CHAPTER - III

FROM COMMUNISM TO HUMANISM
Odets' next play *Till the Day I Die* is one of the four plays written in 1935. This is a very short play of only one act with seven scenes written in five days, through which 'Odets projects a personal conflict.' This was written out of practical necessity. *Waiting for Lefty* was only an hour long, and it required a companion piece to be presented along with it in the theatre. It is to fill this gap that Odets dramatized a short story he had read in the *New Masses*. This was in the form of a letter from Nazi Germany. Directed by Cheryl Crawford, it was one of the first serious anti-Nazi plays to be presented on a New York stage.

The plot centres round Ernest Tausig, a German Communist, captured by the Nazis in a raid. He is subjected to untold physical and mental torture in their effort to make him an informant. He is made to appear a traitor to his comrades, and is therefore blacklisted by them, including his brother and the girl he loved. Sensing the failure of his physical and mental stamina, and afraid of his own consequent failure to hold on, Ernst Tausig commits suicide. The victim of Nazi oppression becomes an appealing symbol conveying the effect of such oppression of any type in any kind of social order. The play is strongly sentimental in spite of the solid political theme. Ernst realizes that 'brother against
brother is the working principle of the day, and that he would fail to convince even Carl and Tilly of his innocence. He pleads; "I know I must be castaway. But you two can believe me. Yes, officially you need not believe, but yourselves." This play deals with the underground struggle against Fascism / Nazism, based upon contemporary life in Nazi Germany. This consists of two main principles: one is the awakening of the middle class and the other is the growing insurgency of the working classes.

As this play is an anti-Nazi play, it could be better if some of the facts about Nazi rule and its leader Hitler, and the circumstances during that period are mentioned. After the First World War came to an end, the countries like Russia, Italy, Germany etc., faced great economic and internal crisis. Owing to this reason, people in those countries lost faith in democracy, and they gained confidence in a dictatorial government. Thus, in Russia, under the leadership of the Communist leader, Lenin; in Italy, the Fascist leader, Mussolini, and in Germany, the Nazi leader, Hitler, the tyrannical governments were formed.

In Germany, as the people suffered multifariously by facing political and economical crisis, they were struggling between the principles of Democracy and the principles of Communism. At that juncture, Hitler came forward and was able to stabilize Germany through his principles of National Socialism, and became responsible for its multifaceted development. Meanwhile, the communists, based on the country's economic crisis, were creating a lot of troubles and turmoil in Germany by means of strikes and revolutions by propagandizing their communist principles. The people who were inspired by the principles of National Socialism were unable to digest the principles of the communists. As opined by Hitler, "Germany that is influenced by the impact of the communism becomes a slave state to Russia." As the Nazism was formed in order to prevent Germany from going to the hands of communism, it became an enemy to Nazism. Dramatizing these circumstances, the play Till the Day I Die has been written.

In this play, the plot centres round the protagonist, Ernst Tausig, who is a
violinist, German communist and revolutionary, who works in the underground movement to destroy the Nazi regime. One of the basic problems of the play is the presentation of Ernst, who essentially serves as "a mouth piece for the communist cause," though he is endowed with "a touching love for the violin and ennobling concern for truth and justice." Many of his speeches have the ring of propaganda and so he remains rather a flat character. He is captured by the Nazis in a raid, and he is subjected to untold physical and mental torture in their effort to make him an informant. He is released only to be shown respect by members of his cell. Even his brother, Carl Tausig, does not trust him, and he can regain their confidence only by killing himself. Harold Clurman says, 'one of the first serious anti-Nazi plays to reach Broadway, Till the Day I Die' (1935) was a melodramatic celebration of the human spirit and a painfully naive endorsement of the move towards consensus left-wing policies.'

Bigsby, in his critical book on American drama, criticizes this play as, "the play ---- on the sadistic nature of the Brown shirts, the simple-mindedness of Nazi party members and their agents, and the heroism of Jew and Communist." This play has become the model for the anti-fascist plays, which would follow. Odets' melodrama in seven scenes, which is his second one-act play, contains characters, situations and slogans, which became clichés by the time World War II, began. The underground fighters in the play include the hero Ernst Tausig; his sweetheart Tilly; and his brother Carl Tausig. All of them are essentially pacifist like most of the antifascists of the pre-war years, and they resort to violence only when they are forced to. Even when Ernst is suspected of treachery and informing on them by the greater organization, they have not punished him with a death sentence but with censure and ostracism.

In this play one can find three different categories of characters; they are Detective Popper, who represents the Gestapo and its sadistic, barbaric cruelty; Captain Schlegel, who stands for the ambitious young officer corps, loyal to Hitler and in control of the fate of the German people, and Major Duhring, who performs his duty to the military but kills himself because his conscience will not permit him to
follow blindly the ideology and orders of a mad man and henchman. The rest of
the soldiers of Germany fall generally into one of these categories, although there
is little likelihood that those who share Duhring's sentiments will follow his
example rather than give in to Nazi pressure.

As observed by John Gassner, *Till the Day I Die* dealt with the under-
ground struggle against fascism in Germany against a back enough. It consisted
of two main principles: the increasing proletarianization or awakening of the
middle class and the growing insurgency of the working class. Like *Waiting for
Lefty*, though this play has the underground members, who are communists,
Odets carefully avoids writing leftist platitudes for them to mouth except insofar as
they react to the extreme rightism of the Nazis. The characters of this play are
more memorable as antifascists rather than as communist revolutionaries. More
over, Odets has written this play based upon contemporary life in Nazi Germany
and so most of the characters are true to life. Describing the characters of this
play, Bigsby says, "His characters are naïve and romantic; their organization is
easily penetrated by the security forces. But Odets seems unwilling to accept the
implications of his own plot, balancing the incompetence of the young communist
with an equally naïve police force, easily placated with implausible stories. The
naivety, in other words, is not merely the characters', it is also the playwright's." This play clearly illustrates the "plights and problems" of his age, which are the
most legitimate ones, and his Jewish background deals with them, as he put it, "to
connect with himself."

There is some criticism against this play. As criticised by R.C. Reynolds,
'Critical reaction to *Till the Day I Die* was generally negative, but the strength of
*Waiting for Lefty* carried the piece along and kept it from closing." This play is in
the form of a letter from Nazi, and this is one of the first serious anti-Nazi plays to
be presented on New York stage. In spite of the solid political theme, this play is
strongly sentimental. It has been realized by Ernst that "brother against brother" is
the working principle of the day. He also realized that he has failed to convince
even Carl and Tilly of his innocence. He pleads, "I know I must be castaway. But
you two can believe me. Yes, officially you need not believe, but yourself. It is to the human cause in general that Odets is committed in this play. Torture in Nazi concentration camps has offered him the appropriate frame work, but dehumanisation individuals due to social and political oppression has been clearly brought about by him through the agency of Ernst Tausig, whose individual will is ebbing away under acute suffering from external sources.

