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American drama began quite late. The reasons are obvious. America as a new nation with its origins as far back as the 16th century had to represent Europe, particularly England. Not to speak of Puritanism dominated America for over 200 years. American life began to achieve a kind of democratic nature only after its independence from England in 1776. The second important event is Frontier Expansion. Once America achieved its political freedom, it opened its gate for its expansion. The West was inhabited with the new hordes of European immigrants. Thirdly Americans by nature were not much deep in their intellectual make-up and they borrowed European knowledge. So American drama took a lot of time to come of age. American drama began to develop after the Civil War in the 1860s. Already playwrights like Thomas Godfrey (1736-1763), Royall Tyler (1757-1826), William Dunlap (1766-1839), Robert Montgomery Bird (1806-1854) and others had built up a base for American drama. The situation for the serious dramatist was not much better in England, where the actor also reigned. American playwrights like George Henry Boker (1823-1890), and Dion Boucicourt (1820-1890), David Belasco (1854-1931) and many more built up the next phase of American drama and theatre. Norman Holmes thinks, "Despite the development of a native drama, the important impact of modern American drama came from abroad: from Ibsen and Strindberg, Chekhov and Shaw."¹

After the World War I expressionism, especially through Kaiser and Toller, made itself felt. Sartre, Brecht and Beckett's influence was there too. The little theatres as well as Broadways developed a kind of vitalization in
American drama. Groups like the Washington Square Players and Provincetown Players (New York) were great trailblazers.

Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) was the first great American playwright. The period between the two world wars saw an activity in American drama that made O'Neill part of a movement. Meanwhile, other playwrights like Elmer Rice, Maxwell Anderson, Laurence Stallings, Sidney Howard, Philip Barry, Clifford Odets, and Thornton Wilder developed the American drama.

After the World War II four dramatists left their mark: William Inge, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Edward Albee. Of these Williams and Miller are outstanding for their contribution to American drama.

All this is discussed in the first chapter.

Arthur Miller (1915-2005) was a prolific American playwright, perhaps the most enduring American dramatist of the postwar period. For *Death of a Salesman* (1949), his best-known work and one of the important American plays written after World War II, Miller was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, the Antoinette Perry (Tony) Award, and other prizes.

Miller was the son of a well-to-do clothing manufacturer. He was born in New York City on Oct. 17, 1915. He grew up in Harlem, which then had prosperous Jewish neighborhoods, and in Brooklyn. After high school he decided to become a playwright and studied dramatic arts at the University of Michigan (B.A, 1938). While in college, during the depths of the Depression, he wrote plays with radical, anticapitalist themes. After graduation he wrote scripts for the Federal Theatre Project. Exempt from military service during World War II because of a football
injury, Miller worked in the early 1940s as a scriptwriter for network radio. In 1945 he published *Focus*, a novel about anti-Semitism.

Miller's first Broadway play was *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, which closed after four performances in 1944. Miller achieved commercial success with his next play, *All My Sons* (1947), winner of the New York Drama Critics Circle Award and a Tony author award.

*Death of a Salesman*, probably Miller's greatest achievement, describes the disillusionment, ending in suicide, of Willy Loman, a tragic figure who has lost the knack of "selling" himself. A devastating critique of commercialism and false values, *Death of a Salesman* ends with a plea by Willy's wife that "attention must be paid" to those who fail to achieve conventional worldly success. Miller's drama *The Crucible* (1953) deals with the Salem witchcraft trials had a temporary political resonance as an implicit damnation of Sen Joseph McCarthy's Senate hearings investigating communist subversion. In 1956 Miller was indicted by HUAC for refusing to identify left-wing associates. In 1957 he was convicted of contempt of Congress, but his conviction was overturned in 1958 by the U.S. Court of Appeals.

All this is discussed as part of chapter II "Arthur Miller and the Tradition of Social /Family Drama."

Arthur Miller was a great American playwright dealing with radicalism and anti-capitalist ideals. At the same time, his plays deal with family life in the backdrop of American values. His plays are a critique of American ideals. In this regard, his four major plays -- *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible* and *A View from the Bridge* -- are analysed here.

What starts out as a relaxed image of American life as neighbours congregate in Joe Keller's backyard on a summer's evening soon begins to develop fears and tensions. Ann Deever is coming from New York to visit Joe's 32-year-old son Chris. She was once engaged to Chris's brother Larry, a pilot who was lost in action in the Second World War, and Kate Keller, mother of Chris and Larry, refuses to believe that Larry is dead. Moreover, Ann is the daughter of Joe Keller's former business partner, now serving a jail sentence for equipping fighter planes with faulty engines, killing 21 pilots. Although it was Keller who instructed him to do so on the telephone, Keller denied his part in the crime, but Deever's son George has discovered the truth and comes to take Ann away from the Kellers. Despite everything, Ann still wants to marry Chris, and shows him a letter written by Larry before he went missing saying that he is going to kill himself because of his father's crime. Chris horrified that his suspicions about his father are now confirmed, confronts Keller with the letter and demands that he give himself up to the authorities. Keller, realizing that the missing pilots 'were all my sons', goes indoors to shoot himself.

Willy Loman is a traveling salesman in his early sixties. He is 'tired to the death' after a life of hard work. He tells his wife Linda how worried he is
about their elder son Biff, 34 and unemployed. Biff is contrasted with his younger brother Happy, who has a steady job, his 'own apartment, a car, and plenty of women'. But Happy is not content, and the two brothers dream briefly of working on a ranch 'out West'. Willy drifts off into reminiscing about the past: we see Biff and Happy as young boys, and Willy boasting about his earnings, although Linda is having difficulty in making ends meet. Willy's neighbour Charley offers Willy a job, but Willy drifts off into a dream about his Uncle Ben, an adventurer whom Willy admired and who has recently died. When Willy wanders off for a walk in his slippers, Linda tells her sons to respect him. Willy pretends to earn money as a salesman but is actually borrowing money. Worse still, he is preparing for suicide so that his family can get his life insurance money. Linda has found a length of rubber pipe. Though Biff hates the city, he agrees to stay and help his parents and ask for a job from his former boss Bill Oliver. The following morning, Willy asks his boss Howard for an advance. Howard not only refuses; he even sacks Willy. Willy goes to Charley, again indignantly refuses the offer of a job, but borrows money from him. That evening Biff and Happy have invited their father out for dinner. Happy finds a woman for himself. Biff waited all day, only to discover that Bill Oliver could not even remember him. Dismayed Biff steals his fountain pen and runs off. Willy arrives, and soon Willy and Biff are arguing again. A past episode that has haunted Willy throughout the play is now enacted. Biff comes to see Willy in his hotel room and discovers that he has got a woman with him. Biff and Happy abandon Willy to leave with their women. When they get home, they find their father in the dark planting seeds. Ben invites Willy to join him in death, and Willy drives off at high speed and kills himself. At his graveside Charley sums up his life: "A salesman is a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and shoeshine" 2 Probably the best-known play to have
come from America and frequently revived, *Death of a Salesman* is arguably the closest any 20th-century playwright has come to writing a contemporary tragedy.

In the next play *The Crucible*, Salem's minister Revd Samuel Parris prays for his 10-year-old daughter Betty, who with other local girls had been dancing at night in the forest. Parris is concerned that, led by his black slave Tituba, the girls had 'trafficked with spirits'. At first, his beautiful niece Abigail Williams denies witchcraft. When Thomas Putnam and his wife declare that they have been bewitched, Abigail admits that Tituba and the Putnams' daughter Ruth conjured spirits, but she persuades the other girls to remain silent about Abigail's curse on John Proctor's wife. As Proctor's servant, she had had an affair with him, until his wife threw her out of the house, but she still longs for him. Rebecca Nurse, a respected grandmother, manages to soothe little Betty. A neighbouring minister Revd John Hale, an expert in witchcraft, interrogates Tituba and the girls. Under severe interrogation, Tituba confesses to witchcraft and names local women in league with the Devil. Abigail hysterically joins in, denouncing more women as witches. Betty sits up and joins in the denunciations. The marshal is summoned. A week later, the town court is trying witches. At their home, Proctor's wife Elizabeth urges him to report that Abigail had initially denied any witchcraft, since now even the gentle Rebecca Nurse is accused of being a witch. To Proctor's horror, Elizabeth is also arrested when a doll pierced by a needle is found in her home. He realizes that Abigail is plotting to have her condemned so that she can have Proctor to herself. Proctor gets his servant girl to admit that the doll was hers and goes before Deputy Governor Danforth to get Elizabeth released. When Abigail pretends to be bewitched, Proctor admits to his affair with her and declares 'it is a whore's
vengeance'. However, Elizabeth when questioned denies the affair to protect Proctor's reputation.

Proctor denounces the court and is arrested. He goes bravely to his death. This is arguably the best known historical drama of the 20th century and secured Miller's reputation as one of America's leading playwrights.

Miller's *A View from the Bridge* is an interesting play. Eddie Carbone, a 40-year-old longshoreman, lives with his wife Beatrice and his pretty orphaned niece Catherine in an apartment overlooked by Brooklyn Bridge. As Catherine grows up and takes a job, Eddie becomes unnaturally edgy about her. Two young cousins of Beatrice come from Italy- as illegal immigrants ('submarines') to live in the apartment. Marco is serious-minded, intent on finding a job so that he can send regular remittances to his family in Sicily; Rodolpho is good-looking and light-headed. Catherine is attracted to Rodolpho, and Eddie, jealously implying that Rodolpho is homosexual, warns Catherine that he wants to marry her only to obtain an American passport. When Eddie discovers Rodolpho emerging from Catherine's bedroom, he orders him out of the house. Catherine says she will leave with him. So Eddie, breaching the Italian code of honour, calls the Immigration Bureau and has the 'submarines' arrested. Marco spits at Eddie and denounces him. When Marco is allowed out on bail to attend the wedding of Rodolpho to Catherine, Eddie, now shunned by his neighbours, threatens him with a knife. They fight and Eddie is killed. The lawyer Alfieri, who has commented on the action throughout, cannot help admiring Eddie's passion.
These four major plays by Miller deal with family life as much as social life in America. The same is elaborated in the chapter "Family Life in Arthur Miller's Major Plays."

