Largo quickly shifts to King McCloud's spiritual malaise. The play is one of personal pilgrimage, and though broader implications may be inferred,<sup>18</sup> it remains basically the story of the recovery of an individual's faith and of how that recovered faith permits him to take effective action. Social and political symbolism remains vague, though suggestive. Anderson quite consistently moved from social implication to personal and generic, or racial. In Winterset, a play roughly based on the Sacco-Vanzetti affair, questions of social justice are raised but never resolved. Instead Mio, seeking justice by at least clearing the name of his unjustly convicted father, turns from his quest because of love. He forgives those responsible for his father's conviction and death. In High Tor the protagonist is upset and perplexed by the exploitation of the earth almost inherent in an industrial society whose primary values are money, expansion, and "progress." Yet this same Van Van Dorn can take no effective action, and the play ends with his selling his cherished land to developers and going to that haven of individualism and freedom, the American West. He evasively philosophizes:

When they wash over you, you either swim  
or drown. We won't be here.<sup>19</sup>

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Marxist critics, as one would expect, were quick to condemn the evasions of social responsibility evident in most Anderson plays. In her The Changing World in Plays and Theatre leftist critic, Anita Block notes Anderson's tendency through 1939 to recognize the reality and stickiness of social problems, but to evade these problems by moving from them to individuals. The social problems become background. "We have in High Tor," writes Miss Block, "the picture of a genuine personal dilemma arising out of the social conflict, resolved in terms of individual escape that is not only blind but spurious. Anything rather than life as it is seems to the tune of Anderson's inner compulsion."<sup>20</sup> For Anderson in 1938-39 life was not defined in social terms, but in terms of the individual, his faith, and his relation to ultimate destiny. Social organizations and dysfunctions were secondary. They belonged to that realm of journalistic comment play that Anderson was seeking to transcend in his poetic tragedy.<sup>21</sup> An Andersonian character does represent more than a unique individual, but he is not a symbol for a class or a victim of fascist aggression. The Andersonian hero is generic or racial man--he is the free human ego confronting the threats of an indifferent or hostile world. His victory in defeat is man's.

Anderson's vision of an anarchic ego may have seemed flippant in this time when the individual ego was quite powerless to combat rampant, internationally

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organized evil. Anderson's entire dramatic theory was based on this vision, however, as perhaps it must have been. Joseph Wood Krutch notes in Modernism in Modern Drama that the very form of tragedy demands recognition of the importance of the individual. "Conventional tragedy rests upon assumptions concerning the reality of ego, the supreme importance of man in a universe where he is only a little below the angels, and the responsibility of the individual for his own conduct."<sup>22</sup>

The individual/cosmic focus might be the only one possible for the construction of tragic drama, but was it an appropriate one for drama in a war period when social demands seemed so much more insistent, when the freedom of the individual ego seemed irrelevant and its power insignificant? Anderson had maintained his individualistic, tragic hero throughout even the socially collectivizing decade of the thirties. For Anderson and his heroes, collectivized life degraded man by diminishing freedom and range of choice. Collectivized life struck Anderson as inherently sordid. Power and government were corrupt in nature and corrupting in their influence. So his heroes reject social responsibility and its dilemmas, to wit Van Van Dorn. In the 1937 play, The Masque of Kings, Rudolph of Hapsburg commits suicide rather than face the almost certain frustration of trying to reform government. But, though Anderson still focuses on the man King McCloud in 1939 as a universal pilgrim beset by doubts of personal

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and cosmic value and meaning, the fact that there is some social significance in his killing of the gangster indicates a subtle change in Anderson's direction.

The critics observing Anderson's work in the period just before the war felt the shift. Vincent Wall predicted in The Sewanee Review in summer, 1941, an as yet undefined change in Anderson's work. "Anderson's theatre of the 'thirties was written before the European danger was so insistent. . . . Some of Anderson's observations seem to have been intended for a cycle of American life already far distant. Certainly the Anderson theatre of the 'forties will no doubt have a different note."<sup>23</sup> Shortly thereafter, also in The Sewanee Review, Edward Foster spoke of the change in Anderson. "He has gradually moved beyond the crudely American conception of freedom as license to buy or sell anything at a profit to an Emersonian vision of the 'infinitude of the private man.'"<sup>24</sup> Wall felt that Anderson would move to an even more intense mysticism, as apparently did Foster. From our more distant vantage point, we see that Anderson did make adjustments to world facts in his attitudes and dramas, but not in the direction of deeper mystical faith (by which I assume is meant a greater emphasis upon the individual character's emotional experience of faith in the potentiality of man and in the course of universal progress).

Anderson was faced consciously or unconsciously with two dilemmas in his attitudes and dramas as World War

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dawned: what to do with his pacifism, and how to alter focus from personal to social or communal in his plays. Anderson had been a militant pacifist. During World War I he had lost his teaching post at Whittier College for attending pacifist rallies and for outspokenly urging his students to do the same. He shortly thereafter also lost an editorial writing job on the San Francisco Chronicle for his radical views. Though What Price Glory? is not explicitly a pacifist propaganda piece, its obvious intent is to represent war as something other than a rich opportunity for excitement and honor. Even until Mio of Winterset, Van Van Dorn, and Rudolph, the Andersonian hero tends to evade violent confrontation, to forgive, to run, or commit suicide rather than take up arms against a sea of troubles.<sup>25</sup>

But a definite change was occurring, and 1938 seems to have been the year of shift. In his radio play, "Second Overture," performed over WEAP on January 29, 1938, the apparent raisonneur speaks for rather mystical, pacifistic change. The scene is the Russian revolution, and several prisoners are awaiting execution. Gregor, a radical who had been imprisoned by the Czar and is now held by the Bolsheviks, feels despite his imprisonment that the revolution is basically right and good and will end arbitrary power and insure civil liberties. He fails to recognize the virulent nature of violence, even of that violence supposedly used in the service of good ends.

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Gregor knows the commissar who is to order the execution of the prisons, and he urges the commissar, Charash, to release them and bring social change through vague, non-violent means.

Justice--  
to attain justice you revoke all justice--  
to attain mercy you repudiate  
the principle of mercy.--Blood will breed murder,  
murder breed blood--the evil means we use  
for a good end, will bring down only more evil  
and curses at the end.<sup>26</sup>

Later he tells Charash that it is

Better to lose  
than to lose your faith (p. 21).

Such an underlying attitude permeates Winterset and is still felt to lesser extent in Key Largo. But by November of 1938, Anderson's pacifism is in eclipse. During that year he voiced his anti-fascist feeling in a curtain speech after a special performance of Knickerbocker Holiday benefitting German refugees. Anderson charged Hitler with dragging his nation to a new low of depravity by inciting mob violence against innocent minorities and by "loading 700,000 Jews with impossible penalties. . . ." <sup>27</sup>

In 1939 King McCloud keeps his faith, is spiritually regenerated, but the regeneration has necessitated murder of a gangster. In 1941 Anderson's son, Quentin, delivered his father's paper, "The Basis of Artistic Creation in Literature," at a symposium commemorating the 175th anniversary of Rutgers University. In the comments

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Anderson struck out against such isolationists as the Lindberghs and Senator Burton K. Wheeler, and explicitly condemned those who would not fight, in drama and in real life. "Not only evil," he said, "but those who will not fight evil are hated on the stage." And the one-time pacifist went on to make what almost appeared to be a threat. "That which is considered despicable on stage will also be held despicable in real life."<sup>28</sup>

Anderson became so committed to the war effort that he began to write radio plays that made no pretense of being much more than propaganda. He joined that rather distinguished group of American writers "devoted to the ideals of American democracy," The Free Company. Anderson's contribution to the group's series of radio dramas was a play starring Paul Muni and featuring Burgess Meredith as narrator. It was titled The Miracle of the Danube, and it concerned a fascist officer torn between his desire to serve the state and his impulses to compassion and humanity. Anderson's other propaganda play, "Your Navy," was written for a radio series produced in cooperation with the U. S. government and the four radio networks. It was directed by the war's leading radio propagandist, Norman Corwin, and its purpose was simply to reassure the public that the American navy was still strong and on guard for their freedom.<sup>29</sup> The broadcasts took place starting in February, 1942, shortly after Pearl Harbor when such reassurances seemed necessary.

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Finally, by 1942 the pacifist in Anderson was long since dead and buried, and the new Anderson started appealing for militancy as stirringly as a Pentagon general. Writing in the Sunday New York Times Magazine Anderson employed the rhetoric of warning to spark resolution and cooperation in the hearts of his readers.

It is now our grim business to pitch into this war as if we were England or Poland, as if our streets had run with blood and our countryside been plowed under by tanks and shells. For if we don't pitch in in just that fasion, it is not certain at all that this war can be won. If we don't waive all civilian reluctances and peace-time privileges and fight voluntarily as the English must now fight, because they must, we may yet have to watch invaders parading down our own streets.<sup>30</sup>

This 1942 New York Times Magazine article and the Norman Corwin radio play is apparently Anderson's last direct efforts at propaganda for the duration. He became active in civil defense, but most of his energies were devoted to composing the three full-length plays written between 1941-1945 (plus the post-war Truckline Cafe composed probably during 1945). But that he had been transformed from pacifist to dedicated war hawk was obvious.

Mabel Driscoll Bailey in her study, Maxwell Anderson, The Playwright as Prophet gives one explanation for the transformation. "Of course, the playwright's precipitous reversal of opinion was not an isolated phenomenon. His plays reflect the attitude of the public for which they were written. That there was some sense of

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failure is apparent in the note of wistfulness which pervades the war plays. We went sadly into war. But being in it, the need to make life justify itself was once more urgent."<sup>31</sup> There may be something to Miss Bailey's remarks, but they do raise questions about the much touted integrity of Maxwell Anderson, that champion of pacifism in World War I, proponent of exalted, aloof drama. It will be valuable to look more closely at some of the plays and critical statements of 1937-1941. In them it is possible to trace Anderson's growing recognition of a threat in Hitler and his allies so terrible that he could with philosophic integrity advocate war to combat it. The plays show the playwright adjusting and subtly transforming the premises and views of his pre-war plays in response to historical realities.

Anderson's cynicism about government in general derived from his view of its corruption, its corruption, its service to those who could pay, its materialism and lack of vision or faith. His feelings about totalitarian government had, however, a more philosophic base. Anderson posited a moral dialectic in man between the godlike and the beast, "the ancient, belly-foot beast from which we came, which is strong within us yet, and tries to drag us down," as d'Alcala puts it in Key Largo. Each man must participate in this dialectic of forces within him. The plays to and including Key Largo depict the dialectic primarily in personal terms. The danger for the individual

is that he will lose faith in the god-like element and potential within himself and the race, and being faithless will have no will to fight against the beast. Thus the beast assumes power and control by default. This is what happens to King McCloud, and until his final resurgence of faith he can be easily bossed by Murillo. The glory of man is overcoming of the beast and having assurance in the god-element. Man must be allowed to experience the struggle and make the right choice in freedom. In Candle in the Wind Anderson makes his ultimate indictment of Naziism. It does not allow the individual ego the freedom to participate in the moral dialectic that makes man man.

In Act I, scene ii, Anderson presents a kind of catechism between Lieutenant Schoen and Corporal Behrens, Germans assigned to a prison in occupied France. Both are representatives of a generation raised under totalitarian doctrine and are supposedly immune to the moral dialectic. The doubts and uncertainties that are to plague Lieutenant Schoen are as yet not apparent.

Schoen: If you discovered that the state had made an error, would you report it to the proper authorities?

Behrens: It is impossible, sir, that the state has made an error. In any conflict between the state and the individual, the state is right and the individual is wrong.

Schoen: But suppose God whispers in a man's heart, and tells him truth, so that he is right and the state is mistaken?

Behrens: It is impossible, sir. There is no God except the state, and the state carries out our Fuehrer's will.

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Schoen: But suppose, for example, that you are right, and I am wrong?

Behrens: It is impossible, sir, because the state has set you above me in authority (pp. 32-33).

The possibility of human grandeur and goodness lies within the individual, and in the Nazi system the individual is negated. Schoen, who is the only character in the play who is not static, grows to realize this and to recognize the safeguards the Nazi state has taken to prevent the individual from ever being really alone and free. He comments cautiously, in characteristic Andersonian imagery, to the head of the prison who is the play's embodiment of Nazism, Colonel Erfurt.

Schoen: It seems to be the heart of our system that no man works alone. We hunt in pairs, or run in pack. One man alone is dangerous.

Erfurt: You mean to say that no man is given complete responsibility.

Schoen: I have not said that. I have said that two men together are found more dependable than one alone (p. 68).

The system has so carefully collectivized people that even when the moral dialectic goes on in a man, he stifles the impulses and remains a machine controlled by the beasts inside and outside who have at least temporarily seized power. Madeline Guest perceives a sympathy in Schoen for her attempts to free from the prison her lover, the anti-Nazi editorialist Raoul St. Cloud. She notes a "look" on his face and tears in his eyes that signal a repressed hatred for the Nazi world. But Schoen demands

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that Madeline not deceive herself. She must recognize the power of totalitarian conditioning to effectively negate the power of sympathy and compassion. "I have seen tears in [Col.] Erfurt's eyes when a man lay dying," he tells her. "And he let the man die. You must not depend on our tears" (p. 93).

This, then, was the basis for Anderson's movement from pacifism to a call for actual armed struggle against the enemy. The enemy threatened to destroy the very source of goodness in the world, the personal moral dialectic. Such a threat, Anderson became convinced, must be met straight on. The more or less mystical pacifism of Gregor in "Second Overture" was rejected. Force must meet force. The shift to militancy did not obscure other Andersonian precepts that remain even after the playwright adjusted his attitude concerning the combatting of evil. Theatre was still not to become a mere propaganda organ; it still had a religious function to fulfil. It still must present the dialectic at work and the good ultimately triumphing. In Candle in the Wind Lieutenant Schoen displays the dialectic at work and the victory of good. It is perhaps a weakness of the play that this significant character's psychological turmoil which is the only element to raise the play above melodrama, occurs offstage. / We do not see Schoen's dialectic as we do King McCloud's. We have only his statement that the beast and man in him have struggled and the good has begun to dictate his actions.



He helps Raoul St. Cloud to escape from the prison at great danger to his own position. He will fight the Nazi system. "You must not worry about me," he tells Madeline after he had effected the escape, "I have my own private war to fight. But, however it goes, not everything is lost. For I am a soldier against what I hate, and it's good to fight alone" (p. 104).

Significant in this speech is Schoen's acceptance of his internal and external struggle, his faith that enables him to fight though defeat is a real possibility, and his sense that fighting as an individual is a good thing. The Andersonian individualism is apparent. This individualism in the 1941 play Candle in the Wind is a little surprising for it seemed that Anderson had been working to find an acceptable formula for making individual faith communal, and personal sacrifice communally effective. The search for such a pattern is hinted crudely in Key Largo where McCloud's death buys his own regeneration but also helps the society by ridding it of Murillo and keeping the innocent Indians from being punished. It was in the unsuccessful Journey to Jerusalem, 1940, that Anderson seemed to find the pattern that made personal faith and sacrifice communal. The play opened on October 5, 1940 at the National Theatre and lasted only seven performances; apparently audiences and critics were not moved by the rather static story of Jesus's experience with the elders in the Jerusalem temple and his discovery of messianic

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mission. But for an investigation of Anderson's philosophic and esthetic adjustments to war, the play is crucial. Its Preface attempts to state explicitly the requisites for defeating Hitler, and in the play he is able to forge a synthesis between the anarchic ego, individual sacrifice, and communal salvation.

In order to combat a Hitler, the Preface declares, faith in man's ability to overcome human brutality is needed. Without such belief there is despair and acquiescence to might makes right morality. Each man develops his assurance from "his own flashes of revelation, and Christianity has been the strongest influence supporting individual dignity and freedom to respond to revelation" (p. vi). Somehow these individual faiths must add up to a national faith--a kind of collective sense that good will certainly triumph. "A Hitler is only possible in a despairing nation, a nation of men who have lost faith in their dignity and destiny. . . . Opposition to Hitler is only possible in a nation which retains or can recapture a belief that there are values beyond those of a materialist" (p. v). All this is vague enough and no real advance from earlier statements. The play itself, however, provides both restatement of and dramatic symbols for the ideas.

The manner in which individual faiths in combination somehow endow a social unit with strength is given poetic declaration when, near the end of the play, Jeshuah reads from the book of Enoch.

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A city is but the outer hull, or garment,  
of the faith which dwells within. . . .

When they cease to believe  
only a little while, the high roofs take rain,  
and the walls sink to the moat. There once was a city  
whose walls were destroyed by music blown against them,  
but the walls of every city are held foursquare in the  
sun  
by a people's secret singing (pp. 105-106).

Metaphorical and mystical, the statement does little to clarify the content of belief. Instead it calls for a faith in faith. It is in the character of Jeshuah (Jesus) that there appears a somewhat clearer picture of what a person must do to save his city.

The play concerns Joseph and Mary's trip with Jesus to Jerusalem for a census called by Herod. The World War II political situation is suggested by the presence of Roman tyrants and the guerillas in the hills who oppose them. Ishmael is spokesman for the guerilla-robbers and represents the man who is enabled by a passionately held vision to oppose tyranny. His faith is in a messiah who is to conquer the Romans. He recognizes Joshua as that messiah. In an interview in Jerusalem, Ishmael confirms to Jeshuah the identity and mission that Jeshuah has already suspected and dreamed about. Ishmael tries to make it clear that the mission of the messiah is a bitter one that entails suffering, but from the suffering that Jeshuah endures, men will be turned toward the right. The messiah is to allow the moral dialectic to arise within him, then by exemplifying the triumph of good, guide men to good and to fighting what is evil.

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Ishmael: The Messiah is sent to hunt out wisdom and truth,  
 to speak this wisdom and truth in love to those  
 who need his love, and in bitterness to those  
 who have earned bitterness. And in the end  
 for this love and bitterness with which he speaks  
 he will become a symbol of those who are guiltless--  
 and those who are guilty, seeing in him this symbol,  
 will turn and destroy him. He will suffer for them  
 and conquer them in their hearts (p. 81).

What Anderson finally suggests in the figure of  
 Jeshuah is a symbol of man, not superman. In the Preface  
 he declares that "This story of the child of God in the  
 court of the Sanhedrin, finding His way to the meaning of  
 the universe as He walks alone among the columns--this  
 appeared to me the perfect symbol of the soul of man  
 searching for its own meaning" (pp. vii-viii). In playing  
 out its own meaning, the soul can be socially effective.  
 When Jeshuah tells Miriam (Mary) of the messiah's sacrifice,  
 he emphasizes the instructive and converting value it will  
 have and its ultimate power to alter evil.

Yes  
 Mother, it [the personal sacrifice] has a meaning. Its  
 meaning is  
 that the death of the innocent will work in the hearts  
 of those who murder them, till the murderers  
 are sorry, and have changed, and never again  
 take life unjustly! (p. 103).

The statement suggests a lingering pacifism, but  
 that pacifistic element is cancelled out a moment later  
 when he calls for a faith that leads to militancy.





officer Cassell is assigned to kill the intelligent, the writers and artists, the leaders of enemies of the state. So eager is he to serve the state and the beast within him that he becomes known as the "Grim Reaper." Nevertheless, as later in Schoen, the god-impulse and faith lingers and brings to him at various times visions of the Giotto Christ. Under the influence of this vision he sets several prisoners loose, finally setting free an entire shipload on the Rumanian frontier after seeing Christ walk on the water. But in responding to the Christ, or god impulse, Cassell becomes himself a kind of Christ, a man who lets the good in him triumph, who tries to combat evil, and in so doing meets certain death. Yet in that death there is mystical triumph. The universe of beneficence and right becomes real and the world of evil an illusion. "In some horrible way . . ." Cassell explains to his jailer, "he [Christ] had become real--and he and I were real together in a country of ghosts. . . . The armies, the men of government, the men of the secret police, all the forces of our nation were shadows that could not stop a wind!" (pp. 15-16). The narrator comments at the end of the play: "So Captain Cassell went to his death because his inner spirit would not be denied. That death was one of triumph and of comfort" (p. 18). The death is not radically different from that of King McCloud except for the stronger suggestions of Christ and the greater communal relevance of Cassell's action.

The mode of the play, certainly a very minor play in Anderson's canon, might be called sentimental, mystical fantasy. The same strain recurs in The Eve of St. Mark where the Christ figure, Quizz, appears in a vision dream on the Eve of St. Mark to his mother and fiancé roughly according to an old legend. He asks them if he should remain voluntarily on a Philippine island to resist Japanese advances even though staying will mean certain death. He does remain, of course, after seeing in the persons of his mother and loved one values worth dying for. His sacrifice is for something Anderson leaves unstated, a vague racial salvation, a sacrifice for the preservation of gentle goodness and love.

In *Mio*, and to some extent in *McCloud*, sacrifice brought personal regeneration. In Journey to Jerusalem and the plays following, Anderson gives his heroes a broader context and greater social relation. Though he continues to exalt the individual faith and inner struggle, the individual has now become a meaningful part of a larger body and his personal sacrifice has greater significance. The rather clear adoption of the Christ-figure in the war period plays, the move toward mythic patterns of sacrifice and communal regeneration was obviously a product of Anderson's trying to forge a personal and dramaturgical philosophy adequate to the emerging world situation. Through adjustment he was able to reshape his ideas into forms that sought to encompass and deal with the evils of

the Axis aggression, the death of men in battle, the seeming triumph of the beast in the world. How good the plays were that contained his new thought is another consideration.

### Anderson's War Plays

Critics reviewing Anderson's career and achievement seldom mention the three plays of World War II, Candle in the Wind, 1941, The Eve of St. Mark, 1942, and Storm Operation, 1944.<sup>33</sup> Anderson himself fails to mention them in a review of his career appearing in the New York Times in 1954.<sup>34</sup> The critics, however, who do discuss the plays find them to be generally inferior to those that came before. It seems possible that Anderson simply had passed beyond his creative zenith. No play after Key Largo was to be considered truly up to the standards of the plays of the thirties. The decline may have demonstrated the problems discussed by Atkinson and other relating to the writing of drama during wartime. George Jean Nathan, writing soon after the war, notes Anderson's falling off. He attributes it to the impossibility of rendering satisfactorily a war so gigantic and horrible in scope and intensity. "In his bout with the late war, [Anderson] has come out a bad second. . . . Like other of his buddies who have put on the gloves in an attempt to subdue it to their dramatic ends, he has not been equal to it."<sup>35</sup> Nathan's remarks grow more acid as he comments on the individual plays, for his failure was perhaps inevitable given the

task, but equally the result of personal short-comings of craft.

Mabel Driscoll Bailey sees a failure of conception. She suggests that Anderson was unable to render with adequate imaginative power his shifted focus, i.e., from personal moral dialectic to the broader social, historical context.

[Anderson] sees clearly, as few in our century have seen, that "no man is fit to live who has not found something for which he will gladly die." But he sees this only as it applies to the moral crises of persons in what are ordinarily thought of as their private concerns. Either he does not perceive or is unwilling to face its bearings upon the choice and actions of men in their group desires and endeavors. Hence the dramas of democracy [the war plays] lack the moral grandeur of the great personal tragedies.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, Philip Stevenson, writing in the New York Times in 1944 called Anderson America's most successful projector of warfare on the stage."<sup>37</sup> Of course the piece was a pre-opening herald for Storm Operation and may have had elements of boosterism. Also on the credit side was Anderson's continuing interest in dramaturgical experimentation. He was the playwright who worked seriously to bring poetry and poetic tragedy, historical and contemporary, to the modern American stage. In the war plays he continued to use different if not entirely new modes. In Candle in the Wind he tried to combine Andersonian philosophy with melodrama. In Storm Operation he attempted to write what he once scorned--journalistic

drama. And in his only really popular and critical success during the war, The Eve of St. Mark, he sought a fusion of topical drama and dominant cultural motifs. A brief investigation of these wartime plays by the period's foremost dramatist is in order. It should provide a view both of difficulties of creating war drama and the potential richness war playwrights saw in culturally recognized study patterns, such as the Christ mythos. It should also demonstrate the inadequacy of such patterns and motifs to create of themselves successful and satisfying plays.

Candle in the Wind opened on a warm September 15, 1941 in Boston at the Colonial Theatre. From Boston it moved to New York's Sam Shubert Theatre where it was staged by Alfred Lunt in his first venture into directing. Helen Hayes starred as the American actress, Madeline Guest, who attempts to free her lover, the anti-fascist editorialist and naval officer, Raoul St. Cloud. Austrian actor, Wengraf, played the Nazi prison camp director, Colonel Erfurt, and Lieutenant Schoen, who suffers from the only moral struggle in the play, was portrayed by Tonio Selwart. In terms of number of performances, ninety-five, the play was almost a success. The critics liked the sets; they found Helen Hayes capable of giving charm and warmth to the part of Madeline, and indeed, the large opening night audience in Boston had given her a great ovation. The Catholic critic, Euphemia Van Renssalaer Wyatt loved the

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play. "Candle possesses a nobility of purpose and execution that is rare in the modern theatre."<sup>38</sup> But the few raves came mostly, it seems, from critics who were moved by the spirit of the moment and hatred for Nazis rather than by cold critical insight.<sup>39</sup>

Most critics could not share in the enthusiasm. The general reaction was "grave disappointment," said the Herald Tribune's Richard Watt's Jr.<sup>40</sup> "All things considered, said John O'Hara unable to be explicit, the play is "lacking in something. . . . It is a bit of a bore. . . . It is inept, amateurish, and unworthy of all concerned."<sup>41</sup> Stark Young was embarrassed. "One does not know just what line to take with a thing that means so well, muddles into the most passionate urgency of our epoch and remains so mediocre, overexplicit, banal, and in its approach so entirely bourgeois."<sup>42</sup>

That critics like Euphemis Wyatt and Stark Young could disagree so violently is not unusual. But now the distance of years and absence of a current Nazi menace may make a more detached evaluation possible. The play is a melodrama using a rather worn plot--that of the faithful woman trying to save her heroic lover from the hands of evil jailers. The moral sides are obvious; the good are very good and the bad are blackly bad. Madeline Guest has no inner moral dialectic in process, a fact that does not add to her dramatic interest. She acts by faith, sacrificing if not her life, at least her wealth and possibly

her looks and career as she remains in Paris trying to get Raoul freed. Raoul St. Cloud also has arrived at goodness; all inner struggle is completed. On the other side, Colonel Erfurt is evil. He is the Nazi incarnate, without personal honor, without compassion. He is cruel and exploitive.

The play thus has a simplicity, a "banality" of conflict found in crude melodramas. The only dynamic character is Schoen, who undergoes an inner moral struggle and finally decides to go against his Nazi colleagues. The struggle of this character is, however, not shown, and we must accept on faith his moment of crisis and spiritual regeneration (the anagnorisis Anderson felt essential in the construction of every significant play). Because of the hidden nature of Schoen's struggle, little of real interest is dramatically established. The process of dynamic character change is only reported. The play does not try to convince; it expects belief from the audience and critics before they sit down in the theatre. The play, in short, presents Andersonian philosophy without deep or painful dramatic struggle. Evil is present, but the good seems more powerful because the struggle is all backstage and given only lip service in front of the lights. Thus Madeline's final speech, "there have been many wars between men and beasts, and the beasts have always lost and men have won," seems unproven tenet of faith--it seems a



decadent affirmation, powerless to move those who do not already subscribe.

What is puzzling about Anderson's handling of the theme of faith and personal sacrifice is his failure to use even the techniques he had employed in earlier plays--King McCloud's self-revelation and debates, and the Christ-figure motif of Journey to Jersuaalem and "Miracle of the Danube." Perhaps profoundly effective craft could not be expected from the playwright, Anderson, as he saw the world moving inexorably into worldwide war. In a review of Candle in the Wind in The Nation Joseph Wood Krutch urged lesser expectation of dramatists in periods of crisis. "In so far as a dramatist is compelled to deal not only with an action of which he is a part but with one which inevitable overwhelms him, just to that extent he must be content to relinquish the poet's hope that he may reveal hidden greatness, for he must be content instead to play a part even less important, perhaps, than that of the mere journalist or historian."<sup>43</sup> And one notes that Anderson signalled to his audience that he was trying for less. His exclusive use of prose in the war plays, except for the scene in The Eve of St. Mark where Quizz visits his mother and finance in dream-vision, indicates, at least to a reader of the plays, that in his own mind Anderson was not attempting to compose drama of the scope or even the seriousness of his earlier work. To call Candle melodrama is fair for he wanted to do no more than create melodrama.



To assume that his audience shared a common set of attitudes about Nazis and their relation to good and evil may have been no more unreasonable than it had been to assume a common cluster of assumptions about war in the audience of What Price Glory? The play's failure lay not in its positions but in its awkward and unconvincing attempts to graft certain articles of Andersonian philosophy onto characters too shallow in their conception and development to give those ideas adequate expression and nuance.

The Eve of St. Mark was Anderson's only real critical and popular success during the war. The play opened at the Cort Theatre in New York on October 7, 1942, and starred William Prince as Quizz West and Aline Mac Mahon as his mother. The play ran for 291 performances, was selected by Burns Mantle as one of the best plays of 1942-1943, had a London production sponsored by the U. S. Army and cast by U. S. servicemen, WACs and Red Cross girls, and was purchased by Twentieth-Century-Fox for \$300,000, a sum equalled only by Fox's purchase of Steinbeck's The Moon is Down.<sup>44</sup> The play had its detractors. Wolcott Gibbs in The New Yorker called it a "superb recruiting poster."<sup>45</sup> More representative of the critical reactions, however, was Howard Barnes comment in the Herald Tribune. "Maxwell Anderson has written stright from the heart in The Eve of St. Mark. The result is a war drama of emotional tension, humor and poetic splendor."<sup>46</sup> And Joseph Wood Krutch

called it "the most effective and . . . satisfying play about the war yet to reach our stage."<sup>47</sup>

The story is a very simple one--as most critics noted. It is of young Quizz West leaving his home farm, mother, and new fiance to go into training and then into battle. He proves his courage and capacity for sacrifice to protect what he loves by staying and persuading his comrades to voluntarily stay and defend a Philippine island against a Japanese advance. The many scenes depict stages of Quizz's journey from upstate New York to a foreign island where he must make the Andersonian decision, the same one King McCloud faced, to stay and fight despite apparent immediate uselessness of the act, or to give up faith and run. Quizz makes the "right" decision and is not forced into the psychological purgatory that McCloud endures. He sacrifices himself--almost too easily--for the saving of the community and loved ones. He is Christ-like in his innocence, in his capacity for compassion and self sacrifice. Further, Quizz is cast in certain traditional Christ-images. Trying to get home on a short furlough he accepts a role as shepherd, feeding and watering the sheep of a heavy drinker who has offered him a ride.

Anderson's comparatively subtle use of such a figure and pattern, an employment not weighed down by debate and philosophical exposition as in Journey to Jerusalem and The Miracle of the Danube may suggest the reasons for the success of the play. It is a play that

taps such archetypal patterns as the Christ-sacrifice pattern, and the youth initiation pattern. Further, and more importantly, it bases its motifs and effects on certain cultural images, expectations, and patterns. Such pattern, characters, images are almost intuitively recognized and understood by the American audience. Their use almost obviates the need for extensive character delineation--indeed, too full and unique a character would destroy any recognizable cultural identity Anderson might wish to create in Quizz. So Quizz becomes an American Everyman; the plot, "a kind of Everyman in khaki."<sup>48</sup> Quizz is every American youth called upon by the world war to leave home and face dangers. The cultural images, then, that surround the idealized American youth are employed in creating the character of Quizz. He is spirited and lively; he falls in love with the neighbor girl. He is chaste but not a prude. Anderson works carefully to create the balance that will make Quizz neither profligate nor goody-goody. Thus he shows Quizz and a barracks friend being kind to a pair of tough-tender prostitutes without falling into fornication. With Janet, his finance, he is human enough and almost ends up in bed with her--except for an opportune phone call that saves the purity of both.

Quizz is a typical and refined image of American manhood. His home is a farm, and his name, we note, is West. Anderson seems to be evoking subtly the potent cultural image discussed by Henry Nash Smith in his Virgin

Land, i.e., the images of the family farm, the agrarian life which breeds individualism, independence, healthy mind and body, rich family life, proper innocence, will and strength, and love of country.<sup>49</sup> There was nothing wrong in 1942 with being from Brooklyn, but in the movies and on the stage the boy from Brooklyn was usually Italian and Catholic and slightly reminiscent of a street urchin. He was not the cultural stereotype of the American boy. That boy was the waspish, "western" farm lad from Ohio, or upper New York State as the case may be.

So Anderson creates in The Eve of St. Mark a kind of mythic expression stripped of all excrescences and reduced to primary cultural symbols, to those culturally evocative and meaningful motifs and patterns.<sup>50</sup> Though no critic explicitly perceived the mythic qualities of the play, Joseph Wood Krutch came very close. "It gives clarity and coherence and logic to our emotional reaction to certain great events; it provides an occasion upon which a group may feel in an orderly and clear fashion what the individual members of the group have been feeling fragmentarily and in confusion."<sup>51</sup> Only at the end of the play does Anderson, unfortunately, step forward and speak in didactic Andersonian fashion. Janet, Quizz's fiance, says, "Every man has to follow his own vision. That's the way new worlds are made."<sup>52</sup> Except for this, Anderson has transmuted his own standard reflections and philosophic dictums into artistic, cultural, and dramatic ritual

wherein one sees and feels because of culturally defined ways of perceiving. In this transmuting process Anderson seemed on the way to discovering the apparent secret for significance and success in wartime expression--the subtle use of the cultural symbols that make what seems to be unique and discrete action become for a member of the American cultural experience universal and true.

Storm Operation was Anderson's last play to appear during the war, opening on January 11, 1944 at the Belasco Theatre. It was the one in which Anderson most clearly abandoned his role as poet and mythmaker, or myth-user, and switched dramatic modes. The play is of that type Anderson had long scorned, the journalistic play. Its conception and purpose from the start was pure journalism. Shortly after The Eve of St. Mark opened in October, 1942, Anderson announced that he was going to Africa (by way of London in order to help there with the London production of Eve). His purpose in Africa originally was to do some research for a play about American negro soldiers.<sup>53</sup> This intent was sidetracked apparently, for when he arrived in Africa in late May, 1943, he was more vague about the prospective play's substance. He would say only that he wanted to "collect some war atmosphere for another war play."<sup>54</sup> The subject was set, it seems, in the much publicized meeting between Anderson and Eisenhower in Algiers on June 1. Anderson suggested a play about Anglo-American military

cooperation, and Eisenhower grew enthusiastic. The General in turn suggested a play about such cooperation in the North African campaign, and he urged that the code name for the Allied efforts, "Storm Operation," be used as the play's title. So it was.<sup>55</sup>

The play took shape along the same lines as What Price Glory? Storm Operation was to be a realistic picture of what war was like. The results were similar to but less successful than those of 1924, perhaps because Anderson's craft was wanting, perhaps because What Price Glory? had a stronger sense of purpose. Storm Operation had no strong center and seems a sort of aimless newsreel with some obviously theatrical gimmicks thrown in. Howard Barnes of the New York Herald Tribune put it this way: "It is almost as factual as a screen documentary; it is not particularly good theatre."<sup>56</sup> Burns Mantle agreed that it was very uneven drama but selected it as one of the best plays of 1943-44 because it happened to be "the one play of the year that, in its better moments, did bring a particular phase of this war home to the American public, which needed to be told about it."<sup>57</sup>

The play concerns a rather inexperienced first sergeant, Peter Moldau, played by Myron McCormick, and his attempts to lead an Allied force in North Africa. His command is challenged by a snobbish British officer, Captain Sutton, who is sceptical of American manners and military abilities. Sutton is a stereotype of the British



aristocratic officer, as are the American soldiers examples of the irreverent, seemingly anything-but-business G. I.s stereotype still current in the '70s in such movies as M\*A\*S\*H. After making a serious error in leadership, Sgt. Moldau does surrender his leadership to Sutton, even as Sutton grows more respectful of American proficiency. The play consists mostly of the interaction of soldiers, their talk, their attempts to deal with the very alien environment of desert, Arab Africa. The dialogue, à la What Price Glory? is salty, the situations often comic.

Into this simple and direct content is thrown an improbable love affair. Lieutenant Thomasina Grey helped in Peter Moldau's therapy following an earlier wound. They loved each other, but he feared permanent attachment, especially in wartime, and they became separated. They meet here in North Africa accidentally. The problem is that Lieutenant Gray has been seeing British Captain Sutton. This theatrical triangle threatens to misshapen and confuse the simple and vigorous reportorial play that Anderson had been creating. Finally, Peter is ready to commit himself to the Lieutenant if she will have him. She will, finally, and they are married by none other than Sutton as a strafing attack takes place around their heads.

Most critics found this mixture of melodrama, spectacle, and reportage a little too varied to create a unified and satisfactory play, and though the play is amusing (Stark Young found it "truly comic") the play was

rejected by both critics and the public. It ran only twenty-three performances.

It is interesting to note what has happened to the Andersonian philosophy in this third attempt at a war play. It has largely disappeared. The anagnorisis is gone. What remains is not a discovery that one must sacrifice one's life for good and the furtherance of the cosmic evolution toward justice and right. There does persist an unphilosophical doggedness--an unspiritual desire to fight the damn war, because the Nazis are a menace to freedom, and then to get home. In this third year of war the spiritual and universal concepts seems less relevant. Sgt. Moldau expresses the new "faith" in the Prologue to the play. He has made no grand decisions of self-sacrifice. "I got drafted," he says, "the same as the rest of you. I didn't want to be a soldier. Nobody did, only we knew the job had to be done, and we had to do it. And the only way to fight a war is to make the other fellow so Goddam sorry he picked on us that he'll never do it again."<sup>58</sup> The elevated sentiment and rhetoric is gone. The concept of death as a noble and mystically effective act is absent. The idealistic faith is replaced by more common war rhetoric. After Storm Operation has been successful and the forces are ready to land again somewhere in the Mediterranean, Peter speaks to his men in the language of American resolution rather than idealism, and though the idea of tragic sacrifice for communal salvation is present,

has been stripped of mystical, Christ parallels. "Do you suppose we'd be allowed to keep a place like that [home] if we weren't willing to fight for it? Hell no! The year we go soft enough to say we won't fight for it there won't be any United States. Only we haven't gone soft yet. . . . We're going to take this town so damn fast they won't know what hit it" (pp. 126-126).

Andersonian philosophy is certainly not incompatible with Moldau's speeches, largely because Anderson's faith in the individual, and in the beneficent tendencies of the universe and man, are so basically American, springing from Emerson and the entire pattern of American thought. But the philosophy has been simplified, stripped of its poetic expression and its mystical trappings. This occurred because the war did make a difference in the thinking and expression of Anderson.

As Anderson became increasingly involved, by working in the Free Company, civil defense, traveling to Africa, the realities of war seemed too pressing to allow for the luxury of rather academic speculation and contemplation. So the poetry of Key Largo and the attempts at synthesis of thought trends in Journey to Jerusalem become first the idealism and mysticism grafted onto contemporary subjects, as in "The Miracle of the Danube" and Candle in the Wind, then the specifics of tenet and dogma are simplified to accord with American myth in The Eve of St. Mark, and

finally they become distant but recognizable echoes in the journalism of Storm Operation.

Robert Sherwood's Rugged Path

I feel that life is too fragile and fine a thing  
to be treated as butcher's meat. . . .  
Irwin Shaw, 1936

I have believed in reason. I convince you, you  
convince me. Can you convince airplanes with bombs and  
men with guns in their pockets?  
Jonah in Irwin Shaw's The Gentle People, 1939

"We are conquering bestiality, not with our muscles and  
our swords, but with the power of the light that is in  
our minds." To deny the ultimate truth of that faith  
would be to commit a philosophical Munich now. . . .  
The hope of the future lies in action today.  
Brooks Atkinson, New York Times,  
September 22, 1940

And where's "our sacred honor" today if we submit  
meekly and timorously to evil . . . where?  
Lovejoy, "An American Crusader"

The intellectual and expressive transformation that  
Anderson underwent as he tried to grapple with the war  
supply us with a kind of paradigm for the agonies and  
transformations certain other artists experienced. The  
increasingly clear ruthlessness and barbarity of the  
fascists' actions, and the Allies timidity at Munich,  
evoked similar gut reactions, categories of thought, and  
personal commitments in at least three other major World  
War II playwrights, Irwin Shaw, Robert E. Sherwood, and  
Lillian Hellman. Each felt it necessary to adjust his

views and transform his dramatic expression in order to face the problem of the individual's role and responsibility in a world where evil no longer was a metaphysical abstraction. Sherwood and Hellman arrived at intellectual conclusions and images strikingly like Anderson's in Journey to Jerusalem and in The Eve of St. Mark.

