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MAXWELL ANDERSON'S UNCERTAIN POSITION IN THE AMERICAN THEATER CANON

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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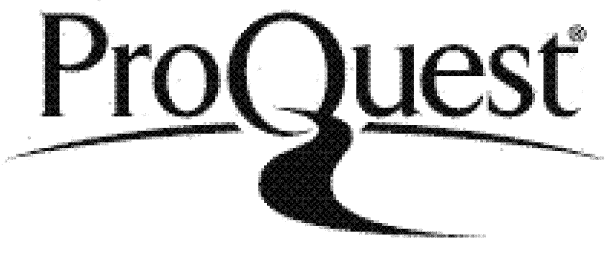

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1. The Early Years

Assessing the body of Maxwell Anderson's works is no easy task. For at times the texts he wrote were paradoxical, brilliant now and then, yet pompous and superficial on occasion. Contradictory were some of the things he went on record as having said. It is therefore difficult to come to definite conclusions about the man and his works. For often when one establishes a premise, the opposite assertion seems to apply as well.

In his youth Anderson read the English classics with a passion. A. S. Shivers says that Anderson was "above all, romantic in temperament" (1983, 10). At the University of North Dakota, he was influenced by his association with F. H. Koch, who is said to have made his students "glow with his own abundant love for Shakespeare and the other masters of thespian magic" (40). The "glow" stuck with Anderson throughout his playwriting career.

Not unlike G. H. Boker, whose verse drama *Francesca da Rimini* was first produced in 1855, revived in 1882, and staged again in 1901, Anderson tried to bring verse drama back into the theater. He was also influenced by other nineteenth century American dramatists. His *Night Over Taos* (1940g) brings to mind David Belasco's *The Rose of the Rancho*, about the American conquest of Spanish-held lands; and Anderson's melodrama *Cavalier King* (1952) which was never produced, is similar to *Charles II*, by H. Payne and Washington Irving–interestingly enough, Washington Irving appears as the narrator in Anderson's *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a).

The American theater at the turn of the century was more geared to entertainment than artistic expression. Vaudeville artists such as W. C. Fields and the Marx Brothers attracted large audiences, as did galas like the Ziegfeld Follies and musical comedies like George M. Cohan's *Johnny Jones*. Believing that Americans preferred entertainment to art, Anderson tried to incorporate the musical and slapstick aspects of these theatrical traditions into plays like *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), *High Tor* (1940c), and *Lost in the Stars* (1949a). But unlike the earlier American playwrights, Anderson strove to make his texts both entertaining and serious: *Knickerbocker Holiday* criticizes government, *High Tor* comes out against corporate greed, and *Lost in the Stars* attacks racism.

Early American theater also influenced Anderson. *Both Your Houses* (1933), which satirized the United States Congress, is similar to *Androboras*, a farce that ridiculed the New York Senate, and which may have been written by the Governor of the Province, Robert Hunter in 1719. Additionally, in *Valley Forge* (1940f) Anderson pays homage to the British players who, during the American War of Independence, staged plays theaters in Philadelphia and New York.

After obtaining a f Master's in English, Anderson became a professor at Whittier College. Later, his fondness for scholarship was reflected in his many history plays. But nowhere is his academic inclination more apparent than in his playwriting rules. His "Prelude to Dramatic Poetry," in which he explains his dramatic theory, reads like a conference paper on dramaturgy–only the footnotes are missing: "There is no instance in the theatre of a writer who left behind him a body of unappreciated work which slowly found its public as, for example, the work of Shelley and Keats found a belated public after they had left the scene" (Anderson 1935a,1).

His essays on playwriting are published in two books: *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers* (1939) and *Off Broadway: Essays About the Theater*

(1947a). However, I believe Anderson was a better playwright than dramatic theorist. His playwriting rules are not original, and, as R. J. Buchanan notes, in the plays there are "important deviations from the rules" (1970, 67); for example, there is no hero in *Winterset* (1940a). With reason, most authors criticize his playwriting theory: E. Wilson (1937), E. Foster (1942), P. J. Rice (1953), D. Gerstenberger (1963), E. M. Jackson (1973).

Anderson had been an editorial writer for the *Globe* and the *New York World* before he became a playwright. While the tendency to editorialize is particularly obvious in the journalist drama *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a), it remains apparent in many of his other plays. At times, the editorialist clashes with the poet-playwright, as can be seen in *Winterset* (1940a), where the subject of the Sacco-Vanzetti case is represented in verse.

Additionally, he was a poet who not only had poems published in nationally recognized magazines like *New Republic*, but he was also one of the founders and editors of *The Measure: A Journal of Poetry*. However, he had only one book of poems published in his lifetime: *You Who Have Dreams* (1925b). A second book of poems, *Notes on a Dream* (1971), was published posthumously.
Anderson strove to find a place in his playwriting career for the poet: his essays "Prelude to Dramatic Poetry" (1935a) and "A Prelude to Poetry in the Theater" (1939, 29) are examples of his efforts to do so.

Critical opinion with regard to his verse dramas was generally favorable prior to World War II: C. Carmer (1933), H. Hatcher (1936), J. W. Krutch (1935a, 1935b) and others were supportive. Moreover, the time seemed right to put verse back into the theater. For not only were Anderson's verse dramas popular, but W. H. Auden's *The Dance of Death* and T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* were also successful. However, by the end of the 1930s verse drama no longer appealed to audiences, and

after World War II, most of the authors were critical of Anderson's verse plays: H. E. Woodbridge (1945), M. Matlaw (1972), J. Y. Miller and W. L. Frazer (1991).

The scholar, journalist and poet were often at odds in his dramas. *Winterset* (1940a) is the best example of how the three clash in a creative work, with the result being that none of them is satisfactorily represented. As history, the drama lacks rigor; as journalism, one is not sure what the message is; and as poetry, the language leaves much to be desired, as will be seen later on, when I discuss this drama in more detail.

Anderson's need to express himself as a scholar, journalist, and poet in his plays is one of the reasons why he experimented with different styles: *Saturday's Children* (1927a) is a melodrama in prose; *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) a journalistic play; *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) a verse drama in Tudor style; *Both Your Houses* (1933) a satire; *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a) a musical comedy; *Winterset* (1940a) a Shakespearean drama on a modern subject; *High Tor* (1940c) a fantasy verse comedy on a modern subject; *Storm Operation* (1944) a war propaganda play; *Lost in the Stars* (1949a) a musical tragedy; and *Bad Seed* (1955a) is naturalistic.

As a professional he wanted his plays to be successful both economically and artistically. His desire to make a living on Broadway also influenced his writing style. He tried to write plays in such a way as to satisfy not only his dramatic, poetic, and journalistic bents, but also to earn money at the same time. As a former journalist, Anderson, kept up with the news. But he was no longer interested in writing for the newspapers. Hence, in a play like *Lost in the Stars* (1949a), he takes a serious current event, Apartheid, and with the help of Kurt Weill, puts it to music, and writes the lyrics to the songs (which is another way of writing verse); moreover, the dramatist's text is a passionate statement against injustice and racism.

2. Ideology

At this point I would like briefly to describe the playwright's ideology, which he represented in so many of his plays. Anderson's world view was linked to his conception of the individual as being pitted against the encroaching power of large governmental bodies. In the 1930s Americans had no choice but to disenthrall themselves from the gay 1920s. The Depression compelled them to demand that the government do something to alleviate the misery that wracked the nation. The New Deal palliative was accompanied by a substantial increase in governmental power. In protest, Anderson took a stand in direct opposition to what he considered to be a grave danger to individual freedom. The majority of Americans, however, were not interested in the libertarian concept of the destructive force of political power; or the anarchist creed that government is intrinsically evil; neither did they relate to Emerson's notion of individual spiritual freedom nor was Thoreau's *Walden* and *Life in the Woods* popular. The millions of homeless and unemployed people were not interested in transcendentalism. The America of Whitman and Twain, "of 'horse sense,' of 'practical men,' of 'hard-headed business men'" (W. Durrant 1961, 488), had changed.

The assumption that unscrupulous capitalists must be coddled, as Anderson wryly maintains in *Both Your Houses* (1933), is a conservative position. That Anderson was a conservative came as a surprise to many. Though he called himself "Bolshevistic" at the beginning of 1920, (L. G. Avery 1979, 13), and once claimed that he and his wife were socialists (3), and associated with the left-wing Group Theatre in the 1930s, he nevertheless came out against the New Deal, attacked the "Red Ogpu" in 1938 (1940b, 10) and eventually argued in favor of the blacklisting of former Communists in the early 1950s.