Miller, as a versatile and major playwright of modern America, has written several full length plays. He has also written many one act plays, radio plays and screen plays. Some of them deal with family life.

Miller's plays deal with the theme of family life in the backdrop of American society. Miller's first one act play No Villain is rather based on his father's business. Abe Simon, a coat manufacturer, is faced with ruin when a strike of shipping clerks prevents him delivering his goods. The bank is about to call in his credit note. One son, Ben, who has grudgingly gone into business, supports him, despite his own left-wing convictions. Another son, Arnold, back from college and imbued with Communist ideology does not. There are hints of a possible solution if Ben will marry the daughter of a rich manufacturer but this is a sub-plot which is dealt with in a perfunctory way. The conflict, in essence, is that between private interest and the general well-being, but there are, as the title suggests, no villains; the characters are all victims of a system which alone is evil. This sets man against man and places material rather than human values at the centre of affairs. Miller twice revised the play calling them They Too Arise and The Grass Still Grows.

Miller's second play though listed as his first by some was Honors at Dawn, written in 1936. In fact, this was a product of 1937 and with it he received his second Avery Hopwood Award, the judges being Susan Glaspell, herself an outstanding playwright. Not as accomplished as They Too Arise, it nonetheless comes out of the same concern with the battle for
human rights. Miller, the committed playwright, was doing battle for the working class. *Honors at Dawn* is another strike play, rooted to some degree in personal experience drawing, as it does, on the time he had spent in an automobile parts warehouse and his experience of university life. Once again there are two brothers, representing different responses to life and adopting radically different stands with respect to an economically and socially divided country.

Miller's third play, *The Great Disobedience* based on his visit to Jackson prison advocates prison reform. It reminds us Charles Dickensian's social philosophy. Just as *Honors at Dawn* had detected the hand of big business in university affairs so *The Great Disobedience* sees the prison system as intimately involved in capitalism's efforts to protect its profits and maintain its control.

Miller's next play *The Golden Years* concerns the ravaging of Mexico by Cortes. Montezuma, king of the Aztecs, is pictured as insecure even in his absolute power, indeed, in part, because of his absolute power in that he is unsure what purpose it could be said to serve. Cortes, meanwhile, battles his way to the heart of the empire in search of gold, though in the name of Jesus. The play explores the reason for Montezuma's capitulation before this adventurer who lacks even the sanction of the Spanish throne. It dramatizes the dilemma of a man who suspects he may have encountered his own fate and hence, mesmerized, paralyzed by the sheer certainty of the invader, surrenders himself and his people. This is a tragedy of the tribal king and the fortune for the invader. And this invader is a tyrant. The play offers a comment on Miller's own times as well as a study of power and its seductiveness.
Next Miller wrote *The Half-Bridge* (1941-43), the only one of his plays to deal directly with the war. It concerns Mark Donegal, mate of a merchant ship, who is encouraged by a Nazi agent to use his ship for piracy and insurance fraud.

In 1940 Miller wrote the novel *The Man Who Had All The Luck*. It tells the story of a man, David, for whom everything turns out well and who believes that he has no hand in his own destiny. He is a happy chap. He is the beneficiary of chance, of coincidence, of, in short, luck. What seems missing from life is any sense of justice as an operative principle. The result is guilt and fear, guilt at what he feels is his unfair advantage, and fear of the ultimate fall which he is convinced must eventually come if the justice for which he looks, and in which, perversely, he wishes to believe, should finally operate. On the other hand, the young man Amos's hopes come to nothing.

In 1953 Miller wrote the play *A Memory of Two Mondays*. Actor Martin Ritt liked the play and they thought that they needed a 'curtain raiser.' This inspired Miller to write *A View from the Bridge*, a one-act play.

In August of 1962, Miller wrote the play *After the Fall*. At the same time, he received the news of the death of his past wife Marilyn Monroe due to overdose of sleeping pills. He had her death and his life with her in mind. He felt a profound sense of loss at her death and a deepened anger at the rest of the world for pushing her to that end. As he anticipated, the play was a failure. Much of the audience did not grasp the intertwined themes of guilt and denial and many remained confused by the play's unusual mixture of characters, abrupt appearance and disappearances, and transformations of time and place. This montage approach did not go over well with the critics.
Six men and a boy have been taken off the streets by the police in Vichy, capital of unoccupied France in the Second World War. They are Marchant, a self-important businessman; Lebeau, a painter; Bayard: an electrician; Monceau, an actor; a Gypsy; a Waiter; and a boy of 15. None of them knows why they have been arrested. Three more detainees are brought in by the police: an old Jew, the indignant Doctor Leduc, who insists that he is a captain in the French army, and the Austrian aristocrat Prince von Berg. The men begin to discuss the deportation of the Jews which has begun in Vichy, France. As they are interrogated one by one by a Professor of 'racial anthropology', the detainees begin to suspect each other of being Jewish and exchange stories about extermination camps in Poland. As they become more aware of their plight, they consider trying to overpower the guard, but as Leduc recognizes, the authorities 'rely on our own logic to immobilize ourselves'. Leduc confronts the German army Major about his complicity in this racist action, but admits his own moral weakness: he would abandon the others if he were set free. Von Berg is given a pass when his credentials are checked, but, partly to assuage his own guilt, he nobly gives it to Leduc, so that he can escape. S. C. Mathur thinks the play deals with the division between man and man.

This well-wrought long one-acter recognizes not only that racism is found the world over, but also that the victims, in this case the Jews, were often partly complicit in their own oppression.

Police Sergeant Victor Franz and his wife Esther wait in the apartment of Victor's late father for the arrival of a dealer who will offer
them a price for all his old furniture and ornaments. Victor joined the police when he had to drop out of college to support his father in the hard days of the Depression. Nearing retirement, he is extremely resentful of his brother Walter, who became a famous surgeon while contributing only a few dollars a month to his father's upkeep. At last the elderly dealer arrives. He is Gregory Solomon, an 89-year-old Jew in failing health but with a warm sense of humour. After checking on the items for sale, he finally offers $1,100, which Victor uncertainly accepts. At this moment, Walter, whom Victor has not seen for 16 years, enters. The brothers confront each other, Victor complaining that he sacrificed his life while Walter was able to go on to be a success.

This play, like The Price, considered the inevitable failings of human nature and how, we, as a society, react to them. The play explores the nature of God and what kind of psychology situated must have given rise to the creation of God in the first place. Using biblical imagery and parallels, Miller also questioned the enforcement of laws and the nature of justice. This play was truly the product of the years the writer spent involved in the New Cannam murder case.

The years 1976 and 1977 were productive ones for the writer, but not altogether successful ones. By 1976, Miller completed The American Clock, a 'mural' of American society during the Depression. A rather unconventional series of scenes and moods, the play failed to reach a significant audience in America.

The next play, The Archibishop's Ceiling, completed in 1977, was a drama derived from the playwright's travels through Prague as president of PEN. It, like The American Clock, was a highly intellectual piece that
attempted to tell a story in unconventional, splintered units of dialogue and action, and its fate in the United States was the same.


Miller has written several radio plays. He adapted his own plays for radio too. Some of his radio plays are *The Pussycat and the Expert Plumber who was a Man* (1941), *William Ireland's Confession* (1941), *The Four Freedoms* (1942), *Grandpa and the Statue* and *That They May Win* (both 1945), and *The Story of Gus* (1947).


The case of Miller's adaptation of Henrick Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* is fairly well known. He adapted Ferenc Molnar's *The Guardsman* in 1947.

Miller wrote an opera called "Uno Sguardo dal Ponte" (1961) and this is based on his play (earlier a novel) *The Man Who Had All The Luck.*
Family life is a major theme in Miller's minor plays too. All this will be discussed in chapter IV "Family Life in Arthur Miller's Minor Plays."

There are a conclusion and select bibliography at the end of the thesis.
References:


American literature began with the first English colonies in Virginia and New England. These colonists with them brought the literary wealth of their countries. Most of these Americans were the English emigrants and these Americans began writing in the 16th century.

Colonial writers include Capt. John Smith (1580-1631), William Byrd (1674-1744), William Bradford (1590-1657) and others. Puritanism had its own sway on the earliest American writers like Cotton Mathur (1663-1728) and Michael Wigglesworth. Great political prose writers of the time were Benjamin Franklin (1706-1813) and Thomas Paine. There was some literature of the early republic.

The mid nineteenth century saw the beginning of the great American literature. The period from 1850-1855 was American Renaissance. New England was the centre of American literature and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) its prominent writer. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) was his worthy companion.

Popular New England poets were Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-94), James Russell Lowell (1819-91), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-82) and John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-92). Edgar Allan Poe was a great poet, short story writer and critic. Mr Poe was from the South.

The mid nineteenth century American novelists of note were Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-64) and Herman Melville (1819-91). Walt Whitman was a great poet as that of Emily Dickenson (1830-1886).
The American Civil War (1861-1863) gave a transition to modern age.

Some of the post-Civil War prose writers were Bret Harte (1836-1902), Joel Harris (1848-1908), Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96) and others.

Three major novelists of the time were Mark Twain (1835-1910), a self educated man, Henry James (1843-1916), a cosmopolitan writer and William Dean Howells (1837-1920), a man in between and a friend of both.

Mark Twain, William Dean Howell and Henry James were realists. They left their marks on certain aspects of life. Later writers after 1900 took care of it. Stephen Crane (1871-1900) depicted slum life. Frank Norris (1870-1902) depicted the violence of economic life. Theodore Dresser (1871-1945) depicted man's commercial attitude. The nineteenth century closed the era of gay novels. Now political corruption, violent conflicts and loss of religious certitude gave way to tragic fiction. Henry Adams' (1838-1918) *The Education of Henry Adams* speaks of this despairing mood in America.