But it is in Shaw and Sherwood that a similar pattern of transformation is especially evident because they, like Anderson, moved away from pacifistic or anti-war stances.<sup>59</sup> Probably the strongest theatre image of 1936 was created by Irwin Shaw in his first play, an anti-war piece called Bury the Dead. In the play six cadaver-casualties of the war "that is to begin tomorrow," as Shaw put it, rise and refuse to be buried despite pleas from their commanders and their women.<sup>60</sup> Cheated of life for no good reason by foolish governments, the corpses refuse to acquiesce to being put away and forgotten. Instead they march off at play's end to spread their protest against the senseless and murderous brutality of war. In a New York Times article following the Broadway opening (the play first began as a production of the Actor's Repertory Co. for benefit of the New Theatre League and New Theatre magazine) Shaw declared his non-interventionist, anti-war, pro-life intention. "This first play," he wrote, "has been written by a young man who does not want to die. He hopes that there are many young men who do not want to die, and that they will be moved by the play, for the time is

coming, and not so far away, when young men will be asked to put their lives on precarious firing steps. . . . I would regard it as a criminal plot against my life if the United States involved itself in a war and dragged me into its army to fight for it against some other young man just as eager as I to stay alive in the bright and pleasant world."<sup>61</sup>

By 1939, after Munich and events in Spain, Shaw had apparently changed his position. In, The Gentle People significantly subtitled "A Brooklyn Fable," Shaw draws two old men, Saroyan-like in their gentle simplicity and their lyrical, genial speech. Jew and Greek, they are the oppressed of the world. Wanting only to fish in peace, they are terrorized by a two-bit gangster demanding money for protection. When the gangster, Goff, tries to extort the money the two men have saved for a new boat, the gentle men react by carefully planning and murdering him. The 1936 pacifist playwright suggests that there is a point when peace in our time is not peace at all, a point when life must not be the ultimate value. This moral is given to Jonah in the play: "If you want peace and gentleness, you got to take violence out of the hands of the people like Goff and you got to take it in your own hands and use it like a club. Then maybe, on the other side of violence, there will be peace and gentleness."<sup>62</sup>

Shaw's process of change remains undocumented. The events in Europe are obviously responsible for his

his acceptance of war and for what amounts to a veiled argument for resistance to evil, but a chart or timetable of his personal intellectual transformation is not available. Sherwood, however, provides us with a fairly complete record of the trials, mental and other, that such "inconsistency" of principle can provoke. After serving in the Canadian Black Watch in World War I, Sherwood became convinced of the correctness of both internationalism and pacifism. "I believed that war was a hideous injustice and that no man had the right to call himself civilized as long as he admitted that another world war could conceivably be justifiable."<sup>63</sup> In the Preface to There Shall be No Night he points to anti-war messages in nearly every one of his plays from the 1926-27 Road to Home to the clearest and most insistent of such statements appearing ten years later in Idiot's Delight. Then the change. In 1940 Sherwood wrote what was by general critical agreement the first play really about the European war, There Shall be No Night, and which was, according to Raymond Clapper, Washington columnist, a "rank inflammatory job, pleading for intervention."<sup>64</sup>

The play's portrayal of very decent people defending the Finnish democracy from a very indecent Russian army moved audiences to tears, Life reported,<sup>65</sup> and moved nearly everyone else aware of the play's existence to some kind of reactions. After the Washington performance, M. Procopé, the Finnish minister, embraced Sherwood, thanked

him for what he was doing for Finland, and underlined his thanks by celebrating the play with a party at the Finnish embassy. Sherwood received support from the President and Mrs. Roosevelt, from Harry Hopkins, and from three Supreme Court Justices.<sup>66</sup>

But many in the still largely isolationist United States agreed with columnist Clapper. Hate mail came in the post; The Daily Worker called Sherwood a stooge of imperialist warmongers.<sup>67</sup> In late May, 1940, the Theatre Arts Committee, a group labelled communistic by Actors' Equity, picketed the Alvin, where There Shall be No Night was playing, passed out pamphlets saying warmongers had captured the Alvin, and urged those going in to sign peace petitions to send President Roosevelt.<sup>68</sup> Strangely enough, however, not all felt that bitterness toward the Russians. Jack Gould, in a brief survey of reactions to the play, noted that the Christian Frontists were accusing Sherwood not of attacking, but of following the communist line.<sup>69</sup> Whatever else one could say about the play, surely Sherwood was, in Gould's words, "the man who made the war an issue in the Broadway theatre."<sup>70</sup>

Though there is no doubt from the play's text that Sherwood has moved from a stance of pacifism to one demanding active struggle against aggressive forces, there is some ambiguity as to his specific recommendation concerning the degree of American involvement in the war. The playwright's sympathies and philosophical position lie



clearly with Dr. Kaarlo Valkonen when that character throws off his passivity and hatred of war to go to the Finnish lines and fight the Russians. But did Sherwood mean to imply that the United States must take up arms and rush also to the front? In a May 12 New York Times interview with Jack Gould, Sherwood denied saying in the play or anywhere else that the United States "should plunge into this war with full force. I would not have," he said, "the faintest idea where such force could be directed."<sup>71</sup> But certainly some American action is implied when Sherwood has Dr. Valkonen's new daughter-in-law and unborn child sent to Massachusetts. America becomes responsible for that child's future and by implication responsible for the future generations' hopes for justice and freedom in the world. To clarify the implications, Sherwood personally took action.

He follows Anderson's pattern of involvement, i.e., of moving from practicing playwright to practicing propagandist. Like Anderson, he joined the Free Company, writing a radio play on freedom of press and speech and using as subject abolitionist journalist, Elijah Parish Lovejoy and that man's martyrdom in Illinois in the 1830s.<sup>22</sup> But Sherwood goes beyond Anderson in the range of his activities and in the devotion of his time to the war effort. No other playwright became so involved both unofficially and officially from 1940 onward. After the production of There Shall be No Night, Sherwood clarified

what he felt to be the proper United States involvement in world affairs by joining William Allen White's Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies (a more aggressive group than the Non-Partisan Committee for Peace through Revision of the Neutrality Law, which White lead and Sherwood had joined in 1939). In June, 1940, he composed for the Committee the full page ad that appeared in the New York Times and numerous other papers around the country. It was titled "Stop Hitler Now!" and it urged the sending of letters to Roosevelt calling for aid to the Allies.<sup>73</sup>

As the year progressed he became a prolific speech-maker and essayist. He espoused and championed Clarence Streit's idea of a federal union of English speaking nations in a speech telephoned to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in late August and subsequently broadcast to other British Empire countries.<sup>74</sup> Sherwood had long urged international union, but he felt that now especially such a union would be advantageous, serving notice to Hitler and the world of the power of the democracies to be dynamic and to organize their collective energies to combat totalitarianism. This conviction he stated to the mass American public in a penned defense of the plan in the October 7, 1940 issue of Life, a defense reprinted in the Reader's Digest's December number.<sup>75</sup>

His speeches were often notable for their candor, and he did not shy away from attacking the "apostles of appeasement" as a group or from attacking individually such

men as Henry Ford and Colonel Lindbergh. Before a rally of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies in New Haven, Connecticut, Sherwood explicitly suggested Lindbergh's Nazism. "I am not accusing Colonel Lindbergh with being pro-Nazi," he said. "He unquestionably is pro-American--aggressively so. He is simply a Nazi with a Nazi's Olympian contempt for all democratic processes--the rights of freedom of speech and worship, the right to select and criticize our own government, and the right of labor to strike."<sup>76</sup>

From a private citizen condemning isolationists and urging substantial aid to the Allies, Sherwood became an official person. He was appointed a special assistant to the Secretary of the Navy in 1940, went to England on a fact finding mission in 1941 as an assistant to the Coordinator of Information for the United States government, Colonel William Donovan. In 1942 he was appointed by his friend, President Franklin Roosevelt, as director of the Overseas Branch of the Office of War Information--a post he held even while serving as correspondent for Time, and a post he held until 1944 when he resigned. In 1945, as special assistant to the Secretary of the Navy again, he made a 37,000 mile tour of the Pacific. The four afforded a first-hand view of the Filipino guerillas he later drew so lovingly in his only wartime play, The Rugged Path, and resulted in his urging the United States to retain its military bases in the Pacific.<sup>77</sup>

All this from a man who had been a professed pacifist. The distance between the assumptions of Idiot's Delight and There Shall be No Night is as great as the distance between those of What Price Glory? and Storm Operation, and the distance was covered by both playwrights with some agony of intellect and emotion. But Anderson had a philosophical framework into which, with a bit of adjustment, he could fit his militancy. Sherwood lacked such an overall framework, though he obviously had strong predilections, and thus he suffered the pains of a sincere man whose evolving emotional sympathies run counter to his public professions. Between the pacifism of 1936's Idiot's Delight and 1940's There Shall be No Night, Sherwood was a man in turmoil. His turmoil seemed to render him creatively impotent, as he testifies in his Preface to There Shall be No Night. "After Abe Lincoln in Illinois, [1937] two years passed during which I had many doubts that I should ever write another play. I wanted to write about that which was uppermost in my own mind and in the minds of most other men who were still free to speak. But how could any play hope to compete or even keep up with the daily headlines and the shrieks of increasing horror heard over the radio" (pp. xxv-xxvi)? Sherwood wanted to evade dealing with the world situation as much as he wanted to write about it. "I said to my friend, Alexander Korda, 'I wish I could write a sparkling drawing-room comedy

without a suggestion of the international calamity or social significance . . ." (p. xxvi).

The creative dilemma continued into the summer and fall of 1939 (though he worked on the screenplay for Abe Lincoln in Illinois). In July, 1939, a New York Times reporter met Sherwood and his wife as they returned on the Queen Mary from a three month vacation in Europe. The playwright said he hoped to write a play for Broadway in the fall, but he had not begun and was having difficulty doing so, an apparent difficulty in sorting out his perceptions of the situation in Europe and in finding an emotionally satisfying position on those perceptions. This seems, at least, to be the difficulty suggested by Sherwood's laconic, puzzling comment to the Times reporter: "With all the things happening in the world today, it is almost impossible to select one [a subject] to write about."<sup>78</sup>

The process of Sherwood's movement from confusion to statement and commitment is best documented in John Mason Brown's The Ordeal of a Playwright, Robert E. Sherwood and the Challenge of War. Brown notes that in October, 1939, Sherwood joined the Non-Partisan Committee for Peace through Revision of the Neutrality Law, a group that seemed through its compromise stand of calling for aid to the allies but no United States participation in fighting to serve well the playwright's division of impulses. But events grew more grave. By December Russia was preparing

to invade Finland. The compromise stand of the Non-Partisan Committee no longer seemed morally acceptable. Sherwood felt America should intervene somehow in Scandanavia. At any rate, he knew that he was shifting positions and would be, as later proved the case, called a warmonger. In deep perplexity he sought counsel and emotional support from William Allen White. "I can only say," he wrote in a letter, "that as a writer and as an embittered veteran of the previous World War, I have consistently tried to plead the course of pacifism. . . . War is still to me as I tried to describe it in such plays as Idiot's Delight [a product of chauvinism, government stupidity, and armament makers]. But the terrible truth is that when war comes home to you, you have to fight it; and this war has come home to me. . . . The essential fact is that I can now no longer stand the sight of the present and future world."<sup>79</sup> There is no apology for his inconsistency or the length of time it has taken him to come to his present conviction. He had reached the point where apology was unnecessary. Deeply felt judgments were enough. Now he needed only a spark to spur him into embodying his convictions in dramatic form. The Finnish defense in general, the United States refusal to give aid to Finland, and the Christmas broadcast from Helsinki by William L. White (William Allen White's son) specifically provided that spark. By December 28, 1939, Sherwood the

pacifist was writing Broadway's first war play, and three and a half months later it was being produced.

In some ways There Shall be No Night was quite different from the plays of Sherwood's Playwrights Company associate, Anderson. Sherwood underwrites his characters. The dialogue, though sometimes eloquent, is naturalistic rather than elevated into poetic statement. Only Anderson's The Eve of St. Mark seems to achieve the tone of quiet sincerity so evident in Sherwood's play. But in most ways the play shows striking similarities to Anderson's in movement, imagery, and ideas. There Shall be No Night involves the Valkonens, a humane, civilized Finnish family, distinguished because of Dr. Valkonen's neurological research and winning of the Nobel Prize. The doctor is suggestive of Sherwood in being internationally minded, finding narrow patriotism "one of the most virulent manifestations of evil," in being reluctant to admit the necessity of fighting, and in being ultimately convinced, by his son's commitment to stand against the Russian invaders and by the human degeneration evident in Russian actions, that it is right and necessary to defend his democratic country. The play is, then, the picture of aggression's effect on quiet, peaceful persons, and like Anderson's plays is a forum for ideas.

The similarity of the ideas is often striking. Both men diagnose the source of the evil that has resulted in the actions of war, and their diagnoses make it sound

as if Sherwood and Anderson graduated from the same medical school. Anderson saw human moral malaise and Hitlerism as products of a form of materialism. McCloud is lost because he values his body more than his ideals. In him, and more so in Hitlerism, spirit has been replaced by faith in mechanics, forces. Closely similar are Dr. Valkonen's views in scene I, supposedly broadcast to America. Men, he says, have put their faith in mechanical, material defense, and have let the spiritual resistances wither. "We have counted too heavily upon pills and serums to protect us from our enemies, just as we count too heavily upon vast systems of concrete fortifications and big navies to guard our frontiers. Of what avail are those artificial protections if each man lacks the power of resistance within himself?"<sup>80</sup> Like Anderson, Sherwood locates man's strength and dignity in his individual spiritual makeup and in his ability to endure trouble and sacrifice. He sees modern man having tried to evade trouble and pain by means of science. Such evasion leaves the man weakened, for, Valkonen quotes St. Paul, "'We glory in tribulation; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience, and experience, hope'" (p. 21). Man has now been weakened because of his attempts to evade the harsh moral and physical tribulations by mechanical means, and the result is moral and mental degeneration, the clearest manifestation being fascist and communist reliance on mechanical, armed might and aggression. "Today the



spiritual resistance of [the German people] has been lowered to such an extent that they are willing to discard all their moral sense, all the essential principles of justice and civilization. They glorify a theory of government which is no more than coordinated barbarism, under the leadership of megalomaniac who belongs in a psychopathic ward rather than a chancellery" (p. 20).

In both Anderson and Sherwood, then, we find similar views of evil's origins--they lie in the neglect of the spiritual in favor of the physical. And both see the need for personal commitment and sacrifice if spirit and dignity are to be fed and to emerge triumphant. Obviously Dr. Valkonen never is as lost and without faith as King McCloud, but his movement from sceptical inaction through an anagnorsis to commitment and personal sacrifice parallels that of both McCloud and of German Lieutenant Schoen in Candle in the Wind. Indeed, the pattern in both playwright's wartime plays, with the exceptions of Storm Operation, is the gradual coming to consciousness that is the hope of man and the world. Only in recognizing man's dual nature and helping to defeat the baser part can man evolve to a higher level of being. Curiously the animal imagery in Sherwood and Anderson echoes each other. Anderson is especially fond of rats as images for man's spiritual atavism; Sherwood of rats and apes. The evolution theme and imagery were emerging as Sherwood unconsciously approached the writing of There Shall be No Night. In his December letter to



William A. White he declares, "if the Soviet Union gets away with victory in this outburst of gang warfare, then we must admit that civilization is ended and the red hand of the ape rules the world."<sup>81</sup> In the play itself the imagery appears several times, as in Uncle Waldemar's description of man's state in 1939-40 to Dr. Valkonen's son, Erik: "Men are groping their way through the night. The lights are out in Berlin, Paris, London. And in Warsaw, they crawl through the ruins like rats. . . . This is war in the jungle and the winner will be crowned 'King of Beast'" (pp. 49-50).

But withal, neither playwright will abandon man to violence and hopelessness. For both, the St. Paul passage that Dr. Valkonen quotes in his broadcast to America may serve as text. Hope comes ultimately from testing and tribulation. Just how such suffering and sacrifice will lead to the beneficent destiny of man remains vague, though Sherwood attempts to deal with the problem a bit more fully than does Anderson. Just before Kaarlo goes to face the Russian forces in a last and obviously futile stand, he gives to his fellow defenders, significantly including Americans, a last "lecture." In it he declares that men are coming to a consciousness about their worst and best impulses, and are questioning why the worst impulses are so powerful. "And for the first time in history, consciousness is not just the privilege of a few secluded philosophers. . . . For the first time, individual men are fighting to know themselves . . . (p. 153). And with the

anagnoristic grasping of self-knowledge, men can overcome the beast in themselves. "We have within ourselves the power to conquer bestiality, not with our muscles and swords, but with the power of the light that is in our minds. What a thrilling challenge this is to all Science! To play its part in the ultimate triumph of evolution. To help speed the day when man becomes genuinely human, instead of the synthetic creature--part bogus angel, part actual brute--that he has imagined himself in the past" (pp. 153-154). In the Preface to the play, Sherwood admits that Kaarlo Valkonen is indeed his *raisonneur*. "I believe every word that Dr. Valkonen utters in the sixth scene. . . . I believe that man, in his new found consciousness, can find the means of his redemption" (p. xxix).

The diction in both Dr. Valkonen's speech and in Sherwood's prefatory comments is significant. The prefatory remarks are, indeed, *credo*, and the word "redemption" underscores the religious and specifically Christian framework of the playwright's conception. The play's title as well as the doctor's "light that is in our minds" is suggested by a passage in Revelations with which he had ended his book. "And they shall see his face and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there . . . for the Lord giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever" (p. 150). In this mystical faith with strong Christian overtones, Sherwood is running a course parallel to Anderson's. Both are drawn to

Christian imagery in the 1940s; both are seeking to deal with the individual's sacrifice in war in terms of Christ's sacrifice and the subsequent communal salvation.

The years 1939-40 saw Shaw, Anderson, and Sherwood all finally reject the primacy of the anarchic individual and move toward a more communally oriented vision. Up to this time the individual had been the significant integer of cosmic arithmetic. The protest against war in Bury the Dead had been rationalized on an almost entirely personal and individual basis. Euphemia Van Rensselaer Wyatt called the play itself "a personal selfish protest against war" because the rationale was that each person's sensuous enjoyment of earth and life justified his living and his life's continuance.<sup>82</sup> Causes were empty excuses for war and murder, and only an individual's own cause would justify his giving up life. "A man can die happy and he contentedly buried," says the first corpse, "only when he dies for himself or for a cause that is his own and not Pharaoh's or Caesar's or Rome's... ."<sup>83</sup>

In Idiot's Delight, too, Sherwood had created a play in which the individual destiny and dignity ultimately remained quite separate from the convulsions of a war threatened society. Brooks Atkinson's opening night review noted that the play drew "that grotesque distinction between the personal, casual lives people want to live and the roar and thunder that crackbrain governments foment."<sup>84</sup>

The play, because it does make so clear the distinction between individual and society, is worth dwelling on for a moment.

Many critics found it hard to take Idiot's Delight seriously. They were perplexed by its combination of hijinks and serious purpose. Atkinson could call it a "robust theatre charade,"<sup>85</sup> Stark Young complain that "the tone does not convey, or create, anything very significant on a large theme,"<sup>86</sup> while Joseph Wood Krutch note that in it "the folly and the horror of war has been conveyed about as effectively as it has ever been conveyed upon the stage."<sup>87</sup> Part of the critical and tonal confusion may have been caused by the apparently inspired spirited performances of Alfred Lunt as Harry Van, a salty, seedy vandeillian who is in charge of a troupe of blond dancers touring the Balkans, and Lynn Fontanne as Irene, sporting a straight blond wig and portraying a cynical lady of elusive identity. Krutch notes that Lunt's hoofing and Fontanne's wig took on the aura of a family joke with the audience in on the fun.<sup>88</sup> But the fun of the production tended to overshadow the seriousness of the message. This had been the case with Harold Clurman's production of Shaw's The Gentle People, also. Appearing in January, 1939, before Poland and Finland, the implications of the fable could still easily be evaded.<sup>89</sup> How much more so with Idiot's Delight in 1936, a point in time just after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and before the Spanish

Civil War. The war, though actually imminent, still seemed far away and rather an academic topic to the American audience, and even so to Sherwood, who needed the events of Munich and Poland and Finland to bring him to full coherence in conviction, expression, and action. For even though the play's anti-war burden comes through quite clearly and effectively when it is read and not subject to the distracting graces of Lunt and Fontanne, one feels that the subject has not been seriously dealt with.

Sherwood provides nearly all viewpoints on the war in the collection of guests forced to spend time at a hotel in the Italian Alps after the frontier has been closed due to the start of a European war. The viewpoints include Quillery's Marxist-Leninist interpretation of war, Captain Locicero's view that wars are needlessly provoked by governments, the internationalist German scientist, Dr. Waldersee's view that war is caused by chauvinistic nationalism, and the play's view which adds to those of the Captain's and Dr. Waldersee's the condemnation of international armament makers and salesmen, represented in the play by Achilles Weber.<sup>90</sup> But all the serious discussion, and even the noise of a bombing attack in the last scene cannot compete with the romantic story of Harry Van and Irene and with the implication of their words and deeds.

Though Irene claims to be a White Russian emigree, Harry recognizes her as a woman with whom he spent a night

in the Governor Bryan Hotel in Omaha. He finally gets her to admit that she is indeed this woman, and to admit that she has become involved with Achilles Weber. Because the Italian government will no longer honor her League of Nations passport, she will not be allowed to cross the frontier. She will be kept in the hotel though it is likely to be bombed when French planes attack the adjoining Italian air base. In an act of devotion, Harry gives up his chance to escape into Switzerland with his troupe and returns to Irene. His return is an act of personal devotion; it has none but romantic and vaguely moral implications. His sacrifice is for love and has no political value. In the final moments of the play, Irene and Harry rather self-pityingly see themselves as powerless individuals and martyrs to the idiot forces of the universe. The war is "just for the purpose of killing us . . . you and me," Irene says, "because we are the little people-- and for us the deadliest weapons are the most merciful. . . ." <sup>91</sup> The play ends with Harry and Irene singing futilely if satirically "Onward Christian Soldiers" as the bombs fall about them. The implications of the scene, and of Irene's speech to Harry a few moments earlier ("Let them [the nations at war] be idiotic if they wish. We are sane") are several. We see the individual's destiny separated from the communal. The forces of society manipulate and kill the individual easily and thoughtlessly, but the individual's real destiny and worth are determined



by his personal choice. "We are sane." The individual's state of mind and course of action are all that are important. If one makes a righteous choice, he is morally square and right with the universe. He may, therefore, assume a superior, satiric stance and laugh at the world as it falls into chaos. Even in the speech in which Irene urges Italian Captain Locicero to follow his impulses rather than to follow unquestioningly his orders to fight ("What else can you do? I'll tell you what else you can do in these tragic circumstances. You can refuse to fight! Have you ever thought of that possibility? You can refuse to use those weapons that they have sold you!" (p. 290), even here the implication is that the individual makes a moral choice--a choice of refusal to engage in evil or insane activities, and if this choice is made, all is well. More than even in Anderson, the play celebrates the anarchic individual and his moral health. Americans could welcome the play for it legitimized their contempt for European intrigues and violence and implied a moral superiority in passivity and isolationism. And from this stance and vision of the individual in the world had Sherwood to move.

There was one intermediate step for Sherwood before he was able in 1940 to make the identification of individual and communal destiny in There Shall be No Night. This step occurred in Abe Lincoln in Illinois. Abe here tries to evade, to remain at peace, but is forced to make a stand

for war. The interest of the play rests in the character of Lincoln and his choice, however, more than in the social implications of the choice. In There Shall be No Night Sherwood moves for the first time to deal with the relationship between an individual's moral choice and its communal significance, and here he seeks the prototype for the man who sacrifices himself for communal and racial salvation. He suggests the prototype to be Christ, as did Anderson in Journey to Jerusalem. In a farewell letter to his American wife, Miranda, Kaarlo Volkonen states his faith in the mystic effectiveness of sacrifice and implicitly identifies the personal sacrifice of Erik and himself with that of Socrates, Christ, and even Lincoln.

I have always believed in the mystic truth of resurrection. The great leaders of the mind and the spirit--Socrates, Christ, Lincoln--were all done to death that the full measure of their contribution to human experience might never be lost. Now--the death of our son is only a fragment in the death of our country. But Erik and others who gave their lives are also giving to mankind a symbol--a little symbol to be sure, but a clear one--of man's unconquerable aspiration to dignity and freedom and purity in sight of God (p. 176).

One cannot help but compare the concept of the role of the individual fighter against totalitarianism with Anderson's explanation of Christ's sacrifice. In Journey to Jerusalem Ishmael tells Jeshuah that the messiah figure "will become a symbol for those who are guiltless," and Jeshuah tells his mother of the efficacy of the symbol.

Its meaning is  
that the death of the innocent will work in the hearts  
of those who murder them, till the murderers  
are sorry, and have changed. . . .

Probably Anderson is presenting a more specific program than Sherwood would care to, but both begin to suggest in 1940 the Christ figure as appropriate for the soldier because of that figure's innocence, his decision to accept the role of sacrifice, and because of the cosmic and communal significance of the sacrifice.

After forging his statement of faith, Sherwood shifted, as noted, from the realm of dramatic statement to that of persuasive, discursive writing. He moved into the role of lecturer and propagandist, spending two years in the O. W. I. From his experience there and his trips to the Pacific as director of the Overseas Branch of the O. W. I. and as assistant to the Secretary of the Navy, he wrote his only play to deal with Americans at war, The Rugged Path. The play's history again reminds us of Anderson, who after finishing the highly successful and cultural motif-rich The Eve of St. Mark, devoted his efforts to the war itself in his work with civilian defense and in his research journey to North Africa. The plays resulting from Anderson and Sherwood's first hand experiences with the real war are strikingly similar in mode, in weaknesses, and in their critical and popular failures. Both attempt a naturalistic look at the war. Both suffer from faulty structure. Critics complained that The Rugged Path was

actually two plays--one about a journalist frustrated in 1940 by the power of the paper's financial interests to influence editorial policy and make it innocuous when it should crusade for the good guys (in this case the unpopular communists), and the second about the journalist, who joins the Navy and begins looking for a personal faith. In this part of the play the journalist, Morey Vinion by name and played on Broadway by Spencer Tracy, declares, "I want to find out whether there is really anything in this world worth fighting for."<sup>92</sup> The question brings to mind, of course, the questions of King McCloud, but more importantly, it also makes the hearer question the unity of this character's conception. Was not this puzzled seeker the crusading journalist of the first act who believed passionately in freedom and the struggle against totalitarianism?

The character is not consistent; the structure is not intelligible because it relies on the divided character. The play is not integrated just as Storm Operation is not because it fails to pull together its reportorial and romantic strands. In short, it is, like Storm Operation, a journalistic play, a product of immediate war experiences, and not an expression marked by cultural or religious motifs or figures. Morey Vinion may be seen to some extent as a sacrificial figure--he is the liberal sacrificed, the play suggests, for the purpose of teaching something to those moved by motives of money and selfish interests

rather than by concern for justice and freedom. The theme becomes clear as his wife echoes a verse from Paul, a verse read at Morey's funeral after he has died fighting with Filipino guerillas. "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." She questions her brother, George, the editor of the paper Morey resigned from in protest. "'We shall be changed.' . . . Are you changed, George, because of what Morey did? Am I changed? Has his death had any effect on all the things he fought against and hated in his life?" (p. 343). The scope is narrowed from the Quizz West everyman to the liberal, but the instructive communal sacrifice remains, unable though its present is to unify and make significant a badly bifurcated play.

#### Abstract and Practical Morality

I am a moral writer, often too moral a writer, and I can't avoid, it seems, that last summing up.

Lillian Hellman, Preface to Four Plays by  
Lillian Hellman

There are people who eat the earth and eat all the people on it like in the Bible with the locusts. . . . It ain't right to stand and watch them do it.

Addie, The Little Foxes

As a belligerent moralist, what Miss Hellman most wants or her audience is undoubtedly that they should go out and act more generously, more socially, more nobly because of what her plays set forth. But with her experience she should know that you cannot drive a theatre audience to shoulder a gun for a cause or even to sign on the dotted line as they leave the house just because you have dinned your moral into their ears.

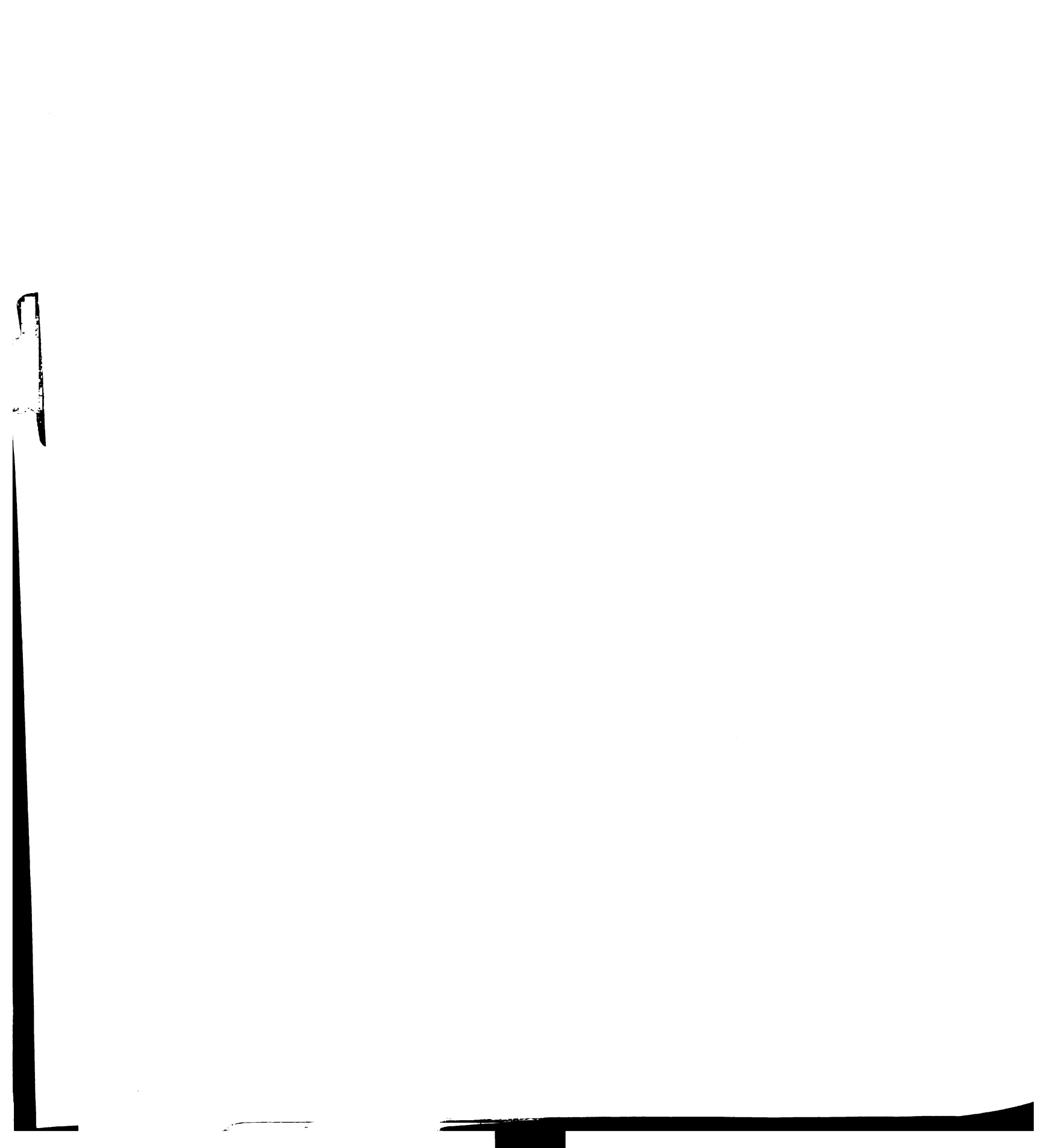
Edith J. R. Isaacs

The paradigm suggested by Anderson's and now Sherwood's adjustments during the war period applies to Lillian Hellman and her pre-war and wartime activities. But not exactly. She demonstrated greater concern and personal involvement in the European conflict earlier than either of her male colleagues, and she was never a professed pacifist. Stopping over in Paris after a visit to a 1937 theatre festival in Moscow, Hellman was persuaded by communist journalist Otto Simon to go to Spain. The persuading was easily accomplished reports Miss Hellman in An Unfinished Woman: "I had strong convictions about the Spanish war, about Fascism-Nazism, strong enough to push just below the surface my fear of the danger of war."<sup>93</sup> Her convictions deepened as events unfolded.

After the United States entered the big war, she wrote a high quality propaganda movie, and like Sherwood and Anderson, this scrappy, diminutive woman toured a distant front. Though Miss Hellman's tour of the Russian front in late 1944 and early 1945 did not lead to a play as had Anderson's tour of North Africa and Sherwood's numerous tours of the Pacific, it did result in much publicity. She was, after all, a woman, a widely known and highly successful playwright, and the first civilian foreigner to visit the Red Army front. She spoke with high ranking Russian officers, and though she missed seeing Stalin, he sent her his apologies pleading that he was too busy with the Poles to get away.<sup>94</sup> It was all quite newsworthy,

and her favorable reports of the Russian people and army received circulation as news items and a long article in Colliers' March 31, 1945 issue.<sup>95</sup> In effect she was working to keep public opinion favorably inclined toward the Russian allies. This had been the goal of her only major effort at propaganda, her writing of the screenplay for The North Star. The movie was one of several appearing in 1943 which highlighted Russian resistance to the Nazi invasion and paid tribute to Russian peasant and guerilla actions. The results of Hellman's combining of her screenwriting experience and propagandistic techniques was a story similar to Steinbeck's play of a Norwegian village's resistance in The Moon is Down, and, though somewhat disappointing to the playwright, a highly popular movie.<sup>96</sup> The credits were almost formidable: the screenplay was by Hellman, music by Aaron Copland, lyrics by Ira Gershwin, and the cast included Walter Brennan, Anne Baxter, Walter Huston, Dana Andrews, Erich Von Stroheim, Dean Jagger, Ann Harding, and introduced Farley Granger.

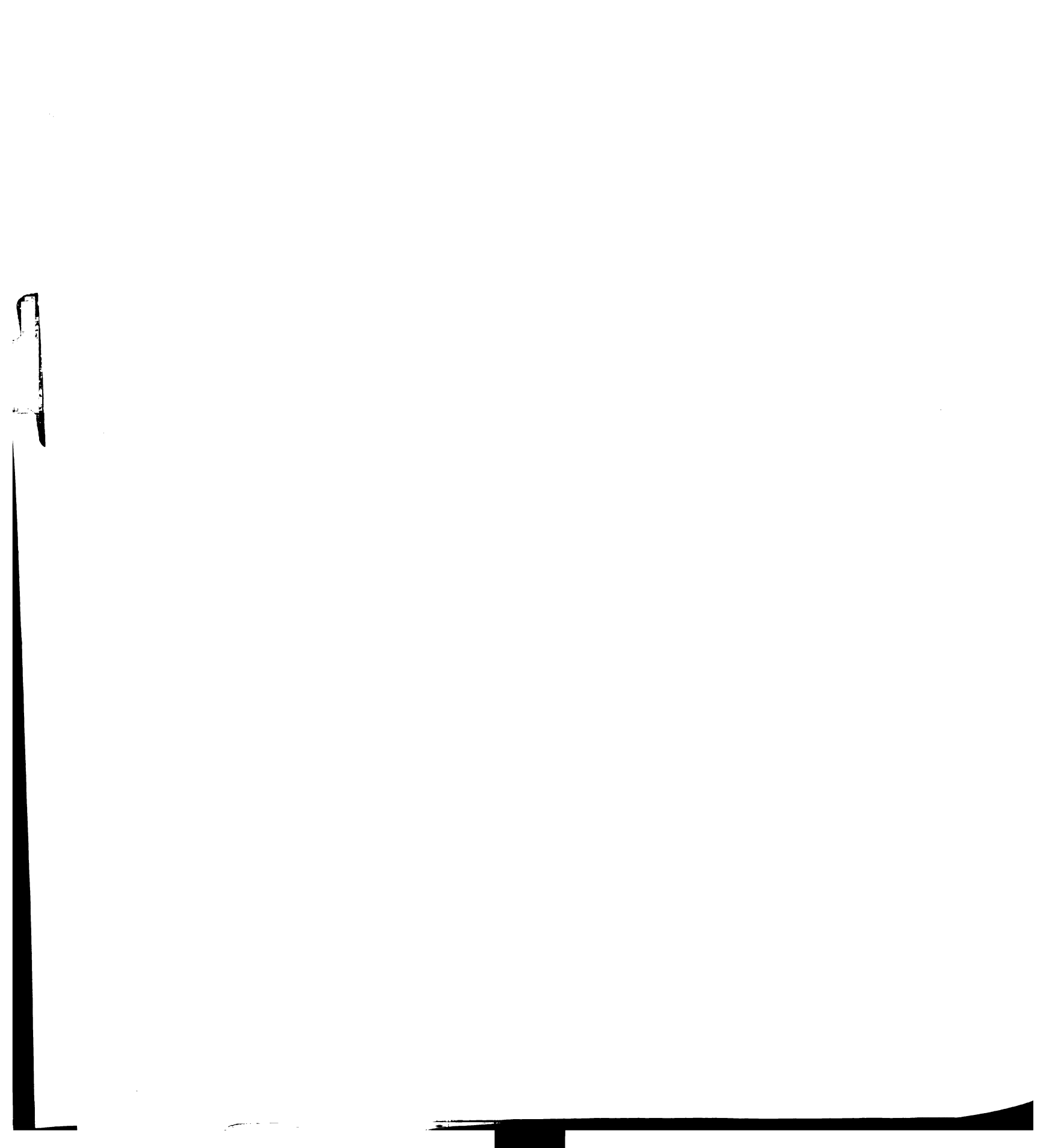
She had become a war servant, though her service did not draw her far from the activities of play and screenwriting as they had Sherwood, and to some extent, Anderson. But Hellman had not always been interested in using her craft to speak of the world struggle. Indeed, though she became more personally concerned and involved with the European war earlier than Anderson, Shaw, or Sherwood, her plays before Watch on the Rhine, 1941





probably reflect less concern with the world than do those of her colleagues. She, like them, was to undergo a transformation, not from pacifist to interventionist and war supporter, but from abstract moralist to social or practical moralist.

Critics see Hellman's early plays following the Ibsen pattern of carefully constructed psychological motivation and clear social content. The plays, in fact, are carefully crafted; each character's particular driving or paralyzing force is laid bare for the audience, and each character and force is usually given a counter force or foil. But on closer examination, one wonders if the supposed social content is not after all somewhat illusory and superficial. Her works are, to use a phrase of Northrup Frye's "distortions of realism in the interests of structure."<sup>97</sup> Her pre-war plays, for instance are actually morality plays written as melodramas in which the forces of evil meet forces of good with some theatrical pyrotechnics as the result. Hellman's vision is of such strong evil, however, that the plays become inverted morality plays. As Joseph Wood Krutch notes about The Little Foxes, "Virtue never triumphs, and neither does wickedness get it in the neck. The curtain always goes down upon wrong in the saddle riding hard."<sup>98</sup> Her vision does not try to account for evil as Anderson and Sherwood's had metaphorically tried to do by using the traditional chain of being image of man as half beast and half angel.



For Hellman evil is an unexplained force that seems to inhabit wholly and relentlessly motivate certain characters. In her dramatic world the good individual is weak, ineffectual, and often as not, simply silly.

The clearest example of this world vision, so different from the tragic but somehow more hopeful ones of Sherwood and Anderson, is the popular and critical failure, Days to Come, 1936. The plot of this mid-depression play concerns a strike at an Ohio town's only important factory. The factory has long been owned by the Rodman family, and a close relationship of cooperation has developed between workers and the family. Hence the strike is called reluctantly only after Andrew Rodman has, also reluctantly, cut wages due to falling sales and rigorous competition. Andrew is a good man, torn between an almost nostalgic devotion to the town and his workers and the demands of being a capitalist. But he is also a weak man and is easily manipulated by his ruthless lawyer, Ellicott, who loves, in a tepid subplot, Rodman's unhappy, unfaithful wife. Under Ellicott's influence, Andrew orders strike breakers into town. They turn out to be lead by gangsters who foment trouble that not even the strong labor leader, Leo Whaen, can prevent. The result is a riot and killings.

The story seems to promise a social message about labor's right to strike and about distorted capitalist values and the effect of such values on the town. But the message finally fails to be delivered because it is

absorbed in the concern for both the personal and abstract moral values of the characters. Andrew is weakness personified. In a description of himself he admits his unsuitedness for combat. "The delicate prince in his ivory tower--," he says, "was carefully protected from the dust and din of battle."<sup>99</sup> Being unsuited and cowardly, he abdicates his authority, refuses to face up to his responsibility. When villainous Ellicott and the gangsters, Wilkie, step into the vacuum created by Andrew's abdication, chaos results. The implication of individual responsibility is clear, but seems negated by the sympathy Hellman allows us to feel for the weak Andrew and by the mood of futile despair that pervades the final moments of the play. The roar of absolute negation overpowers any suggestion of possible reform or recovery. No possibility of action that can alter the situation is allowed. More than a social commentary, then, the play seems one of characters who represent abstract moral forces, or types, who, in Frye's words, "become assimilated to their functions in the plot."<sup>100</sup> What we see is well-intentioned but ineffectual goodness vs. cruelly clear-minded evil. As Andrew's wife, Julie, tells him near the end of the play, "we've been dealing with people shrewder than we are" (p. 147). In the early Hellman plays, the evil of the universe is always shrewder and stronger. So the good, weakness a given, are destroyed. Andrew loses the respect of his workers; his wife is to leave him. He is broken. His punishment is

the rest of his life. He sees no hope, no power that can alter and mend.

An evasion is implied in both the very mode of melodrama and in the giving way to a tone of despair. Absorbed in the crafting of an internally perfected structure, one can avoid looking outside that structure. Relevance to external conditions may be passed over in favor of the tight working of plot machinery and character consistency, even though external problems are supposedly dealt with by the play. Hellman notes that The Little Foxes, another finely honed melodrama, was first conceived as she was leaving Spain, and the very conception of the play was in part an act designed to evade the bitter Iberian situation. "I knew that I only thought about the play to keep from thinking about the plane ride and to keep from admitting to myself that in a few hours I would be having a fine dinner in Toulouse and would be so hungry that I would forget my friends in Spain who would not have so much that night or the next one."<sup>101</sup> And in many ways the play remained an evasion--an abstract melodrama showing the rapacious machinations of evil. Brooks Atkinson noted this in his opening night review: "The Little Foxes is so cleverly contrived that it lacks spontaneity. It is easier to accept as an adroitly designed theatre piece than as a document in the study of humanity."<sup>102</sup> The only connection to social reality that Joseph Wood Krutch could find was that evil was connected

to acquisitiveness.<sup>103</sup> Certainly one might suggest that Hellman is creating a social history of the decline of the old South and its way of life and values before the forces Faulkner was to represent in *Flem Snopes* and family. But the effect of the play, judging from critic's reactions and from a reading of it, seems to be that of a theatre spectacle, finely polished but socially superficial.

But when all this is said, one noted in the final speeches a new element which begins to work against the evasion implicit in the mode of melodrama. The luxury of despair and futility so evident in Days to Come is missing here. In this and subsequent plays, Hellman is harder on the good people in that she expects more of them, and though such characters as Birdie Hubbard and the weak-minded Lavinia Hubbard do get sympathetic treatment, generally her sympathy for weakness is transformed more clearly into implied condemnation. In her world, where evil is so cunning and violent, weakness, like despair, is a luxury that cannot be afforded. So, if The Little Foxes remains in the tradition of Days to Come and shows a morally bankrupt universe where evil triumphs and the good succumbs, it also admits the possibility of good putting up a fight. Such fighting implies facing the evil and working for some kind of amelioration, basically a social concept. We can hardly imagine Andrew actively resisting Ellicott or Wilkie, and unless he can resist them there can be no hope of ameliorating social ills. Social problems in the play are,

therefore, buried beneath absolute weakness and despair. In The Little Foxes Alexandra commits herself to fighting and the active relationship between character and conditions in the outside world is at least suggested.