Commenting on this play, Harold Clurman says, "a rather old fashioned piece of theatre in a style that derived from the swell of Odets' sentiment, an unavowed inclination toward romantic drama, and a feeling for social currents. It was a little artificial, yet not without some qualities of youthful sweetness and idealism." In this play, the mental violence perpetuated by the Nazi is far more frightening. The physical abuse carried out by the back-alley hoods, which can be seen very clearly in case of Ernst. When he is arrested, during the interrogation his hand has been smashed by Popper. After the torture is over, he is made to stand in the room where the remaining prisoners are interrogated. An unfortunate thing for Ernst is those who are released carry the tale that he is cooperating with the Nazis. So this propaganda brings a blemish to Ernst and his organization suspects him. When they go on raids of underground strongholds, they make him sit in front of the Gestapo car as if he were guiding them. Sometimes they release him with their careful vigil on him. This makes anybody hope that he will lead them to his comrades in an attempt to cleanse his own name. Thus, however, the Gestapo is able to create suspicion and mistrust among the underground all with one effort.

There is a complaint frequently made against this play that the playwright offers no alternative to fascism but communism: as Isaacs writes in a review, "If you do not like the philosophy of communism, you will not like the theme of Till the Day I Die." Though he became a member of the Communist Party in the winter of 1935, his advocating of a communist alternative is less a result of his personal politics than of his clever realisation that in Nazi Germany in 1935 the Communist Party was probably the only group capable of effectively facing Hitler's
Reich. In 1933, the blame of burning the German Parliament was put on communists only. At that time, the most strongly prosecuted group in Germany during the mid-thirties was the Communist Party and its affiliates, beside the unorganised and helpless Jews. As indicated by Odets himself, in 1935, there were only three alternatives to the average German, viz., - joining the Nazis, and going along with their programmes, however equal; accepting death along with the Jews and Major Duhring, whether at the hands of the Gestapo or by suicide; or joining the only possible opposition the communists. Though these are not perhaps optimistic alternatives, in 1935, there was little to be optimistic about in Germany.

Odets, using the expressionistic method, has divided this play into seven startling scenes. The action of the first scene of this play takes place in a small room underground in Berlin in 1935, a time when Germany is undergoing an economic crisis. This scene introduces Ernst Tausig, the protagonist and a communist working with the underground press; his brother Carl; his girl friend, Tilly; and Baum, the printing press operator. As the scene opens, a small man with a rueful face, named Baum, is silently operating a hectograph machine. The two brothers, Ernst and Carl, are watching him. Tilly Westermann, Ernst’s girl friend, sits at down stage at a long littered table and is seen concentrating on the work before her. There, they are printing leaflets relating to their underground movement. Here, Odets underscores the atmosphere of tension created not only by the Nazis hounding, but also by the communists’ fear of informers. The two brothers watch the operating machine for quite some time; Carl finally picks up a leaflet, which has just come from the machine, and scans it, replaces it finally. Then Carl says, referring to stencil, “How long will this stencil hold out?” In a singing voice, Baum replies that it will last for “Another hundred” (P.107). Ernst enters into the conversation and says that they are more than enough, as he believes that the recently published leaflet will make the Nazis perspire once it gets into the workers’ hands: “This particular leaflet’s going to make some of our Nazi friends perspire once it gets into the workers’ hands. Workers might like to know the American embargo on German goods has increased 50% in the last six
months. They might like to know wages are down one third and vital foods are up seventy-five percent" (P.107).

At that time, Tilly warns them not to loaf and to look after their work. Then Carl asks Ernst how many leaflets he will take. Ernst tells him to take two hundred and to give them to Zeltner, who will take care of distribution. But, Carl has no trust upon him. However, he is convinced by Tilly and Ernst, and however finally he seriously accepts it. The danger of their work is emphasized and counter pointed by music, as when Ernst complains, "Not to have touched a violin for six months? Incredible!" (P.108). Here, he remembers his violin and music with nostalgia. Carl answers this with an oddly practical endorsement of the value of music: "When I walk in the streets I sing. That makes them say, "He's above board, he can't be doing underground work. But they don't know I'm singing because I know where will be someday" (P.109).

There is a great distrust among the people because of the Nazi's attitude towards them. As the lives of the people in this troubled land have altered drastically, Ernst, formerly a violinist has become an active member of the Communist underground movement in order to fight against fascism. The party members are full of hope. His dream of the world is for happy people everywhere, and now here he enlarges on Carl's theme when he describes his vision of future: "My present dream of the world - I ask for happy laughing people every where. I ask for hope in eyes: for wonderful baby boys and girls I ask, growing up strong and prepared for a new world. I won't ever forget the first time we visited the nursery in Moscow. Such faces on those children! Future engineers, doctors; when I saw them I understood most deeply what the revolution meant" (P.112).

He feels so, because the times are not conducive to marriage, that's why he and his Tilly postpone their marriage. When Tilly and Ernst are staying in a room, the secret police enter their underground room. Then, Tilly is able to convince them that she is a prostitute and Ernst is her customer. As opined by Gabriel Miller, "The true dreamer's visions of a future utopia are abruptly
shattered, them, when the scene loses with the sound of the secret police banging at the door.\textsuperscript{13} The unmusical nature of the Nazis has been emphasized by Odets' stage directions at the close of the scene, "In the dark room between this scene and the shrill rounds of a half dozen whistles, variously pitched, showing with hysterical intensity" (P.113).

The second scene that takes place in a Nazi Brown House, where Popper, a fat detective is there 'in a brown trench coat and brown derby' at telephone on desk which also holds a typewriter along with two orderlies in Nazi uniform at the side sitting on a bench. There is Ernst Tausig too who is taken as a prisoner. Talking about this scene, Gabriel Miller says, "This scene has a slapstick quality that minimizes the potential danger to the protagonist."\textsuperscript{14} Popper, who has trouble with incompetent orderlies, is revealed to be no very competent himself while interrogating. Meanwhile, his superior Captain Schlegal has entered. Here Odets shows some of the forms of Nazi brutality. Schlegal, who eventually takes over the questing from Popper, asks Ernst, whom he knows to be a musician, to place his hands upon the desk. Taking a rifle, he smashes of Ernst's figures with the rifle butt. It can be said that this scene is the most violent in all of Odets' works, and this reminds the readers of the breaking of Joe's hands in the ring in \textit{Golden Boy}, and Bessie's destruction of Jacob's records in \textit{Awake and Sing!} This cruel act of Captain Schlegel eventually has resulted in the amputation of Ernst's right hand. However, later it has been attempted by Odets to humanize Schlegal by having him bemoan the fact that the Germans are afraid of attending a concert of their leader of Hugo Wolf. Odets also reveals that Schlegel is homosexual and at one moment he admits to his lover, Adolph: "I have seen you in a few peculiar positions at times. In fact, it might be much better for both of us if you weren't so graceful with those expressive hands of yours. Flitting around here like a soulful antelope. I'm lonely, I've got no one the whole world" (P.119). He then adds, "Hitler is lonely too. So is God" (P.119).