The twentieth century American literature differs from that of the earlier American literature in so far that modern literature is complex and technically more sophisticated. It is varied, simple in language, realistic and individualistic.

Harriet Monroe (1860-1936), Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931), Carl Sandburg (1878-1967), Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1937) and Robert Frost (1874-1963) were great poets.
T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) though he got British citizenship wrote about American themes. He is known for his new poetic technique. His ‘Prufrock’ is known for modern man’s fear phobia. His *The Waste Land* (1922) for which he got Nobel Prize is an epoch making poem. Eliot reflected the disillusionment of modern times. E. E. Cummings (1894-1962), just like Emily Dickinson, wrote a new kind of poetry. He satirized modern pettiness and emptiness. Hart Crane (1899-1932), Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), Marianne Moore (1887-1972), Edna Vincent Millay (1892-1950), Stephen Vincent Benet (1898-1943), Elinor Wylie (1885-1928) and Sarah Teasdale (1884-1933) wrote poetry of delicate perception. Ogden Nash (1902-71) and Phyllis McGinley (1905-78) are known for their skillful verse.

There is a depiction of modern American Drama in realistic approach. American playwrights like Elmer Rice (1892-1967) and Sidney Kingsley (b.1906) show life as it is lived. George Kaufman (1889-1961) and Marc Connelly (1890-1980) use expressionistic techniques. Thornton Wilder’s (1897-1975) *Our Town* was experimental. Maxwell Anderson’s (1888-1959) *Winterset*, and T. S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral* are poetic dramas.

Eugene O’Neill (1888-1953), as an experimental playwright, is great. His *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and *The Hairy Ape* (1922) are unique—one character plays. His *Mourning Becomes Electra* depicts Aeschylus’s tragedy of Oresteia.

This is a brief yet critical review of American literature upto the close of nineteenth century.
ii. American Drama

As American fiction continued to be written and enjoyed on social and philosophical issues of the day, the American drama was just the old stuff—the revivals of the old favourites in the romantic or heroic vein.

The Civil War was neither the beginning nor the end of an epoch in American drama. The demand for popular theatrical entertainment, which actually increased in the North during the war, produced only variations upon such established traditions as the comedy of eccentric character, domestic melodrama, and the sensational play. The stage continued to be dominated by a generation of great actors—Edwin Forrest and Edwin Booth, Charlotte Cushman, Clara Morris, Lester Wallack, E. L. Davenport and James E. Murdoch—who kept alive the literary masterpieces of the past, especially the plays of Shakespeare, by their inspired if sometimes grandiose performances. Most of the new plays, by contrast, were ephemeral, sensational, or sentimental legerdemain evoked by the huge popular demand for entertainment or escape. Thus by contrast is emphasized the importance of James A. Herne, Bronson Howard, David Belasco, Augustus Thomas, Clyde Fitch and William Vaughn Moody, who were the principal progenitors of the vigorous modern American drama.

It is said, "After the Civil War the traveling company, stimulated by the development of the railroads, tended to replace the old stock companies. Although the change produced new problems, like that of the monopolistic syndicate, its ultimate effect was to encourage dramatic authorship. While fewer plays could be performed under such conditions, they remained longer upon the stage and assured professional income for such dramatists as could overcome severe competition. The result was the establishment of a new
profession of dramatic authorship attractive to talented writers, of whom Bronson Howard was the earliest."¹

The older tradition of romantic and heroic tragedy is best represented in the work of George Henry Boker who gave our literature its most original plays of the type. The earlier heroic play, as befitted the literature of a country recently born of a democratic revolution, had shown a marked preference for the theme of popular revolt against the oppression of a ruling class or a foreign despot.

Freedom was the theme of these plays. Boker revolted against his environment. He criticized American materialism. That way he resembled his fellow poets. Of Boker's eleven plays, the tragedies if not the comedies deserved a robust life on the stage. Yet the first of them, *Calaynos* (1851), played in the United States only about two week's altogether even though it ran for one hundred performances in London without its author's knowledge, consent, or profit. No producer could be found for *Anne Boleyn*, a good play on Henry VIII and the tragic fate of his second Queen. *Leonor de Guzman* appeared for ten nights during the winter of 1853-1854; and *Franceses da Rimini* was thought by E. L. Davenport to be worth just a week's run in 1855. In the face of such apathy Boker, like Bird, gave up the stage. In 1882 when Barrett triumphed in *Francesca* and added the play to his permanent repertory, the author wrote pathetically, "Why didn't I receive this encouragement years ago? Then I might have done something." He tried to write again for the stage but the fire that animated his earlier tragedies had waned.

This type of drama was not the only survival from the prewar theater. Conventional types of comic character made popular by such native comic actors as James H. Hackett, Joseph Jefferson, and J. S. Jones, who preferred to
portray country bumpkins, still continued to flourish, urbanized by Edward Harrigan. Harrigan's comical and sympathetic interpretation of the plight of the immigrant in the American city made him, both as author and actor, a popular figure on Broadway until the turn of the century; and even now a reference to the "Mulligans" will recall the shanty Irish immigrant of the last century, and his colorful influence on the life of the large American cities, especially New York.

The domestic melodrama, long associated with the presentation of eccentric types of character, usually rustic, now became increasingly citified, but no less conventional and sensational.

At the same time, European plays were borrowed by great producers like Augustin Daly and Dion Boucicault. The former brought at least 90 plays and Dion Boucicault produced 132 plays. Boucicault, whose associations with the theater were international, could write a historical drama so substantial as *Louis XI*, which for a half-century held the stage as a favorite of Charles Kean, and later Henry Irving, who selected it for his farewell appearance in London in 1905. Daly's productions of Shakespeare won him international fame but his few published plays reveal a master of theatrical technique whose works remained sub-literary. *Horizon*, his best original play, gave a new realism of setting and atmosphere to the frontier drama; *Divorce* and *Pique* were early approaches to the social problem play; but even such plays made only a feeble and losing struggle against melodrama and sentiment. Similarly, many popular novels like Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were made into plays and staged.
Such examples not unfairly suggest the conditions of the popular stage when James A. Herne and Bronson Howard entered upon careers which were to prepare the way for the modern drama. Herne was educated in the earlier theater of sentiment in eastern stock companies and on tours through the West. Such plays as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The People's Lawyer*, *East Lynn*, and sentimental versions of Dickens were then preferred by the playgoers of San Francisco where Herne became a stage manager and leading character actor in the seventies. There he began to collaborate with David Belasco, a youth of barely twenty-one. The principal product of this association was *Hearts of Oak* (1879), which became one of the most famous plays of the century in the hands of the Herne family who played it over and over for a score of years. Herne brought realism to American theatre.

The domestic melodrama of eccentric character or humble life survived also in Steele MacKaye’s *Hazel Kirke*, and Denman Thompson’s *The Old Homestead*, which are inferior to Herne’s play, even though they both outlived it. *Way Down East* (1898) ran for a full year before becoming a permanent possession of the rural stock companies. Winchell Smith’s *Lightin’* (1918) was the most popular play in this tradition until *Abie’s Irish Rose* (1922) began a six years run.

It is said, “Bronson Howard restored the social comedy as a civilized art in the United States, a form which had lapsed in the middle years of the century, and it was he who chiefly prepared the way for the social comedies of Clyde Fitch, Augustus Thomas, and the playwrights of the present century. At the same time the social comedies of Howells, for the most part one-acters, though not produced, were widely read, and no doubt played their part in broadening the area of good taste.”² His early plays, *Moorcroft, Only a Tramp* (1874), and *Lillian’s Last Love* (1873), are problem melodramas; but his revision of the last
of these produced a convincing and well developed drama in *The Banker's Daughter* of 1878. Howard's mature social comedies reveal his knowledge of American society, and that growing awareness of international social contrasts to be found in the contemporary novels of Howells and Henry James.

In all of his social comedies, Howard made excellent use of broad elements of comic relief. The later plays of Howard represent a decline of his powers, but he left play writing a profession and the American social comedy an art.

The really spectacular development of the social comedy, however, did not occur until the complexities of the present century furnished dramatic materials for such playwrights as Langdon Mitchell, Rachel Crothers, Gilbert Emery, Philip Barry, George S. Kaufman, George Kelly, Sidney Howard, and S. N. Behrman. This *fin de siecle* (decadent) romance influenced fiction as well as drama, and provided a spate of romantic novels for dramatic adaptation. At the same time there appeared a new generation of romantic actors, like Lawrence Barrett, Richard Mansfield, E. H. Sothern, Julia Marlowe, and Otis Skinner, who revived the older heroic plays and especially Shakespeare, while at the same time encouraging the new tendency.

Another actor-author of the period who popularized a romantic character conception suited to his own temperament was William Gillette. David Belasco is also most properly considered in connection with the romantic revival of the century's end. Among the seventy-five plays in which he is known to have had a hand one may find domestic melodramas, melodramas, farces, domestic problem plays, Civil War plays, frontier plays like *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, historical dramas, and exotic romances of spiritual revolt in semipoetic language, such as *Madame Butterfly*, *The
Darling of the Gods, and Adrea. All of Belasco's plays are romantic in nature. He was a master of the theater, and it is probable that he contributed more than any other producer of his times to the mechanical perfection of the modern stage and playhouse. He continuously struggled against the monopolistic theatrical trust, supported courageous experiment, and promoted the talents of such actors as David Warfield, Mrs. Leslie Carter, Frances Starr, and Blanche Bates.

At the close of the nineteenth century a new flux of European drama influenced American theatre. Shakespeare was ever popular there. Many English novels as of American, were dramatized and staged. There was social realism, symbolism, psychology and social forces. But Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw's plays came only in the 1890s. Moral censorship delayed Henric Ibsen's plays in America.