This new attitude may very well stem from Miss Helman's contact with the real, shrewd, and virulent evil of the Spanish Civil War. Though it is dangerous to assign so specific a source for the new element in Hellman's play, one wonders if the idea of goodness's possible resolution and strength did not also spring from her often ugly experiences in Spain. She describes the foreign loyalists as "noble" in an article appearing in The New Republic in 1938, and notes that she had had difficulty ever perceiving such nobility before. "I had never used the word noble before, and it came hard. . . . They had come a long way to Spain, most of them making the cruel sixteen hour walk across the Pyrenees. When it was over, if they came out alive . . . there would be no glory and no reward. They had come because they thought that if a man believed in democracy he ought to do something about it. . . . Lying there, I prayed, for the first time in many years, that they would get what they wanted."<sup>104</sup> Miss Helman saw good waging a struggle and began to be personally committed to that struggle.

Hence the dual quality of The Little Foxes. In most respects it remains like Days to Come, a carefully constructed but abstract melodrama. It is certainly less

topically related than Days to Come. But it calls for new strength and resolution in combatting evil. The terms of the call, issued by the Hubbard's maid, Addie, suggest the European as well as the universal aspects of struggle against evil. Addie says, "Well, there are people who eat the earth and eat all the people on it like in the Bible with the locusts. Then there are people who stand around and watch them eat it. Sometimes I think it ain't right to stand and watch them do it."<sup>105</sup> Connecting this call to the callous manipulation she sees in her family, Alexandra resolves to fight. She confronts Regina, played by Tallulah Bankhead, whom she holds responsible for her father's death. "Addie said there were people who ate the earth and other people who stood around and watched them do it. And just now Uncle Ben said the same thing. . . . Well, tell him for me, Mama, I'm not going to stand around and watch you do it. Tell him I'll be fighting as hard as he'll be fighting some place where people don't stand around and watch" (p. 247).

Whether or not the speech and commitment is very convincing, whether or not it is an obscure call for some kind of individual or national intervention in Europe<sup>106</sup> is less important than the movement we note in Hellman's thought. In Days to Come there is individual weakness; in The Little Foxes individual resolution; in her next play, Watch on the Rhine, 1941, Kurt Muller's active fight in the German underground. Hellman has moved both from a



perspective in which the personal and cosmic are the dominant categories increasingly to a perspective in which the theme of good and evil and one's response to them is set in terms inescapably connected to the world situation. There is a shift in focus from Andrew's personal disaster because of his abdication of responsibility to the social or communal implications of such abdications. Sara Muller, Kurt's wife, quotes her father, an ambassador and statesman:

Sara: Do you remember, Mama? "For every man who lives without freedom, the rest of us must face the guilt."  
 Fanny: Yes. "We are liable in the conscience-balance for the tailor in Lodz, the black man in our South."  
 . . . "107

In preparing to write Watch on the Rhine, Miss Hellman read no fewer than twenty-five books on political argument, recent German history and memoirs, and had compiled a notebook of some 100,000 words.<sup>108</sup> She wanted to steep herself and her play in the Europe and America of 1941 and give it the flavor of the real world. The play, then, is a parable of America's coming to the consciousness of evil in general and the Nazi evil in particular. America is Fanny Farrelly, and is, in Fanny's words, "shaken out of the magnolias" (p. 330). But the play combines with this theme the developing conviction of the possible power and efficacy of good persons. In a questionably necessary sub-plot, Fanny's hitherto aimless son, David, is shown to have developed some strength of conviction by persisting in an affair with the wife of the

play's villain, Tech. The play ends with Kurt killing Tech, and with the once flippant and whimsical Fanny sobered and having resolved to bear responsibility for helping Kurt in his return to the resistance. In a less vehement but more convincing statement than Alexandra's, Fanny declares her resolution to do battle. "We will manage [to David]. You and I. I'm not put together with flour paste. And neither are you--I'm happy to learn" (p. 300).

The play was intended obviously to demonstrate the viciousness of fascists and their sympathizers, in Tech, and to engage one's sympathies and aid for men like Kurt Muller, who are willing to give up their families and possibly their very lives for what they believe in. The play was enthusiastically greeted by the critics, though they disagreed as to how much inciting to action Hellman was attempting. Brooks Atkinson found little. "Miss Hellman does not beat the drum in favor of any cause. She does not incite to action. . . . An intangible political idea from abroad hovers over an American living-room and brings a feeling of sadness, apprehension and restlessness here."<sup>109</sup> On the other side, Wolcott Gibbs, in a review titled "This is It," called the play both "the best serious play of the year" and a "necessary" play, implying its immediate usefulness in inciting Americans to sympathy and, maybe, to action. It is hard to accept Atkinson's evaluation when one notes that the foreign idea not only hovers over the living room; it enters and threatens Kurt Muller



with blackmail and the end of his usefulness. To continue to fight for his cause, Muller must kill Tech. The action is hardly intangible, and though the mood may ultimately be one of sadness and regret that such action is necessary, the point is just that--good men may have to commit murder. It is a play justifying action, a more loosely constructed play than is usual for Hellman, an outward looking play.

What distinguishes it in quality is Hellman's attempt and success in integrating the social message with realized characters. Fanny Farrelly the flightly Washington matron is charming but slightly irrelevant and unaware of the modern world. But she is capable of believably developing into a serious-minded person. She is rounder, more intelligent, and more believable than the weak-minded, decadent rich women of the earlier plays (Cora Rodman, Lavinia, and Birdie Hubbard). Kurt and Sara are also full characters, combining decency with a necessary ruthlessness, longing for peace with a determination to wage war. They have the depth of character that permits for contradictory impulses and surprising action. And because the characters are recognizably people rather than counters in an abstract cosmic drama, the audience must deal with them and what they immediately demonstrate about the world. Jordan Y. Miller notes this in his essay on war dramas.

The impact of the audience's realization that the tolerant, honest, and respectable father is, when necessary, a coolly efficient killer who acts in order that his kind of honesty and respectability can endure,

is devastating. Like Sherwood's Finns, these representatives of humane decencies who must function as savages in a world gone wildly awry are superb characterizations. War's ultimate meaning is stronger here than any amount of noise of battle or slime of simulated trenches.<sup>110</sup>

To this successful integration of modes Hellman was not to return during the war. Her only other Broadway play produced during the war, The Searching Wind, opened at the Fulton Theatre on April 22, 1944, and showed a movement opposite that of Sherwood and Anderson's use of the journalistic mode late in the war. The Searching Wind is more clearly and precisely allegorical than any of her previous works, and the allegory is more intensely social and political than even in Watch on the Rhine.<sup>111</sup> And though Stark Young found the triangle plot line "pseudo-analytical-psychological, head-in-the-box-office-feet-in-the-clouds, feministic, novelistic rubbish,"<sup>112</sup> Life found its "profound and disturbing truths" impressive enough to make it one of the playwright's "most consequential" works.<sup>113</sup> Lewis Nichols agreed, finding Hellman "exploring the current state of the world and the causes which brought about its miserable condition. She pays her sharp respects to the appeasers, who were wrong, to the lackadaisical and to those who when the battle first started against them withdrew and would fight no more."<sup>114</sup>

The play is, indeed, a parable of responsibility, or rather, of the irresponsibility of a generation. If responsibility is abdicated and evil ignored or toyed with,

it grows stronger and finally wounds the descendants of those who shirked. Emily toys, Cassie tries to ignore, and Alexander and Moses Taney, that outspoken liberal journalist who quits his paper in disgust as Mussolini takes power, both abdicate. Given the play's assumptions it seems inevitable that Alexander and Emily's son be wounded and about to lose his leg. The pattern is much the same as that in Days to Come. Both plays have their weak or wavering characters, both have children killed or wounded because the forces of violence have not been checked by responsible, decisive action. But in The Searching Wind Hellman makes her story a social-political allegory by presenting private failure against a backdrop of European history, from Mussolini's seizure of power in 1922 to spring, 1944 when the Hazen's son, Samuel, returns home ultimately to have his leg amputated.

On the personal level, the story deals with the triangular relationship of Emily, Cassie, and Alexander. Though Cassie and Alexander love each other, Alexander marries Emily, for no very clear reason. Cassie and Alexander meet periodically for relatively innocent reunions; Emily knows about the meetings but tries to ignore and evade their implications. Structure and social implications are provided by Hellman's juxtaposing each personal evasion with the evasion of dealing decisively with the fascists. Cassie and Alexander evade the responsibility of their love and make foolish choices as Victor Emmanuel

asks Mussolini to form a government. They evade making correct commitments in their own lives, and they evade the ominous implications of what is going on outside their hotel in Rome. Cassie sees this. "We're an ignorant generation. We see so much and know so little. Maybe because we think about ourselves so much."<sup>115</sup>

The clearest evasion on both personal and political levels comes as Chamberlain and Daladier prepared to give Hitler his demands at Munich, and Alex must compose a cable giving the United States government his judgment whether or not the United States should silently allow appeasement. At this point Emily has become involved with a gay, fashionable set in Paris, where Alexander is serving. The set includes bankers doing business with the Nazis and Japanese, and in one of whose banks Emily has her money. She is easily swayed by these men's soft line on fascism. Responding to Emily's influence and her suggestion that if war comes their son might have to fight, and to an unsubtle hint by German envoy Von Stammer that if Washington would not interfere at Munich perhaps Germany will destroy the Russian communist menace, Alex ignores his own sense of the fascist danger and sends a cable urging Washington not to interfere with appeasement. He tries to rationalize his action by saying that the individual is not important, that his actions have no communal significance. "What the hell has one man got to do with history? There's something crazy about sitting here and thinking that what I say makes

any difference" (p. 84). So his cable reads, "I am convinced that Mr. Chamberlain is working in the interests of peace and his actions must not be judged too sharply" (pp. 84-85).

The play suggests that individual men do have significance in history, both personal and world history. If a person refuses to see things straight and make the hard choices, the personal and communal life is poisoned. Cassie's life has become embittered and twisted because she refused to face her loss of Alexander. Alex and Emily's lives are half-fulfilled because of the triangular relationship that has never been dealt with. The world war has broken out and taken a resentful Samuel's leg because "frivolous people" attempted to evade evil by appeasement.

Like the other major playwrights of the period, Hellman was forced by the increasingly ominous world crisis to make certain adjustments in her drama. By The Searching Wind she has moved a good distance from the tone and content of Days to Come. Though she never incorporates the cultural and Christian motifs to the extent of her colleagues, Anderson and Sherwood, she has moved in the same general direction as they. She has moved from a world in which the individual stands alone against a cosmic background to one wherein the individual stands against a social background, linked to other men, responsible to other men for the implications of his action. The focus





has shifted from abstract to practical and from individual to community.

### III. EPIC THEATRE: THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH

#### The Wedding of Form and Content

When the breath of creative imagination blows through the theatre, what exhilaration to the lungs, what refreshment to the spirit!

Rosamond Gilder, Theatre Arts

'Relax your predilections for the accustomed, the received, and be ready to accept an extreme example of idiosyncratic writing.'

Thorton Wilder, Introduction to Gertrude Stein's Four in America

Like Sherwood's There Shall be No Night, The Skin of Our Teeth is a statement of faith that man and civilization will survive the Second World War. Unlike the Sherwood play, The Skin of Our Teeth has remained popular through numerous revivals. It is certainly of historical importance, illustrating as it does the tendencies of World War II dramas, already discussed in Anderson's The Eve of St. Mark, to use cultural image patterns. It is an important play to this study because of the transformation of these image patterns into a structure both topical and universal, consistently popular and yet intrinsically artistic. Probably no non-musical play represents as well as The Skin of Our Teeth World War II theatre's tendency

to make use of cultural motifs and myths. Probably no play uses them so consciously or creates the complex texture of reference and allusion that makes rewarding the kind of literary analysis this chapter will try to provide. The play as a literary work and as a document of literary cultural history, then, demands attention.

Because of its complexity and peculiar fusion of motifs and mythic patterns, the play won for itself the scepticism and outrage usually reserved for the avant-garde. In the beginning, thirty-seven prospective investors refused to put any money into the play because it was obviously too incoherent and outrageous for Broadway. But a few people believed it was good fun and good theatre, including the future George Antrobus himself, Frederick March, who acquired 5 percent interest in the show and gave up \$200,000 in movie contracts so he and his wife, Florence Eldridge, could play the leads.<sup>1</sup> The show went on and was getting by, but at first only by the skin of its proverbial title. Out-of-town audiences were as perplexed as the thirty-seven reluctant investors. What was this thing on the stage? During a preview performance on the eve of the official New York opening, audience members talked back to the cast and refused to applaud.<sup>2</sup> After opening on November 18, 1942 the critics tried to discuss and interpret the eccentric play for their readers. But the audience reaction remained sharply divided between incensed bewilderment and genuine delight. Frederick March told a

New York Times interviewer that the play "either makes people so mad they want to throw bricks at it, or they love it. There isn't any middle point of view."<sup>3</sup> Most of the angry people just left--often demanding their money back from box office and ticket broker. March reported a taxi driver telling him that he had never picked up so many people at intermission time before.<sup>4</sup> A few of the incensed took pen in hand, e.g., the man so angered by Brooks Atkinson's favorable review that he sent the critic a letter ending with the words, "Watch out!"<sup>5</sup>

No play produced during the war years caused so much controversy as The Skin of Our Teeth, not even Steinbeck's The Moon is Down. Here was a play that played havoc with the expectations of the casual theatre goer. Vaudeville and drama and chaos were all mixed up in it; nothing was as it should be. The props flew away when Tallulah Bankhead dusted them. Miss Bankhead was supposedly a maid, but she also seemed to play an actress playing a maid, an actress who was so confused by the meaning of the play that she stepped forward to confide her confusion to the audience. It is in the third act, however, that the ultimate confusion occurs. The stage manager stops the action to rehearse a portion of the play that is yet to come. It seems that part of the regular cast had dinner together and had been made ill by the fish or lemon pie, the cast cannot decide which. Some volunteer stand-ins need to run through the ailing cast members' lines. So the

during-the-play rehearsal. Had the perplexed audience member seen the same thing happen at an Olsen and Johnson revue, he would have likely laughed and enjoyed the fun. But this play was by a serious if eccentric playwright who had a reputation for writing of sublime and solemn subjects. Hence, confusion.

Critics were more aware of the integration of styles that Wilder was attempting. John Anderson of the New York Journal American labeled the show a "cosmic vaudeville." Richard Lockridge in the New York Sun called it a "fresh and delightful jest." But, though the critics were generally able to correctly identify the revue, burlesque, Hellzapopin tradition that informed the play, they were divided as to what use Wilder had put the tradition. Lockridge seemed to sense little really serious intent. "It is not profound nor does it pretend to be," he said. It is comedy, outrageous and unexpected and full of tricks."<sup>6</sup> The New York Post's Wilella Waldorf was more cynical. "Mr. Wilder must simply have decided one night that if Olsen and Johnson can get away with what they've been doing in the theatre all these years, there is no good reason why Thornton Wilder shouldn't turn out something of the kind with a dash of philosophy tossed in here and there to remind us that he has, after all, a reputation for profound and lofty thinking."<sup>7</sup> And so, the critical controversy took shape around the question of how seriously and

creatively Wilder had used the revue style--how serious was the play.

Years later, in the 1957 Preface to Three Plays, Wilder claimed a sincere and serious impulse behind the play's composition. It was a response to the world situation: The Skin of Our Teeth "was written on the eve of our entrance into the war and under strong emotion and I think it mostly comes alive under conditions of crisis."<sup>8</sup> Whatever it was for a spectator, the play was for Wilder obviously a statement of faith. It was not as positive as Anderson's faith in cosmic evolution toward greater universal justice and goodness. Evil is not conquered in The Skin of Our Teeth as Madeline Guest suggests that it will be in Candle in the Wind. In The Skin of Our Teeth Wilder envisions survival and continued human striving as the future of mankind--foolish and noble, futile and dignified as that survival and striving might be. Many found the vision reassuring. Burton Rasco of the World Telegram: "In my opinion this is the best play the war is likely to produce. Certainly it is the most comforting."<sup>9</sup>

Some critics found this vision of man's future not idealistic enough to be really affirmative. John Gassner saw a kind of evasion in Wilder's use of stage tricks to obscure a vision of man unable to break the cycles of disaster. "This skittishness is something more than willful theatricalization; it is rooted in hesitancy, negativism, and conservatism."<sup>10</sup> And those who fight accept the





tragic implications of Wilder's image of a man heir to continual catastrophe, felt that the power of the theme was lost in Wilder's integration of serious intent with Hellzapoppin's hi-jinks. Harrison Smith of The Saturday Review of Literature identified Wilder's use of the revue genre as many average patrons did not, but he felt it subverted the source of the play's power. "Here is a morality play . . . a morality play without that moral ardor which could have captured the imagination of the audience with its recital of mankind's long agony, his indomitable hope. It substituted stage tricks and the charming antics of Tullulah [sic] Bankhead."<sup>11</sup> The critical question to Harrison and others, then, was not whether the play was intelligible, but whether its form could carry the play's idea, whether this particular fusion of form and idea could be successful.

It is hardly fair to say that Wilder "substituted" tricks for a serious consideration of his theme. Actually the "tricks" often embody the theme. When Tallulah Bankhead-Miss Somerset-Sabina refuses to speak a particular speech in Act II because it may hurt a friend who is in the audience, and when the regular actors get sick in Act III and must be replaced by employees of the theatre, the play becomes analogous to mankind. It too is surviving only by the skin of its teeth. The form suggests the message in what is really a brilliantly original stage metaphor. And it would be dangerous to stress too heavily the tragic

implications of the play. The Skin of Our Teeth was obviously conceived in the comic mode. It does not deal with an ultimate catastrophe, though it deals with ultimate catastrophes. It deals with man in the continuing process of confrontation with himself and the universe rather than with one final confrontation. The play's tragic implications are certainly there but are buried beneath the weight of a different perspective.

Wilder's Sources: Joyce, Brecht,  
and the Human Race

The right-and-wrong of "Finn" and "Skin"  
Has raised a din of angry voices,  
While, blissfully exempt of sin,  
Wilder, withal, re-Joyces.

Melville Cane in The Saturday  
Review of Literature

The Pulitzer judges felt the play to be neither so confused nor confusing as many spectators and critics, and on May 3, 1943 awarded it the Pulitzer Prize for the best original American play of 1942. Wilder, a captain with the 328th Fighter Squadron of the Army Air Corps during the play's production and at the time of the award, had received a Pulitzer for Our Town, 1938, and The Bridge of San Luis Rey, 1928. But the controversy about the play had not ended in triumphant recognition of Wilder's creative originality. Enjoying now both a long run and the prestige of a Pulitzer, and with Miss Bankhead soon to be named best actress by the Variety critics' poll, the play

remained the center of controversy. Almost simultaneously with its winning the Pulitzer Prize, The Skin of Our Teeth lost the New York Drama Critic's Circle Award because of an intense controversy that had sprung to life in the December 19, 1942 issue of The Saturday Review of Literature.

In that issue Joseph Campbell and Henry Robinson, both working on A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake, charged that the play was actually a plagiarized version of Joyce's work. They found that "important plot elements, characters, devices of presentation, as well as major themes and many of the speeches, [were] directly and frankly imitated, with but the flimsiest veneer to lend an American touch to the original features."<sup>12</sup> Campbell and Robinson suggested as coming from Joyce the play's circular form with a female character opening and closing the play, the play's divisions ending with catastrophe (as Finnegans Wake had ended with cosmic dissolutions), a central every-man figure (Joyce's H. C. Earwicker is a man "who has endured throughout all the ages, though periodically overwhelmed by floods, wars, and other catastrophes")<sup>13</sup> Sabina (Finnegans Wake's garrulous housekeeper), Mrs. Antrobus's letter on the secret of women and of life, the Cain/Abel theme, and other elements. Campbell and Robinson's attitude was slightly ambiguous. They did not exactly condemn Wilder as a surreptitious scoundrel. "On the one hand, he gives no credit to his source, masking it with an

Olsen and Johnson technique. On the other hand, he makes no attempt to conceal his borrowings, emphasizing them rather, sometimes even stressing details which with a minimum of ingenuity he could have suppressed or altered."<sup>14</sup> Their most intense scorn was reserved for critics, and seemed to stem from scholars who have seen the object of their greatest intellectual passion mistreated. If they were puzzled by Wilder's open use of Joyce, they were more puzzled when they considered the critics, "those literary advisors who four years ago dismissed Finnegan's Wake as a literary abortion not worth the modern reader's time, yet today hail with rave notices its Broadway reaction. The banquet was rejected but the Hellzapoppin's scrap that fall from the table they clutch to their bosom."<sup>15</sup>

Campbell and Robinson's charges sparked a lively debate in the serious journals; the more popular magazines, such as Time and Newsweek, looked on, reporting this academic controversy with slightly amused detachment.<sup>16</sup> The accusing scholars had support for their charges from such respected critics as Edmund Wilson, who noted that Wilder had thoroughly studied Finnegan's Wake's text and had even written and lectured on the book. The play was indebted to Joyce in its very conception and plan, and Wilder must have been aware of it, Wilson concluded.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, even those who agreed that Wilder had used Finnegan's Wake in one way or another did not feel that a serious plagiarism had been committed. "Joyce is a

great quarry . . ." said Wilson, "out of which a variety of writers have been getting and will continue to get a variety of different things; and Wilder is a poet with a form and imagination of his own who may find his themes where he pleases without incurring the charge of imitation."<sup>18</sup>

Harrison Smith saw the problem not as plagiarism, after all, but that Wilder had "pulled a fast one on the public and especially . . . dramatic critics."<sup>19</sup> Smith does not precisely define what the fast one was; presumably it is garbing serious Joycean themes in vaudeville's clothes.

The people associated with the play reacted to the controversy with combined amusement and playfulness. Producer, Michael Myerberg told reporters that Wilder got the idea for the play when a chicken landed in his lap at Hellzapoppin'.<sup>20</sup> Tallulah Bankhead-Somerset-Sabina-Lillith-la fille du regiment asked drily, "Who the hell am I supposed to be anyhow?"<sup>21</sup> Her transformations were confusing enough without adding an overlay of Joyce's protean characters. Though in his 1957 Preface to Three Plays, he admitted that The Skin of Our Teeth is "deeply indebted" to Joyce's work, in 1942 Wilder reacted brusquely to the controversy. His only comment to reporters was "let everyone interested read Finnegan's Wake and decide for himself."<sup>22</sup> Perhaps this seemed a wise answer at the time, retaining as it did both the interest in the controversy and suggesting that he had nothing to fear. But his refusal to respond at length to Campbell and

Robinson's charges had its repercussions. Even those critics who took a rather sceptical view of the charges and their importance were upset by Wilder's silence, and when it came time to make the Drama Critics' Circle Award selection, they could not bring themselves to vote for The Skin of Our Teeth even though it seemed to be the most original and entertaining play of the season. In December, 1942 Wolcott Gibbs had parodied the controversy in The New Yorker, claiming, tongue in cheek, that the play had actually been lifted from one of Gibb's own supposed works, Nabisco.<sup>23</sup> In May he admitted being intimidated by cultured companions during the Critics' Award voting, and consequently casting his ballot for The Patriots by Sidney Kingsley, a play Gibbs felt inferior to The Skin of Our Teeth.<sup>24</sup> He was not alone persuaded to change his vote, and the history play won.<sup>25</sup>

Except for costing Wilder the Critic's Award, the Finnegan's Wake controversy was probably useful to the appreciation of the play, for it suggested the serious creative and philosophical intent that lay behind what some critics called a mere stunt show. If the controversy was unfair to Wilder, it was so in not suggesting the depth of Wilder's indebtedness to others, and in not crediting his accomplishment in fusing elements from such diverse sources as the Bible and Brecht, Homer via Joyce, and Olsen and Johnson. Probably no play during the war, and possibly none since, tried to include so much that was

culturally and mythologically significant to Western man-- tried to be, that is, what Northrup Frye would call encyclopedic. And the inclusion was not a cold blooded intellectual exercise. Wilder claimed his statement of faith in man's ability to endure and to preserve humanistic values was written under great emotion. He felt so strongly about the war as a struggle to preserve civilized values that he enlisted in the Air Corps in May, 1942. It is possible and perhaps likely that the living models for the image of a preserving and persevering humanity were the British, for Wilder toured factories and countryside and talked with Britons in 1941. He was impressed by their calmness and resolution in the face of the disastrous German attacks.<sup>26</sup> In the Britons he saw, if not the inspiration, then the corroboration for this vision of man standing up to threatened catastrophe and somehow pulling through.

It was a powerful theme, an epic theme, and yet threatened to be fatuous unless it found adequate creative embodiment. Wilder had faced the same problem in Our Town of trying to suggest the relationship of man's daily life to universal truths. He solved the problem by creating characters who were both individuals and types, defined mainly by their life roles. Wilder avoided that flat, static quality that might seem endemic in characters defined by roles (misanthrope, hypochondriac, etc.) by allowing the roles to alter slightly as the play progresses.

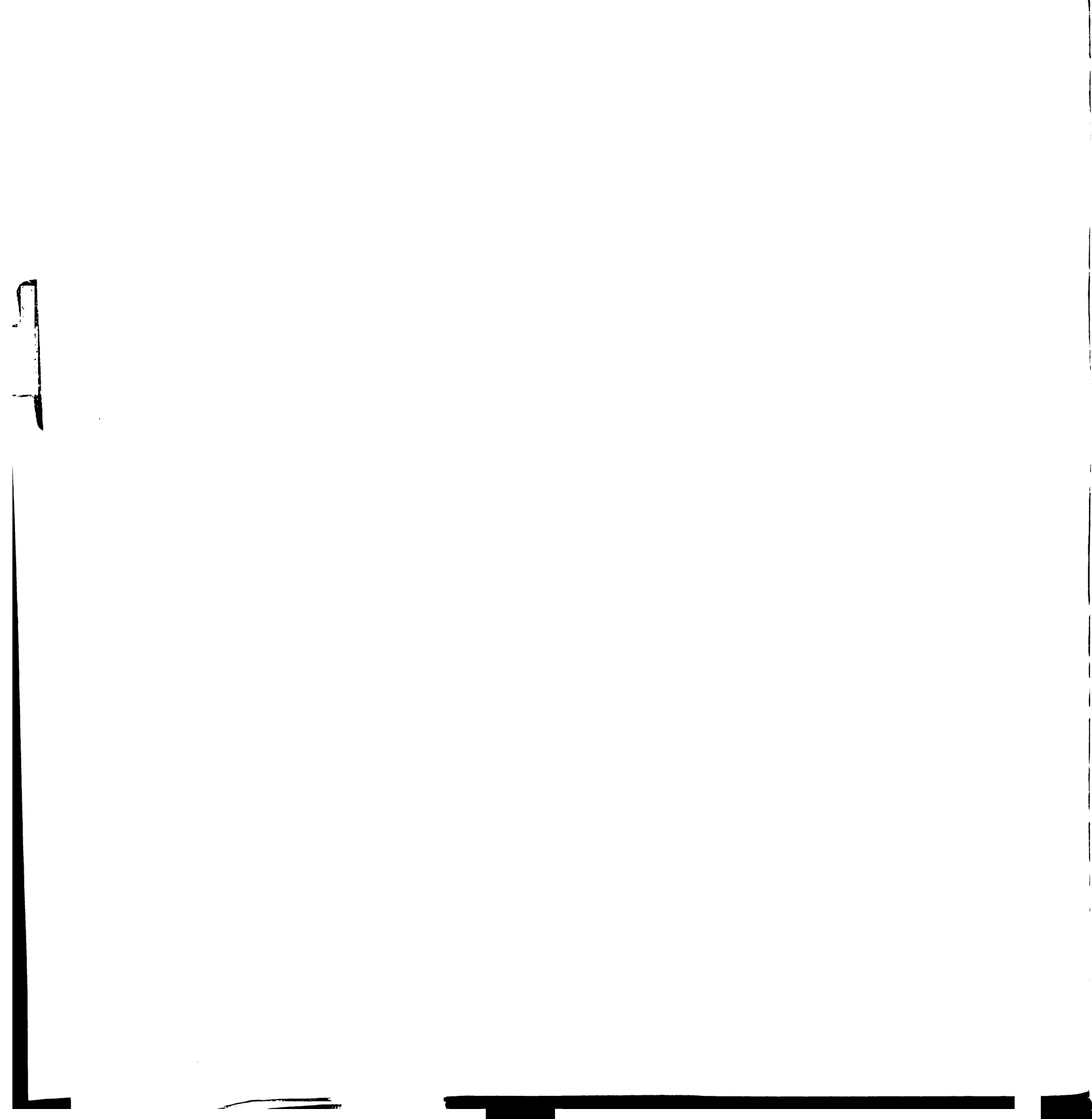
Emily is transformed from a rather vain and romantic young girl to a shy but receptive sweetheart to a practical farm wife (glimpsed in the graveyard scene). A character defined by his role may seem a flat, stereotyped creature if shown only at one point in time. By showing characters and roles transformed by time and circumstance, a roundness and dynamism is suggested; we see men and man in the process of living. Yet we are never allowed to quite believe in the individuality of any of the characters. The stage manager is there to remind us that the characters are, in fact, types or symbols and that he is in charge of presenting them to us. They do not quite live a dramatic life of their own.

The stage manager is in effect a kind of narrator. He directs the proceedings and even establishes the tone for Our Town, allowing us neither to feel too superior to these small town, almost local color types, nor too sentimental about their loves and deaths. It may seem strange that Wilder used such a figure. In 1935, after the negative critical and popular reaction to Heaven's My Destination, Wilder announced prematurely that he would write no more fiction. He felt that he would move to drama where he could write without being an editorial presence. Yet the presence certainly remains in Our Town. In The Skin of Our Teeth it is also felt--in the tricks used to destroy illusion, in Sabina's references to "the author" and to the play's obscurity, in the Act III stand-ins'



discussion about the author's purpose in having the hours march across the stage. In both Our Town and The Skin of Teeth, then, the epic events are not so much presented dramatically as they are narrated, presented by a figure or presence that is apparent to the spectator. The goings on are given meaning through form and through the suggestions of the narrator, be he the stage manager or the playwright that Miss Somerset rails against. Wilder is fusing, to some extent, Aristotle's two methods of presenting material --the dramatic and the epic, or narrative. In fact, it is probable that Wilder was actually creating a theatre that can be called epic in both of that word's senses--a narrative theatre like Brecht's and a theatre tapping the content, theme, and forms of those chronicles of great human events and cycles, the epics and myths.

From 1928 to 1930 Wilder studied the Continental European theatre. Observors note the influences of Strindberg and the German expressionists on Wilder's one act and subsequent plays. A figure only occasionally mentioned as an influence is Bertholt Brecht.<sup>27</sup> It would seem, however, that Wilder was actually greatly influenced by this man's theory of drama. Though I can find no record that Wilder met or read Brecht, or saw any of his work, it seems likely that he somehow knew of the German's work. The opera, Mahagonny, was presented in 1927 and again in 1930 in Berlin. It was for the 1930 production that appeared Brecht's important notes on that opera and his



statement of epic theatre theory, "The Modern Theatre is Epic Theatre." Whether Wilder saw the opera or read the notes is, however, unimportant. Even if he did not, his theatre in The Skin of Our Teeth can best be described in the same terms Brecht used to describe his own narrative, didactic, episodic dramas.

The central fact of epic theatre as Brecht describes it in "The Modern Theatre is Epic Theatre" is its use of techniques aimed at distancing the spectator from the events and characters. The goal is for the spectator to contemplate the spectacle on a rational level rather than to have judgment swamped by emotional involvement. The chief means for reducing emotional involvement is to reduce the continuous plot wherein we are introduced to a set of characters' problems, and we watch them work those problems out in a series of organically related scenes. Brecht proposes a series of scenes independent of one another presented with a highly theatrical use of the narrative mode; the characters become pawns for the editorial presence to manipulate. Our Town and The Skin of Teeth feature such a narrative, episodic plot line. The Skin of Our Teeth's first act concerns Antrobuses and the group of refugees, who represent the civilized values and achievements of man, all confronting an advancing wall of ice. The second act takes the same family to the 600,000th annual convention of mammals at Atlantic City and confronts those mammals, and their slackening moral standards, with

the Biblical Flood. The second act, except in using the same characters and suggesting the same catastrophic theme, has no organic relation to Act I. Each could stand as a dramatic entity. Even the perspectives of time are changed, as numerous critics have pointed out. The first act sees man in relation to geological time; the second act sees him in terms of Biblical or Judeo-Christian mythic time. The third act has a new system of action again and a new time perspective. Here Antrobus is a general home from the wars and is in no realistic way related to the Adam-inventor figure of Act I or the wandering husband-Noah figure of Act II. The time perspective is historical, possibly contemporary. All this jumping about (an effect Brecht suggested in "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre" with the term "montage") destroys any personal emotional involvement a spectator could feel. To some extent the spectator, in Brecht's words "stands outside, studies."<sup>28</sup> In Brecht's epic theatre and in Wilder's work "the human being is the object of study."<sup>29</sup> And man is seen not as a fixed point with a single though perhaps complex personality, but as a person working and adjusting and changing in relation to the larger social and cosmic systems. Brecht and Wilder, in Our Town and The Skin of Our Teeth, present man as a process.

In addition to the basic conceptual similarities between Brecht's epic theatre and The Skin of Our Teeth, Wilder can be seen using some of the same stage techniques

as the German playwright. Brecht, for instance, called attention to his using elements of "unreality, irrationality, and lack of seriousness," at the right moment for a "double meaning."<sup>30</sup> Wilder's use of Olsen and Johnson tricks is suggested here. The collapsing, flying sets, the ushers bringing up broken chairs to build the fire to save mankind--these jokes destroy any illusion of reality that may have crept into the proceedings. They are amusing, yet they suggest the unpredictability of the universe and the need for cooperative human effort if man is to survive.

Brecht and Wilder are both insisting that the spectator recognize the stage to be a stage and not a room with the fourth wall removed. In the 1941 essay, "Some Thoughts on Playwrighting," Wilder declared that "the stage is a fundamental pretense and it thrives on the acceptance of that fact in the multiplication of additional pretenses."<sup>31</sup> Both playwrights used props, then, only as they seemed necessary to suggest locale or suggest some aspect of theme, such as Wilder's collapsing walls in Act I and Act III. Brecht, via Piscator, was one of the first users of slide projections; slides open the first two acts of The Skin of Our Teeth. Brecht used the slides as one means of furthering his alienating, distancing effect ("they do not set out to help the spectator but to block him; they prevent his complete empathy"),<sup>32</sup> and also to comment on the action. A character mouthing capitalist claims might be exposed by projected documents which belie

those claims. Again the appeal is to be to reason and judgment. Wilder's use of slide projections seems less theoretically purposeful than Brecht's. The first act opens with a slide of the sunrise and a supposed news reporter noting that mankind has been granted one more day. The effect, coming as it does before the curtain goes up and the play begins, is to startle and to suggest that the spectator must not get comfortable in his seat expecting a conventional play. In this sense it serves to introduce theme and distance the observer, and it does suggest a narrative presence and point of view. But in general, Wilder does not rely on slides to make his point.

Another stage technique Wilder shared with Brecht's epic theatre was what Brecht called "moral tableau."<sup>33</sup> An example occurs in the final scene when the hours of the night march across the stage speaking passages from Spinoza, Plato, Aristotle, and the Bible. As they go across, a tableau forms. George Antrobus, stands watching them; Mrs. Antrobus, the eternal mother and homemaker, sits sewing; Gladys, the young female figure who promises a continuing life force, moves toward her mother's chair; and Henry, unreconciled evil but still a member of the racial family broods on the edge of the scene. The tableau embodies the vision and nearly all the values present in the play--the humanistic values of great philosophy and literature, the value of the family, and the image of evil present in the midst of it all.

11

This moral tableau suggests Brecht, but it also illuminates some of the differences in the playwrights. Brecht used his theatre for proposing to the spectator a relatively specific Marxist program. Wilder's theatre is more vague, more a presentation of universal than purely social or class man. Indeed, the Marxist reviewer of The New Masses, Alvah Bessie, complained that the main weakness in Wilder's allegory was that it did not particularize the evil (in this case Naziism) and did not instruct the spectator in how to combat it. "You cannot deal with such a problem in broad allegorical terms," Bessie said, "and hope to contribute to your audience's understanding of a particular evil you are fighting."<sup>34</sup>

It is here that Wilder and Brecht and other Marxists part. For Brecht and the Marxists, theatre was to promote immediate and quite clearly determined action. For Wilder theatre was to tap what might be called the general racial, communal memory. The principle of great literature, Wilder said in his Preface to Three Plays, was what he called "recollection." "The response we make when we 'believe' a work of the imagination is that of saying, 'This is the way things are. I have always known it without being fully aware that I knew it. Now in the presence of this play or novel or poem . . . I know that I know it.'"<sup>35</sup> The process of recollection is suggested in Act I of The Skin of Our Teeth. Moses and Homer, taken in by Antrobus to be sheltered from the advancing ice, start to



sing their culturally seminal works. After a few lines "Homer's face shows he is lost in thought and memory and the words die away on his lips. The [other] refugees likewise nod in dreamy recollection." As Moses recites "the same dying away of the words takes place, and on the part of the REFUGEES the same retreat into recollection. Some of them murmur, 'Yes, yes.'"<sup>36</sup>

The scene suggests that though the novel may deal with individual fates and evoke individual identification, the theatre is a group activity fostering communal memory and communal activity. When the spectacle uses culturally significant motifs and allusions it focuses the individual's imagination upon the experiences and wisdom of the community. Thus, the action on stage becomes significant not only for an individual spectator, but for the group or community assembled. In "Some Thoughts on Playwrighting," Wilder declared that "the excitement induced by pretending a fragment of life is such that it partakes of ritual and festival, and requires a throng."<sup>37</sup> The play, in addition to suggesting contemporary times and problems suggests the patterns that the audience has almost unconsciously accepted from their religious, philosophical, in short, their general cultural milieu, and in fact the play collects people to engage in a celebration of those patterns. Theatre deals, then, in myth. In the 1941 essay Wilder claimed that myth is central to creative expression. "The myth, the parable, the fable are the fountainhead of all

fiction and in them is seen most clearly the didactic, moralizing employment of a story. Modern taste shrinks from emphasizing the central ideal that hides behind the fiction, but it exists there nevertheless, supplying the unity to fantasizing. . . ."38

### Making Myth Fun

When the pre-flood frivolities of mankind are equated with "Fun at the Beach" at Atlantic City we admire the skill with which Wilder infuses contemporary comedy with mythic apprehension.

Gerald Rabkin, "The Skin of Our Teeth and The Theatre of Thornton Wilder"

The Skin of Our Teeth is Wilder's most complex and creative attempt to present myth in the theatre and to stir the spectators' racial recollection and hope that man has survived catastrophe in the past and will again in the present. He was influenced and indebted to Joyce for that author's example of creative fusion of myths, but his own achievement was significant. When before had such an act of mythic fusion and expression been attempted in American theatre? Never, certainly, had mythic expression been given in American idiom with techniques from diverse quarters as Brecht and Olsen and Johnson so smoothly combined. It was a remarkable accomplishment of transformation and fusion hopefully tapping racial and mythic

recollection and yet not ignoring the local and national characteristics.<sup>39</sup>

Myth, more precisely defined than has yet been done, deals with human, natural, and supernatural cycles--creation and apocalypse. According to Northrup Frye in Anatomy of Criticism, there has been in every age a particular encyclopedic work, i.e., a work or related body of works that becomes the sacred and revered source of that culture's mythic explanations and belief. For Western man the encyclopedic form, the one that includes all the basic mythic patterns, has been the Bible, and it is to this central encyclopedic document that Wilder naturally turned in the creation of his own rather encyclopedic play. But like Eliot and Joyce, Wilder recognized that our cultural sources and traditions are broader than the Judaeo-Christian background. The identities of his characters reflect this recognition. Thus George Antrobus is a respectable, New Jersey citizen; the apocryphal Adam who has (almost) carnal relations with Lilith; the Genesis Adam, father of mankind, husband to Eve, subject to temptation, and source of evil for mankind; Noah; protector of the community laws and welfare. He is also one of the Roman soldiers who ravished one of the Sabine women, Odysseus, warrior and protector of the community and figure eternally being separated from home while Penelope awaits keeping the home fires burning. The other characters also partake of simultaneous mythic identities.

Mrs. Antrobus is Eve, life force and mother; Penelope, protector of family values and received morality, protector of the home, not against the suiters but against that more potent danger in 1942 of despair and discouragement. Sabina is the Sabine woman, the apocryphal Lilith, the Homeric Calypso. She is also the more contemporary camp follower and feather duster, exposition-giving maid from realistic drama's conventions. Apparently in this maid role she is to stir the spectator's theatrical recollection. Henry is obviously Cain, and Gladys a young, vaguely life-force female.

Having fused characters with identities that should suggest to the member of the Western-Christian-American audience certain patterns and stories, Wilder had to dramatize somehow those cycles that are the patterns of myth. Every act and nearly every page suggests opposites held in tension, cycles continually in process. The opening moments of the play suggest one of the three cyclic movements Frye notes in myth--the birth-death, creation-apocalypse movement. The "News Events of the World" slide shows the sun rising in the continuing creation and continuing cycle of day. The announcement of the new day has an addendum, however. "The society for affirming the end of the world at once went into a special session and postponed the arrival of that event for TWENTY-FOUR HOURS" (p. 69). The apocalypse. Next the newscaster announces a wedding ring found with the inscription "To

Eva from Adam. Genesis II:18" (p. 70). Creation. Then an announcement of the first act's catastrophe, the glacial wall moving across New England. Apocalypse. The play ends at the beginning, in a sense, with the midnight hour figure's reading the opening of Genesis. Wilder has carefully given circular, cyclical movement to the play (as Joyce gave to Finnegan's Wake) with creation and apocalypse occurring regularly. There appears to be no resting point for man, as there would be in tragic catastrophe or in the final banishment of evil and vanity in the formation of a comedy's revitalized society. There is only the continuing process that is at once reassuring in the autumn of 1942, and frightening and wearying to contemplate. "The end of this play isn't written yet," Sabina tells the audience. "We have to go on for ages and ages yet" (p. 137).