Scene three, which is also brutal and rather farcical, takes place in a barracks room where prisoners are tortured. Five troopers are there in that
barracks room along with the prisoners. Their behaviour with the prisoners is very odd and cruel. As observed by Gabriel Miller in his work, Clifford Odets, "Odets illustrates the senseless, degrading violence of the troops who beat up prisoners mercilessly to win bets. The violence of their action is presented here as so casual and banal a mode of conduct as to condemn any group's blind obedience to the dictates of a leader." In this scene a hot argument between two troopers, Weiner and Peltz, is very interesting. During their discussion Weiner quotes the words of Thyssen, about the success of a man, "success is ninety percent luck, five percent work, he said" (P.124). The attitude of the troopers towards Ernst is somewhat pathetic because the Trooper does not hesitate to call Ernst a pig, "Hey, Blackhead! Fall out of line! (Pulls him by coat tail) Stand there, pig". (P.125). Thus the argument between the troopers Peltz and Weiner is found throughout this scene.

In the fourth scene, Odets introduces an even more equivocal Nazi, Major Duhring, who is part Jewish. He enters there and wants to interrogate Ernst Tausig. First he scorns the person, the orderlies Edsel and Martin, for not maintaining the examination room neatly and he says; "Now boys, does this look like an examination room? Clear out before I lose my temper" (P.129). He orders them to 'inform them on the floor below to send up the communist, Ernst Tausig'. Secretly admiring Tausig, this man is uncomfortable before him, seeking to rationalize his own position: "Why I am in a Nazi uniform happens to be unimportant. A realistic necessity. I am married into one of the finest old German families, Nordic from the year one. The work I do for the National Socialists hams no foe of the Nazi state, in fact I am inclined to believe that if the truth were known, my work may often be interpreted as a positive hindrance... I will not deny the justness of the scorn in your eyes. This may cost me my head — I'm not sure I care" (P.130).

Major Duhring asks Tausig that their side wants information from him i.e. addresses and names of party officials. When Ernst Tausig says that he does not have that information with him, Duhring says: "I am not asking. They are here you can identify prisoners. They mean to make you do it. You have been here
than three weeks. Until now they have been comparatively mild. They ill beat you to with in an inch of death" (P.133). Then he warns Tausig of the tortures yet to come: "It's possible you may forget you proletarian task. Don't smile. A man's made of flesh and bone. They'll inform your comrades through subversive means that you've turned stool pigeon. Before you know it your own unit papers will be passing the word along. In a few months - no friends. No home" (P.133).

Then, finally Major says tells Ernst that they are releasing him and he is expected to make contacts with the party members. He will be followed every minute of the day and night. He has told all the details relating to his party members and their addresses, otherwise the consequences will be very severe. At the end of the scene, Duhring shoots Schlegel, who has threatened to expose his Jewish origin, and then he shoots himself. This suicide prefigures the eventual suicide of Tausig. Gerald Wheals observes that even the moving scene, the suicide of Major Duhring is, "a theatrical solution to a non-theatrical problem" and sums up his views on the play, "probably the weakest of Odets' plays, it is interesting largely because a few sketches aside - it is his last piece of pure propaganda and....his last public attempts deal directly with an important social situation. It exposed not only the Nazis, but his own imitation." These scenes in the Nazi offices serve two important functions - they portray two Nazi officers as cognizant not only of their own better selves but also of Tausig's heroic idealism.

Scene five takes place in Tilly's room, where Tausig returns to her room for taking rest, as he is badly beaten by the Nazis. Both of them talk about his sufferings. Then he remarks, "In the cell there - I know I stayed alive because I knew my comrades were with me in the same pain and chaos. Yes I know that till the day I die there is no peace for an honest worker in the whole world" (p.139). Here, this dialogue of Ernst reveals the aptness of title of this play. In response to this, Tilly says, "Till the day we die there is steady work to do. Let us hope we will both live to see strange and wonderful things. Perhaps we will die before then. Our children will see it then (P.139). The expression 'our children' is bitterly repeated by Ernst, as he does not understand its meaning. Then Tilly clarifies
that she is going to have a baby of his. However, the subject is changed to something else. Meanwhile Carl enters, but he is followed by two detectives. So, Tilly pretends and acts according to the situation so that they may not identify their real identity. After sending the detectives by convincing them, she comes to Ernst and finds that he is asleep. Then, as she looks through the window the scene ends.

The penultimate scene is a comrade scene, in which the hopeful exchange between the lovers, "our work is bearing fruit", is countered and also Tausig is tried in absentia by his comrades on the charge of being an informer. In their trial, one of the members, Arno accuses that "he must go on the blacklist. Every unit paper in the country must carry his name and description. For our purposes he is deadly, dangerous (P.104). Then Tilly makes an appeal on behalf of Tausig and declares that she does not believe him to be a traitor, reminding those present that they have known and worked with the man for years. She requests the chair to permit her to read a small note that she received from Ernst last week: "They are taking my life by the inch. Day and night they press me for an answer - identify prisoners or be killed. I cannot last much longer. The terrible truth is they do not kill me. I am enclosing money, which they handed over to me yesterday after forcing me to fit beside their chauffeur when they made a street raid. You may be sure I have kept my mouth shut. Love to Carl and you". (p.p.144-145).

