CHAPTER - IV

A GOLDEN WAY TO DOMESTIC BLISS
Clifford Odets' **Golden Boy**, written during his stay in Hollywood is frequently regarded as his most successful play. It is opened during 1937 and concerns American quest for success. This is also concerned with the general question of lost integrity on a somewhat a personal level. Harold Clurman in his introduction to this play, calls this Odets' "most subjective play".¹ This play dramatizes how an overactive drive for material success corrupts a talented young violinist, Joe Bonaparte, who discovers that he can earn more money from prize-fighting than music.

This play is modern allegory or a parable which reveals both an individual's relation to society and his duty to himself. This is the playwright's last play to focus on the economic effects of the depression. This play moves even more inward in the sense that it does not deal with the decadence of a class, or even society in general, but with the mental turbulence 'success' can cause in an individual mind. By this time, Odets had got associated with Hollywood, and it is but natural that this trend is reflected in the new play.
This play has a basically Hollywood theme handled with a fine sense of reality. The strong of this play is not mere the story of prize-fighting but allegorically it is a fighting for place in the world as an individual. This has been called, "One of the few important tragedies in American drama". The title of this play has grown out of the golden gloves boxing competition, which is responsible for the initial success of his model for the play.

The story is that of the 'golden boy' Clifford Odets himself having been referred to as "the Golden Boy of American Drama", the one gifted with the golden hand to handle the violin, who becomes a prize fighter. The allegory speaks for itself. Music has to relegate itself to the background when Mammon asserts himself. Joe's artistic integrity is sacrificed at the altar of material gain. Odets has easily managed to prove how the psychological conflict in an individual's mind can be related to social causes. Joe Bonaparte facing the choice between violin and leather gloves symbolizes the struggle of youth, very often unsuccessfully, against the material values before which they are forced to surrender. This is not a happy choice. The individual is suffocated to the point of annihilation of all that is good in him. He 'kills' his family affinities; he tries to kill his love for Lorna, till he really commits a murder though unwittingly. Completely shatters in spirit, he takes shelter in speed; the speed of the dream car he has purchased. It is this uncontrollable speed that finally destroys Joe and his beloved, Lorna. The violin and the boxing gloves represent antithetical forces which can never be resolved. The person who is caught between these two polar opposites can never find a solution. Joe realizes the futility of what he is trying to do: "I develop the ability to knock down anyone my weight. But what point have I made? ... I want off to the wars because someone called me a name – because I wanted to be two guys. Now it's happening ... I'm not sure I like it."

Joe Bonaparte is an Italian violinist, who always yearns for fame and fortune; he is torn between his desire for material wealth, along with the accompanying fame of boxing ring and his passionate love for music. Because of his poverty and oversensitive nature, he suffers a lot from a deep-set insecurity and diffidence, which is hidden behind an outward hostility.
towards the world. When his feelings are hurt, he says, "You can't get even with people by playing the fiddle." Because of his attitude he becomes a boxer; throughout his fights he fears that he may damage his hands and be forced to give up playing the violin that he loves much. Finally, he wins fame and fortune; his manager Tom Moody's girl, Lorna Moon with whom he falls madly in love.

In an interview after the opening of the play, Odets stated that he was trying to place his hero '...in his true social background and show his fellow conspirators in their true light (to) bring out the essential loneliness and bewilderment of the average citizen, not (to) blow trumpets for all that is corrupt an wicked around the Italian boy, not (to) substitute, string of gags for reality of experience, (but to) present the genuine pain, meaning, and dignity of life within the characters." Odets makes Tom Moody, the fight Manager, the very symbol of exploitation. He takes the maximum advantage of Joe's offer. "Joe does his work, I do mine. Like this telephone ... I pay the bill and I use it." Very soon, Moody is forced to confess to Lorna: "It's our last chance for a decent life ... We have to make the kid tight! He's more than a meal ticket – he's everything we want and need from life!"

The family of Joe is portrayed effectively to render the appropriate background. They represent the real values of life. His father, Mr. Bonaparte is upset, hurt, and even enraged when he discovers that his son has virtually exchanged violin for boxing gloves. He wants Joe to retain his love for art. Even the minor characters, Ann, Sigge and Mr. Carp are all simple individuals thriving old-fashioned concepts of love, virtue, and love of art. Joe's brother Frank explains what he stands for, as a conscientious representative of the Congress of Industrial Organizations: "I fight (for) the pleasure of acting as (I) think! ...the satisfaction of staying where I belong, being what (I am) ...at harmony with millions of others." Odets makes it clear that each man belongs to the 'millions of others' of the same background, and that struggling collectively for socially desirable ends is necessary in the world of today.
Odets knows very well that this day becomes a great success. That is why he himself says, "I wrote this to be a hit, to keep the group theater going, and a hit it was." This play works best as a symbolic play. As the playwright clearly intended it as an allegory, he subtitled an early draft An American Allegory. Many critics opined that this play is a modern allegory; Harold Clurman also agrees and says: "What this Golden Boy of this allegory is fighting for a place in the world as an individual; what he wants is to free his ego from the scorn that attaches to 'nobilities' in a society in which every activity is viewed in the light of competition."

Clurman points out that the chief symbol in this allegorical plot is boxing that represent life's struggle, which is the attempt of a frustrated artist "to 'punch' his way in to a world and find acceptance by it, peace with it, safety from becoming the victim that it makes of the poor, the alien, the unnoticed minorities." Clurman concludes "to achieve access, the allegorical hero is forced to exploit an accidental attribute of his make up, a mere skill, and abandon the development of his real self." Some other critics also have discovered other symbols in their interpretations of this play as allegory. Murray points out two park bench scenes where Joe and Loma meet to express their feeling each other in general Joe's motivations for wanting to box in particular. During these scenes a traffic light flashes, changing between red and green. This alteration is a mark of 'stop and go' and is "as if in comment on both the lover's desire for each other and Joe's decision about where to begin using hands without worrying about damaging them." Murray says, "I, who ruthlessly abandoned caution in a desire to conquer the world, but who was ultimately defeated by his own overriding ambition." Gerald Weales opines about the play regarding allegory and says, "The play takes a further allegorical step that audiences are reluctant to accept the analogy between boxing and capitalism. Joe is regularly an instrument, a machine or a commodity, a possession. His marketability is discussed through out the play, and in the end there are two worlds gathered to mourn Joe's death-one to mourn the loss of a property, the other the loss a man." Besides these symbol and allegorical interpretation towards a naturalistic hero's defeat, there are some other symbols which emphasize the other significant social points.
Tom Moody, the manager is a clear-cut symbol of capitalist greed. He recognizes Joe's great skill in boxing and tries to persuade him to devote himself to fighting. Irrespective of Joe's musical ambitions, he exploits Joe only as much as one might expect an investor to exploit his investments. He wants maximum benefits from his business; so he encourages Joe maximum, but not at the cost of Joe's life, because he doesn't want to lose his investment [Joe]. The arrangement of Joe's fatal play with Chocolate Drop is against his will. By the force of Eddie Fuseli he schedules the fight. Fuseli is the opposite of Moody, and his interest in Joe is because of several reasons. A desire for a source of income from illegal gambling; his little care for Joe's physical welfare; Joe's interest in luxurious life and he is ready to do anything; his unhappiness over Joe's growing love for Loma Moon; his partly feeling that women are bad for athletes health; she is the chief obstacle in Joe's total commitment to fighting and because he is jealous. Above all Fuseli is a homosexual.

Here, Fuseli, the gangster, stands for something more seeming dangerous in American society than organized crime. During the earlier period, the gangster figure symbolized the force and oppression of the capital system. Generally gunman and racketeer figures in a drama always act at the instruction of corrupt capitalists and politicians, and help to oppress the workers. But in this play Odets has created Fuseli as an enemy of both capitalist, Moody and of the lower middleclass boy trying to make good. In this connection, R. C. Reynolds opines: “In allegorical from Odets shifts the social struggle away from working class against capitalist and even away from middle class against undefined economic forces; in Golden Boy capitalism, through still not presented in a favourable light, struggle with focus for the control of a middle class boy who looks to both as the way to success.”