The creation-apocalypse cycle is complemented in the play by the Judeo-Christian cycle of fall and forgiveness. As the Genesis Adam, Antrobus figures as the source of human guilt and evil. Sabine declares that "every muscle goes tight every time he passes a policeman" (p. 71). He is the father of Cain, and as such is the ultimate source of Cain's weaknesses. In Act II when Henry-Cain throws a stone at a negro, he justifies his act with his father's philosophy in that act, "Enjoy yourselves." "All I wanted to do," says Henry, "was--have some fun" (p. 102). It is in Act II that the nature of Antrobus's

fall into sin is portrayed, and this portrayal corresponds to the Biblical account of man's fall. Antrobus, now elected president of the Ancient and Honorable Order of Mammals, Subdivision Humans, begins to suffer what the fortune teller, an oracular prophet's presence, calls the "Great Man dizziness." Great Man dizziness is essentially no more than pride, sin's Biblically ascribed basis. Because of his dizziness, George is vulnerable to Lily Sabina's temptations, feels superior to his commitments and is ultimately ready to divorce Mrs. Antrobus. Suddenly Mrs. Antrobus becomes the basis and secret of all life; she speaks not only for the family but for God. In this role she tells George that she selected him, not because he was worthy, but because together they made something like the Jehovah-Hebrew covenant, which indeed is usually expressed in the Old Testament in terms of a marriage pact. "I married you because you gave me a promise. The promise made up for your faults. And the promise I gave you made up for mine" (p. 113). Because of his dizziness-pride and breaking of the marriage covenant, Antrobus-Adam has brought corruption into his world and family, corruption symbolized in the play by his Gladys' scarlet stockings. He is shocked by signs of his daughter's corruption and is ready to return to wife (God) and the straight and narrow. The action has become a parable for man's fall from grace due to pride and his free readmittance to grace when he somewhat contritely calls upon God. Readmitted to grace,

Antrobus continues his mythic transformation by becoming Noah, second father of mankind.

In Act III, the problem of evil reappears, this time having psychological overtones. Henry, as son and one more dimension of George Antrobus's encompassing identity, returns to the family home after acting the part of the enemy in war. He cannot be evaded; his presence must be confronted. In the play the confrontation is physical, and father and son come to blows. Such continual confrontation between aspects of man's nature is reminiscent of Anderson's image of divided man in continual dialectical struggle between his lower and more angelic elements. But in Act III the theological/mythological and metaphorical explanations of evil are given an overlay of psychology. The actor who plays Henry finds himself identifying with and becoming the character--eager to kill the actor who plays George. The reason for this identification and urge to violence is a personal sense of emptiness and a self-hatred that is projected onto others. The actor who plays Henry:

In this scene it's as though I were back in High School again. It's like I had some big emptiness inside me,-- the emptiness of being hated and blocked at every turn. And the emptiness fills up with the one thought that you have to strike and fight and kill. Listen, it's as though you have to kill somebody else so as not to end up killing yourself.

Sabina: That's not true. I knew your father and your uncle and your mother. You imagined all that. Why, they did everything they could for you. . . . They didn't lock you up.

Henry: They did. They did. They wished I hadn't been born (p. 132).

Henry's anti-social, destructive behavior is an attempt to still the nagging self-doubt and make assertion, even though that assertion be murder.

The struggling characters/actors are broken up by Miss Somerset/Sabina, who in Act III shows a compassionate strain not so clearly present in her earlier identities. She seems to be ubiquitous in the play and bears her own suggestions of cyclic process. Sabina's opening and closing of the play drew charges from Campbell and Robinson of plagiarism, for a female figure in Finnegan's Wake does the same. Actually in this both play and novel tap an ancient convention of classical epics. "To the extent that the encyclopedic form concerns itself with the cycle of human life," says Northrup Frye, "an ambivalent female archetype appears in it, sometimes benevolent [as when Sabine breaks up the Henry-George struggle in Act III], sometimes sinister [Sabina as Lilith and voice of despair], but usually presiding over and confirming the cyclic movement."<sup>40</sup> Sabina shares this opening and closing function with Athene in The Odyssey, and shares the eternal presiding function with Penelope of The Odyssey and the Penelope of The Skin of Our Teeth, Mrs. Antrobus, to whom is given the



unambiguous statement of affirmation: "I could live for seventy years in a cellar and make soup out of grass and bark, without ever doubting that this world has a work to do and will do it" (p. 129).

Yet with all the use of allusions, mythic cycles, character transformations, most members of the audience were able to discern the theme and message. The audience confusion about the play came from the bizarre antics and integration of styles rather than obscure content. There is nothing difficult about the theme itself, after all, and it is stated explicitly in Act III by Sabina and Mrs. Antrobus if it had been missed before. Further, the values and ideas expressed were what Wilder considered common cultural possession. They were what other observers considered to be the received and reassuring values of the middle-class theatre audience. The values of family life, a none too fastidious piety, perseverance, confidence in God and work (Antrobus says, "All I ask is the chance to build new worlds and God has always given us that" P. 136), and a respect for learning--all these make an easy appeal to the kind of person who can afford to attend the theatre. This at least was the view of M. Mc Grath in a letter appearing in The Nation. "Mr Wilder is preeminently philistine. He is George F. Babbitt turned poet. He has left the real-estate business and taken to the lyre, but his songs are only long nostalgias for those happy

real-estate days. This is the true and hitherto secret of Mr. Wilder's success with the philistine populace."<sup>41</sup>

Years later critics continued the complaint. Gerald Rabkin suggests that Wilder may have "been overly conscious of his role as mediator between highbrow sensibility and middlebrow taste. . . ."<sup>42</sup> And Dwight Macdonald in his rather scathing appraisal of Wilder's work says of The Skin of Our Teeth, "I think one should rather admire the author's ability to transmute into Midcult [diluted and unoriginal esthetic culture] such an impenetrably avant-garde work [as Finnegan's Wake]. There seems to be no limit to this kind of alchemy in reverse, given a certain amount of brass."<sup>43</sup> Certainly these critics correctly identify the middle class values of Wilder's work. They probably are also correct in seeing the mythic and allusive elements all somehow reduced in vitality from their original sources and expressions. George Antrobus is not as grandly austere as the Hebrew Adam or Noah, not as impressive as Odysseus, and despite his multiple identities, not as complex as Joyce's Earwicker. Wilder's flood is as awesome as an Olsen and Johnson seltzer bottle.

But whatever the final critical evaluation may be, the play's process of transmuting and popularizing cultural myth (Western, American, bourgeois) represents the dominant trend in World War II drama. Many of the most important plays of the period were actually spectacles politely projecting the cherished images of cultural heritage and

identity. The wartime audience seemed to desire and implicitly demand such projections. At times the theatre responded to the demands in respectably creative and original ways, such as in The Skin of Our Teeth and Oklahoma! These pieces were not sublime, but they were solid. And they were affirmations of a kind that satisfied a deeper, even unconscious, wartime need. They were, in the final analysis, midcult rituals of reassurance.

IV. ON NATIVE GROUNDS: LOCAL COLOR  
AND THE UNIVERSAL HERO

The Local Image

Plays of the home and the native soil have always had  
a tremendous hold on the American people.

New York Times editorial, June 3, 1941

The next great dramatic renaissance in America will come  
when the theatre is recaptured from the producers by the  
people, when we become active enough in mind and rich  
enough in spirit to begin the creation of a folk-drama  
and a folk-theatre in America.

Glenn Frank

The Skin of Our Teeth consisted of a fusion of  
primarily literary elements; the play might be called  
popular cultural pedantry. As with the Christ figures of  
Anderson and Sherwood, the mythic identities were culturally  
meaningful for Americans, but they were not specifically  
American. Whatever bourgeois values may have been implicit  
in the play probably appealed to a middle-class American  
theatre audience, but again, those values were not  
specifically American. The general impetus in the American  
theatre as the United States moved into war, however, was  
toward increasingly specific or literal images of America  
and American folk. The movement obviously did not mean a

rejection or neglect of the motifs and patterns shared with the broader western culture or, indeed, with the race as a whole. Wilder's play belies such rejection, and the Lincoln plays show a fascinating union of the purely local and the universal. But the purely local image became increasingly dominant as a building block for World War II dramas. The image had had to be acquired, taken possession of by the American theatre before such a union of local and universal could occur. Basically this local America was discovered for dramatic use during the thirties and transformed into art during the war period.

During the middle years of the 1930s Woody Guthrie and Burl Ives trudged the dusty roads of a depression plagued America. They went into the mountains and lonely plains to listen to, sing, and record what the common folk sang, the traditional time-out-of-mind songs that were the communally shared experience and possession of the peoples of those regions. The same partly nostalgic impulse to uncover and remember American regional and general cultural heritage was also alive in the other arts. The historical novel became extremely popular during the decade. Arthur Bernon Tourtellot found the popularity an artistic and culturally significant sign. In a 1940 Saturday Review of Literature article he commented that the "historical novel may be evidence of the present discovering its own past--an indication of a people's maturity in the art of expression."<sup>1</sup> In the theatre of the thirties, the impulse

to give expression to regional identities and experiences was second only to the impulse for socially concerned plays. It is almost fair to say that the W. P. A. Federal Theatre project was characterized by its constant search for folk materials. Hallie Flanagan declared the Theatre's artistic policy was to be "a theatre which should reflect our country, its history, its present problems, its diverse regions and populations."<sup>2</sup> In reviewing the achievements of the project, Miss Flanagan emphasized the Theatre's accomplishments and its leadership in the area of regional theatres and use of regional material. "The Federal Theatre at its best was working toward an art in which each region and eventually each state would have its unique, indigenous dramatic expression, its company . . . producing plays of its own past and present in its own rhythm of speech and its native design in an essentially American pattern."<sup>3</sup>

The policy probably reflected the regional-folk interest already abroad in the land and marked by such men as Guthrie, but it also was responsible for organizing that impulse and interest in the theatre community and making it probably the basic impulse behind the most significant World War II dramas. The Federal Theatre's widely dispersed regional centers spurred research and discovery of local history and expression and began to transmute that history and collection of songs, sayings, dialect peculiarities into dramatic form. For the first time, what was

uniquely regional and American was extensively seen as potentially dramatic and usable--a fact that may seem surprising when we recall how long local color writers had been turning regional materials into fiction. There had been some gestures toward picturing regional types and attitudes in the plays of the West, including Moody's The Great Divide, and in O'Neill's Desire Under the Elms, Paul Green's In Abraham's Bosom, and Sidney Howard's They Knew What They Wanted. But honest and detailed American experience outside a New York or generalized American setting remained largely absent from the American stage.

Even in so fertile and untilled a field, much work needed to be done before a rich harvest could be enjoyed. Here the Federal Theatre made an especially valuable contribution to the development of American theatre. Initial efforts of project workers were to uncover usable material. Sometimes this involved work and activities vaguely reminiscent of anthropologist's activities among primitive tribes or communities. Herbert Price, actor-director, and Mary Dirkberger, for instance were sent to rural and poor urban areas of the South to help serve recreational needs. Their efforts began mainly in finding assembly halls and arranging for performances of ballads, recitations, folk songs and dances. They organized communal story telling sessions in which the old people of the locality told about their experiences in the mines, fields, or whatever.<sup>4</sup> The project provided recreation, but it also

uncovered subjects for dramatic treatment, uncovered for the community its shared experience and shared expression and images--in short disclosed to the village or locality its communal identity. The identity of Pennsylvania's plain Dutch settlers, the Dunkards, for instance, was portrayed in a play composed by the director of the Reading company, H. A. Archibald. The play, Feet on the Ground was so successful it toured the area by truck in the summer of 1936.<sup>5</sup>

Regional history, with or without depiction of local mores, proved an even more fertile field for the Theatre projects. No region of the country was without its Federal Theatre pageant. The most famous was Paul Green's The Lost Colony, an outgrowth of an annual North Carolina festival commemorating Virginia Dare's birthday. The pageant depicted the founding and history of the Roanoke Island colony, including its founding, Virginia Dare's birth, and the mysterious disappearance of the settlers. In 1937, to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the colony's founding, the state commissioned Paul Green to provide a script and professor Frederick Koch to direct that script. Koch sought Federal project aid in casting, acting, and especially in teaching so that the annual pageant could be turned over to local folk. By 1939, local persons took 118 of the 130 roles.<sup>6</sup> In that year more than 100,000 spectators at one dollar each were expected to come to the natural amphitheatre at the northern end of Roanoke



Island to watch local and national history and legend performed on the spot where the history had been made. In Little Rock, Arkansas audiences crowded an amphitheatre to watch a folk-song studded production depicting the history of the Southwest under five flags.<sup>7</sup> In California, Virginia Farmer worked with young playwrights on a cycle of plays about the history of that state's gold rush days.<sup>8</sup> Non-regional history was also used as a subject for Federal Theatre presentation. In the case of American Exodus experimentation of form was attempted. A dance drama, American Exodus tried to give graphic dance images of the American pioneers' advance across the continent, and probably may be seen as a forbearer of Agnes De Mille's ballet segments in Oklahoma!, Carousel, and other World War II musicals.

The Federal Theatre's efforts made new material available and allowed for experimental expression of that material. These accomplishments were not lost when the project was cancelled. Some regional pageants continued, including The Lost Colony in North Carolina and Robert Nail's "poetic historical epics" of southwest Texas called "fandangles."<sup>9</sup> The regional playwright and his dramatic portraits began to receive nationwide hearing when Frederick Koch's playwrighting group at the University of North Carolina was given a chance to broadcast its plays over NBC's "Carolina Playmakers of the Air." That the Federal Theatre's emphasis and the Carolina Playmakers influence

was felt is demonstrated in Edith J. R. Isaac's 1939 Theatre Arts Monthly report that the current playwriting groups and university classes had broken with G. P. Baker's teachings. Craft and form was to bow before authentic folk values. "'Write what you know' and 'write the lore of the folk among whom you live,' have become the stock phrase," Isaacs reported.<sup>10</sup> In 1939-40 Isaacs and Brooks Atkinson strongly advocated a new national theatre to replace the defunct W. P. A. project, and both felt it should be decentralized in organization and subject matter. In other words, it should continue to develop the storehouse of material and forms disclosed and initially employed in the spectacles of the Federal Theatre. "A country rich in folklore . . . should yield an abundant harvest of drama, . . ." declared Atkinson in 1940.<sup>11</sup>

The columnists justified their emphasis on local color and historical material on grounds other than the simple abundance of untreated subjects, the dramatic impact implicit in certain historical events and persons, and the novelty of some local character types. They suggested that regional and history plays would serve to tighten and strengthen the American community in several ways. Though local color plays would seem to highlight the differences among American regions, ethnic and religious groups, actually the dramas would serve to lessen those differences. Supposedly, they would educate their audiences about other Americans' ways and, thus, would pave the way for mutual

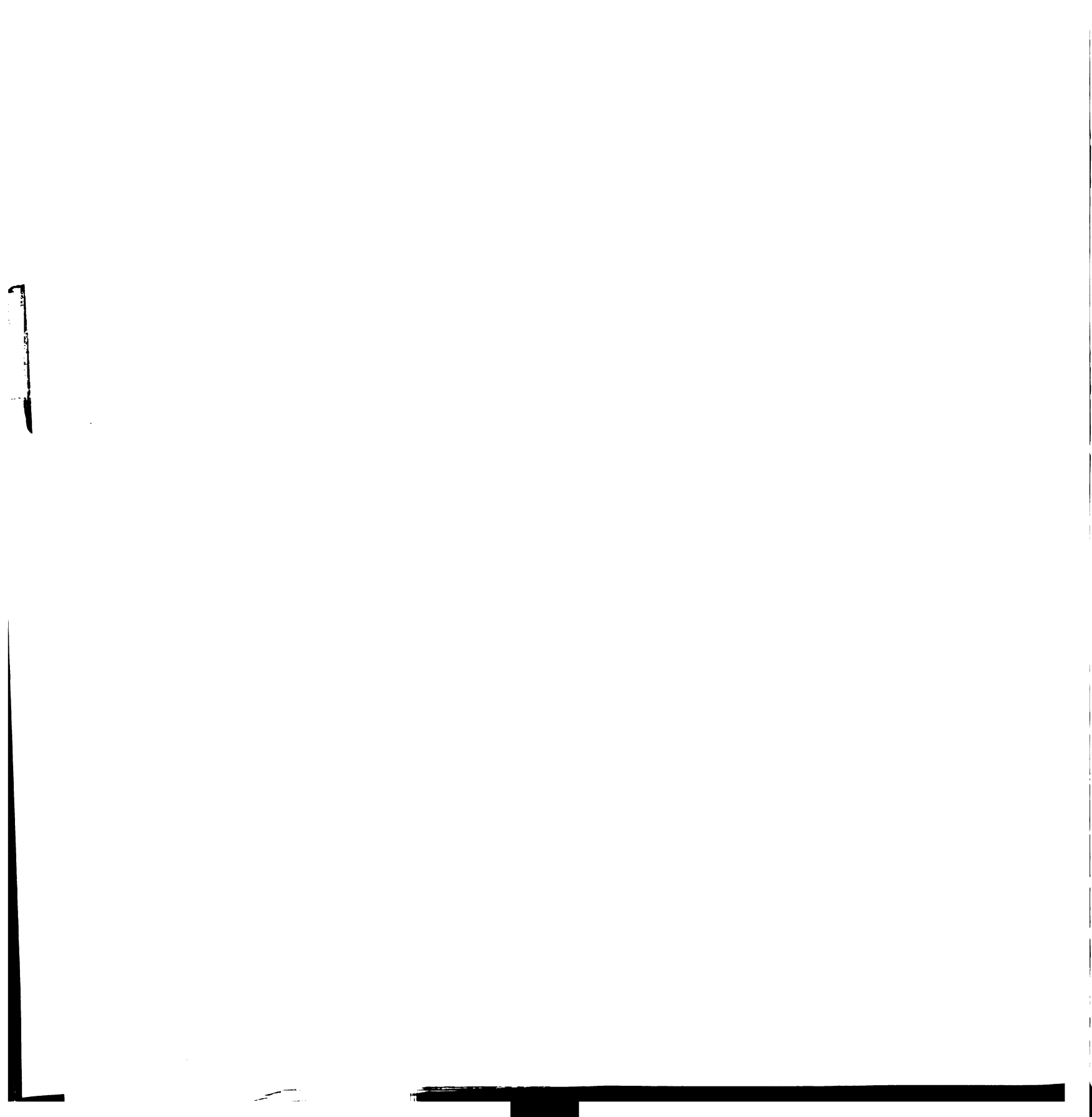
respect.<sup>12</sup> Further, though the local color plays emphasized differences, they also suggested the Americanness of the characters. Few if any local color plays portrayed their region's characters or peculiarities as despicable or malignant.<sup>13</sup> Eccentricities in local color fiction and drama had a way of losing their saltiness and becoming rather bland and quaint. The plays tend to make differences understandable and even, perhaps, lovable. Thus such plays were seen to draw Americans together rather than to divide. Finally, diversity displayed on stage could perhaps lead to a broader sense of identification in the spectator.

History plays were defended as having even more value to the American community at that point in its life. In addition to numerous regional plays and pageants, the Federal Theatre produced several plays with historical subjects, including Created Equal, a chronicle play tracing the principle of freedom and equality in America from Columbus on, and Prologue to Glory, E. P. Conkle's play about Abraham Lincoln. "Such historical spectacles, celebrating faith and achievement which have helped to build our country, cannot but draw out of audiences and participants alike renewed devotion to the American way of life," claimed Hallie Flanagan.<sup>14</sup> Not everyone agreed, at least not on every play. In Arena Miss Flanagan quotes Republican member of the Dies Committee, J. Parnell Thomas on Prologue to Glory. "'The play Prologue to Glory deals with Lincoln in his youth," said Parnell, "' and portrays



him battling with the politicians. This is simply a propaganda play to prove that all politicians are crooked.'"<sup>15</sup> Though Parnell's comment is incredibly insensitive, or politically motivated, or both, such comment and motivations put an end to the Federal Theatre.

They did not put an end to Conkle's play nor other local color and history plays, however. The impulse that had been given rein in the mid-thirties continued to live and develop in the 1938-45 period. Though the locally presented regional pageant declined after the Federal Theatre organization and money evaporated, the genre made the necessary changes and appeared on Broadway. In fact, by 1942 William Peery was able to announce the arrival of the regional play as an established force in the American professional theatre. "In the past twenty years," he said in The American Scholar, "the Playmakers [Koch's group] have seen their kind of drama take root throughout America until today plays of the American people are common on Broadway."<sup>16</sup> Peery was surely referring to the wealth of local color appearing in Manhattan during the 1940-42 seasons. It was evident in Patterson Greene's rather strange comedy of Pennsylvania Dutch folk, Papa is All (1942), Arnold Sundgaard's comedy of Minnesota's Scandinavians, The First Crocus (1942), in Sophie Treadwell's story of pastoral California, Hope for a Harvest (1941), the revival of Porgy and Bess (1942), Lynn Root's play about negroes, Cabin in the Sky (1940), and Lynn Rigg's Oklahoma tragedy,



The Cream in the Well (1941). These plays are not spectacles or pageants on the order of The Lost Colony; they are focused looks of varying depth and seriousness at regional or ethnic types with some little attention paid at times to regional landscapes.

In the March, 1942 American Mercury, George Jean Nathan defined the content and appeal of local color plays; he also measured their usual depth and found it shallow. "Most such plays," he commented, "are little more than forced talkie versions of the silent pictures in eccentric family albums and rely for their audience interest upon mere strange accents, outlandish clothes, absence of razors, and basically familiar plots. . . ." <sup>17</sup> A good example of the more or less typical local color play Nathan is describing is the almost popular Papa is All by Patterson Greene. This play, set on a Mennonite farm north of Lancaster, Pennsylvania ran sixty-three performances and provided Celeste Holme with one of her first major parts before she played Annie in Okalhoma! and starred as Evelina in Bloomer Girl.

As in most local color plays before I Remember Mama (1944-45), Papa is All employs a completely naturalistic mode. The farm kitchen set includes those objects essential to any real, old-fashioned Mennonite kitchen--the shaded kerosene lamp, the Windsor chair, the hooded dresser. The acting edition contains a list of properties covering more than six pages. The set, obviously, is meant to

suggest the Mennonite life style with photographic detail. Greene, again working in the local color tradition, exploits the quaint Pennsylvania Dutch dialect peculiarities of syntax and diction for much of his illusion of authenticity and for humor. To his daughter who has appeared in her best dress, Papa says, "A devil is in you for really, Emma Aukamp! (to MAMA). Devils you bear me for children. Devils, still! (to EMMA again). I'd have right to lay a whip on your back, like the lying' shussle you are. A jezabel, even, wearing grand on Thursday."<sup>18</sup>

An essential problem of the local color playwright was one shared by the local color fiction writer. Providing a superficially realistic image of the physical and verbal universe was relatively simple; providing a narrative or dramatic structure to mirror the ordinary lives of supposedly ordinary people was not so simple. The writer trying to picture accurately the actual life of ordinary persons would be naturally attracted to the slice of life presentation. Its free form does not demand the conventional formal plotting of drama. No crisis, climax, resolution is supposedly necessary. The basic characteristics is untampered projection of apparently unstructured experience. Sarah Orne Jewett's stories often seem close to this. But the slice of life presentation, however honest and in keeping with its impulse toward fidelity to experience, is not as effective in theatre as in short fiction. The theatrical event demands movement, tension.

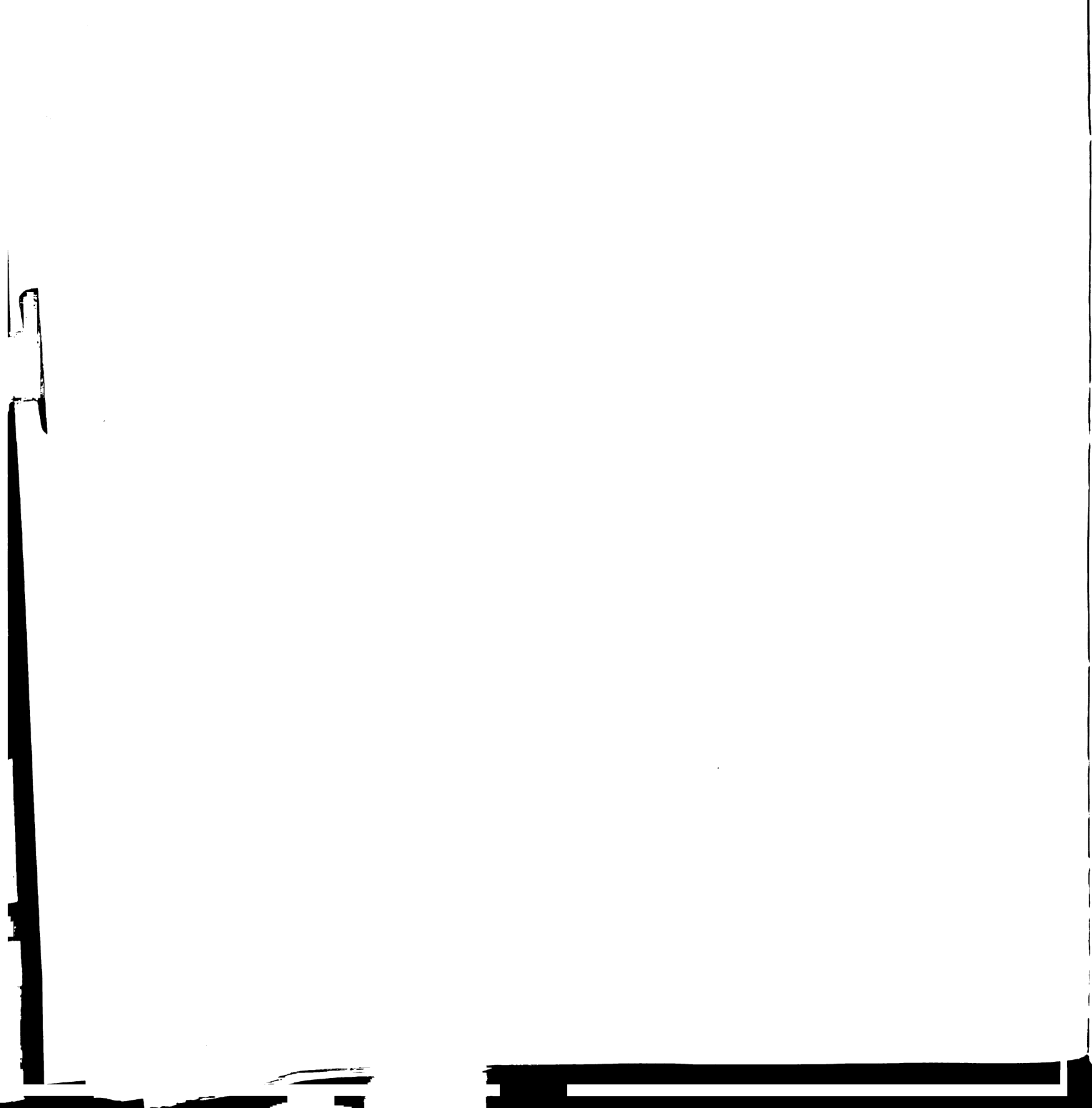


Thus it is that the local color plays, with Papa is All as a prime example, do, as Nathan suggests, turn to the conventionally structured plot.

In Papa is All the plot follows the essential comedic structure of Menanderian New Comedy as described by Northrup Frye. As in a Menanderian play, and most comedies thereafter, the erotic intrigue between daughter, Emma, and her surveyor boyfriend is blocked by the authority, senex, figure, Papa. Papa, stretching already strict Mennonite doctrines, makes his family virtual captives of the farm, keeping them from distracting outside contacts and forcing them to work the farm without such simple, modern conveniences as lights and a telephone. He plays a vengeful, watchful God, and our sympathies lie with the brow-beaten Mama and the rebellious children, Emma and Jake. Following the traditional pattern, the play traces the senex's fall and the triumph of the love pair, who suggest also in their union the younger, new social order. Angered that Emma has sneaked off to a movie in Lancaster with her surveyor friend, Papa takes a gun and orders Jake to help him find the man. Jake hits his father over the head with a monkey wrench before the surveyor is found, however, and hides him in the coal car of a stopped train. He then places the old Ford on the track, and the train destroys it. By so doing he is able to say that his father was killed when the train hit the car and the body was apparently obliterated.

Three days later Papa returns to the farm announcing that despite the treachery he has completed his mission, for on the way home he met the surveyor and shot him. The police arrive shortly thereafter, and it is discovered that Papa has shot the wrong man--and only in the shoulder. Emma's lover is safe. In a departure from the conventional comedic structure, the senex figure is not to be reconciled and integrated into the new order, represented by the loving couple and the new telephone that the family installed during Papa's three day absence. Instead the play ends with the family at peace after Papa is taken off to jail saying, "May the lightning of God strike down your souls all!" (p. 117).

The unreconciled father and the failure of old and new orders to merge is the only deviation, albeit a major one, from conventional form. It makes the play strangely bitter-sweet. Perhaps the deviation was an attempt by Greene to be true to what he felt essential in Papa's character. Whatever the reason, the deviation upsets the expectations engendered in the form and probably confuses the effect of the play upon spectators. It is perhaps the frustrated expectations and confusions that prevented the play, despite several very funny scenes, from becoming a real success. And the problems of this play suggest the problems almost inherent in attempting local color within the confines of the ordinary play. There may well be an incompatibility between the naturalistic demands of local



color representation and the structural demands of most "good" dramas. Form and content are at odds.

This apparently became clear to playwrights, for after 1942, the local color impulse in straight dramas seemed to diminish. In 1943 Jack Kirkland's Tobacco Road ran for sixty-six performances in one of the nearly annual revivals of the play, and the negro, Run, Little Children was revived for a short run. But the only major local color, ethnic success after 1942 was John Van Druten's I Remember Mama, and it showed a merging of the local color genre with the domestic period piece that was so popular during the war years. Plays projecting a benign image of family life, ethnic or not, had many examples during the war, including Junior Miss (1941), which ran to 710 performances, and Dear Ruth, which lasted for 683 performances. The probable originators of the trend were, first, Thornton Wilder's 1938 play, Our Town, which combined an affectionate local color portrait of a new Hampshire town with a kind of universal pastoral idyll. Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse's Life With Father was the other seminal play; it was the most successful of all the domestic sagas. It opened on November 8, 1939 and closed on July 12, 1947 after running continuously through the war and chalking up 3,216 performances, finally surpassing even Tobacco Road in longevity. Brooks Atkinson, in his Introduction to the printed version of the play declared that "almost anybody would like to live in a family as wholesome, healthy, and

alive as the one [Crouse and Lindsay] have conjured into being on the stage."<sup>19</sup> And apparently the wholesome, healthy, and happy family image gave rise to a comforting nostalgic fantasy for the American theatregoer. To see the Day family performing the ritual of family breakfast, to see a life where the outside world was a distant, pleasant New York of the 1880's and the major problem of life was getting father baptized--these images evoked a secure, nostalgic past. The local color element is minimal, though the mention of horse cars and the elaborately decorated dining room set clearly place the action in well-to-do nineteenth century New York.

I Remember Mama can be seen to combine the appeals and techniques of the local color plays with the domestic, nostalgic strain seen in Our Town and Life With Father. Taken from Kathryn Forbe's Mama's Bank Account, the imaginatively staged play quietly pictures the life of a Norwegian family living on San Francisco's Steiner Street around 1910. Though the purely ethnic touches such as dialect are there, they are toned down and the appeal has become almost that of a generalized nostalgia for innocence and the secure domestic, mother-dominated past seen in Life With Father. The structure is not conventional; it is episodic but given unity through character and such themes as Katrin's attempts to write. The settings for the play have switched from the naturalistic detail of the dining room of Life With Father and the kitchen of Papa is All

to a collection of sparsely furnished, revolving acting areas on stage somewhat reminiscent of Our Town's staging.

In I Remember Mama the local color play had obviously undergone a change. It compromised its naturalistic demands and found a form both more spectacular and structurally more fluid. In its new form it found its greatest popular acceptance between 1943-45. With I Remember Mama as an exception, the straight play largely ceased to be the vehicle for local color and nostalgia during those years. The content had been appropriated by a different theatrical genre of form, both more spectacular and in some ways more fluid, the musical.

In April, 1943 Rodger's and Hammerstein's Oklahoma! opened, and in the wealth of innovations it worked on the old musical comedy conventions, set the style for subsequent World War II musical dramas. One of its major influences was its setting and subject--the opening of the Oklahoma territory. After Oklahoma! came theatrical images of Appalachian folk tales in Dark of the Moon, of nineteenth century Maine in Carousel, of upstate New York in Bloomer Girl, old New York City in Up in Central Park, and contemporary New York City in On the Town. Here was regional history and customs served up in what appeared to be the logical Broadway genre for such descendants of the outdoor, regional pageants. In the musical, more than in the straight drama, the sense of spectacle could be created. Music and dance added non-verbal appeals. In

the case of The Dark of the Moon, at least, the musical based on the Appalachian version of Barbara Allen, the music was of authentic folk origin. So the regional play had been transformed from relatively crude pageant-like spectacles in local fields and amphitheatres across the country to the small local color play on Broadway, and transformed once more to the synthetic but once again fluid and spectacle-like musical form.

In the musical, the local color play no doubt lost some of the authenticity and bite that it may have had. As in I Remember Mama, the appeal is to a vague Americana and nostalgia. Oklahoma! loses some of the darker tones of its parent play, Lynn Riggs's Green Grow the Lilacs. The local color of Carousel and Up in Central Park and Bloomer Girl is a basically stereotyped local color. The New Englanders and upstate New Yorkers are not closely observed individual characters; they are characters partaking of the hazily conceived quirks conventionally ascribed to people of that region. The form loses the true heart of its impulse as defined by the local colorists of the nineteenth century and Hallie Flanagan, i.e., to represent almost photographically the locale and actual life of a people. But what it loses in realism and authenticity, the new local color-Americana form gains in innovative energy and originality. It is fair to say that the Americana musical drama after 1943 was the greatest achievement of American

theatre during the war. The nature of the achievement, must wait to be defined, however, until the next chapter.

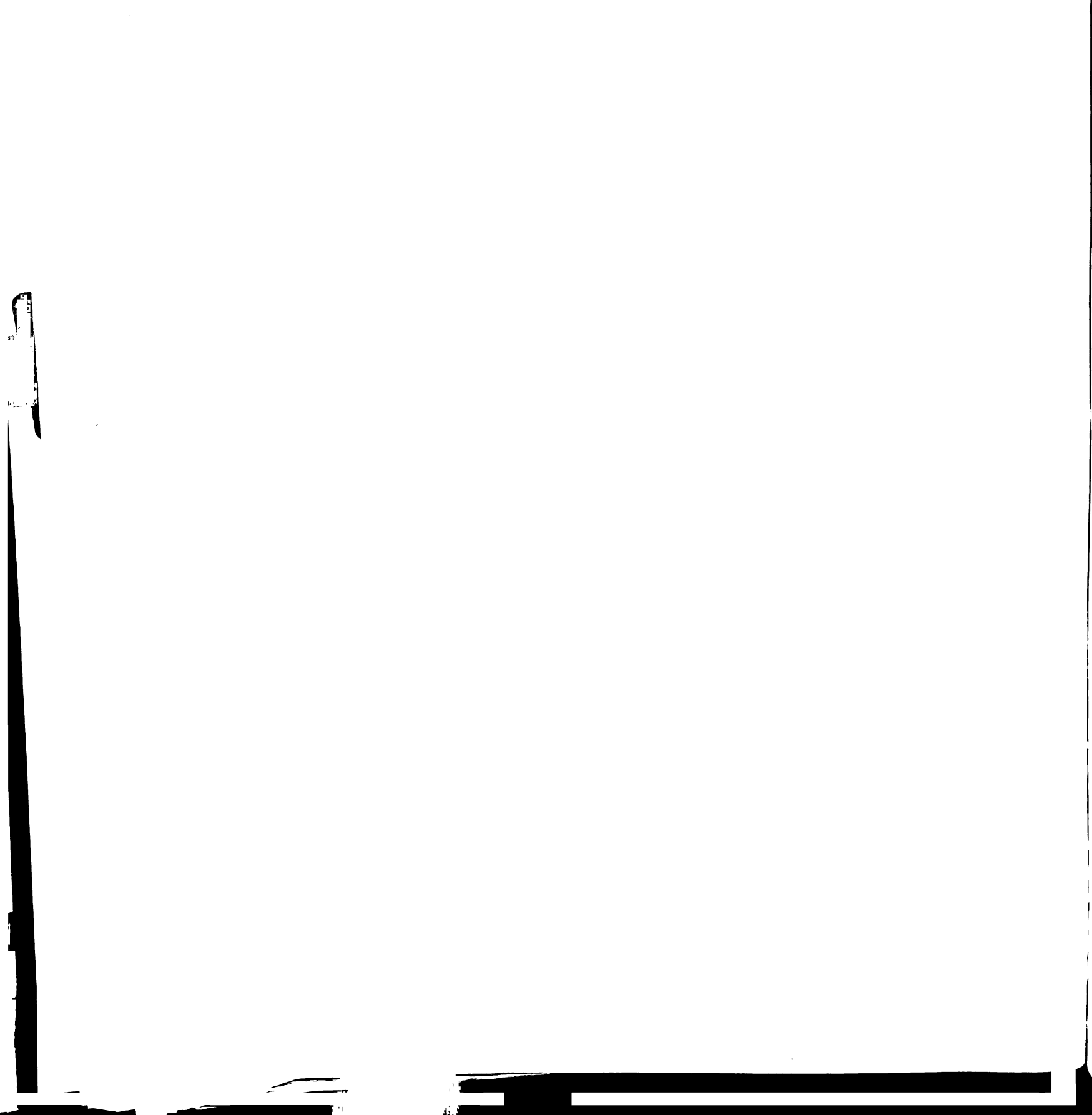
The Wedding of Local and Universal

Chroniclers: When the high heart we magnify,  
And the sure vision celebrate,  
And worship greatness passing by,  
Ourselves are great.  
John Drinkwater, Abraham Lincoln

The ready-made effect that was once implicit in Mother, Baby, and the Flag, remains as invincibly implicit in Lincoln as in Cinderella, the Saviour. . . .  
George Jean Nathan

The awakened interest in American roots during the thirties expressed itself in a deep interest not only in regional folk peculiarities and expression, but also in regional and national history. We have noted the significant increase in the incidence and popularity of the historical novel during the decade; this popularity continued and perhaps increased as America entered the war. Oliver Wiswell by Kenneth Roberts was on the best seller list for both 1940 and 1941. In 1943 five of the ten best sellers had local color elements, such as A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, religious elements, The Apostle, history, The Forest and the Fort, or combinations thereof, The Valley of Decision, a novel about a Pennsylvania mine owning family, and The Robe. In drama the interest in American history and historical figures was widespread and the history plays on Broadway nearly always seemed to critics to be important





events if not successful ones. In late December, 1941, Howard Koch and John Huston's portrait of Woodrow Wilson, In Time to Come, appeared on Broadway. Lewis Nichols noted in his review of the 1943 play, Harriet, that during the previous year or so there had been "a good many plays written about Mrs. Stowe, possibly because the nation once again [was] facing dangers of as great a degree if not the same kind as those which brought forth the Civil War."<sup>20</sup> In his review of Sidney Kingsley's play about Jefferson and Hamilton, The Patriots, also 1943, John Gassner noted several plays recently composed about these two historical figures. Fortunately or unfortunately the plays, like those about Harriet Beecher Stowe, remained unproduced.<sup>21</sup> "No figures in our national history, except Lincoln," Gassner went on, "can illuminate the nature and problems of our evolving democracy to the same dramatic degree."<sup>22</sup> Apparently the New York Drama Critics approved of the illumination. On Jefferson Day, 1943, they awarded Kingsley's play the Circle Award for its "dignity of material, its thoughtful projection of a great American theme."<sup>23</sup> The Patriots had received thirteen votes; so formidable a contender as The Skin of Our Teeth could muster only four against this history play, in part due to the Finnegan's Wake controversy.

The play treating American historical figures with some degree of accuracy had a real appeal to critical and popular tastes of the 1938-1945 period. The appeal had

first been demonstrated when Sherwood's Abe Lincoln in Illinois won the Pulitzer Prize in 1938. To give the prize to this play legally, the judges had to rescind an earlier rule that a dramatist could receive only one award; Sherwood had been awarded a Pulitzer in 1936 for Idiot's Delight. The critics, it seemed, had a particular weakness for plays centering around historical characters.

The appeals of the history play genre to playwright and audience were numerous as well, especially during this period of increasing crisis. The Federal Theatre project had created an interest in regional and national history, had shown that there was an audience for history served up on stage. In short, the project had shown the viability of regionalism and history as dramatic subjects. Further, the reverberations between past history and current events seemed to heighten the effect and importance of historical plays. Rosamond Gilder noted in Theatre Arts Monthly that "the impact of [In Time to Come], which opens with Wilson's speech to Congress asking for a declaration of war, was incalculably intensified by the fact that Roosevelt had spoken in the same place and for the same cause so short a time before."<sup>24</sup>

An advantage apparent to playwrights was history's oblique effect. If a playwright wished to comment on or plead a contemporary cause, he could do so without resorting to explicit propaganda. He could present his case in

historical clothes. Nearly all the critics comment on the obvious lessons contained in the history plays, but they note at the same time that the propaganda is not objectionably obtrusive. Lewis Nichols on The Patriots: "Mr. Kingsley . . . does not wave a flag, blow trumpets or shout about democracy; he does not have to since his subject matter is enough. . . . All Mr. Kingsley has done is to point out that democracy never has been easily held, that even at the beginning it was necessary to fight to retain it. Thus a moral for this day of a desperate war."<sup>25</sup>

Joseph Wood Krutch pointed out the lesson to playwrights if they had not perceived it already on their own. "In several of its more serious passages, Harriet is . . . as good a patriotic preachment for the moment as anything I've seen. Perhaps that is another illustration of the fact that, at least except in the case of the very best writers at their own very best, an oblique or tangential approach to the most important topic of the moment is more likely to be effective on the stage than direct statement."<sup>26</sup>

Candle in the Wind's heroine, Madeline Guest can state her faith: "In the history of the world, there have been many wars between men and beasts. The beasts have always lost, and men have won." The speech sounds flat and false, partially because it has been dramatically unsupported. But playwrights using historical figures as mouthpieces are able to make approximately the same speech

with much greater effect, even when the language is rhetorically less neat. After Harriot Beecher Stowe returns from seeing President Lincoln, she speaks to a recruiting rally and nearly echoes Madeline Guest's sentiments. "There have always been tyrants. . . . Equally always, there have been noble souls who bravely and gladly gave their lives for the eternal right of man to liberty."<sup>27</sup> In The Patriots' climax, when Jefferson awaits results of Congress's vote as to whether he, who won the popular vote, or Burr shall win the presidency, Kingsley allows Jefferson a statement of faith in democracy. "You'll not make these people hold their breath at the caprice or submit to the rods and hatchet of a dictator. You cannot fix fear in their hearts, or make them fear their principle of government. I know them. I place my faith in them. I have no fear of their ultimate victory."<sup>28</sup> Kingsley ends the play with his character delivering part of Jefferson's actual inaugural. "I believe, indeed, I know, this government is the world's best hope" (p. 181). The playwright, then, is enabled in a history play to insert didactic statements of faith both unmotivated and unrequired by the play's context. Certainly the speech from Harriet is less than dramatically essential.

