

WOMEN DRAMATISTS OF AMERICA

by

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B. S., St. Cloud Teachers College,
St. Cloud, Minnesota, 1939

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of English

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

1949

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study of the work of women dramatists in the United States is two-fold. The first purpose is to discover the historical facts about the participation of American women in the writing of plays. The second is to show by analysis of successful plays by women the characteristic contributions that women have made up to 1947 to the drama of the United States.

For the study of the historical background, the scholarly volumes of Quinn's A History of the American Drama have served as the main texts. Also used for this purpose have been Orians' A Short History of American Literature, the Cambridge History of American Literature, Volume III and Edmund Gagey's Revolution in the American Drama.

The Burns Mantle editions of the Best Plays of each year from 1909 to 1947 were used for the basic study of the twentieth century. In addition, the plays were read in full whenever available. For background study and reading of the twentieth century drama, Krutch's The American Drama Since 1910, Dickinson's Playwrights of the New American Theatre and George Pierce Baker's Dramatic Technique were used.

The Appendix is a list of plays by women dramatists taken from the Burns Mantle editions that have been produced on the New York stage from 1909 - 1947.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1770 - 1900

The women dramatists of the United States during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries follow the general trends of dramatic activities in their time. Few of them show exceptional skill or organization, as the following summary of dramatic history will show.

In the early drama of the United States numerous plays dealt with patriotism. They had their origin in New England, where the Revolution began. These plays were dramatic satires expressing either the writers' resentment against the actions of Great Britain and the Tories or their hatred of independence and their loyalty to the king. Among the Whig dramatists Mrs. Mercy Warren was the best.¹

In the last part of the seventeenth century and the early part of the eighteenth century some women dramatists were concerned with contemporary events, such as the barbarities of the Mediterranean pirates, the whiskey rebellion and patriotism. The domestic drama, tragedy, and social satire were types of plays that were written by women of this period.

The 1830's was the period when Indian drama rose to its greatest popularity. Among these Indian plays was Lamorah by Caroline Lee Hentz.² In the 1840's there were no outstanding

¹ G. Harrison Orlean. A Short History of American Literature, p. 25.

² Ibid., p. 150.

figures in the history of the drama. Plays on national themes continued to stir the public consciousness and dealt with military expeditions against the Indians. One play handled the red man romantically, The Forest Princess (1848) by Mrs. Charlotte Barnes.¹ Many plays were largely comedies with little purpose beyond the advance of a humorous type. Not so the social satire, Fashion, which satirized the social scenes of New York so that even today some of the gaiety of the piece remains.²

Between 1850 and 1860 stock companies grew up in nearly every city and traveling troupes and showboats flourished. Rip Van Winkle and Ten Nights in a Bar Room became stage favorites. By 1860 no less than seven hundred plays by American playwrights had appeared on the American stage. Some were adaptations of European successes, and others were studies of local types and situations. In 1859 Evangeline was dramatized by Mrs. Bateman, a successful actress and manager, and her daughter Kate had the leading role. Summaries of some of the more successful plays by women dramatists will indicate their subject matter and their approach to it.³

One of the early women dramatists, Mrs. Mercy Otis Warren, wrote two patriotic plays. One, The Adulateur, recording events of the Boston massacre, published in 1773, was directed

¹ Loc. cit.

² Ibid., p. 150.

³ Ibid., p. 169.

against the duplicity of Thomas Hutchinson, who pretended to be for the colonists but really supported Great Britain.¹ Two years later her other patriotic play, The Group, was published.² This play was built around the abrogation of the charter of Massachusetts, whose upper house was appointed by the King and the Council instead of by the Assembly. Also attributed to Mrs. Warren is The Motley Assembly, (1779), which ridicules the element in Boston that believed hearty support of the Revolution incompatible with secure social standing.³ In 1785 she published Sans Souci, alias Free and Easy, and Evening's Peep into a Polite Circle, which contrasts the affectation of British manners and the sturdier reliance upon native worth.⁴ Mrs. Warren also wrote two tragedies in verse published in 1790: The Sack of Rome and The Ladies of Castile.⁵

Another dramatist who was thoroughly patriotic and who represents an impulse to place contemporary events on the stage is Susanna Haswell Rowson. She valued liberty, especially for her own sex. Her first play, and the only one which survived, was Slaves in Algiers, or a Struggle for Freedom, which was performed December 22, 1794.⁶ This play excited

¹ Arthur Hobson Quinn. A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, p. 54.

² Ibid., p. 39.

³ Ibid., p. 53.

⁴ Ibid., p. 63.

⁵ Ibid., p. 46

⁶ Ibid., p. 121-123.

public opinion over the barbarities practiced upon American citizens captured by the pirates of the Mediterranean.

Mrs. Rowson's play, The Volunteers, which was performed in 1795, dealt with the subject of the whiskey insurrection in western Pennsylvania.¹ The Female Patriot was a farce produced in 1795.² The last appearance of her plays in America was in 1797 with Americans in England.³ Ireland records her play, Columbia's Daughters, in September, 1800.⁴

Domestic drama and social comedy were her chief subjects, although the Revolution is referred to in the plays of Mrs. Judith Sargent Murray. In her play, Virtue Triumphant (1795), "Virtue" is symbolized by a maiden of irreproachable manners and morals, who resolutely refuses to marry the man she loves until her social and financial positions are secured.⁵ The scene is laid in the Revolutionary period. The plot of The Traveller Returned tells of the return of a father who has abandoned his wife for 20 years and returns in time to prevent the marriage of their two children, who have been brought up in ignorance of each other.⁶ The best dialogue in both plays is in the mouths of servants.

Mary Clark wrote The Fair Americans (1815), which expressed the undercurrent of Federalist criticism of the War,

¹ Ibid., p. 123.

² Loc. cit.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

⁶ Ibid., p. 126, 127.

but it was not acted.¹

Zeikel and Homespun, two rural New England caricatures, appear in M. Pinchney's play, the Young Carolinians or Americans in Algiers, which, like Mrs. Rowson's play, dramatizes the difficulties of the Mediterranean pirates.² M. Pinchney also wrote The Tyrant's Victims and The Orphans. The Tyrant's Victims is a tragedy laid near Carthage, showing strong dramatic impulse.³ The Orphans is a five act social satire upon English life showing good sense of the stage.⁴

The play, Altorf, written by Frances Wright, was laid in Switzerland in the fourteenth century. Mrs. Wright was Scottish and came to New York in 1818. The new freedom she found in America inspired her to write this play. The hero, Eberhard de Altorf, is caught in a web of circumstances in which he has to seem untrue to his country and to his wife, or abandon Rosina, who loves him and whom he has long loved. Altorf was produced in 1819.⁵

Fanny Kemble, from the notable theatrical family, wrote Star of Seville, a tragedy laid in Spain, which was published here in 1837, and was played at the Walnut Street Theatre, August 7, 1837. It was a close adaptation of La estrella de Sevilla.⁶ However, in her version, the lovers meet their death

¹ Ibid., p. 221.

² Ibid., p. 153

³ Ibid., p. 192.

⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵ Ibid., p. 194-195.

⁶ Ibid., p. 253.

in the last scene, while in the Spanish version they only part forever. Her play, The Duke's Racer, produced in 1850, was based on Alexandre Dumas' Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle.¹ New Tragedy was played as late as 1865. In drama Fanny Kemble's work was mainly translation, but she wrote autobiographical accounts of real distinction.²

Mrs. Elizabeth Ellet's tragedy, Teresa Centarina, was founded on an incident in Venetian history. It was produced in 1835, and it was inferior in quality.³

Caroline Lee Hentz received a five hundred dollar prize from William Pelby for De Lara, or the Moorish Bride, although the characters were purely types.⁴ Mr. Pelby produced the play in Philadelphia in November, 1831. Caroline Lee Hentz also wrote Werdenberg, or the Forest League and Lamurah, neither of which survived.⁵

Mrs. J. C. Swayze put on her play, Ossawatimie Brown, in December, 1859.⁶ This play emphasizes the heroic qualities of John Brown and shows, one after another, scenes in which his sons are killed, until he is made a prisoner at Harper's Ferry. There is a love story with a maid involved which offers bits of comedy. The play is frankly a melodrama.⁷

One of the first significant social comedies written by

1 Loc. cit.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Ibid., p. 265.

4 Ibid., p. 264.

5 Ibid., p. 265.

6 Ibid., p. 290.

7 Loc. cit.

an American woman, Mrs. Mowatt, was Fashion, which was produced in 1845. It is true to the manners and morals of the time and place, and the motives and feelings are acceptable. There are fine character drawings.¹ Her first play, Gulzara, or the Persian Slave, published in 1840, is unusual in that the only male character is a boy of ten.²

Self, a satire on New York society and business methods, was written by Mrs. Sidney Bateman. It is less artistic than Fashion.³

Julia Ward Howe wrote a play of revenge called Leonora, or the World's Own, published in 1857. The central character is Leonora, who has been led astray by Lothair, a disguised Italian prince who is married. Leonora plans a revenge which leads her to become the mistress of the Prince and involve him in ruin through a false charge of treason.⁴

Hippolytus, published in 1864, was not performed until after Mrs. Howe's death, but it contains some of her best poetry. Her central character is again a woman. Phaedra has a guilty passion for Hippolytus, the son of her husband, Theseus. When he repulses her, love turns to hate, and she accuses him to Theseus.⁵ By the 1860's the plays of local types and situations quickly replaced the romantic comedy and tragedy in verse which had been perfected in the 1850's.

¹ Ibid., 310-311.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 321.

⁴ Ibid., p. 325.

⁵ Ibid., p. 365-367.

Julia Ward Howe's Hippolytus was the last of the verse plays, and it did not go beyond the rehearsal stage. However, Augustin Daly says in his article, "The American Dramatist": "When the prevailing demand for a higher spirit in the play wears away--as all fashions do change--there are plays by Mrs. Julia Ward Howe and Mrs. Mowatt and other native dramatists, which will bear taking down from the prompter's shelf, and dusting off, and redressing for the stage."¹

The veteran dramatic critic, Henry Austin Clapp, in his reminiscences published in 1900, describes The Spirit of '76 by Mrs. Daniel Sargent Curtis in quite flattering terms. "Mrs. Curtis's drama The Spirit of '76 deserves to be recalled not only for its piquant wit, but because of the interest attaching to its prophetic character. It was in form a delicate burlesque, but its plot and dialogue were underborne by a thoughtful, conservative purpose. Produced in 1861, the play was a forceful picture in anticipation of our corner of the United States in 1876, the political and economic relations of the sexes having been precisely inverted ad interim. None of the more extravagant versions have anywhere come even partly true, except in Colorado and the other three sparsely populated gynocratic states. Massachusetts is not yet ruled by a 'Governess', there are no women on its supreme court bench, and none sit in its jury boxes. It has thus far escaped a law

¹ Daly, Augustin. "The American Dramatist", North American Review, 142:486.

which makes it a felony for an unmarried man to decline an unmarried woman's offer of marriage. But Mrs. Curtis's adumbration of some less violent but highly significant changes was remarkable. She really predicted in the next sequent generations of young women the virile athleticism and sophomoric abandon which makes the manners of the twentieth-century girl so engaging."¹

A great many plays of the late 1800's and early 1900's were adaptations of successful novels. Most of these dramatizations were described by discriminating critics as hasty and of little literary value. One of the play butchers, F. A. Rose, is said to have been able to turn out a full length play from a novel in two or three weeks' time.

This custom of hasty dramatizations to catch popular favor is paralleled today by the dramatization of novels on the screen.

Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett perhaps saw more of her stories upon the stage than any other American writer of her time. William Gillette made one of the most successful of American plays from her story, Esmeralda.² Editha's Burglar was given in 1867 as a one-act play, but Augustus Thomas elaborated it into a long play which was called The Burglar, and this has been repeatedly performed.³ Mrs. Barnett's

¹ Clapp, Harry Austin. "Reminiscences of a Dramatic Critic", Atlantic, 88:162.

² Wilstock, Paul. "The American Library and the Drama", Bookman, 8:137.

³ Loc. cit.

Little Lord Fauntleroy made one of the most distinct successes of plays of her time founded upon books.¹ A Lady of Quality showed Mrs. Burnett's ability as dramatist as well as novelist, and she made a direct excursion into the field of dramatic authorship in The First Gentleman of Europe (1897).²

In the early 1900's there was a dramatization of more novels -- Mary Johnston's To Have and to Hold and Aubrey,³ Kate D. Wiggin Riggs dramatized Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm (1910); and Alice Hegan Rice dramatized Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch (1904).⁴

Examples of romantic and historical plays based on novels in the late 1800's were Marguerite Kerrington's Captain Letterblair (1892); Madeleine Lucette Ryley's The Mysterious Mr. Bugle (1897) and Richard Savage (1901); Grace Livingston Furness and Abby Sage Richardson's Colonial Girl (1898) and Americans at Home (1899).⁵

Social comedies with a melodramatic flavor were Mrs. Bateman's Self, Mrs. Logan's Surf, and Mary Wilkins Freeman's Giles Corey (1893).⁶

College life was portrayed in Rida Johnson Young's Brown of Harvard (1906)⁷ and a piece of imaginative freshness was

¹ Loc. cit.

² Loc. cit.

³ Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. III, p. 287.

⁴ Ibid., p. 288.

⁵ Ibid., p. 290.

⁶ Ibid., p. 274.

⁷ Ibid., p. 289.

given to the theatre with Fleanor Gates' The Poor Little Rich Girl (1913).¹ Miss Gates showed in her next play We Are Seven (1913) that she was a better story teller than playwright.²

Illustrating the vogue for the detective play was Anna Katherine Green's House with the Green Blinds and The Leavenworth Case, but they were short lived.³ Amelie Rives' The Quick and the Dead failed ignominiously after a trial of three weeks at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York City, in October, 1898.⁴ In this trend of detective plays there are again fictional dramatizations. Elizabeth Phipps Train's A Social Highwayman and A Puritan Romance, dramatized from Augusta Campbell's Dorothy, the Puritan, were examples.⁵ Other plays of this type were Mrs. Atherton's Mrs. Pondleton's Four-in-Hand, Mrs. Shager's The Major's Appointment, Anna Jefferson Holland's Refugees, and Texas from Ann S. Stephen's The Siege of the Alamo.⁶

The story of the drama of the post-Civil War period down to 1890 is mainly a record of minor successes. American drama was out of favor in those years; the Indian and Yankee plays had died out and little appeared to replace them. Plays by Americans on native themes were not common, but the drama of

¹ Ibid., p. 292.

² Loc. cit.

³ Willstock, op. cit., p. 137.

⁴ Ibid., p. 137.

⁵ Ibid., p. 138.

⁶ Loc. cit.

the period, like fiction, recognized the literary merits of the West. Melodramas and rural plays were also written.

The drama of the eighties and nineties was not of itself great, but it was important in the history of American letters as marking a great outburst of individual activities by dramatists like Howard, Herne and Fitch.¹ In this period one finds a reluctance on the part of producers to handle pieces by American playwrights.² The producers' interest in competing with the commercial theatre made them develop the "star" system or using actors and actresses with personality appeal and producing plays by English dramatists like J. M. Barrie and Henry Arthur Jones, because of greater confidence in them.³

The matter of popularity and permanence has confused the history of playwriting in America. Many women dramatists were very popular in their day, but they are not widely known now. Mary Morton's His Wife's Father (1895) and Mrs. Burnett's Little Lord Fauntleroy (1898) are examples of those plays which were once favorites of the American playgoers.⁴ The most notable contributions of this time by women dramatists were Josephine Preston Peabody's The Piper (1911) and Alice Brown's Children of Earth (1915). Moreover, owing to insufficient copyright protection many plays from 1860 to 1900 remained unpublished.⁵

¹ Orians, op. cit., p. 261.

² Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. III, p. 230.

³ Wilstock, op. cit., p. 137.

⁴ Cambridge History of American Literature, p. 290.

⁵ Arthur Hobson Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, p. 255.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1900 - 1910

In the years from 1900 to 1910 playwrights devoted themselves to romantic drama.¹ Through the improvements of standards in matters of setting, costuming, lighting, and stage business to which David Belasco was the greatest contributor, the theatre was undergoing a transformation.² However, this placed emphasis on external effects rather than characterization or careful workmanship.³ Near the end of the decade there was a greater tendency towards seriousness and more dependence on ideas.⁴ William Vaughn Moody and Josephine Peabody tried to restore a literary quality to dramatic production.⁵

Rachel Crothers was the outstanding woman dramatist of America of the World War decade. She establishes herself as a dramatist of manners, social problems, and feminine psychology. Her works, for all their light touch, are too definitely "problem plays" to be classed as pure comedy, and her more recent works from Nice People in 1921 to Susan and God in 1937 are in most instances definitely topical. She was born in 1878 and directed plays at the age of twelve. She was trained

¹ Orians, op. cit., p. 278.

² Loc. cit.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵ Loc. cit.

for the stage in Boston and New York.¹

Her one-act play, The Rector, was presented in 1902 and is concerned with a minister who marries a pretty but not practical girl instead of a girl selected for him by his congregation. The Three of Us, presented in 1906, was laid in a mining camp in Nevada and gives a sympathetic treatment of a girl's character. Rhy MacChestney determines to guide and protect her two younger brothers, even against their own ambition. She is the head of a family and a woman of business. She is placed in a false position by giving her word to a clever schemer and goes to his room at night to demand a release from her promise. Though the plot is conventional, the characters are well drawn.² Her next two plays, Coming of Mrs. Patrick in 1907 and Myself Bettina, show an advance over The Three of Us.³ A Man's World, presented in 1909, establishes the atmosphere of a boarding house in lower New York. "Frank" Ware, an independent, lovable woman writer, is bringing up Kiddie, a boy of seven, whose mother had died in her house in Paris. Gaskell, who is in love with "Frank", is the father of Kiddie. "Frank" finds it out and refuses to marry him. She can't make him see that he has committed any crime. The play offers no solution for the situation except the substitution of a career for a woman instead of dependence on marriage.⁴

¹ Quinn. A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, p. 50-51.

² Ibid., p. 51.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Quinn, loc. cit., p. 52.

The situation in Rachel Crothers' play, He and She, is a contest of husband and wife for supremacy and for the establishment of their respective spheres. Ann and Tom Hereford, both sculptors, enter an important competition and Ann wins. Ruth Creel, a representative of the girl who prefers her own career as an editor to the domination of the love of Keith, rejoices with her. Millicent, Ann's daughter, however spoils Ann's ambition by having an affair with a chauffeur at school. The play is sympathetic to Tom. A man must be a breadwinner. This play, presented in 1911, was not a popular success as it was probably too advanced for the times.¹

Ourselves (1913) is a study of the responsibility which women of cultivation and refinement should assume for present moral conditions. Beatrice Barrington takes Molly from a reformatory into her home, but Molly develops an affair with Bob Barrington, Beatrice's brother. She has to leave. This play shows that reformatories for women are no solution for moral reform.²

Young Wisdom (1914) presents two girls who wish to experiment with trial marriage, though the outcome is perfectly innocent.³

Sentimental, but merging into witty comedy of character, was Rachel Crothers' Old Lady 31 (1916), her first popular success.⁴ It is concerned with an old sea captain, Abe, and

¹ Ibid., p. 54.

² Ibid., p. 55.

³ Ibid., p. 56.

⁴ Loc. cit.

his wife, Angie, who have been forced to sell their home, he to go to the poor farm, she to the old ladies' home. The thirty old ladies at the home, their sympathies aroused at this belated separation, propose that Abe become old lady 31 and remain with them and Angie. The old captain is not too happy in this feminine entourage, in which at one point he excites a flurry of jealousy and later is mollycoddled into a state of invalidism. Finally he succeeds in making his escape for two days but returns to his Angie. In the meantime, a letter has arrived announcing that some presumably worthless stock, purchased years before, has now a value of eight thousand dollars--enough to buy back their home and befriend a young couple who are planning to marry despite parental opposition.

"Problem plays" and character comedies were not the only types of plays written by women dramatists. Plays of sentimentalities were scoring a huge success.¹ One about a Scotch Peg o' My Heart, Kitty Mackay, by Catherine Chisholm Cushing, appeared in 1914, as did the sentimental Jerry by the same author. Her triumph of sentimentality, however, did not appear until 1916 with Pollyanna, a dramatization of the novel by Eleanor H. Porter.² To the home of her frustrated maiden aunt comes the orphaned Pollyanna, the Glad Girl, with a sick kitten and puppy (Sodom and Gomorrah) which she has picked up

¹ Gagey, Revolution in the American Drama, p. 5.

² Ibid., p. 5.

en route, as well as Jimmy Bean, a runaway from the near-by orphanage. As she is unable to thaw out her aunt with her glad game, she teaches it to the neighbors. She soon meets grouchy John Pendleton, who has been in love with her "angel-mother". It isn't long before he adopts Sodom, Gomorrah, and Jimmy Bean. Later she effects a marriage between her Aunt Polly and Dr. Chilton, an estranged suitor of twenty years before. Badly injured in an accident, Pollyanna is a cripple for five years but recovers in time to marry Jimmy Bean, now a sophomore at Harvard, who is discovered to be not a waif, but one of the Back Bay Wetherbys. Misunderstandings bring complications in the final act, amid a welter of emotion, but the ending is undeniably and tearfully happy.

Another orphaned Cindorella role was in Jean Webster's Daddy Long-Legs. Brought up in an orphans' home, the heroine, now eighteen, is assigned the task of caring for the younger children but is a victim of unjust nagging and persecution. She is adopted and sent to college by one of the trustees, whom she knows only as Daddy Long-Legs; she falls in love with a Mr. Jervis Pendleton, only to discover that he and Daddy Long-Legs are the same, and she agrees to marry him--showing the preference of so many heroines of the period for older men. This play was superbly acted by Ruth Chatterton in 1914.

Love and tears were not the only passport to Broadway fame. The neatly tailored farce-comedy, in which a clever idea was fully exploited, was a perennial favorite. The bedroom

farces were especially designed to bring relaxation to the "tired business man". One of this type, Twin Beds, (1914) by Salisbury Fields and Margaret Mayo, enjoyed a long and successful run, with its usual mix-ups in beds and identities. In this play the young wife shows a partiality for tango parties at a time when both twin beds and tango were sufficiently new to be of topical interest.

Except for the plays of Shaw and other European importations, neither social comedy nor comedy of manners made much headway in the period under discussion. Broadway managers preferred sentiment to satire, and they shied away from controversial questions. The plays of Rachel Crothers discussing feminism or trial marriage just did not "take". Near the end of the period, however, Clare Kummer, in Good Gracious, Annabelle (1916) began a series of comedies, with some satire, that were at least touched with the comic spirit.¹ Miss Kummer is important for her lightness of touch, but she has little plot.² Quinn in his History of the American Drama classified Good Gracious, Annabelle as a comedy of manners.³ What distinguishes the play from the more conventional product is the verve of the lines; the burlesque of the big business man in his Long Island habitat with its usual complement of yachts, liquor, and servants; and the farcical idea of having several characters of cocktail society hire themselves out as

¹ Ibid., p. 11.

² Quinn, loc. cit., p. 76.

³ Loc. cit.

servants on the Long Island estate. The real modernism of the play is clear in a reference in one of the lines to Freud, whose theory of association of ideas has been adopted by a hotel detective.

Two other playwrights of this period who should be mentioned are Josephine Peabody for her play The Piper and Alice Brown for her Children of Earth. The Piper (1907) is the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Josephine Peabody sketches the crass burghers of the Middle Ages, who have been freed from the plague of rats by the Piper, a strolling player, to whom they feel they need not keep their word because he is a social outcast. The children's own love for music leads them to the Piper.¹

In 1914 Alice Brown's Children of Earth, a folk play, won the ten thousand dollar prize offered by Winthrop Ames for the best play to be submitted anonymously by an American author. Nearly 1700 manuscripts were received. On January 12, 1915, Mr. Ames produced the play at The Booth Theatre, New York. This play expresses an insurgent desire for participation in life. Ellen Barston has been dominated by her father and brother Aaron. Her lover returns, but she is disappointed in him. She clutches at Peter Hale, whose wife Jane is a drunkard, and is about to elope with him. Jane is heartbroken, and Peter and Ellen decide not to elope. Jane tries to save their

¹ Quinn, loc. cit., p. 19.

reputation.

Up until the time of the First World War the box office standards of the theatre rested upon the system of popular morality inherited from the nineteenth century. But by 1916 theatregoers and critics were becoming disturbed by the verbal frankness on the stage, which consisted mainly of "Hell" and "My Gawd".¹ However, there is a definite effort on the part of the playwrights to break away from this prudery.² Dialogue was gradually loosening up, the flapper appeared as a popular character, and a number of plays made some attempt to discuss trial marriage, eugenics, and the new woman. Examples of these trends occur in Rachel Crothers' plays A Man's World, Ourselves, and Young Wisdom.³

Though its influence on Broadway had been slight, Europe had been for some time developing a new drama, from the social problem plays of Ibsen to the unorthodox comedies of Shaw, from the psychological tragedies of Strindberg to the symbolic mysticism of Maeterlinck.⁴ The strongest European influence had to do with the "new stagecraft" and the concept of the "art theatre".⁵ The leader of this new movement was Gordon Craig, who protested against realism, both of play and scenery.⁶ He believed that the theatre should represent a synthesis of all

¹ Gagey, loc. cit., p. 22.

² Loc. cit.

³ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

⁶ Loc. cit.

the arts--music, dancing, stage design, as well as writing and acting.¹

Two other influences on the insurgent theatre of this period were the little theater movement and the courses offered in colleges and universities in history of drama and in actual playwriting. The best known course in playwriting was George Pierce Baker's English 47 at Harvard. Edmund Gagey, in his book, Revolution in the American Drama, describes the work of Baker thus: "Viewed in terms of the number and importance of his students who made their way into the theatre, his influence is truly colossal. Among the earlier graduates were Edward Sheldon, Edward Knoblock, and Percy Mackaye; more recent playwrights were Eugene O'Neill, Philip Barry, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, and John Howard Lawson. Other students later became directors (Winthrop Ames, George Abbott, Theresa Helburn); critics (Kenneth MacGowan, Heywood Brown, Walter Pritchard Eaton, Robert C. Benchley, John Mason Brown); actors (Mary Morris, Dorothy Sands, Osgood Perkins); and designers (Robert Edmond Jones, Leo Simonson, Donald Oenslager)".² Among the most famous of the small theatres that sprang up all over the country were the Chicago Little Theatre, the Boston Toy Theatre, the Detroit Arts and Crafts Theatre, and the Wisconsin Players. The common characteristics of all these various organizations were their true amateur spirit, their experimentation with unusual plays and settings--particularly imaginative

¹ Loc. cit.

² Gagey, Loc. cit., p. 29-30.

ones, their dependence on the one-act play, their practice of repertory, and their development of the subscription audience.¹ One important group was the Washington Square Players, who attempted heavy realism, historical satire, poetical drama, and fantasy. Among the contributions of women to their repertoire were Alice Gerstenberg's Overtones and Zoe Akins one-act play, The Magical City, which won praise for Lee Simonson's superb setting revealing New York City at night through a studio window. The Magical City was first performed in 1908 and later in 1916 by the Washington Square Players. The theme of this play was the effect of a great city, New York, upon a girl, her "protector" and her young poet lover, who kills him. There are some fine lines but small artificial profundity.

Another important group was the Provincetown Players, whose list of original members included the radical journalists, Floyd Dell and Max Eastman, and the latter's wife Ida Rauh, who was to play heavy dramatic roles for the company.² George Cram Cook was elected as president, and his wife, Susan Glaspell, was one of the company's most constant and successful playwrights.³ Another playwright discovered by this company was the then unknown dramatist, Eugene O'Neill.⁴ Glaspell's The Verge, Cook's The Spring, and O'Neill's The Hairy

¹ Ibid., p. 31-32.

² Cagoy, loc. cit., p. 34.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Loc. cit.

Ape, were such successes that they were moved to Broadway.¹

Glaspell's Suppressed Desires is a satire on the Freudian interpretation of dreams or the cult of self-expression. The Verge is a study of a neurotic woman who is going insane. She has a great desire to create new forms of life and is planting new flowers and developing new species. She is also experimenting with the lives of two men, friends of hers who are staying in the house. In the last act she kills one as a gift to him. Then she fires a pistol and sings "Nearer My God to Thee".

Another contributor to the Provincetown Players, both as actress and as playwright, was Edna St. Vincent Millay, whose first plays, The Princess Marries a Page and Aria da Capo were given by the players.²

After the death of Clyde Fitch and William Vaughn Moody, there was a lull in dramatic activity, but by the middle of the decade there was a slight revival in interest.³ It no sooner got started than it received a setback by movies. With its standardization of plot and its search for emotional appeals it served only those theatregoers of a low caliber. New factors served to offset this to a certain extent.⁴ Art theatres and other independent agencies prepared the way for change and experimentation.⁵

¹ Loc. cit.

² Ibid., p. 35.

³ Quinns, loc. cit., p. 297.

⁴ Orians, loc. cit., p. 297.

⁵ Loc. cit.

Theatregoers organized themselves into a protective Drama League of America in 1910.¹ The designs of Max Reinhardt, Gordon Craig, and Joseph Urban offered relief from Belasco realism. The little theatre movement offered many a chance for self-expression. Such groups as the Provincetown Players and the Washington Square Players led the way to full development. During the decade of 1910 to 1920 there was a marked awareness of the continental activities of Strindberg, Shaw, Chekhov, Maeterlinck, Dunsany, Sudermann, and others.²

The results of the activities of the little theatre movement was a flowering of American drama in the decade of the twenties.³ Though it was limited to the largest cities, it was higher in quality than ever before in the history of the theatre. Regional plays flourished in the twenties.⁴

1 Loc. cit.

2 Ibid., p. 298.

3 Ibid., p. 305.

4 Ibid., p. 306.

WOMEN DRAMATISTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

As it is impossible in this study to discuss all the plays written by women of America, this analysis is limited to those women dramatists who have appeared in the Burns Mantle editions of his Best Plays from 1909 - 1947. The first play by a woman dramatist to appear in a Burns Mantle edition was Good Gracious, Annabelle by Clare Kummer in 1916. Thereafter, with increasing frequency, the works of women dramatists have been selected for this publication. These women dramatists are also the ones whose plays have regularly reached the New York stage, as a study of the Appendix will show.

As would be expected, women dramatists have a strong tendency to deal with domestic problems. Many of these plays stress mental maladjustments and parent and child relationships. Another important subject of women dramatists is the social problems appearing outside the home. Lillian Hellman, Clare Boothe, and others have with considerable merit tackled political problems. Another favorite subject is the problems of artists, usually treated humorously, though in some instances like Alison's House and Stage Door, with sympathy and deep insight. All these subjects and problems have been attacked from satirical, humorous, sentimental, melodramatic, tragic and even fantastical viewpoints.