As to that, Anderson explains to his Playwrights' Company associate, J. F. Wharton, "I got inveigled into one or two Communist fronts myself, and I'm ashamed of it, and wish it hadn't happened, but it did happen" (259). Anderson felt that there was nothing in his past that he had to hide. He accepted the fact that, because he associated with Communists in the 1930s, his own was name is listed in *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television*, which was published in 1950. Furthermore, he insisted that he was not against anyone publishing the names of Communists and ex-Communists "so long as we retain free speech and a free press." Anderson did not criticize the fact that fellow playwright John Howard Lawson and others were jailed for having exercised that same right to freedom of speech.

The erstwhile anti-militarist, whose open pacifism had once "enraged the star-spangled school board" (A.S. Shivers 1983, 47) in North Dakota and later again at Whittier College–costing him his teaching post on both occasions–became a warmonger in the 1940s. Even before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Anderson urged American to prepare for war: "We have become very soft indeed as a nation," he writes, and concludes that the time has come for the country to "fight for its life" (1942b). Moreover, after World War II, the former pacifist urged his countrymen to force "a showdown of military strength with Russia before Russia's military strength has caught up with ours" (1948c); and in the following decade he asserted "The United States is facing the greatest danger and most fearful challenge in all its history" (1958). Yet, *What Price Glory* (1926a), the play that had launched his career as a dramatist, was against war; moreover, in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a) he satirized militarism, and in *Valley Forge* (1940f) he showed how little the government looks after the people doing the actual fighting.

However, the assumption that Anderson was a one-time Leftist who later became, as Clifford Odets described him, "a damned reactionary" (H. Cantor 1991, 34) is not exactly true. For reactionaries do not "illuminate the tragedy of our own negroes" (Avery 1979, 221).Nor they do admire the democracy of Thomas Jefferson (223).

Neither do they maintain a long standing relationship with socialist novelists like Upton Sinclair and Leftists like Elmer Rice.

Naturally, Leftist critics attacked his ideological shift in the 1930s. A. C. Block–whom Shivers considers to be a Marxist-social critic (1985, 88)–found the propagandistic drama *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a), about the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, "a stirring play" whose failure was due to the audience's "absence of play-consciousness" (Block 1939, 239). Apparently, the same defect made *Winterset (1940a)*–his second drama about the case–a success. *Winterset* was a critical and financial success, Block holds, because the audiences went "to the theatre in order to forget the great questions of life that we have." In her opinion, *Winterset* was "a distorted wraith of *Gods of the Lightning*." To the minds of many left-wingers, a bad play succeeded where a good play had failed.

While Leftist authors like Block spun their criticisms out of the syllogisms defined by ideology, mainstream critics like J. W. Krutch praised *Winterset* (1940a) calling the play "brilliant" (1936, 485). But Krutch would later alter his assertion, saying that the play was "tainted with mere romantic sentimentality and the end purely fortuitous" (1938, 77); elsewhere the well-known author writes that there is an "absence of any sense that one's thought or feeling is being anywhere enlarged" (1965, 293). The shift in attitude is symptomatic of a decline in Anderson's critical popularity.

3. Why Anderson Is Not Better Known Today

Anderson was granted the most prestigious awards an American playwright can receive: the Pulitzer Prize, the Drama Critics Circle Award (twice) and, like Eugene O'Neill before him, the Gold Medal from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Furthermore, he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. According to R. J. Buchanan, "In volume of work alone Anderson stands above most

of his contemporaries, and in variety both of subject matter and dramatic form he has few if any peers" (1970, 60). Yet he has practically been forgotten in the American theater. In an article entitled "Maxwell Who?" the playwright's son Alan H. Anderson, says,

> Why is Anderson not better known today, read more, studied more, and seen more often in production? Considering his prominence, critical acclaim, and popular success among theatre audiences over a period of thirty years, it seems puzzling. (1991, 171)

In my opinion, there are various reasons for this. First, the realism that Anderson eschewed in his plays dominated the American theater after World War II; second, he lost his credibility as a result of his writing war propaganda dramas; and third he took the offensive against the critics.

The realistic style of theater that the Group Theatre preferred prevailed over Anderson's conception of "Dramatic Poetry." When they rejected Anderson's play *Winterset* (1940a), the playwright and the members of the Group went their different ways. H. Clurman became an influential drama critic; E. Kazan a well known stage and film director; and L. Strasberg established a school of realistic acting that is still taught at the Actors Studio, and remains in vogue .

Anderson contradicted himself in the 1940s when he wrote war propaganda dramas. Up till then, he had been faithful to one idea in his plays. Not trusting any "centralized political mechanism," he believed in the individual, and held that "a government is always on the side of the powers that be" (Avery 1979, 15). I believe that when he reneged on this belief during World War II, he sacrificed his credibility.

Having betrayed his ideology (pacifism and anarchism), Anderson was morally bankrupt after World War II. The philosophical stance he had taken to support an art

form that led to the writing of *Winterset* (1940a) and *Key Largo* (1940b), was considerably weakened after *Storm Operation* (1944); and though he was to write a few good plays after the war–*Joan of Lorraine* (1946a), *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) and *Bad Seed* (1955a)–the moral factor, the mystique that gives an artist his charisma, had vanished.

Up till World War II, no one could deny that Maxwell Anderson was an uncompromising critic of the state. His critics might disagree with him, but morally he was able to stand up to his faultfinders. As long as he remained faithful to his ideals, the sincerity of his works was unquestionable. Had he not turned his back on his philosophy, the poet would have been able to sustain all criticism.

I think Anderson was more of a poet than a political theorist. He felt things deeply and was greatly saddened when social idealism was corrupted by politicos. In 1921, three years before his first Broadway success, Anderson was struggling to make a name for himself as a poet. As editor of *The Measure: A Journal of Poetry*, Anderson introduced the first issue saying, "I am under no compulsion to establish a policy that can be followed. Nothing is more deadly than a set philosophy" (1921, 23). I believe he was wrong: it is deadlier for a poet-playwright to turn his back on his own philosophy of life.

In my opinion, Anderson reached the height of his career in 1937 when he won his second Drama Critics Circle Award for *High Tor* (1940c), an excellent play that skillfully blends poetry, commentary, scholarship and shows his talent for pleasing audiences. After that, his plays suffered as a result of his obsession with the war. The promising poet and playwright became absorbed by the events. As a result, in the 1940s and 1950s he was overshadowed by other playwrights. His playwriting theory did not influence dramaturgy, and his use of verse in his dramas and the Shakespeareanism of his Tudor Plays and *Winterset* (1940a) had little or no effect on

later playwrights. Anderson was a skillful and versatile dramatist: he could write in prose and verse; serious dramas, comedies and musicals; and he had at least one success in each field. But none of his plays had the impact on the American theater that one drama by a far less prolific author had: *The Time of Your Life* by William Saroyan; and the works of Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller totally eclipsed Anderson's production.

The accomplishments of Williams and Miller notwithstanding, Anderson's plays are original. Though his protagonists are similar to the antihero Joe in *The Time of Your Life* and the loser Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* (both are realistically depicted), Anderson's heroes are unique because they depict abstractions. There are no heroes in his once popular Tudor plays, or his award winning *Winterset* (1940a). In each of these dramas the hero is not any one particular character on stage but rather an abstraction produced by a dyad. The protagonist is pitted against his or her opposite on stage, and the sum of both characters is the abstractional tragic hero. I believe that this dyadic association is a dramaturgic novelty. Moreover, with the exception of *Winterset*, the method contributed to the success not only financially but artistically, of the Tudor plays, *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a) and *Bad Seed* (1955a). But nowhere is the abstraction better employed than in *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a), which in my opinion is a masterpiece, and unlike most of Anderson's other plays, is still produced in the United States. But the abstraction is not always suitable. I think that *Winterset* fails as a tragedy because the abstract hero figure cannot be depicted in a play about a current event in which the characters are related in the minds of the audience to real figures in life. Anderson endeavored to reproduce the abstract hero figure by using the subject of the Sacco-Vanzetti case. That was a mistake.