Hence two struggles are there in the play, which are recognized by Odets as significant social concerns. They are the struggle of a middle class hero against the frustration of trying for the betterment of his life; the struggle of a capitalist against encroaching fascism that attempts to force him to abuse
his position and exploit the hero. Odets so skilfully conceals his social concern in the play. Krutch wrote in 1939 that this play is “capable of engaging the interest of a spectator little concerned with either political agitation or the attempt to interpret human nature in maximum terms.”

When the play is opened, Tom Moody, the fight manager, and Lorna moon, his girl are found in the small Broadway office, “where one finds these two at the height of one of their frequent fights.” In their conversation, it is understood that Lorna has been pressurizing Tom Moody to marry her; but he tells her that he has to divorce his wife, Goddam Monica, to marry her. He also tells her that his wife wants five thousand dollars to give him divorce. Lorna is tired of waiting for Moody’s wife to divorce him, so she wants to force him in this regard. But she feels trapped and is afraid of leaving Moody. Gabriel Miller says: “Like Awake and Sing!, Golden Boy thus begins characteristic Odetsian note of movement and stasis, involving a character’s need to break out and frustrating inability to do so.”

Moody is also trapped by two things – his wife’s demand to pay the price of divorce and his failure of finding a boxer who can revive his managerial career. Now he has a mediocre boxer, Kaplan, and he has some hopes on him. He thinks that Kaplan might win him some money and he says: “If Kaplan wins tonight, I’ll take you dancing at the park.” Lorna says: “It’s the twentieth century, Tom-no more miracles,” and warns him to come out of the imagination. Now Moody is in need of ‘a boy who can fight.’ So he tells Lorna to find out any capable person. Moody regretting about the presents and talks about the twentieths, when he was successful and he had a lot of money. Lorna undercuts his reverie by mentioning her mother death in 1928; this exchange provides ‘the first of many instances of success and death, a dominant thematic concept in this play.’ Moody kisses her and promises to give her anything she wants. Meanwhile a boy enters the office without taking permission. Here Odets’ stage direction is significant. “Suddenly youth is standing at the office door. Lorna sees him and breaks away.” Then Moody’s reaction is, “Don’t you knock when you come in an office. Later he reveals his identity as Joe Bonaparte. He is very confident in his talks. He introduces
himself to Lorna also. Finally he is able to convince Moody that he is competent though to participate in fighting. Joe tells Moody that Mr. Kaplan has broken his hand, and so he is ready to replace him, but later he is convinced. So he decides to take Joe in the place of Mr. Kaplan.

It is in the scene two of act one, where Joe turns against his elders when he is questioned about his participation in fighting. Here he tries for his own identity and so he takes a big step of entering a new field leaving his music. At one stage he says: "I don't want to be criticized! Nobody takes me serious here! I want to do what I want. I proved it tonight I'm good-I went out to earn some money and I earned! I had a professional fight tonight-may be I'll have some more." In fact, his father wants him to be a musician and so he buys a violin costs twelve hundred dollars as a present for his birthday, as he turns twenty-one the next day. But when he sees Joe's photo in the newspaper fighting chocolate drop, he puzzles; he can't believe his own eyes and says that the boy should be somebody else. When he comes to know that the boy is none but Joe, he feels a lot; he expresses his helplessness. In this scene Odets dramatizes the relation between the wife and husband fantastically. He indicates that the third person should not interfere with them even through they are quarrelling. It is seen very clearly in case of Anna and Siggie, Mr. Bonaparte's daughter and son-in-law. During their conversation Siggie asks Mr. Bonaparte to get a taxicab so that he can earn money to support the family. Meanwhile Anna interferes and recommends his father to get an old one; however, every now and them she too returns the same. Mr. Bonaparte interferes and says:"that your wife in private, not in public!" (P.781). It is supported by Mr. Crap, a Jewish friend of Mr. Bonaparte, also. Immediately, both Siggie and Anna turned against Mr. Bonaparte and say to look after his business. This is revealed through the dialogues of Siggie and Anna after Mr. Crap says: "A man his wife and it is the first step to fascism." (P.781). Both of them start their wordy war. That follows as: Siggie [to crap]: What are you talking about, my little prince! I love my wife. [Now to Mr. Bonaparte] And as for you, don't make believe you care! Do I have to fall on my knees to you otherwise? We wanna raise a family-it's a normal instinct. Take your arm off her.
Anna: (Suddenly moving over to Siggie). That's right, poppa. He can hit me any time he likes. Siggie: (his arm around her) and we don't want you interfering in our affairs unless you do it the right way!

Anna: That's right poppa-you mind your g. d business! (Mr. Bonaparte repressing a smile, slowly sits. (P.781)

After this conversation both Mr. Bonaparte says: There's a olda remark—never interfere in the lows of nature and you gonna be happy." (P.781). In this way one finds the children turning against their elders in this scene.

After two months, Lorna, Moody, Tokio and Roxy are discussing Joe in Moody's office. When it comes to the question of Joe's capability, Tokio tells Moody about Joe: "I'd trust him, Tom. Joe knows his own needs, as he says. Don't ask him to change style. A style is best when it's individual, when it comes out of the inner personality and the lay of the muscles and the set of the bones. That boy stands a chance to make the best light weight since Benny Simon." (P.784). Meanwhile Mr. Bonaparte comes there to know about his son; he introduces himself as the father of Joe. During their conversation it is revealed that Joe is not showing interest towards fighting, as he is afraid of his hands, thinking that he may not play violin. Finally after Mr. Bonaparte's leaving Joe come there and says: "I might give up fighting as a bad job. I'm not over-convinced it's what I want. I can do other things." (P.788) Moody talks to Loma, and he wants to convince Joe through her.

The next scene is the Park scene, Where Joe and Lorna sit on a bench in the park; they are talking about each other's thoughts. Joe says that he loves music, and he says," When I play music nothing is closed to me. I'm not afraid of people and what they say. There's no war in music. It's not like the streets." (P.789) He also says: "If music shot bullets I'd like it better artists and people like that are freaks today. The worlds moves fast and they sit around like forgotten dopes." (P.789) But Lorna persuades him to prefer fighting and she says: "Don't Tokio know what his talking about? Don't Tom? Joe, listen: be a fighter! Show the world! It you made your fame and fortune—and you can—
you'd be anything you want. Do it! Bang your way to the light weight crown. Get a bank account. Hire a great doctor with a beard-" Thus their conversation goes through the love matter of Moody and Lorna and finally doesn't come to a conclusion.

In this scene, Joe is getting ready to go on a tour along with Lorna and Tokio. Remaining members of a family talk to Lorna. Mr. Bonaparte shows the violin to Joe; all of them bid farewell to Joe with a lot of sadness. In the first scene of the second scene, park scene once again Joe and Lorna meet. Joe expresses his love for her and says: "You're real for me-the way music was real." (P.798) First Lorna says that Moody loves her and so she too loves to him. But finally she expresses her love towards Joe where the scene ends. The next day in Moody's office, Lorna and Moody are found. After some conversation, Moody tells Lorna that he is not happy with the way Joe loves at her. He is looking at her, "As if he saw the whole island of Manhattan in your face," Moody says. But Lorna declines it. Later by the time Joe comes there, Moody and Lorna are kissing each other. After a while Joe ask Lorna, "Why did you kiss him?" Moody interferes and says, it is about time you shut your mouth and minded your own Goddam business." Joe says: "Lorna loves me and I love her." But Lorna tells Joe that she loves Tom or Moody. After Joe's leaving the place, Lorna sheds tears. Moody realizes and asks her whether she loves that boy; Lorna accepts.