Here, the pathetic situation of Ernst is revealed through his note. All his agony is his comrades may mistake him, but however, they have mistaken except Tilly. Then the leading figure in the movement, Stieglitz, who has been released from a detention camp recently, has risen to speak, but has become inarticulate soon, as his mind has been destroyed by years of imprisonment. Stieglitz was once brilliant, but now a defeated man. In spite of that, he is still devoted to the cause. In this scene, he serves as Tausig's stand in; his appearance adds force to Tilly's words, and stimulates audience sympathy for Tausig further. As he leaves the meeting hall, however, care takes the floor to speak against his brother, Ernst. (In this play Ernst is called some times Ernst and other times
Tausig). Here, his action mirrors the betrayal scene in *Waiting for Lefy*. As commented by Gabriel Miller: "Here, transition from pity to condemnation is abrupt and jarring, making Carl's words sound heartless even as he proclaims the revolutionary credo. While Carl speaks, a violin and piano duo are heard playing a Mozart sonata in the background, and the contraposition of the music with the denunciation of a brother creates a dramatic emotional conflict through Odetsian symbolism."17

Carl suddenly ups and says that he'd like to say something in reference to his brother, Ernst. Addressing them comrades and says whether it is time for music today, as he hears the music of piano and violin from downstairs. He asks them what we are fighting for and he espouses the harsh, unsentimental reasoning of the party line: "Yes, it is brother against brother. Many a comrade has found with deep realization that he has no home, no brother—even no mothers and fathers! What must we do here? Is this what you asked me? We must expose this one brother wherever he is met. Whosoever looks in his face is to point the finger. Children will jeer him in the darkest streets of his life! Yes the brother, the erstwhile comrade cast out! There is no brother, no family, no deeper mother than the working class" (P.146).

In spite of his powerful speech that galvanizes the meeting and turns the vote against Tausig, a profound ambivalence pervades this scene, as if the playwright desperately wanted to advocate the larger sense of brotherhood that the party represents. It can't give support to Carl's betrayal, his denial of his brother's humanity and his inability to believe in his innocence. As observed by Gabriel Miller: "The sundering of an ideal (home) in which Odets believed deeply—for one that he seems to question invests the scene with a tension that confused the thematic thrust of the play."18 However, after having the discussion, first Carl and then Tilly vote to blacklist him. The playwright may have wanted to depict Tausig as a martyr, but he seems instead a victim of political abstraction.

The ultimate scene that prolongs this mood of ambivalence closes the play
with a confrontation between the two brothers. When Carl and Tilly are in Carl's room, Ernst comes there. Carl asks him several questions with suspicion. Then he says: "Nothing, nothing. Only I want you to believe me. I must have someone believing me. I am not a traitor. I'm not so far gone I don't understand the position I'm in. I see what you must do to me. Warn all party members against me. You can't know the truth. Yes, what is one person like me against the whole enslaved German working class, I know I must be cast away. But you two can believe me. Yes, officially you need not believe - but yourselves Carl, don't look at me that way!" (P.152).

When Carl notices the small of perfume on his brother, Tausig explains, "They gave me money. It falls out of my hands. My mind wanders like smoke. I passed the store the other day and it was in the window. Perfumed soap. I bought some. A man must have something. It smells like flowers." (P.152).

Here, the allusion to flowers reminds of Baum's nostalgic reference to tulips in the scene one. Even though this is an anti-fascist propaganda piece, there is an element of affirmation. At the time when he decided to commit suicide in order to avoid selling out his comrades, Ernst asserts: "We live in the joy of a great coming people!.... Day must follow the night". (P.154).

It is indicated that Tausig retains his personal memories and he maintains his idealism to the end. He produces a gun to his brother, Carl, to shoot him. But Carl refuses to do so, insisting that Ernst must kill himself. As he does so, the final words of the play are exchanged by Carl and Tilly:

"Carl: Let him die...
Tilly: Carl... (Shot heard within)
Carl: Let him live (P.154).

Here the last words of Carl, "Let him live," indicates that he will live through his death. Unlike the other protagonists of Odets Later plays, Ernst is not a divided soul, but a wholly committed and unchanging idealist. That's why Ernst
tells his girl friend Tilly that he struggles for the cause "Till the Day He Dies". As observed by Gabriel Miller: "Odets's attempt to vindicate his hero through suicide/martyrdom demonstrates his desire to end the play on a note of transcendence, to highlight the party's best qualities above else. Nevertheless, the play's memorable moments spring not from such efforts at propaganda, but rather from the glimpses of a deeper artistry evidenced here in embryonic form: Odets's pungent dialogue, his ability to delineate character with a minimum of detail, and, most notable, his creative ambivalence about political causes and their effects on individual."  

The purpose of creating the underground newspaper is to inform the people of the real state of affairs in Germany. There is a great distrust among the people, as the ranks of the communist have been infiltrated by the Nazi, and so, in turn, the communist sympathizers have joined the Nazi party. Even though this play does not coincide thematically with the influence of Marxism on the common man, the understanding of the interrelation of communist and Fascist philosophies can clearly be detected in the play. Every dialogue delivered by Ernst, especially when he tries to convince Carl and Tilly is a heartrending one. The torture and trouble faced by him, especially, when he is smashed at his fingers by the Nazi officer, make the audience feel pity towards him. As there is a lot of violence in this play, a reader or an audience can't easily digest it unless he intentionally concentrates. This play is an inspiration to the communists and is admired by the communist sympathizers.

This play describes how the zeal towards any goal leads anybody up to any extent. Tilly and Tausig are in the face of growing Nazi Hostility; that hostility forced them to decide to follow the hard course, and to postpone marriage and the children they desire. Lawson objects, "The sustained conflict, the conscious will of man pitted against terrible odds is omitted. We see (Tausig).... only before and after. The crucial stage, in which his will is tested and broken, occurs between scenes five and seven." Generally in Marxist literature, the deaths of the martyrs serve as the catalysts for the awakening of others. Unlike the traditional martyrs,
in the words of Gerald Rabkin, "Ernst believes that he is the phoenix that will arise from the ashes of his necessary death."\(^2\) He also says, talking about the end of the play, "Thus the play ends, not with the conversation of the previously uncommitted, but with the affirmation by the committed that their existence is contained in the collective of whom they are a part."\(^2\)

The 'plights and problems' that have been clearly illustrated in the play are 'the most legitimate plights and problems of his age'. Though Odets is not obvious to the situation of Jews in Germany, as he illustrates in the present play, his Jewish background gives him, whatever a little he has, a special competence to deal with them, 'to connect with himself', as he puts it. This play has been criticised by Joseph Wood Krutch, and he says: "Till the Day I Die is founded upon nothing except the printed word, and the characters are mere men of wax. In so far as we believe it at all, we do so only because we have only been told that such things do happen. There is little in the play itself to carry conviction, and neither its hero nor its villains seem very much more real that those of the simplest and most old-fashioned melodramas."\(^2\)