I do not criticize Anderson for using the Sacco-Vanzetti case in an attempt to create an abstract hero figure. He himself admits that the play was an "experiment, an attempt to twist raw, modern reality to the shape and meaning of poetry" (Avery

1979, 295). I suspected that Anderson might have chosen the Sacco-Vanzetti issue as the background of his play for other than artistic reasons after reading O. K. Fraenkel's book *The Sacco-Vanzetti Case* (1969), which had originally been published in 1931. That there were enough potential readers to have warranted the publishing of the book at that time seems to indicate that the subject was still an issue. My suspicion is that Anderson chose the Sacco-Vanzetti case as the background subject of his play because he knew that it would attract audiences. Unlike *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a), which was forced to close after 29 performances, he wrote *Winterset* (1940a) with the box office in mind. Indeed, the background figures of Sacco and Vanzetti contributed to the success of the play. But I believe that Anderson betrayed himself as a poet as a result.

This is not to say that *Winterset* (1940a) lacks interest. The play was extremely original. Anderson's blending of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was well done. As to that, J. B. Jones (1973) mentions several of Shakespeare's tragedies that are reflected in *Winterset.* The impact of the play on critics and audiences alike was such that Anderson and his drama were highly acclaimed.

But Anderson's days of glory in the 1930s were numbered, though he strongly resisted his postwar decline in popularity. When *Truckline Cafe* (1946b) and *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a) were panned by critics, Anderson fought back and lost. I believe the playwright did himself more harm than good by coming out with diatribes against the critics, accusing them of being "tyrants" and "exhibitionists" (1948d). Elsewhere, he asserts,

> Nothing amuses readers more than a public execution, with bloody details, and the temptation to gratify the populace with such exhibitions when you have been assigned the duties of judge, jury and firing-squad must be nearly irresistible. (1947b, 2)

By resorting to using slurs Anderson diminished the force of his argument. In essence, he blacklisted himself by calling the theater critics a "Jukes Family" (1946c)–in other words, fools.

Anderson was beside himself as a result of his turnabout during World War II. As I mentioned before, *Storm Operation* (1944) took its toll on the playwright. Having betrayed his ideals, he was cut adrift from himself as it were. I believe that the psychological instability that this caused him was one of the reasons why he lashed out against his critics with such harmful immoderation.

4. Diverse Critical Opinion

In my research I have found that Anderson's works are praised and criticized in equal measure. He was identified in the minds of some authors in the 1940s as a man who acquiesced "in such social evils as 'class justice'" (L. R. Morris 1947, 197). To critics in the 1950s, Anderson was seen as an "old" face for a "new" theater: "Where is that great, new poetic theatre that we have been promised for a long time?" (J. Gassner, 1954, 682). In the 1960s he was considered "banal when not pretentious" (H. J. Muller 1968, 316); in the 1970s, his plays were judged "flawed by verbosity" (M. Matlaw 1972, 23); in the 1980s, he was seen as being too conventional: "Anderson accommodated himself to the stage" (A. S. Shivers 1983, 262); and in the 1990s it was thought that his dialogue "was often larger than life" (A. H. Anderson 1991, 172).

Yet in the same decades there were also authors that praised Anderson's works. It was held that his dramas were "in their particular way, real tragedies" (H. H. Watts 1943, 221); "exciting" (R. E. Sherwood 1955, 28); noteworthy for having "beat the West End at its own game" (G. Steiner 1961, 312); "worthy of study" (R. J. Buchanan 1970, 60); and, finally, in a book that represents the culmination of a series of events that began with the Maxwell Anderson Centennial Celebration, organized by

Rockland Community College in 1986, N. J. D. Hazelton and K. Krause assert that "there are no final answers," and conclude that there is a "need for further Anderson research" (1991, 5).

5. Work-In-Progress

I was first drawn to Maxwell Anderson when, as a student at Hollywood High School, I saw *Bad Seed* (1955a) and *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) staged. Living in Spain, I came across a copy of *Key Largo* (1940b) and was surprised to see that, unlike the film version which I had seen, the background of the play is the Spanish Civil War. Then I read his Sacco-Vanzetti plays *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) and *Winterset* (1940a). However, the latter play confused me, because I was not sure what the dramatist was trying to say in it. Fortunately, the Centro de Estudios Norteamericanos of Valencia had copies of many of his works. After reading a few more of his dramas, I realized that Anderson was neither a Communist nor a Socialist. He was no Leftist, either. But neither was he a conservative. (Conservatives do not attack the American Revolution the way Anderson does in *Valley Forge* (1940f) or write plays that sympathize with Sacco and Vanzetti.). So read what critics had to say about him.

I traveled to New York City and visited the Public Library, where I found the works of several authors as well as some of Anderson's plays that I had not yet read. The following two summers I spent in Boston, where I was able to amass a considerable amount of bibliographical material. Additionally, Dr. Juan José Coy of the English Department at the University of Salamanca provided me with other sources.

I found there was a great deal of bibliography available. A large number of Anderson's letters are published in *Dramatist in America: Letters of Maxwell Anderson, 1912-1958,* edited by L. G. Avery (1979). Avery also compiled *A*

Catalogue of the Maxwell Anderson Collection at the University of Texas (1968). Additionally, there are four biographies to date: Barret H. Clark's *Maxwell Anderson, the Man and His Plays* (1933); Mabel Driscoll Bailey's *Maxwell Anderson: The Playwright as Prophet* (1970);and Alfred S. Shivers' *Maxwell Anderson* (1976) and *The Private Life of Maxwell Anderson* (1983).

Alfred. S. Shiver's *Maxwell Anderson: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Works* (1985) was extremely helpful, as were the updated bibliographical entries in *Maxwell Anderson and the New York Stage* (N. J. D. Hazelton and K. Krauss 1991). Other bibliographical listings that I found helpful were Clarence Gohdes' *Bibliographical Guide to the Study of the Literature of the U. S. A.* (1970); and *A Field Guide to the Study of American Literature* by Harold H. Kolb, Jr. (1976).

In the Billy Rose Collection at the Linclon Center Museum of Performing Arts branch of the New York City Public Library, I found newspaper clippings about Maxwell Anderson. In an article entitled "Q. Where's Maxwell Anderson? A. Lost in the Shadow of O'Neill," published in *The New York Times*, Mervyn Rothstein asks, "What is it that has made one playwright endure and the other fall from favor? Is it simply talent or is there something else involved? (1988, 21). The author then quotes the actress Helen Hayes as saying,

> 'It's just a matter of people not noticing. They don't notice Elmer Rice, Robert Sherwood, Sidney Howard, Philip Barry, Clifford Odets. It was a renaissance of playwrights in those days. We've limited ourselves to O'Neill and Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. But there are many more. We had some good playwrights and some of them touch greatness, and Max was one of them.' (25)

I was sorry to have to admit that, in spite of having studied the American theater for several years in the United States, my knowledge of Sherwood, Howard, and Barry was slight. Moreover, though colleagues of mine at the University of Valencia were familiar with O'Neill, Miller, Williams, and Odets, few of them had ever heard of

Maxwell Anderson. They were surprised when I mentioned that he was the author of the Broadway play *Key Largo* (1940b).

I decided to find out just what that "touch of greatness" was that Helen Hayes ascribed to Anderson. I wanted to know why Anderson had practically been forgotten, if his plays were so great. At first I used an analytic approach. I gathered as much bibliographical data as I could, and after reading some more, I decided to organize the material into the following categories: the plays; the Playwrights' Company; Anderson's political views and ideology; the critics (for and against); the playwriting rules; Anderson's playwriting style; and my own impressions.

I concentrated on the fact that two related themes are repeated throughout his career as a playwright: power corrupts and large government is undesirable. I therefore concluded that he had to be an anarchist, though nowhere does he ever refer to himself as one. Anarchism best describes the ideology he espouses in three works in particular–*Both Your Houses* (1933), *Valley Forge* (1940f) and *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938A), all written in the 1930s. A fourth play, *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) offers an anarcho-syndicalist perspective of the Sacco-Vanzetti trial.

These plays made him a pariah in some liberal circles. Moreover, his anarchism ran contrary to the prevailing Leftist political canon. It seemed to me that his ideological differences with Leftist colleagues like Clifford Odets and Harold Clurman in the 1930s might have had a detrimental effect on Anderson's career in later years. Clurman, for example, rejected *Winterset* (1940a) when Anderson offered to let the Group Theatre stage the play. Then he ignored the playwright in his "The Theatre in the Thirties" (1959).