It was not until after the nineteenth century that the modern continental theater made its influence felt through the work of such playwrights as Strindberg, Chekhov, Gorky, Hauptmann, Sudermann, Schnitzler, and Maeterlinck. These considerations increase one's appreciation for the contributions to the theater made by Howard, Thomas, and Fitch, especially when one compares them with such British contemporaries as Pinero and Jones. Augustus Thomas was another comedy writer. Thomas wrote or adapted at least sixty-four plays. They fall into two groups which illustrate the development of the American stage of his day. All his best plays are social comedies in the larger sense. His earlier plays, like the earlier work of Clyde Fitch, belong to the fin de siecle romance. Later Thomas' preference was for a more sophisticated metropolitan society, sometimes involving international contrasts.
His rival Clyde Fitch produced as many as 64 plays in a few decades. Yet even the romantic social comedies, melodramas, and period plays, which gave Fitch an international eminence during his first decade were decidedly in advance of their times.

Fitch surpassed his mid-century predecessors in such romantic or even melodramatic situations by his wit, and by the appeal of the characters that he has projected upon scenes so obviously idealized or exotic. The character problem plays of his last decade no doubt constitute Fitch's more lasting contribution to the literature of the stage. William Vaughn Moody, both an academician and playwright died early. Yet his plays were extremely popular. He dealt with some central American problems. His theme is the sense of sin and, more particularly, its destructive power upon the freedom and expression of the human soul. His *The Great Divide* is a classic. For more than a century this problem has engaged the profoundest efforts of writers so diverse as Hawthorne, Whitman, Melville, and Edwin Arlington Robinson.

Robert Spiller observes, "The story of the development of American drama from Boker to Moody is that of the formative stage of an art. The subliterary theatricality of the period, by illustrating the popular and prevailing taste, particularly in urban America, emphasizes the importance of those playwrights who gradually created, in spite of overwhelming handicaps, a native drama which gave deeper meaning to the theater, portrayed modern character and life with fidelity, and pointed the way toward imaginative maturity."

In the older period of romantic drama, Boker had rejected the prevailing heroic themes of national idealism, and had devoted his art to great tragic crises of the personality. This impulse has always afforded themes
for the noblest tragedy. The modern drama has drawn its strength from the ability of dramatists to find such subjects in the stuff of everyday life. Possibly this characteristic finds its point of origin, historically, in that series of Ibsen's dramas which began with *A Doll's House* in 1879. In American drama, Herne's *Margaret Fleming*, in 1890, marks an epoch. In the first years of the new century, the dramas which best stand the test of time are concerned with the mysteries of the human mind and spirit, or with some struggle of the will of the individual to overcome a fate that seems ordained in destiny or human frailty. That the important dramatists of the period were still entranced by the human miracle which Moody called a "mystical hanker after something higher" is demonstrated by such plays as Fitch's *The Truth*, and *The Girl with the Green Eyes*; Thomas' *The Watching Hour*, and *The Harvest Moon*; Belasco's *The Return of Peter Grimm*; and Moody's entire works.

Theatrical and melodramatic plays persisted until the end of the century, yet a new vitality was discernible after 1880. Stimulated in part by native forces and later by the experimental European theater, American drama gradually acquired social responsibility and seriousness, a surer grasp of psychological and spiritual realities. Enriched by the complexities of life in the twentieth century, these same convictions later found a more masterful statement in the dramatic symbolism of Eugene O'Neill.3

Eugene (Gladstone) O'Neill (1888-1953) was an American playwright. He was born in New York, the younger son of James Neill, a popular actor. As a child he toured with his father, and attended a Catholic boarding school and a preparatory school in Connecticut. He enrolled at Princeton University for a year (1906-7), then held a series of jobs including prospecting for gold, several months as a seaman on a Norwegian freighter...
and a brief spell as a journalist in Connecticut. He then spent time in a tuberculosis sanatorium (1912-13), and his early one-act plays date from this period of confinement. His involvement with the Provincetown Players brought him, and the company, to the attention of the New York public, initially with a sequence of plays about the SS Glencairn (a group of one-act plays) and its crew: Bound East for Cardiff (1916), In the Zone (1917), The Long Voyage Home (1917) and The Moon of the Caribees (1918). Two other plays, not in the Glencairn cycle but drawing on his memories of life at sea, won the Pulitzer Prize: Beyond the Horizon (1920) and Anna Christie (1921).

It is said O'Neill was much influenced by the European theatre, particularly, Strindberg. Neill went on to become a major influence on the development of the modern American theatre, exploring difficult subjects and experimenting with a variety of dramatic styles. African Americans made up the cast of The Dreamy Kid (1919); an interracial marriage is the subject of All God's Chilian Got Wings (1924); and in The Emperor Jones (1920) a black actor dominates the stage in the central role. The Expressionism of The Emperor Jones is further developed in The Hairy Ape (1922), in which a ship's stoker's alienation from his peers causes him to embrace his own animality. B. Yugenderanath observes, "In this play O'Neill looks for a struggle between the forces of nature and society in man."

Strange Interlude (1928) which won O'Neill a third Pulitzer Prize, portrays the life of its central character, Nina Leeds, through the juxtaposition of conventional dialogue with stylized internal monologue. O'Neill's interest in the familial patterns of Greek tragedy and in Nietzsche's opposition of the Apollonian and the Dionysian is evident in the grim New England tragedy Desire under the Elms (1924), and is the
motive force behind *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), a reworking of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* in the context of the American Civil War.

After the failure of *Days without End* (1934), O'Neill, suffering from increasing ill health which was eventually diagnosed as Parkinson's disease, maintained a long theatrical silence, unbroken by the award of the Nobel Prize in 1936. *The Iceman Cometh* (1946), his first new play to be performed for 12 years, is set in a Bowery bar. *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (Pulitzer Prize 1957) is a tortured but compassionate portrait of his own family, a subject he had treated more lightly and with nostalgia in the comedy *Ah, Wilderness!* (1933). *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1957) continues the story of the alcoholic elder brother of *Long Day's Journey into Night*, describing the process of his self-destruction on a Connecticut farm following his mother's death. Of a projected 11-play cycle which was to trace the fortunes of an American family from the 18th to the 20th centuries, only *A Touch of the Poet* (1957) and the incomplete *More Stately Mansions* (1962) were actually written.

As V. Rama Murthy observes, "O'Neill was an expressionist playwright. He began as a realist and wrote some of the best expressionist plays of the century."6

After Eugene O'Neill, new playwrights like Elmer Rice, Maxwell Anderson, Laurence Stallings, Sidney Howard and John Howard Lawson emerged in the 1920s. Both art theatres and commercial theatres continued to produce plays of popular success. There was also European and exotic drama alongside.

Long arguments have raged over the question whether the English drama of Shaw and Galsworthy owed more to Ibsen. An equally long and equally
futile one might be conducted concerning the relative importance to the new American playwrights of the European tradition and of that native one which had for decades been slowly evolving through James A. Herne, Charles Hoyt, Clyde Fitch, William Vaughn Moody, George M. Cohan, and the rest. Undoubtedly the most violent stimulus was provided by the revolutionary dramatists of Europe, and undoubtedly the "little theaters" contributed greatly to the playwrights' awareness of possible new horizons in the theater. But even as early as the season of 1924-1925, the outstandingly successful plays of men who were less the disciples of any playwright, native or foreign, and less members of any theatrical cult, than they were simply talented writers eager to reach an American public for plays found a way for success.

Maxwell Anderson's *What Price Glory* and Sidney Howard's *They Knew What They Wanted* were popular success. Both of the new works were theoretically shocking, since the first treated in a frankly ribald spirit certain incidents in the lives of soldiers fighting the First World War, and the second had as its sympathetic heroine a young waitress whom a middle-aged Italian winegrower was willing to marry despite his knowledge of the fact that she was soon to bear an illegitimate child by a lover who had deserted her. Both plays were enthusiastically received, and it is evident that the large audiences which saw them were not actually shocked as the early audiences of Ibsen and Shaw had been; the reason is simply that by 1924 much of what had formerly seemed dangerously paradoxical had been assimilated not only by the intellectual but also by the whole sophisticated public. The two plays were not preaching a new doctrine. What they actually did was tell, for the first time on the American stage, dramatically interesting stories looked at from the point of view of the 1920's rather than from that of the mid-nineteenth century.
The same thing may be said of many of the other characteristic plays of the period. Laurence Stallings, co-author of *What Price Glory*, abandoned play writing after failing to repeat his first success; but *Saturday's Children* (1927) and *Gypsy* (1929) by his collaborator, Maxwell Anderson, as well as *Lucky Sam McCarver* (1925), *Ned McCobb's Daughter* (1926) and *The Silver Cord* (1926), all by Sidney Howard, were comedies or light dramas which, without being directly didactic, told remarkably various stories always from the point of view of what may be called libertarian humanism—one conspicuous element in which is a protest in the name of common sense and kindliness against conventional respectability.

Some of these plays were satires. Thus George Kelly's *The Show-Off* (1924) is a rather bitter satire in which the central figure, a blustering vulgarian, actually succeeds through a fluke in "pulling off the big deal" he has always dreamed of; and the long series of popular farces from *Dulcy* (1921) to *Once in a Lifetime* (1930), which George Kaufman wrote with various collaborators, represent a somewhat more frankly popular exploitation of the same theme.