The speech may have effect because of the nature of the history play. Quite apart from the image projected by the play, the words are given weight and dignity by the person's stature already existent in the mind of the audience. Jefferson's words, so similar in content, carry

more weight than Madeline Guest's simply because of Jefferson's historical and cultural importance. Further, a history play creates a particular context of events and attitudes simply by presenting its historical period and chief characters. Such a context must be created from nothing in a non-historical play. Stark Young acknowledged the opportunities and legitimacy of the playwright's playing with the audience's knowledge of history, but also noted the difficulty of estimating the average cultural possession of the spectators. "There is no way of knowing at what point exactly we leave off the assumption of a common dialect between audience and playwright, a dialect either or mere words, of culture, or of knowledge in experience. . . ." <sup>29</sup> But if he is dealing with historical events and figures commonly known, the playwright can expect his audience to start the play with a framework of ideas and attitudes. He can expect the spectator to perceive quickly the play's suggested historical analogies to contemporary events. Raymond Massey pointed out the way such analogies work for the average viewer in Abe Lincoln in Illinois.

There really isn't such a great deal of difference between Lincoln's fight and ours. . . . If you substitute the word dictatorship for the word slavery throughout this script, it becomes electric with meaning for our own time. Try it on his answer to Douglas in which he scores the policy of "indifference to evil" and the fellows who hold "there is no right principle for action but self-interest." That was old Abe talking and he was saying as much to our own time as he was to the world of the Eighteen Sixties. <sup>30</sup>

And if he is at all knowledgeable about the play's historical period, the viewer may extrapolate--i.e., go beyond the final curtain and continue making analogies with the present. Thus, the failure of Wilson to get United States involvement in the League of Nations suggests itself as a reason for World War II. The play begins to bear a heavy burden of advocacy if the implication is followed to its logical conclusion: The United States must not retreat to isolationism after World War II as it did after the Great War. It must join the U. N.<sup>31</sup> Yet the message need not be stated. It is implied by historical analogy.

On a less topical and propagandistic level, this ability to evoke the cultural images, legends, and history in a communal experience (in the theatre setting) allowed the theatre to provide a perhaps unique wartime experience. The impulse to explore regional history and local color in drama, the use of national historical figures and events suggested an interest and perhaps need from the late 30's through the war to define the American identity by retelling the old stories about American experiences and the American heroes. Though not stressing the nationalistic dimension, Rosamond Gilder suggested this function in her review of The Patriots. "While the super-structure of civilization is being blown to bits," she said, "it is well to explore its enduring foundations. Here the theatre's peculiar gift of recreating the very form and pressure of past times can be of signal service."<sup>32</sup>

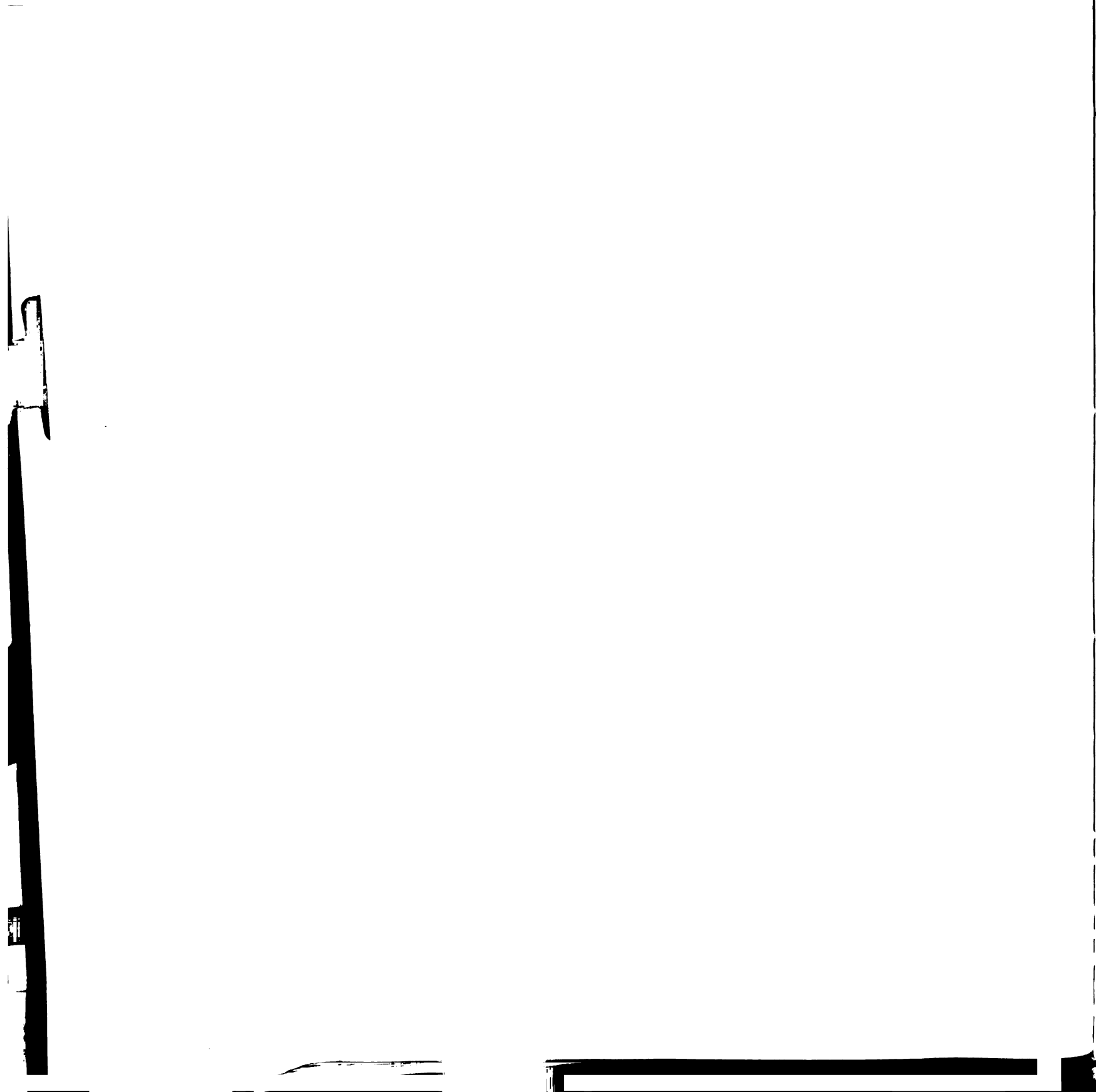
Helen Hayes refused to do either pure escapist plays or realistic war plays during the war. Neither, she felt, was as effective as the play that approached the contemporary situation obliquely and tapped the national memory and pride. "Curiously, I think Harriet does more to inspire audiences to effort in the present war by reminding them of the proud moments and great aims of our past than a play of the grim suffering of today put on the stage. They learn of that in the morning headlines."<sup>33</sup> What the successful history play was to do, then, in the view of many in the theatre, was to inspire a faith in America's principles and confidence in the strength and success of those principles in the past. Such strength was imaged especially in the historical personage, in the American communal hero.

Nearly all history plays, certainly all those of the war period, show a great national figure caught in a crisis of some kind. He may be challenged by domestic enemies, as is Jefferson by Hamilton and the Federalists, or Wilson by America's desire for isolationism as represented by Senator Lodge, or Lincoln by his own self-doubts and a disintegrating nation. Each hero faces a challenge or series of challenges to his principles. The plays all portray the main figure suffering not only the outside challenge, but an inner debate of duty vs. inclination to flee from the conflict. Jefferson wants to return to Monticello rather than serve in the founding government.



Harriet Beecher Stowe resists writing about the horrors of slavery, though brother Henry Beecher urges her to. "I dare not [write of it]," she tells him. "I am afraid of what it might to do me. There is something insidious about the subject. It's so dark and terrible, it seems to drive everyone who touches it into a sort of insanity" (p. 99). Sherwood's Abe Lincoln flees from both his impending marriage to Mary Todd and what others feel to be his duty to go to Washington to fight the extension of slavery. In the triumph of will over inclination and inner doubts, in the triumph of duty, the historical figure provides a lesson to the fearful and uncommitted person of 1938-45. In his successful battle with enemies and his fidelity to accepted American principles, he restates the bases of belief for the committed person. In his triumph, though as with Lincoln the triumph may be tempered by tragedy, the audience may extrapolate and be inspired to expect success in their current struggle to defend the same principles.

Below these rather obvious characteristics and appeals of the historical figure plays, a more profound pattern and appeal is evident. The pattern and appeal is that of the mythic hero rendered for American audiences in American terms. The figure most clearly identified as an American legend, or a mythic hero, is Abraham Lincoln. The increased interest and dramatic use of him during the war period is significant. From 1865 on there has been a fairly steady stream of both scholarly and popular work



based on the figure of Lincoln. In his 1935 study of the literary and biographical treatment of Lincoln, Roy P. Basher declared that a firm legendary or mythic quality had been created around the Civil War president and in 1966 David Donald declared the popularly drawn Lincoln to have "the outlines of a mythological hero."<sup>34</sup> The treatment continued beyond 1935. In 1939 Sandburg published his four volume study, The War Years, and finished the biography begun in 1926 with The Prairie Years. The 1926 book had been influential in stirring the interest and forming the late 30's image of young Lincoln. Sherwood testified in his notes to Abe Lincoln in Illinois: "It was not until I had read Carl Sandburg's The Prairie Years that I began to feel the curious quality of the complex man who, in his statement of the eternal aspirations of the human race, achieved a supreme triumph of simplicity."<sup>35</sup>

Spurred, perhaps, initially by Sandburg's pastoral portrait and by the Federal Theatre's interest in regional and historical figure plays, and, possibly by the subtle realization of the Lincoln figure's impact on a country threatened by war, numerous plays about the man began to appear starting in 1938. In fact it is fair to say that the use of Lincoln in drama peaked in the period from 1938 to 1945. Victor Searcher's bibliography of Lincoln materials, Lincoln Today, lists only three plays using the figure before 1938. During the seven year period under study there are at least nine adult plays directly



treating Lincoln, three juvenile plays, and two movies. His figure is also treated indirectly in Harriet and Bloomer Girl. From 1945 to 1969, a twenty-four year period, Searcher lists only eight additional plays, most of those from the 1950's.

The dramatic treatments during the war years included one act plays, such as Chase Webb and Betty Smith's Lawyer Lincoln (1939), a comedy in which Lincoln acts as matchmaker; and a play by former governor of New Jersey, Harold G. Hoffman, Nor Long Remember (1939), presented privately at the Lambs Club in New York with Raymond Massey as the wartime president. Two of the full-length plays, Paul Horgan's 1942 play, Yours, A. Lincoln, and Nat Sherman's 1944 War President, were presented at the Experimental Theatre founded by the Dramatists' Guild and Actors' Equity. The plays' runs were limited to only two performances each, and War President's audience was limited to those invited. A huge audience heard Millard Lampell's "folk cantata" about Lincoln's funeral train, The Lonesome Train, when it was presented by Norman Corwin over CBS in 1944. Starring Raymond Massey as Lincoln and Burl Ives as narrator, the play portrayed through folk music and narration both Lincoln's wartime opposition and the great love felt for him by the people. The radio play became one of the most widely known and moving dramatic events of the war. Decca recorded the broadcasts. When President Roosevelt died, the analogies between the two war presidents

seemed clear and poignant. So, as Roosevelt's funeral train carried the body north, local radio stations across the country broadcast transcriptions of The Lonesome Train, and schools assembled to listen to the Decca recordings.<sup>36</sup>

Lincoln became the figure of the period. His story and the Civil War, when the country's survival was traumatically threatened, had lessons to teach and inspiration to give. No other American figure quite stirred, or probably stirs, the imagination as does Lincoln. In no other figure was there such universal recognition of greatness and of intriguingly complex and mysterious personality. No other figure is so clearly a prototype of America's supposed social pattern of log cabin to White House.<sup>37</sup> Probably no other American figure is seen as being so beset by enemies and challenges, yet able to triumph, to carry through his mission. He is the figure communally recognized and revered who has strength to duel with the fates and win, however tragically. He is the American mythic hero, and as such seems especially attractive as subject for dramatic treatment during a period of national crisis. The rendering of his exploits and agonies has a special edge at a time when the nation must again face the kinds of dangers this national mythic hero faced.

In a real but highly qualified sense, the history plays produced during the war period, particularly those about Lincoln, function in the manner of primitive drama.<sup>38</sup>

That function, according to Northrup Frye, is "to present a powerful sensational focus for a community."<sup>39</sup> Such plays "present to an audience a myth already familiar to and significant for that audience, and they are designed to remind that audience of their communal possession of this myth."<sup>40</sup> The abundance of Lincoln plays between 1938 and 1945 suggests the recognition by playwrights and audiences of one heroic figure in whom cultural beliefs and images coalesce, and in whom the community's identity, strengths, and principles are made manifest. And though the American nation as a body could not view a dramatic spectacle until the advent of television, and the New York theatre reached a relatively small audience, Sherwood's movie version of Abe Lincoln in Illinois (1940) could be seen in even the smallest American village. The population at large could hear The Lonesome Train on nationwide radio. In these events and in the Lincoln plays that toured or were presented at the local high schools, the entire population could share in the story of America's greatest legendary figure.

Because it seems at least possible that the Lincoln plays served the function suggested above, it is interesting to note how the dramas utilize the structure and motifs of primitive mythic hero tales. Joseph Campbell has abstracted the conventional adventure pattern of nearly all mythic heroes in his The Hero With a Thousand Faces.

With obvious transformations, the pattern is that found in the history plays of 1938-45, especially those dealing with Lincoln.

The mythological hero, setting forth from his commonday hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark (brother-battle, dragon-battle . . .), . . . Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. . . . If the powers have remained unfriendly to him--his theft of the boon he came to gain (bride-theft, fire-theft) [may be his reward]; intrinsically it is an expansion of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom). The final work is that of the return. . . . The hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dread (return, resurrection). The boon that he brings restores the world (elixir).<sup>41</sup>

The above composite myth or monomyth is followed with remarkable fidelity in both E. P. Conkle's Prologue to Glory and Sherwood's Abe Lincoln in Illinois. If we see the pattern in its broadest outlines of ordeal, nadir of fortune, and return to the kingdom with principles and strength (boon) to restore the kingdom, then nearly all the history plays follow the monomyth. (In In Time to Come Wilson undergoes all the ordeals of the hero, but fails to save the kingdom. It is suggested that in the League of Nations he did have the boon, elixir that might have helped save the kingdom (world) from World War II, however.) The monomyth, of course, has undergone extensive transformation,



and both Frye and Campbell describe the process by which the primitive, basically religious myth changes. Frye notes that in Christian societies the sacred myth becomes mixed with secular elements, and the result is "a romantic drama presenting the exploits of a hero, which is closely related to tragedy, the end of a hero's exploit being eventually his death, but which in itself is neither tragic nor comic, being primarily spectacular."<sup>42</sup> The magical and supernatural dimensions of the primitive mythic stories are made credible; in Frye's term they are displaced, in Campbell's they are rationalized. "In the later stages of many mythologies, the key images hide like needles in great haystacks of secondary anecdote and rationalization," comments Campbell.<sup>43</sup> "The outlines of myths and tales are subject to damage and obscuration. Archaic traits are generally eliminated or subdued. Imported materials are revised to fit local landscapes, custom, or belief, and always suffer in the process."<sup>44</sup>

Campbell's comments on the obscuration and rationalization of the Christ figure illuminates what happens to that figure in the plays of the war period. "In modern progressive Christianity," Campbell says, "The Christ--Incarnation of the Logos and Redeemer of the World--is primarily a historical personage . . . who preached a benign doctrine . . . yet was executed as a criminal. His death is read as a splendid lesson in integrity and fortitude."<sup>45</sup> This rationalized Christ is clearly the one

presented in Anderson's Journey to Jerusalem. Note Ishmael's and the play's conception of Jesuah's (Jesus) role.

And in the end  
for this love and bitterness with which he speaks  
he will become a symbol of those who are guiltless--  
And those who are guilty, seeing him in this symbol,  
will turn and destroy him. He will suffer for them  
and conquer them in their hearts.

The same, although secularly conceived, Christ figure lurks beneath the surface also in the instructive and inspiring deaths of King McCloud, Quizz West, in Sherwood's Dr. Valkonen, and is suggested in the truth-seeking journalist, Morey Vinion's death fighting with guerrillas in the Philippines. His wife asks after his death, "Are [we] changed . . . because of what Morey did? . . . Has his death had any effect on all the things he fought against and hated in his life?" In short, she asks if his death serves as the lesson of integrity and fortitude that it should.

In looking at the plays not tapping the resources of the Christ mythos but still using the monomyth's patterns, specifically Conkle's and Sherwood's plays, it is possible to see the myth transformed for the modern American audience, rationalized or displaced until it is completely secular and mundane, yet retaining the primitive patterns that have moved audiences to a sense of community and identify from time immemorial.

The structures of Prologue to Glory and Abe Lincoln in Illinois, as those of the other history plays mentioned in this chapter, correspond to the structure of the mythic hero's tale, i.e., the structure is episodic. The plays may best be called fluid form, chronicle plays and are a series of scenes telling of significant crisis points in the hero's journey to his destiny. Such structure is especially valuable for a play tracing the development of a figure over a long period of time, and coincidentally, because of its fluidity and unusual wealth of characters, lends itself to the infusion of local color elements. That such elements are often somewhat inappropriate and detrimental to the play's purpose and impact may be seen in Conkle's play. Conkle makes obvious use of dialect, frontier humor and story-telling. The play seems as aware of its telling a story about early nineteenth century Illinois as it is of Lincoln, and its focus is somewhat diffused. Brooks Atkinson commented on the problem of fusing the local color play with a play about legendary hero figures. "The style of [Prologue to Glory] is that of the folk play, and the folk play is too casual and artless to measure the dimensions of a towering man."<sup>46</sup> Despite the possible confusion of genres and confusion of effects, however, the play does follow the form of Campbell's monomythic pattern with startling correspondence.

The play, like Abe Lincoln in Illinois roughly covers the New Salem years--the period of youth, preparation,

initiation and commitment. In Scene I of Prologue to Glory Lincoln, like the mythological hero, is lured "from his commonday hut." Lincoln, a listless and aimless young man is urged by his step-mother to accept big-talking Denton Offut's offer of a storekeeping job in New Salem. Abe, a bit worried that he is wasting his life sitting on a stump, proceeds to New Salem, which becomes for him a fusion of the mythic "threshold of adventure" and site of adventure. In scene II he meets the rationalized and Americanized "shadow presence that guards the passage," Jack Armstrong. They "wrestle"; Abe undergoes the test, which is both a mythic test and one actually employed on newcomers on the American frontier. He defeats Armstrong, of course, and they are conciliated. Abe is pronounced "officially natcherlized," or initiated. Over the threshold now, Abe comes in contact with "strangely intimate forces," specifically of the helper variety, and more specifically, Ann Rutledge who prods Abe to make something of himself. It is in Ann Rutledge's role in Abe's life that Atkinson and others who felt the play too folksy and sentimental. She is seen to be the major influence on his actions; the play is said not to portray any depth of character from which strong resolution or commitment could come. However valid the criticism, Ann's proddings at least provide coherent motivation within the play's context. Abe, responding to Ann's proddings, soon

declares his intent to run for state legislature and asks Ann to marry him.

Ann's help and his own quick wit and strength have taken him far on his adventure. But the supreme ordeal is yet to occur, and does so occur with Ann's death. In Prologue to Glory and Abe Lincoln in Illinois the death event is the test that almost drives Lincoln to despair and defeat. "You can't have a light like her come, and lose it, without everything goin' blank before your eyes! . . . She showed me my power and strength, and she's gone, and I've got nary a wish to go on."<sup>47</sup> Abe's friends, Aunt Polly and Squire Bowlin Green, persuade him that Ann would not approve of his giving up, and that he is needed as a lawyer. So the play ends with Abe committed to going to Springfield to pursue his law career. The play may be said to conclude then, as a truncated version of the mythic adventure pattern in which the hero emerges from the kingdom of dread and returns to the world. It is in such truncated renderings that the extrapolation inherent in history plays completes the pattern. If the play leaves off before Lincoln is able to give his boon to the world, the spectator's knowledge of history and of the Lincoln legend fill in and tactitly complete the hero's triumph.

Though both Conkle and Sherwood deal with the early years of Lincoln, their emphases differ. Conkle is interested in the earliest years. Sherwood looks at the more mature hero, and is careful to define more clearly

for us the boon (principles and strengths of character) that Lincoln drew from his tests and with which he will set out to restore the world, i.e., the crumbling union. The different emphasis may be accounted for, perhaps, by Sherwood's personal struggle to find firm attitudes about the war. Lincoln's mature turmoil is a more attractive and intriguing subject to Sherwood because the playwright himself was undergoing the inner turmoil that can beset a serious, pacific, and principled man. Also, Sherwood recognized that Lincoln's coming to commitment was an instructive spectacle for the United States as it observed the world surely being engulfed by conflict.

The Conkle play and Abe Lincoln in Illinois differ not only in their emphasis on different points in the hero's life, but also in their approaches to character. Though Conkle's Lincoln is identifiably Lincoln, he is even more a local color character, a crude, frontier creature. Sherwood's Lincoln is approached with more psychological sensitivity. In the first scene Abe is found studying, being introduced to Henry Clay's belief in an indissoluble union, and pondering Keat's "On Death." The inner tensions that Sherwood found in his fairly extensive research as central to Lincoln's character, intellectual curiosity, commitment to justice, and law, and union, a brooding introspectiveness and something like a death wish, all these are suggested in the short first scene.

The emphasis on mimetic characterization suggests a further displacement or rationalization of the monomyth, but the basic pattern does remain. In scene II, the initial test of combat with the shadow presence, Armstrong again, is referred to when Abe keeps Jack from fighting with a Springfield politician by offering to match Jack himself. The play then shows Abe tested by several ordeals, the death of Ann, the dilemma, intellectual and academic at this point, of opposing slavery and yet somehow keeping the South appeased and holding the union together, and the further ordeal of his unsure commitment to Mary Todd. These ordeals, all in one way or another intellectual and emotional rather than physical, nearly deliver him to the black underworld of his despair and death. It is at the nadir of his fortune in dealing with life that Sherwood provides inspiration for Abe (the helper figure) in the person of Seth Gale and family. Gale is crossing the country on the way to Oregon when his son grows sick in Illinois. Abe, who has been wandering near Ann's grave, comes to their wagon and is impressed by Seth's determination, despite the hardships, to push on to an Oregon free of corruption and slavery. "Seeing you now," says Abe, "and thinking of the big thing you've set out to do--well, it's made me feel pretty small. It's made me feel that I've got to do something, too, to keep you and your kind in the United States of America" (p. 120). He is ready to return from the kingdom of dread and carry to the world

his boon of wisdom, principle, and strength wrested from the bitterness of his personal turmoil. The rest of Sherwood's play shows Lincoln moving into the world, carefully developing his gifts and principles against the tests that are to come. Sherwood's hero is not the god of the myth; he is secularized and, thus, even after his emergence from the underworld, he must debate Douglas, deal with a neurotic wife, face election, etc. But extrapolation works again, and Lincoln's strength and character is tacitly recognized as sufficient to help restore the nation.

Aided by Raymond Massey giving what Brooks Atkinson called a "transcendant performance,"<sup>48</sup> the play ran 472 performances, and was made into a movie in 1940, again with Massey as Lincoln, and moved audiences profoundly. Carl Sandburg, in a "Forward" to the printed version of the play, testified to the play's effect on audiences and suggested reasons for the effect. "Having seen Sherwood's play, and having noticed how the audience itself participated, I believe it carries some shine of the American dream, that it delivers great themes of human wit, behavior and freedom with Lincoln as mouthpiece and instrument" (p. xii). Sandburg's comment suggests the didactic value of the topical analogies, so evident, for instance when Lincoln debates Douglas and denounces the complacent policies of allowing slavery to go on. "I hate it," he



says, "because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republic of its just influence in the world; enables the enemies of free institutions everywhere to taunt us as hypocrites, causes the real friends to doubt our sincerity . . ." (p. 139). The call for a rethinking of America's attitudes at this point, a month after the Munich agreement, is clear. Sandburg's comment also seems to sense the communal participation in a contemplation of a cultural hero. Brooks Atkinson came even closer to tapping one of the sources of the play's impact. It is a superior play to Britisher John Drinkwater's 1919 play, Abraham Lincoln, he said, "because it is written out of an instinctive understanding of an American with a broad point of view. Mr. Sherwood shows the common wonder that Americans feel toward their national idol."<sup>49</sup> The intimations of primitive religion are probably unintentional here, but may be suggestive.

It is not until The Lonesome Train was presented by Norman Corwin in 1944 that the Lincoln myth was directly used again. In this collection of folk songs and narrative tribute to the slain president, the common features of history plays are evident. The songs and narration draw analogies between that time and the 1940s, specifically the parallels of Copperhead opposition to Lincoln and Republican opposition to Roosevelt. After Roosevelt's death, the

widely broadcast show served doubtless as a contemporary elegy and an implicit appeal to unity behind the new President in Washington. There is an Americana and local color appeal in the show when its scene shifts to a Southern negro church service and a Kansas square dance.

The "cantata" also contains mythic and pseudo-religious elements that are less rationalized than in other treatments of Lincoln. There is the more primitive and mysterious suggestion of Lincoln's unity with his people. Two of the repeated lines in this almost incantatory play go:

You couldn't tell where the people left off  
And where Abe Lincoln began.

Another speech expands the identification and its implications.

A job for all the people,  
Carrying freedom across the land.  
A job for Lincoln's people!  
And you know ho Lincoln's people were. . . .

A primitive and Christian mythic element is contained in the suggestion of spiritual if not actual resurrection. The dead President is said to be at the negro church service in the South, at the square dance in Kansas. The figure, living and dead, is portrayed as ubiquitous. When a wounded soldier tells Lincoln he will soon be going home, Lincoln says he will see him (Lincoln) there. The

treatment is obviously metaphorical--it is Lincoln's spirit, ideas, presence that live on and are triumphant. Yet the treatment is curiously literal and intense. The effect of the show must have been especially poignant after Roosevelt's death. It is not typical of the plays or spectacles of historical figures during the war period; it is simply, perhaps, the purest example of the impulse to use folk expression and cultural figures to state or suggest artistically a cultural commonwealth and unity.

What had happened in the American theatre after the mid-thirties, then, was a discovery of the local image, the American historical image, a discovery of their potentialities as dramatic material and their impact upon the American war-period audience. Behind what was specifically American lay the universal, perhaps, but what was on the surface seemed literal and local. The images found their ultimate wartime and ultimate popular reception in the musical. The musical was a form that never threatened profundity, it seemed. In this genre Broadway appeared to be nearest to its generally accepted wartime role as entertainer. But actually the musical smacked of ritual and cultural celebration more profoundly than did the history plays, indeed, more profoundly than any other theatrical form during the war.

## V. BROMIDIC PARABLES: THE MUSICALS

### The Evolution of a New Form

The musical stage, with its glitter of scenery, costume and spectacle, its liveliness of humor and spirit and its exuberance and music, is the one department of the theatre in which America leads the world. No other country has the tempo in its blood and the mechanical ingenuity in its tradition that produce our Showboats and Panama Hatties.

Brooks Atkinson

Long before the present crisis came into being, there was a saying that if one could control the songs of a nation, one need not care who made its laws.

John Dewey, Freedom and Culture, 1939

The Second World War caught the musical theatre at a crucial point of evolution and full of introspective self-analysis about those evolutionary directions. One is struck by the number of articles written during and just after the war about what the American musical, especially, had been and was to become. In those written just prior to the war there is implied an expectation of the imminent birth of a new form, a new kind of musical theatre, born, to be sure, of old genres, but nonetheless somehow new. The sense of impending development was best expressed, perhaps, by Brooks Atkinson writing in the Times in

February, 1941. "Nothing of epochal importance has been created yet," he says. "But it is encouraging to notice that all at once several theatre people have become impatient with the dramatic patterns that have been serving our stage for many years. Perhaps they feel the necessity of saying something that does not fit neatly into old forms."<sup>1</sup> Atkinson is referring specifically to straight drama here, and notes as a development away from old forms the emergence of plays like Our Town and The Green Pastures that deliberately reject objective reality in their presentation. Ironically, with the obvious exception of Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth, it was not in straight drama that the new forms developed. Instead, the stirrings Atkinson felt were realized in the field of the musical, probably the most innovative and creative genre of Broadway production during the war. With the production of Oklahoma! and its similar successors, a new kind of Broadway musical was born.

The new form was synthetic and evolutionary. George Beiswanger in Theatre Arts in 1941 noted that here had been a line of theatre developing toward music for twenty-five years.<sup>2</sup> The new musical drama had its prototype in Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II's 1927 production of Show Boat. In the new style the book was literate and was integrated with the music; the play served as more than a string on which gaudy mother-of-pearl dance and musical beads were strung. In Show Boat drama and music were put

together so that one really could not very well be taken away without making the other less effective (though certain songs from Show Boat, such as "Old Man River," gained popularity on their own merits). This kind of fusion was to solidify during the war years, beginning with Moss Hart and Kurt Weill's musical dream fantasies in Lady in the Dark (1941) and reaching its highest point of development in Carousel in such songs as Billy's "Soliloquy." After the war such integration continued in Kurt Weill and Langston Hughes's Street Scene (1946) where music and lyrics helped propel the drama instead of being a kind eddy in the forward moving current.<sup>3</sup> But if Show Boat was a great success and a prototype for what was distantly to follow it, it did not serve as a model for shows immediately following it. The other genres of musical theatre continued to be dominant through the 1920s and 1930s and even into the war period.

The genres of the musical show from which the integrated musical drama had parentage were vaudeville, the follies, and the revue. These theatrical forms derived from a popular theatre based on the minstrel show, musical extravaganza, and spectacle. The shows consisted essentially of individual performers doing their independently developed and autonomous skits or acts. Thus, in the shows closest to the minstrel-vaudiville pattern there was no story line with which to integrate the music. In the primitive musical comedy the plot merely tried to

provide some little coherence to the sketches and specialty acts of the variety theatre that was the real content of the show.<sup>4</sup> The individual performers did not even have to compete with a plot for the audience's interest and attention. But rosy times for vaudeville and the follies ended in November, 1932 when the Palace closed. Performers panicked. Vaudeville seemed dead for sure. It did, in fact, shrink and turn rather shabby and threadbare. But it did not disappear. Variety and others spoke in 1942 of a "possible vaudeville renaissance."<sup>5</sup> In the spring of 1942 there were three strong vaudeville, revue-shows on Broadway: Priorities of 1942, comedians Olsen and Johnson's Sons O' Fun, and Hellzapoppin'. During Holy Week, Sons O' Fun was actually the strongest show on Broadway, grossing \$35,000. Priorities of 1942 was not too far behind, grossing \$25,000 during the week of April 15 and ultimately running for forty-five weeks.<sup>6</sup> There were rumors of a new revue in the fall starring Mae West and Al Jolson, which did not, however, materialize. In 1943 Laugh Time with Frank Fay, Burt Wheeler, and Ethel Waters, was a near hit. It seemed that the idea of vaudeville's having died was, in Lewis Nichol's words, "one of the theatre's most depressing legends. . . ."<sup>7</sup>

There was a definite and positive relationship between war conditions and vaudeville's resurgence. During the summer of 1942 more theatre's were retaining their

stage shows than at any time since the early 1930s.

Variety attributed this to the fact that defense workers were foregoing vacations and were staying at their jobs during the hot months.<sup>8</sup> And if war conditions helped revive the New York vaudeville stage, they practically resurrected vaudeville in the provinces across the American continent. After having been closed for seven years, Montreal's Gayety Theatre reopened in April, 1942 with a vaudeville show.<sup>9</sup> In that same month the RKO houses in Springfield and Salem, Massachusetts adopted stage shows. Variety explained the rise in small town vaudeville by the taste of the public for fast, varied shows, and by the difficulty small town residents had in getting to the big cities for entertainment.<sup>10</sup> The small-towner could see live shows right down at the Strand or the Albee. But the picture for vaudeville was mixed. The snake charmer and the baggy-pants comedians did live better during the war, but that brief, brighter period proved to be not so much a renaissance as a short respite. One could not help notice that these performers continued to grow a bit shabbier and more tired as they went from one hotel and shallow stage to the next. Paul Small, producer of the successful "time" shows, Show Time (with George Jessel), Star Time, Big Time, Laugh Time, etc., said that vaudeville could produce no more than one or two good shows a season because there simply were not enough performers of the first caliber and box office potency.<sup>11</sup> One looks at the



statistics of vaudeville production on Broadway during the war. He was evidently right.

Vaudeville's first of kin was the revue. What differentiated the two was a slightly higher level of sophistication of the revue, more plot line within the revue's separate skits than in the acts of vaudeville, and less reliance in the revue on novelty acts such as dancing dogs and snake charmers. The revue, possibly because of its more highly sophisticated forms, continued healthy through the 1930s when vaudeville was tottering, held on more precariously during the war years, and got a new breath of life on television in Sid Cesar's Show of Shows and the Red Skelton Hour. Actually the pure revue, i.e., a show of varied acts interlarded with short skits featuring a single great star, was to find television a more congenial home than the Broadway stage. After 1942, like vaudeville, the form began to seem old and tired. Billy Rose tried to resuscitate it with his glamorous 1944 revue, Seven Lively Arts. Rose wanted a spectacular revival, so he created an overripe spectacle. Opening night audience members were charged \$24.00 tops and were served champagne at intermission. The entertainment fare was rich and varied. There was a ballet by Igor Stravinsky, performances by Benny Goodman and Bert Lahr, and a score by Cole Porter. The big attraction was Bea Lillie, however, who was, according to Wolcott Gibbs, the "greatest comedienne living in our time," and who was back on Broadway after an absence

of five years.<sup>12</sup> But even the greatest living comedienne could not breath real life into a show that tried to substitute size and flashiness for authentic style and wit. The performers themselves were not happy with the show or with Rose, reports John Lahr in the biography of his father.<sup>13</sup> Cole Porter felt Seven Lively Arts to be one of his unhappiest experiences in the theatre.<sup>14</sup> The show simply lacked a creative center. It certainly did not resuscitate the revue, which was to survive but not flourish until the new medium of television appropriated the form as its own.

Brooks Atkinson suggests two reasons for the survival of the revue after Show Boat and the advent of musical drama had shown its greater energy and artistic superiority. The revue pleased many customers, and it did that partially by the quality of its music. The most talented composers and lyricists continued for years after Show Boat to create some of their finest songs for such slender shows. Richard Rodger's "With a Song in My Heart" was composed for the 1929 revue Spring is Here. In 1939, Jerome Kern, the creator of Show Boat, composed "All the Things You Are" for Very Warm for May. The revue's music may not have been integrated, but it was often very good. Atkinson further suggests as reason for the revue's long life its characteristic of giving good comedians and entertainers opportunity to be good. In a real sense, revues were star vehicles for such performers as W. C.

Fields, Bert Larh, Jimmy Durante, and Ed Wynn,<sup>15</sup> and the "musical comedies" Banjo Eyes (1941) and Something for the Boys (1942) were hardly more than star vehicles for Eddie Cantor and Ethel Merman.<sup>16</sup> It is significant to note that the first specimens of the genre that evolved from the revue, the musical drama, had no big name stars. The performers became stars because of the success of the new shows, a reversal of the usual pattern. Alfred Drake, Celeste Holm, Joan McCracken, and Bambi Lynn were the lead performers and dancers of Oklahoma!, but they were not stars until the show became a hit. Unlike the revue, Oklahoma! had to rely on an innovative style and integrating idea to succeed.

As already implied, some of the shows called musical comedies might better be labeled revues. Even though some shows had a single and continuous plot line, the plot seemed a pretense for putting together some snappy songs and some startling visual effects. Furthermore, the plot was often just a vehicle for a strong star. Something for the Boys is, perhaps, an example of the highly developed and evolving musical revue that has almost become something else. It is only because the revue was flexible and capable of growing away from pure vaudeville to a more sophisticated form that musical drama had a base on which to stand. The revue was flexible enough to allow ballet into its canon of acts. This inclusion was important because the ballet demanded more extended musical compositions and suggested

a movement toward a new kind of orchestra. Something besides the Tin Pan Alley song grew acceptable to the music show audience. Further developments came in the music as more and more black music and blues singers, such as Ethel Waters, were incorporated into revue shows. Such singers and their blues style demanded declamatory and, like the ballet, more extended forms of music.<sup>17</sup> The use of black performers and black music grew to be important during the war years. Berlin's This is the Army included an all black segment, and Hammerstein used a black cast for Carmen Jones, 1943. In 1945 there was the black musical, Memphis Bound. But the show where the black influence was perhaps most strongly felt was in the 1942 revival of Gershwin's Porgy and Bess. The 1942 shortened version of this semi-operatic, semi-song-tune black show was more favorably received than the 1935 version had been. It had a successful run on Broadway as well as an extended tour of major cities. Things had changed since 1935, racially perhaps, and musically. People had accepted the increasing sophistication of some revues and were now willing to pay to see really complexly integrated music, dance, character, and story.

Other great changes in the music and dance that occurred as vaudeville and revue became refined into musical drama demand attention. The orchestra of the revue and musical comedy of the 1930s had basically a band sound, a vaudeville sound. Porgy and Bess used a nearly full,

symphonic sounding orchestra. But, then, Porgy and Bess was a hybrid and closer to opera than musical comedy. The real departure from the band sound came along with the many other evolutionary but decisive innovations of Oklahoma! In designing orchestration for his music, Richard Rodgers decreased the brass and saxaphones and replaced them with strings. He added a harp.<sup>18</sup> The sound was new, fuller, more subtle. It was more like a concert orchestra and was capable of creating a greater range of moods. The change in orchestration was evident in the composition of orchestras assembled for nearly every musical drama after Oklahoma! It is interesting to compare the conventional saxophone band sound of Kurt Weill's orchestra in Lady in the Dark, 1941 with his orchestra for One Touch of Venus, the first really major musical after Oklahoma! Venus's orchestra never tires for the fullness of Rodger's strings and is far from the almost overripe sound of Harold Arlen's Bloomer Girl orchestra, 1944, but the evolution to strings is evident. With On the Town, a well respected young conductor and composer, Leonard Bernstein, gave Broadway a score that had the familiar song integrated right into the bodies of highly complex ballet numbers. The music was full of syncopated modern rhythms, and it demanded an orchestra with skill and fullness. The vaudeville sound was done, replaced by an orchestra that was a logical outgrowth of certain earlier ensembles, such as the orchestra for Porgy and Bess and for Rodger's "Slaughter

on Tenth Avenue," but one that was conceived and delivered to musical comedy and drama by Rodgers in Oklahoma!<sup>19</sup>

The other most significant development in music during the war years was the loosening of the thirty-two bar song formula, standard for nearly all the music and vaudeville and revues. It has been noted how the introduction of black singers and their blues numbers demanded extended forms. The music of Porgy and Bess presented music that had qualities of the recitative yet escaped being strictly operatic. In Porgy and Bess there were interludes, straight "songs," recitatives, and some hybrids. There were numbers that began as songs, were briefly interrupted for dialogue and perhaps for even a recitative or different song sung by another character, then the original song would return and be completed. The handling of "Summertime" in the first few minutes of the play is an example of this kind of hybrid. Though Porgy and Bess was not a pure example of the Broadway musical and was not terribly influential, it did provide precedent and background for the musical dramas to come after it.

Another show providing an interesting new use of musical form is Kurt Weill's Lady in the Dark. There were only three segments in which music was used in the play, periods of dreams and fantasy of a lady executive (played by Gertrude Lawrence) who is suffering a near nervous breakdown. In these segments, which Weill called operatic, choreography and music are nearly continuous, providing

sophisticated expression of the mental problems and processes of the character. Certainly this use of music and dance seems to presage the revolutionary ballet in Oklahoma! where Laurey falls asleep and dreams of Jud's murdering Curly. The songs within the dream/fantasy sequences of Lady in the Dark remain rather standard form songs, however. It is really only with Rodgers and Hammerstein that the song is used and integrated into the texture of the action as flexibly as it was in the hybridized, opera forms of Porgy and Bess. Hammerstein's adaptation of Carmen, Carmen Jones, used the extended forms of that opera, of course, but the real innovations for musical drama came in Oklahoma! and even more so in Carousel. The opening song of Oklahoma! "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," seems conventional enough if heard on a recording. But heard in the show, it is something quite different. Curly enters singing the song, engages in dialogue with Aunt Eller, then resumes singing. The curiously cruel-humorous "Pore Jud is Daid" starts and stops to allow Curly to improvise double edged comments about the villainous farmhand. Such suspended song forms are seen also in Carousel in "There's Nothing so Bad for a Woman," among others. In Billy's "Soliloquy," he finds out that he is to be a father. The number changes in mood from pride to tenderness to resolution, and develops a complex metrical pattern. It too becomes an extended musical segment, not a "song." In Dark of the Moon

experimentation with sound and musical speech is evident. In addition to traditional songs, the authors employ repetition in the dialogue, especially in the revival scene, Act II, scene iv, and the repetition creates a chanting, almost musical effect.

It would be misleading, however, to imply that such innovation in musical form was as extensive and widespread as innovation in orchestration. Most of the musical shows of the period continued to use the thirty-two bar standard form, or minor variations thereof. The lyricist may have been more careful to make lyrics express more closely the character who sang them, as in Pal Joey, but the form did not always express the inner emotional state as did Billy's soliloquy in Carousel or the long slow lines of Mrs. Maurant's "Somehow I Never Could Believe" in Kurt Weill's Street Scene, 1947. One Touch of Venus, Bloomer Girl, By Jupiter were among the biggest shows of the World War II musical shows that used the standard song form. But even songs that remained formally autonomous and did not try to integrate their structure into the dialogue and action were usually "absorbed" enough into the character and situation so they could not easily be lifted from the play and sung on any occasion as could songs from revues. The songs of musical shows during the war were no longer looked on as potential hit parade candidates. They were seen as part of their context.<sup>20</sup>



A development fully as significant as that in music occurred during the war in the dance. The development in dance obviously took some by surprise. In 1942 Theodore Strauss wrote in the New York Times Magazine that the revue chorus girl was staging a comeback. The number of chorus lines and chorus girls had been diminishing during the 1930s. In 1929 there were 3,800 chorus girls; in 1936 only 552. Strauss cited expectations of employment for as many as 1,400 in 1942, the same approximate number as in 1932.<sup>21</sup> Yet in 1945 the Times Magazine carried an article by Thyra Wimslow stating that "the chorus, so long the keystone of the modern musical show, has lost the battle and disappeared."<sup>22</sup> Miss Wimslow noted that only Follow the Girls and Mexican Hayride of the eleven musical shows running at the time had anything even resembling chorus lines. It would appear that an unexpected revolution in dance had taken place in the three years that separate Strauss's article from Wimslow's.