In spite of the criticism, Gerald Weales concedes: "Despite the extensive pilfering from Ballinger, Till the Day I Die is plainly Odets' play - not so much because there are occasional exchanges that are unmistakably his (Tilly: "He's your brother". Carl: "That went sell a postage stamp"), as because the propaganda impulse of the play is tempered by a theatricality and sentimentalises heroes and villain alike.... It is simply that the ineffectuality implicit in the comic figures lessens the Nazis as opponents, and the caricaturing technique, used in conjunction with those comic figures, infects all the others, turning them into grotesque as well."\(^2\) The minor characters like Peltz and Weiner are made comic and it is to be admitted that low, comic tones appear rather jarring in the general atmosphere of seriousness. It is natural that most of the critics and audiences have felt that this comic note spoils the intensity of the basic theme and so it appears strained and artificial. Gerald Weales explains "how the play would fail to convince both as a propaganda piece and as a work of art because of the
superimposition of sentiment and comedy on a theme which should have been handled with nothing but seriousness.25

This play is admittedly deficient in details. Odets’ limitations when he tried to combine elements for theatrical appeal with those of serious committed drama were made evident. Yet, Odets’ concern with human suffering caused by social and political factors is manifest with its deepest sense of sympathy and understanding. Odets considered the individual as the nucleus of society, and therefore went deep into a sympathetic analysis of the working of the human mind under excessive pressure, social, political, or personal. It is this approach which has made his plays more than simple ‘agit-prop’ pieces meant for impersonal, general, political sloganeering. The characters apart from Ernst, especially his brother Carl, and Tilly who is to become the mother of Ernst’s child, are convincingly drawn. Concession to popular taste for comedy was the only weakening factor in this play.

Paradise Lost, the last of the four plays produced during 1935, whose title indicates its theme, the loss of what the middle class considers paradise, is an allegory of middle class decay. This play presents the degradation of the middle class Gordon family, just like in Awake and Sing! This play introduces two decadent families where individuals appear buried alive under the debris of modern social system. This play is Odets’ second full-length drama and is an utter failure. Critics have been disappointed, and Gilbert Gabriel, whose praise for the earlier plays was unstinting, regretted that: “... Everything that father time and his mean lieutenants, the drama critics, ever feared would happen to the talents of Odets has evidently been happening now. Everything that would reduce the fiery attractiveness of an Awake and Sing! to fog, almost to foolishness, has turned up in exaggerated quantity in Paradise Lost and made of it a grotesque with a down oratorical arms and not a leg to stand on.”26

The play itself is the playwright’s parable of the decadence of contemporary capitalism and his idolatries are as surely condemned - some by disease, some
economies - despite that they are all presented as denizens of a world made unreal by false hope and futile illusion. The seeds of redemption are not allowed to flower, although they are present in the play, *Awake and Sing!* In spite of Leo’s realization that he must do the same, his final affirmation has come too late, and he too is condemned. Thus, redemption must come from without and the world of *Paradise Lost* is dominated by a world unmarred by the abortiveness and sickness. This play is designed to be a worth in which “the hero.... is the entire American middle class of liberal tendency.” This play is a complicated work that has undertaken to exhibit the decadence of a family, which is presented as a symbol of social collapse. But it has exaggeration almost to the point of burlesque and seems to suggest that its author has completely lost his grip upon reality. In this play playwright has attempted to maintain a balance between realism and symbolism.

The story of this play is the disintegration of the middle class people in America under the capital system and their hope of redemption in general and about the Gordons in particular. This play occupies a significant place in the playwright’s cannon and the playwright describes this piece as his “favourite” despite its poor reception as “a practical theatre work” in the preface to 1939 six plays collection. There are a few major differences between Odets’ first and second full-length plays - one of them lies in characterization. In this case the difference goes beyond the tendency towards allegory in the play that led some characters to dismiss the characters as “merely types or case histories.”

This play also presents a realistic picture of the ‘paradise’ of the American middleclass slowly fading away, exposing them to the rough and tumble of life they had not known. Paradise, or the world of illusion they had built around them with material prosperity, was to be lost once for all. Harold Clurman, who produced the play very effectively, explains what he considers to be the general tone of the new play, especially after his return from the Soviet Union, and how he developed a personal feeling for the basic theme of the play: “...on my return from the Soviet union, where I had been so impressed by the sanity of the people I met,
I was almost equally depressed in New York by a feeling that I was living in a mad world. Wherever I went it seemed to me I observed an inner chaos. People hankered for things they did not need or really want, belied their own best impulses, became miserable over trivialities, were ambitious to achieve ends they really did not respect, struggled over mirages, and wandered about in a maze where nothing was altogether real to them. **Paradise Lost** seemed to me to reflect this almost dream-like unclarity and, in a measure, to explain it ... The play, I told the actors, represented the search for reality, the little people of the small middle-class world, were fumbling about in an environment they did not control or understand, their hearts full of fond dreams, their eyes beclouded with illusions inherited from the past, while their hands groped in a void that was full of terror.  

The bewildered members of the middle class find their own world disintegrating. They cannot prevent its total collapse. Nor are their children on whom they had bestowed all their hopes, capable of any positive step. There is a vacuum, financial as well as spiritual, that appears to engulf them. It is this crucial theme that Clifford Odets has boldly taken up in **Paradise Lost**. A typical family embodying this social tempo is the nucleus of action. Yet, most of the New York reviewers rejected the play, though not with convincing reasons. The most obvious reason was that it failed to offer the public the theatrical excitement they expected from the author of **Waiting for Lefty** and **Awake and Sing**! Anita Block attributes this to the lack of play-consciousness among the American critics and pleads that "it is necessary that the audiences and readers should make the necessary mental effort to understand the spirit of the play, and that such an effort would offer a rich reward."  

The play centres round the families of Leo Gordon and Sam Katz, the two depression-hounded businessmen, who are leather goods manufacturers, i.e. the manufacturers of ladies handbags, which Leo designs and Sam makes. The Gordons live downstairs, whereas the Katz's live upstairs. Mr. Sam Katz has been a partner in business with Mr. Leo Gordon for years. Mr. Leo Gordon is somewhat vague, idealistic and rather liberal in his policies. He is a man of honour, who
raises the wages of his workers and finally gets into financial difficulties for doing so. His partner, Mr. Sam Katz is realistic, practical, and aggressive, and it is he who is actually runs the business.

Mr. Leo Gordon's wife is Mrs. Clara, who is a typical mother of such family and who has only limited dreams and ambitions, everything concerning the daily requirements of the family. They have three children - Ben, who is the protagonist of this play, Julie and Pearl. These (two sons and one daughter) represent three different cases of acute problems, verging on frustration. Ben is a former Olympic champion. He has a bad heart, and therefore he is forced to give up athletics. He can't even find a proper job and so his ego is badly hurt. In his home, his mother treats him as a hero, and at present his pride is injured. As he has failed in every attempt to redeem his lost confidence in himself, he does not hesitate to participate in a hold-up. There again, his middle class values have come in the way, and so he cannot accept such degrading terms. As Kewpie reports in the end: "He stood there soaking up cops' bullets like sponge ... Ben Gordon wanted to die!" Thus Ben's lost paradise could never be regained.