Six weeks later, the scene in the dressing room. All people along with Mr. Bonaparte, Siggie are found. Meanwhile Lorna comes, but she leaves when Joe says: "I don't want her here!" Here, Joe is totally disgusted with all the people, as Lorna rejected him before all the people. So he tells Roxy: "I'm important! My mind must be clear before I fight. I have to think before I go in." (P.806) He tells his father: "Poppa, I have to fight, no matter what you say or think! This is my profession! I'm out for fame and fortune, not to be different or artistic! I don't intend to be ashamed of my life!" (P.807) He also tells Tokio: "Now I'm alone. They are all against me-Moody, the girl...You're my family now, Tokio - you and Eddie! I'll show them all - Moody stands in my way! My father had his hand on me for years. No more. No more for her either-she had
her chance! When a bullet sings through the air it has no past - only a future-like me! Nobody, nothing stands in my way!” From this it is understood that Joe is vexed with all and his aim nothing but fighting. Slowly he is turned in to the nature against his better nature, i.e. a killer; ultimately he has no alternative, and so she must fight because that is the only thing he can do. He has become a killer in spirit. He is actually seduced by the moneyed world, surrounded by the prize arena and the temptations offered by the gangster Eddie, who tries to mould this Golden Boy in to a fighting machine. Now he is careless of others, indifferent to love, cut off from family ties and memories of the past. When he breaks his hands in the boxing, this seals his new identity as a fighter; but his exultant cry is simply ironic that’s recalls Ralph’s exultant at the end of Awake and Sing! : “I swear to god, I’m one week old! .... We’re glad we’re living.”

Act three is a crucial one and in its first scene the title aptness is found in the words of Eddie: “A year ago Bonaparte was a rookie with a two-pants suit. Now he wears the best, eats the best, sleeps the best. He walks down the street respected - golden boy! They howl their heads off when Bonaparte steps in the ring... and I done it for him.” (P.812) Eddie says like this when they have a conversation in which Eddie talks about the next days fight. He also tells Joe: “I know Bonaparte. I got eighteen thousand spread out on him tomorrow.” Joes tells him suppose Bonaparte looses?” But Eddie expresses his confidence on Joe and says:” I look at proposition from all sides-I know he’ll win.” Finally when Joe says that he wants some personal life, Eddie says he will give a good personal life. However Joe has some inner feeling that he is losing some-thing in his life and says: “you use me like a gun! Your loyalty’s to keep me oiled and polished!” In fact, before all this happiness Joe has a talk with Lorna in which he feels a lot of disappointment because she says that she does not feel unhappy to marry Moody. But in reality, she loves Joe, which is unknown to him. So she talks to him hypocritically without revealing the truth.

The next scene is the most important scene where Joe inadvertently kills Chocolate Drop in the fight; where Joe and Loma run away in a car very
fast. But however the truth about their death is revealed in the last scene only. In this scene, when Lorna comes to the fight place Eddie tells her to leave that place; he also says with utmost angry: “Get outa my sight! You turned down the sweetest boy who ever walked in shoes! You turned him down, the golden boy, that king among Juven-niles! He gave you his hand—you spit his face! You led him on like gertie's whoore! You sold him down the river! And now you got the nerve to stand here, to want and him bleeding from mouth!”

(P.813) Meanwhile Joe comes to dressing room after winning Chocolate Drop in the fight. He gets a lot of appreciation. Moody says that the world is his oyster. After a while, Barker, the Chocolate Drop's manager rushes forward and says that the Chocolate Drop is killed. He says that they all murdered his boy; he points at Joe and says that Joe has killed his boy. Joe can't digest this and feels a lot. He says that intentionally he has not done that. It is supported by all most all the people. Then it is Lorna who has given him a lot of moral support. She tells him that he wanted to conquer the world and he has done that. Joe says: “I am what I want to be!” Lorna advises him to “Give up the fighting business!” and go back to his music. But he says that his hands are ruined; He will never play again. Lorna declares love for him and consoles him: “Two together! We have each other! Somewhere there must be happy boys and girls who can teach us the way of life! We'll fine some city where poverty's no shame—where music is no crime! Where there is no war in the streets—where a man is glad to be himself, to live and make his woman herself!” Here Lorna has a pathetic eleventh hour hope of salvaging their broken lives. Clearly she refers to death only, as in fact such place can't be found in real world. Joe also understands this and realizes that “to salvage his soul he must separate it from his body.” Their quest ends in disaster in the portentous local of Babylon, Long Island. The play concludes in the home of the Bonaparte where Frank announces the deaths of Joe and Lorna to Mr. Bonaparte, Moody and Fuseli.

Goldstein complains that the play is “Sturdily constructed, but the structure rests on a week foundation.” But at the same he says: “Odets shows himself in possession of a newly heightened curiosity about the problems of the individual to expose the flaws in American society.” In this
play the playwright departs from 'the family-unit-as-hero theme', as there is no Mr. Bonaparte, Frank lives all over the country, Siggie and Anna are the unwanted tenants in the family of Mr. Bonaparte; he concentrate on the role of the individual. Krutch identifies the play's major theme as "the lonely agony of souls imprisoned in private hells of frustrated desire and inarticulate hate. The agonies of his characters are real and affecting, what ever one may think of the reasons for existence."

Most of the agree that Odets' play can, as told by Edward Murray, "survive a rigorous study of its from and content as literature."

Writing about this play Sam Smiley says: that "the dichotomy between materialism and human values remain too strict for Golden Boy to be a tragedy, and the action is closely under the control of thought for it to be mimetic melodrama. Structurally, it is a serious, persuasive play." But the chief literary value of the drama is pinned down by Gerald Rabkin, and he says: "If Joe was destroyed by his false image of success, he was not entirely culpable; this image was created by a society in which man's basest instincts are glorified."

In this play, the playwright used of the convention of melodrama also in order to construct an allegory that depicts a gradual harmful effect of a destructive ethic. This play presents a social alternative also. In this play, Joe Bonaparte tries to repossess his own soul, which he sells for gold to the people, who are running a boxing game, through the love affair with Loma Moon. But he is unable to love Loma, because of her relation with the manager. So he commits suicide her in his new automobile. The theme of this play is nothing but the battle of Joe in finding himself in a world in which 'material and spiritual values clash.' He has broken his hands; and so he can no longer play the violin. But he has attained a great material success; he finds he has lost his true self.

This play is not primarily concerned with the decay of the class, but with the decadence of an ideal, success. The playwright got this theme from his personal situation in Hollywood. Comparing the theme of the play and the
experiences of Odets in Hollywood, Gerald Rabkin says, "Whether or not the world of the prize ring is intended to represent the world of the Hollywood, it is apparent that the values of both are those which Odets had previously attacked in his early plays. The theme of the Golden Boy is made meaningful in terms of a specific condemnation of the value of a society in which false values are able to prevent man's better instincts."  

In this play the playwright opens up the stage to surround various settings—Moody's office, the Bonaparte home, the part, and the dressing room. Joe Bonaparte, who is the playwright's first major protagonist, cannot be confined to the living room. He wants to go out into the world to see what is there. In this play Moody hankers for a miracle, a winning boxer 'who will reverse his professional decline and personal fortunes.' Where as 'Lorna wants love and sense of family lost at her mother's death.' Joe answers both their longings in the long run.

After this play opened, Odets quoted with man's complaint about the lack of an authentic American drama in an essay, 'Democratic Vistas in Drama,' published in the New York Times:

"In his easy "Democratic Vistas" written in 1871, Walt Whitman wrote: 'of what is called the drama or dramatic presentation, in the United States, as now put forth at the theaters, I should say it deserves to be treated with the same gravity, and on a poor with questions of ornamental confectionery at public dinners, or the arrangement of curtains and hangings in ballroom...."

"I feel in dejection and amazement that among writers and talented speakers, few or none have yet really spoken to this people, created a single image-making work for them, or absorbed the central spirit and the idiosyncrasies which are theirs—and which, thus, in the highest ranges, so far remain entirely uncelebrated and unexpected."

Odets agrees with Whitman that 'the modern theatre had failed to express the American spirit' and then he advances a rather bold claim for the time which the movies supply the lack at least partially: "Let us, for once, give
the movies some credit. They have spoken to this people. The movies have explored the common man in all of his manifestation-out of the Kentucky Mountains, out of the Montana ranch house, out of the machine shop, from the docks and alleys of the great cities, from the farm out of the hospitals, air planes, and taxicabs.