The revolution was ballet. Dance was not dead; the chorus line "dance" style was. Actually even Strauss noted the changing styles in Broadway dance. More and more was being expected of this girl who earned, after all, an average of \$500.00 a year, or less than \$10.00 a week.<sup>23</sup> The old style dancers needed only be friendly to her auditioner and good looking. She must hone her look of naughtiness and disdain, however, for on stage it was the diffident kick and attitude of charming coolness that won.

She really did not have to dance, just kick at approximately the right time. That something other than gracefulness was essential is satirized in Pal Joey by a showgirl who says, rather tiredly during rehearsal, "Wish I was tall enough to be a show girl, then I wouldn't have to dance."<sup>24</sup> That was the old-style chorus girl, the Ziegfield Girl, the Busby Berkley Girl. The new one had "to spin across that stage in a complex counterpoint of routines that [took] weeks of work and a quick mind to perfect. She [had] to know the rudiments of ballet technique; . . ."<sup>25</sup> So Broadway dancers grew better trained, sometimes having as much as five to eight years of training. And with the training came a steadily increasing professional sense. The girl who had only glamor to offer began to leave for Hollywood or for a photographer's studio. Both places offered more money and made fewer demands.<sup>26</sup>

The chorus line had been replaced by the ballet ensemble. Ballet became a legitimate, nay, even a necessary part of every show.<sup>27</sup> The origins of ballet on Broadway lay in the experiments of the mid and late 1930s. There were such popular ballets as Agnes de Mille's Rodeo, Bernstein's Fancy Free, and Rodger's "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" from On Your Toes choreographed by George Balanchine of the Ballet Russe. The Federal Theatre's dance drama, American Exodus, with its depiction of American pioneer hardships and successes, seems now to suggest itself as a direct precedent for the interpreting of Americana themes

through ballet. But the single event that consolidated the evolutionary tendencies into one inevitable movement was, once again, Oklahoma!

This time the figure of importance was Agnes de Mille. Her ballet for Act I, scene 3 explores Laurey's fears through dance. Such exploration is more graphic and probably is made more immediate than could be done with words. Laurey has been forced through her own pride to reject Curley's offer to take her to the box-social. Instead she has accepted an invitation to go with the dark and somewhat ominous Jud. As the stage lights go down, the ballet counterparts of Laurey and Curly come on stage. In the subsequent ballet, Laurey dreams she is about to marry Curly, but she finds the groom that comes to her to be Jud. Her friends and Curly back away from her though she appeals for help. After a sequence in which Jud abandons Laurey temporarily for some gaudy dancehall girls, Curly enters and begins the inevitable fight with Jud. The anxiety and dread that Laurey has felt in her waking state is projected into the dream. Given Laurey's psychological state, the result of the conflict is inevitable. Jud kills Curly. The ballet is an effective piece of action that gives some needed psychological depth to what has been a rather shallow characterization. The ballet was more, then, than mere color and movement. It added dimension to the show, creating mood and tension without which the show might become vapid. It defined the conflict of the play, the

conflict of the good and innocent with the evil and ominous. Critics praised the ballet,<sup>28</sup> and the integrated dance form became de rigeur for every big musical drama thereafter.

Miss de Mille did the choreography for at least three of the biggest musical dramas during the war years--Oklahoma!, with the ballet that started it all, Bloomer Girl, and Carousel. In Bloomer Girl she created a ballet which had to do the difficult job of telescoping into a few minutes of dance the events and emotional impact of the Civil war on a small, upstate New York town. Critics generally felt she succeeded. Said Kappo Phelan of The Commonwealth, "In an exact space of time, the struggle is experienced and emerged from by the audience."<sup>29</sup> This ballet saved the author and audience from awkward and dull exposition of passing time and replaced it with an expressive, emotional spectacle. In Carousel de Mille again had to express in short compass the emotional hurts suffered by Billy Bigelow's daughter (played and danced by Bambi Lynn). The audience is introduced with economy and art to her life's characteristic rejection experiences and resulting frustrations. The ballet here, as in Oklahoma!, serves both psychological and plot functions.

Other shows followed de Mille's example, not always with equal success. Even such a slight show as the 1945 entry, Hollywood Pinafore, had a ballet. One Touch of

Venus contained two brief ballets, "Forty Minutes for Lunch," and "Venus in Ozone Heights." Featured in "Forty Minutes for Lunch" was Sono Osato who later starred in the show to incorporate more ballet than any other during or probably since the war, On the Town. On the Town, with music by Leonard Bernstein and choreography by Jerome Robbins, integrated a slender plot with much dancing. Three sailors on twenty-four hour leave in New York City seek Ivy Smith, the subway rider named Miss Turnstiles for June. In seeking her (because one of the three has taken an impelling shine to her), they chase all over the metropolis, meeting strange people, adventures, and nearly continuous opportunities to dance. The hectic life of the city is expressed in the hectic search for Miss Turnstiles, in the music's rhythms, and the kinetic, witty dialogue. In On the Town the music, dance, and plot, however slender, become one, all working toward a unified experience. Far from vaudeville or revue specialty acts, this; here the actor must sing, and he must dance, and he must act. The best of the new musical dramas began to achieve new complexity and to make new demands of appreciation.

It had been a long, hard way from 1927 to 1941. Groups like the Neighborhood Playhouse and the American Lyric Theatre had had to crusade for what they felt was to be a new theatre. The American Lyric Theatre called for a music theatre between popular musical comedy and grand opera. It called for this new form to be rooted in folk

material.<sup>30</sup> Though the Lyric Theatre itself was less than a success, it was a leader in verbalizing the general feelings of the period that the American musical theatre was ready to move from its vaudeville and revue parentage into a new phase.

In 1941 George Beiswanger stated succinctly the demands sympathetic observers made of the American theatre. "The theatre . . . has become ready at long last to acknowledge that music must take part if America's drama is to be commensurate in imaginative wealth with its life."<sup>31</sup> During the war the musical theatre accepted the implicit challenge, if, indeed, it could have done otherwise given the background of forces that had developed by 1941. And by the end of the war, commentators noted what seemed to have been the emergence of a new and attractive organism. "Within the last few years, with what seemed like suddenness, there came out of all this hodge-podge an American theatre form--entertaining and artistically sound, made up of story, verse, music, dance and design, with plenty of opportunity not only for the comedian, long an outstanding American theatre product, but for our newer singing-actors and actor-singers."<sup>32</sup>

At least three tendencies are evident in the comments of observers and participants during these years. One is their emphasis on the new musical theatre's need for and sometime success in gaining integration of all the elements of production, and, concurrently, its need for

and sometimes success in achieving emotional depth and mature consideration of some weighty subject--the war, for instance, or psychoanalysis. Lady in the Dark's relatively serious handling of its psycholanalytical theme seemed a fluke, and even after its example, most observers did not really expect much seriousness from the musical comedies. One or two musical shows had war settings, just as some straight dramas put a character or two into a uniform and claimed relevance. Carmen Jones, which opened in December, 1943, was such a musical. Oscar Hammerstein's new libretto for Bizet's music and story moved the action from Spain to the American South during the war. The Spanish gypsies became American blacks. The cigarette factory became a parachute factory, Carmen Jones a worker in the factory, Joe (Don José) became an M. P., and Escamilla became Husky Miller, a prizefighter. The setting was contemporary and the story serious, but the show did not really deal with the war. Besides, Carmen Jones was a special case--more a transposed opera than a pure musical "comedy."

Actually there were very few pure musical comedies and musical dramas that dealt directly with the war at all. Of those few that had any connection with the war, On the Town (1945), and A Connecticutt Jankee (1944), put their heroes into naval uniforms. Herbert and Dorothy Fields revue-like Something for the Boys was probably most successful and would have been typical if a hypothetical

war musical comedy vogue had developed.<sup>33</sup> The show was characterized by some of Cole Porter's "second-best music, [and] beautiful girls all covered with sequins. . . ." <sup>34</sup>

No one could accuse the book of being too serious. Three cousins are located and informed by the Court of Missing Heirs that they have inherited a ranch in Texas. Taking possession of the ranch, they find it to be nothing but a broken down building near Keeley Field air base. The patriotic and evidently ambitious Blossom Hart (Ethel Merman) decides to turn the building into a boarding house for fliers' wives. She also wants to make the lower floor's rooms into some kind of a defense plant. Love comes for Blossom in the figure of flier Sergeant Rocky Fulton (Bill Johnson). But the flier is not free; he is pursued by Melanie, a senator's daughter. In an effort to break up Blossom's budding romance, Melanie hints to the base's commanding officer that the boarding house is actually a brothel. The C. O. responds to this news by ordering the house off-limits. Ruined but still energetic, Blossom discovers that she is a human radio, made so by the carborundum fillings of her bridgework. She informs the commanding officer of this discovery, and he is understandably grateful. Now every one of his men can be his own radio. Blossom further endears herself when she saves a plane and crew by serving as a radio when the one in the plane breaks down. Being now a heroine and her word trustworthy, she explains the real nature of her



establishment and the C. O. allows it reopened. Blossom and Rocky, of course, are reunited and all ends happily. One may agree with Wolcott Gibbs that it is "one of those books that won't hurt you if you don't pay too much attention to it"<sup>35</sup> and wax philosophical with Brooks Atkinson, "although it is not dishonorable, it is not sublime." But the real joys of the show had little to do with thought or fine plot, and few really expected them to. The real joys came when Ethel Merman started belting out such songs as "Hey, Good Looking." The songs, the star, stood out, apart from the texture of the play. This was not to be the style of the newly developing musical drama genre.

Richard Rodgers attributed much of Oklahoma's! success to its integration of elements. "The scenery looks the way the music sounds and the clothes look as though they belonged to the characters rather than the management."<sup>36</sup> At the same time that he celebrated the achievement of integration, he called for a continuing quest in the musical theatre for seriousness. The new musical drama, he said, "could be an extension of our musical comedy . . . into a field where music has emotion as well as rhythm, where lyrics become poetry, where design has artistry, and where dancing has meaning and is not a succession of hammer blows on a wooden stage."<sup>37</sup>

The second tendency is for musical theatre observers to look for a new term to define that new

genre-organism they see having developed during the war. Rodgers implies in his comments that the new form is different from what we call "musical comedy." Edith J. R. Isaacs and Rosamond Gilder state flatly that in 1945 "the term musical comedy is inadequate; musical theatre would be more appropriate. . . ." <sup>38</sup> No consensus on terminology was reached during the war, nor has it been since, but musical drama perhaps most accurately describes the new genre as it was to flower in such productions as Oklahoma!, West Side Story, and Gypsy.

The third element seen in the comments of observers late in the war and after it is the feeling that musical drama is essentially an American form. The reviewer for Theatre Arts Monthly declared that with On the Town "an American genre [had] come into being." <sup>39</sup> Observers had long felt that America's theatrical form lay in the vaudeville-revue pattern. American did it best. In America it had more zest and mature talent. But it was in the vaudeville-revues's offspring, the musical drama, that the cruder music hall kind of performance indirectly achieved sufficient artistic stature to be accepted as a valuable esthetic contribution to the theatre.

With the unity and integration of such shows as Porgy and Bess, Oklahoma!, Carousel, and On the Town, a Broadway musical show could be judged seriously on its artistic merits. The critic did not have to pretend there was no book to discuss, as was often the case before and

even during the war with such shows as Something for the Boys and Mexican Hayride. The American musical drama began to take serious works from both literature and music and transform them into its own new conventions. Carmen became the successful and respected Carmen Jones. One version of the ballad of "Barbara Allen" became the basis of Dark of the Moon. W. Somerset Maugham's story, "Rain" and play, Miss Thompson, became the musical Sadie Thompson, 1944, with June Havoc. Both Oklahoma! and Carousel were adapted from serious dramas, Lynn Riggs' Green Grow the Lilacs and Ferenc Molnar's Liliom respectively. In short, the new form was a synthesis of elements, story, music, dance, capable of treating varied topics and themes seriously or lightly, as occasion demanded. It was, perhaps, the most flexible of genres. But when the observers pointed to the musical drama as a distinctly American form, they were referring to more than the esthetic capacities of a genre that had developed in America of American "parents." They also had in mind the emerging content of the American musical theatre.

#### Cultural Celebration in 4/4 Time

There is an attempt to find a genuine theme for this whole affair [Sing Out, Sweet Land]; all through it runs the effort to create a kind of folk fable: America singing, America saved by a song, the people's wild and scattered heart gathered up and given its life again through our songs, songs, songs, countless songs.  
Stark Young



The music haunts the communal imagination of a society, subliminal advertisements for the American dream.

John Lahr, Up Against the Fourth Wall

[Mass fiction] tends to become an objectified mass dream. . . . The individual writer abandons his own personality and identifies himself with the reveries of his readers.

Henry Nash Smith, The Virgin Land

Something had happened to the content of musical shows during the war. In 1941-42 no dominant theme or setting could be discerned. The big shows were By Jupiter by Rodgers and Hart, Pal Joey by John O'Hara, Rodgers, and Hart, and Lady in the Dark. The hero, if there was one, was the ne'er-do-very-well and kept man, Joey, an anti-hero. In 1945 things had changed; patterns and dominant motifs had emerged. The biggest shows on Broadway in 1945 were the continuing Oklahoma!, Carousel, Sing Out, Sweet Land, which was a cavalcade of American folk songs assembled and made into a somewhat coherent whole by Walter Kerr, Bloomer Girl, a musical drama about the liberal niece of the famous women's dress reformer and about helping slaves on the underground railroad, Dark of the Moon, based on an Appalachian version of the ballad of "Barbara Allen," and finally, On the Town.

The most startling thing about these musical plays, the ones most people were paying money to see, is that in one way or another they all deal with Americana.<sup>40</sup> Rogers and Hammerstein moved the action of Liliom from Hungary to New England. Sing Out, Sweet Land used a panorama approach

to American music and history, moving from Puritan New England to a contemporary bar scene. When the observers and critics of Broadway began to speak of a new American genre, then, they were referring in part to this phenomenon of subject matter. The new American genre seemed to be reaching into American folklore and folk types for its matter. And it seemed to be moving uniformly to the American past for its setting. Note that only one of the hit shows listed for 1945, On the Town, had a contemporary setting. The rest took their audiences back into the past--sometimes a Currier and Ives past, as in Up in Central Park, sometimes a darker past, as in Dark of the Moon, but always an American past. And only those shows dealing with the American subjects survived their 100th performance in the 1944-45 season.

It would seem that the interest and cultivation by the Federal Theatre of American local color and historical subjects found its most innovative, and popular, and polite, embodiment in the American musical drama after 1942. Part of the reason for the move of Americana from straight drama to musicals has been suggested in the previous chapter--musicals are more closely akin to the spectacle form of many of the Federal Theatre's regional and historical festivals. But the reason is probably more complex than that. Northrup Frye's discussion of genres suggests that the musical comedy genre is the one best

suited to project American communally shared images and ideals.

As the comedy form incorporates music and dance, according to Frye, it moves in the direction of the masque. The masque, he explains, is usually supportive of the contemporary social order and sense of identity.

The masque is usually a compliment to the audience . . . and leads up to an idealization of the society represented by that audience. . . . The ideal masque is in fact a myth play. . . . It is designed to emphasize, not the ideals to be achieved by discipline or faith, but ideals which are desired or considered to be already possessed. Its settings are seldom remote from magic and fairyland, from Arcadia and visions of earthly paradise.<sup>41</sup>

The musical drama/masque genre, then, becomes the conventional and apparently most effective mode for projecting cultural ideas and patterns of thought.

The almost ritual-like combining of music, words, and dance in celebration of specifically American settings and stories seemed in World War II to have an almost hypnotic effect upon spectators. The audiences' reactions to the Americana shows was not merely casual enjoyment. There seemed to be some deeper appeal than that of light entertainment. The ticket lines for Oklahoma! were notorious. People told with zest stories of their hardships and dealings to get tickets for that show. Even with what may be the weakest of this All-American crop of shows, Up in Central Park, people were drawn to see it again. "Audience reaction in this town is something of a marvel,"

said Kappo Phelan about the Up in Central Park audience. "Here, one finds second-night people firm in each seat, even a fringe of them standing at the rear; . . ." <sup>42</sup> Such devotion to shows, good or weak, suggests that there may be something of interest to a student of literature and its relation to culture and mass psychology.

Supposing there to be a real trend going on in the theatre, especially in the most vital and creative genre at the time, and supposing that this trend is in response to and reflects some probably unconscious psychological undercurrent, one can ask if this general psychological atmosphere has direct or indirect genesis in the war. The taste for the past, the desire to be in contact with one's roots, traditions, and one's justifying heritage may be emotional products of a culture under siege. A people under stress may seek some kind of statement of identity. It may seek comfort in archetypal motifs through which it can feel identity, pride, or perhaps a nostalgic melancholy. The trends in the musical theatre after Oklahoma! indicate that this is possibly the case. <sup>43</sup> If this need of people for their past when the present proves threatening either personally or collectively is real, then one may say that the theatre did not, indeed, ignore either the war nor its audience as some Congressmen and columnists sometimes feared. The theatre's reaction to the war may have been oblique but essentially fitting with its nature and capacities. We recall Helen Haye's response to Martha



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Dreiblatt's question about the role of the theatre during war. Miss Hayes seemed to see the theatre as a place where might be experienced the strength the culture has earned through its past collective sufferings, trials, and triumphs. "Curiously," she said, "I think Harriet does more to inspire audiences to effort in the present war by reminding them of proud moments and great aims of our past rather than of the grim suffering of today put on the stage."

Examination of the Americana play may finally consolidate our consideration of the motifs people were responding to and evidently finding emotionally rewarding and inspiring. The musical drama that became the model for later musical plays was, of course, Oklahoma! Its discussion shall be reserved, for it has both a cultural and esthetic depth and importance that deserve closer study. The only Americana hit having a contemporary setting, On the Town, found its success and depth from a subtle coalescence of specifically American and universal appeals --similar to the coalescence seen in Abe Lincoln in Illinois. On the Town did not hide the fact of the World War II city ethos--the shrill-tongued, gum snapping stenographers, the crowds. It did not hide the war. Its heroes were three sailors on leave in the big city. On the other hand, it did not really look at the war either. It rather smothers the war in our sympathy and affection for these likable people out on the natural quest for an

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ideal girl. Here are good, clean, high-spirited American boys in the American city seeking the comforting, the good, the universal perhaps.

It is no accident that Miss Turnstile's name is Ivy Smith--common, green, wholesome. What we seem to have in the show is a highly displaced, ironic, quest romance, with knight figures made into sailors, and the princesses transformed into a taxi-driver, an anthropologist, and a subway rider. The grail becomes an idealized subway queen, the vision of which is reward for the American virtue of perseverance in the pursuit of a vision. The quest is debased, but honorable and funny; rather than supernatural it is folksy and human. That the sailors' leave must end soon casts a melancholy note over the proceedings, but the show does not end till the quest is successful and Miss Turnstiles is found. So there is the esthetic satisfaction of a completed romance structure. And even returning to the ship cannot completely dampen the irrepressible spirit of the sailors, so there is the emotional satisfaction coming from contemplating strong people who cannot be "got down." Though most of the elements in On the Town differ from those of the other musical dramas of the period in being basically ironic and esthetic, there are certain American motifs that merge with the more universal esthetic images, such as the innocent hero, the image of chaste courting, and especially a general life-spirit of youth and irreverence.

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As On the Town demonstrates, the boy did not have to win the girl permanently so that the curtain could come down on a happy-ever-after finale. Certainly the happy ending was common enough during the war, from Oklahoma! and Lady in the Dark to One Touch of Venus, Bloomer Girl, and Up in Central Park. But the outcome of the action in Carousel and Dark of the Moon was quite different. In Dark of the Moon a witch boy is made human on the condition that his true love, Barbara Allen, be true to him for one year. Though Barbara loves John, the witch boy, she is persuaded to be unfaithful to him by the shocked Christians of her mountain community. So John is forced to reenter his unholy realms again, and Barbara dies because of a bargain the jealous female witches have made with the conjuring man of the mountain. The play ends as John coldly pushes Barbara Allen's body with his foot.

In Carousel, Billy Bigelow, a carousel operator, shows the increasing complexity of characters in musical dramas during the war. He is proud and neurotic, beating his wife, Julie, in his frustration at failing to support her and achieve the American respectability of the hard-working and upright Mr. Snow. His real tragedy, however, is that he cannot communicate his deepest feelings for Julie and must show love by striving for external symbols of that love. He tries to steal a payroll to get money for his coming family, is caught, and kills himself rather than go to prison. Certainly no revue-musical comedy would have

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dared handle such a complex character. In heaven Billy is given the opportunity to return to earth for one day to help his daughter, who is suffering social rejection because of her father's reputation. Their meeting goes badly, and Billy ends by striking his frightened daughter. He fails again to reach the people he loves. Only in the last scene, as he invisibly watches his daughter graduate, does any kind of communication between the girl and her father occur. The graduation speaker celebrates Emersonian self-reliance and self-worth, and, though she cannot hear him directly, Billy tells her, in effect, to forget him and believe in herself. The show ends in a song of endurance and comfort, "You'll Never Walk Alone."

Both Dark of the Moon and Carousel are "tragic" in the loosest sense of the word. The primary appeals are those of the much maligned literary tradition, the sentimental. Whether the issue of the action is happy, tragic, or cynical, the characters and their struggles engage the "tender" emotions. Whether the result of the engagement of emotion is weeping, inspiration, or the ambivalent pity and wonder at the revelation of other realms, the audience is moved and, theoretically, ennobled by their involvement. The involvement may be all the more intense because the settings and stories are American.

Local color and American types find their most consistent, though perhaps blandest, employment in the Americana musical drama. Probably the most authentic and



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compelling of the plays under discussion is Dark of the Moon. Part of the compelling quality comes from the fact that it is set in the Smoky Mountains and is based on a local version of a story that has universally shown great power of fascination. In watching this drama the viewer establishes a kind of link with the common folk of the American soil. The audience shares with the characters a common story, common folk songs, and perhaps latent common fears and fascination with witches and witchcraft. But there is also the simpler interest in local color. In Dark of the Moon a region's particular superstitions and human types are presented. The conjurer man and his powers, the revival preacher and his curious congregation, the dialect spoken by the characters--all these appeal to an American outlook that paradoxically links the diversity of region and richness of regional characters with a sense of common American identity.

The same kind of local color appeal is seen in Up in Central Park, in which New York's past is evoked. It is doubtless partly this evocation of their own past that made New Yorkers flock to this show in spite of its plodding book. Carousel, moved from Hungary to New England, consciously exploited local color appeal, to the point where some critics objected.<sup>44</sup> The joy of spring's returning to a northern climate, clam bakes, smelly fishermen, and the typically taciturn, earnest, hardworking Yankee are all evoked and portrayed. In Oklahoma! the

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frontier box-social is a central element of the action, and such uniquely frontier conflicts as that between the rancher and the farmer raise their heads, though without injecting much bitterness into the action. The musical dramas tried to incorporate and exploit a sense of the American multiplicity and unity--many regions, many curious types but all American.

The shows tied the regions and types of people together with certain common ideas and ideals. The musical drama during the war did not usually preach. The sure but comparatively subtle patriotism of This is the Army grew even more subtle in the musical drama. There was no singing of the "Marseilles" as in the movie Casablanca or reading from the "Rights of Man" as in Charles Laughton's movie, This Land is Mine. But such common ideas of liberty, fraternity, and equality, and the more specifically American expressions of them were often glorified subliminally--the most effective way according to Joseph Wood Krutch we recall.\* The Emersonian ideals of self-reliance and individual worth are central to the final scene of Carousel. At least two other American ideas that supposedly motivate Americans are evident in the musical dramas of the period. The interest in Lincoln and the Civil War is

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\*"An oblique or tangential approach to the most important topic of the moment is more likely to be effective on the stage than direct statement."

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incorporated in Bloomer Girl, where the attendant ideas of national unity, freedom, and equality provide the framework and motivations for the action. Evelina Bloomer (Celeste Holm) is the liberal, abolitionist-minded daughter of a hoop skirt manufacturer in Cicero Falls, New York. She is so committed to the underground railroad that she is able to persuade her slaveholding fiancé from Kentucky to help one of his own slaves escape via the system. One of the show's brightest moments comes when the escaped slave sings "I Got a Song" with its verse on Freedom.

The Civil War, as popularly conceived, was the logical necessity of the North's belief in freedom and equality for all (i.e., slavery had to be abolished), but the war showed the failure of Americans to bring their diverse regions and ideas into a consensual unity. The Civil War is the central crisis and symbol of Bloomer Girl. When the war begins, union of the characters and nation is destroyed. Evelina's Southern slaveholding fiancé leaves Cicero Falls to join the Confederate Army. But on his way south he stops off in, of all places, Washington. There he hears Lincoln and is so moved by that man that he accepts the concepts of freedom and equality. He returns to Evelina in Cicero Falls, and the stated American ideals of liberty for all and unity of moral principles despite diversity of regions and ways of life are evoked and symbolized by the characters' personal union.

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Bloomer Girl and Up in Central Park evoke an image of America related to that discussed above. This image is of America as a place of reform. Evils exist in America, but there are always honest men to fight the evil and conquer it. In Oklahoma! Curly seems a minor culture hero in conflict with Jud, who, because of his arsonist tendencies is a definite threat to the community. In Up in Central Park, a newspaper reporter and a cartoonist take on the Tweed gang to try to bring to light their graft and corruption in arranging for the building of Central Park. The reporter and cartoonist are, of course, successful, and the park may be completed untainted, a Currier and Ives plate, a bit of the American pastoral dream-landscape amidst the urban clang of commerce, fire engines, and Irish brogues. In Bloomer Girl Evelina and her Aunt Dolly Bloomer fight for reform in women's dress and for the freedom of black people. The North joins in with this personal crusade, and the American community becomes a united reforming agency. Such an image of Americans and the American nation must have struck an especially responsive chord during the war years when the enemy could so completely be identified with evil.

The musical drama, then, provided certain kinds of inspiration for a war weary culture. Here were images of regional types, admittedly tailored for the theatre, but identifiably and proudly Americans. Here was diversity made unity through ideals. Here were reformers successfully



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meeting and beating the particular evils they faced, and the nation itself as a kind of collective savior and reformer of vast evils. The images of the reformers were somewhat idealized and the issue of their battles never really in doubt. Jud is threatening, but no one doubts that Curly, the pure and strong, can overcome his threat. The reforms to be effected, furthermore, were all in the past, comfortably settled. Women's dress had long since changed to more comfortable styles, and the Civil War had legislated slavery out of existence and supposedly settled forever the problem of black equality. The corruption of New York City seemed under control as long as a man like La Guardia remained mayor. The reforms and evils allowed relatively complacent contemplation. Obviously, then the goal was not to stir the viewer to awareness, anger, and action in the Ibsen tradition, but to instill confidence in the success of the American person's and nation's use of virtuous power. The musical was performing the masque's conventional role of complimenting and idealizing the audience and the society it represented.

The musical drama showed its audience that Americans had fought battles before for unquestionable causes and that the battles had been won. The American nation was tough, and good, and spirited. It would survive, as Sing Out, Sweet Land implied. And for those moments of doubt and apparent loss and failure, the musical drama provided

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Perhaps the most interesting element of the musical theatre's response to the war environment was its probably unconscious movement in the direction of cultural myth and imagery, the same direction in which the other genres moved. It is in Oklahoma! that the use, conscious or unconscious, of cultural archetypes is most fully made. Perhaps one may suggest that this is the reason that the show became such a phenomenon. And phenomenon is the only word for it; it was not merely a hit. The statistics suggest its role as a major event of cultural expression. The New York production ran for 2,248 performances (five years and nine weeks). It grossed \$7,000,000 in New York City alone. A national company toured for ten years, visiting 250 cities, grossing \$20,000,000 and playing before 10,000,000 people. The New York company also started touring after its Broadway production closed, and it visited seventy-one more cities before disbanding.<sup>46</sup> There was something in Oklahoma! that moved the American mind in a profound way. Certainly the high quality of the production, the fine music and dance were important, but

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such a phenomenal production record suggests that it was more than mere integration of elements and esthetic quality that brought people in by the millions.

It may be possible to argue that Oklahoma! evoked in Americans a sense of community, a sense of a common land and common ideals. It may have evoked an America that all Americans wanted to remember, believed still existed somewhere, maybe only in the mind. Critics noted Oklahoma! as an idealized projection of cultural images and wishes, even though they did not explicitly state the projection to be mythic. Life said Oklahoma! "is wholesome and sweet in the unaffected way that a fairy tale is."<sup>47</sup> Stark Young, for The New Republic said, "There is nothing distinguished about it, and nothing chic and nothing smart, but none of these is tried for; what is sought is the open, the friendly and bright and plain American--not the realistic plain American but the Broadway version of what we like to think is our plain, folksy, happy-hearted, waltz-me-around-again-Willie native life and character ways."<sup>48</sup>

What is evident in Oklahoma!, and what millions of Americans suffered hardships of a sort in order to partake is that most powerful of American cultural images, the image of a pastoral, innocent, and hopeful West. In Oklahoma! the pastoral West is the Arcadia or earthly paradise that Frye describes as conventionally a part of the masque-myth-play. What the musical evokes is the image

of the American West that has stirred the imaginations of Americans since settlers first landed on these shores. Cultural historian Henry Nash Smith attests to the power of this image of the garden of the world, of a "vast and constantly growing agricultural society in the interior of the continent" to become "a collective representation, a poetic idea . . . that defined the promise of American life."<sup>49</sup> One must admit that there are shadows in this picture of promise and paradise. The conceptual and actual conflict between the wild west of the trapper and the agricultural west is suggested in the mention of conflict between the ranchers and farmers. Evil and disorder are present in the figure of Jud. But the conflict between the ranchers and farmers is minimized in the play, and though the Jud story grows ugly, the reality of it is soft-pedalled. There is also some suggestion of deeper and darker psychological reality both in Laurey's ballet and in the exposition of Jud's mind as that character talks with Curly in the smoke house. In fact, as Jud's history of exclusion and alienation becomes clearer, the character becomes almost too sympathetic. His formal function as villain is nearly compromised, and he becomes dimensional, threatening, somewhat like Shylock, to upset the tone of the play. But the overwhelming aura is of a simple idyll in American pastures. Americans in such an ongoing idyll can deal with evil and then get back to the business of living out the Arcadian dream.

The American images evoked in Oklahoma! are best described in what Nash calls our yoeman ideal<sup>50</sup> and in R. W. B. Lewis's The American Adam, which is an attempt to define American culture's basic mythic construction of reality. Lewis's description of the images consistently employed in American literature and thought to picture the American person in this new world seem to describe the figure of Curly in Oklahoma! Curly is just one of a long line of conventionally conceived and rendered men. Curly, like Lewis's "Adam," is a figure bereft of ancestry, "untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritance of family and race, an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever [awaits] him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources. . . . His moral position [is] prior to experience, and in his very newness he [is] fundamentally innocent."<sup>51</sup> The American figure, innocent, moral, ready to face a new land and challenges; that is Curly.

The future for the American has always been viewed as bright. Even after the Census Bureau and Frederick Jackson Turner declared it closed, there has always been in the American imagination or memory some kind of frontier on which the American man could become new, free, and hopeful again. Lewis deals with this aspect of American Adam figures, i.e., their view of history and the future. "The image contrived . . . [has been] that of the authentic American as a figure of heroic innocence and vast



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potentialities, poised at the start of a new history. . . . This image had about it always an air of adventurousness, a sense of promise and possibility."<sup>52</sup> The underlying theme of Oklahoma! is that of starting on a new adventure, personal and communal. A few problems exist, such as Jud and the rancher/farmer dispute, but a little sweat and effort can deal with them. As John Lahr has observed about American musicals in general, there is "still the rainbow, and America still [looms] as some profuse Eden in which every person [has] only to wait his turn for satisfaction."<sup>53</sup>

The show opens with an ode to sweet morning--sweet beginnings, "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," and ends with the same song as Curly and Laurey drive off to start their new life. One of the interesting and significant things about Oklahoma!, and one which is somewhat echoed in Bloomer Girl, is the identification of the personal life of the young man and woman with the life of the community. As with the Anderson-Sherwood Christ figures, the individual and communal destinies are linked, but here the implications are not tragic. In the marriage of its individual members, the community gets new life. Individual destiny and community destiny are one, and together they share the Adamic image as defined by Lewis, innocent, full of vast potentialities and hope. The best example of this union of destinies occurs at Curly and Laurey's wedding. Instead of a wedding march being played, an ode to the territory

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and way of life is sung, suggesting the union of personal and community identity, and incorporating the images of the garden--fertile, blissful, and promising.

Aunt Eller: They couldn't pick a better time to start in life!

Ike: It ain't too early and it ain't too late.

Curly: Startin' as a farmer with a brand-new wife--

Laurey: Soon be livin in a brand-new state!

All: Brand-new state  
Gonna treat you great!

Fred: Gonna give you barley,  
Carrots and pertaters--

Cord Elam: Pasture for the cattle--

Carnes: Spinach and termayters!

Aunt Eller: Flowers on the prairie where the June bugs zoom--

Ike: Plen'y of air and plen'y of room--

Fred: Plen'y of room to swing a rope!

Aunt Eller: Plen'y of heart and plen'y of hope. . . .

Curly: Oklahoma,  
Where the wind comes sweepin' down the plain,  
And the wavin' wheat  
Can sure smell sweet  
When the wind comes right behind the rain.  
Oklahoma,  
Every night my honey lamb and I  
Sit alone and talk  
And watch a hawk  
Makin' lazy circles in the sky.  
We know we belong to the land,  
And the land we belong to is grand!  
And when we say:  
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 (pp. 75-76)

Unfortunately Jud appears to upset this idyll of innocence and hope. He comes at Curly with a knife, but is accidentally killed himself. There are legal problems to be settled because of this development, of course. But in this innocent Eden of the West where moral categories are so clear cut and moral evaluation so sure, where legal formalities run counter to a basic anarchic impulse, it is acceptable to bend the law a little. In a near parody of court proceedings, Curly is absolved of all blame and is freed to start his life with Laurey.

The power of American archetypes to create a sense of communal identity in a culture threatened from the outside must be obvious. In The Machine in the Garden Leo Marx analyzes the impulse that creates and responds to the kind of pastoral expression found in Oklahoma! and the other American musicals of World War II. He finds it to be basically an impulse of escape from complexity and threat. Such impulse can lead, he says, to "A simple-minded wishfulness, a romantic perversion of thought and feeling."<sup>54</sup> Yet it can lead to more. "While in the culture at large [the pastoral impulse] is the starting point for infantile wish-fulfillment dreams, a diffuse nostalgia, and a naive, anarchic primitivism, yet it is

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also the source of writing that is invaluable for its power to enrich and clarify our experience."<sup>55</sup>

It is extremely doubtful that any of the musicals evoking American's past clarified the American experience in any profound way. The musicals, excellent and innovative as they may have been in terms of their generic development, served mostly a popular, cultural celebration function rather than a clarifying one. It seems in retrospective contemplation that they created nostalgic but subtle cultural parables. They created a past in which things were safer and sunnier, but also a past in which a subliminally wished for present could be discerned. In *Curly and Jud*, Laurey and the Oklahoma territory was the situation that Americans found themselves in. In *Jud* were all the hard and ugly challenges of a world at war. In *Curly*, a hero who combines the Adamic, local color innocence of E. P. Conkle's *Lincoln* with that of a John Wayne cowboy, we have a goodness and resolution that suggests the American nation, puzzled by evil but strong against it. In *Laurey and the Oklahoma territory* was the promise of a bright future after the war. Americans must have recognized these correspondences or analogies to some extent in Oklahoma! and the shows that followed. For a few moments on a dimmed out Broadway they could put away doubts about the vincibility of the present evil, and about the future in a post-war world. For a few moments they could believe



in that vague thing--the American myth. For a few moments the theatre spoke to their deeper needs, not just to a need to be entertained and diverted, but to needs made more acute by the war, the need of a past and a sure identity, and a need for assurance that that past and identity were sufficient to deal with the problematic present and that void ahead, the future.

## VI. 1946: THE WORLD IS LIT BY LIGHTNING

### Period of Adjustment

Night is at hand, and life, and another day is about to begin. It will be bad or good, beautiful or tawdry, all depending on the point of view. It will be normal, however, for the lights are on.

Lewis Nichols, New York Times, May 20, 1945

Rarely has a season opened more languidly or made so many futile gestures in the wrong direction. . . . The theatre is temporarily becalmed. Its prewar creative impulse has died away; the new winds have not risen.

Rosamond Gilder, Theatre Arts, December, 1945

Compared to VJ Day, the VE Day celebration seemed as intimate and sedate as an afternoon tea in the east eighties. News of the Nazi surrender came on May 7 at 9:00 A. M. EWT. Shops closed for the day, and New Yorkers from the nearby garment district and from the far reaches of the island gathered in Times Square. They were mostly cold sober at first, but were obviously happy. One discharged serviceman looked at the crowd of 500,000 and asked, "What the hell are they happy about? Right now some of my own buddies are dying in the Pacific."<sup>1</sup> The war was, indeed, not over. But officials decided that the threat of air raids clearly was, and so by May 20, 1945 the more

than twenty miles of neon tubing and other lights that made the Great White Way white were glowing again. The nighttime town and its theatre appeared to be back to their old selves. All that was necessary for an actual peacetime Broadway was that final victory in the Pacific--a mere matter of time and, as it turned out, the atomic bomb.

The final victory came and was announced at 7:03 P. M., August 14, 1945. The words on Times Tower read: "Official--Truman announces Japanese surrender." By 10:00 P. M. 2,000,000 people and thousands of taxis joined voices and horns for a roaring, giddy, mob celebration that extended from 40th to 52nd streets.<sup>2</sup> By April, 1946 the Broadway theatre was able to celebrate the peace officially with Arnold Auerbach's and Harold Rome's Call Me Mister. Irving Berlin, under the auspices of the United States Army, had inducted and made a soldier of John Doe at war's beginning in This is the Army. Now Auerbach and Rome, under the auspices of producers Douglas and Herman Levin, made an ex-soldier of the G. I. The money from This is the Army went to charities and overseas relief. The money from Call Me Mister went to Messrs. Levin et al. Things were getting back to normal.

The ordeal that had organized, given direction, purpose and a substantial degree of unity to the American nation was over. What cohesion existed on domestic problems began to weaken. Large communal goals and identity seemed

obscured by smaller group and individual goals. A man might no longer think of himself as an American, but as a farmer or auto worker eager to consolidate or extend the economic gains made during the war. Actually, Americans felt uncertain about their security in the post-war future. A Gallup poll found 71 percent of its sample citing some problem of "personal financial security" as the biggest post-war problem. To demonstrate their anxiety and their demands 3,500,000 workers became involved in nearly 5,000 strikes during 1945.<sup>3</sup> Economic and other forces struggled against each other, and the American pattern of controlled domestic conflict resumed its petty, though perhaps healthy and creative pace.

The theatre too, suddenly bereft of the vague sense of duty to a war culture, began a period of drift. In October, 1945 Lewis Nichols labeled the season, "the saddest in at least four years."<sup>4</sup> No Drama Critics' Circle Award was given for the 1945-46 season, no play being judged worthy. Nichols expected theatre to find a direction and improve its products' quality. A reconversion process was necessary for the American theatre just as for American industry. Producers during the war had developed the attitude that even the mediocre products could succeed in a prosperous wartime, post-war period. The attitude would change. The playwrights who were in the army or otherwise officially occupied, including Wilder, Saroyan, and Robert Sherwood, would return to their real profession

and would start to produce quality plays. So Nichols felt. But the expected "reconversion" came slowly if at all. There was an air of the theatre's not knowing what to do-- not knowing what subjects to discuss, what appeals to make. The Americana, nostalgia formulas and appeals of the war period seemed less attractive. There were several important shows still running, including Oklahoma!, Carousel, I Remember Mama, and Life With Father, which satisfied the need for nostalgia. Furthermore, the audiences seemed to want a rest from war plays and patriotic, communal appeals, no matter how subtle those appeals might be made. But, no new direction could be discovered. No vital audience nerve was touched. John K. Hutchens noted in February, 1946 that since the Labor Day season's opening only ten shows had survived the public's perusal.<sup>5</sup> The statistics for the 1945-46 season show a drop in total production from ninety-five for the 1944-45 season to seventy-nine. Part of this drop was due to the simple lack of theatres. Because many theatres had been converted for use as television studios by 1946, only thirty-four houses were available for legitimate production. When one considers that this number was further reduced by the numerous long run shows (at least nine), the smaller number of premieres seems inevitable. Plays could not find a stage to play on. Producers were uncertain and were being cautious. Rather than experiment with unusual vehicles in an attempt to find the post-war audience's new

sensibility, producers dragged out the supposedly tried and true. Few seasons on Broadway have seen so many revivals as those of 1945-46 and 1946-47. "It is violating no confidence to state that for a year or more the bulk of the product has been substandard," said Brock Pemberton in December, 1946, "and that to make up for this scarcity of attractive consumer goods, many wheezy old vehicles boasting only fresh duco jobs have been pushed in, without fooling many customers."<sup>6</sup> Actually many customers were fooled, or if not fooled, were happy with the revivals. Of the eighty-seven productions of the 1946-47 season, nineteen were revivals, and six, including Lady Windemere's Fan and Cyrano de Bergerac were major successes.

The revivals seemed to indicate a theatre as uncertain of its post-war role as it had been of its wartime role in 1941-42. The revivals signaled a reversion in the theatre rather than a reconversion. But the theatre's uncertainty mirrored, perhaps, great and pervasive uncertainties about the new world that had just been created with the purging of the fascist and Japanese menaces, about the new potential for apocalypse attendant upon the creation of the atomic bomb, and about the new attempts to create order. Burns Mantel tried to view the theatre's malaise in its world-wide context. "The theatre staggered a little this last season [1946-47]. . . . The theatre's mental processes . . . were a bit on the foggy side. Its established dramatists as well as those in

search of a hearing, were still reeling slightly from their impact with a wartime conditioning . . . that included the hysterical struggle of a dazed and unhappy world trying to right itself with the help of an untried United Nations gyroscope."<sup>7</sup>

There was no lack of prescriptions for the theatre's role in the uncertain new world order. On the domestic and practical level, Sidney Kingsley pointed out that the theatre industry's plans for helping the theatre profession vets get the most from their G. I. Bill of Rights educational benefits could provide a model for other professions.<sup>8</sup> On a more idealistic level Kingsley and others felt that the theatre had a leading and necessary role to play in furthering international understanding. Arthur Hopkins proposed a World dramatists Congress in which leading playwrights from various countries would adapt each others' plays. Thus people in the participating countries would gain an understanding and respect for each other. "Dramatists truly depicting their own people can make them known and understood, their faults as well as their virtues. . . ." claimed Hopkins. "People are looking into each other's hearts and ways. No evil can long survive exposure."<sup>9</sup> A lofty and perhaps impossible challenge to dramatist, and one never actually accepted or apparently seriously contemplated.