The Second of the Gordon's son, Julie, who likes to dress up in a taxedo, as it makes him feel good, is slowly dying of sleeping sickness. Anita Block explains, while commenting on the symbolic significance of Julie's portrait: "Every once of his energy, every working thought, is expended on feverish calculation as to how he may make a fabulous fortune in Wall Street. If the symbolism of this middle class tragedy is not clear, nothing I can add will make it clearer."

The symbolism makes itself quite clear. The Paradise itself is slipping away from us; we are still calculating how to make more of money. America is dying of sleeping sickness. Obvious of the realities of life, the nation is on the steady slope of decline. It is alert only with regard to the speculations going on in Wall Street. Only monetary speculations remain; the American spirit is slowly ebbing away with out its own knowledge. The sleeping sickness is quite appropriate to represent the spiritual bankruptcy of the nation, in spite of an active Wall Street.
The only daughter of the Gordons is Pearl Gordon, who represents another aspect of the frustration of youth. She is a neurotic pianist, and who is a fine musician also. She has practised with her piano for several years and she has been dreaming of her career as a concert pianist. She is a gifted pianist and her playing on it opens and closes the play. She spends much of the play alone in her room playing on the piano. She is condemned to sex starvation when she can’t afford to marry the impoverished violinist, Felix, who loves her, as he is not able to get a proper job in the place. The second family in the play, as mentioned earlier, is of the Sam Katz. Sam Katz and his wife are childless, as his slavish wife has presented him with no children. But finally it is revealed that the physical defect is not with his wife but with him.

As the play begins, the action takes place in the Gordon’s home, and the daughter of that family, Pearl Gordon is talking to her lover, Felix by telephone. Meanwhile Gus Michaels, their family friend enters; he becomes a family member when his daughter Libby marries Ben, the protagonist of the play. He asks her whether her piano tuned, but she is irritated by his words; she says that she will kill him. As Clara, Leo Gordon, Mrs. Katz and Julie enter, some discussions took place. Before Mrs. Katz leave, Leo asks her to tell Sam Katz that she should come after supper. During their discussions Clara says to Gus, "...we lost every penny in the bank crash ... my foolish husband took a mortgage on the house to put in the business" (P.162)

Here, she wishes to indicate the attitude of Leo Gordon, because he always believes blindly Sam Katz. That is why only she gives warning - like indication to Leo, which can be understood from the following discussion:

"Clara : I know you like a book. If your head wasn’t pinned on year shoulders, would you find it in the morning? And I know Sam Katz. You sit and design pocket books, and he runs the business. He brings a check, and one-two it's signed
with no questions asked.

Leo
: Clara, I have trusted Sam for twenty-two years.

Clara
: A lunatic can make a mistake.

Leo (laughing)
: She is serious - a man I know intimately for thirty year.

Clara
: Never mind! In business 'intimately' don't grow hair on a bald man's head" (P.164).

Then she asks him in a convincing manner: “if you go bankrupt, who'll pay my poker debts?” (P.164). In spite of all her telling, Leo says that 'he does not mean any harm.’ But Clara does not listen to his words and leaves the place telling that she was not born yesterday. Meanwhile Mr. Pike, the furnace man comes and talks to Julie and at the same time Mr. Phil Foley, a local politician, also comes. All of them are seen deliberating. At that time, Ben with Libby held under his arm enters, and they tell that they got married that afternoon at City Hall. Leo congratulated them, and says to Libby, "I love my sons better than life", which reveals how affectionate towards his children he is. Before he exits he also says to Libby, "I know you'll make a good wife, but married life brings new responsibilities and...” (P.175).

In the conversation of Julie, the second son of the Gordons, with his mother, he says about a boy in their high school, who had sleeping sickness, who after two years died. This indicates the internal fear of Julie. Afterwards Felix comes there and he was taking to Pearl, the daughter of the Gordons, Felix and Pearl are lovers and they were engaged to marry before two years. But due to the instability in the life of Felix, they could not marry. Felix knows very well that without money people can't get married, which is the opinion of Clara. Felix is a violinist, and he has no proper financial support for his livelihood. So at one stage he advises her to marry somebody else: “Find a better man, Pearl” (P.183). He loves Pearl so much, to put this in his words: “I love you more than my fiddle more than my life...” (P.183). Here the pathetic situation of the two lovers is revealed. It reflects the economic crisis of the depression era, which has been dramatised very effectively by Clifford Odets. This also reminds of a young couple, Sid and Florie, who are
also engaged for three years, but are unable to get married due to their financial difficulties. From this it is understood that Odets presented the problems of the Depression through these the plays.

Meanwhile a shop delegation comes there to meet Leo to protest the working conditions. The delegation has three workers - Mr. Schnabel, a scholarly looking man; Mr. Rogo, a plump Italian and Lucy, a serious intense woman of thirty-two. When they expressed their grievances relating to their salaries, hours and other labour conditions, Leo is clearly shocked, as he is quite ignorant of these problems. Schnabel explains the problems of their workers, and their demands also. This is clearly seen through the following conversation:

Schnabel : Also it was stated at this time it would be necessary to make a new union in the shop.

Rogo : He don't work for workers!

Schnabel : Now we're talking to you Mr. Gordon, Mr. Katz jumped already several times down my threat.

Katz : Tisssst!

Leo : What are your demands, Mr. Schnabel?

Lucy : Concrete demands!

Schnabel : In the shop the work for one dollar a day nine hours. Forty-five-hour week. Five dollars for girls a week, seven dollars for men. But on pay day Mr. Katz makes us, sign statements we get more, thirteen and seventeen. Is this tain, gentlemen's? On the wall it reads in the labour code, "Only eight hours day". Where is it fair?" (P.185).