The movies are now the folk theatre of America. But they are not what with man asked for in 1871...Hollywood producers will tell you gladly that they are not interested in presenting their themes "significantly." They are not interested in interpretation or criticism of their material. Their chief problem, they contend, is the one of keeping the level of human experience in their pictures as low as possible. They keep to primary colors with the expected result: "The good will be rewarded, the wicked punished: success lurks around every corner: love is only a matter of the right man looking the right girl in eyes: and so on and so on and soon."  

Odets concludes with a suggestion that the theatre adopts the themes of the movies, but they tell the truth where the film told a lie. Thus Odets utilizes in this play a cinematic scene format that differentiates this play from the tightly knit structure of the earlier plays. In the character of Joe Bonaparte, "Odets not only gives expression to the human condition in the American city of 1930s, but also celebrates a broader human experience as well."  

The character carp is like a serpent in the Edenic garden of the Bonaparte home. He always counters Mr. Bonaparte's native optimism and his for Joe's career in music with gloomy criticism. In the end, as Schopenhauer says, what is the use of trying something? For every wish we get, ten remains unsatisfied. Death is playing with us as a cat and her mouse!" He proves to be prophetic in assessment of Joe's pursuit of the American dream: As mentioned by Gabriel Miller, "Briefly, Schopenhauer posited that conflict between individual wills is the cause of continuous pain and frustration, and the world in thus a place of unsatisfied wants and unhappiness. Man's intellect and consciousness are mere instrument of the will, while music, the ultimate expression of the soul, provides a means of momentarily transcending the conflict, investing human life with higher significance."  

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In this play, Joe’s most important relationship is with Lorna Moon. She is anxious for home; moreover, she is looking for a combination of father and husband in Moody. Here, Lorna wants what seeks to escape i.e. home. Joe Bonaparte is destroyed because society makes him a killer. The boxing world becomes a microcosm of the larger society of which it is a part. The crucial fact in this play is, it presents a social alternative; this play ends with an image of a family solidarity. This play ends with Joe’s realization that materialism will not make him happy. This play has become the greatest success of Odets’ career. Clurman wrote shortly after the play closed in New York, it was “the greatest success in the Group’s history.” When this play turns out to be a great success in London, the English press hails Odets as “white hope of English dramatic letters.” Leslie Weiner praises this play as “Odets’ most commercially successful creation Golden Boy,...is the single play which most directly mirrors Odets’ own personal conflict between doing his work as an artist and getting his name in the papers.”

Daniel Aaron calls Clifford Odets “the ‘Golden Boy’ of the left theater.” This play represents a “triumph of dramatic technique and artistry,” as told by Murray after this play, Odets loses his force as a maker of social drama. In this connection Gerald Weales concludes, “The revolutionary playwright who never kept his promises.” Gerald Rabkin effectively analyses the theme of the play: “Golden Boy treads the uncertain line between cliché and seriousness. Although the story of Joe Bonaparte’s rise and fall is indeed sheer Hollywood – it is the stuff of a hundred fight films – Odets has succeeded in covering the bones of melodrama with sterner stuff. He has done so by reverting to his role of allegorist.”

Among the highly effective symbols in the play, the most appealing is that of the new Deusenberg automobile Joe has been craving for. It stands for speed which has become a pervasive factor in modern American life. Joe explains that sensation: “Those cars are poison in my blood. When you sit in a car and speed you are looking down at the world. Speed, speed, everything is speed – nobody gets me!” The same symbol of speed is the symbol of destruction as well. Joe has already killed his better self by ignoring the
violinist in him and promoting the pugilist. That process of death becomes complete in the speeding machine. It was but natural that Lorna had to share the experience with him. Fuseli, the Italian racketeer who wants to "buy a piece of Joe", is another penetrating symbol of human exploitation that has become a lucrative business. The symbol gains more meaning in the context of Frank's enquiry to Fuseli, "How much does Joe own of himself?" The individual in the modern world, struggling against several forces operating from different direction, appears to own very little of himself. It is this grim reality that Odets succeeds in driving home.

In analyzing the character of Joe, Eleanor Flexner points out: "...the inevitability of such behaviour when human beings are on the one hand pushed to the wall by their circumstances and on the other, lack the understanding and the desire to struggle towards a better kind of world." John Gassner introduces the general trend of the play: "Superficially, the saga of a violinist turned prize-fighter might have come from the Beverly Hills Studios. Its background was reminiscent of many a flicker, as was perhaps the rather arbitrary transformation of a violinist into a bruiser. But Odets aimed at something higher. Taking a theme from popular life as ready material for critical interpretation, he dramatized the waste inherent in contemporary life."38

Regarding the unresolved question about the ending, whether it is a suicide or an accident, Gerald Weales explains effectively: "since speed is an escape for Joe, one that he describes in terms of aggression, violence, separateness, the automobile is a fitting means of execution. Nor is there any point in quibbling over whether or not the crash is suicide; the important thing to recognize is that, even if it is an accident, it is no accident." He sums up the theme of the play: "Golden Boy, then, is another Faustian variation, the story of a young man who sells his soul (goes against his nature) and discovers, too later, that he has made a bad bargain."40

Both Malcolm Goldstein and John Gassner find the symbols in this play defective. Goldstein observes: "Both Paradise Lost and Golden Boy are
burdened with a clumsy system of symbols which...sits uncomfortably with their class-conscious theme."\(^{41}\) John Gassner points out, "In *Golden Boy* the case history is wobbly because the tragedy of a promising violinist's success as a prizefighter seems obviously contrived in order to prove a point. If his sacrifice of art to expediency is intended to be symbolic of capitalistic evil, it is too literal to serve as a symbol."\(^{42}\)

The system of symbols adopted in this play is, in fact, clearly manipulated by the playwright. Art being sacrificed in its confrontation with material values is a well-recognized situation, and there is no need to 'contrive' such a theme. Individual cases of failure symbolizing the society's failure to safeguard individual being the unit of the aggregate called 'society', it is but natural that the most articulate symbol of it failure becomes the most eloquent image. This play embodies this aspect of the decadent middle class taste. Money is with the boorish, philistine, prize-fighting. Music with all its associated refinement and divinity, bows itself out of existence in a violent, resounding crash.

*Rocket to the Moon*, which has a sub-title "A Romance in Three Acts", is a modern love story that shows loneliness relieved by understanding. Edmond M. Gagey calls this play a "Paean to love in a dental office."\(^{43}\) Brenman-Gibson considers this play to be "Odets' best play."\(^{44}\) This play deals with "Love and Marriage" as told by Odets himself to the director Harold Clurman. This play deals with the drab existence of a fairly successful dentist Ben Stark who is still hopeful of some of the beauty and romance in life. In this play one finds the relationship of two people - Ben Stark and Mr. Prince, his father-in-law to Ben's receptionist Cleo, an insecure and uneducated, but intensely vital girl, who unfarmed quality is a large part of her attraction. Ben is unhappy in his marriage and so he has an affair with Cleo, while Mr. Prince is lonely in his riches and so he offers her a marriage of mutual exploitation, his money and worldly experience in exchange for her youth and passion. But by the end of the play, when the two men pressurize her to choose between them, she astonishes herself instead.
In this play, one can find the shift from "the emotional currency of economics and politics to that of psychology." This can be understood when no audience is found as in Waiting for Lefty to shout, "Strike". Margaret Brenman-Gibson says: "The major critics dimly understood Odets' shift away from the manifestly political as 'a landmark in his growth.' Those writing for the communist press — missing entirely the point of the play: a plea for the liberation of creativity — mourned that he had given over his 'magnificent flair for character study and dialogue' to such bourgeois concerns as 'love and marriage.' Of the first-line critics, only the sagacious Joseph Wood Krutch, writing for The Nation, understood the nature of Odets' evolution as a playwright and the resultant shifts within himself, and, accordingly, the nature of his transactions with an equally changing audience: "The tendency still persists to make of Clifford Odets and his plays a political issue. That, I think; is a pity from any point of view now that the facts are becoming increasingly clear. What his opinions may have been or, for that matter, may still be, those opinions are shared by many, while Mr. Odets reveals a gift for characterization and a gift for incisive dialogue unapproached by any of his Marxian fellows and hardly equaled by any other American playwright.' Another central point made by Krutch was that Odets — and correspondingly his audience — had gradually shifted from the manifestly political to the psychological arena."46

Talking about the theme of this play Gibson says: "The play's theme had originally centered on the question of whether the timid and dependently vulnerable man could break through the enveloping, dead wasteland of his static and submerged existence by an explosive and creative thrust (a "rocket to the moon") toward a fresh, young (amorphously talented), girl in quest of both love and of self-expression. It had been conceived as the man's play, and the struggle was to be his. Now, the theme appeared to have moved from him to the girl even as Odets had moved from his failed struggle for intimacy with his wife to the broader issues of his own creativity or generativity; Carrying the responsibility for the recent destruction of his first unborn biological child, he deeply feared that his stagnation would extend to his 'brain-children' as well."47
In this play, the protagonist Ben Stark's professional and marital frustrations mirror each other. In almost of all plays the playwright "protests against a stodgy existence and appeals for an awakened understanding of life." In this play, it is a love affair that breaks the shackles of conventionality which bind a middleclass dentist. In this connection Odets says, "In our youth we collect material to build a bridge to the moon; but in old age, we use materials to build a shack." Here, figuratively, Ben stark, a forty-year-old dentist, lives with his wife, Belle in a lonely shack.