Domestic Problems

Broadway's bill of fare during the period before and just after the First World War, offered musical shows, sentimental pieces, and bedroom farces.¹ Twin Beds (1914) by Salisbury Field and Margaret Mayo has already been mentioned. However, in Zoe Akins Declassee (1919) the playgoer could find some solid fare.² It deals with the subject of marital maladjustment arising from the marriage of Lady Helen, a highly sensitive woman of noble birth, to a wealthy industrialist of inferior social standing. Before leaving her husband, she has fallen in love with Edward Thayer, a card-shark and social climber whom she had been forced to order out of her home. Several years later she appears in America. She has used up her money and is down to her last pearl. Solomon, a Jew, wants to marry her. At first she refuses but later decides to accept him. At the party in which their engagement was to be announced, Thayer comes back. Solomon, knowing she had been in love with Thayer, is willing to call off the engagement. Not realizing that Thayer is there, Lady Helen leaves hurriedly and is struck down by a car. She is brought in, and before she dies, recognizes Thayer. He has really come to tell her that he has found someone he could love as she wanted him to. Now

¹ Edmond M. Cagey, Revolution in American Drama, p. 9.

² Ibid., p. 270.

he tells her he wants to marry her. She dies happy.

Marital infidelity was the subject of countless plays, whether treated as a problem or simply as a dramatic situation. No one has been more skilled at straddling the current moral issues than Rachel Crothers, a prolific writer of sentimental and problem comedies. A keen and sagacious playwright, Miss Crothers, who continued her dramatic career after World War I, has shown a gift for selecting a timely subject, treating it with daring, diluting with sentimentality, and ending with the conventionally approved conclusion. She has considered in several plays the problems of infidelity in a way which has proved absorbing to her feminine audience.

In Let Us Be Gay (1920) Kitty Brown has secured a divorce from her husband because of an affair which meant no more to him, he explains, than getting drunk. Hurt and disillusioned, Kitty has become emancipated: she earns her own living as a designer and has essayed a few love affairs of her own, which she has found shallow and unsatisfying. In spite of her arguments for independence, she is lonely. She unexpectedly meets her former husband again at a house party at the home of Mrs. Boucicault, an eccentric old woman who smokes cigars and talks with great frankness. Bob Brown is being pursued relentlessly by Deirdre, the hostess' granddaughter, "one of those gorgeous young things who were running around loose at that period." Her ultra-modernism is made graphic on the stage by her appearance in a one-piece bathing suit, orange and black.

Eventually Bob discourages Deirdre and is able to persuade Kitty to marry him again. The double standard is further brought into the discussion when a young suitor of Deirdre expresses the usual male view that either a girl is decent or she isn't, whereupon Deirdre inquires where a girl will find the same standards in men. Miss Crothers gives her support to the old-fashioned marriage and presumably the double standard.

Another Crothers play, As Husbands Go (1931), came at a time when American matrons from the Middle West were making frequent pilgrimages to Europe. It takes occasion to contrast foreign men--attractive and romantic but frankly fortune-hunting--with the stodgy, dependable American husband, to the latter's glorification. With customary shrewdness the author makes the foreigners credible and not unsympathetic. Using the same formula of discussing a marital problem from a feminine angle with a seasoning of sentimentality, Miss Crothers in When Ladies Meet (1932) contrives a meeting between wife and mistress in which the two women have an opportunity to understand each other's point of view, to the natural discomfiture of the husband. These two plays were interesting and workmanlike.

It was not until 1937, after more than thirty years of Broadway playwriting, that Rachel Crothers produced her finest work to date, Susan and God.¹ Here, in spite of her usual

¹ Ibid., p. 195.

conventional and not too convincing ending, she has a sound situation and excellent satire. To her fast and fashionable set in the country Susan Trexel returns from a long stay in England where she has been converted to Lady Wiggam's movement (not unlike the Oxford movement). Lady Wiggam has found God, says Susan, in a new way. It isn't necessary to change one's faith. "You can keep right on being what you are. It's just love--love--love--for other people--not for yourself." You need only to be "God-conscious" and have the courage to confess your sins publicly. For all her religious fervor Susan has had no thought since her return for her unhappy, inebriated husband Barrie and even less for her fifteen-year-old daughter Blossom, who has had practically no home but school. Susan's friends decide to cure her of her evangelical fad by having one of them pretend conversion and make a ridiculous public confession. The deception begins successfully, but as Susan warms up to her subject, Barrie and Blossom wander in unexpectedly. The husband, somewhat drunk, takes Susan's words about reformation seriously, and trapped by her own eloquence, Susan cannot refuse to follow her new principles. The result is that she agrees not to divorce Barrie, as planned, but to spend the entire summer with him and Blossom at their country home. If he touches liquor during this time, he must grant her the divorce she wants, and she also makes it clear they will live together merely as friends. Blossom is overjoyed, but the prospects are dreary to Susan. Barrie lives up

to all conditions and Blossom is deliriously happy, but by late August the husband finally realizes Susan's complete selfishness and the fact that she is through with him, drunk or sober. He then disappears on a two-day drinking bout, allowing Susan time to think matters over. The play ends--somewhat illogically in view of Susan's character--with complete reconciliation. The satirical slant is a welcome change from Miss Crothers' normal sentimentality, though the play obviously is not without sentiment.

In Porgy (1927) by Dorothy and Du Bose Heyward the subject of marital infidelity is treated from an entirely different viewpoint. This popular folk play treats seriously the manners, folk lore, and social divisions of the South. The stage represents Catfish Row in Charleston, South Carolina. Porgy, a crippled peddler, has given refuge to Bess, whom he loves, the woman of a rambunctious longshoreman, now hiding because of a murder. Her efforts to remain with Porgy and go straight are prevented by the reappearance of the longshoreman at a picnic. She is then victimized by Sportin' Life, bootlegger and dealer in drugs, who tempts her with "happy dust" and persuades her to go with him to New York. Porgy, doggedly patient and still in love with Bess, sets out after her in the distant city. The effective use of spirituals in the play suggested the possibilities of musical treatment, and in 1935 the play was refurbished as a folk opera, Porgy and Bess, with a score by George Gershwin. The Heywards were responsible, also, for

another melodramatic Charleston play, Mamba's Daughters (1939), which deals with the shifting fortunes of three generations of negro women from slave status to appearance in New York. Both these plays were originally published as novels.

In Lolly (1929) by Fanny Heaslip Lea, Lolly Carroll, a gay lady of frustrated dreams of romance, threatens to lose her head over a Spanish gigolo. It is all her daughter, Laura, 19, can do to keep Lolly straight. She manages it with the aid of Don Gaylord, back home after twenty years in South America. It transpires that Don is not only Lolly's lost romance, but also Laura's father.

The desire for social position and prestige on the part of the wife in Dinner at Eight (1932) by Kaufman and Ferber causes serious differences to arise between husband and wife. Becoming involved with the comparatively trivial arrangements for a dinner party, the wife fails to realize that her husband is in serious financial difficulties and that her daughter has become involved with a has-been matinee idol.

The Women (1935) by Clare Boothe is the classic example of how a husband and wife become almost forever estranged because of the nasty tongues of gossiping "friends". When Mary, the wife of Stephen Haines, hears reports of her husband's affair, she leaves for Reno to obtain a divorce, of course with the urging and advice of her friends. After her return, she realizes that her husband is unhappy with his second wife, that she is unhappy without Stephen, and her two children are unhappy

about the whole situation. By cultivating feline claws, jungle red, she sets out to get her husband back. One of Miss Boothe's simplest, yet most effective, scenes shows the maid and cook enjoying a midnight snack and talking over their employer's marital relations. Maggie, the cook, concludes that "the first man who can think up a good explanation how he can be in love with his wife and another woman, is going to win that prize they're giving out in Sweden!"

To explain the relationship between Regina Hubbard and her husband in Hellman's The Little Foxes (1939) as a case of marital maladjustment is almost the height of understatement. When Regina fails to receive the necessary financial aid from her husband to gain controlling interest in Hubbard's cotton mills, she calmly refrains from giving him the medicine that would have saved him from a heart attack. The overpowering acquisitive instinct or greed on the part of Regina controls the plot of the whole play.

The reviews fell upon Rose Franken's Outrageous Fortune (1943) with enthusiasm, freely admitting its virtues. It was considered well written and honest in exposition, but they found it somewhat lacking in coherency in both subject and character development.¹

Rose Franken's play is a drama of conflicts within a family of wealthy Jews living near New York. Its story covers

¹ Burns Mantle. Best Plays, 1944, p. 10.

the adventures of a week-end during which a certain strange and glamorous lady, Crystal Grainger, with decidedly mystic leanings, tries with better than fair success to resolve a few of the problems with which the family is beset.

One of the problems is the failure of the wife to see her husband in a sufficiently romantic light that she can establish their relationship on a harmonious basis. The barrier seems to be mainly the ultra-conservative and conventional outlook on the part of the husband. After he falls lightly in love with Crystal Grainger, his wife is able to see him from a more romantic angle.

Problems of Parent-Child Relationship

According to the sociologist one of the prime causes of individual disorganization is parental projection. The women dramatists have dealt with this problem in a number of different ways. Rachel Crothers shows a father's concern for his young daughter in her play Nice People (1921). He wants her to marry the boy who has compromised her when they spent the night at a cabin. And in the play Mary III, Mary's parents object to her going on an unchaperoned camping trip that Mary feels will help her decide which of her two suitors to accept. Mamma's Affairs shows the almost tragic effect of a mother's desire to marry her daughter, Eve, to a man she doesn't love. A more sympathetic treatment of a mother's

efforts to project her own lost aims and ambitions on her two children is depicted in the play, Mrs. Partridge Presents (1925) by Mary Kennedy and Ruth Warren.

Nice People represents one of Rachel Crothers' typical contributions to the drama of flaming youth. Teddy Gloucester, daughter of a Park Avenue millionaire, practices all the vices of the younger set--smokes, drinks, wears revealing evening dresses, and talks about sex. All this is profoundly disturbing to Teddy's aunt and guardian. When Teddy's father forbids her to keep a midnight date with Scottie Wilbur, man-about-town and expert dancer, she goes off to meet him anyway. The two eventually reach the Gloucester summer cottage on Long Island, with Scottie both bibulous and amorous and a big storm coming up. Teddy's reputation is saved, after a fashion, by the arrival of Billy Wade, an upright young stranger, who obligingly sleeps downstairs with Scottie while Teddy retires upstairs. Next morning Billy Wade departs, and when Teddy's father and members of her fast set come 'n, they assume the worst. In a few hours the scandal has incredibly spread all over New York, and Teddy has refused to marry Scottie, who is willing to do the right thing. Now honest Billy Wade reappears; he and Teddy decide to turn the summer place into a farm. Finally, after great effort, Teddy persuades the prim hero to marry her as he objects to her money.

In 1923 Rachel Crothers returned to the flapper in Mary the Third, a considerably better play which shows the court-

ship of three generations of Marys. This play shows Mary I in 1870 taking her mate by the lure of physical attraction. Mary II, in 1897, was taken by the man among her lovers who is the most insistent. In 1923 Mary III is determined to know the theory and practice of marriage before taking the actual marriage vows. She goes on an unchaperoned camping trip with another girl and three young men--two of them her suitors. She wants to find out what these boys are really like before rather than after marriage. Evading the issue as usual, the author has Mary suddenly feel her parents were right in forbidding the trip; she therefore pretends an attack of appendicitis. On the way home she accepts one of the suitors. Now unfortunately Mary and her brother overhear their parents quarreling, and are shocked at the apparent hate between them. The children insist on a divorce and call their mother a kept woman because she is financially dependent on her husband. Mary also decides she will live with her fiancée in sin rather than in wedlock, having discovered the horrors and hypocrisies of a respectable union. The parents separate temporarily, but when Mary sees how much her opinionated father really loves his wife, though he won't admit it, she sends him back to her mother and accepts her own suitor in marriage. The final scene parallels the words of the proposals to Mary I and Mary II, her mother and her grandmother.

Rachel Baron Butler's play, Mamma's Affairs (1920) may be classed as a comedy only because it has a happy ending. Mrs.

Orrin, a sentimental hypochondriac, is traveling about the country enjoying poor health in the company of her daughter Eve, her dear friend Mrs. Marchant, and Mrs. Marchant's son Henry. She and her friend have arranged that Henry and Eve get married. Eve doesn't love Henry but agrees to marry him to please her mamma. Mamma has so possessed her daughter that Eve doesn't realize she has any alternative to obedience until she has a nervous breakdown. They call in Dr. Jensen, who appreciates how Mrs. Orrin has used her daughter. He isolates Eve from them all and she recovers her health to marry the doctor.

Among the minor dramatic productions by women was Mrs. Partridge Presents (1925) by Mary Kennedy and Ruth Warren, a comedy echoing vaguely those plays of the season concerned with the problems and protests of the younger generation. Mrs. Partridge attempts to make an artist out of her son and an actress out of her daughter, although their desires and talents are opposed. It is a story drawn obviously from the authors' observations and convictions and the result is a sane and humorous preachment on the determination of parents to rule and the rebellion of their enlightened offspring against the attempted and often unreasonable domination of their immediate forbears.

Her Master's Voice by Clare Kummer (1933) is a domestic comedy written with many graceful twists of dialogue and many revealing bits of character observations. Ned and Queen

Farrar are having a difficult time, because Ned can't seem to hold an office job very long. It wouldn't be so trying if Queena's mother weren't so concerned about it. She feels that Queena has given up an operatic career by marrying Ned and wouldn't let Queena forget it. Queena is entirely satisfied with Ned and is upset that her mother has written to have wealthy Aunt Minnie ask her for a visit. Her aunt hadn't approved of Ned either and had stopped giving her niece voice lessons. However, Aunt Minnie appears unexpectedly, and a good comedy situation arises from the fact that she mistakes Ned for a servant and practically falls in love with him. She offers him a job at her estate as a house man, which he accepts after Queena decided to go out there too. Before he goes out to Aunt Minnie's estate, Mr. Twilling, his former employer and owner of the Radio Realm, appears and offers him a job singing on the radio. Ned accepts the offer. Queena is unaware that Ned is posing as Aunt Minnie's house man, but Ned finds out that Queena sleeps out on the porch. Unfortunately the night he selects to crawl into bed with her. Aunt Minnie has changed places with her. When he discovers his mistake, he knocks over some furniture in his hurry to leave. Queena's mother, coming to investigate the noise, switches on the light long enough to see a man crouching behind a fur coat that has been thrown over a chair. She never does get a satisfactory answer from Aunt Minnie to her question, "Why didn't you scream?" All complications are cleared up when Aunt Minnie

finds out that her house man is really Ned, and when Queena really hears her master's voice on the radio.

The father is the dominant influence in the life of his family in Big Hearted Herbert (1934) by Sophie Kerr and Anna Steese Richardson. Herbert Kalness was a boastful, self-made man who refuses to let his son go to college. Herbert refuses to let his daughter, Alice, marry Andrew Goodrich, because Andrew is a Harvard man. When Herbert invites his best customer to dinner, Mrs. Kalness determines to make it plain with a vengeance. She strips the house of its decorations and cooks Irish stew. She and Alice get into gingham and do their own serving. Herbert is cured.