Early in its career the Theater Guild, besides popularizing Shaw on the American stage, had produced the work of Molnár and other central European dramatists whose "Continental" treatment of the comedy of sex was widely regarded as a corrective to Puritanism. In *The Road to Rome* (1927) Robert Sherwood responded to the influence of Shaw by writing an amusing pseudo-historical comedy somewhat in the manner of *Caesar and Cleopatra*, and then, in 1931 achieved with *Reunion in Vienna* a comedy so perfectly in the continental tradition that it might easily pass as a translation.
Hatcher Hughes' *Hell-Bent for Heaven* (1924) and Paul Green's *In Abraham's Bosom* (1926)—two folk plays, which are certainly among the best representatives of a genre that did not flourish as many supposed it would. On the other hand, two plays held in high esteem both by critics and by a large public—Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* (1923) and John Howard Lawson's *Processional* (1925)—were directly inspired by those same expressionistic experiments which influenced O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*. *The Adding Machine* is a theatrically effective exposition of a nihilistic fable concerning a certain "Mr. Zero," who remains hopelessly insignificant even after he has been transported to heaven. It is said, "Rice's play is a comment on the mechanization of man." Another critic J. L. Styan thinks that "The play is a noteworthy satire on the depersonalization of man in modern society." Rice said of expressionism the technique which he used, "It attempts to go beyond mere representation and to arrive at interpretation. The author attempts not so much to depict events faithfully as to convey to the spectator what seems to be their inner significance to depart entirely from objective reality and to employ symbols, condensations and a dozen devices which to the conservative must seem arbitrary fantastic."

The American theatre now developed four dramatic trends as follows:

(a) Maxwell Andersen's experiments with tragedy which, unlike those of O'Neill, assume that verse is necessary if the highest effects are to be achieved;
(b) S. N. Behrman's development of a comic style not wholly different from that of his predecessor Rachel Crothers or his contemporary Philip Barry, but seeming to be more consciously aware of the problem of adapting conceptions of the nature of comedy to the circumstances of American life; (c) the work of Clifford Odets as representing the most successful cultivation of the play intended to further a definite political and social ideology; and (d) the
attempt on the part of several otherwise diverse writers to develop a dramatic form in which symbolism and fantasy definitely replace the realistic method.

Poetic tragedy found a convinced advocate in Maxwell Anderson. Born in 1888, he had written more than a score of produced plays before 1945. Among the earliest of these were *What Price Glory* (with Laurence Stallings) and several light comedies; but suddenly in 1930 he revealed an entirely new style in the formal tragedy in verse, *Elizabeth the Queen*. Bamber Gascoigne thinks *Elizabeth the Queen* is sentimental. Though from time to time thereafter he wrote pieces in several different manners, it is probably with the formal tragedy, frequently historical in subject but in some instances dealing with a contemporary situation, that his name is most often associated. Plays of this kind include, besides the first just mentioned, *Mary of Scotland* (1933), *Valley Forge* (1934), *Winterset* (1935), *Key Largo* (1939) and *The Eve of St. Mark* (1942).

Maxwell Anderson was the only conspicuously successful dramatist except O'Neill who persistently attempted tragedy during the first four decades of the twentieth century; but the parallel between him and the author of *Mourning Becomes Electra* cannot be drawn any further.

Anderson's subsequent plays include pieces as diverse as *The Masque of Kings* (1937), a romantic tragedy about Rudolph of Austria; the extremely popular, but not very original, fantastic comedy *The Star Wagon*; a romantic verse comedy, *High Tor*; a musical comedy, *Knickerbocker Holiday*; and a patriotic war play, *The Eve of St. Mark*. They also include *Key Largo* (1939), the only other piece which suggests obvious comparison with *Winterset*. Like the latter, it was not among the author's most conspicuous commercial successes, and it perhaps comes less close to the full realization of its intention as that of
The situation is nevertheless a powerful one, and the central character—an ex-soldier trying to justify himself for a failure to perform a duty at the cost of his life—has an obvious relation to the judge in *Winterset*.

Nevertheless, Anderson is to be ranked among the five or six most considerable playwrights of the two decades following 1925, and he represents one aspect of a movement which seemed, at least until the war arrested artistic development, likely to achieve something toward which the American drama had been struggling ever since the earliest of the 'new playwrights' began to cultivate a 'new drama.'

S. N. Behrman, known as 'America's Bernard Shaw,' like O'Neill, was a great playwright. Unlike O'Neill, he was a comedian. Behrman's *The Second Man* (1927) was a drawing-room comedy which took as its theme the nature of the comic spirit here manifesting itself as the voice of a 'second man' who whispers the witty counsels of common sense to the hero. As comedy it was 'pure,' both in the sense that it admitted no admixture of sentiment and in the sense that it so concerned generalized human nature rather than local conditions or customs.

His next important works *Brief Moment* (1931) and *Biography* (1932) continued to cultivate the manner which he had just established. The hero of the first is a typical inhabitant of that intellectual world which its denizens have liked to call the Wasteland. But instead of gesturing magniloquently in the void and attempting to turn his predicament into tragedy despite the obvious absence of the necessary exaltation, he is content to analyze the situation intellectually and then to compensate for the absence of ecstasy by the cultivation of that grace and wit which no one can be too sophisticated to
achieve. Biography is another vehicle for a comment made by the comic spirit upon one of the predicaments of modern life.

In Rain from Heaven (1934) we have what is basically the same situation as that in Biography, a wise and witty woman being brought into conflict with two men, each of whom is capable of a certain fanaticism incomprehensible to her. But in the earlier play, neither the Communist nor the practical politician is more than potentially dangerous; each is operating so nearly in a vacuum that the clash between them is chiefly a clash of temperaments and ideologies. In Rain from Heaven, on the other hand, another sort of crisis is near. One man, an aviator, is a popular American hero of the moment, being exploited by his brother in the interest of a vague Fascist scheme; the other is a German refugee. The scene has been moved to England, to an atmosphere charged with the possibility of proximate conflict.

Had Behrman happened to live in a more stable society he would doubtless have written comedies more strictly in the great comic tradition than his later plays. As it is, Rain from Heaven established a pattern into which his best subsequent works—End of Summer (1936), Wine of Choice (1938), and No Time for Comedy (1939)—tended to fall. Faced with the problem of writing comedy in an atmosphere which many are ready to say makes comedy either impossible or impertinent, he thus invented something which might not improperly be called the comedy of illumination.

Philip Barry wrote similar kind of comedies. Three of his subsequent plays, Holiday (1928), The Animal Kingdom (1932) and Bright Star (1935), give him some claim to share with Behrman the distinction of being the most accomplished writer of comedy at once pure and smart.
It is said, "In spite of the tendency of playwrights like Anderson and Behrman to treat the issues of the moment with full seriousness, the play intended to further a definite political and social ideology taking shape."10

Both Anderson and Behrman responded somewhat to the changed atmosphere though neither changed fundamentally either his convictions or style. Most of the other established playwrights, except O'Neill, reacted in more violently to the shock by attempting a fundamental reorientation as evident in their plays. Thus Elmer Rice, who had just before written Street Scene a completely nonpolitical though completely sympathetic tragic melodrama about life in the slums, came out with a series of propagandist plays. G. R. Taylor says "This is a more memorable than The Adding Machine, a comment on the mechanization of modern man."11 John Howard Lawson, who had celebrated America's exuberant health in Processional, turned to a Marxian denunciation of American decadence in Gentlewoman (1934) as well as in other didactic dramas; and Sidney Howard who had produced a whole series of studies in manners and morals, wrote The Ghost of Yankee Doodle (1937). Inevitably, any new insurgent group was a political group, and the Theater Union, definitely committed to the propaganda play, was the Washington Square, and the Provincetown Players had been for the old. J. L. Styan thinks "Elmer Rice and John Howard Lawson were far more militant and much less successful."12

The next playwrights are George Sklar, Paul Peters, Marc Blitzstein and Clifford Odets. The last one of the group was noteworthy. Once the drama critic John Gassner said, "Odets was the foremost discovery of the thirties."13 As J. L. Styan thinks "He most firmly held the public imagination."14

Though born in Philadelphia, Odets was educated in the public schools of New York City. While still quite young he joined a junior acting company
originally sponsored by the Theater Guild and soon to become the independent Group Theater. He never achieved any prominence as an actor, but like most of the Group members he began to take an interest in the current discussion of social problems; and early in 1935 the Group filled out a short bill by the production of his brief tour de force called Waiting for Lefty. B. Yugenderanath observes, "The play represents the dramatic ethos of the 19th century thirties." The public-reaction was extremely favorable, and about six weeks later the Group offered his first full-length play, Awake and Sing.

Odets' Awake and Sing exhibits virtues of quite a different kind. It is said to have been begun before its author's conversion to Marxism, and to have been hastily provided, with the concluding scene in which a 'revolutionary' moral is drawn. In any event, the general effect is dramatic rather than didactic and most reviewers recognized immediately an interesting new talent. J. L. Styan thinks the play describes the tensions arising within a lower-middle-class family.

Odets was soon publicly claiming kinship with Chekhov, and a comparison between the two is less grotesque than it might seem. Chekhov's decaying aristocrats are at the opposite end of the social scale from the proletarians of Awake and Sing, but they are astonishingly like them in their self-centered absorption in the bitterness of their individual frustrations. It may very well be that Odets learned from the Russian his most striking stylistic trick, the writing of brisk colloquial dialogue in which much appears to be irrelevant or random, though all is actually very much to the point. His characters, like most of Chekhov's, reveal themselves by their very inability to communicate with their fellows; and, again like the characters of Chekhov, they cannot communicate because each is too absorbed in his own misery even to recognize the similar state of all around him.
During the same year which saw the first production of *Awake and Sing*, the Group Theater produced two other plays by the same author: *Till the Day I Die*, an undistinguished if earnest drama of Nazi brutality; and *Paradise Lost*, which Odets professed to regard as his most important work, but which to most critics seemed a highly doctrinaire, rather than convincing, study of American society in the process of a disintegration closely in accord with the pattern laid down in Marxian prophecy. Possibly because neither of these plays achieved great success, *Golden Boy* (1937) attempted, not wholly in vain, to tell in terms of the popular theater a story capable of conveying to the attentive a moral for the politically radical; and it was not until the following year that *Rocket to the Moon* again gave convincing demonstration of the fact that its author was a man of more than mediocre talents. G. R. Taylor says, "*Golden Boys* with its Sammy Davis is perhaps the most striking fulfillment."16

Robert Spiller says, "After the outbreak of the Second World War, most radicals, including finally even the members of the Communist Party, became convinced that it was advisable to form with 'capitalism' a 'united front' against the Axis powers. One result was an effective dampening of their enthusiasm for revolutionary social criticism, and the 'revolutionary theater' as a recognizable entity rapidly dissolved. Many new plays of social import were written, and audiences became larger than at any time since the twenties; but between 1939 and 1945 no one kind of play was persistently cultivated and no new theatrical movement became discernible."17

The World War II themes pre-dominated the American theatre in the 1940s. For example, Robert Sherwood's *There Shall Be No Night* (1940) was widely praised for its statement of the case of Finland against Russia.
Lillian Hellman wrote plays with social themes. Her play The Little Foxes (1939), whose raison d'être is an implied criticism of capitalist society, and then with Watch on the Rhine (1941), in which violent condemnation of Nazi Germany is the main motivating idea. Both of these plays, like The Searching Wind, which was produced after the German invasion of Russia, exhibit considerable theatrical dexterity but suffer from the extent to which they appear to be limited by immediate political considerations. Another Part of the Forest (1947) deals with the same family as The Little Foxes and is theatrically the most dexterous of her plays. J. L. Styan thinks her plays agitate against evil and they do so by the indirect method of holding it up to view, not by the direct means of a militant appeal.