When this play opened on November 24, Odets expected its failure and stood in the bathroom of the Belasco Theatre, vomiting. Although there was some criticism that the play was very long and the third act was indecisive, the reviews were almost good. Brooks Atkinson writes in the New York Times that "Rocket to the Moon was a play torn out of the quivering fabric of life... written with the hard brilliance of his past work," and also says, "although Mr. Odets rocket leaves the stage in the first act with a shower of speaks and roar of glory, it bursts before it touches the moon." Richards Watts, Jr. of the Harold Tribune wrote: "Mr. Odets continues to be the most exciting and the most exasperating of the younger American dramatists...a writer of really brilliant first acts, fine and moving dialogue, true and breathing characters, of brooding power and of plays that end by being curiously disappointing." Some critics were pleased as Odets switched over from his economic focus to human psychology. However, the play becomes failure. Immediately after the opening of this play, the playwright appears on the cover of Time magazine, and it has the caption under his picture reading, "Down with the general fraud!" The piece was very complimentary to the playwright: "The reason that Odets has gained and held a public that, by and large, does not share his Leftist ideas is obviously not the ideas themselves but his rich, compassionate, angry feeling for people, his tremendous dramatic punch; his dialogue, bracing as ozone. In every Odets play, regardless of its theme or its worth, at least once or twice during the evening every spectator feels that a fire hose has been turned on his body that a first has connected with his chin."
The opening scene of the play takes place in Ben Stark’s dental office during a sultry June, July and August. Odets emphasizes the heat throughout the play “as an atmospheric metaphor for the aridity of his characters lives as well as a physical force that deepens their discomfort and exposes them even more sharply to the spiritual despair of reflected in their barren environment.” In this play the single most important prop is a water fountain that the characters continuously turn to for refreshment. Thus the symbolic landscape of this play anticipates The Flowering Peach, a retelling of the Noah story, wherein a flood literally washes the world clean.

In this play act one is the one which reveals not only the separation husband and wife i.e. Ben Stark and Belle, but also a lot of realities about life. Prince is the character who talks throughout jovially, who claims himself that he is a joker. He also says that he would have become an actor, in his words: “Without marriage I would have been one of the greatest actors in the world.”

As the play opens, Dr. Ben Stark and his wife Belle are present, having a family discussion on economics. Belle seems depressed and hides her feelings. Ben tells her that her father proposes that he opens a new office in a suitable neighbourhood, but he should have practice at the right place otherwise people won’t come. Belle dominates her husband like many women in Odets works. Her comment indicates that she is not only the boss but also a parent figure under whose dominance Ben has abdicated his potential for growth. He tells her with lamentation others with less knowledge are earning a lot while he is unable to: “I was a pioneer with Gladstone in orthodontia, once. Now I’m a dentist, good for sixty dollars a week, while men with half my brains and talents are making their twenty and thirty thousand a year.”

Belle is less sympathetic character than Ben in this play. But her loneliness is made as read as his. She feels: “A man and his wife should live alone, always.”(P.331). She says with the recognition of their separation: “A woman wants to live with a man—not next to him. I see three or four hours a
night-in the morning you-re gone before I get up. Then you'll cry your blue eyes black." (P.333). She is in isolation and is in need of a baby. In fact, three years ago a baby died at birth, and Ben forgets the anniversary. He does not want to adopt a child even. She tries to hide her tears and tells him. You have to love me all the time. I have to know my husband's there, loving me and needing me."(P.335). Meanwhile Cleo singer, Ben's secretary enters the place. Then Ben talks to her in a harsh voice for the sake of his wife. In fact, he helps her a lot by increasing her salary, and then he recognizes her real state. But Cleo always pretends as if she were rich and did not need the job. This is made clear through the conversation of Belle and Cleo:

Belle: I want to have a few words with you.

Cleo (Opening the door but standing behind it): I'll be out in just a sec', Mrs. Stark.

Belle: you are dressed to kill, Miss Singer.

Cleo: That's one of my ordinary dresses-angle-skin satin.

Belle: It looks hot.

Cleo: (coming in to the waiting room in her uniform): It's one of my coolest dresses.

Belle: It that why you don't wear stockings?

Cleo: yes.

Belle: I thought you may be saving money.

Cleo: I come from a well to do family.

Belle: How well to do?

Cleo: I really don't need to job.

Belle (archly): Never the less, as long as you have the job, you should wear stocking in the office.

Cleo: Yes?

Belle: Yes, it looks sloppy and it makes a very bad impression on the patients.

(P.336)

Cleo doesn't wear stockings not because of any other reason, but because of her poverty. Without recognizing this fact Belle always tries to find fault with Cleo for one or the other reason, while Ben Stark does contrary to
this. He encourages, helps and consoles Cleo; thus he wins sympathy of the audience, while Belle could not. Then a conversation takes place between Belle and Cooper, where in Belle points out that he should pay a few months rent. Belle says that because of her husband's lenience only people are doing like this. She says: "My husband lets people walk all over him—don't you think you're talking advantage of his good nature?" Cooper asks for a chance to clear that money. After a while Belle tells Cleo to inform Ben Stark that 'his terrible wife expects him at seven', and leaves the place.

When she is about leave, her father Mr. Prince comes there. He is near sixty; he wears an old panama hat, a fine Palm Beach suit of twenty years ago and a Malacca cane. He is a man of extremely self-confidence and has a strong sense of humour which is often veiled in this play. Here Cleo and he are introduced each other. He tries to attract her by means of jokes. Talking a newspaper from side table, he reads a head-line: "In India a snake swallowed a man," and asks her to tell her opinion on that. Finally he himself tells his opinion "the universe is governed by a committee; one man couldn't make so many mistakes," which makes Cleo laugh heartily. He also says that his daughter calls him a clown. Then he asks her whether Ben Stark annoys her, but she doesn't give straight answer for this. He says "Every woman wants to convert a man to the gospel of herself." He tells him about his daughter that Mrs. Belle thinks that he is a dummy, and also tells that "Dr. Stark was a nice man when I came here. But his wife just twists him around her little finger, like a spit cruel." Then Mr. Prince says that "any woman could do the same." Cleo tells about Ben Stark that "He stands there like a big shepherd dog and she tells him what to do," and also says," He's afraid of his own shadow." For all these things Mr. Prince says "correct." Then she says, "You can't get in my good graces by agreeing with me in everything I say." She also says that she is able to so through him like cellophanes. While this conversation is going on Mr. Prince observes eyes drops and asks her whether she is going to cry. She says that there is something in her eye. While tries to remove it, Ben Stark enters, which is not observed by both of them. When Ben tries to talk to Mr. Prince, Cleo interferes and says that she had something in her eye. He asked whether it is out. Then she says it is nothing. Mr. Prince says, "A glass
...from my daughter's heart. Here through this dialogue it is understood that both Ben and Belle don't have proper relations and their marital life is not at all happy. Ben Stark is not happy with the way Mr. Prince talked and so he said, "But you mustn't talk that way about Belle in front of strangers." Later in their conversation, Prince tells Ben, "There are two kinds of marriages, Benny—where the husband quotes the wife, or where the wife quotes the husband."