An interesting anticipation of a later trend for revivals of works of earlier periods is the dramatization of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice in 1935. Its success was somewhat surprising, as it is really a restored daguerreotype. It is a dramatization of Jane Austen's novel of the same name. One of the underlying forces of the story is the mother's ambition to marry off her three daughters. The plot is concerned with the pride of Elizabeth Bennet and the prejudice of Darcy Brown, the squire of Pemberly. Elizabeth, realizing that it is the snobbishness of Darcy and his crowd that kept his friend Bingley from proposing marriage to her sister Jane, spurns Darcy's belated acknowledgment of his love for her. However, after Darcy pays the dowry necessary to get Wickham to marry her other sister, Lydia, and is instrumental in getting Jane

and Bingley together again, Elizabeth forgets her pride.

Produced April 25, 1932, Rose Franken's play Another Language is a simple domestic comedy showing neither novelty in plot and character nor exceptional brilliance in composition. But there is no part of it nor any character in it either essentially cheap or obviously false. The play was a success because it is soundly built on a foundation of human plausibility. The setting is in the Hallam home. It is basically a story of a strong-willed mother wishing to dominate her children. She has four devoted sons, who have never failed to appear with their reluctant wives on Tuesday night to have dinner with their mother. Only Stella, Victor's wife, fails to appear every time. However, the night the play opens she is expected, and there are several barbed comments about her previous absences, her art lessons, and the way she has Victor wrapped around her finger. Her appearance with long stemmed flowers requiring the umbrella stand for a vase also brings forth an undercurrent of disapproval. Almost an unexpected guest, Victor's nephew Jerry turns up and meets Stella for the first time. Immediately they sense in each other the sensitive spirit of an artist, that spirit which looks beyond the commonplace and seeks an understanding of the ideal. Later Stella invites them all to her house for the following Tuesday evening, and because the wives and even the Hallam sons would welcome a change, they force down their mother's objections to any change in her Tuesday night ritual. Having recognized in

Stella a soul-mate, Jerry goes to see her several times. She sympathizes with him in his desire to be an architect rather than to go into his father's business as the whole family is forcing him to do. Victor is angry with Stella for taking Jerry's part. On the following Tuesday, Mrs. Hallam effectively breaks up Stella's party by imagining an insult. Again Victor sides in with his family and runs home to spend the night with mamma. Jerry stays to declare his love for Stella and doesn't get home until morning. By that time the whole family has come to Mrs. Hallam's looking for him, and Stella has arrived to talk to Victor. It finally comes out that Jerry is in love with Stella, and Victor, in order to cover up for Stella, tells Jerry that Stella really made light of his love for her. Jerry leaves totally crushed. Stella makes Victor realize what he has done to Jerry to cover up his false pride, and before the play ends she also makes him realize how his family is making him into an inconsiderate husband like the rest of the Hallam boys.

After Rose Franken had been nine years away from the Broadway theatre Claudia brought her back in 1941. At least it had been nine years since Miss Franken's first comedy, Another Language, had proved so positive a late season hit that it ran through the Summer of 1932 and well into the winter following. Claudia, like Another Language, achieved a great popularity with women audiences. The heroine's consuming curiosity regarding her sex appeal, her definite mother

fixation, her reluctance to grow to full stature as a wife-- these familiar feminine characteristics helped to keep the matinees crowded.

Changes in domestic drama may be seen by comparison of Claudia with any of the marital plays of the twenties. The play is a realistic study of a girl-wife who is prevented from completely growing up by the insistent pressure of a mother fixation. This emotional tie prevents full happiness in marriage and leads the girl to doubt her own sex appeal. Only when an overheard phone conversation reveals to her that her mother will soon die of cancer is she suddenly shocked into maturity and independence. Instead of the earlier comic minutiae of married life the author presents a realistic, though sympathetic, psychological study of human relationships in a play that borders closely on tragedy. The only circumstance Claudia had in common with her counterparts of the twenties was that she too became pregnant.

About two-thirds of New York's professional play reviewers felt that The Old Maid (1935) listed far too sharply toward the obviously, sentimental drama and followed too closely the older form of emotional drama to satisfy the sophisticated playgoers.¹ It was unquestionably a great woman's play and a strong matinee attraction. Business steadily built up until late Spring when, overcoming a division in the recommendations

¹ Burns Mantle. Best Plays, 1935, p. 21.

made by its advisory jury, The Old Maid by Zoe Akins was given the annual award as the best play of American authorship of the season by the Pulitzer prize committee.

Its critics were right in their charge that this drama of maternal yearning and mother love is definitely sentimental, and it does belong to that school of emotional drama that flourished a generation ago. But its enthusiastic supporters are equally right in insisting that it is a human and substantial drama, skillfully and intelligently adapted by Miss Akins from one of Edith Wharton's most characteristic stories of old New York. The beginning of The Old Maid goes back to 1833, on Delia Lovell's wedding day. She is marrying James Ralston simply because she is afraid of being an old maid. Clem Spender, the man she really loves, is in Italy and in no apparent hurry to get back. But he does, the day of her wedding! There is nothing for Delia to do, but to go through with her marriage to Ralston. Charlotte, Delia's cousin, who has been secretly in love with Clem, tries to console him. They have intimate relations and he leaves. Charlotte never tells him of the child she bears to this union. She goes South apparently for her health. When she returns, she starts up a day nursery for underprivileged children, among whom is Tina, Charlotte's own child. Later, to everyone's surprise, she becomes engaged to Joseph Ralston, brother to Delia's husband. Not too long before their wedding, Charlotte realizes that she will have to tell Joseph why she can't give up the nursery. She

goes to Delia for advice. Delia discerns that Clem Spender is the father of Charlotte's child and advises her to give up Joe. She agrees to support Charlotte and Tina for the rest of their lives. Soon after, James Palston dies and Charlotte and Tina go to live with Delia. Tina, ignorant of her past, learns to have a great affection for Delia and great scorn for Charlotte. Charlotte, jealous of Tina's love for Delia, has grown into a narrow, bitter old maid. Later Delia decides to adopt Tina. This gives Tina a name and a share in the Palston estate, thereby removing any barrier to a marriage with the boy of her choice. Stung by Tina's open display of contempt for her, Charlotte decides on the night before Tina's wedding to tell her that she, Charlotte, is actually her mother. At the last minute she changes her mind. Grateful that Charlotte has spared Tina, Delia tells Tina to be sure that Charlotte is the last one she kisses before she gets into the carriage to drive away on the honeymoon.

Years Ago (1947) by Ruth Gordon is a simple domestic comedy of Miss Gordon's own adolescent years. Though the aim of Years Ago is to amuse, yet the play gives a realistic study of a father who, because of his limited income, tries to make his family economize and of a mother who is furtively striving to obtain a few of the "little extra" things in life like a telephone, which was then coming into use. Secretly, Ruth is harboring a desire to be an actress, but when her parents seriously begin plans for another career for her, the truth

comes out. At first the father objects, but later, though he has lost his job, he gives her his last fifty dollars to go to New York to begin her career.

Coquette (1927) is that most effective type of comedy drama that turns suddenly and unexpectedly into a tragedy without unduly depressing its audience. It offers the world the luxury of a good cry and stimulates its love of good drama. Dr. Besant, a gentleman of the old Southern aristocracy, objects to his daughter Norma's love for Michael Jeffery. His voiced objection to Michael is that Michael has spent his life drinking and gambling but his underlying objection is that Michael doesn't belong to the country club class of people. Michael goes away for a brief time to make something of himself, but returns unexpectedly. Dr. Besant hears the gossip that Norma and Michael have been spending a night together and angrily demands a confession from Norma. Fearing her father's anger, Norma only tells him that she had seen Michael, but fails to tell him that she and Michael must get married. Although accepting Norma's word that she has not been guilty of any wrong doing, Dr. Besant seeks out Michael and kills him to defend his daughter's honor. He stands trial for the murder, and is to be allowed to go free, if it can be proved that his daughter's honor needed to be defended. When Norma realizes that she must establish her chastity in order to free her father, she kills herself.

Social Problems Outside the Home

Women dramatists have dealt with other family problems. Miss Lulu Bett depicts the problems that an unmarried sister has to face living in the household of a sister and a brother-in-law. Family Portrait gives a vivid account of Christ's sufferings at the hands of his own brothers and countrymen. Fanny Hurst's It Is To Laugh shows a sister aggravating her snobbish brother. Outrageous Fortune, that has been mentioned above, depicts the minor and major problems which arise in a Jewish family. The philosophical old mother who can't refrain from fixing her favorite fish dishes though it is the cause of many cooks resigning, is sympathetically treated. The elder son's efforts to make his younger brother see the need to adhere to a superior moral code because they are Jewish is another underlying feature of this play.

Miss Gale won the Pulitzer Prize in 1921 with the dramatization of her novel Miss Lulu Bett. Miss Bett both in the story and play was an unmarried woman without a career, living with her sister and brother-in-law. Her rebellion and flight with her lover, who has concealed his earlier marriage in the belief that his wife is dead, gives an opportunity for Miss Gale to develop her character through her return to face the emptiness of her life and the taunts of her family. Miss Gale made two endings for the play. In the first version, Lulu

departs to fight her battle alone, though with a new offer of marriage on file. This was changed to bring the first lover back unmarried.

Although Family Portrait by Lenore Coffey and William Joyce Cowen (1939) attracted attention chiefly by its dramatic novelty, it is really a presentation of problems of family life. The Cowens evolved a simple story of the family of Christ, taking their inspiration and their argument from those verses in the Gospel according to St. Mark which begin: "And he went from thence, and came into his own country, and his disciples followed him.¹ And when the Sabbath day was come he began to teach in the synagogue, and many hearing him were astonished, saying: 'From whence has this man these things?--- Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, an of Juda, and of Simon?'² And are not his sisters here with us?'³ And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, 'A prophet is not without honor but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house'.⁴ Although the character of the subject might have led to fantasy, the authors tried to keep their dialogue as colloquial as possible and their argument as close to modern social trends as they could, thus consistently giving their play the spirit of timeliness.⁵

1 Burns Mantle. Best Plays, 1930, p. 131.

2 Ibid., p. 131.

3 Loc. cit.

4 Loc. cit.

5 Loc. cit.

In It Is To Laugh (1927) by Fanny Hurst, Morris Goldfish, making money, insists on moving his old father and mother from Division Street to an expensive West End Avenue apartment, wherein they are comically unhappy and protesting. Birdie, the Goldfish sister, rebels, marries a crook, sticks by him while he is in jail, welcomes and reforms him when he gets out and finally forces him upon her snobbish brother.

These plays make one realize not only the wide scope of domestic problems presented by women dramatists, but also their deep understanding of the problems they treat.

Women dramatists did not confine their writing only to the social problems arising in the home, but also treated the wider aspects of society. They deal with the effects of fatiguing office routine on the life of a young girl, with the crushing discouragements of the depression, with the sensationalism of newspaper reporting, and with victims of society such as the amnesia sufferer, and the "victory girl" of the last World War.

The Breaking Point (1923) by Mary Roberts Rinehart is concerned with Dick, an amnesia victim. He had been in love with a vamp in his youth. In a fight he kills her husband. Escaping, he was found by a friend, his memory completely obliterated by the shock. His friend, Dr. Livingston, takes Dick east and tries the experiment of reclaiming his soul. Ten years later he is a successful physician. Now in love with Elizabeth, he feels he must clear up his past before asking her to marry him. He goes back to the scene of his youth to

suffer a second shock of remembering the murder, but forgets the past ten years. A third shock completes his recovery and makes a happy ending possible.

As a center of racketeering and malodorous politics Chicago inspired a number of melodramatic comedies, not necessarily connected with prohibition. One of the best was Maurine Watkins' Chicago (1926), a riproaring burlesque on the publicity mania of female murderers and on the ways of Chicago courts. Roxie Hart, played with commendable toughness by Francine Larrimore, shoots a lover to death as he is buttoning up his pants. Then the fanfare begins--the reporters, the pictures, the dickering with criminal lawyers, the lawyer's directions about dresses and make-up for the trial. Mad for more publicity, Roxie pretends a pregnancy, which also gives her lawyer a chance in the courtroom to orate about innocence and motherhood. After the jury gives the verdict of not guilty, Roxie's husband inquires about the baby. "What baby?" exclaims Roxie. "My God, do I look like an amachure!" Clearly the play is not dependent on subtlety or understatement, but the satire is excellent.

Synthetic Sin (1927) by Frederic and Fanny Hatton, tells of the experience of a young actress from the South, Betty Fairfax. Following her first failure the playwright tells her

she can never hope to act until she has had experience, until she has sinned and suffered. He offers to help, but Betty prefers to gather experience in her own way. With her faithful maid, she rents a room in a "dump", meets many queer people, is nearly seduced by a dope peddler and is happily saved by an author seeking atmosphere.

When Sophie Treadwell wrote Machinal (1928), she admitted being influenced to some extent by the grinding forces of a mechanistic world that had played a part in the lowering of Ruth Snyder's standards of loyalty, her morals and ambitions, her pathetic and utterly frustrated pursuit of happiness. To that extent it is based on the Ruth Snyder-Judd Gray murder trial.

The grinding of the machines begins with the introduction of the Young Woman in the office in which she works. The Young Woman is faced with two dreary prospects; either she must allow her soul to be crushed by office routine or marry the boss whom she doesn't love. After marriage she soon comes to realize the torture of an uncongenial marriage. She goes through the grueling experience of bearing his child and remains faithful to her husband for five years. Then she meets a man with whom she has intimate relations. Even though she knows the man, Richard Roe, will not stay with her, she has had a taste of what it would mean to live with someone she could actually love. Richard has told her how he had to kill a man by slugging him with a bottle full of pebbles while he was on

one of his excursions in South America. When he leaves and she is forced back into her routine life with her husband, she uses this method to kill him. At the trial it is the sworn affidavit of Richard Roe testifying to their intimate relations that convicts her.

Lillian Hellman's tragedy, The Children's Hour (1934) is written upon a subject of such delicacy that reference to it in the theatre usually is confined to the vulgarized comment of burlesque comedians and the writers of tasteless sketches for topical revues. This is the subject of unnatural affections harbored by persons of the same sex. However, this is not the main theme of The Children's Hour. The true theme is the curse of scandalmongering and the whispering campaign, the kind of vicious lying that may easily wreck the lives of innocent persons. This play is similar to the story told by William Roughhead in his report of a famous case tried in the Glasgow courts of the last century. Miss Hellman reveals her subject without offense. The setting is the Wright-Dobie school for girls, housed in a converted farmhouse near the village of Laneet. Karen Wright and Martha Dobie, having spent years developing and managing their school, have now come to the point where they can relax and enjoy their success. But the fly in the ointment and the motivating force behind the scandalmongering is the warped personality of Mary Tilford, a student at the school. In spite of her youth, Mary has managed to develop an extremely vicious, deceitful, almost sadistic

character. She, also, has developed the attitude that Karen and Martha are "picking" on her, and when Mrs. Lily Mortor, the elocution teacher and aunt of Martha Dobie, was overheard by the students telling Martha that she has an abnormal affection for Karen and consequently is jealous of Dr. Cardin's love for Karen, Mary loses no time in repeating this to her aunt, Mrs. Tilford. Mrs. Tilford has been one of many contributors to Karen's and Martha's success. She immediately confronts Karen, Martha and Dr. Cardin with Mary's accusation, which Mary is able to substantiate by the testimony of another student. She has threatened to expose her classmate's theft of jewelry if she doesn't corroborate Mary's imaginative story of what has been going on between Karen and Martha. Karen and Martha are forced to sue for slander, but lose their case. Though Dr. Cardin has been faithful to Karen all through the trial, it becomes apparent that he has doubts about the situation. Karen releases him from his promise to marry her and sends him away. They have now lost everything--their reputation, their school, and Dr. Cardin. The horrifying realization that they will suffer complete social ostracism spreads over them. Martha, in a frantic moment of utter despair, confesses to Karen that she really did harbor an abnormal affection for her. Karen refuses to believe her until she hears a gun shot. Rushing to investigate, she finds Martha has taken her life. Into this scene of complete disorganization Mrs. Tilford comes to tell Karen that she has discovered Mary's

lies and wants somehow to make amends. Completely devoid of feeling, Karen tells her there is nothing she can do now, but if it will make her sleep any easier, Karen will take the allowance Mrs. Tilford is desperately forcing upon her.