If the theatre from 1945 to 1947, with its uncertain direction and questionable quality, with its continuing

domination by comedies, if this theatre could be said to accept any challenge at all, it was the more limited one thrown up by Lewis Nichols. Writing in the March 11, 1945 New York Times, Nichols asked the theatre to become a forum for post-war American problems. "The public is engaged in the war," he said, "and it has a vital interest in the peace and in the days which are to follow. There are many problems to be solved, all of them difficult of solving. The theatre should take part in the discussion. It should not go on with only one bell ringing."<sup>10</sup> Not that the theatre from 1945-47 became a real forum for social problems. It lacked any dominant trend, except perhaps toward revivals, which were a kind of creative evasion, a treading of water. In fact, one of the themes that recurred during the two seasons under discussion was the theme of escape from reality into a fantasy world. Of this theme, more later. But even so, the 1945-47 seasons did make some serious acknowledgment of social and political America. The World War II theatre had presented a mythologized, distanced America of memory and wish-image. With the basic threat of survival removed by Axis surrender, the theatre no longer need serve quite so slavishly the communal myths. Rather, it could turn to the community's internal threats--specifically its political shortcomings and racial problems--and cast the kind of critical eye on them that would have been unacceptable to a wartime audience.



The first play to turn such an eye on American political hypocrisy and opportunism was Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse's State of the Union, which opened on November 14, 1945 and starred Ralph Bellamy and Ruth Hussey. The play concerned Grant Matthews (Bellamy), an honest airplane manufacturer, who is urged by James Conover, a professional politician, and Kay Thorndyke, Matthews' mistress and editor of a large chain of newspapers, to run as the Republican candidate for President. Matthews is deeply concerned about the post-war occupational and nationalistic/ethnic divisions in the country. "We're splitting apart," he says. "Business, labor, farmers, cattlemen, lumbermen--they're all trying to get the biggest bite of the apple. We talk about the war being over--well, we've got a war on here at home now--a civil war--an economic war."<sup>11</sup> The explicit and serious topicality of the play sounded a note not often heard on American stages since some of the Federal Theatre productions.

Matthews desired to speak honestly to his audiences, calling upon the interest groups to work together and make sacrifices if necessary for the greater good of the community. But as a speaking tour progresses, Matthews finds himself under pressure from Conover to make politically expedient changes in his addresses. Instead of speaking honestly about reconversion, Conover urges Matthews to promise the Poles this today and the Italians that tomorrow. Labor this, and management that. The play,

then, becomes a personal test of integrity for Matthews, and a rather cynical look at American political deceit and compromise of principle. "In this country we play politics--" Conover tells the potential candidate, "and to play politics you have to play ball" (p. 221).

The conflict is structured along lines similar to S. N. Behrman's No Time for Comedy. In that 1939 play the playwright-character's integrity to his creative gift is threatened by the influence of a mistress, Amanda Smith. In State of the Union, Grant Matthews is tempted by his mistress to compromise his beliefs and make appeals to special interest and prejudice "until after the election." In both plays the male is nearly seduced, then, by temptresses and their appeals to vanity. They promise immortality and power. But the narrow road of integrity and purity has its champion in the figure of the wry, clearsighted wife-figure. In State of the Union the slightly bitter, Mary is happy that Grant may run for president only as long as she sees him maintaining his ideals. When he begins to compromise, she confronts him, forcing in him, finally, an awareness of his gradual corruption by Conover, Kay, and the vision of power. Grant, like Gay Esterbrook of No Time for Comedy returns to the domestic fold, refuses to play politics and appeal to the worst in Americans.

The play's version of American politics is, at best, cynical. It sees the American politician without

motivating ideals and with a greater desire for power than for the nation's welfare. Kay asks Conover: "Is there any real difference between the Democratic and Republican Party?" Conover replies: "All the difference in the world. They're in--and we're out" (p. 147). The point is to get power. But the play also suggests that there is hope for American politics in 1946 if the naive and manipulable American electorate will not allow politicians to buy its votes with false promises, and if it will try for a broad rather than a self-interested view. Mary declares that "Your politicians have stayed professionals because the voters have remained amateurs" (p. 170). The power can still lie with the people if they will rise and demand straight answers from the men they elect.

The play was well written, the dialogue being generally adult, pointed, and without preachment or reform cliché. The character of Grant Matthews is complex enough to bear credibly the internal struggle of power and integrity. Mary's character is fully delineated and shows her rigorous in her own integrity, a woman jealous of her husband's wandering attention, but still proud of his inherent honesty. The play's topicality is emphasized with names like Stassen, Truman, and Taft recurring; such headline items as price ceilings are mentioned. It was a solid, if not an inspired play. The Pulitzer committee liked it as a play and as a lesson for Americans, and they gave it that prize for being 1945-46's best play. The

public liked it; the play ran for 756 performances. Apparently it tapped a reservoir of cynicism about public officials that had been untouched for some time and needed release. Other plays began to feature the corrupt or foolish political figure. Born Yesterday included a senator anxious to be bought off. Call Me Mister included a satirical sketch on Southern senators, and the 1947 musical, Finian's Rainbow made bitter fun of negro-hating Senator Billboard Rawkins. Satire, an admission of basic social problems, a form noticeably underplayed during the war, was reemerging.

The social problem receiving most attention from playwrights after the war, however, was not the shortcomings of American democracy. It was, instead, the festering religious and racial hatreds in the United States. Anti-semitism, one of the very evils of Naziism that Americans had supposedly been fighting, seemed to many writers a very real danger in post-war American. Arthur Miller's 1945 novel, Focus, deals with anti-semitism and has as its climax a group of neighbors beseiging a Jew's corner news and stationary store. In order to combat the alleged incipient anti-semitic wave, the Research Board of American Jewish Arts called in April, 1945 for scripts advocating tolerance, especially between Jews and Gentiles. The group hoped to sponsor such a play or film.<sup>12</sup> Plays dealing with the theme had already begun to appear in 1945. In April of that year, This, Too, Shall Pass by

Don Appel appeared at the Belasco. It tells of a Jewish soldier who returns home with a gentile buddy, becomes involved with the buddy's sister, and meets the opposition of the mother. Arthur Laurent's first play, Home of the Brave, opened on December 27, 1945, and skillfully interwove the themes of psychosomatic paralysis, battle shock, and anti-semitism.<sup>13</sup> Coney, a young, Jewish soldier, has been made extremely sensitive, almost paranoid by the anti-semitic remarks and actions that he has experienced from his childhood on into his military service. During an expedition to map a Pacific island, now held by Japanese but soon to be invaded by Americans, Coney becomes mysteriously paralyzed after his best friend is shot. We discover, as he (Coney) is treated with drugs which help him to relive the experience his mind has blocked from memory, that the paralysis is a result of his relief that it was his friend and not he who was shot. There is even a deeper guilt at his feeling that his friend deserved death because he had almost called Coney a "lousy yellow Jew." Being assured that his guilt and resentments are actually quite normal under the circumstances, Coney is able to make a physical and psychological recovery. The play combines effective evocation of jungle warfare with a picture of the debilitating effects of religious prejudice.

Getting more attention than religious prejudice in the post-war American theatre, however, was the problem of

racial hatred. The politicians most satirized in this period were Southern politicians, including Judge Jefferson Davis Alexander of State of the Union and the Southern senators in Call Me Mister's skits. It is a bigoted senator from the mythical but definitely Southern state of Missitucky who is turned black by Finian's Rainbow's leprechaun, Og. Black freedom had been given polite lip service during the war in those plays, like Harriet and Bloomer Girl, that had the Civil War as part of their background. After the war, the handling of the problem became much more hard-eyed and explicit. In the five months between September, 1945 and February, 1946, three plays appeared (Deep are the Roots by Arnaud d'Usseau and James Gow, Strange Fruit by Lillian and Esther Smith, and Jeb by Robert Ardrey) which dealt with racial prejudice. The theme cropped up in plays even when it seemed quite irrelevant to the main thrust of the action. In Hear that Trumpet, a play about a love triangle including a jazz musician, his wife, and the group's sponsor, the theme appears in the difficulty of making bookings because of the combo's colored clarinetist. In Finian's Rainbow the theme is sounded, and in Rodgers and Hammerstein's South Pacific, 1949, it is the central thread.

The new awareness of racial problems was a product of the cultural and theatrical history of the war years. World War II stood as the four year period most important to the negro-American between the Civil War and the mid to

late sixties. Edwin Embree gives a good capsulized picture of race relations in the United States during the war in an Atlantic article.<sup>14</sup> There were gains for blacks. The income gap between blacks and whites narrowed. The CIO spoke out strongly against discrimination, and President Roosevelt's 1941 Executive Order 8802 forbade discrimination on the basis of race, creed, or national origin. The Order was issued, however, only after A. Philip Randolph, head of the all-black Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters threatened a massive march on Washington. There were increased numbers of black policemen. In fact there were larger numbers of black workers in general; the 53,000,000 negroes employed in civilian jobs in 1944 was 1,000,000 more than had ever been employed before in American history. To get the jobs, some moves had to be made, however. One million blacks migrated North to find jobs in the war industries. With their migration came the necessity of social adjustments most white were unable or unwilling to make. The result was an increasingly tense situation that provided a background for the post-war dramatists and their works. There were riots in Detroit, Mobile, Newark, and Dayton. The job upgrading of blacks brought on numerous strikes. The six day Philadelphia transportation strike began because eight negroes were given jobs as motormen on trolleys. There seemed to be official reluctance to recognize the change occurring in the society; Congress refused to outlaw lynching and the

poll tax. The Army retained its segregated units until shortly before Germany's surrender in 1945, and the Army was hardly diligent about protecting its black members while in the States. Three black men from Camp Doreen in Mississippi were killed when one of them said "yes" instead of "yes, sir." Other black servicemen were beaten or shot near Southern bases, and little was done to bring the guilty to justice. Racial incident followed racial incident; the black man's presence could not be ignored. His existence called to awareness the gap between the American ideals, the Four Freedoms, and the American performance in granting those rights to its citizens. The war first made America truly aware of its deepest social problem, its most persistent and destructive inconsistency, its most ugly hatred.

The theatre had a good record of integration during the war. The Stage Door Canteen opened its doors to all races, though a kind of fastidiousness demanded that black hostesses be provided for black servicemen. During the thirties and the war years, the black professional and the black literary image had made extensive gains. Though the shuffling, superstitious, and mammy stereotypes were projected on the legitimate stage, there were also rather hard hitting, realistic plays about black life. And there were serious and respected black actors and actresses to create convincing portraits of black Americans. Such



a production was Richard Wright's 1941 adaptation of his novel, Native Son, with Canada Lee as Bigger. The black performer, however, found most opportunities during the war in musical productions (perhaps an unconscious perpetuation of the stereotype of the naturally rhythmic negro). Ethel Waters, a much loved personality, starred in the black musical fantasy, Cabin in the Sky in 1940. Porgy and Bess toured the country successfully in 1942. Hammerstein's Carmen Jones opened in 1943 and was still running at war's end. In fact, in 1945 two black productions were running simultaneously as hits, Carmen Jones and Anna Lucasta, and Paul Robeson's Othello at City Center was drawing rave notices. The American Negro Theatre was regularly producing plays, including the long running Anna Lucasta. In the 1946-47 Theatre Book of the Year George Jean Nathan reported an increasing acceptance of blacks on the stage and an all-time high number of mixed casts on Broadway and on the road.<sup>15</sup>

The point is that an increasing national awareness of the racial problem and a concurrent growth of black acceptance and importance in the theatre made the small flurry of civil rights plays seem almost an inevitability. The war was over and the visions of national unity could be laid aside for the moment. Real national division could be faced squarely--or so the liberals hoped. The public agreed, cautiously, tentatively. Of the plays dealing specifically with the theme of racial prejudice,

only Deep on the Roots was a long running hit,<sup>16</sup> and its melodramatic qualities may have almost as much to do with its popularity as its serious theme.

The play, like Jeb, concerns a decorated black serviceman, Brett, who returns to his home in the South. Brett's home happens to be with a Southern senator (the figure almost becomes a ubiquitous bogey during the period). The senator seems in the first act to have some elements of humanity, but he becomes a stereotyped, hate-filled white supremacist by the play's third act. Senator Langdon had sponsored Brett's education at Fisk University before the war, so the returning negro figure, again as in Jeb where the protagonist has learned a semi-skilled trade in the Army, is not the naive and ignorant black man who is seen in Paul Green's plays or in Native Son. Black figures are changing, and social adjustments must be made. Brett wants to teach and help his fellow black improve their statuses. With the help of Senator Langdon's superficially liberal daughter, Alice, he is to be appointed principal of the black school. But the educated Brett wants to move faster toward negro improvement and civil equality than the Senator and Alice can stand. He dares to enter the town library by the front door, and asks to attend a racial conference in Atlanta. Worst of all he dares to walk out at night with the Senator's other daughter, Genevra, who loves Brett. Up to this point the play has portrayed a set of relationships clearly defined

and limited by social attitudes. Brett, the new black man who has education and has tasted some dignity of treatment overseas, can no longer fit neatly into those societal limits. So the relationships grow increasingly tense and move toward confrontation.

D'Usseau and Gow are unable to create a crisis in the play which is as inevitable as they have shown the societal crisis to be. They manufacture, instead, a melodramatic plot device in which the Senator, threatened by the independence of Brett is able to frame Brett for stealing a watch. In an incredibly contrived final scene, Brett confronts his accusers and comments on their sickness. "Go on living," he tells Alice, whose liberality could not stand the test of a rumored relationship between Brett and Genevra, "and shake with fear every time you see a black face."<sup>17</sup> Ultimately he and Alice are reconciled. The Senator stands ugly and rather impotent in the face of this newly emerging social alliance. The play's denouncement suggests an ambiguous prognosis of the racial problem. Brett has been rendered powerless without the support of Senator Langdon, the Southern power structure, but he has made a kind of alliance with the liberals, Alice and her fiance, a Northern novelist.

Strange Fruit and Jeb appeared on Broadway shortly after Deep are the Roots and were less ambiguous. Lillian Smith enlisted her sister, Esther's, help in adapting her popular novel for the stage. The stage version lost little

of the novel's hopelessness. A weak Southern white man decides that his affair with a black woman can no longer continue. He tries to persuade his houseboy to marry her and give the illegitimate child a name. The woman refuses to accept the arrangement, and her brother kills the white man in disgust and hatred. The brother escapes, and a mob lynches the houseboy, feeling that some negro must atone for the murder. In Jeb melodrama is repressed till the end, and we get a picture of Southern whites and blacks that is unusually free of stereotyped monsters, such as Senator Langdon, and saints, such as Brett. Jeb is a decorated and wounded veteran, who, having learned to run an adding machine in the Army, wants a job running the machine at the mill in his home town. Though the current clerk is both dishonest and usually drunk, Jeb is denied the job because it is traditionally a white man's job. The situation is unspectacular and one likely to face many black veterans returning to the South. But lacking confidence in the actual to be dramatically effective, Robert Ardrey, like d'Usseau and Gow, creates a somewhat melodramatic crisis. Jeb enters the mill one night to see if he can still run the machine, is seen, accused of having a white girl with him, beaten, and forced to leave town. Again, the spectacular is substituted for what is probably the more typical and authentic problem portrayed in the play's first scenes--the problem of jobs and frozen

social roles and attitudes that even rightminded men cannot quite alter.

Strange Fruit ran sixty performances; Jeb, nine. Robert Ardrey explained his play's failure by saying that it was twenty years ahead of its time.<sup>18</sup> But Deep are the Roots had found an audience, and though marred by unconvincing melodrama, it at least raised the problem, just as Home of the Brave and This, Too, Shall Pass raised the problem of anti-semitism and State of the Union the problem of professional politics. The post-war theatre was willing to tackle, at least tentatively, American problems, to confront rather than merely celebrate the social community. Such dramatic confrontation was sometimes financially dangerous for its sponsors. The audience, weary of war tensions was not quite anxious to face immediately the problems that were not only difficult, but that threatened personal values and shook faith in accepted communal patterns of behavior. As Howard, Alice's Northern fiancé in Deep are the Roots tells her, "The prejudice is rooted deep--so deep it will take every ounce of your strength to dig it out and look at it squarely" (p. 188). The question was whether the American theatre audience and playwrights were willing and able to summon the strength required to look persistently at America's unresolved problems. There was the impulse, and it was to grow and flower ultimately in Arthur Miller's All My Sons (1947) and Death of a Salesman (1949), a play that probed so deeply into the

American value patterns and myths that it did in fact take every ounce of many viewers' strength to endure the image of themselves in Willy Loman. But there was also an impulse in the other direction--the impulse to escape.

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad World?

And it seems to me that the basic reason (that Broadway is unendurable) is that Broadway is still playing jackstraws in a world that is playing with the atomic bomb. Playwrights have been selecting subjects that could not possibly interest a playgoer of average intelligence. The schism between Broadway and the adult world has always been clearly visible. Now it is so wide that you can hardly see across.

Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, October 13, 1946

When the adult world is a world of atomic brutality, strikes, imminent racial confrontation, the only sane thing to do may be to escape, if only momentarily. At war's end the problem of whether or not a person could deal with the modern world on an unflinching basis began to be considered somewhat seriously by the theatre. Perhaps the world, as manifested by war which can best be ended when sane men decide to drop a monster bomb and kill 100,000 persons at a shot, perhaps this world could not be rationally dealt with. In Pulitzer Prize winning Harvey, Drama Critics' Circle Award winning The Glass Menagerie, the biggest hits of 1945, and in O'Neill's 1946 The Iceman Cometh, the problematic relation of cruel reality and soothing escape is dramatically discussed. In each play, escape from the world appears to be almost a necessity. On one level, the

three plays and the receptive audiences suggest an ex post facto rationale for the escape role explicitly espoused by America's wartime theatre. In one of the numerous interviews he gave before the opening of The Iceman Cometh, O'Neill, profoundly serious playwright that he was, declared escape to be the theatre's purpose. "Almost the first words of my father I remember . . . are, 'The theatre is dying.' And those words seem to me as true today as when he said them. But the theatre must be a hardy wrench, for although she is still ailing, she will never die as long as she offers an escape."<sup>19</sup>

O'Neill seems to be suggesting that the theatre serves an innate human need--the need to soften the blinding light of reality with the artificial hues of fantasy. O'Neill's belief in the need may have its deep roots in his personal life. His deep sense of guilt and his reluctance to face squarely his family past (until Long Day's Journey into Night) may account for his feeling that in each life there is a vista of horrors too destructive to confront. But there is in O'Neill of 1939-1946 a deepening recognition that the vista is not just a subjective one. Objective reality, as it began to manifest itself during the thirties simply underlined the individual's need to develop a protective hedge of fantasy, the kind of hedge Harry Hope's inmates have all so pathetically constructed. By June 1939, when The Iceman Cometh was begun, and in the year or so following, O'Neill

became almost hypnotized by world happenings. In 1940 he wrote Laurence Langner that he had spent several months "with an ear glued to the radio for war news. . . ." He would not allow Iceman to be produced: "I don't want the strain of any production now," he said. "To tell the truth, like anyone else with any imagination, I have been absolutely sunk by this damned world debacle."<sup>20</sup> Sickened and pained by the outside world, he strangely enough turned to the vista of horrors in his own life, his relationship with his father, mother, and brother, and for the first time tried to face it with real honesty. The result of the confrontation was Long Day's Journey into Night and almost excruciating pain for the playwright. His wife, Carlotta, told Arthur and Barbara Gelb, "at times I thought he'd go mad. It was terrifying to watch his suffering."<sup>21</sup> Not everyone is strong enough to face his own and the world's past and present.

In The Glass Menagerie and The Iceman Cometh characters rely desperately on illusion and falsified memory to save them from the squalor and hopelessness of their lives. The defeated men and women in Harry Hope's Raine's Law hotel nullify the memory of their guilts and their total superfluity by their deadened, drunken states and their "pipe dreams" of a successful return to potency and effectiveness in the world. Amanda Wingfield, in The Glass Menagerie escapes from her oppressive St. Louis apartment and her frustrated, aimless children to a



glorious Southern childhood. "One afternoon in Blue Mountain," she reminisces about the high point of her life, "[I] received--seventeen!--gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accomodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house."<sup>22</sup> Here is a past as heightened, falsified (mythologized, if you will) as the pipe dreams of Harry Hope, Willie Oban, or any of Iceman's characters.

In both plays the escape is seen as being both destructive and saving. In Iceman illusion becomes almost a necessity. Incapable of dealing with life outside, Hope's inmates must retreat to a somewhat manipulable world of dreams. Dwelling there they can at least have the "appearances of life," as Larry describes it.<sup>23</sup> If they try to face the facts of their past and try to deal with the exterior world, as Hickey would force them to do, they face only their own psychic death. In The Glass Menagerie the situation is not so extreme. Amanda, Tom, and Laura have not retreated so far from the depression American of the thirties as O'Neill's characters have from New York of 1912. Thus there is a greater tension in Menagerie between the characters' fantasies and their conduct in the world. Amanda is practical, obsessed as well with her plans and provisions for Laura's future and the family's independence as with her romantic Southern past. She sends Laura to business school, and when that fails, tries to arrange for her the only other future that custom seems

to allow--marriage. Laura is furthest removed from contact with the real world and tries to hide from Amanda's plans and provisions behind a shield of glass figurines and victrola records. Tom attempts to blunt the boredom of his job at the warehouse by drinking and the vicarious escape that movies give. He ultimately tries to escape the trap of his family and life by joining the merchant marine, running off to sea; he attempts the archetypal romantic escape.

But in Williams, unlike O'Neill, reality cannot be evaded. The escapes, the fantasies, poetic and beguiling as they are, create haunting memories and new guilts. They demand new attempts at escape. "Oh, Laura, Laura," cries the supposedly freed Tom. "I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger--anything that can blow your candles out!" (p. 237). But they cannot be blown out. Our defections remain; objective reality remains. Tom, in his role as narrator, notes the uselessness of fantasy against the cruel, contemporary reality when he describes the Paradise Dance across the alley from the Wingfield apartment.

Couples would come outside, to the relative privacy of the alley. You could see them kissing behind ash pits and telephone poles. This was compensation for lives that passed like mine, without any change or adventure. Adventure and change were imminent in

this year. . . . Suspended in in the mist over Berchtesgaden, caught in the folds of Chamberlain's umbrella. In Spain there was Guernica! But here there was only hot swing music and liquor, dance halls, bars, and movies, and sex that hung in the gloom like a chandelier and flooded the world with brief deceptive rainbows. . . . All the world was waiting for bombardments! (p. 179).

In these late war and post war plays a note of despair and pessimism sounds more loudly than in any of the serious plays appearing at the onset of world holocaust. Even in the charming fantasy, Harvey, the implications are ominous. The dipsomaniac, Elwood P. Dowd, suffers from illusions about a six foot tall rabbit that has befriended him. The play suggests that this state of illusion is preferable to living on a realistic level. Elwood tells his doctor, "I wrestled with reality for forty years, Doctor, and I am happy to state that I finally won out over it."<sup>24</sup> Reality is destructive; its impact on those who try to face it squarely is to dehumanize and make monsters of men. The taxi driver tells Elwood's sister, Veta, that the treatments she has arranged for that will make Elwood normal again will also make him a nasty person. "Lady, after this he'll be a perfectly normal human being, and you know what bastards they are!" (p. 188). In this Pulitzer Prize, immensely popular play, a world softened by alchohoic fantasy is seen as preferable to the real world. It would seem that by the end of the war there is a new spirit of blank pessimism and negation abroad in the land.

In the pre-war and early wartime plays such as Key Largo, There Shall be No Night, and The Eve of St. Mark there had been catastrophe. But the outlook of the plays was tragic optimism. In spite of personal disaster and seeming universal meaninglessness, these plays saw human dignity and the promise that struggle had significance. In Harvey normal human beings are bastards and those who escape reality are lovable models of conduct. In The Glass Menagerie the real world is "lit by lighting," and illusions are powerless to alter that world. Instead of making persons compassionate, as they do in Harvey, and bringing people together, the fantasy escapes of The Glass Menagerie further isolate characters from one another. There may be a poignant beauty in Amanda, Tom, and Laura's dreams, and their dreams may save them from being crushed by their lives, but those dreams offer no hope--only disappointment. In The Iceman Cometh the illusions do not even have beauty, and the world definitely has no hope. The individual is faced with the dilemma of facing crushing reality squarely, which means death, or cultivating illusions which do not save and barely even salve. There is a blank despair here not found even in the critical social problem plays of the period. And this despair seemed to strike a nerve in the post-war audience. After the perhaps artificial optimism and cultural celebration of the war period plays, the sense of latent horror could surface and be expressed. The pressure of combatting a

discreet enemy was relaxed; the luxury of admitting one's deepest fears was now allowable and maybe psychologically necessary. Samuel Crafton of the New York Post noted the acceptance of such pessimistic plays in New York and Paris and saw it as "'a phenomenon of great, even frightening current significance.'"<sup>25</sup> The post-war era had begun.

Conclusions: The War, the  
Audience, the Theatre

I say to you solemnly that if Hitler's present military plans are brought to successful fulfilment, we Americans shall be forced to fight in defense of our own homes and our own freedom in a war as costly and devastating as that which now rages on the Russian front.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Message to Congress  
October 9, 1941.

Imagination needs a soil in history, tradition or human institutions else its random growths are not significant enough. . . .

George Santayana, Obiter Scripta

Such philosophic despair could probably only find a theatre audience when the audience was relatively safe from the threat of possible actual destruction. During a period of threat the popular taste seems to demand spectacles quite different from thoughtful examinations of existential tensions and mysteries. The audience seeks inspiration and justification through mythic projections of man and culture. As our major playwrights moved toward personal commitment to the war against Hitlerism in the pre- and early war period, they created in their plays an image of

heightened man. King McCloud, Dr Valkonen, George Antrobus, Quizz West, the various Lincolns all assume primitive heroic, Christ-like, or other Biblical identities and undergo heroic and Christ-like patterns of adventures. As the United States enters the war and our national, or communal involvement becomes intense, the artistically recreated man remains somewhat heroic, but becomes increasingly identifiable as American, e.g., Oklahoma's American Adam figure, Curly, The Eve of St. Mark's all-American Christ-figure, Quizz West. The drama of the Second World War also tends to recreate American man in a more life size version. His life size contours are generally softened and silhouetted, however, by the misty hues of domestic nostalgia, as in Life With Father, I Remember Mama, and even Junior Miss. World War II drama, then, taps with amazing recurrence what Northrup Frye calls archetypes, or culturally associative clusters, and what Henry Nash Smith calls symbol or myth, "an intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image."<sup>26</sup> The tempting question is why the imaginative recreation of man begins to employ these cultural archetypes and mythic characteristics with greater intensity, clarity, and frequency during a period of national stress and crisis than at other times.

Any answer to such a question must be tentative, speculative, and with a good deal of fear and trembling, for it must move from the regions of literary analysis and

history into the less familiar regions, for this author, of individual and social psychology, into the realms of anthropology. The theatre responds to the needs and desires of its patrons--that is how it survives, much to the chagrin of its most passionate champions and sourest critics. Occasionally its playwrights try to move ahead of public and opinion and help form that opinion through their plays. Such was the case with Anderson in Candle in the Wind, Sherwood in There Shall be No Night, and Lilian Hellman in Watch on the Rhine. But generally the theatre takes its cue from the nebulous but somehow discernible taste and underlying personal and collective psychic needs of its audience. Thus, we may assume that in the war period's plays and their projection of cultural myths recurrently enveloped by the clouds of a nostalgically idealized and distanced America, we are witnessing the extremely subtle relationship of communal/personal need and commercial/artistic response.

Perhaps the need and response is somewhat illuminated by Irving Janis in his report, "Psychological Effect of Warnings." Americans were, in effect, not so much under immediate threat of physical or cultural annihilation as under a protracted period of warning that such annihilation could occur. President Roosevelt warned the American public of the danger in a December 9, 1941 Fireside Chat. Note his use of terms calling to mind the Old West. "We must be set to face a long war against crafty and powerful

bandits. The attack at Pearl Harbor can be repeated at any one of many points in both oceans and along both our coast lines and against all the rest of the hemispheres."<sup>27</sup> The long isolationist and supposedly secure American public could not at first believe the warning and initial air raid drills in San Francisco and New York were essentially farces,<sup>28</sup> but the continuing bad news of Axis successes at Midway, in Southeast Asia, and in Europe gave the warning and threat credibility. Janis describes the two usual psychological responses to a credible threat as (a) feeling a need for vigilance and (b), "a strong need for alleviating emotional tension by obtaining convincing reassurances. . . . Heightened need for reassurance is also manifested by changes in beliefs and attitudes--the adoption of a fatalistic outlook or a greater faith in divine protection, the use of magical or superstitious practices for warding off bad luck. . . ." <sup>29</sup>

President Roosevelt seems intuitively to have understood the psychological dynamics of a threat or warning situation. He appeals to the need for vigilance. He also provides reassurance, and in terms which suggest the same image of America as righteous agent of reform and justice that would appear again in Bloomer Girl and Up in Central Park. "I don't think" he declared in the December 9 Chat, "any American has any doubts of our ability to administer punishment to the perpetrator of these crimes."<sup>30</sup> The theatre also seems to have understood



intuitively the psychological needs of a community under the stress of physical and cultural threat, especially the reassurance component. Though the producers and writers often consciously felt that what the public wanted was sheer relief and escape, an apparently unconscious or oblique response to the need is evident in the rise in numbers of productions projecting cultural images. These spectacles, from the tragic optimism of The Eve of St. Mark to the lyric celebration of the American land and character, the American past and future in Oklahoma! and Bloomer Girl, are almost rituals of reassurance, wherein the focus is the community, its health and life.

"Myths and rituals are reinforced," says anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, "because they reduce the anticipation of diaster."<sup>31</sup> The triumphs of the hero, be he Lincoln, Curly, or even Mama of John Van Druten's play, represent to some extent the power of the community and its ideals to triumph over external threat. The spectacle becomes one of wish fulfillment--of desire successfully altering reality and memory. As George Jean Nathan remarked in his essay, "The Audience Emotion," "A theatre audience enters a theatre with the deliberate intention of either forgetting itself for a couple of hours or of being reminded of half-remembered phases of itself, of its life and of its dreams and despairs."<sup>32</sup> During the World War II period the theatre combined, however unconsciously, both the appeals to escape and cultural memory that Nathan

speaks of. In projecting images of an artistically idealized communal life of strength and honor, the plays provided an image in which a relatively sophisticated audience could find personal and social identity and security. Kluckhohn noted this identifying and solidifying role of mythic and ritual expression. "Myth and rituals are adaptive from the point of view of the society in that they promote social solidarity, enhance the integration of the society by providing a formalized statement of its ultimate values--attitudes."<sup>33</sup>

The World War II theatre, then, to the extent that it used cultural motifs and myths, served to celebrate and give focus to the community. People responded by making successful those shows, among others, that did so celebrate the wishful image of America. The increasing recurrence of the motifs, the nostalgic pastoral/historical motifs, for instance, began to take on something of the character of mindless repetition or theatrical fad. Yet the audience apparently wanted such repetitive Americana. Up in Central Park is an example of a comparatively weak show that not only drew an audience, but drew the people back to see the show a second time. This same desire for repetition and the expected is observed by Harry Schein in the Western's audience. "The desire to experience the same thing time after time implies on the part of the audience a ritualistic passivity similar to that which one finds in a

congregation at divine service. It cannot be curiosity which drives the public to the Western; there is no wish for something different and unfamiliar, but a need for something old and well known. . . . The Western has the same bewitching strength as an incantation; the magic of repetition."<sup>34</sup> The repetition of cultural archetypes in World War II drama and musicals fulfilled, probably, the same cluster of needs and expectations Schein defines. The recurrence of idealized cultural figures provided the individual with something friendly, unchanging. Kluckhohn comments: "We can [see] the function of myth as fulfilling the expectancy of the familiar. . . . In the face of want and death and destruction all humans have a fundamental insecurity. To some extent, all culture is a gigantic effort to mask this, to give the future the simulacrum of safety by making activity repetitive, expective. . . ."<sup>35</sup>

The individual, then, may find a personal reassurance of security in the nostalgic and culturally significant patterns before him on the stage. He may enter momentarily into a revery that includes a firm sense of personal membership in the community (identity) and a feeling of certainty that that communal identity is both honorable and strong enough to meet its challenges. And at an unconscious level, the repetitive archetypal motifs of World War II theatre pieces might have had the mysterious power of incantation. The Broadway play, in its nearly ritualistic playing out of certain of the

culture's fondest dreams may begin to serve an almost talismanic function. That is, the repetition of images of American heroes successfully (though sometimes tragically) meeting a challenge and protecting the community, may have the psychological effect of creating a reassuring magical formula that has power to nullify threat. The nostalgic spectacle, if repeated as it was during the war years, seems to reassure the spectator that the community is fundamentally the same as his wishful memory has recorded it, and if the wishful image is repeated and asserted enough, that community may well be secure against the threat of destruction or fundamental change. Assertion creates reality. Repeating the assertion creates a magic powerful enough to drive away evil spirits. While the threatening evil remains, the repetition continues. While World War II went on, the repetitive evocation of Americana went on. As the war drew to a close in 1945, the repetition ceased (though certain hits such as Oklahomap, Carousel, and Life With Father continued into the post-war and cold war periods). The less threatened American community began to look, however tentatively, at its internal social problems, and a few brave souls faced the frightening prospect of reality without the soft cushions of myths and fantasies. The theatre's oblique but strangely perceptive response to the communal psychological needs during wartime ended; new needs were emerging. New responses must follow.

Limitations and Hopes

The conclusions about the historical-theatrical-audience relationship are tentative and speculative. They would obviously be hard to prove. The study, further, is not meant to be inclusive literary. It is fairly selective in what it has chosen to describe and analyze, but it has not selected arbitrarily. The choices were determined by what seemed to indicate significant trends of the war period theatre and by the desire to see literature as a human cultural phenomenon as well as art. It is hoped that the study and conclusions may be suggestive rather than definitive, that it may, in fact, suggest new investigations into the complex and mysterious human-literature relationship.

## NOTES

## NOTES

### I. ELUSIVE JUSTIFICATION: THE THEATRE SEEKS A ROLE

<sup>1</sup>Everett Dirksen, The Congressional Record, 84 (16 June 1939), pp. 7372-7373:1.

<sup>2</sup>Dirksen, p. 7373:1.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Reynolds, The Congressional Record, 84 (28 June 1939), p. 8089:1-2.

<sup>4</sup>Henry Ashurst, The Congressional Record, 84 (28 June 1939), p. 8096:2.

<sup>5</sup>Hallie Flanagan, Arena (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), p. 347.

<sup>6</sup>Caspar H. Nannes, Politics in the American Drama (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1960), p. 150.

<sup>7</sup>"War Between U. S. and Germany is Opposed in Any Circumstance, Gallup Test Finds," New York Times, 21 February 1940, p. 6, col. 3.

<sup>8</sup>"Survey Finds Public Against A. E. F. but Still Back of Aid to Britain," New York Times, 17 August 1941, p. 36, col. 2.

<sup>9</sup>"All Workers Urged to Help Finns," New York Times, 17 January 1940, p. 12, col. 4.

<sup>10</sup>"Stage Folk Plan Wide Finnish Aid," New York Times, 13 January 1940, p. 2, col. 5.

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<sup>11</sup>"Benefits for Finns Stir Theatre Row," New York Times, 19 January 1940, p. 21, col. 1.

<sup>12</sup>"Finnish Stage Fund Assails Union Reds," New York Times, 23 January 1940, p. 7, col. 1.

<sup>13</sup>"Sees Finnish Aid Imperiling Peace," New York Times, 21 January 1940, p. 27, col. 1.

<sup>14</sup>"Sees Finnish Aid Imperiling Peace," p. 27, col. 1.

<sup>15</sup>"Benefits for Finns Assured by Equity," New York Times, 24 January 1940, p. 5, col. 3. But a poll of players by Theatre Authority, which supervised stage benefits, found an "overwhelming majority" willing to give performances without pay. See "Actors' Poll Backs Benefits for Finns," New York Times, 26 January 1940, p. 5, col. 5.

<sup>16</sup>Rosamond Gilder, "'Smile, Demmit, Smile,'" Theatre Arts, XXIII (November 1939), p. 772.

<sup>17</sup>"Next Draft Quota in State is 6,200," New York Times, 17 December 1940, p. 20, col. 2.

<sup>18</sup>August H. Anderson, Congressional Record, 88 (9 February 1942), p. 1143. For an actor's experience with slurs directed toward theatre people by the public outside Congress, see Sgt. Eugene Francis, "Actors are Americans," New York Times, 7 June 1942, VIII, p. 1, cols. 3-5.

<sup>19</sup>Clevenger, Congressional Record, 88 (16 February 1942), p. 1266.

<sup>20</sup>Charles Fabbis, Congressional Record, 88 (6 February 1942), p. 1097.

<sup>21</sup>In a telegram to his agent, Phil Berg, Douglas protested against the attack on himself and denied the innuendoes. He noted that he was working, in fact, without pay and had not asked for the job. "I am not," he continued, "have never been, and never will be a Communist or a sympathizer with any communist doctrines." See "Actors Defend Douglas," New York Times, 11 February 1942, p. 15, col. 2.

<sup>22</sup>Congressional Record, 88 (9 February 1942), p. 1158.

<sup>23</sup>Brooks Atkinson, Broadway (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 168.

<sup>24</sup>"Actors Protest 'Slurs' of Congressmen in Debate Over Theatre's Role in War," New York Times, 10 February 1942, p. 13, col. 4.

<sup>25</sup>Emmanuel Cellers, Congressional Record, 88 (7 July 1942), pp. 6035-6036.

<sup>26</sup>Cellers, p. 6035.

<sup>27</sup>John Gassner, "The War in the Theatre," Current History, 3 (December 1942), p. 360.

<sup>28</sup>Gassner, p. 360.

<sup>29</sup>Variety, 3 June 1942, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>30</sup>Richard Grunberger, The 12-Year Reich (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), pp. 400-401.

<sup>31</sup>Gassner, p. 361.

<sup>32</sup>Rosamond Gilder, "Watchman, What of the Nights," Theatre Arts, XXVIII (October 1943), p. 573.

<sup>33</sup>See for example, Lee Simonson, "Prescription for an Ailing Theatre," New York Times Magazine, 14 November 1943, p. 16.

<sup>34</sup>Martha Dreiblat, "Words on the Theatre and War," New York Times, 16 May 1943, II, p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>35</sup>Dreiblat, p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>36</sup>Coe Ladd, "The Theatre in Wartime," Arts and Decorations, LV (March 1942), p. 5.

<sup>37</sup>"More Comedy, Less Drama," Variety, 20 May 1942, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>38</sup>"Filmusicals Biggest Year," Variety, 18 March 1942, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>S. N. Behrman, No Time for Comedy (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 49. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>40</sup>S. N. Behrman, The Talley Method (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 144. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>41</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Time for Behrman's Comedy," New York Times, 2 March 1941, IX, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>42</sup>Atkinson, "Time for Behrman's Comedy, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>43</sup>Maurice Schwartz, "Theatre in a Democracy," New York Times, 1 December 1940, X, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>44</sup>P. W. T. Ross, letter in the New York Times, 18 August 1940, IX, p. 2, col. 7.

<sup>45</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Drama Tomorrow, Thoughts on the Place of the Theatre in This Chaotic World," New York Times, 30 June 1940, IX, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>46</sup>Atkinson, "Drama Tomorrow," p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>47</sup>Atkinson, "Drama Tomorrow," p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>48</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Some Reflections on the Uses of the Theatre in Time of War," New York Times, 14 December 1941, IX, p. 3, col. 1.

<sup>49</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Things to Write About Now," New York Times, 15 December 1940, X, p. 1, cols. 1-2.

<sup>50</sup>Atkinson, "Things to Write About Now," p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>51</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Art Can Do the Job," New York Times, 6 September 1942, VIII, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>52</sup>Lewis Nichols, "Of War Plays," New York Times, 3 December 1942, VIII, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>53</sup>Lewis Nichols, "Theatre at War," New York Times, 11 March 1945, II, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>54</sup>Lewis Nichols, "End of Summer," New York Times, 7 September 1945, II, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>55</sup>"Theatre goer," "The 'Amusing Evening,'" New York Times, 1 December 1940, X, p. 3, col. 6.

<sup>56</sup>"Topics of the Times," New York Times, 6 November 1940, p. 22, col. 4.

<sup>57</sup>George Jean Nathan, "The People Versus the Playwrights," The American Mercury, LIV (January 1942), p. 103.

<sup>58</sup>George Jean Nathan, "Ivory Towers to Let," The American Mercury, LIII (October 1941), pp. 425-426.

<sup>59</sup>George Jean Nathan, "The Status of Male Playwrights," in The Entertainment of a Nation (Teaneck, New Jersey: Farleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1969), p. 31.

<sup>60</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Hot Time Next Friday," New York Times, 16 February 1941, IX, p. 1, cols. 1-2.

<sup>61</sup>Milton Bracker, "Service Men Get in Free," New York Times, 10 August 1941, IX, p. 1, cols. 1-3.

<sup>62</sup>"Free Stage Shows for Soldiers Begin," New York Times, 30 July 1941, p. 12, col. 3.

<sup>63</sup>See Irving Spiegel, "War and the Theatre," New York Times, 7 March 1943, II, p. 2, cols. 1-2, and "American Theatre Wing Recruiting Show People for War Prod. Labor," Variety, 1 April 1942, p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>64</sup>Brock Pemberton, "Of the Vanished Year 1942," New York Times, 3 January 1943, VIII, p. 2, cols. 2-4.

<sup>65</sup>"This is the Army," Life, XIII (20 July 1942), p. 73.

<sup>66</sup>"Kate Smith's \$10,000 Ducats for 'Army' Preem," Variety, 17 June 1942, p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>67</sup>George Jean Nathan, "School Opens Again," The American Mercury, LV (October 1942), p. 450. See also "Soldiers Chorus," Time, XL (13 July 1942), p. 36, and Edward Fitch Hall, "This is the Army," New York Times Magazine, 12 July 1942, pp. 6-7, and Milton Rosenstock, "Reunion with Broadway," The Saturday Review of Literature, XXIX (26 January 1946), pp. 7-8.

<sup>68</sup>"Show Biz to Forefront, Again," Variety, 13 May 1942, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>69</sup>"15 Broadway Hits to Aid Bond Drive." New York Times, 17 June 1945, p. 19, col. 1.

<sup>70</sup>"War Bond Buyers Attend Shows," New York Times, 27 June 1945, p. 21, col. 4.