Later Prince observes the unhappiness in the face of Ben Stark and says: "A man is a mirror. He tells me his wife is wonderful...I look in his face to see the truth." Ben Stark asks him what he has seen in his face. Then he says that he has seen a liar. Prince says something about life and then stark says, "a creation man once said that in our youth we collect materials to build a bridge to the moon: but in our old age, he says, we use the materials to build a shack." Prince tells him to go home because Belle is worried. He also says that she is intelligent. They don't have children to hold them together. Ben is already forty. So it is time for special adventures. Prince ridiculously tells him that a housewife rules his destiny. She has got him where she wants him like an iceberg, three quarters under water." At the same time he urges Ben to change him into "a life where everyday is Monday." He continues: "Why you suddenly ride away, an airplane, a boat! Take a rocket to the moon! Explode! ...Laugh...But make a motto for yourself: "Out of the coffin by Labour day! "Have an affaire with-with-with this girl...this Miss Cleo. She'll make you a living man again." (P.350). In this regard Gabriel Miller says: "Ben is pictured as spiritual dead in need of what Cleo offers, sexual rejuvenation—the image of an exploding rocket is obvious—and liberation of the spirit." Before his exit, Prince tells Ben "When you look away from the problem, it don't disappear. But may be you might disappear!"

Now Ben Stark is still laughing and he suddenly stops. He is not feeling humorous and realized it in a flash. He becomes visibly upset. Meanwhile Dr. Jensen, who is commonly called Frenchy, a chiropodist enters the waiting room. He has an office nearby and he often comes there for cool water, which is not liked by Bell. Frenchy tells Ben: Some day, when I can
afford it, I'll get a water cooler. You don't mind me running in and out like that, do you?' (P.351). Stark tells him that Prince is a gloomy man. He can't make out and he always disturbs him. Whenever he comes there, Ben becomes depressed for a long time. Ben tells Frenchy that if Frenchy is married, he can understand everything. He goes on describing his problems: "A man fall asleep in marriage. And after a time he wants to keep on sleeping, undisturbed. I'm surprised how little I've thought about it. Gee! – What I don't know would fill a book!" (P. 351). Ben repeats the same at the end of the play. Ben continues and tells him that Prince is incorrect and asks him whether he looked like an unhappy man. He asks: "...Don't all married couples argue and disagree? Even the joke papers tell us that. A man would be a mad idealist to want a honeymoon all his life." (P.352). Then Frenchy tells him: "No he'd be a woman. A man can't be both lover and banker, enchanter and provider. But the girls want those combined talents.... The man who worries for the bucks is not the one to kiss his wife behind the ear." (P.352).

Dr. Cooper enters and Frenchy asks him about his opinion on woman. He says whether there is a man in their generation with time to think about women. He also tells that he will show a loafer, if anybody shows such a man. In a casual talk among the three of them, Dr. Cooper tells Stark about Belle how she was asking him to vacate the office. So he tells Stark to tell his wife that he has decided to let him stay in the office till after Labour Day. Cooper tells him that he can't pay anything now and he can pay in July only. When Stark accepts that, Cooper goes down for a shave. Cleo comes there and Stark apologizes to her for his way of shouting at her; she says she does not mind. Moreover, when he calls her Cleo, she tells him that he has called her for the first time because he used to call her Miss. Singer. He asks her about her age, but she says it is a personal question.

The next act also takes in the same place, where all of them- Stark, Cleo, Frenchy and Cooper are found. Stark is reading a book on Shakespeare which was given by Dr. Gladstone, his teacher, fifteen years ago. That book is like a Bible to him. Dr. Gladstone is no more and it is a great loss for Stark. In their casual talk Cleo and Stark talks about their happiness. Cleo asks him
whether he has happy marital life. Stark asks her whether she likes to get married. Afterwards they talk about Willy Wax, a dance director, a friend of hers, who was a patient of his. Stark looks at her continuously and she asks him why he was looking at her just a thing in a museum. That discussion leads to their personal matter. Stark asks him whether he likes her. Meanwhile he gets a phone call from his wife. As Stark is about to tell something to Cleo, Mr. Prince has walked in to the waiting room. He asks them how their little affair is going between them. He also says that 'womanhood is fermenting through her veins', referring to Belle, and he exits. Cleo tells him that she has good family background, but Stark says that she is telling stories and she is an unhappy lonely girl. When he holds her hands, she told to keep his hands off. Cleo then admits and says with tears that she is telling lies. Stark tries to console her taking one of her hands in to his hands. He says: "Cleo, I'm your friend...please believe me...Everyone tells little fables, Cleo. Sometimes to themselves, sometimes to others. Life is so full of brutal facts... we all try to soften them by making believe." (P.372). He continues: "We all like to have good opinions of ourselves. That's why we squirm around and tell stories and adjust ourselves. It's a way to go on living proudly-" (P.372). He says that telling lies is necessary and so he lies a dozen times a day. Then she starts telling about her family pathetic state. Stark tells Cleo to go home, but she tells him that she would never go home if there is another place. Here she tries to attract him through her words. She told him, "You are kind and you're good." She persuades him to go out to things, to new experiences. She has such ideas but her mother discourages them. Their idea is to get married and have babies right away. But she feels there is time for them. Stark tells her that without thinking anything she is talking. Finally she tells him that she does not like his wife because she loves him. She tells him, "I have a throat to sing with, a heart to love with! Why don't you love me, Dr. Start? I was ten, then fifteen – I'm almost twenty now. Everything is in a hurry and you ought to love me.(P.379). She also tells him that he will become like Cooper in a year or two. She is alone – nobody loves her. Moreover, she changes his life. She pleads him to love her. He says that he can't do it.
In the next scene, Cleo comes out of the operating room to answer a telephone call, which is from Prince for her. Then Frenchy comes there. Without observing the presence of Frenchy, Stark tells her not to go along with Willy Wax. Then she tells him that Frenchy is there. When Stark leaves for operation theatre, Cleo also follows him. Later they come out along with Wax, who has taken his x-ray. When Stark leaves for operation room with Frenchy once again, Wax starts a general talk with Cleo. He offers her a lunch, when she says that she has a date tonight. Wax exits telling her to come for lunch to the place down his office. Later, Stark and Frenchy come out of the operation theatre, and Frenchy exits. Stark and Cleo are alone. They are planning to out tonight. Then Cleo tells him that he is going for lunch along with Wax. Stark is jealous of it.

When Cleo is going to leave that place, Belle expresses her agony that he is not showing any interest towards her. Belle asks him whether he wants to get rid of her. But he says that he doesn't want to leave her at least one day even. She tells him that she wants to work in his office. He tells her that she wants a girl who takes orders to clean instructions. He can't order his wife. Belle tells him that she doesn't like Cleo's calling 'Ben'. She tells him that she should call him Dr. Stark. In their conversation he tells that she is not going to stay under water like an iceberg the rest of his life. She has got him licked. He does not love her enough. He also asks her what she knows about his needs. Belle asks him why he is speaking like that. Stark says she has been talking for ten years. After a few dialogues, she goes to office, slamming the door in Stark's following face. She does not open for some time. Meanwhile Phil Cooper comes there and gives a cheque to Stark singing it on the back. When Bells comes there, Stark gives her the cheque. But she declaims and asks him to do it. Belle leaves without listening to the words of Stark saying goodbye to Dr. Cooper. After Cooper's exit, Stark stands there angrily thoughtful. He stays his head angrily and strides around the room so many times. Finally he looks out of the window, examining hotel Algiers. Then Cleo enters with Wax. Wax talks as if Cleo belongs to Stark. After he leaves, Stark asks Cleo why she was gone with him out. She says that she will go out with other men. He tells her that she should not go like that, since he loves her. They should
go to a place where nobody will be there except those two. She says she does not trust him. But finally he says that he only knows he loves her. After a pause, suddenly she asks him to hold her tight-kiss her till she can't be kissed no more, and hold her. Don't let her be alone in the world. Starks moves and embraces her.