Hope for a Harvest (1941) by Sophie Treadwell is stronger in purpose than in theatre value. The story of a California that has suffered from a gradual deterioration of native character that had made it a leader among the commonwealths and is again threatened with later infiltrations of "Okies" and well-to-do loafers, is, Burns Mantle feels, a story of definite social value. The Treadwell message, as it reached the stage, even with the gifted Fredric and Florence Eldridge March to tell it, was more theatrical than convincing, but it still remains an important message to Americans in any theatre season.

Hope for a Harvest belongs to that simple type of folk drama that flourished twenty or thirty years ago, when experts were fewer and audiences were larger.¹ It has its scenes of drama, frequently flaring into touches of melodrama, alternating with scenes of comedy relief provided by character types common to the native drama.² It even revels in an old-fashioned happy ending that ties up loose ends, loose characters and loose emotions. Carlotta Thatcher returns to

¹ Burns Mantle. Best Plays, 1942, p. 62.

² Loc. cit.

California after knocking about chaotic Europe, hoping to find peace and security. Instead she finds a degraded, "Okie"-infested land. All the way home she had raised her lagging spirits with thoughts of her former home, which now is almost completely dilapidated. Her cousin, Elliot Martin, who once had specialized in peach growing, is running a filling station. He had married a half-breed, now dead, and has an amoral, airplane-flying daughter, Tonie. Tonie is in love with Victor de Lucchi, whose parents have sent him away to be a priest. Elliot is glad for this. He hates the de Lucchis because they have been buying up land around his property in order to carry on their truck farming. They had gradually prospered while Elliot had made a failure of his peach orchards. He had been unable to cope with market conditions, droughts, etc. What had really been at the bottom of his difficulty was Carlotta's leaving. He had been in love with her.

Carlotta sets about righting all the wrongs. She overrides Elliot's prejudices against Mr. de Lucchi and makes a deal with him whereby she gets enough money to start farming. She really appreciates the little Italian's business ability. Next she tries to take Tonie under her wing. But Tonie, frustrated in her love for Victor, has taken up with Billy Barnes. They have been using Carlotta's empty house for their rendezvous. Victor unexpectedly returns. Tonie is overjoyed, as she is pregnant and now Victor can marry her instead of Billy Barnes. Horrified, Victor tries to explain to her that

she must marry Billy. She can't understand it. If he, Victor, loves her, what difference does it make that it is Billy's baby? Victor decides to go back and be a priest. In the meantime, Billy's gum-chewing, social-climbing parents get him married off to the banker's daughter. Tonie is beside herself to know what to do until Victor reappears to marry her.

Under Carlotta's influence Elliot once more takes up his fight against economic ills and so the play ends.

One of the interesting dramatic presentations of the problems of World War II was Pick-up Girl by Elsa Shelley, actress wife of Irving Kaye Davis.

The Second World War had no more than entered its second year before the problem of juvenile delinquency began to loom large on the police blotters in the Children's Courtrooms of the country. In New York it quickly became so active an issue that the police admitted their alarm and something of their bafflement. It was a pretty difficult assignment, that of trying to discourage the Victory Girl adolescents who prowled the darker side streets to make dates with service men. Worried social workers pleaded with both the potential delinquents and the agencies of the law that were called upon to deal with their delinquencies. It was inevitable that the subject should reach the stage in the form of a drama of fairly sordid realism sooner or later.

Elsa Shelley, who wrote Pick-up Girl (1944) is the actress-wife of Irving Kaye Davis, who has had several interesting adventures as a playwright. Interested in the subject of the un-

happy and restless adolescent, she devoted a good deal of time to research work in the belief that she would turn her findings over to Mr. Davis and he would write the play. Mr. Davis, however, noting the thorough job his wife had done in the preparation of her material, insisted that she should write the script herself.

Miss Shelley was a privileged visitor at several Children's Courts. One Judge read her manuscript and reported that he was amazed at the accuracy of the court detail.

Political Problems

The important plays of women dramatists dealing with war and the political problems arising from war were chiefly written by Lillian Hellman and Clare Boothe, although there were minor contributions by others. Miss Hellman's Another Part of the Forest (1947) tells about the Hubbard family twenty years before The Little Foxes. The elder Hubbard during the time of the Civil War betrayed Confederate soldiers by selling information to the North, and he made a fortune by selling salt for a huge sum to those who desperately needed it.

Lulu Vollmer in Sun-up gives a humorous account of a mountaineer woman's ideas of World War I. Miss Vollmer is one of the women writers of imaginative drama who found a natural haven in the past, but who did not disregard the present or

the near present.¹ This, in good romantic fashion, they discovered in the byways of America, rich in local color and folk traditions, home of the unusual and the picturesque. New York in their opinion was too ingrown and sophisticated, prone to consider itself the whole of America. Regionalism and folkways provided them with a kind of contemporary costume drama, not without possibilities of poetical treatment. Regionalism showed a normal tendency to become entangled with other elements--realism, social significance, and fantasy.² The hillbilly play, inspirer of a thousand jokes and cartoons, came to town early with Lulu Vollmer's Sun-up (1923). This play derives its humor and quaintness from the Widow Cagle's conception of the First World War as a mountaineer feud in France, a place located forty miles east of Asheville. Her son Rufe has been drafted--as she thinks--to fight the Yankees. Widow Cagle's opinions on revenue officers and corn liquor are equally unorthodox. Though interesting, the play ends in melodramatic absurdity. Widow Cagle is about to kill the son of the revenue officer who shot Rufe's pappy when suddenly there comes a message with music from the spirit of Rufe (he's been killed in France) explaining the obsolescence of feuds. She reluctantly lets her victim go but is herself arrested by the Sheriff. The Duncie Boy and Trigger by Lulu Vollmer lost the advantage of novelty and were far less successful.

¹ Gagey, op. cit., p. 92.

² Loc. cit.

When Margin for Error by Clare Boothe was produced in early November, 1939, it was generally conceded by the play's reviewers that the author had at last found a proper vent for her keenest satire and a perfect target for those barbed shafts which she had so successfully tipped with venom in her former successes, The Women and Kiss the Boys Good-bye.¹ It was also freely admitted that this was the first successful anti-Nazi play to reach the stage, a rare combination of melodrama and comedy. Henry R. Luce has, with the frankness of a husband, written in the introduction to the published play, "But her peculiar success does not really lie in having got National Socialism on stage. Her success--or rather what will later be defined as her half-success--is her success in dramatizing the democrat's rebuttal to National Socialism. For in all these years of failure the difficulty has not in fact been to get National Socialism on stage. The real difficulty has been to get on stage a convincing rebuttal to National Socialism. It is in this that Miss Boothe has half succeeded. She succeeded with her character of Moe Finkelshtein, the Jewish policeman. Her success is glorious, a heart-warming triumph. She failed with Thomas S. Denny, the just-an-American. Her failure is a dull thump--a failure of some significance, because it is symptomatic of a failure in contemporary American life."²

¹ Burns Mantle. Best Plays, 1940, p. 93.

² Loc. cit.

The whole play takes place in the library in the home of the German Consul General Baumer. The Consul General has come to the point in his career when he must stop the insidious newspaper reports appearing in American newspapers, and also, he must explain the shortage of funds in his accounts. This has to be done or he will lose his life by being recalled to Germany. He knows that Thomas Denny, the newspaper reporter, is getting the information for his column from Baumer's own wife, Sophie. She has been begging for a divorce, because she is in love with Denny and wants to marry him. Baumer, with typical Germanic brutality refuses the divorce and tells Denny what will happen to Sophie if he doesn't stop his newspaper reports. By digging up the proof that Baron Alvenstor's grandmother was a Jewess (the Baron is Baumer's secretary) Baumer knows he can shift responsibility for the shortage of funds over to the Baron. By taking care of his other business in the same fashion, he makes enemies of the doctor who has paid him huge sums for information concerning his relative in Germany and of Otto Horst, the American Bund leader. All his mortal foes gather in his living room to listen to Hitler's speech. By the end of the speech Moe Finklestein, the Jewish officer who has been assigned to protect the Consul, finds that Baumer has been stabbed, shot, and poisoned. Because Baumer has drunk the poisoned liquor he had intended for someone else before he was stabbed or shot, everyone was acquitted. However, Moe was able to run the stupid Bund leader in for in-

come tax evasion. It is Moe's lines that point up vividly the treacherousness of National Socialism.

The high point of anti-Nazi or pro-democratic drama is to be seen in a widely popular play written before our entry into the War, Hellman's Watch on the Rhine (1941), gently chided Americans for their complacent feeling of security about the European situation.¹ To the luxurious home of a prominent and elderly Washington matron comes for a visit--after a long absence--her daughter Sara with the latter's German husband, Kurt, and their three children. For years Kurt has been a leader of the resistance movement in Germany. Now at last, the exiled family has found rest and refuge. But not for long. A guest at the house, a dissolute Romanian count and hanger-on at the German embassy, recognizes Kurt and demands a huge bribe in return for silence. Realizing what he must do to save the cause and continue his work, Kurt kills the count, shocking the Americans into a realization that they are living in a new and different world. With Lucile Watson as the Washington hostess, Paul Lukas as Kurt, and Mady Christiana as his wife, Watch on the Rhine was enthusiastically received and was later turned into a successful movie.² In analyzing the play's popularity on the stage, Irwin Shaw shrewdly pointed out that no mention was made of communism, to which underground forces

¹ Cagney, op. cit., p. 137.

² Ibid., p. 138.

would almost necessarily adhere, that Kurt and his family are drawn with almost unbelievable nobility, and that the Americans are depicted as thoughtless and wayward innocents with no suggestion of responsibility for the rise of Nazism in the world.¹

Another contribution of Miss Hellman, with even wider scope, was The Searching Wind of which Louis Kronenberger wrote in the New York newspaper, P.M., "The Searching Wind is in no sense Shavian, but it does resemble Shaw in its incisive dialogue, its provocative ideas, its political awareness and its force of personality."² The Drama Critics' Circle Award was almost given to Mrs. Hellman's The Searching Wind, only lacking one vote of a majority.³

Alex Hazen has been connected with the American state department for 22 years. He had started out as a young diplomat in Italy with the advent of Mussolini. At that time he had sided in with Mussolini's gang, because he felt another few months of misery and starvation for the Italian people would have meant a revolution anyway. Moses Taney, a powerful American newspaper publisher and later to be Alex's father-in-law, had been very angry with Alex's attitude. From his long experience he knew what Fascism would do to Italy.

In 1928 Alex is in Berlin and again he fails to realize the significance of a street demonstration against the Jews by the Young People's League.

¹ Loc. cit.

² Burns Mantle. Best Plays, 1944, p. 123.

³ Loc. cit.

In 1923 we find Alex in Paris facing the prospects of sending a report of the muddled European situation to the state department. He is aware that Hitler is going to want more than the Sudetenland. He knows he should recommend war. His wife Emily comes in and tells him that she doesn't want war because of their son, Sam. He tells her that she shouldn't be associating with Tonic and Boudouin, as they are tied up with the Nazi and the Japs. She reminds him that a lot of her investments are in Boudouin's bank. Whether those facts influence Alex or not, his report to the state department is very ineffectual.

At a dinner party in 1944 Sam, their son, becomes acquainted with his parents as he never had before. Emily has invited Cassie Bowman for dinner. It is through their reminiscing about the past twenty-two years that Sam gains his insight to the part they played in making the world what it is. He reveals the fact that he had read a clipping of his mother's social activities and acquaintances in Germany at the time he was wounded. Now he must face the prospects of losing his leg. He tells them that he loves his country, "And I don't want any more fooling around with it. I don't want any more of Father's mistakes, for any reason, good or bad, or yours, Mother, because I think they do it harm---I am ashamed of both of you, and that's the truth,--I don't like losing my leg, but everybody's welcome to it as long as it means a little something and helps to bring us out some place."

Problems Dealing with Artists

Another class of problems popular with women dramatists is that connected with artists. The treatment may be serious or comic. Among the kinds of artists the theatre in all its forms has seemed to offer the best comic material. More often than not the treatment was satirical. The dramatist particularly liked to give the inside story of some phase of theatre life, with the usual display of jargon and local color. Satire of the tempestuous private life of actors--not a new theme--proved still popular. Enter Madame (1920) by Gilda Varesi and Dolly Byrne reveals the traditionally erratic prima donna, who lives in a continual maelstrom of excitement and confusion. Her long patient husband, craving a peaceful home life, is now divorcing her to make another marriage, but at the last minute he is again won over by the prima donna's glamor and elopes with her to South America, carrying the poodle as in the old days.

With even more gusto The Royal Family (1927) by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber, presents four generations of the Cavendish family, a theatrical dynasty modeled after the Barrymores. Try as they will, the daughter and granddaughter cannot escape the stage by either marriage or motherhood. The scapegrace Tony flees from Hollywood, pursued by a relentless Polish actress. He gets off to Europe, only to become entangled

in various international complications. Good theatrical emotion is provided by Haidee Wright as Fanny Carr, the matriarch, whose sole desire is to go on the road once more but who dies before its fulfillment. The play well illustrates the glorious exploitation of a dramatic situation by shameless exaggeration.

A more serious treatment of the life of a writer is Alison's House (1930) by Susan Glaspell, a literary play burdened with an undramatic story and superabundance of stiff dialogue. The dramatist's efforts have been to re-create a spiritual influence wielded by a poet who eighteen years after her death, achieved a righteous justification of her life. This is supposedly taken from the life of Emily Dickinson who was posthumously admitted to the ranks of greater American poets.

The locale of the play is Iowa in 1899. John Stanhope is breaking up the old family home where his sister Alison, the poetess, had lived. There are several disruptions to John's activities. One is his nephew, who is frantically trying to get information about Alison's secret love affair in order to get a stand-in with his professor at college. Another disturbing influence is John's sister, Agatha, who has a very serious heart ailment. In trying to burn papers entrusted to her by Alison, she almost burns the house down. Finally his daughter, Elsa, who has disgraced the family by living with a man already married, arrives on the scene. The excitement of the fire causes Agatha to have a fatal heart attack, but before she

expires completely she gives Alison's papers to Elsa. John feels that Elsa should burn the portfolio because she has besmirched the name of Alison, whose newly found manuscript reveals her inmost anguish at giving up the man she loved because he was married. Elsa finally persuades him to leave them for posterity.

The problems of Hollywood, both those of writers and those of actors appear first in Boy Meets Girl (1935) by Bella and Samuel Spewack. Although its authors have indulged in admitted extravagance and satirical subtleties, the impression the play leaves is of a picture taken at first hand, of analysis of characters and situations based intelligently in fact.¹ The Spewacks had been working in Hollywood for sometime previous to the appearance of Boy Meets Girl and were credited with having taken certain recorded adventures of the writing team of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur as the inspiration of their story.² They were quick to issue the customary and expected denial of this charge.³

The play opens with Susie, a waitress, collapsing in a Hollywood producer's office in the Royal Studio. When it develops that she is going to have a fatherless child, Benson and Law, a slap-happy writing team, get an option on the baby, subsequently named Happy. In order to aggravate Larry Toms, Benson and Law star Happy in his pictures. Larry Toms is a

¹ Burns Mantle. Best Plays, 1936, p. 84.