He does not know that his partner has been cheating him. He has been defrauding him systematically, and at one stage he proposes that they should employ a gangster to burn their business down so that they can claim on the insurance. Here, criminality is presented as a constant temptation under the pressure of deteriorating financial situation. So far, what he has been doing is
talking politics and philosophy with his friend Pike and listening to the music of piano played by his daughter. In this connection, Gabriel Miller says: "He is Odets' most deliberately modelled Chekhovian character. His query 'What is to be done?' is repeated in various contexts throughout the play, as he remains puzzled by the collapse of the economy, moral values and human commitment. He can't understand why, 'Never in my forty-seven years have I met a happy man?' yet despite the economic and moral collapse around him, he displays a Chekhovian faith, firm in his commitment to life."34

Leo Gordon was a man of generosity. So they wanted to talk to him only, but not to Sam Katz. On behalf of them, Schnabel asked him that they needed better wages — "Nine dollars for men, seven dollars for girls. Forty hour week." (P.185). Then Leo asks Schnabel to continue and tell the remaining things. He says that the condition of the shop is very bad and 'they keep the lunches under the table where cockroaches run all over it.' Leo says that he does not realize conditions are so bad. Finally, Schnabel says that they want 'a living wage', other wise they go on 'strike!' After listening to all the problems of the workers, Leo says that everything is settled in a day or two. When he is asked to do a promise he says: "will do something about it - that is my promise. No one will be exploited in the Cameo shop" (P.187).

After taking a promise that everything will be done in their favour, all of them leave. Them Leo wanted to do something to his workers: "My brain has been sleeping. My mind is made up: our workers must have better conditions! Tomorrow I mean to start fresh. In life we must face certain facts." (P.188). Afterwards, when Leo tells Pike that his daughter and son are married that afternoon, Gus interferes one said: "Marriage—hmm. I have come to the opinion that the world is on two conflictin' principles male and female and some is one and some is the other!" (P.188). The words of Gus are very real and it is a universal truth or fact. They continued their chat besides their drinking, and it leads to the end of the first act.
As the second act begins, the scene takes place at the same place after eighteen months later, where Julie is alone on the stage and he is dressed in evening clothes. He is looking out the window, folding his arms across his chest. Meanwhile Leo enters and they have a casual talk for a while. This is the act at the end of which the protagonist, Ben is killed. Ben, after he enters the scene, talks to Leo and Mrs. Katz for a while. At the time, he talks about the American Youth and American problems: “The American Youth is never timed”... “I know about the 1930's. I am a child of sorrow.” (p.p.196-197). In this Act, it is revealed by Ben that he gets a child also.

This act reveals unbearable news to Ben. That is he is cuckolded by his friend Kewpie. Ben comes to know this matter, when he knows that Libby has thirty dollars with her; moreover she is able to manage most of the monthly household expenditure, rent etc. This is very clear from the following conversation:

“Gus (nervously, hesitant) : you said before... what thirty dollars?
Ben (turning slowly) : What?
Gus : What thirty dollars?
Ben : For rent you didn’t give Libby...?
Gus : No.
Ben : Where did she get it?
Gus : Ben, I don’t know.
Ben : Yes, you do.
Gus : Ben... (Tries to put the table between them)
Ben : (with realization): Kewpie?
Gus : (very late) I really don't know...
Ben : Do you think she....” (P.201).

The other conversation with Kewpie makes clearer that his wife is not faithful to him.

Ben : --- were you over my house this morning after I left?
Kewpie : No.
Ben: You gave her thirty dollars.
Kewpie: Who said?
Ben: May be you forgot (A pause) she is my wife...
Kewpie: Sure.
Ben: You give her money, just like that?
Kewpie: (finally admitting something): She needed some dough for the house.
Ben: And the other stuff you have been buying her for months - the pink and black underwear? She needs that to run the house too?
Kewpie: (after an intense second): Were that way for each other.
Ben: Which way?
Kewpie: That way!
Ben: You are a liar!
Kewpie: Libby don't care for you three cents you're sand in her shoes. I buy her clothes; keep your house running... I'm in you like a tape warm.
Ben: You pushed me out of bed (pp.203-204).

Here, it is clearly understood that Kewpie got a place not only in Libby's heart, but also in her personal life, as Ben is unable to run the family because of lack of financial sources. This becomes a due advantage to Kewpie; He enters in to the lives of these couple and becomes an obstacle to their marital life.

Later Sam Katz comes there and a chat takes place with Leo about his lack of children. At one stage he says (generally to the world): “You Bertha - you find the hanging from a chandelier! Why should I live with her? I'm a man like an ox! With one hand I lifted a stamping press. But Children I can't have. Look she sits without expression - a woman with a mix-up inside... A girl told me I remind her of her father ... Believe me, I had enough girls you hear me, Bertha? But a man like an ox can't have a son” (P.213). These words of Katz reveal how anxious he is about children. Meanwhile, when Leo and Clara are talking about a card, left
by May, Julie enters the scene. He has a newspaper in his hand, in which the death news of Ben is found. But he doesn't reveal it instead he says that 'Ben got something' and then they think that it might be a job, as Kewpie promises him to get a job for him. Julie hides the newspaper and when all of them leave the place, he drops the newspaper. He walks over to Ben's statue and hugs it to keep himself from breaking up, there ends second act.

The third act takes place at the same room, where there are two kitchen chairs, a grate full of books and the statue of Ben, and it is a year and some months later. At that time Julie is sitting in a wheel chair; Clara is paring his to nails; Pearl is upstairs and she is finishing a piece of music. Leo also enters the scene; meanwhile Kewpie comes there. Then Gus, who also arrives at the place, says that he gets the wrong house. Kewpie warns him to mind his business. Interfering in the conversation, Clara questions Kewpie who invites him there. When he says that he might help them, Clara tells him that they don't need his help. Kewpie says that he has supported Ben's family for two years. In response to this Leo tells him angrily that he has killed their son. But Kewpie says that he has not killed his son and his son has killed himself; to narrate this in his words: "... Ben killed himself. That's what he aids. He dug his own grave. He was a little kid in a man's world... you made him like that. He could not earn a living, and he was ashamed" (P.223). He also said: "Don't think I'll forget my friend Ben. I carry him around like a medal. He wanted to show he was better than me – that's why he killed himself. He was better. You can have all this money" (P.223). Speaking these words, Kewpie offers some money, but nobody is reading there to accept the money. Then, suddenly he throws the currency notes upon Gus' face and left the place at once.

Finally, after he loses almost everything, Leo appears to come to some sudden realization, which leads to a kind a transformation. Now he lives only for the future: "No! there is more life than this! Everything he said is true, but there is more. That was the past, but there is a future. Now we know. We dare to understand. Truly, truly the past was a dream. But this is real! To know from
this that something must be done. That is real. We searched, we were confused! But we searched, and now the search is ended. For the truth has found us. For the first time in our lives - for the first time our house has a real foundation.... Clara, my darling, listen to me. Everywhere now men are rising from their sleep. Men, men are understanding the bitter black total of their lives. Their whispers are growing to shouts! They become an ocean of understanding! No man fights alone" (p.p.229-290).