<sup>71</sup>"War Bond Honor to Carousel," New York Times, 30 August 1945, p. 15, col. 2.

<sup>72</sup>See Pemberton, "Of the Vanished Year 1942," p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>73</sup>"N. Y. Theatre Canteen Hosts 1,200 Servicemen Nightly in First Week," Variety, 11 March 1942, p. 51, col. 5.

<sup>74</sup>"N. Y. Show Biz-Sponsored Canteen Host to 10,640 Servicemen in 2nd Week," Variety, 18 March 1942, p. 51.

<sup>75</sup>"Stage Door Canteen Reopens in Splendor," New York Times, 21 June 1944, p. 23, col. 3.

<sup>76</sup>Sol Lesser, in Variety, 20 January 1943, p. 56.

<sup>77</sup>James Boyd, Introduction, The Free Company Presents. . . (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1941), p. v.

<sup>78</sup>Boyd, p. vii.

<sup>79</sup>Rosamond Gilder, "Rue for Remembrance," Theatre Arts, XXVI (June 1942), p. 358.

<sup>80</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Drama at Its Lowest Ebb," New York Times, 26 April 1942, VIII, p. 1, col. 1.

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<sup>81</sup>Lewis Nichols, "Note on the War Plays," New York Times, 3 October 1943, II, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>82</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Problems in War Plays," New York Times, 1 March 1942, VIII, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>83</sup>Jordan Y. Miller, "Drama: The War Play Comes of Age," in The Forties: Fiction, Poetry, Drama, ed. Warren French (Deland, Florida: Everett Edwards, 1969), p. 66.

<sup>84</sup>Milton Bracker, "Note on Colonel Lanser," New York Times, 19 April 1942, VIII, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>85</sup>John Steinbeck, The Moon is Down, in The Best Plays of 1941-42, ed. Burns Mantel (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1942), p. 70. Future page references will be given in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>86</sup>James Thurber, "What Price Conquest," The New Republic, 106 (16 March 1942), p. 370.

<sup>87</sup>Thurber, p. 370.

<sup>88</sup>James Thurber, letter in The New Republic, 106 (30 March 1942), p. 431.

<sup>89</sup>Frank G. Nelson, "In Support of Steinbeck's Characters," The New Republic, 106 (13 April 1942), p. 495.

<sup>90</sup>Hans Olav, letter in The New Republic (4 May 1942), p. 607.

<sup>91</sup>The London audience loved the 1943 production. W. A. Darlington attributed the warm response to the unfolding record of Nazi occupation. After another year of war it appeared that resistance was having its effect on German occupation army morale. Such external reports prepared Londoners to accept the play's premises. W. A. Darlington, "London and The Moon is Down," New York Times, 11 July 1943, II, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>92</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Our War of Nerves," New York Times, 10 May 1942, Sec. VIII, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>93</sup>See Maxwell Anderson's "Poetry in the Theatre," and Thornton Wilder's "Some Thoughts on Playwrighting."

<sup>94</sup>In the case where ideology and motifs are acceptable but form is new or outrageous, the response may be divided and the play highly controversial, as was the case with The Skin of Our Teeth.

<sup>95</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Melancholy Time of Year," New York Times, 10 March 1940, XI, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>96</sup>"Actors in Experimental Program," New York Times, 20 February 1944, p. 34, col. 7.

<sup>97</sup>Northrup Frye, "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement," in Fables of Identity (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), pp. 27-28.

<sup>98</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Problems in War Plays," p. 1, col. 3.

## II. PLAYWRIGHTS ADJUST: THE WAR AND ANARCHIC INDIVIDUALISM

<sup>1</sup>Maxwell Anderson, "A Confession," New York Times, 5 December 1954, II, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>For accounts of the formation of the Playwright's Co. see Robert E. Sherwood, "White Desert to Bad Seed," Theatre Arts, XXXIX (March 1955), p. 28, and "Union of Playwrights for Joint Producing," Theatre Arts, XXII (May 1938), pp. 323-324.

<sup>3</sup>Burns Mantle, Contemporary American Playwrights (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1938), p. 38.

<sup>4</sup>Eleanor Flexnor, American Playwrights, 1918-1938, The Theatre Retreats from Reality (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1938), pp. 78-79.

<sup>5</sup>Harold Clurman, "Theatre: Maxwell Anderson," The New Republic, CXIX (27 December 1948), p. 29.

<sup>6</sup>Allan G. Halline, "Maxwell Anderson's Dramatic Theory," American Literature, XVI (1944), pp. 63-64.



<sup>7</sup>Maxwell Anderson, "Whatever Hope We Have," in The Essence of Tragedy (Washington, D.C.: Anderson House, 1939), p. 18.

<sup>8</sup>Maxwell Anderson, Key Largo (Washington, D.C.: Anderson House, 1939), p. 112. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>9</sup>Anderson, "Whatever Hope We Have," p. 20.

<sup>10</sup>Allan G. Halline suggests in "Maxwell Anderson's Dramatic Theory," p. 70, the use of Emerson's phrase and suggested to Anderson that he was influenced by the Concord idealist. Anderson confirmed the influence in a February 17, 1943 letter to Halline.

<sup>11</sup>Maxwell Anderson, Candle in the Wind (Washington, D.C.: Anderson House, 1941), p. 116. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>12</sup>Joseph Wood Krutch, "Modernism" in Modern Drama (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 122.

<sup>13</sup>Maxwell Anderson, Journey to Jerusalem (Washington, D.C.: Anderson House, 1940), p. vi. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>14</sup>Anderson, "Whatever Hope We Have," p. 23.

<sup>15</sup>Maxwell Anderson, "The Essence of Tragedy," in The Essence of Tragedy, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup>Anderson, "The Essence of Tragedy," p. 14.

<sup>17</sup>Edward Foster, "Core of Belief," Sewanee Review, XLX (January-March 1942), p. 95.

<sup>18</sup>In 1942 Edward Foster ("Core of Belief") saw the play as an "allegory of the plight of democracy in a world fast moving toward totalitarianism," p. 95.

<sup>19</sup>Maxwell Anderson, High Tor, in Eleven Verse Plays (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939), p. 141.

<sup>20</sup>Anita Block, The Changing World in Plays and Theatre (Boston: Little, Brown, 1939), p. 243.

<sup>21</sup>Eleanor Flexnor commented in American Playwrights, 1918-1938: "The danger is, that in eschewing the realism of 'journalistic social comment' for poetic prophecy, the writer will lose his grip on the reality of which must necessarily be the basis of dreaming if it is not to be idle vapping and self-delusion. A dream can be, not only the setting of a goal, the embodiment of a hope, but an escape from the difficult and the necessary," p. 90.

<sup>22</sup>Krutch, p. 116.

<sup>23</sup>Vincent Wall, "Maxwell Anderson: The Last Anarchist," Sewanee Review, XLIX (July-September 1941), p. 369.

<sup>24</sup>Foster, p. 100.

<sup>25</sup>An exception occurs in Valley Forge, whose subject militates against a pacifist stance and an evasive protagonist.

<sup>26</sup>Maxwell Anderson, The Miracle of the Danube (New York: The Free Company, 1941), p. 21. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>27</sup>"Hitler Denounced at Drama Benefits," New York Times, 21 November 1938, p. 4, col. 4.

<sup>28</sup>William L. Laurence, "New Curb is Seen for Bone Cancer," New York Times, 11 October 1941, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup>Maxwell Anderson, "Your Navy," in This is War! (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1942), pp. 47-68.

<sup>30</sup>Maxwell Anderson, "A Summons from Valley Forge," New York Times Magazine, 22 February 1942, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup>Mabel Driscoll Bailey, Maxwell Anderson, The Playwright as Prophet (New York: Abelard-Shuman, 1957), pp. 118-119.

<sup>32</sup>Nearly all Anderson's later major figures can be considered Christ figures--i.e., from King McCloud to Joan of Joan of Lorraine, and Socrates of Barefoot in Athens.

<sup>33</sup>Mabel Driscoll Bailey does devote a Chapter to them in Maxwell Anderson, The Playwright as Prophet.

<sup>34</sup>Anderson, "A Confession," p. 7, col. 1.

<sup>35</sup>George Jean Nathan, The Theatre Book of the Year, 1945-46 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 319.

<sup>36</sup>Bailey, p. 117.

<sup>37</sup>Philip Stevenson, "Concerning M. Anderson," New York Times, 9 January 1944, II, p. 1, col. 6.

<sup>38</sup>Euphemia Van Rensselaer Wyatt, "Candle in the Wind," The Catholic World, CLIV (December 1941), p. 335.

<sup>39</sup>See, for example Rosamond Gilder, "Candles that Light the Way," Theatre Arts, XXV (December 1941), pp. 861-866.

<sup>40</sup>Richard Watts, Jr., "Miss Hayes and the Nazis," New York Herald Tribune, 24 October 1941, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup>John O'Hara, "Cool for Candle," Newsweek, XVIII (3 November 1941), p. 58.

<sup>42</sup>Stark Young, "Regrettable," The New Republic, CV (10 November 1941), p. 621.

<sup>43</sup>Joseph Wood Krutch, "The Theatre and the War," The Nation, XLIII (8 November 1941), p. 462.

<sup>44</sup>"Anderson's Drama to Go on in Britain," New York Times, 1 May 1943, p. 3, and "Eve of St. Mark Sold for \$30,000," New York Times, 17 November 1942, p. 29.

<sup>45</sup>Wolcott, Gibbs, "But is it Art?" The New Yorker, XVIII (17 October 1942), p. 36.

<sup>46</sup>Howard Barnes, "Inspired War Drama," New York Herald Tribune, 9 October 1942, p. 16.

<sup>47</sup>Joseph Wood Krutch, "The Eve of St. Mark," The Nation, CLV (24 October 1942), p. 425.

<sup>48</sup>"New Play in Manhattan," Time, XL (19 October 1942), p. 60.

<sup>49</sup>See Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land (New York: Random House Vintage Book, 1950), pp. 138 ff.

<sup>50</sup>Anderson's attempt to rid the play of all excrescences is seen in his use of scenery. The short scenes are played against curtains with only enough furnishings to suggest location. Again the result is one of universalization and is similar in technique to that of Thornton Wilder, another American playwright who consciously experimented with stage technique, ridded the stage of distracting naturalistic details, and explored American cultural motifs.

<sup>51</sup>Krutch, "The Eve of St. Mark," p. 425.

<sup>52</sup>Maxwell Anderson, The Eve of St. Mark (Washington, D.C.: Anderson, 1942), p. 108.

<sup>53</sup>"Anderson Going to Africa," New York Times, 24 January 1943, p. 31.

<sup>54</sup>"Maxwell Anderson in Africa," New York Times, 1 June 1943, p. 19.

<sup>55</sup>Maxwell Anderson, "A Dramatist's Playbill," New York Herald Tribune, 19 September 1943, V, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup>Howard Barnes, "Report from Africa," New York Herald Tribune, 13 January 1944, p. 14.

<sup>57</sup>Burns Mantle, Best Plays of 1943-44 (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1944), p. v.

<sup>58</sup>Maxwell Anderson, Storm Operation (Washington, D.C.: Anderson House, 1944), pp. 7-8. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>59</sup>Other artists made similar moves from various positions on the pacifist spectrum. Lewis Milestone, for instance, had directed the anti-war movie, All Quiet on the

Western Front in 1929-30; in 1943 he became a warrior of sorts by directing Lillian Hellman's portrait of the Russian peasant courageously fighting the Nazi invaders, The North Star. In an example of American pragmatism triumphing over principle, and an example of the art of expedient definition, Milestone defended his new role. "If by pacifist is meant a man who prefers peace and doesn't like war but who will fight rather than surrender his freedom, then I am a pacifist. There were 130,000,000 of that kind of pacifist in this country before Pearl Harbor, and I was quite content to be included." In "Mr. Milestone Beats a Plowshare into a Sword," New York Times, 14 March 1943, II, p. 3, col. 4.

<sup>60</sup>The idea of corpses refusing burial occurred earlier in Chlumberg's Miracle at Verdun, but this does not detract from Shaw's powerful use of the image.

<sup>61</sup>Irwin Shaw, "Notes on Bury the Dead," New York Times, 3 May 1936, X, p. 1, col. 6.

<sup>62</sup>Irwin Shaw, The Gentle People (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 149. Note the similarity of The Gentle People to Saroyan's The Time of Your Life, which appeared later that year. In it the mean, petty tyrant cop, Blick is killed by the gentle dreamer, Kit Carson. The murder is justified by our sympathy for Carson and by the brief poetic essay that Saroyan attached to the play. The essay includes the following: "Have no shame in being kindly and gentle, but if the time comes in the time of your life to kill, kill and have no regret."

<sup>63</sup>Robert E. Sherwood, Preface, There Shall be No Night (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), p. xi.

<sup>64</sup>Quoted in "The First Current War Play," Life, VIII (13 May 1940), p. 48.

<sup>65</sup>"The First Current War Play," p. 48.

<sup>66</sup>John Mason Brown, The Ordeal of a Playwright, Robert E. Sherwood and the Challenge of the War (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 82.

<sup>67</sup>See Jack Gould, "The Broadway Stage Has Its First War Play," New York Times, 12 May 1940, IX, p. 1, col. 3.

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<sup>68</sup>"Finnish War Play Picketed," New York Times, 31 May 1940, p. 15, col. 1.

<sup>69</sup>Gould, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>70</sup>Gould, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>71</sup>Gould, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>72</sup>Robert E. Sherwood, "An American Crusader," in The Free Company Presents. . . . (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1941), pp. 56-86.

<sup>73</sup>"Stop Hitler Now!" New York Times, 10 June 1940, p. 36.

<sup>74</sup>"Sherwood Assails Ford, Lindbergh," New York Times, 26 August 1940, p. 9, col. 1.

<sup>75</sup>Robert E. Sherwood, "Plan for Union," Life, IX (7 October 1940), pp. 98-100. The plan for union had other supporters in the literary-theatre world, including W. Somerset Maugham and Raymond Massey.

<sup>76</sup>"Calls Lindbergh a Nazi," New York Times, 12 October 1940, p. 18, col. 3.

<sup>77</sup>"Sherwood Bids U. S. Keep Pacific Bases," New York Times, 29 March 1945, p. 11, cols. 2-3.

<sup>78</sup>"Playwright Back Home; Worked on His Vacation," New York Times, 18 July 1939, p. 14, col. 2.

<sup>79</sup>Letter quoted in Brown, pp. 26-27.

<sup>80</sup>Robert E. Sherwood, There Shall be No Night, p. 21. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>81</sup>Brown, p. 28.

<sup>82</sup>Euphemia Van Rensselaer Wyatt, "Macbeth in Harlem," The Catholic World, CXLI (June 1936), p. 338.





<sup>83</sup>Irwin Shaw, Bury the Dead (New York: Random House, 1936), p. 56.

<sup>84</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "The Play," New York Times, 25 March 1936, p. 25, col. 3.

<sup>85</sup>Atkinson, p. 25, col. 2.

<sup>86</sup>Stark Young, "Government and Guild," The New Republic, LXXXVI (8 April 1936), p. 253.

<sup>87</sup>Joseph Wood Krutch, "The Devil's Tones," The Nation, CXLII (15 April 1936), pp. 491-492.

<sup>88</sup>Krutch, p. 492.

<sup>89</sup>Part of the problem lay in the writing, especially of the ending. The old, gentle men have just committed murder yet our attention is directed not to the implications of violently resisting cruel men, but by the humorous and shrewd hiding of a piece of incriminating evidence. The major problem, however, as in Idiot's Delight, stemmed from the production. Clurman states in The Fervent Years that he felt the play to be "rather slight" and felt a bit unsure how to stage it. Several critics noted the uncertainty. In the January 25, 1939 issue of The New Republic Otis Ferguson complained of the mishmash that resulted from the reluctance of the production to live up to the play's content. "As produced, there is some hesitation over whether they want straight drama or laughs, and a tendency to go out indiscriminately for both, so that I don't know where you can match the scene of the murder for confusion and plain criminal awkwardness--the whole climax of the piece held up and stretched farther than the nerves will go while there is this hammy playing for guffaws, the whole effect of resolve and violence ruined" (p. 343).

In the London production, the confusion was less apparent, probably because the implications about appeasement vs. fighting evil men were clearer to Londoners than to New York producers and audiences. W. A. Darlington noted in his reports to the New York Times that though no one explicitly suggested that the play was a "parable of power politics," everyone felt the parabolic content subconsciously. The result of this intuitive insight was a more consistent production and a more uniform audience reaction. Goff, the petty gangster, played a bit too charmingly by Franchot Tone in New York, was played with less charm and more menace in London. The audience felt so strongly his menace and accepted the necessity of action

against it that they applauded his murder. See the New York Times, 30 July 1939, IX, p. 1, cols. 3-7.

<sup>90</sup> Apparently feeling that the point might be obscured by the play, Sherwood added a Postscript to the printed version. The Postscript included the following: "If decent people will continue to be intoxicated by the synthestic spirit of patriotism, pumped into them by magalomaniac leaders, and will continue to have faith in the 'security' provided by those lethal weapons sold to them by the armaments industry, then war is inevitable; and the world will soon resolve itself into the semblance of an ant hill, governed by commissars who owe their power to the profundity of their contempt for the individual members of their species," pp. 189-190.

<sup>91</sup> Robert E. Sherwood, Idiot's Delight, in Famous American Plays of the 1930's, ed. Harold Clurman (New York: Dell, 1962), p. 296. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>92</sup> Robert E. Sherwood, The Rugged Path, in The Best Plays of 1945-46, ed. Burns Mantle (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1946), p. 362. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>93</sup> Lillian Hellman, An Unfinished Woman (New York: Little, Brown, 1969), p. 82.

<sup>94</sup> "Russia Acclaimed by Miss Hellman," New York Times, 2 March 1945, p. 5, col. 1.

<sup>95</sup> Lillian Hellman, "I Met the Front-Line Russians," Colliers, 115 (31 March 1945), pp. 11 ff.

<sup>96</sup> Hellman complained that though the completed movie was worthwhile the director, Lewis Milestone, had romanticized the opening scene making the Ukranian peasant appear to be the happy, operetta peasant of some never-never land. See Theodore Strauss, "The Author's Case," New York Times, 19 December 1943, II, p. 5, col. 8.

<sup>97</sup> Northrup Frye, "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement," in Fables of Identity (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), p. 28.

<sup>98</sup> Joseph Wood Krutch, "Unpleasant Play," The Nation, 148 (25 February 1939), p. 244.

<sup>99</sup>Lillian Hellman, Days to Come in Four Plays by Lillian Hellman (New York: Random House Modern Library, 1942), p. 154. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>100</sup>Frye, p. 27.

<sup>101</sup>Lillian Hellman, "Back of Those Foxes," New York Times, 26 February 1939, IX, p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>102</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "The Play," New York Times, 16 February 1939, p. 16, col. 2.

<sup>103</sup>Krutch, "Unpleasant Play," p. 244.

<sup>104</sup>Lillian Hellman, "Day in Spain," The New Republic, LXXXIV (13 April 1938), p. 298.

<sup>105</sup>Lillian Hellman, The Little Foxes, in Four Plays, p. 225. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>106</sup>Miss Hellman promoted the loyalist cause in Spain after her return to this country. She asked that a benefit performance of The Little Foxes be given. For more details see Chapter I.

<sup>107</sup>Lillian Hellman, Watch on the Rhine, in Four Plays, p. 296. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>108</sup>Robert Van Gilder, "Of Lillian Hellman," New York Times, 20 April 1942, IX, p. 1, cols. 607.

<sup>109</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Hellman's Watch on the Rhine," New York Times, 13 April 1942, IX, p. 1, cols. 2-3.

<sup>110</sup>Jordan Y. Miller, "Drama: The War Play Comes of Age," in The Forties: Fiction, Poetry, Drama, ed. Warren French (Deland, Florida: Everett/Edwards, 1969), p. 71.

<sup>111</sup>The play seems to be one of the allegorical structures described by Frye. It is one of "the poetic structures with a large and insistent doctrinal interest in which the internal fictions are exempla, like the epics of

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Milton," Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 91.

<sup>112</sup>Stark Young, "Behind the Beyond," The New Republic, 110 (1 May 1944), p. 604.

<sup>113</sup>"The Searching Wind," Life, XVI (1 May 1944), p. 43.

<sup>114</sup>Lewis Nichols, "The Play," New York Times, 13 April 1944, p. 25, col. 2.

<sup>115</sup>Lillian Hellman, The Searching Wind (New York: Viking Press, 1944), p. 37. Future page references will appear in parentheses after the quote.

### III. EPIC THEATRE: THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH

<sup>1</sup>Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1942-43, ed. Burns Mantle (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1943), p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis Nichols, "Gnashing Teeth," New York Times, 3 January 1943, VIII, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Charlotte Hughes, "The Antrobi at Home," New York Times, 13 December 1942, VIII, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Hughes, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Nichols, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Richard Lockridge, in Critics' Theatre Reviews (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1943), p. 173.

<sup>7</sup>Wilella Waldorf, in Critics' Theatre Reviews, p. 174.

<sup>8</sup>Thornton Wilder, Preface to Three Plays (New York: Bantam Books, 1957), p. xii.

<sup>9</sup>Burton Rasco, in Critics' Theatre Reviews, p. 174.

<sup>10</sup>John Gassner, "Upswing in the Theatre," Current History, 3 (January 1943), p. 459. Actually Wilder sounds a note common to such other World War II plays as Harriet, i.e., he suggests that man can organize after the war, can improve, can break the war-peace cycle. Antrobus: "In the middle of all that blood and dirt and hot and cold--every day and night, I'd have moments, Maggie, when I saw the things that we could do when it was over . . . (p. 133). Maggie, you and I will remember in peacetime all the resolves that were so clear to us in the days of war. We've come a long ways. We've learned. We're learning. And the steps of our journey are marked for us here." He refers to the books of philosophers (p. 136).

<sup>11</sup>Harrison Smith, "The Skin of Whose Teeth: Part II," The Saturday Review of Literature, XXV (26 December 1942), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup>Joseph Campbell and Henry Robinson, "The Skin of Whose Teeth?" The Saturday Review of Literature, XXV (19 December 1942), p. 3.

<sup>13</sup>Campbell and Robinson, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup>Campbell and Robinson, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>Campbell and Robinson, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup>See "Joyce or a Chicken," Time, XL (28 December 1942), p. 62, and "Finnegan Reawakened," Newsweek, XX (28 December 1942), p. 70.

<sup>17</sup>Edmund Wilson, "The Antrobuses and the Earwickers," The Nation, 156 (30 January 1943), p. 167.

<sup>18</sup>Wilson, p. 167.

<sup>19</sup>Smith, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup>See "Joyce or a Chicken," p. 62.

<sup>21</sup>In "Trade Winds," The Saturday Review of Literature, XXVI (9 January 1943), p. 12.

<sup>22</sup>"Finnegan Reawakened," p. 70.

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<sup>23</sup>Wolcott Gibbs, "Finnegan's Teeth," The New Yorker, XVIII (16 December 1942), p. 34.

<sup>24</sup>Wolcott Gibbs, "Under Pressure," The New Yorker, XIX (8 May 1942), p. 32.

<sup>25</sup>Lewis Nichols later chided the critics for their lack of courage and their abandonment of the year's best play (in Nichol's judgment) in the face of controversy. "Two Prize Plays," New York Times, 9 May 1943, II, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Thorton Wilder, "After a Visit to England," The Yale Review, XXXI (December 1941), pp. 217-224.

<sup>27</sup>M. C. Kuner suggests that the two playwrights were simultaneously experimenting along the same lines, both being independently influenced by expressionism. In Thorton Wilder: The Bright and the Dark (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972), pp. 104-105.

<sup>28</sup>Bertholt Brecht, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," in Brecht on Theatre, ed. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), p. 37.

<sup>29</sup>Brecht, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup>Brecht, p. 36.

<sup>31</sup>Thorton Wilder, "Some Thoughts on Playwrighting," in American Playwrights on Drama, ed. Horst Frenz (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965), p. 59.

<sup>32</sup>Bertholt Brecht, "Indirect Impact of the Epic Theatre," in Brecht on Theatre, p. 58.

<sup>33</sup>Bertholt Brecht, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," p. 38.

<sup>34</sup>Alvah Bessie, "Wilder Allegory," The New Masses, XLV (8 December 1942), pp. 29-30.

<sup>35</sup>Wilder, Preface to Three Plays, p. vii.



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<sup>36</sup>Thorton Wilder, The Skin of Our Teeth, in Three Plays (New York: Bantam Books, 1961), p. 88. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>37</sup>Wilder, "Some Thoughts on Playwrighting," p. 57.

<sup>38</sup>Wilder, "Some Thoughts on Playwrighting," pp. 54-55.

<sup>39</sup>It was such fusion of the specific national detail with universal consciousness that Wilder admired in Goethe. See Thorton Wilder, "The Planetary Mind," Harper's Bazaar, 84 (1 March 1950), p. 148.

<sup>40</sup>Northrup Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 322.

<sup>41</sup>M. Mc Grath, "No Wilder than Babbitt," The Nation, 156 (13 March 1943), p. 395.

<sup>42</sup>Gerald Rabkin, "The Skin of Our Teeth and the Thatre of Thorton Wilder," in The Forties: Fiction, Poetry, Drama, ed. Warren French (Deland, Florida: Everett/Edwards, 1969), p. 120.

<sup>43</sup>Dwight Macdonald, Against the American Grain (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 53.

#### IV. ON NATIVE GROUNDS: LOCAL COLOR AND THE UNIVERSAL HERO

<sup>1</sup>Arthur Bernon Tourtellot, "History and the Historical Novel," The Saturday Review of Literature, XXII (24 August 1940), pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup>Hallie Flanagan, Arena (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>Flanagan, p. 371.

<sup>4</sup>Flanagan, p. 91.

<sup>5</sup>Flanagan, p. 248.

<sup>6</sup>Anthony F. Merrill, "The Town that is a Theatre," Theatre Arts, XXIII (July 1939), p. 520.

<sup>7</sup>Flanagan, p. 95.

<sup>8</sup>Flanagan, p. 283.

<sup>9</sup>For a description of Nail's creations see Norris Houghton, "Drama at the Crossroads," The Atlantic Monthly, 168 (November 1941), pp. 596-604.

<sup>10</sup>Edith J. R. Isaacs, "Where Do We Go From Here?" Theatre Arts, XXIII (July 1939), p. 482.

<sup>11</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Ought We to Found a National Theatre?" New York Times Magazine, 24 March 1940, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup>Atkinson, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup>A possible exception might be Jack Strickland's Tobacco Road.

<sup>14</sup>Flanagan, p. 312.

<sup>15</sup>Flanagan, p. 173.

<sup>16</sup>William Peery, "American Folk Drama Comes of Age," The American Scholar, 11 (Spring 1942), p. 361.

<sup>17</sup>George Jean Nathan, "The Inspiration of the Current Drama," The American Mercury, LIV (March 1942), p. 361.

<sup>18</sup>Patterson Greene, Papa is All (New York: Samuel French, 1942), p. 38. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>19</sup>Brooks Atkinson, Introduction to Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, Life With Father (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. xi.

<sup>20</sup>Lewis Nichols, "Harriet and Miss Hayes," New York Times, 14 March 1943, II, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>21</sup>John Gassner, "Jefferson and Hamilton in Drama," Current History, IV (March 1943), p. 88.

<sup>22</sup>Gassner, p. 88.

<sup>23</sup>"Critics Prize Won by The Patriots," New York Times, 14 April 1943, p. 25, col. 7.

<sup>24</sup>Rosamond Gilder, "Time and the Rivals," Theatre Arts, XXVI (March 1942), p. 149.

<sup>25</sup>Lewis Nichols, "Jefferson and Democracy," New York Times, 7 February 1943, II, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Joseph Wood Krutch, "Henry Ward Beecher's Little Sister," The Nation, 156 (20 March 1943), p. 426.

<sup>27</sup>Francis Ryerson and Colin Clements, Harriet (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), p. 211. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>28</sup>Sidney Kingsley, The Patriots (New York: Random House, 1943), p. 176. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>29</sup>Stark Young, "Lincoln and Huston," The New Republic, LXXXVII (9 November 1938), p. 18.

<sup>30</sup>See Theodore Strauss, "Abe Lincoln of 45th St." New York Times, 30 October 1938, IX, p. 3, col. 5.

<sup>31</sup>Harriet also seemed to plead the case for the U.S. not to return to its post-World War I attitudes. "Our danger is this," says Harriet at the recruiting rally, "when the conflict is finished and war-weariness has set in, we may be tempted to forget, to slip back into old ways. . . . Then will the battle have to be fought again, and, perhaps, yet again" (p. 211).

<sup>32</sup>Rosamond Gilder, "Patriots, 1776, 1943," Theatre Arts, XXVII (April 1943), p. 201.

<sup>33</sup>See Martha Dreiblatt, "Words on Theatre and War," New York Times, 16 May 1943, II, p. 1, col. 5.

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<sup>34</sup>Roy P. Basher, The Lincoln Legend (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), and David Donald, "The Folklore Lincoln," in Lincoln Reconsidered, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 149.

<sup>35</sup>Robert Sherwood, Abe Lincoln in Illinois (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 191. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>36</sup>Millard Lampell, "The Lonesome Train," in Radio Drama in Action, ed. Erick Barnouw (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1945), p. 241.

<sup>37</sup>In a 1938 review of Prologue to Glory, Euphemia Van Rensselaer Wyatt observed that "Lincoln will always remain the prototype of the American country boy who developed himself not through any trick of fortune but through an innate spirit of honesty and industry." In "The Drama," The Catholic World, 147 (May 1938), p. 214.

<sup>38</sup>If the history plays dealing with such other historical persons as Jefferson and Wilson lack the clear mythic patterns, it is probably because their central figures were not cultural figures in the same definitive way as Lincoln's.

<sup>39</sup>Northrup Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 282.

<sup>40</sup>Frye, p. 282.

<sup>41</sup>Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Bollingen Series XVII, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 245-246.

<sup>42</sup>Frye, p. 283.

<sup>43</sup>Campbell, p. 249.

<sup>44</sup>Campbell, p. 246.

<sup>45</sup>Campbell, p. 249.

<sup>46</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Lincoln of New Salem," New York Times, 27 March 1938, X, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>47</sup>E. P. Conkle, Prologue to Glory, in Federal Theatre Plays, ed. Pierre de Rohan (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 103. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>48</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Lincoln's Prairie Years," New York Times, 23 October 1938, IX, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>49</sup>Atkinson, "Lincoln's Prairie Years," p. 1, col. 1.

## V. BROMIDIC PARABLES: THE MUSICALS

<sup>1</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "New Dramatic Forms for Old," New York Times, 9 February 1941, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>2</sup>George Beiswanger, "The Theatre Moves Toward Music," Theatre Arts, XXV (April 1941), p. 287.

<sup>3</sup>Weill notes the movement on Broadway and in his own work toward integration of elements on his notes on the cast recording of Street Scene. "In the different Broadway shows which I wrote . . . I tried to make the music an integral part of the plays; especially in Lady in the Dark, with its three little one-act operas, I continued the story in musical fantasies when the realistic story stopped. In the meantime, the whole Broadway scene began to change in the same direction. Porgy and Bess became a big popular success, Carousel and Carmen Jones introduced operatic elements, and the American public became more and more opera-conscious. When I finally decided that the time was ripe for a real Broadway opera, I found Elmer Rice's famous play . . . a perfect vehicle. The form I decided on as the best realization of an American opera-form was exactly that complete integration of drama and music which I had attempted in my earlier works." Columbia, O L 4139.

<sup>4</sup>Beiswanger, p. 289.

<sup>5</sup>"Al Jolson, Mae West May Head New Revue," Variety, 15 April 1942, p. 1. col. 1. See also Karl Schriftgeiser, "Rebirth of Vaudeville," New York Times Magazine, 19 April 1942, pp. 18-19.

<sup>6</sup>Variety, 15 April 1942, p. 51, col. 1.

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<sup>7</sup>Lewis Nichols, "More on Vaudeville," New York Times, 19 September 1943, II, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>8</sup>"See Summer Vaudeville Boost," Variety, 8 April 1942, p. 3, col. 3.

<sup>9</sup>"Vaudeville Back in Montreal after 7 Years," Variety, 22 April 1942, p. 45, col. 1.

<sup>10</sup>"Demand for Fast, Varied Shows Cues Great Strides in Comeback of Vaude," Variety, 15 April 1942, p. 43, col. 1.

<sup>11</sup>"And Still the Corpse Carries on," New York Times, 29 October 1944, II, p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>12</sup>Wolcott Gibbs, "Something for Everybody," The New Yorker, XX (6 December 1944), p. 42.

<sup>13</sup>John Lahr, Notes on a Cowardly Lion (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 228-230.

<sup>14</sup>George Eells, The Life That Late He Led (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1967), p. 216.

<sup>15</sup>Brooks Atkinson, Broadway (New York: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 314-315.

<sup>16</sup>Banjo Eyes, especially, seemed an expression of the vaudeville-revue genre. It contained the vaudeville commonplaces of a chorus line, a parody of a ballroom dance, patriotic songs, and talking horses that crossed their legs. For a review and description of the show see Wolcott Gibbs, "Full Week," The New Yorker, XVII (3 January 1942), p. 28.

<sup>17</sup>Beiswanger, p. 293.

<sup>18</sup>Richard Rodgers, "Theatre Music," American Mercury, LIX (September 1944), p. 280.

<sup>19</sup>It is curious that Rodgers, who helped give strings their importance in the contemporary musical drama's orchestra, later introduced an orchestra without any strings in his show, No Strings.

<sup>20</sup>See Lewis Nichols, "Musical Shows," New York Times, 11 February 1945, II, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>21</sup>Theodore Strauss, "Comeback of the Chorus Girl," New York Times Magazine, 11 March 1942, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup>Thyra Sumter Wimslow, "Notes on a Theatrical Revolution," New York Times Magazine, 11 March 1945, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup>Strauss, pp. 18-19.

<sup>24</sup>John O'Hara, Pal Joey (New York: Random House, 1952), p. 16.

<sup>25</sup>Wimslow, p. 37.

<sup>26</sup>See Strauss, p. 18.

<sup>27</sup>The Theatre Guild tried to encourage new work in the fertile field of ballet by announcing in 1944 a contest for the best original ballet play on an American subject. The prize was \$500. For the announcement see Sam Zolotow, "Premiere Tonight of Mrs. Kimball," New York Times, 29 February 1944, p. 21, col. 1.

<sup>28</sup>See, for example, Euphemia Van Rensselaer Wyatt, "Oklahoma!" The Catholic World, 57 (May 1943), pp. 186-187.

<sup>29</sup>Kappo Phelan, "Bloomer Girl," The Commonweal, XLI (27 October 1944), p. 37.

<sup>30</sup>For a critical view of the American Lyric Theatre see B. H. Haggin, "American Lyric Theatre," The Nation, 149 (8 July 1939), pp. 52-53.

<sup>31</sup>Beiswanger, p. 296.

<sup>32</sup>Edith J. R. Isaacs and Rosamond Gilder, "American Musical Comedy," Theatre Arts, XXIX (August 1945), p. 452.

<sup>33</sup>The Field's had put military trimmings on their really civilian 1941-42 hit, Let's Face It with Danny Kaye and Eve Arden. In that show three wives adopt servicemen from a nearby army camp as gigolos in an effort to get revenge on their wandering husbands. Aside from the

numerous allusions that are made to inductee life, the play has little to do with war or war world problems. The Field's Mexican Hayride, 1944 had nothing at all to do with war.

<sup>34</sup>Wolcott Gibbs, "Our Miss Merman," The New Yorker, XVIII (16 January 1943), p. 32.

<sup>35</sup>Gibbs, p. 32.

<sup>36</sup>Rodgers, p. 281.

<sup>37</sup>Rodgers, p. 281.

<sup>38</sup>Isaacs and Gilder, p. 493.

<sup>39</sup>Rosamond Gilder, "The Isle is Full of Noises," Theatre Arts, XXIX (March 1945), p. 85.

<sup>40</sup>Several critics note this trend. See, for example, Rosamond Gilder, "Spring Laurel," Theatre Arts, XXIX (June 1945), pp. 325-336, and Nichols, "Musical Shows," New York Times, 11 February 1945, II, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>41</sup>Northrup Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 287-288.

<sup>42</sup>Kappo Phelan, "Up in Central Park," The Commonwealth, XLI (16 February 1945), p. 448.

<sup>43</sup>An ad for Decca records in 1944 appeals to the sense of American identity and the American past. "We have recorded the love of the land, the reverence for the flag, the joy of our people. You still find them in thousands of Decca records and albums, such as Oklahoma! . . . Porgy and Bess . . . Cowboy Songs and such favorites as "Silent Night" and "Sweet Lilani" as sung by Bing Crosby." "Broken! . . . Thank Goodness," ad in New York Times Magazine, 5 November 1944, p. 45.

<sup>44</sup>See Wolcott Gibbs, "And Very Pretty, Too," The New Yorker, XXI (28 April 1945), p. 38.

<sup>45</sup>Oscar Hammerstain II, Oklahoma! in Six Plays by Rodgers and Hammerstein (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 81. Future page references will appear in parentheses after the quote.

<sup>46</sup>David Ewen, The Story of America's Musical Theatre (New York: Chilton Corporation, 1961), p. 179 ff.

<sup>47</sup>"Oklahoma!" Life, 14 (24 May 1943), p. 57.

<sup>48</sup>Stark Young, "Oklahoma with Details," The New Republic, 108 (19 April 1943), p. 508).

<sup>49</sup>Henry Nash Smith, The Virgin Land (New York: Random House Vintage Book, 1950), p. 138.

<sup>50</sup>Smith quotes an 1851 speech by Representative George W. Julian to define the yeoman ideal. Julian said, in part: "The life of a simple farmer is peculiarly favorably to virtue. . . . His manners are simple, and his nature unsophisticated. . . . The farmer lives in rustic plenty, remote from the contagion of popular vices, and enjoys, in the greatest fruition, the blessings of health and contentment," p. 197. How like the American Adam is Julian's yeoman, and how like the world of Oklahoma!

<sup>51</sup>R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 15.

<sup>52</sup>Lewis, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup>John Lahr, Up Against the Fourth Wall (New York: Grove Press, 1970), p. 118.

<sup>54</sup>Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 10.

<sup>55</sup>Marx, p. 11.

## VI. 1946: THE WORLD IS LIT BY LIGHTNING

<sup>1</sup>Nat Kohn, "Broadway in Anti-Climactic Welcome of V-E Day: Real Whoopee on Monday," Variety, 158 (9 May 1945), p. 16, col. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"All City 'Lets Go,'" New York Times, 15 August 1945, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Reported in John M. Fenton, In Your Opinion (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), pp. 34-37.

<sup>4</sup>Lewis Nichols, "Slow Motion," New York Times, 21 October 1945, II, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>5</sup>John K. Hutchens, "Why They Flop--and Who Pays," New York Times Magazine, 17 February 1946, VI, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup>Brock Pemberton, "Crisis over Broadway," New York Times, 29 December 1946, II, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>7</sup>Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1946-47 (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1947), p. v.

<sup>8</sup>Sidney Kingsley, "American Theatre Wing Reconverts," New York Times, 16 June 1946, II, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>9</sup>Arthur Hopkins, "New World Theatre," New York Times, 8 July 1945, II, p. 1, col. 1. See also Richard Watts, Jr., "One World," Theatre Arts, XXX (March 1946), pp. 142-149.

<sup>10</sup>Lewis Nichols, "Theatre at War," New York Times, 11 March 1945, II, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>11</sup>Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, State of the Union (New York: Random House, 1946), p. 9. Future page references will appear in parentheses after the quote.

<sup>12</sup>"Seeks Play on Tolerance," New York Times, 2 April 1945, p. 15, col. 8.

<sup>13</sup>Rosamond Gilder felt the numerous themes tended to overload the play. "Sprightly Entertainment," Theatre Arts, XXX (March 1946), p. 141.

<sup>14</sup>Edwin R. Embree, "Balance Sheet in Race Relations," The Atlantic Monthly, 175 (May 1945), pp. 87-91.

<sup>15</sup>George Jean Nathan, The Theatre Book of the Year, 1946-47 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. v.

<sup>16</sup>Anna Lucasta was a long run black production, but it was originally written as a play about a Polish family

in a Pennsylvania mining town. Minor changes were made to make the play "black," but the play remained basically a color-blind, ethnic comedy-drama that seems almost incidentally to have been casted by black performers.

<sup>17</sup>Arnaud d'Usseau and James Gow, Deep are the Roots (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), p. 182. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>18</sup>Robert Ardrey, Preface to Plays of Three Decades (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 25.

<sup>19</sup>Interview with S. J. Woolf, "Eugene O'Neill Returns after Twelve Years," New York Times Magazine, 15 September 1946, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup>In Arthur and Barbara Gelb, O'Neill (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), p. 835.

<sup>21</sup>Gelb, p. 836.

<sup>22</sup>Tennessee Williams, The Glass Menagerie, in The Theatre of Tennessee Williams (New York: New Directions, 1971), I, p. 148. Future page references will appear in parentheses following the quote.

<sup>23</sup>Eugene O'Neill, The Iceman Cometh (New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1946), p. 25.

<sup>24</sup>Mary Chase, Harvey, in Best Plays of 1944-45, ed. Burns Mantle (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1945), p. 184.

<sup>25</sup>Grafton is quoted in Brooks Atkinson, "To Be or Not To Be," New York Times, 27 October 1946, II, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Henry Nash Smith, Preface to Virgin Land (New York: Random House Vintage Book, 1950), p. vi.

<sup>27</sup>Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat on December 9, 1941," in The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), X, p. 526.

<sup>28</sup>See Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On? (New York: Paperback Library, 1971), pp. 24-38.

<sup>29</sup>Irving L. Janis, "Psychological Effects of Warning," in Man and Society in Diaster, eds. George W. Baker and Dwight W. Chapman (New York: Basic Books, 1962), pp. 60-61.

<sup>30</sup>Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat," p. 529.

<sup>31</sup>Clyde Kluckhohn, "Myths and Rituals: A General Theory," The Harvard Theological Review, XXXV (January 1942), p. 69.

<sup>32</sup>George Jean Nathan, "The Audience Emotion," in Art of the Night (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928), pp. 93-94.

<sup>33</sup>Kluckhohn, p. 65.

<sup>34</sup>Harry Schein, "The Olympian Cowboy," trans. Ida M. Alcock, The American Scholar, 24 (Summer 1955), p. 311.

<sup>35</sup>Kluckhohn, p. 66.

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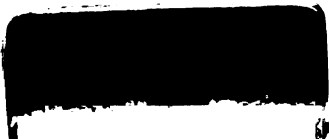
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