Act there takes place after three weeks at the end of August in the same place, where Belle and Stark are present; both of them are silent. Finally Stark tells her that he has told the truth that he has stayed in the office just to check the vouchers as there is difference of eighteen dollars in the accounts. In fact, Belle suspects that he stays in the office for Cleo. That is why repeatedly she asks him to get clarification. They receive a telephone call from Mr. Prince. He says that he is coming to office. Then Belle tells him that he would have told him they are going home. Stark says that he will call him back and tell him. Belle tells him that he does not want to go home. Stark says "I know you're my wife, but it's like we're enemies. We're like two exposed nerves!" He continues: "Much more mine. I don't know what happened. I thought about these things a lot these past few months. You expect many things from marriage, but I don't know what to do. These scenes go on. We're always worried... We're two machines counting up the petty cash. Something about me cheats you-I'm not the man to help you be the best woman it's in you to be. So your attitudes justified. I know I owe you a lot. Belle" (P.401). He also says: "(anger mounting despite himself): Now I realize I've had a guilty feeling for years. "Marriage is the only adventure open to the coward," a certain man says. He made a mistake; you have to be a hero to face the pains and disappointments. (As she tries to speak.) No let me finish. Because now I'm really guilty... I mean with this girl-"(P.401) Now Stark guilty of his affaire with Cleo. For that Belle says: "But you don't love her! You had an affair, all right, but you don't love her! (Stark sits, head in hands, Belle continuous with fearful agitation.) The girl was here all day. You were close together and you fell it to that thing. I can forget it, I can forget it Ben. I'm your wife. It doesn't involve our whole relationship. We can have many happy years together. I'll do anything you want. We're young - we have our life together in common, our ten years. We can talk it out-we're civilized beings-I'll never mention it.
We'll both forget it! We need each other, Ben. We..." (P.401). After listening to these words, Stark immediately goes to her and embraces her. Belle has stunned at his attitude and becomes bloodless. Now Belle wants to wait for Cleo. So she asks him when she comes. She asks him one more time whether he loves her. He says that it can't be settled now. He has to know what to do. Belle gets angry and wants to go home. She exits in silence.

Now Stark is totally in a disturbed mood. He stands in his place, literally shivering. Then the door knob is rattled and Frenchy has entered. They had a general talk. In their conversation they talk about Cleo, Frenchy's marriage and love in general. Then Stark tells him that he loves Cleo and now he is unable to understand what to do. One side his wife and other side Cleo. Now he is totally exhausted. Frenchy tells him to be practical. Meanwhile Prince enters. He tells Stark that last night he "feels asleep and dreamed the secret of the world. It is not good for man to live alone." He also tells that Stark loves Cleo and so he is desperate man. He wants to marry Cleo because she pleases her eye and ear in every way in constant pleasure. Stark says that he must be out of his mind and crazy. She won't prefer that. When Stark scorns him that he is a villain he says: "Listen, a man in the fullness of his life speak to you. I did not come here to make you unhappy. I came here to make myself happy! You don't like it - I can understand that. Circumstances insulted me enough in my life. But your insults that I don't need! And I don't apologize to no man because I try to take happiness by throat! Remember, Dr. Benny, I want what I want! There are seven fundamental words in life, and one of these is love, and I didn't have it! And another one is love, and I didn't have it! And the third of these is love, and I shall have it! (Beating the furniture with his umbrella.) De Corpse you think! I'm dead and buried you think! I'll sit in the long winter night with a shawl on my shoulder? Now you see my face, Dr. Benny. Now you know you father-in-law, That demand smiling villain! I'll fight you to the last ditch you'll get mowed down like a train. I want that girl. I'll wait down stairs. When she returns I'll come right up, in five minutes. I'll test your sanity! You, you Noble Prize winner!" (P.408). As he has exhausted, he stops then it and exits. Wax comes there and greets Stark. Stark asks him where Cleo is. He also asks him to leave her as he has a lot of girls. When Stark tells
Wax to keep away from Cleo, he tells Stark to mind his own business. Then Stark is very angry; he abruptly plunges forward and seizes Wax by throat. Wax is frightened by this. Stark asks him to leave the office. When Cleo comes there, she scolds Wax, telling that they don't want him around the office, and however, Wax exits.

Stark tells Cleo that they should to come to an understanding. He asks her weather she loves him very much. When he gets a positive answer, he tells her to try to understand his problems. Prince enters there and watches both of them embracing. Cleo moves away after she observes him. Prince tells Cleo that he has told Stark to send him to out of his office. Prince tells her that Stark does not leave his wife and so let her love him and marry. He also says that Stark can't leave his wife as they are married for ten years. They have a child together. He tells Cleo that he has studied her and he knows what she wants—she wants a man who can take care of her in all aspects. Stark tries to stop Prince from talking, but Cleo tells him to talk to her. She asks him to tell about their plans. He says that he can't tell anything then itself. Then she said: "I'd like to hold my breath and die." Prince says that Stark lets do that. Then Stark gets angry. He tells Cleo: "Listen Cleo,...think. What can I give you? All I can offer you is a second-hand life, dedicated to trifles and troubles...and they go on forever. This is not self-justification...but facts are stubborn things, Cleo; I've wrestled with myself for weeks. This is how it must end. (His voice trembling.) Try to understand...I can't say more." (P.415).

When Prince tells Cleo that he offers her a vitalizing relationship—a father, counselor, lover, a friend, she condemns it. She says: "I know what issued...If I can't love here, I'll find it there...yes, if there's road, I'll take then...I want a love that uses me, that needs me. Don't you think there is a world of joyful men and woman? Must all men live afraid to laugh and sing? Can't we sing at work and love our work? It's getting late to play life; I want to live in something has to feel real for me, more than both of you...I'm a girl, and I want to be a woman, and the man I love must help me be a woman! Ben isn't free. He's a citizen of another country. Mr. Prince, don't let me hurt you feelings; you've lived your life. I think your good, but you are too old for me. And Mr. Wax, his type loves himself. None of you can give me what I'm

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looking for: A whole full world, with all the trimmings! ... Experience gives more confidence, you know. I have more confidence then when I am here." (p.p.416-417). Finally she says good bye to both of them and exits once for ever. After sometime both Prince and Stark also leaves that office.

This play is intensely occupied by individual conflict and consequential suffering. Partially this is a play about marriage relationship. Recording this play, the playwright himself wrote in the World-Telegram after its opening: "The roots of love and the meaning of it in the present world need surely to be comprehended as much as the effect of a strike on its activists." Gerald Weales observes this remark, though partly defensive, was "an accurate indication of a new emphasis in his work." Ira Wolfert wrote in his review that "Mr. Odets seems to have discovered the subject in the course of quarrelling and reconciling with his wife, Luise Rainer." It would not be wrong to assume that the troubled days of this marriage with the Hollywood actress Luise Rainer must have certainly had strong influence on the choice of marital problems as the basic theme in the plays written during this period.

This play appears to be an ordinary triangle play, but it offers more than the bare theme. The effect of the social system and its impact on the personal relationship between men and women have interested the playwright, who has tried to sum up the message of the play stating that it "attempts to depict the difficulty or near-impossibility of full and natural love between man woman in society where each one of us is reduced to a high tension of loneliness by the competitive set-up and the passion for personal triumph." During course of the play, Frenchy, a relatively minor character, expresses the playwright's own ideas: "Love is a beginning, a Jumping-off place ... who's got time and place for 'love and grace to use it?' ... You have to bring a whole balanced normal life to love if you want it go! ... I don't see much normal life .... The free exercise of love, I figure, gets harder every day" (Ill) As Gerald Weales points out, the individual question presented here calls for social solutions; "Although with Rocket Odets has moved a distance from the early plays this description of the play's social bedrock indicates that the situation cries out for another Ralph, another Leo to point toward the
Promised Land." Frank O'Hara considers the play 'too realistically ordinary.' "It has snapshot recognizability in figures like Ben Stark, D.D.S., and his father-in-law, Mr. Prince; there is reality in the picture given of Stark and the girl Cleo as they are caught in a pocket of life so common that it is poignant; there is remarkable verisimilitude in the easy vernacular of the Odets dialogue. Perhaps, indeed, Rocket to the Moon is too realistically ordinary; it is hard for many to grow concerned about these people as we are concerned about the characters of Awake and Sing! , which seems to transmit realism into something meaningful."