When the modern drama was born in Europe the assumption was commonly made that naturalism was its normal method. In America, however, during the three decades after the founding of the Provincetown and the Washington Square Players, there was a strong tendency in an opposite direction, and even the Broadway audiences showed a willingness to accept fantasy, symbolism, poetry, and other deviations from the literal. This is surprising enough when one considers the supposed contemporary devotion to doctrinaire realism, or even when one remembers that the sentimental plays which dominated the late nineteenth and early twentieth century stages were usually presented in pseudorealistic terms.

Of the five modern dramatists given most extended consideration in this history, three, O'Neill, Anderson, and Saroyan, could not by any stretch of the term be called exclusively or even primarily realists. Marc Connelly's Negro fantasy The Green Pastures was tremendously successful in 1930, and Thornton Wilder's New England allegory Our Town won the Pulitzer Prize in 1938. B. Yugenderanath observes, "The significance of Thornton Wilder's
plays is the unmatched theatricalism they bring to the American stage. In the manner of Brecht, Wilder endeavours to present emblems of reality rather than reality on the stage.18 Even the left-wing drama, though professing to be so practical in its implications, tended toward the expressionism cultivated by the earliest of the Communist-inspired groups and by John Howard Lawson in his Processional or, like many of the productions of the Theater Union and the Federal Theater, employed a symbolism which at times approaches the simple and directly translatable allegory of the old morality play.

William Saroyan is another great playwright. His many plays are whimsical and symbolic to the extreme. Yet he is only incidentally a playwright. For that matter he is incidentally a novelist or short-story writer since he must be classed as a romantic egotist who lets himself go on paper. Of his several plays, only two, My Heart's in the Highlands (1939) and The Time of Your Life (1939), achieved any sort of conspicuous success; the second of these won the Pulitzer Prize and enjoyed a long run. Both are, however, a great deal more entertaining than any description is likely to seem, and both are perhaps best understood in the light of the author's complaint that the chief defect of American plays has been the lack of any 'play' in them. My Heart's in the Highlands concerns a fantastically improvident and unsuccessful poet whose chief difficulty—getting something to eat for himself and his young son—is temporarily solved by the appearance of an old man who plays so sweetly on the bugle that the neighbors bring a tribute of eggs, fruits, and vegetables. In The Time of Your Life, a mysterious habitue of a waterfront saloon acts as deus ex machina in the lives of a group of fantastic unfortunates, and helps to rid the world of the only really ill disposed person in either play.
Technically the objection most often raised to Saroyan's plays is that, like his stories, they lack continuity, form, or unity. Still he was accepted in America.

Literary historians observe “The revolution in the American theater which characterizes the twentieth century began when a group of new writers presented on the stage various stories told against the background of that new sophistication which not only the American intellectual but also a considerable part of the American population had somewhat self-consciously acquired from many sources, including more than a few European dramatists. Drama tended to remain up-to date by treating themes current at any particular moment, and by treating them from current points of view rather than with the safe conventionality of most nineteenth century dramatists who, on the whole, were far more timid than essayists or writers of fiction. Perhaps, then, the experiments with fantasy and symbolism and poetry so characteristic of the middle forties indicate a growing dissatisfaction of playwright and public alike with the limitations of a realistic treatment of current topics, and an obvious effort to gain intensity by exploring further methods not merely realistic and subject matter, nor essentially topical. On the whole, the novelists of these years were more successful than the dramatists in exploiting such subject matter, and the poets developed more highly experimental forms. But the drama, occupying a middle position, shared with writing unrestricted by the exigencies of stage and audience the creative vitality of the period, and the national theater was not wholly inhospitable to what the best playwrights could make of it.”

The situation of post-war drama was ironical. Though it boasted the most challenging experiments it did not produce great figures. The roster of serious playwrights is brief: Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee and Jack Gelber who have created distinguished records. Yet drama
showed the will to encompass as much of reality as men can bear, and to break the molds which time and experience inevitably must alter. In this respect, drama was at one with postwar fiction and poetry; the three genres pointed beyond formalism to new conceptions of form. Like the other genres, post-war drama held its images of the self paramount, veering toward expressionism or surrealism merely to render its vision of a human truth that the mass of fact and cliche threatened to obliterate. The emphasis, if not always absurd or private, was certainly personal; the focus was on the elusive or illusive part of man. For example, Arthur Miller, despite his abiding social passion, distinguished himself from playwrights of the thirties by a more troubled awareness of individual psychology; Tennessee Williams concerned himself with the power of dream and desire breaking helplessly on the ramparts of culture; and Gelber and Albee moved on the boundaries of reason, looking at the darkness within. Their absurd drama is noteworthy.

There is little doubt that the aura of risk and zest cultivated by the small theater off Broadway facilitated the growth of drama. Born out of economic as well as artistic necessities, these theaters achieved, on the whole, a high standard of performance in presenting the classic repertory of Shakespeare, Ibsen, or Chekov, in introducing foreign playwrights such as Beckett, Genet, Brecht, Ionesco, or Adamov, and in offering new American dramatists the opportunity to try out before a select audience. Albee's *The Zoo Story* (1958), Gelber's *The Connection* (1959), and Jack Richardson's *The Prodigal* (1960) were all performed off Broadway and so were such interesting adaptations of novels as Alfred Hayes's *The Girl on the Via Flaminia* (1954) and Calder Willingham's *End as a Man* (1953), which later moved uptown. After the establishment of the Circle-in-the-Square and the Phoenix Theatre, a large number of theaters began appearing in and around
Greenwich Village; and though a few tended to be, like little magazines, rather fugitive, others, like the Theatre de Lys, the revived Cherry Lane, and the embattled Living Theatre, contributed greatly to the growth of drama.

The TV made its own assault on the American theatre. It produced its own plays. The most notable among them were Gore Vidal's satirical fantasy, *Visit to a Small Planet* (1957); Horton Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful* (1953); William Gibson's version of the Helen Keller story, *The Miracle Worker* (1959); N. Richard Hash's romantic comedy, *The Rainmaker* (1954); and Paddy Chayevsky's drama of love and loneliness, *Middle of the Night* (1956). But even the most notable of these plays were marred by sentimental realism or pat humor; and their authors, even when they wrote directly for the stage, could not create the authentic drama which the age required. "Ironically," Gerald Weales concludes in *American Drama Since World War II* (1962), "although television drama is the most realistic of dramatic forms today, its most important effect on the theatre has been its contribution to the spread of nonrealistic staging, and the concomitant shattering of the strict act structure."20

Between the avant-garde drama off Broadway and the video culture of Madison Avenue, a large and indefinite area of the commercial theater existed. This area was usually dominated by musical comedies; but it was also infiltrated by a certain type of melodrama which, though wide in its appeal, exhibited more serious pretensions. The leading writers in this group were William Inge, Arthur Laurents, and Robert Anderson, who shared the dubious ambition of putting complex human problems in a soft focus. Inge wrote a number of popular plays which found their way to the Hollywood industry: *Come Back Little Sheba* (1950), *Picnic* (1953), *Bus Stop* (1955),
and *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* (1957). His concern with the erotic aspirations of muddled men and women lent itself to a shallow conception of love as the panacea of society, and to commonplace naturalism in expression. V. Rama Murthy thinks Inge plays are traditional in technique. Bamber Gascoigne observes, "Inge was a low-brow Ibsen whose commercial plays appeared seriously and added appeal." Arthur Laurents, who wrote *Home of the Brave* (1945), his best play, *The Time of the Cuckoo* (1952), and *A Clearing in the Woods* (1957), showed similar limitations in his treatment of social problems. Andersen's *Tea and Sympathy* (1953) and *All Summer Long* (1954), like the preceding plays, engaged large issues mainly by shirking their full implications. In all these playwrights there seemed to be as little dramatic inventiveness as depth of vision; theatrical skill and moral elusiveness carried the evening for audiences flattered into a semblance of self-knowledge; and the terrors of human existence were invoked merely to be dispelled in the vicarious afterglow of promised passion.