² Loc. cit.

³ Loc. cit.

conceited, self-righteous western star who is fast losing his public appeal. Of course, Happy steals the show. The only hope for Larry to get back in the limelight, according to his agent, is for Larry to get the option on the baby. This he can do by marrying Susie. Very reluctantly Larry agrees to this arrangement. In the meanwhile, however, Susie has fallen in love with an extra, Rodney Bevan. She has had only one conversation with him, but she keeps hoping he will turn up again. Realizing she must give Happy a name, she accepts Larry's offer of marriage. (Happy's father turned out to be a bigamist whose first wife appeared and shot him.) Benson and Law break the engagement up by having an extra pose as Happy's father at a grand opening where Larry and Susie were to announce their engagement. The studio, realizing that Benson and Law perpetrated the hoax, fires them. However, the extra they hired to pose as Happy's father was none other than Rodney Bevan. It turns out that he is of the British nobility and now that he has found Susie again wants to marry her. "Boy meets girl--boy loses girl--boy gets girl" is the classic cinematic formula.

Benson and Law decide to pull one last trick before they break up their team. They have a friend send a wire from London in the name of Gaumont British studio offering to buy the Royal Studio with the stipulation that an option on Happy must be included in the agreement. Before the Royal Studio realizes that the wire is phoney, they frantically try to get control of

Happy and hire Benson and Law to write his parts.

The problems of a musical family first treated in novel form by Margaret Kennedy in The Constant Nymph, appeared in dramatic form in Escape Me Never (1935) by Margaret Kennedy. Gemma Jones, origin misty, intentions hazy, history clouded, steals a uniform from a girls' school and enters the palazzo leased by the Sir Ivon McCleans in Venice. Caught, Gemma tells of her adventures as a walf, her experience as a child-mother, and the friendship of a young man named Sanger with whom she and her child are living. The McCleans are upset. Their lovely daughter Fenella is about to marry a Sanger. He turns out to be Caryl Sanger. Gemma's friend is his brother, Sebastian. The McCleans take Fenella to the Dolomites. The Sanger boys and Gemma follow. Both Sangers make love to Fenella. Gemma's baby dies. She tries to quit Sebastian. They discover that come what may, they are bound to each other.

In 1936 Edna Ferber and George Kaufman wrote Stage Door, an unexpectedly tender play recording the progress of a typical young actress from the drabness of a cheap theatrical boarding house to final success on Broadway. Here the emphasis is on realism with all the humor and pathos one might expect from the setting. The heroine refuses to be downed by hardships, disappointments, insecurity, sudden closings, and odd jobs between times. In spite of her financial straits she refuses a seven-year contract in Hollywood for she realizes this would have a deleterious effect on her acting. When her real oppor-

tunity comes at last, she is both competent and deserving. There is some satire on the former Footlights Club girl who has become a movie star and particularly of the left-wing playwright who goes both Hollywood and high hat after his first play has become a hit.

Kiss the Boys Good-bye (1938) was Clare Boothe's first comedy following her success with The Women. It was a pointed satire on the Hollywood ballyhoo concerned with the search for an actress to play Scarlett O'Hara in the screen version of Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind.

Harriet (1943) is Florence Ryerson and Colin Clement's biographical drama telling of the life and times of Harriet Beecher Stowe. It dramatizes interestingly the story of how Mrs. Stowe came to write the immortalized Uncle Tom's Cabin, and reveals, also interestingly and with acceptable authenticity, the environment and home and family conditions under which the story was written.

The authors contrast Mrs. Stowe amusingly with the other Beechers--the stern, Old Testament, pulpit-walloping preachers of hellfire and damnation, and they suggest that in her political ideas Harriet began as an escapist, turned into an appeaser, and finally found that there can be no compromise over liberty. If she shaped the events, she was also shaped by them. She thought that slavery was ugly but none of her business; she believed that for every Southern slave-holder there were 10 Northern mill owners, opposing abolition because

it would hurt their profits, and she wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin in the hope that it would bring peace--not the sword. It was only when she talked to Lincoln that she learned the true proportions of the struggle, and saw it as part of the fight for freedom to release--someday, somehow--all men, white and black, from bondage of all sorts, political and economic. The story took place from 1836 to 1862.

Miscellaneous Subjects

Various other subjects concern American women playwrights. Clare Kummer's comedy of manners, Good Gracious, Annabelle (1916) tells of the escapades of wealthy Annabelle Leigh, who has a husband somewhere and a group of her friends, mostly artists. They go out to a country estate to fill gayly and irresponsibly positions from head cook down. Two shares of stock are mixed up in the plot, and are used to make a satire upon modern psychological methods of detecting a thief.

Amelie Rives dramatized Mark Twain's story The Prince and the Pauper (1920). It begins with the adventures of Tom Canty, the beggar's son, who looks like the prince. When the prince finds Tom outside the palace gate, he invites him in. They exchange places. After adventures in the city, the prince returns to the palace in time to save young Tom from being crowned king.

Minick (1934) another comedy by Edna Ferber and George Kaufman, was fashioned from Ferber's short story Old Man Minick. It is a character sketch of an old man who comes to live with his son and daughter-in-law, to everyone's discomfort. Old Minick finally decides he has his own life to lead and happily sets out for the Old Men's Home and the more congenial companionship of his cronies.

Harvey (1944) by Mary Chase treated the subject of alcoholism in a highly entertaining fashion. The leading character is a harmless alcoholic who hobnobs with a large rabbit (Harvey) invisible to anyone but himself. Underneath the humor is a pathetic picture of a man who resorts to alcohol, because he is unable to face reality. His sister contrives to make him see a psychiatrist, but comes to realize it would be almost brutal to make him face facts. The high point of the comedy is when the psychiatrist thinks that he too can see the rabbit.

Adjustment to army life and re-adjustment after army life were discussed in the plays Over 21 (1944) by Ruth Gordon and Soldier's Wife (1944) by Rose Franken.

Ruth Gordon, a successful actress, had been recently married the summer of 1944, and was keeping house for her husband, Garson Kanin, in Washington, D. C., where he was in service. She began work on Over 21 and found the writing fun. She was surrounded by Army people and that was a help. She had the service experience of her husband to draw upon, and a troop of highly individualized friends on whom to model her

characters.

The setting is at an Army Air Force Training Command near Miami, Florida, at a court composed of thirty or forty bungalows. Polly, a clever authoress, has come to stay with her husband, Max Wharton, while he takes his training to be a Second Lieutenant. Max had been a famous editor before he had entered the service and his boss, Robert Drexel Gow, is trying desperately to get him back on the job. Max flatly refuses though he knows he is over 21--in his late thirties as a matter of fact--and will have a tough time getting through his training. Amusing situations arise out of inconvenient features of the bungalow, the arrival of the Colonel whose wife wants to meet the clever Paula Wharton and Max's struggles to pass his examinations. Finally he does graduate--in a class of 353 he graduates 271. Polly is thrilled. Then Robert Gow appears on the scene in an Army uniform of a Major. He has decided to sell the paper. Max is crushed, but Polly decides she can save the paper by being editor in Max's place. Max is being shipped to Crocker Field, Arkansas, however, and Polly can't spend the last six weeks with Max before he will be shipped overseas. Women just can't go there according to Max. But Polly, being reminded of the movie Test Pilot, decides to fly to Crocker Field and arrive there before Max's troop train.

Soldier's Wife is the story of a young wife who successfully publishes the letters she has written to her husband while he was overseas. He has been discharged because of an injury,

and his adjustment to his young son and to his wife's newly acquired fame is the main concern of the play. The couple's love for one another, not being of the shallow variety, survives the trials heaped upon them.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of the early period of the American theatre shows that few women dramatists had exceptional ability, and that most of their subject matter was inclined to place emphasis on contemporary events. The Revolution, and the patriotic ideas it inspired, the whiskey insurrection, and the war with the Mediterranean pirates were the subjects dealt with by such women playwrights as Mrs. Warren, Mrs. Rowson, and M. Finchney. Other women playwrights used foreign settings. Frances Wright used Switzerland for the background of her play Altorf, and the setting of Fanny Kem le's play, Star of Seville, was laid in Spain.

Perhaps the three most significant plays of the first half of the 1800's was Mrs. Mowatt's social comedy, Fashions, Mrs. Bateman's satire, Self, and the last of the verse plays Hypolytus by Mrs. Howe.

By the late 1800's the fashion of dramatizing novels was in full swing. The most prolific novelist thus adapted was Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett. Probably her most popular play was Little Lord Fauntleroy. Another significant trend of this period was the vogue for the detective play derived from the detective novel. Mrs. Anna Katherine Green's Leavenworth Case is a good example.

By the decade of 1900-1910 women dramatists were devoting

themselves to the romantic drama and the theatre was undergoing improvements in technique. David Belasco was establishing more realism in setting, costumes and lighting. Mrs. Peabody's The Piper, a fantasy, is worthy of mention here for its dramatic illusion.

In the World War decade Rachel Crothers was the dominant woman dramatist of America. She developed the problem play and character comedies. Also important in this period were the sentimental plays like Catherine Cushing's Pollyanna and Jean Webster's Daddy Long-Legs and the development of the bedroom farces, one of which was Twin Beds by Salisbury Field and Margaret Mayo. Near the end of this period Clare Kummer's satirical comedy Good Gracious, Annabelle was produced and also Alice Brown's folk play, Children of Earth.

The theatre of the twentieth century was gradually undergoing a change which was brought about through the new theory on staging advocated by Gordon Craig, who protested against the realism in stage craft. Another cause for change in the theatre was the development of the little theatres the most famous of which were the Provincetown Players and the Washington Square Players. They experimented with unusual plays and settings. The Washington Square Players attempted heavy realism, historical satire, poetical drama and fantasy. Alice Gerstenberg and Zoe Akins were important women contributors to Washington Square group. One of the constant and most successful playwrights of Provincetown Players was Susan Glaspell, and

Edna St. Vincent Millay served as both actress and playwright. Another important influence on the theatre was the courses offered in colleges and universities in the history of the drama and in actual playwriting. The best known course was George Pierce Baker's English 47 at Harvard. All these influences served to develop a higher type of drama in America.

As is to be expected women dramatists deal mainly with domestic problems and problems concerning parent-child relations. Rachel Crothers' Let Us Be Gay and Susan and God, Clare Boothe's The Women, Kaufman and Ferber's Dinner at Eight and Lillian Hellman's The Little Foxes were important plays dealing with marital infidelity. Important plays treating the subject of parent-child relationship were Rose Franken's Claudia and Another Language, Zoe Akins' The Old Maid, Ruth Gordon's Years Ago and Rachel Crothers' Nice People. Other family problems were dealt with in Coffee and Cowen's Family Portrait and Miss Lulu Bett by Zona Gale.

Though domestic problems are treated extensively, women dramatists in later years have gradually extended their interests from the home to problems having a wider significance. Lillian Hellman's The Children's Hour, Treadwell's Machinal, Elsa Shelley's Pick-Up Girl all treat social problems outside the home.

Susan Glaspell's Alison's House, Clare Boothe's Kiss the Boys Good-bye, Bella and Samuel Spewack's Boy Meets Girl, and

Ferber and Kaufman's The Royal Family and Stage Door all treat the problems of artists.

Serious treatment of political problems is given in The Searching Wind and The Watch on the Rhine by Lillian Hellman, and in Clare Boothe's play Margin For Error.

This trend toward a wider scope of interest by women dramatists is a reflection of modern women's broadening activities into many fields of modern life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The selection of the subject of this thesis, and the guidance and inspiration in the preparation of it, the author acknowledges to her major instructor, Miss Helen E. Elcock.

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APPENDIX

This is a list of women dramatists whose productions have reached the New York stage. The following names have been found in the Burns Mantle editions' Best Plays from 1909-1947.

1909 - 1919

- Akins, Zoe - The Magical City
 Akins, Zoe - Papa
 Austin, Mary - The Arrow Maker
 Austin, Mary - Merry Christmas, Daddy
 Bailey, Oliver D.) - Pay-day
 Meaney, Lottie M.) - Pay-day
 Bailey, Oliver D.) - A Stitch in Time
 Meaney, Lottie M.) - A Stitch in Time
 Bonner, Geraldine) - Sauce for the Goose
 Boyd, Hutcheson) - Sauce for the Goose
 Bradley, Alice - The Governor's Lady
 Bradley, Lillian Trimble - Mr. Myd's
 Bradley, Millian Trimble) - The Women on the Index
 Broadhurst, George) - The Women on the Index
 Brown, Alice - Children of Earth
 Brown, Alice - The Sugar House
 Burnett, Frances Hodgson - Racketty Packetty House
 Caldwell, Anne - The Nest Egg
 Caldwell, Anne - Pom-Pom
 Caldwell, Anne - She's a Good Fellow

- Caldwell, Anne - The Lady in Red
- Caldwell, Anne)
O'Dea, James) - Uncle Sam
- Caldwell, Anne)
McCarty, Lawrence) - The Lady of the Slipper
- Caldwell, Anne) - Chin-Chin
Burnside, R. H.)
- Caldwell, Anne) - Jack-O'-Lantern
Burnside, R. H.)
- Campbell, Mrs. Vera - The Worth of Man
- Carter, Robert Peyton)
Chopin, Anna Alice) - The Deserters
- Chester, Randolph) - Cordelia Blossom
Chester, Lillian)
- Cowl, Jane) - Lilac Time
Murfin, Jane)
- Cowl, Jane) - Daybreak
Murfin, Jane)
- Cowl, Jane) - Information, Please
Murfin, Jane)
- Crane, Elizabeth G. - The Hecken
- Crothers, Rachel - A Man's World
- Crothers, Rachel - Revenge on the Pride of Lillian Lo Mar
- Crothers, Rachel - Ourselves
- Crothers, Rachel - Young Wisdom
- Crothers, Rachel - Old Lady 31
- Crothers, Rachel - Once Upon a Time
- Crothers, Rachel - 39 East
- Crothers, Rachel - A Little Journey
- Cushing, Catherine Chisholm - The Real Thing

- Cushing, Catherine Chisholm - Widow by Proxy
- Cushing, Catherine Chisholm - Kitty Mackay
- Cushing, Catherine Chisholm - Jerry
- Cushing, Catherine Chisholm - Pollyanna
- Cushing, Catherine Chisholm - Glorianna
- Dale, Gretchen)
Estabrook, Howard) - Mrs. Avery
- Davis, Maria Thompson - The Melting of Molly
- Davis, Ruth Helen)
Klein, Charles) - The Guilty Man
- Dix, Beulah M. - Molock
- Donnelly, Dorothy)
Smith, Edgar) - Fancy Free
- Earle, Georgia)
Cannon, Fanny) - The Mark of the Beast
- Ellis, Edith - The Devil's Garden (Adapted from study by
William B. Maxwell)
- Fairfax, Marion)
Mitchell, Ruth C.) - A Modern Girl
- Ferber, Edna)
Hobart, George V.) - Our Mrs. McCheesney
- Field, Salisbury)
Mayo, Margaret) - Twin Beds
- Floxner, Anne Crawford - The Lucky Star
- Flexner, Anne Crawford - The Marriage Game
- Flexner, Anne Crawford - The Blue Pearl
- Forest, Marion de - Little Women
- Forest, Marion de - Erstwhile Susan
- Gale, Zona - Neighbors
- Gates, Eleanor - We Are Seven

Gerstenberg, Alice - Alice in Wonderland (Adaptation)

Gerstenberg, Alice - Overtones

Glaspell, Susan - A Woman's Honor

Glaspell, Susan) - Suppressed Desires
Cook, G. C.)