As for my second endeavor–to find out what had induced Helen Hayes to claim that Anderson touched "greatness"–I decided that the actress, who had starred in Anderson's 1941 production of *Candle in the Wind* (1941), would naturally have looked at the playwright from that perspective. The times we live in being another age, though, I concluded that the matter needed to be reconsidered. However, affirming Anderson's supposed greatness as a playwright was not as easy for me as it was for Ms. Hayes. By and large I found his plays acceptable, but not great. Undoubtedly Anderson was a craftsman at writing plays. But greatness entails far more than just skill.

By this time my research project had passed from the analytic methodological phase to the synthetic stage. I felt that I had advanced somewhat in establishing why Anderson's plays were almost forgotten. But I still had not uncovered evidence as to the playwright's "greatness."

I studied his essays in *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers* (1939) and *Off Broadway: Essays About the Theatre* (1947a) and did not find enough brilliance there to make Anderson's faded star glow again. So I turned to *Winterset* (1940a), for it was the play that accompanied the publication of Anderson's playwriting theory. I noticed the similarities between *Winterset* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and found that other authors had also observed the same resemblance over the years: G. W. Gabriel (1936), O. Ferguson (1937a, 1937b), R. C. Roby (1957), B. Hewitt (1959); M. E. Prior (1966) and H. Cantor (1991). I noticed that no one had ever made a detailed comparison of the two plays. I therefore proceeded to do so. While relating the characters and events I became interested in the abstract idea of the wraith in *Winterset*. That is to say, whereas the ghost appears in *Hamlet*, in Anderson's play it is the memory of a dead man that haunts the characters.

The hero is an essential part of Anderson's playwriting theory. Yet, in *Winterset (1940a)* there is no hero. Mio Romagna struck me as being more a victim than a hero. I noticed that Anderson's works are full of victims: Macready and Capraro in *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a); Mary in *Mary of Scotland* (1940e); Oparre in *The Wingless Victory* (1940h); Crown Prince Rudolph in *The Masque of Kings* (1940i); Joan of Arc in *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a); Anne Boleyn in *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a); Socrates in *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a); and Christine Penmark in *Bad Seed* (1955a). That Anderson places so much importance on the hero figure in his dramaturgic rules, while so few heroes are actually depicted in his plays, made we wonder whether I had a conceptual misapprehension of what the hero was. I noticed that in the above cited plays, there were always two protagonists: one a victim and the other an apparent victor. That of course, is typical of melodrama. But Anderson's protagonists are too complex for melodrama. In *Winterset*, Judge Gaunt is a well-drawn character. He is no melodramatic villain. The same can be said for Henry VIII in *Anne of the Thousand Days*, and Elizabeth in both *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) and *Mary of Scotland.* I realized then that Anderson's hero was not any of the main characters in the plays, but rather an abstraction of two: Elizabeth and Mary; Gaunt and Mio; Prince Rudolph and Emperor Franz Joseph.

Here at last was something I felt touched Anderson's plays with greatness. Rereading his works from this perspective has helped me to appreciate the dramatist more. I was also able to concur with Ms. Haye's assertion in Anderson's favor.

Briefly, with regard to the bibliography, in the primary source section I have included a chronological listing of the plays in the order in which they were written. Then the plays referred to in the section dedicated to the sources quoted in the text are listed chronologically, according to when they were published. In those cases where an earlier draft of a play was written and left aside to be rewritten or taken up again at another time, I have listed the later date. *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a) posed a particular

problem in that the first version was written in May, 1944; Anderson changed the title of the play to *A Girl from Lorraine* in February, 1945, and was still revising in April, 1946, when he changed the title back to *Joan of Lorraine*. Those unpublished plays that I mention in the text are cited in the bibliography as "U of Texas," in reference to the repository of Andersonia at the University of Texas in Austin.

Finally, in the secondary source section I have also listed the published bibliographies and the book-length critical and biological studies in chronological order. The other works quoted in the Secondary Source section are listed in alphabetical order.

CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER ONE

DRAMA IN THE UNITED STATES FROM ITS BEGINNINGS TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR

1. Theater in Colonial America

The literary dependence of America on the mother country extended from the Colonial period to the early years of the twentieth century, during which time Americans produced few original plays. If one considers the fact that in the northern provinces theater was shunned for religious reasons, it is little wonder that there were few noteworthy American playwrights until the 1920s.

The earliest known American dramatist was Thomas Godfrey. Born in Philadelphia in 1736, he was influenced by William Smith, provost of the College of Philadelphia, who encouraged dramatic performances at the school. Godfrey's play *The Prince of Parthia* was the first American work to be given a professional performance (G. Bordman 1987, 189). It showed the influence of Godfrey's study of plays by Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Dryden, Philips and Rowe. Having participated in the amateur production of masques, odes, and dialogues in the College of Philadelphia, he incorporated his knowledge of theater practice into his play, which unfortunately was not produced until after his untimely death in 1763.

Interestingly enough, the first play produced in what is today the United States was in Spanish. Written by Captain Marcos Farfán de los Godos, it was staged near El Paso in 1598. Additionally, "Los Moros y los Cristianos," a play by an anonymous author, was staged in the same year and is still produced in the Southwest.

In colonial times, there was a certain amount of risk involved in staging plays. For example, William Darby of Accomac County, Virginia, was arrested in 1665 for representing *Ye Bare and Ye Cubb*. Nevertheless, plays were produced. Satire was especially popular. *Androboros*, a farce in three acts that satirized the Senate and was published in 1719, is attributed to Robert Hunter, Governor of the Province of New York.

There being few Colonial players, British acting troupes traveled to America. William and Lewis Hallam (sons of Adam Hallam, who was a member of the Covent Garden in the 1730s) took a company to the American colonies in 1750, where some twenty-four plays were staged. In addition to several of Shakespeare's works, the group also put on plays by Congreve, Farquhar, Addison, Dryden and Gay, among other British playwrights. Though popular, the Hallams nevertheless met with staunch resistance when they tried to build a theater in New York City.

In 1759, the presence of David Douglass' acting troupe (called the American Company after The Stamp Act of 1765 had sparked bitterness against Britain) in Philadelphia prompted "petitions from Quaker, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Baptist congregations," and this "brought about the passage of a bill in the General Assembly prohibiting theatrical entertainments" (A. H. Quinn 1946, 13-14). Fortunately for both the company and Philadelphia theatergoers, the King in Council intervened, allowing the company to perform in public. In 1767, a theater was built for Douglass in New York City, near Broadway, where theater was tabooed. For as B. Hewitt notes, "The descendants of the Puritan pilgrims of the eastern colonies were deadly inimical to the drama, and to all kinds of exhibitions" (1959, 7). A. H. Quinn observes that, while New Yorkers frowned on theater in the 1770s, acting troupes like Douglass' American Company were well received in Charleston where "it was distinctly the smart thing to do to attend the theatre" (1946, 32). Furthermore, in contrast to the northern districts, Maryland and the southern provinces "were characterized by

spirited and enlightened sentiment," and "the cavaliers of Charles the 1st and 2nd" were applauded (Hewitt 1959, 7-8).

Tension between the American colonies and the mother country having worsened as a result of the Stamp Act of 1765, English acting troupes found that their productions were being increasingly boycotted. In 1766, the Sons of Liberty broke up a performance by British players at the Beekman Street Theatre in New York (28). Americans themselves were divided over the issue of independence from the British Crown: General Burgoyne's satire *The Blockade* was staged by Boston loyalists in early 1775.

During the American Revolution, the Continental Congress frowned on play production. In a gesture reminiscent of the Commonwealth era, (when from 1642 to 1664 English theaters were closed by law), Congress discouraged theatrical entertainment: Americans considered theater production and lavish entertainment to be wasteful endeavors during the war. In contrast, British officers amused themselves by staging plays in Boston, New York and Philadelphia between 1775 and 1783. In New York (which was occupied by British troops for the duration of the war), the red-coats changed the name of the John Street Theatre to the Theatre Royal in 1777; and General Howe's players put on plays at the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia during the occupation of that city.

After the war, plays continued to be staged at the Southwark Theatre. Only they had to be disguised as concerts or lectures, play production being prohibited under Pennsylvania law. However, in New York (where the Theatre Royal became the John Street Theatre once again), people did not stop going to the theater after the British withdrew from the city.