Greater artistic success was often achieved by striking adaptations of fiction to the stage as before. Though such plays seldom fell within the purview of creative achievement, a few, besides the works by Hayes and Willingham noted earlier, reflected the dramatic temper of the period and thus deserve to be mentioned: Truman Capote's *The Grass Harp* (1952); Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding* (1950); Tad Mosel's *All the Way Home* (1960), based on Agee's novel, *A Death in the Family*; Ketti Frings's *Look Homeward, Angel* (1957); Joshua Logan's version of Thomas Heggen's *Mister Roberts* (1948); Harvey Breit and Budd Schulberg's *The Disenchanted* (1959); and Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny* (1954). Besides, many others novelists also attempted their hand at theatre. Some of them are E. E. Comings, John Dos Passos, Upton Sinclair and others.
It was with Arthur Miller, however, that post-war drama acquired new dignity and import. Miller's insistence on man's inherited will to survive, on the solidarity of human ties and the perpetual wonder of experience, lifted his work from ideology and sensationalism. "I am tired of seeing man as merely a bundle of nerves. That way lies pathology,"²² Miller once said in an interview. The statement points to Miller's central conviction that as man is seldom defined by his social or political milieu; neither can he escape the impersonal forces which affect his image of himself, his very name. This conflict of images, however awkward or inchoate it may seem in particular plays, energized his powerful characters, and drove them to implicate their dreams in a widening circle of loyalties. It was, therefore, natural that Miller planted his characters firmly within a family structure which reflected in turn the pressures of society at large. The guilty passion of the hero became significant only when it was finally challenged by some broader commitment; the latter invariably transcended both private will and social sanction. This was the essential dramatic situation in all of Miller's plays. The Man Who Had All the Luck (1944) depicted a character who anticipates his doom simply because he has come to accept the value which the community has put on his success. All My Sons (1947), a more convincing play which uses war profiteering as its background, showed that not even a family can be an island unto itself. Bamber Gascoigne Observes, "Miller feels deeply about the betrayal of one's family responsibilities."²³ Death of a Salesman (1949) not only created the unforgettable figure of the middle-aged salesman, Willy Loman; it penetrated the dark mythology of America. The play, G. R. Taylor says, "has extremely complicated, fluid, flexible, dramaturgic structure, moving across space and time, very nearly musical in its handling of theme and statement, to recognize how impelled American drama felt to move toward a richer artistic texture."²⁴ The play revealed the moral ambivalence and inexplicable impact of
a major work of art; and though critics may feel that the voice of tragedy was muffled by pathos in it, there is no doubt that its realistic treatment of such age-worn themes as sex and success became transfigured into an expressionistic statement of deep human resonance. Bamber Gascoigne thinks "the play is an admirable blend of pathos and satire."²⁵ This play along with O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* and Tennessee William's *The Glass Menagerie* has achieved the perfect integration of expressionism and realism. In the words of B. Yugenderanath the play internalizes the desperation, gloom and the sense of entrapment that characterizes the depression period. V. Rama Murthy observes, "In all these plays, expressionism has been meaningfully and fruitfully employed. Their authors certainly go farther than Ibsen but not as far as Kaiser or Toller. They have a logical consistency and an original structure that other plays lack. They are unsurpassed in their construction and power of situation. In all of them there is a harmonious blending of realism with non-realistic or expressionistic stylization."²⁶ In *The Crucible* (1953), written when anti-Communist hysteria was at its peak in the country, Miller set his action in witch-hunting Salem, and once again, though perhaps less resonantly, displayed the clash between private and collective guilt, hinting that man must in the end define himself beyond both. This is a full-scale tragedy. G. R. Taylor says, "The play caught the country's sense of bewilderment and fright during the McCarthy era."²⁷ The same may be said of Miller's more forceful play, *A View from the Bridge* (1955, 1956), set on the Brooklyn waterfront, which found a common moral focus of the lust of a man, both incestuous and homosexual, and the lust of a society which denies men the hope of self-betterment. Its protagonist, Eddie Carbone, finally became tragic as Loman was not, because even in lust or betrayal he insisted on claiming his full due as a human being. In the original version, much of the play was in verse, and it appeared on the same bill with the one-acter, *A Memory of Two Mondays*
(1955). Later, the play was expanded, recast in prose, and somewhat heightened in realism. Bamber Gascoigne thinks the play is autobiographical. If Miller's work exhibited any development, it was probably in the direction of simplicity in construction and immediacy in language. As V. Rama Murthy observes, "Miller explores the basic malaise of society, which is responsible for the nerve-racking tensions and worries of modern man. He views the individual not in isolation as Williams does but in relation to the environments. Though his moral earnestness sometimes sounds puritanical and old-fashioned the powerful dramatic element in his plays makes them interesting as plays." It is observed that, "Though Miller's output is small just four full-length plays and one one-act, he maintained a very high standard. He is a dramatist of passion, conviction and intelligence."29

The contrast between Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller is complete in almost every respect. Miller, at bottom, was a realist with a moral, a social, vision; and despite his occasional use of the flashback, the simultaneous set, or the dramatic narrator, he was technically a conservative. Williams, on the other hand, was essentially a fantasist with a lonely, poetic vision; and his dramaturgy, despite its deceptive verisimilitude, welled from untold desires. What made the drama of Williams enormously exciting was precisely its explosive contact with the human unconscious, its enactments of primal conflicts whose significance ultimately lay beyond the scope of reason or social order. This is not to say that Williams' work lacked all social reference; it stood, in fact, as one of the most savage indictments of culture in our time. Its focus was the lonely victim or outsider, the deviate from the norm which the world cruelly enforces, the 'fugitive kind.' In the Williams myth, however, the outsider was as often a victim of his own weakness, guilt, or illusion as he was a victim of the brutality of the world or its crippling mendacity. The most
obvious quality of Williams' drama was its lurid action, its shocking treatment of murder, perversion, cannibalism, or rape. But sensationalism, which may account for his vast, popular success, should be recognized in his case as an expression of a gothic imagination haunted by a genuine sense of the horror, the implacability, of existence. By his own admission a rebellious Puritan, Williams was really a moral symbolist who projected the tradition of Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and Faulkner into the present. More than any of these writers, however, he made the mystery of sexuality his central metaphor. The perversion of sexuality reflected the identity of his characters; the absence of love defined the terror of their isolation. Love is no bromide. It is the ground of wisdom and poetry, as it was for Orpheus; and also the ground for being, as it may be for an inscrutable, and occasionally malignant, god. That Williams' apprehension of love was ultimately religious was suggested by his unformed, yet recurrent, intuition of it both as a function of evil—Suddenly Last Summer (1958)—and as atonement for evil—Orpheus Descending (1955). A writer of fiction as well as poetry, it was in his best plays that he made an indelible impression. These include The Glass Menagerie (1945), a somewhat autobiographical family drama, which created in Amanda Wingfield the eternal Southern lady, steeped in genteel illusions, who contributes unwillingly to the breakdown of her ailing, dreamy daughter. The play generated a tender, poetic mood unparalleled by any other except perhaps Night of the Iguana (1961). Williams's greatest success remains A Streetcar Named Desire (1947) which revealed, in the unforgettable figure of Blanche DuBois, how corruption and sensitivity, in Southern society, may be intricately conjoined, and how reality, represented by the Marion Brando interpretation of Stanley Kowalski, may be brutal. Camino Real (1953), an allegorical fable, dropped all pretenses of realism, and deflected the obsessive sexual theme toward Kilroy's jaunty, quixotic search for life. Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955) was an eclectic drama of
greed and mendacity. It was set on a Southern plantation dominated by the patriarchic figure of Big Daddy, and it counterpointed the social lie of Gooper and Mae, who lust after the land, with the self-deception of Brick and Maggie, who evade the implications of their sexual crisis. Other plays, *Summer and Smoke* (1948), *The Rose Tattoo* (1951), *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959), *Period of Adjustment* (1960), did not greatly amplify the reputation of Williams. His was a mixed achievement: the symbols were too often intrusive, the violence was at times less dramatic than pathological, and the vision, when it faltered, exuded self-hate. But Williams' romantic vision seldom faltered so drastically. His dialogue sang; his characters, always supercharged with emotion, compelled us to enter their lives and share their fate; and his moods changed so cannily, from poignancy to humor to sheer terror that his audiences were made to experience a lifetime in an evening. Such expansion in knowledge finally amounts to an expansion in the language of drama of which Tennessee Williams must be considered the foremost living practitioner.

Williams modified the conventions of the theater by a deep personal intuition of the irrational. In the so-called Theater of the Absurd, such intuitions became the norm of drama; the examples of Beckett, Genet, Artaud, and Ionesco coalesced into an international style. The style, however, reflected no passing fad; it expressed, rather, a radical attitude toward reality. Reality was apprehended as a random and mysterious thing; man was seen as a contradictory, an unpredictable, being constantly in flux; and language itself was accepted as an irrelevant activity of the discursive mind, powerless to describe either man or reality. Since no structure could be discerned in experience, the form of drama was entirely shattered, and language was formally dissolved as an organ of thought. What remained on
the stage was merely a quizzical sense of being, a poetic intuition, beyond
comedy or tragedy, of the absurd persistence of man. No story was told; no
character was explored; no ideas were discussed. Such drama seemed to be,
at first sight, a wry expression of nihilism. If so, it was a brand of nihilism
that refused, quite paradoxically, to accept itself. The tension of that
paradox indicated the promise of the new antiform.

The promise was confirmed by the work of Edward Albee. In *The
Zoo Story*, for instance, Albee showed how a chance encounter between two
strangers could develop, by means of witty, erratic dialogue, into a
compelling statement about the hope which is the other side of despair, and
the freedom which is the other face of constraint. Likewise, the social content
didacticism, in a macabre comedy focused on the figures of the emasculated
Daddy and domineering Mommy in search of a son. The use of clichés in the
play was masterly, as was the contrast between the cheery facade and grim
reality suggested by the dialogue. In *The Death of Bessie Smith* (1959),
Albee adopted a more realistic technique. Realism, however, was entirely
modified by the fury of language in his first full-length work, *Who's Afraid
of Virginia Woolf?* (1961-1962), which explored the mutual destructiveness
of four people who transform their tame environment into a torture
chamber. The icy savagery of the play redeemed its wobbly structure and
implied a moral commitment. It is said, "The theatrical power and success
notwithstanding, *Who's Afraid...?* presents a rare dramatic achievement in
telescoping a whole lot of cultural and religious dilemmas and aspirations into
the subtle nuances of marital relationships in the sixties. Like *Death of a
Salesman* and *Street Car---in the earlier decade, *Who is Afraid...?* Is a dramatic
epic of the nineteen sixties.” Bamber Gascoigne thinks Albee was as much existentialist as absurdist in his presentation.