Glaspell, Susan - Trifles

Halsey, Forrest)
Ellis, Edith) - My Man

Hemlin, Mary)
Arless, George) - Hamilton

Hatton, Frederic and Fanny - Year of Discretion

Hatton, Frederic and Fanny - Upstairs and Down

Hatton, Frederic and Fanny - Lombardi, Ltd.

Hatton, Frederic and Fanny - The Squab Farm

Hatton, Frederic and Fanny - The Indestructible Wife

Hatton, Frederic and Fanny - The Walkoffs

Helburn, Theresa - Enter the Hero

Helburn, Theresa - Crops and Croppers

Hichens, Robert)
Anderson, Mary) - The Garden of Allah

Higgins, Harry)
Ford, Harriet) - The Dummy

Hinkley, Laura)
Ferris, Mabel) - Another Man's Shoes

Hotthoir, Beatrice de - Yum Chapah

Hurst, Fanny)
Ford, Harriet) - The Land of the Free

Ives, Alice E. - Mary's Manoeuvre

Jordon, Elizabeth - The Lady from Oklahoma

- Jordon, Kate - Mrs. Dakon
- Jordon, Kate - Secret Strings
- Kummer, Clare - A Successful Calamity (2 acts)
- Kummer, Clare - The Rescuing Angel
- Kummer, Clare - Be Calm, Camilla
- LaVerne, Lucille - Ann Boyd
- Lincoln, Florence - Barbara
- Lipman, Clara)
Shipman, Samuel) - Elevating a Husband
- Lipman, Clara)
Shipman, Samuel) - Children of Today
- Lonsdale, Frederick)
Unger, Gladys) - Betty
- McCrees, Junie - Mamma's Baby Poy
- Martin, Helen R.)
Howe, Frank, Jr.) - Tillie
- Maynard, Cora - The Watcher
- Mayo, Margaret - The Debtor
- Mayo, Margaret - Baby Mine
- Mayo, Margaret)
Selwyn, Edgar) - The Wall Street Girl
- Miller, Katherine Browning
Kanka, Allena - Just Boys
- Morton, Martha - On the Eve
- Morton, Martha - Senator Keeps House
- Morton, Martha - A Fool of Fortune
- Morton, Martha - Three of Hearts (Adapted from H. McGrath's
story, "Hearts and Masks")
- Mumford, Ethel Watts - Sick a-Red

- Mumford, Ethel Watts - Just Myself
- O'Higgins, Harvey) - Polysamy
Ford, Harriet)
- O'Higgins, Harvey) - The Dickey Bird
Ford, Harriet)
- O'Higgins, Harvey) - Mr. Lazarus
Ford, Harriet)
- Patterson, Ada) - Love's Lightning
Edison, Robert)
- Peabody, Josephine O. - The Piper
- Pearn, Violet - Hush
- Pollock, Alice Teal) - The Co-respondent
Weiman, Rita)
- Porter, Olive - The Ringmaster
- Poynter, Beulah - The Unborn
- Ramsay, Alicia - Eve's Daughter
- Richardson, Anna Steese) - The Love Leash
Bruse, Edmund)
- Rinehart, Mary Roberts) - Seven Days
Hopwood, Avery)
- Rinehart, Mary Roberts - Cheer Up (2 acts)
- Robson, May) - The Three Lights
Dazey, Charles T.)
- Sawyers, Ruth - The Awakening
- Skinner, Constance L. - Good Morning, Rosamond
- Smith, Mary Stafford) - Penny Wise
Vyner, Leslie)
- Stokes, Rose Pastor - In April
- Thompson, Charlotte - The Awakening of Helena Richie
- Thompson, Maravene - The Net
- Townsend, Margaret - The Passing of the Idle Rich

- Tully, May - Mary's Ankle
- Turnbull, Margaret - The Deadlock
- Tuper, Edith Sessions - The Road to Arcady
- Unger, Gladys - The Merry Countess
- Webster, Jean - Daddy Long-Legs
- Wellman, Rita - The Gentile Wife
- Wells, Charlotte E.)
Donnelly, Dorothy) - The Riddle Woman
- Wiggin, Kate D. - Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm
- Wiggin, Kate D. - Mother Carey's Chickens
- Wiren, Myra - Vik
- Woolf, Edgar Allan)
Mayo, Margaret) - Rock-a-Bye Baby
- Wright, Grace Latimer - Blind Alleys
- Wynne, Anna - The Courtship of Then, Now and Tomorrow
- Young, Rida Johnson - Next
- Young, Rida Johnson - The Lottery Men
- Young, Rida Johnson - The Red Petticoat
- Young, Rida Johnson - The Isle (' Dreams
- Young, Rida Johnson - Shameen Dhu
- Young, Rida Johnson - Lady Luxury
- Young, Rida Johnson - Captain Kidd, Jr.
- Young, Rida Johnson - Maytime
- Young, Rida Johnson - Little Simplicity
- Young, Rida Johnson)
Mathewson, Christy) - The Girl and the Pearl
- Young, Rida Johnson) - His Little Widow
Duncan, William Cary)

Young, Rida Johnson) - Sometime
 Prinkl, Rudolf)

1919 - 1920

Akins, Zoe - Declassée

Akins, Zoe - Footloose

Blaine, Marjorie) - The Unknown Woman
 Mack, Willard)

Butler, Rachel Barton - Mamma's Affairs

Caldwell, Anne - The Night Boat

Crothers, Rachel - He and She

Cushing, Catherine Chisholm - Lassie

Donnelly, Dorothy - Forbidden

Flexner, Anne Crawford - All Soul's Eve

Franklin, Peg - Thunder

Halsey, Forrest) - His Chinese Wife
 Beranger, Clara)

Janis, Elsie - Elsie Janis and Her Gang

Michael, Margaret) - Fifty-Fifty, Ltd.
 Lennox, William)

Olcott, Rita) - Lurmore
 Moyer, Grace)

O'Higgins, Harvey) - On the Hiring Line
 Ford, Harriet)

Peabody, Josephine Preston - The Piper

Rose, Norman S.) - Mrs. Jimmie Thompson
 Ellis, Edith)

Sabine, Lillian - The Rise of Silas Lapham

Skinner, Maud
 Goodman, Julius Eckert) - Pietro

Stanley, Martha M.) - Nighty-Night
 Matthews, Adelaide)

Trimble, Mrs. Lillian - The Wonderful Thing

1920 - 1921

Caldwell, Anne - The Sweetheart Shop (Lyrics)

Caldwell, Anne - Tip Top (Lyrics)

Crothers, Rachel - Nice People

Ellis, Edith - The White Villa

Gale, Zona - Miss Lulu Bett

Gantt, Cora Dick - The Tavern

Hatton, Frederic and Fanny - The Checkerboard

Hopwood, Avery)
 Rinehart, Mary Roberts) - Spanish Love

Kummer, Clare - Polly's Wild Cat

Kummer, Clare - Bridges

Kummer, Clare - The Choir Rehearsal

Kummer, Clare - The Robbery

Kummer, Clare - Chinese Love

McLaurin, Kate L. - When We Are Young

MacDonough, Glen)
 Caldwell, Anna) - Hitchy-Koo

Matthews, Adelaide)
 Stanley, Martha M.) - Scrambled Wives

Matthews, Adelaide)
 Nichols, Anne) - Just Married

Mayo, Margaret)
 Kennedy, Aubrey) - Seeing Things

Miller, Alice Duer)
 Milton, Robert) - The Charm School

Norman, Mrs. George }
 MacKenzie, Margaret) - The Young Visitors

Rinehart, Mary Roberts }
 Hopwood, Avery) - The Bat

Rives, Amelie - The Prince and the Pauper (Adaptation of Mark Twain)

Spears, Zelda - Lady Billy

Varesi, Gilda }
 Byrne, Dolly) - Enter Madame

Young, Rida Johnson - Little Old New York

1921 - 1922

Akins, Zoe - Daddy's Gone A-Hunting

Akins, Zoe - The Varying Shore

Chase, Marjorie }
 Walter, Eugene) - The Man's Name

Crothers, Rachel - Everyday

Fish, Horace }
 Freeman, Helen) - The Great Way

George, Gladys - The Goldfish

Glaspell, Susan - The Verge

Glaspell, Susan - Chains of Dew

Hatton, Frederic and Fannie - We Girls

Hendricks, Adeline - The Nightfall

Hurst, Fannie - Back Pay

Kumser, Clare - The Mountain-Man

McLaurin, Kate - The Six-Fifty

Meyer, Annie Nathan - The Advertising of Kate

Nichols, Anne - Love Dreams

- Nordstrom, Frances - Lady Bug
 O'Higgins, Harvey)
 Ford, Harriet) - Main Street
 O'Ryan, Anne Wynne)
 Woodruff, Helen S.) - Just Because
 Stanley, Martha M.)
 Matthews, Adelaide) - The Teaser
 Taylor, Lula)
 Purcell, Gertrude) - Voltaire
 Unger, Gladys - The Fair Circassian
 Wiborg, Mary Hoyt - Taboo
 Woodward, Ruth M. - The Red Geranium

1922 - 1923

- Akins, Zoo - The Texas Nightingale
 Baker, Josephine Turck - The Apache
 Barrett, Lillian - The Dice of the Gods
 Bryant, Frances)
 Stone, William) - Adrienne
 Caldwell, Anne - The Bunch and Judy
 Clifton, Ethel - For Value Received
 Crothers, Rachel - Mary III
 Fulton, Maude - The Humming Bird
 Hurst, Fanny - Humoresque
 Kummer, Clare - Ranco
 Spears, Zelda - The Clinging Vine
 Treadwell, Sophie - Gringo
 Vollmer, Lulu - Sun-Up

1923 - 1924

Akins, Zoe - A Royal PandangoAkins, Zoe - The Moon-Flower (Adapted)Besier, Rudolph)
Eddington, May) - A Lesson in LoveBrandon, Dorothy - The OutsiderCaldwell, Anne }
Burnside, R. H.) - Stepping StonesChandler, Julia)
Luce, Alethea) - The GiftCrothers, Rachel - Expressing WillieDonnelly, Dorothy - PonyDonnelly, Dorothy (Shubert Score) Blossom TimeEmerson, John)
Loos, Anita) - The Whole Town's TalkingGale, Zona - Mr. PittCriswold, Grace)
McKean, Thomas) - The Main LineHeyward, Dorothy - Nancy AnneKummer, Clare - One KissMandel, Alice and Frank - The Lady KillerMorrison, Anne - The Wild WascottsRinehart, Mary Roberts - The Breaking PointRobson, Eleanor)
Ford, Harriet) - In the Next RoomSpears, Zelda - The Magic RingUnger, Gladys - The Business WidowVollmer, Lulu - The Shame Women

1924 - 1925

- Caldwell, Anne - The Magnolia Lady
 Cushing, Catherine Chisholm - Topsy and Eva
 Donnelly, Dorothy - (Sigmund Pomberg) The Student Prince
 Ellis, Edith - White Collars
 Kennedy, Mary)
 Hawthorne, Ruth) - Mrs. Partridge Presents
 Kummer, Clare - Anne Dear
 Lightner, Frances - Puppets
 Morgan, Agnes - The Legend of the Dance
 Purcell, Gertrude - Tangletoes
 Sidman, Alice Fleming)
 Montgomery, Victoria) - Blind Alley
 Stanley, Martha - My Son
 Treadwell, Sophie - O, Nightingale
 Upright, Blanche - The Valley of Content
 Vollmer, Lulu - The Dunce Boy
 Young, Rida Johnson - Cock O' The Roost

1925 - 1926

- Borden, Mary - Jane, Our Stranger
 Brown, Helen - Clouds
 Crothers, Rachel - A Lady's Virtue
 Cushing, Catherine Chisholm - Miscar Allan Poe
 Cushing, Catherine Chisholm - The Master of the Inn
 Horton, Kate - Harvest

Kummer, Clara - Pomeroy's Past
 McLaurin, Kate - It All Depends
 McLaurin, Kate - Caught
 Mast, Jane - Sex
 Matthews, Adelaide)
 Stanley, Martha) - Puppy Love
 Morgan, Agnes - Grand Street Follies
 Sears, Zelda - A Lucky Break
 Wightman, Marion - The Dancer
 Wood, Mrs. Henry - Mast Lynne

1926 - 1927

Akins, Zoe - First Love (Adapted)
 Akins, Zoe - The Crown Prince
 Evans, Helena Phillip - Happy Go Lucky
 Fain, Pauline - What's the Use
 Glaspell, Susan - Inheritors
 Hatton, Frederic and Fanny - Treat 'Em Rough
 Hatton, Frederic and Fanny - Lombardio, Ltd.
 Horton, Kate - Ballyhoo
 Hyman, Sarah Ellis - The Seventh Heart
 Mayo, Margaret - Baby Mine
 Unger, Gladys - Two Girls Wanted
 Vernon, Margaret - Yellow

1927 - 1928

- Abbott, George) - Coquette
 Bridges, Ann Preston)
- Akins, Zoe - The Furies
- Erandon, Dorothy - The Outsider
- Chamberlain, Ida Hoyt - Enchanted Isle
- Collins, Anne) - Bottled
 Timoney, Alice)
- Crothers, Rachel - Venus
- Donnelly, Dorothy - My Maryland
- Farmer, Virginia - Spring Song
- Hatton, Frederic and Fanny - Synthotic Sin
- Hurst, Fanny - It Is To Laugh
- Hutchinson, Harold) - Out of the Night
 Williams, Margery)
- Matthews, Adelaide) - The Wasp's Nest
 Stanley, Martha)
- Miller, Alice Duer - The Springboard
- Vollmer, Lulu - Trigger
- Watkins, Maurine - Revelry
- West, Mae - Diamond Lil

1928 - 1929

- Barnes, Margaret Ayer (Edith Wharton's Novel) Age of Innocence
- Caldwell, Anne) - Three Cheers
 Burnside, R. H.)
- Charles, Theodore) - The Jealous Moon
 Cowl, Jane)

- Clugston, Katherine - These Days
- Crothers, Rachel - Let Us Be Gay
- Dayton, Helena) - Hot Water
 Bascom, Louise)
- Franke, Caroline - Exceedingly Small
- Goodrich, Arthur) - Caponsacchi
 Palmer, Rose A.)
- Gould, Bruce) - Man's Estate
 Blackman, Beatrice)
- Granville-Barker, Helen and Harley - The Lady From Alfaqueque
- Meriwether, Susan) - Flight
 Victor, Victor)
- Mitchell, Fanny Todd - Angela (Adapted) Based on "A Royal Family" by Captain Robert Marshall
- Morgan, Agnes - Grand Street Pollies
- Morrison, Anne) - Jonesy
 Toohoy, John Peter)
- Poynter, Beulah - One Way Street
- Robinson, Thomas P.) - Be Your Age
 Bates, Esther Willard)
- Treadwell, Sophie - Machinal
- Wales, Amy) - Hockbound
 Kalleser, Michael)
- West, Mae - Pleasure Man