2. The American Theater after the War of Independence up to the Twentieth Century

Having won independence, the new nation was suddenly forced to reckon not only with its altered political identity but also with a new era. In *The Making of the American Theatre*, H. Taubman observes, "As the old century, which came to a stand for the age of enlightenment, was drawing to a close, an increasingly tolerant and enlightened attitude toward the theatre became manifest in the new nation" (1967, 51).

Notwithstanding the prohibition of play production in Pennsylvania in the years immediately following the war, theatricals were becoming popular in the new country. Even a city like Boston (traditionally inimical to players), could boast a theatrical season by the early 1790s. Charleston, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Baltimore and New York City all had theaters by the end of the decade.

Increasingly more Americans began talking about the theater. In "The Letters of Jonathan Oldstyle, Gent" (a series of early articles written for the New York *Morning Chronicle* in 1802-03), the essayist Washington Irving, one of the first internationally famous American authors, not only examined the contemporary theater but he also collaborated with Howard Payne on a half a dozen plays, one of which, *Charles the Second*, gained especial notoriety in the mid-1820s.

The leaders of the country took stock of the practical side of theater. Andrew Jackson, the seventh President of the United States, declared, "It is time that the principal events in the history of our country were dramatized, and exhibited at the theatres on such days as are set apart as national festivals" (72). Writers began to produce historical works. The well-known novelists Bret Harte and Mark Twain worked together on a text: their play *Ah Sin* was, in Twain's words, "intended rather for

instruction than amusement" (111). However, one of the most noteworthy American works of nineteenth century was the stage adaptation of H. B. Stowe's anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

In writing plays, American playwrights generally followed their great English counterparts. However, by mid-century increasingly more theatergoers appealed for less imitative works. Criticizing a contemporary play he had seen produced, Edgar Allen Poe noted,

> 'The day has at length arrived when men demand rationalities in place of conventionalities. It will no longer do to copy, even with absolute accuracy, the whole tone of even so ingenuous and really spirited a thing as *The School of Scandal.* It was comparatively good in its day, but it would be positively bad at the present day, and imitations of it are inadmissible at any day.' (73)

From time to time Poe also wrote theatrical criticism for the *Broadway Journal.* The growing need to insert social significance into the American theater, and to eliminate superficiality and foreign characteristics on stage, prompted Poe to write his first and only play, *Politian.*

By mid-century, New York had become the theater center of the nation. Stage production as a commercial enterprise grew rapidly. Lured by opportunity, several British players (Edmund Kean's working visit to the United States in 1820 earned him a considerable sum of money) journeyed to the United States, some of whom chose to remain. After the American Civil War, immigrants and long-term visitors began arriving in droves. Not only did unknowns try their luck in the new nation. Charles Dickens visited America and offered public readings from his own works in 1867; and the Irish born playwright Dion Boucicault, considered one of the most successful and popular playwrights of his era, spent the last twenty years of his life in New York City. One of his many plays, *The Poor of New York,* produced in 1857, was frequently staged–though often with the title *The Streets of New York.* G. Bordman notes that

after the opening of the play, Boucicault confessed, "I can spin out these rough-and-tumble dramas as a hen lays eggs. It's a degrading occupation, but more money has been made out of guano than poetry" (1987, 62). He further adds, "Sensation is what the public wants and you cannot give them too much of it". Many noted Europeans would follow in his footsteps in the subsequent years.

Prior to the Civil War, an American dramatist had already earned a name for himself both in the United States and abroad. Among the works written by Americans in the 1850s, the romantic tragedies of George Henry Boker are particularly noteworthy. *Calaynos*, his first play, was staged in London in 1849; and *Francesca da Rimini* (written in verse and based on an episode in Dante's *Inferno*) was produced on Broadway in 1855. Though the latter play ran for only eight performances, it is generally considered to be "the best written in America before the present century" (Hewitt 1959, 179). Additionally, Taubman notes,

> *Fancesca da Rimini*, like its author, is worth more than a cursory glance. While Boker's contemporaries attempted poetic diction that harked back to the great age of English drama, he was more successful with it than any nineteenth-century American writer. (1967, 99)

In the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, there was no playwright in the United States who could measure up to the works of Shaw, Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov. Nevertheless, all was not strictly vaudeville in the United States. Edward Harrington's plays and musicals were not just popular; they depicted reality, though in an entertaining way. (In *The Mulligan Guards*, he satirized contemporary militarism and in many of his other works, he represented the serious struggle of working class Americans of different races, though always in a comical fashion.)

A writer who was extremely fond of realism in the theater was David Belasco. With plays like *The Rose of the Rancho* (about the American conquest of Spanish lands), potentially explosive themes were broached with an excess of detail that bordered on obsession.

There were also American playwrights who carefully studied the contemporary European theater craftsmen. Augustine Dally's approximately one hundred plays were virtually all adaptations of foreign works; and Steele MacKaye, one of the most respected innovators in the American theater, introduced modern scene changing equipment into his theater productions after returning from a stint in Europe. MacKaye founded a school of acting–based on the naturalistic style–which eventually became the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.

However, the players more than the plays captured the better part of the American public's attention. In 1864-65, Edwin Booth played the leading role in *Hamlet* in a run that lasted a hundred performances–the longest playing engagement ever of Shakespeare's brooding tragedy; and Louisa Lane presided over some of the most important theater companies, including the Arch Theatre in Philadelphia, which influenced a generation of American players. Her name is also associated with Ethel, Lionel and John Barrymore, her grandchildren, who became theatrical legends in the early twentieth century.

3. The Early Twentieth Century

The turn of the century found Americans riding the crest of a wave of optimism, which was reflected in the theater. New playhouses were opening everywhere at such a rate that by the 1927-1928 season, there were 268 productions in New York alone–a record, never since equaled.

Americans were eager to see themselves represented on stage by native-born playwrights. "Of some twenty-six works playing at the legitimate theaters in New York during the first week of 1900, thirteen might be considered a study of American drama" (A. S. Downer 1951, 2-3). These included such native sounding titles as Clyde Fitch's *The Cowboy and the Lady* and James A. Herne's *Way Down East.* In 1903, New York City could boast that it had twenty theaters in operation: by 1927, there were three times as many. Stock companies were forming all over the country. Taubman maintains that in 1910, there were 2,000 such companies organizing road shows that traveled around the nation (1967, 126).

After the Spanish-American War, Americans discovered a new identity. Their nation was fast becoming a world power. Playwrights wrote with that in mind. David Belasco successfully adapted the Pennsylvanian John Luther Long's South Pacific romance about the love affair between an American sailor and a Japanese girl: the result, *Madam Butterfly*, was a smash hit, in large part thanks to the play's theatricality. But there were more serious plays of merit as well. William Vaughn Moody's *The Great Divide*, which criticized the constraints of Puritanism, is considered to be "one of the milestones in the history of the American theatre" (Bordman 1987, 301).

However, Americans found it difficult to blaze their own theatrical trail. "In situations and the general tendency of the action there is still little difference between the chief works of American playwrights and those of such successful English dramatists as Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones" (Downer 1951, 4). Similarly, Javier and Juan Jose Coy observe that American literature in general, "carece de la sofisticación (para emplear un término hoy de moda), que es fácil encontrar en la mayor parte de los autores europeos" (1967, 11).

Americans were not especially interested in art, amusement being more to their liking. Hence, variety show performances were the most widespread theatrical entertainment in the nation. Some of the finest American theaters, such as Martin Beck's New York's Palace, were vaudeville Meccas; and many famous American actors (the Marx Brothers, W. C. Fields, George M. Cohen, Will Rogers, to name but a few) got their starts in variety stage shows.

The musical theater has always been applauded in America. The imported works of Gilbert and Sullivan and of Offenbach were popular and often staged around the country. Johann Strauss' *Pinafore* was performed by about a hundred American companies in 1878, "including five in New York" (Taubman 1967, 142). In 1906, thirty-three musicals opened in New York City. However, the American musical comedy came into its own with the playscripts of George M. Cohan. His *Johnny Jones*–the "Yankee Doodle Boy"–brought him his first success in 1904, and one of the songs of that musical, "Give My Regards to Broadway," is still heard today. Though many critics thought his works were superficial, his popular plays were staged continuously from 1906 to 1920. Also at that time, Jerome Kern and Irving Berlin made lasting names for themselves in the American musical theater; and the glamour and opulence of Florenz Ziegfeld's "Follies" or revues (with their chorus lines of sumptuously clad women dancing on resplendent sets) were the costliest of their day. So successful were the *Ziegfeld Follies*, that when its original producer died in 1932, the Shuberts staged three more successful–if less tasteful–editions.

Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein's musical *Show Boat*, which opened in 1927, is generally considered "the first successful modern musical play with an American theme and employing American idioms" (Bordman 1987, 203). But the precedents can be found in the earlier American musical comedies and the *Ziegfeld Follies*. (In this sense, the 1919 and 1920 editions were especially noteworthy thanks to Irving Berlin's songs, the music of which was elegant and the language typically American.)

By and large, the American theater of the early twentieth century tended to ignore developments in the European theater. Antoine, Strindberg, Brahm, Grein, Stanislavsky, Reinhardt, Appia, Craig–theatrical pioneers all, who placed the cornerstone in the foundation of modern theater–were names known to but a few in America, where profit was the principal aim of play production.

Theater production in America became big business in the twentieth century as businessmen invested large sums of money in the entertainment industry. The Shubert brothers, for instance, bought several playhouses and created a theatrical enterprise that is still going strong today. But the unfortunate side of the free enterprise system that they professed was the shameless exploitation of those who depended on the theater for their livelihood. The struggle for fair wages ultimately sparked the founding of the White Rats, and later Actors Equity, which succeeded in closing down most of the shows on Broadway in August 1919. With its aim of achieving an equitable contract for actors and management alike, the strike gained considerable support from the public and, as a result, succeeded in containing the growth of the Theatrical Trust.

4. The Years Between the World Wars

Notwithstanding the debate over whether William Vaughn Moody's *The Great Divide*, which was produced in 1906, or Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon* (which premiered in 1920) was the first great American play, the fact remains that playwriting came of age in America after the First World War. The language used was more idiomatic, and the subject matter of serious drama relied less on the spectacular stagecraft of the previous decades, and more on frankness and character probing. American theatergoers demanded truth and originality, and theatrical professionals in the twenties and thirties rose to the challenge.

One cannot say with certainty that the turning point in American playwriting was George Pierce Baker's Workshop 47 at Harvard, even though some of his students–such as Eugene O'Neill, Philip Barry and S. N. Behrman–were to become well-known playwrights during the first half of the twentieth century. Neither can we conclude that modern American theater came into being in 1915, when the Provincetown Players opened a tiny theater on Cape Cod. True, the group's discovery of Eugene O'Neill might lend credence to such a view–as would also the fact that the company founded the Washington Square Players in downtown Manhattan within a year, and that its offshoot, the Theatre Guild became a pace setter for serious drama in the United States throughout the 1920s and 1930s. But then again, the Group Theatre, an offshoot of the Guild, had a lasting impact on stage acting, with Lee Strasberg's "Method", and directing: Elia Kazan directed important plays written by two of the most influential American playwrights after Eugene O'Neill: Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller.

Yet by placing too much emphasis on the successes of the Provincetown Players, the Washington Square Players, the Theatre Guild (which in addition to American plays also familiarized American audiences with forty-seven foreign works between 1919 to 1929) and the Group Theatre, one runs the risk of overlooking the other important experiences that–taken not individually but together–were absolutely instrumental in bringing about the great change in the American theater. Undertakings such as the Drama League, which published the *Drama Quarterly,* raised the level of theater consciousness in America, as did also the "Little Theatres," such as Irene and Alice Lewisohn's Neighborhood Playhouse (which between 1915 and 1927 produced plays by reputable contemporary dramatists and even popular revues like *The Grand Street Follies*); and Stuart Walker's the Portmanteau Theatre. Also influential were cooperative ventures such as the Equity Players (later called the Actors' Theatre), which produced an early work by the Communist playwright John Howard Lawson;

and other Leftist theatrical groups that included the Dramatists Theatre, the New Playwrights Company (a forerunner of the more radical Theater Union in the 1930s); the American Laboratory Theatre, founded in 1925 by Richard Boleslawski and Maria Ouspenskaya (Soviet immigrants who worked in the tradition of Konstantin Stanislavsky and the Moscow Art Players); and Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre, founded in 1926, which sought to reestablish repertory theater in the United States. Furthermore, Downer contends that in the 1920s the American theater

> was regularly surpassing in quality and seriousness those theaters that had been its mentors. During the years from 1920 to 1950 there were few playwrights abroad to contest the superiority of such Americans as O'Neill, Barry, Howard, and Sherwood in the drama of realism. (1951, 92)

Whether or not this is absolutely so is less import than the fact that the American theater had evidently made a qualitative leap forward in the early 1920s. Not only were there numerous theaters–80 playhouses on Broadway in 1926–but there were also talented playwrights (Eugene O'Neill, Elmer Rice, Maxwell Anderson; George Kelly, Philip Barry, S. N. Behrman; Sidney Howard, Paul Green, Robert E. Sherwood; George S. Kaufman, George Abbott, and Marc Connelly) who wrote quality works; and able critics (James Huneker, George Jean Nathan, Alexander Woollcott; Stark Young, Brooks Atkinson, Robert Benchley; Heywood Broun, John Mason Brown, Joseph Wood Krutch; Barrett H. Clark and George Freedley).

Both the widespread misery that followed the New York Stock Market crash in 1929 and political bifurcation contributed in large part to the attrition of the American theater by the end of the 1930s, as did also the evolution of talking pictures. Taubman notes, "Looking at the figures for Broadway productions during the thirties, one sees how the twin menaces–the depression and films–emaciated the theatre" (1967, 206).

Finally, the outbreak of World War II brought to a close a high point in the American theater. Nevertheless, many of those who made the American theater what it was in the late 1920s and, especially, in the 1930s would have considerable influence in the decades that followed.

5. The American Theater in the 1930s

Vestiges of the 1920s were carried over into the theater during the early years of the Depression. But as Ana Anton-Pacheco notes, "The mood of the times changed suddenly. ... Strikes, marches and pickets became the counterpart of the affluence that for a long time had been the marked characteristic of the American Dream" (1982, 21-22). Moreover, the immediateness of theater that, as C. W. E. Bigsby observes, "has always had the power to engage the present in a way that is less true of other genres" (1978, 332), kept many playwrights representing the gay twenties in the grim thirties. H. Clurman observes, "A good many of the writers, artists and theatre folk in the thirties were inclined to radicalism" (1959, 3).

Robert Sherwood is a good example of a playwright who was critical without being radical. He reflected the social and political problems of the country to popular acclaim., winning two Pulitzer Prizes–one in 1936 for his comedy *Idiot's Delight*, and another in 1938 for his historical play, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*.

Nonetheless, the musical was very popular in the 1930s. Memorable productions included George Gershwin's *Of Thee I Sing* (the first musical to win a Pulitzer Prize) and his Black folk opera *Porgy and Bess*; and *Once in a Lifetime* by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman, which glanced back fondly at the days of vaudeville and spoofed the age of cinema. Cole Porter, who had spent much of the 1920s in Europe, wrote the swanky musical scores for *The New Yorkers*, *Gay Divorce*, and *Anything Goes*. *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), by Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill, was

remembered for decades thanks to the catchy music and lyrics of "September Song;" and "musical comedy entered politics on the opening night of *Of Thee I Sing*, at the Music Box Theatre, on December 26, 1931" (C. Smith and G. Litton 1981, 160).

President Herbert Hoover tried to convince Americans that life would go on as usual after Black Tuesday, 29 October 1929. But by 1930 there were already four million people unemployed; the following year the number doubled; by 1932 twelve million people were out of jobs in the United States; and in 1933, the year that Franklin D. Roosevelt took the oath of office as president, there were thirteen million unemployed Americans, and a million or more homeless people living in "Hoovervilles" and shantytowns all across the nation.

Many displaced people found refuge in Leftist theater groups. Convinced that the economic system needed to be radically changed, the members of many such groups zealously produced plays with political themes. However, the fraternal, cooperative efforts of all but a few of those companies have been forgotten. the Group Theatre was the outstanding exception. As Taubman observes, "The graduates of the Group influenced the theatre into the next three and four decades" (1967, 222).

the Group Theatre, though, was not as radical as some of the other left-wing companies in New York at the time–in particular the Theatre Union and the Civic Repertory (which put on several of Bertolt Brecht's works). Thesis plays were the preferred texts of the radical Leftists–plays such as John Wexley's *The Last Mile* (about prisoners in death row) and *They Shall Not Die* (which dramatized the Scottsboro boys case). Proletarian works like *Let Freedom Ring* found ample audiences.