The moral commitment was even more powerful and protestant in the work of Jack Gelber. In *The Connection* (1959), a haunting play about drug addiction, men wait bitterly, as they do in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954), for "the connection" who does finally appear. Dialogue and jazz improvisations blend on the stage, and the author, the director, and the audiences itself are implicated in the action, sharing the responsibility for it. Yet if the play, in pretending to be not art but life, mocked its own conventions of realism, it did so in a symbolic fashion. The anger of its specific social theme was raised to the universal level of the imagination: in the quest for salvation, no one is really without some connection. A fierce individualist, Gelber was intent on opening the floodgates of tolerance in *The Apple* (1961). If anything, the play was even more vital and form-shattering than his first. Its zany violence and theatrical horseplay blasted every kind of bigotry that stifles human awareness. Y thinks "Gelber's plays are examples of New realism. His practice is Pirandelian."

Here history opens on the future. The *avant-garde* theater of Gelber tells the story of post-war literature even while advancing on its frontiers. The story is new only because it belongs to the living, not the dead. Forms break and are remade; the attack on conventions really heralds their inner collapse. If any motives emerge from the story of the past decades, they are probably too bald to tell. And yet it is the business of literature to tell of these things without baldness: man's renewed sense of his being, the encroachments he must deny and the commitments he must once again test. In a world where conscience so often compels dissent, post-war literature found the courage commensurate

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with its vision. Through form and antiform, its search for the basic thing, where self and society meet, continued.

G. R. Taylor writes "Senecan plays were popular in Renaissance Italy, France and England. Although the blood, lust, revenge motifs were ultimately subdued or refined, the Senecan form has remained a tempting possibility for every serious dramatist since the seventeenth century if only because of the sensational surface of violence and shock. The American Living Theatre crystallized many of the qualities of the new Senecanism, producing two works of—Broadway that attained national notoriety, *The Connection* and *The Brig*. The first showed a gathering of dope addicts waiting for the delivery of heroin. The second was a literal, moment-by-moment record of experience in a U.S. marine prison."^{32} One may find early manifestations of the new Senecanism in some of the more intense scenes in Eugene O'Neill's works (*Desire under the Elms*). These and many other Senecan tragedies exposed the audience to psychological and physical trauma. The new Senecanism has a comic mode as much as tragic and melodramatic ones. The most familiar manifestation of the comic mode is in the black humour dramatic monologues of stand up comedians like Mort Sahl, Bob Newhart, Jonathan Winters, the Smothers Brothers, Jack E. Leonard, Don Rickles, and Lenny Bruce. The so called Black or sick comedy is popular in modern age and it has its roots in the works of Aristophanes, Moliere, Jonathan Swift, Mark Twain and others. Another thing is audiences' participation. Brecht's alienation effect, Artaud's theatre of brutality and absurd drama also insist that audiences have to be forced to participate in the ceremony of experience in the modern theatre.

In general American tragedy is really interesting. Much of this tragedy is political. Like Sophocles' Oedipus, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Ibsen's
middle class heroes, the American tragedy has political overtones. Elmer Rice's *Street Scene* and Lilian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* evidence this amply. Jack Gelber's *The Connection* is another example as Jean Itallie's *Motel*. B. Yugenderanath thinks, "Itallie is perhaps the most representative of the The Open Thetare and he presents the essential human decadence of the technologically advanced American society." Tragedy has a metaphorical and symbolic intention. Great tragedies as Shakespeare's reflect universal theme. Likewise, Arthur Miller's 'Low-man' as a common man enlarges this significance. The depth, the continuity, the moral value established that importance and provided the necessary universality. This is seen in the works of Albee (*The American Dream*), LeRoi Jones (*Dutchman*), Arnold Weinstein (*The Red Eye*), Kopit (*Dad, Poor Dad*), Rochelle Owens (*Futz*) and others. Finally tragedy is not about an individual but about a nation and any American tragedy has to acknowledge the quality of American life.

Often material success spoiled the American drama. For example, Saul Bellow could not write his play *The Last Analysis* (1964) carefully as he got wealth out of his novel *Herzog*. Henry James's efforts to write a successful play were strenuous and futile. Hemingway failed too. John O'Hara wrote ingenuously about his own wish to write plays.

G. R. Taylor writes, "American drama has for so long been Broadway drama that is, financially successful drama, that no writer can think of a 'hit,' with all it implies of the importance of drama critics' reviews, long runs, large audiences, theatre parties, Hollywood bids for the movie rights, without having in mind those financial aspects of success that sometimes blur the other aspects of achievement. From the Provincetown Playhouse of around 1920 to the San Francisco Actors Group Workshop of the 1960s,
artistically ambitious and successful American drama has led directly to Broadway. Provincetown ‘fulfilled its promise’ and its efforts with the Theatre Guild and Eugene O’Neill; the directors of the serious, energetic, ambitious San Francisco group, Herbert Blau and Jules Irving, went to the Lincoln Repertory Theatre in New York, only a step or two from Broadway. The costs of putting on a Broadway play increased so fantastically since the end of World War II that only rich men could afford to ignore financial considerations. Two contrasts cited by Eric Bentley: *Life with Father* (1939) cost $23,000 to produce; *Life with Mother* (1948), $85,000. A proper Saroyan play cost $5,000; a post-war Williams play, $115,000.34

What else the success of Hollywood was another problem. Most of the playwrights except O’Neill, moved to Hollywood for opportunities. Most of them—from Odets, the writer, through Franchot Tone and Hohn Garfield, the actors, to the directors and producers of the federal Theatre, the Group Theatre, and the privately sponsored productions – moved on, more or less permanently to Hollywood and the massive salaries of the films. One bad result of this was that most of them who moved to Hollywood failed to achieve dramatic heights. Only O’Neill did it as comparable to the European writers like Brecht, Pirandello, Lorca, and Anouilh.

This concept of success haunted the playwrights. For example, Arthur Miller wrote his plays around this concept. It is said, “His ‘Low-man’ wants the middle class apotheosis of success: a mortgage paid off, a car clear of debt, a properly working modern refrigerator, and an occasional mistress, son’s ‘well liked’ if uneducated and aimless. Willy Loman is Babbitt, twenty years later.”35 The plays of Tennessee Williams are dominated by an atmosphere of un-success and anti-success, which may be part of their total perverseness, a denial of the main American impulses of ambition and
fulfillment. Tom Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* and his sister and mother are impotent in making their way in the larger world, from which escape to their several private refuges. Likewise, Odets' play *Paradise Lost* reflects success to bankruptcy, death and disease. Sometimes, guilt accompanies success in America; some of our best writers are driven to excesses of apologia, destructive self-examinations under the pressures of success, denying it, explaining it away, and even mutilating it.

American drama critics have done a marvelous job in refining theatre. A mention may be made of Mary McCarthy, Abel, Susan Sontag, Stanley Kauffmann, Brunsten, Jack Richardson, Diana Trilling, Henry Popkin, Gerald Weales and others.

American theatre has its own problems of production. To begin with American theatre is at least fifty years behind the European theater. Of course, there is a revolution in theatricality.

Bernard Dukore writes "To many people the American theatre means Broadway, and Broadway has become associated with neon signs and phony glitter, with the opulence and gaudiness that masks shallowness or emptiness. In short, Broadway means the commercial theatre, and the Broadway theaters are the boulevard theatres of New York City, the theatrical capital of the United States.

But there is an alternative, off-Broadway. Although most of the off-Broadway theatres are in New York's Greenwich Village or on the Lower East Side, off-Broadway is not so much a matter of location as it is a state of mind. If Broadway evokes images of shallowness, sugariness and superficial slickness, then off-Broadway brings to mind the image of the dedicated artist in the loft. If Broadway is commercialization, then off-
Broadway is anti-commercialization. Dukore observes, "However, these contrast that have indicated are not rigid compartments; they are generalization and, as is the case with all generalizations, exceptions can be found."36

The plus points with the Broadway theatre were that playwrights could spend much and produce great pieces. On the other hand, off-Broadway production had its own multiples benefits. Such efforts can yield low cast productions, revivals, one-actors, European avant-garde productions, and the like.

A recent national economic review published by The New York Times reveals that the 'arts market' is one of the fastest growing markets in America. Nowadays Broadway theatre is not functioning as it did once producing plenty of plays. Today many universities have their own theatres as much as their own drama courses. They award degrees and fellowships for new artists and beginners. They bestow the honour of doctorates for brilliant achievements. They are as popular as TV and motion pictures. They facilitate 'artist-in-residences.' There are many municipal and community professional theatres. Theatre graduates are employed in schools and colleges as teachers or as trainers to new graduates. Some of them work as producers.

Alan Downer in his thought provoking essay "The Future of the American Theatre" writes of a bright future for American theatre. He observes, "The theatre is a living art—the playwright or director manipulates bodies and voices in actual time and visible space, creating afresh at each performance a unique total work of art, in which creation the audience assists. The theatre is a communal art: it is an experience shared by
its performers and by its spectators—not by ones and twos in the living room but by hundred in its special home, the playhouse. And this is the second fact on which to base a confident prediction that the American theatre has a future—there is no equivalent, from the spectator’s point of view, for the experience of living drama in a playhouse.”

Alan Downer seems to think the American theatre is eclectic, its matter and techniques come to it from the wide, wide world, and the American audience chooses commitment in its playwrights, its actors, and itself. That has been its history since World War II, and that, one supposes, will be its foreseeable future.
References:


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18. B. Yugenderanath, *Between the Real and Surreal*, p. 78.


27. G. R. Taylor, *Drama and Society*, p. 84.


34. G. R. Taylor, *Drama and Society*, pp. 75-76.

35. G. R. Taylor, *Drama and Society*, p. 79.