1929 - 1930

- Baldwin, Winnie - Divided Honors
- Barnes, Margaret Ayer) - Jenny
 Sheldon, Edward)

Darnes, Margaret Ayer) - Dishonored Lady
 Sheldon, Edward)

Baumer, Marie - Town Boy

Baumer, Marie - Penny Arcade

Carter, Louise - Bedfellows

Connell, Louise Fox) - Queen Bee
 Hawthorne, Ruth)

Fitzgerald, Edith) - Many A Slip
 Pickens, Robert)

Flint, Eva Kay) - Subway Express
 Madison, Martha)

Hatton, Fanny and Frederic - Love, Honor and Betray

Heyward, Dorothy and DuBose - Porgy

Heyward, Dorothy) - Jonica
 Hart, Moss)

Lea, Fanny Heaslip - Lolly

Miele, Elizabeth - City Hall

Murfin, Jane - Stripped

Parsons, Kate - The Commodore Marries

Shelby, Ann - Gold Braid

Stanley, Martha - Let and Sub-Let

Treadwell, Sophie - Ladies Leave

Veiller, Bayard) - Damn Your Honor
 Gardiner, Becky)

Young, Rida Johnson - Naughty Marietta

1930 - 1931

- Akins, Zoe - The Greeks Had a Word for It
- Caspary, Vera) - Blind Mice
 Lenihan, Winifred)
- Caylor, Rose - Uncle Vanya (Adapted)
- Crothers, Rachel - As Husbands Go
- Dazey, Frank Mitchell) - Sweet Stranger
 Johnson, Agnes Christine)
- Flint, Eva Kay) - The Up and Up
 Madison, Martha)
- Glaspell, Susan - Allison's House
- Hachett, Albert) - Up Pops the Devil
 Goodrich, Frances)
- Hart, Anita) - In the Best of Families
 Braddell, Maurice)
- Hart, Frances Noyes) - The Bellamy Trail
 Carstarphen, Frank E.)
- Hatton, Fanny and Frederic - His Majesty's Car
- Heyward, Dorothy) - Cincerelative
 DeJagers, Dorothy)
- Warde, Shirley) - Queen at Home
 Crosby, Vivian)
- Welty, Ruth) - With Privileges
 Hargrave, Roy)
- Wilson, Alma - Company's Coming

1931 - 1932

- Anderson, Doris) - Gold in Sables
 Jackson, Joseph)
- Axelson, Mary MacDougal - Life Begins

Beirne, Deborah - Park Avenue, Ltd.

Crosby, Vivian)
Wade, Shirley) - Trick for Trick
Cribble, Harry Wagstaffe)

Crothers, Rachel - Caught Yet

Ford, George)
Taylor, Ethel) - Miss Gulliver Travels

Franken, Rose - Another Language

Loos, Anita)
Emerson, John) - The Social Register

Meyer, Annie Nathan - Black Souls

Miele, Elizabeth - Did I Say No?

Murphy, Ralph)
Baxter, Lora) - The Black Tower

Roberts, Katherine - Divorce Me, Dear

Sifton, Claire and Paul - 1931

Unger, Gladys - Ladies of Creation

Vollmer, Lulu - Sentinels

West, Mae - The Constant Sister

1932 - 1933

Ball, Jessica - Strange Gods

Beatty, Bessie)
Black, Jack) - Jamboree

Crothers, Rachel - When Ladies Meet

Draper, Ruth - Ruth Draper (A series of character sketches)

Gallienne, Eva Le)
Friebus, Florida) - Alice In Wonderland (Adapted)

Glaspell, Susan)
Matson, Norman) - The Comic Artist

- Hinkley, Eleanor Holmes - Dear Jane
- Howell, Lois - Ridding High
- Kaufman, George S.) - Dinner at Eight
 Ferber, Edna)
- Knoblock, Edward) - Evensong
 Nichols, Beverly)
- Leary, Helen and Nolan - Belmont Varieties
- Mearson, Lyon) - Our Wife
 Day, Lillian)
- Medcraft, Russell) - Cradle Snatcher
 Mitchell, Norma)
- Munn, Margaret Crosby - The Passionate Pilgrim
- Nutter, Fileen - Humming Songs
- Porter, Rose Albert - Chrysalis
- Powell, Dawn - Big Night
- Riley, Edna and Edward - Before Morning
- Sands, Dorothy - Dorothy Sands (Lectures on styles in acting)
- Skinner, Cornelia Otis - Cornelia Otis Skinner (Character
 Sketches)
- Spowack, Bella and Samuel - Clear All Wires
- Treadwell, Sophie - Lone Valley
- Unger, Gladys - Nona
- Unger, Gladys) - \$25 an Hour
 Georgie, Leyla)
- Washburne, John) - They All Come to Moscow
 Kennell, Ruth)
- Wiernik, Bertha - Destruction

1933 - 1934

- Bushnell, Adelyn - I, Myself
- Chapin, Anne Morrison - No Questions Asked
- Dix, Beulah Marie) - Ragged Army
 Millhauser, Bertram)
- Flint, Eva Kaye) - Under Glass
 Bradshaw, George)
- Hurlbut, Gladys) - By Your Leave
 Wells, Emma)
- Johns, Florence) - American - Very Early
 Lackaye, Wilton)
- Keeler, Eloise - Wrong Number
- Kerr, Sophie) - Big Hearted Herbert
 Richardson, Anna Steese)
- Kummer, Clare - Amourette
- Kummer, Clare - Her Master's Voice
- Kummer, Clare - A Successful Calamity
- McFadden, Elizabeth - Double Door
- Massingham, Dorothy) - The Lake
 MacDonald, Murray)
- Metcalf, Felicia - Come Easy
- Morando, Estelle - Shady Lady
- Perelman, Laura and S. J. - All Good Americans
- Powell, Dawn - Jigsaw
- Skinner, Cornelia Otis - The Loves of Charles II
- Walker, Laura - Doctor Monica (Adapted from the Polish)
- Waters, Marianne Brown - The Blue Widow

1934 - 1935

- Akins, Zoe - The Old Maid
 Baumer, Marie - Creeping Fire
 Bennett, Dorothy) - Fly Away Home
 White, Irving)
 Emerson, Geraldine - But Not For Love
 Heilbron, Adelaide - Something Gay
 Hellman, Lillian - The Children's Hour
 Kennedy, Margaret - Escape Me Never
 Leach, Margaret) - Divided By Three
 Kaufman, Beatrice)
 Madison, Martha - The Night Remembers
 Skinner, Cornelia Otis - Mansion on the Hudson
 Smith, Sarah B.) - Piper Paid
 Brothers, Viola)
 Spewack, Belle and Samuel - Spring Song

1935 - 1936

- Akins, Zoe - O Evening Star
 Brokaw, Clare Boothe - Abide With Me
 Dayton, Katharine) - First Lady
 Kaufman, George S.)
 Harris, Mildred) - Co-Respondent Unknown
 Goldman, Harold)
 Heathfield, Mary - The Ragged Edge
 Hedman, Martha) - For Valor
 House, Henry Arthur)
 Jerome, Helen - Pride and Prejudice

Kaghan, Leonora)
 Philips, Anita) - A Touch of Brimstone

Kandel, Judith - Play, Genius, Play

Lawlor, Nora - Few Are Chosers

Schauffer, Elsie - Parnell

Spewack, Bella and Samuel - Boy Meets Girl

VanRonkel, Alford)
 Nichols, Anne) - Pre-Honeymoon

Walker, Laura - Among Those Sailing

1936 - 1937

Alton, Maxine - Arrest That Woman

Baumer, Marie)
 Berkeley, Martin) - Seen But Not Heard

Boothe, Clare - The Women

Chase, Mary Coyle - Now You've Done It

Flexner, Anne Crawford - Aged 26

Hellman, Lillian - Days to Come

Kaufman, George S.)
 Ferber, Edna) - Stage Door

Nichols, Anne - Abie's Irish Rose

Sandberg, Sara - Be So Kindly

Treadwell, Sophie - Plumes in the Dust

1937 - 1938

Dayton, Katherine - Save Me the Waltz

Duffey, Vincent)
 Alexander, Irene) - The Greatest Show on Earth

Crothers, Rachel - Susan and God

Helburn, Theresa - A Hero is Born
 Kummer, Clare - Spring Thaw
 Skinner, Cornelia Otis - Edna, His Wife
 Stuart, Aimee and Philip - Love of Women
 Vollmer, Lulu - The Hill Between
 Waters, Marianne Brown - Right This Way
 Wendell, Dorothy Day - Tell Me Pretty Maiden

1938 - 1939

Armstrong, Charlotte - The Happiest Days
 Bennett, Dorothy }
 Hannah, Link } - A Woman's a Fool - To Be Clever
 Boothe, Clare - Kiss the Boys Goodbye
 Coffee, Lenore }
 Cowen, William Joyce } - Family Portrait
 Frankel, Doris - Don't Throw Glass Houses
 Hamilton, Nancy - One For the Money
 Hellman, Lillian - The Little Foxes
 Heyward, Dorothy and DuBose - Mamba's Daughter
 McCarty, Mary - Please, Mrs. Garibaldi
 Newmeyer, Sarah }
 Loomis, Clarence } - Susanna, Don't You Cry
 Spewack, Bella and Samuel - Leave It To Me
 Spewack, Bella and Samuel - Miss Swan Expects

1939 - 1940

- Boothe, Clara - Margin For Error
 Cumming, Dorothy - The Woman Brown
 Hamilton, Nancy - Two for the Show
 Hurlbut, Gladys - Ring Two
 North, Caroline)
 Blackwell, Earl) - Aries Is Rising
 Regan, Sylvia - Morning Star
 Sharp, Margery - Lady in Waiting
 Spewack, Bella and Samuel - Leave It To Me
 Thompson, Dorothy)
 Kortner, Fritz) - Another Sun
 Turney, Catherine)
 Horwin, Jerry) - My Dear Children

1940 - 1941

- Akins, Zoe - The Happy Days
 Allot, Beatrice)
 Newman, Howard) - Brooklyn Biarritz
 Chilton, Eleanor Carroll - Fledgling
 Faulkner, Virginia)
 Marcy, Everett) - All in Fun
 Franken, Rose - Claudia
 Harper, H. H. and Marguerite - Romantic Mr. Dickens
 Hellman, Lillian - Watch on the Rhine
 Henie, Sonja) - It Happens on Ice
 Wirtz, Arthur)
 Hurlbut, Gladys)
 Logan, Joshua) - Higher and Higher
 Perelman, Laura and S. J. - The Night Before Christmas

Prumba, Lucille S. - Five Alarm Waltz

Ryerson, Florence)
Clements, Colin) - Glamour Preferred

1941 - 1942

Angus, Bernadine - Pie in the Sky

Canfield, Mary Cass)
Bordin, Ethel) - Anne of England

Field, Herbert and Dorothy - Let's Face It

Helburn, Theresa - Little Dark Horse

Kaufman, George)
Ferber, Edna) - The Land Is Bright

Leighton, Isabel)
Black, Bertram) - Spring Again

Mitchell, Norma)
Harris, John) - Autumn Hill

Perkins, Grace)
Oursler, Fulton) - The Walking Gentleman

Skeekman, Arthur)
Shane, Margaret) - Mr. Big

Treadwell, Sophie - Hope for a Harvest

Wells, William K. and Eleanor - Viva O'Brien

1942 - 1943

Bell, Mary Hayley - Men in Shadows

Bentham, Josephine)
Williams, Herschel) - Janie

Coleman, Patricia - The Moon Vine

Donnelly, Dorothy - The Student Prince (music by Sigmund Romberg)

Ephron, Henry and Phoebe - Three's a Family

Fields, Herbert and Dorothy - Something for the Boys

Goodrich, Frances)
Hackett, Albert) - The Great Big Doorstep

Hurlbut, Gladys - Yankee Point

Ryerson, Florence)
Clements, Colin) - Harriet

Stevenson, Janet and Philip - Counterattack

1943 - 1944

Akins, Zoe - Mrs. January and Mrs. X

Bein, Albert and Mary - Land of Fame

Curtis, Margaret - A Highland Fling

Fields, Herbert and Dorothy - Mexican Hayride

Franken, Rose - Outrageous Fortune

Franken, Rose - Doctors Disagree

Gerstenberg, Alice - Victory Belles

Gordon, Ruth - Over 21

Hellman, Lillian - The Searching Wind

Heyward, Dorothy and DuBose - Foggy and Hess

Jamerson, Pauline)
Lawrence, Reginald) - Feathers in a Gale

Kohn, Rose Simon - Pillar to Post

Lee, Cypsy Rose - The Naked Genius

Orrs, Mary)
Denham, Reginald) - Wallflower

Prumbs, Lucille - I'll Take the High Road

Rigsby, Howard)
Heyward, Dorothy) - South Pacific

Shelley, Elsa - Pick-up Girl

1944 - 1945

Baker, Dorothy and Howard - TrioBarker, Albert }
Benton } - Memphis RoundChase, Mary - HarveyChase, Ilka - In Bed We CryChristie, Agatha - Ten Little IndiansComden, Betty }
Green, Adolph } - On the TowndeForest, Marion - Little Women (Adaptation from Louise May
Alcott's Novel)Fields, Herbert and Dorothy - Up in Central ParkFranken, Rose - Soldier's WifeGoodman, Ruth }
Goetz, Augustus } - One-Man ShowHinton, Jane - Meet a BodyKuzner, Clare - Mary Happy ReturnsLaure, Katherine - Blackfriars GuildMcFadden, Elizabeth - SignatureOrr, Mary }
Denham, Reginald } - Dark HamockOrr, Mary }
Denham, Reginald } - Round TripRoss, George }
Field, Rose } - SophieRyerson, Florence }
Cloments, Colin } - HarrietShelley, Elsa - Forbidden in the ParlorWest, Mae - Catherine Was Great

1945 - 1946

- Baumer, Marie - Little Brown Jug
 Chase, Mary - The Next Half Hour
 Comden, Betty) - Billion Dollar Baby
 Green, Adolph)
 Delmar, Vina - The Rich Full Life
 Egbert, Leslie Floyd) - A Boy Who Lived Twice
 Tubby, Gertrude Ogden)
 Fields, Herbert and Dorothy - Annie Get Your Gun
 Hamilton, Nancy - Three to Make Ready
 Kerr, Jean and Walter - The Song of Bernadette
 Mathews, Vera - Make Yourself at Home
 Shelly, Gladys - The Duchess Misbehaves
 Smith, Lillian and Esther - Strange Fruit
 Spewack, Bella and Samuel - Woman Bites Dog
 Wilder, Robert and Sally - Flamingo Road
 Wood, Maxine - On Whitman Avenue

1946 - 1947

- Bush-Fekete, L.)
 Fay, Mary Helen) - The Big Two
 Carroll, June) - If the Shoe Fits
 Duke, Robert)
 Christie, Agatha - Hidden Horizon
 Dunham, Katherine - Cal Negro
 Eunson, Dale)
 Albert, Katherine) - Loco

Faulkner, Virginia }
 Suesse, Dana } - It Takes Two

Fields, Herbert and Dorothy - Up in Central Park

Gallienne, Eva Le }
 Friebus, Florida } - Alice in Wonderland

Gellhorn, Martha)
 Cowles, Virginia) - Love Goes to Press

Gordon, Ruth - Years Ago

Hellman, Lillian - Another Part of the Forest

Lawson, Peggy - Respectfully Yours

Loos, Anita - Happy Birthday

Susann, Jacqueline }
 Cole, Beatrice } - Lovely Me

Weaver, John and Harriet - Virginia Reel