Additionally, the Federal Theatre Project was established by an Act of Congress in 1935 under the Works Progress Administration (WPA). At its peak the Project

employed on a bare subsistence level some ten thousand theatrical professionals–half of them residing in New York–and staged about a thousand productions, mostly free of charge, around the country. The Leftist commentaries of many of the plays would eventually bring about the termination of the Project by Congressional mandate in 1939. Elmer Rice (whose play *The Adding Machine* had earned him early success in 1923, and whose Pulitzer Prize winning play *Street Scene* had established him as one of the most important playwrights of the 1920s) resigned his post as the Theatre Project director of the New York Branch after *Ethiopia*, a Living Newspaper play (e.g., documentary theater), was canceled by the State Department before opening.

Orson Welles and John Houseman headed one of the most memorable units of the Project. An all-Black *Macbeth* (there were already numerous Black theater groups in Harlem) and the staging of Marc Blitzstein's strongly Leftist opera *The Cradle Will Rock* testify to their audacity and flair. When authorities canceled the final dress rehearsal of Blitzstein's play at the Maxine Elliot Theatre, Welles and Houseman moved the entire production to the Venice Theatre. Abandoning the Federal Theatre Project, they formed the Mercury Theatre, which staged *The Cradle Will Rock* on a stage without sets. Welles went on to become a well-known film director, and Houseman remained an influential figure in the American theater for many years. Outside of the orbit of the Federal Theatre Project, Lynn Rigg's play *Green Grow the Lilacs* (which twelve years after its success on Broadway was turned into the operetta *Oklahoma!*, Rodgers and Hammerstein's first hit as a professional team, and still frequently produced) was typical of popular works in the 1930s. Like Thorton Wilder's *Our Town*, it depicted small town America in nostalgic fashion. In contrast, Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, produced in 1934, was a landmark in the American Theatre in that it broached the subject of lesbianism. *The Little Foxes*, about a ruthless well-to-do Southern family, was a huge success in 1939. Other important works in the 1930s included John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*; James Thurber and Elliot Nugent's *The Male Animal* (which showed that the Sacco-Vanzetti

case was still alive in the consciences of Americans a decade after the execution of the two immigrant anarchists); and Sidney Howard's *Yellow Jack* (a theatrical experiment in a factual account of a scientific development).

Moreover, S. N. Behrman's *Biography* and *No Time for Comedy* were American contributions to the comedy of manners; Philip Barry, whose plays in the 1920s depicted the troubles of the rich, in the 1930s was able to satisfy the not-so-rich-anymore with plays such as *Tomorrow and Tomorrow* in 1931, and *The Philadelphia Story* in 1939. Additionally, Marc Connelly's Black folk play *The Green Pastures* ran for 640 performances; and T. S. Eliot, nationalized a British subject in 1927, had his *Murder in the Cathedral* staged by the Federal Theatre Project before it was produced in Great Britain.

6. Opposing Views of the Social Drama

Prior to the Depression, there were only two theaters producing radical social dramas: the Worker's League and the New Playwrights'. Less politically divided than in the 1930s, dissenters in the 1920s were skeptical rather than dogmatic. But, as Joseph Wood Krutch remarks, after 1929 "communists began to hate wavering socialists more ardently than they hated the bourgeoisie and to demand that the author of a play should unequivocally declare his political faith" (1938, 77-78).

In the 1920s plays were not written to persuade audiences to follow a political policy. However, in the 1930s, those Leftists who held that theater was "a weapon" could not appreciate the poetic lyricism of Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset* (1940a) or Thorton Wilder's nostalgic *Our Town.*

Moreover, what was considered to be progressive (e.g., Leftist political correctness) became the self-proclaimed dominion of the Marxists in the 1930s. The talent of a

playwright like Clifford Odets notwithstanding, many "progressives" applauded *Golden Boy*, simply because the author was sympathetic with the Communist cause.

As I have already noted, in the early years of the Depression liberals, Communists and left-wingers in general saw the theater as a way of promoting social reform. M. Y. Himelstein mentions,

> The new theatre movement thus encompassed plays written from many political points of view. There were the liberal dramas, as left wing as the New Deal. There were the Marxist plays that explained the Depression problems by the philosophy of economic determinism, and liberal plays with Marxian overtones. And, finally, there were Communist dramas that not only followed the Marxian analysis of American society but also called for the violent 'transition' to a Soviet America. (1963, 4)

After 1921, the Provincetown Players–under the leadership of Robert Edmond Jones, Eugene O'Neill and Kenneth MacGowan–favored psychological drama over conventional melodrama. As H. Clurman notes, in their ensuing productions, "The standardized Puritanism typified by the old anti-vice societies became an object of scorn and ridicule" (1959, 5). Their plays remained critical in the 1930s.

The "gay" 1920s became the politicized 1930s. Few playwrights could afford to ignore the trend. J. Gassner observes, "Every young serious writer of any power–Clifford Odets, Irwin Shaw, Sidney Kingsley, Lillian Hellman, John Wexley, Albert Maltz, and William Saroyan–was directly or indirectly affected by it" (1954, 65).

Other authors have observed as much. C. A. Carpenter comments,

> Books on American drama and theatre during the thirties naturally focus on plays as instruments of social reform. Not that apolitical writers were dormant; Anderson and Wilder, for instance, made their (overblown) reputations in this period. But the distinctive form of the decade was political theatre, from sensitive family dramas of economic misfortune to 'living newspapers' rigged for anti-capitalist propaganda. (1983, 19)

The "long struggle from the bonds of limited melodrama and farce" (W. J. Meserve, 1970, 221) straddled the 1920s and 1930s alike. But for many people the word "struggle" became synonymous with "propaganda" in the latter decade. Groups such as the Theatre of Action and the Theatre Union sought to convert the masses to the Marxist cause with superficial, stereotypical plays. In essence, they substituted the revolutionary term "dialectical materialism" for the word "melodrama".

Typical of the more promising of the politicized groups was the New Playwrights Theatre, which saw the accumulation of wealth as the chief factor undermining social relations between human beings. Curiously, most of its members came from middle class backgrounds. But while Howard Lawson was a Communist Party member, John Dos Passos, was not. Moreover, Dos Passos was a well-known author before he became attached to the New Playwrights Theatre. Lawson, though, earned a name for himself with his play *Processional*, which the New Playwrights produced. There were other companies, such as the Workers' Theatre, that were more proletarian. But none of these groups ever became as widely accepted as the Theatre Guild.

Less politically dogmatic in its productions, the Theatre Guild gained the widespread respect of both liberals and left-wingers in the 1920s and 1930s. The Guild's plays differed from those of the more radical theatrical groups in that, while those of the Guild were critical of society, they nonetheless eschewed radical solutions. M. Goldstein observes,

> Expressing dismay about the quality of daily life in their time and, unlike the radical writers who had gone to Marx for the answers, admitting to doubt about the future, they were the perfect playwrights to present to an audience of relative affluence for whom the old certainties had long since been exploded. (1974, 342)

Liberals such as Robert Sherwood and S. N. Beherman contributed to the Guild's programs, as did also the Irish socialist George Bernard Shaw (who granted the company the rights to fifteen of his plays); and Communists like John Howard Lawson. At its height, the Guild was also the principal producer of Maxwell Anderson's plays.

7. The Social Drama in the 1930s: A Synthesis

An offshoot of the Theater Guild, the Group Theatre, founded in 1931, attracted sympathizers from among the radical Left. One of the most outstanding and highly regarded collectives of the 1930s, the Group was caught up in the political fervor of the decade. According to M. Y. Himelstein, within two years of the Group's inception, "the Communists had started a campaign to convert the Group into a revolutionary theatre. The deepening of the Depression aided them in their mission" (1963, 159). And he further adds, "The details of this plot were not fully revealed until 1952, when Elia Kazan testified before the House Committee on Un-American Activities" (159).