The background that of an ordinary dentist's room, his assistant, and the daily chores, the dull and stale married life and so on, is rather too ordinary and colourless to be considered as material for a work of art. Yet, it cannot be said that Odets had failed to evoke any meaning from these ordinary characters as he has managed in the earlier play Awake and Sing! The tone is deliberately suppressed and subtle. That itself succeeds in conveying how stale, meaningless, and matter-of-fact a routine Ben Stark's marriage has come to. Ben Stark himself is one of the many, "as mixed up as the twentieth century." Marriage had never touched any deep spot in his heart. The office girl, for the first time, makes him see himself in a new light. He wonders whether it is the beginning of something beyond defining. Awake and Sing! , written with a clearer and more immediate social message, had to be more colourful and emphatic in its appeal. This play is essentially more subdued, and therefore rather slow in its appeal. Belle, Ben's wife, and Cleo, the new girl in his life, both deserve sympathy. Belle herself, having lost the only child she has borne, is an object of sympathy and understanding, more a victim than a villain. Cleo, 'the other woman', in this case, has a strong claim for understanding than or contempt. It is logical that Cleo and Ben are drawn to each other for love and comfort. Cleo gains nothing but experience after her lament. "Nobody loves me! Millions of people moving around the city and nobody cares if you live or die. Go up a high building and see them down below. Some day I'll fall down on them all!" (II, i). Realizing the hopelessness of the situation based on the truth that Belle and Ben Stark have to go on as they have, Cleo walks out alone: "Experience gives more confidence than
when I came here. Button my coat, Ben." (III). Mr. Prince, Ben's father-in-law is a typical successful businessman, never unhappy in life because he believes that he can always have all that he wants. He takes it for granted that Cleo, badly in need of security in life, will easily accept his marriage proposal. He explains: "you are clay. Miss Cleo, on the way to great womanhood. ... You need a man who is proud to serve you and has means to do it ....Every President of this great country is my age. Because this is the time he's at his best..." (III). Rather shocked and disappointed at her refusal, he consoles himself that he would buy a dog next week. Dr. Phil Cooper is a typical Depression figure. Qualified though he is, professional security seems to elude him. He begins drinking. He wonders why his fellowmen do not need his services.

Harold Clurman refers to a review that appeared in radical weekly. "Rocket to the Moon is a good play, a moving one, full of poignant moments. ... Now he writes plays about problems people solved the day before yesterday. His dentist in Rocket to the Moon is today no longer worrying about the long sleep of his life. For the people of our country have learned how to be bold and brave in the last three year, and Clifford Odets has not. The dentist and his wife and his friends have been jolted out of their narrow vision of life by history, but Mr. Odets sees them today as they were long ago before the workers of Spain went out to fight Fascism before the workers of America's organized to fight reaction in our nation."83

The reviewer has obviously not looked deep into the nature of the individual problems at the roots of the play. Shortcomings in the contemporary social and economic setup are bound to have adverse effect on individuals in any age. Corrosion of life and the gradual waning of human energy consequent to external pressure are endless sources of literary themes, irrespective of the specific age in which it takes place. No nation can ever undergo such a miraculous change that all human problems could be solved overnight. And, America certainly had not, at this stage. There were a few general signs of emergence from the Depression collapse; it was by no means complete. Clurman gives an apt rejoinder to this statement: "...But
can we say that everyone is entirely clear today about the relation of their personal problems to the world, that the subjective turmoil of small individuals no longer plays its part in shaping people's lives or even in the direction of history? How American is the rapidity with which this earnest reviewer counted the days of our progress. By her calendar the millennium will be overdue next year. 84

With concentration on the mental agony of the "small individuals", Clifford Odets has presented, not a tragedy according to the popular concept, but a 'drama' as Allardyce Nicoll has defined it: "The drama is simply a serious problem-play where the emotions never rise to a tragic height and where the denouement is in harmony with the general atmosphere of the plot." 85 It is this definition which fits this phase of Odets' dramatic career. John Gassner points out the shortcoming of this play. Odets has tried to concentrate on too many individuals at the same time that the play has an overcrowded effect: "In Rocket to the Moon, eagerness to combine serious facets of the social stalemate caused the overzealous author to pack his play with ill-matched, if diagnostically related, case histories. Still, this playwright's zeal was a necessary ferment in his work; and to it were allied the intensity and compassion that so often won acclaim from even those critics who rejected his ideas." 86

It is the sincerity of his commitment to the human cause irrespective of the social factors that has made Odets preset every character beset with similar problems. Concentration on individuals marked the middle phase of his dramatic career; such enthusiasm characterized only a few of his plays. He could develop the sense of correct choice of themes with out diffusion of concentration in his later plays. This play can be considered as a domestic drama as well. This specific genre, in the hands of the 17th century dramatists like Heywood and Dekker, was "a tragedy of the common people, ordinarily set in the domestic scene, dealing with personal and family relationships rather than with large affairs of state, presented in a realistic fashion and ending in a tragic or otherwise serious manner." 87 On its revival by the end of the 19th century in the hands of John Galsworthy and a few contemporary
dramatists, Domestic Drama had to fulfill the double responsibility of portraying not only the intricate emotional problems in the private lives of individuals but of presenting them against the background of complex social conditions of the current age.

Gerald Rabkin also considers this a domestic drama and explains how the loss of Marxist metaphor is evident in it. "Rocket to the Moon is not an overtly political play ... But despite Odets' essentially personal concerns, despite his emphasis upon psychological rather than social factors, there can be no denying that beneath the play resides the basic social metaphor ... The very positing of the metaphor of the rocket to the - the illusion of escape - has meaning because it is an illusion, because there is an alternative." Just as in his earlier plays, especially Awake and Sing! and Paradise Lost, the motif of redemption as the outcome of awakening, can be discerned in this play. A Marxist critic complained that 'Odets has stopped listening to the people he knows so well.' This observation is unjustified, because the theme of the play itself is based on what the playwright has concluded after 'listening' to the people around. He has been watching their movements, listening to what they had to tell both to others and to themselves, and trying to understand what lay beneath the surface. The deep-seated frustration, the yearning for happiness, as well as the sudden awakening to the possibility of a change for the better, were what the playwright discovered in the 'small', ordinary people around him. Odets deliberately keeps the play at the level of a domestic drama, or 'drama', without allowing the emotions to boil over and upset the uniform surface tension. He did not ignore them; he made the play as ordinary and uneventful as the stale life they were leading.

This play is with a symbolic title. The characters Bell, Ben Stark, Cleo, and even Mr. Prince, are all ambitious in a sense, desirous of getting what is beyond their reach. The desires are like rockets, soaring up to the moon. Leaving the earth and flying to the moon on flights of imagination is a romantic feat, not in tune with the modern world. Every one realizes this fact towards the end of the play, and as the irony in the title would have it, the rocket comes down like a squib, never reaching the moon. They accept the earth,
and leave the moon alone. Redemption comes to them not through revolt, but only through acceptance. John Gassner opines that: "Rocket to the Moon showed the corrosion of life, the depletion of energy, and the frustration of love by absorption in the struggle for existence in the professions until its dentist hero Ben Stark utters a rather ambiguous, mystical faith in something better to come. In this play, the other characters are either totally warped like Mr. Prince who has acquired riches without happiness and the movie director Willy Wax who is frustrated and is apparently made neurotics by his devotion to commercialized art, or they are harassed to the point of desperation by lack of income like the other dentist Phil Cooper who becomes a blood donor. There can be no adequate lovers, Odets implied, unless men enjoy a rich inner life, which society fails to allow." Belle and Ben Stark resolve their difficulties at the end of the play. Rosamond Gilder once apply put it in reviewing this play; "the mood is apocalyptic but there is no revelation." This play, as described by Clurman as "the first love play the Group has ever done... the first love play by a modern playwright." This is the central text in any reading of Odets' growth as playwright. It looked like the start of something new for him, but it was the beginning of the end.
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