He also says when the exciting discovery of men's greatness inspires him on to lyrical heights: 'Oh! If you could only see with me the greatness of men. I tremble like a bride to see the time when they'll use it... We must have only one regret, that life is so short... The world is beautiful. No fruit tree wears a lock and key. Ben will sing at their work, men will love.... the world is in its morning... and no man fights alone." (P.230). The play thus ends on a note of regaining paradise, with fresh air of the new awareness blowing in through the open windows, and not on the tone of the ironic title, Paradise Lost. This healthy attitude of optimism in the face of individual frustrations, failures, and even losses, is the characteristic contribution of Clifford Odets. The repeated statement on Leo Gordon's - "No man fight alone" - is an indicator to the attitude; Odets would like the decadent middle class to take. Social conflicts as well as solutions are collective in nature; individual contribution can become meaningful when it is in the spirit of positive defiance against disruptive forces. Odets' sense of responsibility to society makes him convey such a meaningful message to the middle class in the throes of the post-Depression collapse.

In this play, one can find the same deterministic forces as in Awake and Sing! The family starts its decadence gradually, and it appears to be led on by some forces, which are beyond their control. They have discovered that all the three children are doomed and the illusive paradise that has been built by them cracks, when it comes into contact with reality, when Leo tells his wife that they would not give up the fight towards the end Odetsian assertion comes as a saving grace. Finally, Leo and his wife look forward to a brighter future for the
entire humanity on the graves of their children and family respectability.

In the case of Ben's young wife, Libby, she finds her world of illusions shattered and reality holds her in vicious grip. She is inclined to the monetary temptations offered by Kewpie, as she has no alternative except this to feed her baby, pay rent and make her family run. The same monetary problem is in case of Ben also. He is not helpful to his family financially, so he has only on choice to put his bravado to practice, and invite death i.e. committing suicide.

The playwright tries to sustain a balance between realism and symbolism in this play. The play is symbolic in its very title. The word 'Paradise' refers to the world of illusions, what the American middle class have built around them with material prosperity is lost one for all. The sleeping sickness of Julie has symbolic potentialities. It is the disease from which one is dying a slow, painless death, but at the same time one is obvious of it. America moves on and it is unaware of the fatal disease under which its vitality is declining slowly. The people who hold the positions of power are unaware of the impending total collapse. Odets has used the symbolic suggestions of Julie's fatal disease to indicate that America is losing its vitality and drifting towards annihilation. There is some criticism that Odets could not use symbolism in this play properly: "... a much more complicated work, undertakes to exhibit the decadence a family which is presented as a symbol of social collapse, but it carries exaggeration almost to the point of burlesque and seemed to suggest that its author had completely lost his grip upon reality."36

This play is a depressing example of a twisted marital relationship. One is a sexually impotent male, Sam Katz, who bullies his wife Bertha unmercifully and blames her in front of others for their childlessness. The very title gives an implication that there is a paradise that has to be regained. In this connection Duisenberg remarks: "Paradise Lost is aptly titled, for Leo loses everything which might seem to make his land a heaven, but a sequel would certainly have to be titled "Paradise Regained", because he acquires a faith in brotherhood of man...

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and declares at play’s end: “No man fights alone.” Clurman writes in his introduction to Paradise Lost, echoing many of the dramatist’s own statements: “The end of the play is a prologue. The optimism is present in the last scene of nearly every Odets play, whatever sordidness precedes it, because Odets believed in people and their potentialities.” Gerald Rabkin has brought a comparison between Awake and Sing! and this play, and said: “The image is starker than that of Awake and Sing! because the seeds of redemption, although present in the play, are not allowed to flower.”

Gassner has suggested that there is confusion in the early notices of the play. They probably resulted from “a misunderstanding of the dramaturgical differences between this and Awake and Sing!”, this misunderstanding is natural enough, considering the resemblances between the two plays. Gerald Rabkin observes that Odets has not been a realist throughout Awake and Sing! and this play, being allegories of middle-class decay. In spite of the general approval, critics, both Marxist and the others, expressed adverse views against this play. Both the camps found Odets’ social analysis unsound. Rabkin quotes Stanley Burn Shaw, for example, who maintained that the American bourgeoisie “is not a homogenous group withering into oblivion… Overwhelming numbers of middle-class people… are part and parcel of the advancing social group… Can their life be truthfully conveyed by such symbols as sexual impotence, heart disease… barrenness and arson, larceny, racketeering, cuckoldry, feeble mindedness, and sex neuroses?” The Marxist attack also was on the same target. The play had a generous sprinkling of diseases; and diseases could not be attributed to economic or political disorder. Physical or economic ailments leave them all condemned; they can be saved only by the realization of truth, however unpleasant. Illusions have to be wiped off. It is this redemptive note that Odets strikes in Leo Gordon’s words. The unreality that critics objected to was just a reflection of what the playwright found around him – the world of dreams that the middle-class was building, and was bound to collapse. The bubble of the illusion had to be pricked to bring them into the awareness of reality with a positive realistic approach. Gerald Rabkin sums up the relevance
of the play in the general context of Odets' contributions: "The Marxist metaphor lies at the heart of Paradise Lost: it is basic to its very conception. The very title implies that there is a paradise to be regained. The play also represents the end of Odets' period of overt political commitment, the last expression of the bitter years of anonymity which preceded his emergence."40

Overt political commitment on the same lines as in Waiting for Lefty is not evident in this play, but the playwright's commitment to society is strongly reflected in the moral message that the play conveys. It strikes deeper; he appeals to a change in the minds of the people before they clamour for political reforms. Revolutions should lead to militant politically-oriented ones. This play is symbolic in its very title. 'Paradise' refers to the world of illusions that the middle class had built around themselves. Its loss signifies the crash in the lives of the individual members of the family. Julie's 'sleeping sickness' has immense symbolic potentialities. It is the disease from which Uncle Sam himself appears to be suffering. One is dying a slow, painless death; but one is oblivious of it. Peaceful and complacent, America moves on, unaware of the fatal disease under which its vitality is slowly ebbing away. It is under the effect of the tranquilizer. The cheer at the surface level cannot go deeper into the spirit of American national life. People holding positions of power are unaware of the impending total collapse. Clifford Odets has actually used a daring symbolic suggestion in Julie's fatal disease, indicating that America is losing its vitality and drifting towards annihilation. Ben, the former Olympic champion who cannot play any more, having lost his athletic prowess and contacted a disease, is like his brother Julie and the symbol of the malady that confronts the nation which is a champion no more. The degradation that Ben faces is shocking, to be redeemed only by what amounts to suicide.
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