The importance of the Group Theatre cannot be denied. Group cofounder Harold Clurman is absolutely right when he asserts,

> the Group theatre was important not alone because it developed Odets from among its acting members ... but because it organized its actors as a permanent company and trained them in a common technical virtuosity which not only became emblematic for the era but which in many ways influenced the course of our theatre practice in the ensuing years. (10)

Why the Group was forced to disband in 1940, after nine years of play production, can in part be attributed to business matters: the company was always in the red. Like most collectives, it depended on volunteers and subsidies, and the generous contributions of benefactors, such as Maxwell Anderson, whose *Night Over Taos*

(1940g), was produced by the Group in 1932. Many theaters depended on volunteers and donations. Playwrights'Company cofounder Elmer Rice observes that "the Washington Square Players, the Provincetown Players, the Theatre Union and the Group Theatre" all depended "upon the willingness of their personnel to work for nothing or to accept wages far below the prevailing, or even subsistence, level" (1959, 147). Moreover, the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union staged *Pins and Needles* and other productions with union members working as actors and stagehands.

Collectivism was a social characteristic of the 1930s. Few periods in the history of the American theater have had such intense group oriented activity. Theatre Union, the Mercury Theatre, and the Group Theatre were the most famous collectives. But lesser known companies included Theatre Action, Labor Stage, Theatre Collective, Artef, and the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union. Many people found opportunities in these groups. Elia Kazan, for example, got his start as a director for Theatre Action in 1935. Additionally, the Marxist New Theatre League staged Clifford Odets' *Waiting for Lefty* and Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead.*

The Leftist theatrical experiments of people like Bertolt Brecht and Irwin Piscator in Europe influenced a great many of these American theater collectives: Agtitprop and the Living Newspaper were techniques they commonly used. Since for most of these groups, politics precluded art, social didacticism was the usual fare.

However, the more established Theatre Guild, is still considered to be "the most exciting and responsible producing organization of the 1920s and 1930s (G. Bordman 1987, 408). It produced *Roar, China* by the Soviet dramatist Tretyakov and Anderson's *Both Your Houses* (1933); not to mention John Wexley's *They Shall Not Die* and the Leftist revue, *Parade*, by Peters and Sklar. G. Rabkin observes that the fact that "the respectable Theatre Guild would produce a revue by two of the decade's foremost Marxist dramatists offers some indication of the social atmosphere of the

1930's" (1964, 39). Playwrights naturally responded in accordance with the demand. Anderson, for example, wrote *Winterset* (1940a), *High Tor* (1940c), *Key Largo* (1940b), and *Both Your Houses* (1933), and several other plays of a socially critical nature during this time. So did Anderson's partners in the Playwrights' company: Robert Sherwood, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, and Elmer Rice. As Rabkin notes,

> Indeed, in the political vicissitudes of their age, the newly committed playwrights found many common dramatic themes: social injustice (*Winterset, We the People*), anti-fascism (*Key Largo, Judgment Day*), anti-war (*There Shall Be No Night, Idiot's Delight, Second Overture*) and Americanism (*Valley Forge, Abe Lincoln in Illinois, American Landscape*). (32)

Much of the political fervor of the early 1930s diminished significantly in the latter part of the 1930s. By the end of the decade, the Leftist theater movement had all but disappeared. Clurman recalls,

> In the early forties the fervor of the thirties was gradually absorbed by the pressures of the war. Since Russia was one of our allies there was less strictly political feeling; everyone was chiefly concerned with victory and the return to peaceful prosperity. (1959, 3)

The war in Europe radically altered perspectives. However, the Popular Front had earlier lost much of its momentum when Hitler and Stalin signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Rabkin affirms that "the period from 1938 to 1941 represents a general decline in social and, in particular, left-wing drama" (1964, 33). By then, the Communist sympathizer Clifford Odets was working in Hollywood, and the former pacifist Maxwell Anderson was urging his fellow citizens to prepare for war.

Some critics question the importance of the socially significant drama produced in the 1930s. M. Y. Himelstein asserts that most of the plays performed during the decade were not social dramas at all. In his opinion, the theatrical history of the 1930s reveals that the social drama "did not, in fact, dominate the American stage. Although many

plays of social significance were produced in the Depression decade, their importance has been overstated by the friends of the new movement" (1963, 6). Rabkin also supports this view. The statistics show that "the bulk of drama produced during the decade was substantially similar to that of the periods that preceded and followed it; the common fare of Broadway has not varied considerably in forty years" (1964, 28). Additionally, R. D. Skinner notes the generally conservative nature of theater in the United States: "The theatre has changed less in ten years than most of our institutions" (1934, 19). He continues, "It is still held within tight bonds of convention, in spite of the passionate efforts of a few crusaders to endow it with new forms and to breathe into it the spirit of liberty and daring.

The next time the Federal Government would finance a theatrical production was during the Second World War. Anderson's *The Eve of St. Mark* (1942a) was staged in Britain "with a cast made up entirely of Unites States Soldiers, Wacs and Red Cross girls, and sponsored by the United States Army, with performances free to Allied servicemen" (Unsigned 1943a).

8. The Outcome of the Theater Collective Tradition

The tradition of theatrical groups did not disappear after the war. The Theatre Guild continued staging plays, including *The Iceman Cometh* by Eugene O'Neill–his first drama in twelve years–and the Playwrights' Company produced a few notable works such as Anderson's *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) and Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* But theater had to compete with a new rival: television.

In its early stages, television offered opportunities for collective endeavors. In the early 1950s several leading playwrights formed the Playwrights' Repertory Theatre of Television. These included Eugene O'Neill, Rachel Crothers, S. N. Behrman, Maxwell Anderson; John van Druten, Elmer Rice, and Paul Osborn. The dramatists'

plays were scheduled for the *Celanese Theatre* program, produced by the ABC television network and directed by Anderson's wife, Gertrude "Mab" Maynard. The premiere play was Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!*. However, the CBS television network also premiered its *Schlitz Playhouse of Stars* at the same hour. Though both programs brought plays to American living rooms from coast to coast, the Schlitz Playhouse scripts were more tailored to fit its prestigious guest stars, which included such famous names as David Niven, Helen Hayes, Margaret Sullavan, Rosalind Russell, and Ronald Reagan, among others. The Playwrights' Repertory Theatre of Television did not attract audiences as much as the Schlitz Playhouse of Stars did; and though the *Celanese Theatre* television program won the 1952 Peabody Award for plays done with "fidelity, intelligence and scrupulous regard for the intentions of the playwright" (Unsigned 1952, 88), the show could not compete with the attractions of such programs as televised boxing matches and the star studded Schlitz Playhouse. An anonymous critic reports for *Time Magazine*,

> This is particularly unfortunate because in its first year on TV, *Celanese* has put on more grownup drama than almost any of its rivals. There have been plays by Eugene O'Neill (*Ah, Wilderness!*, *Anna Christie*), Maxwell Anderson (*Winterset*, *Saturday's Children*), Elmer Rice (*Street Scene*) and Robert Sherwood (*Reunion in Vienna*, *The Petrified Forest*). (88)

Today, there is no national theater in the United States and Congress, through the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), spends little money in support of theater production. According to Robert Brustein, artistic director of the American Repertory Theatre and drama critic for *The New Republic*, the solution for the problem of financing theater in America is 'privatization,' which puts "the responsibility for artistic needs on the charitable impulses of individuals, corporations and foundations" (1995). He further asserts, "But since those who control those purse strings often dictate how their money should be spent, total 'privatization' would well affect the independence, even the survival, of artistic institutions that don't conform to funding fashions". He concludes by making the following proposal: "Transform the National

Endowment for the Arts into a genuine endowment, along the lines of a private American university".

The theater collective trend and the Federal Theatre Project, as experiences, responded to the needs of an era. But the theater in America today must address itself to an entirely different age. Nevertheless, one tradition in particular that began early this century remains: theater is still being produced in colleges and universities across the United States. Maxwell Anderson had his first experience as a playwright and actor at the University of North Dakota, and George Pierce Baker's Harvard Dramatic Club and his celebrated 47 Workshop, as well as Fredrick H. Koch's theater training courses at the University of North Dakota (and later at the University of North Carolina) all established early in the twentieth century a practice that continues to supply the American theater with highly qualified and experienced professionals.

CHAPTER TWO

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A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

Maxwell Anderson's principal contribution to the American theater was made in the prewar era, especially in the 1930s when he was considered Eugene O'Neill's rival (above all after O'Neill disappeared from the limelight in the middle of the decade). But just what the impact was, and how seriously we are to consider it today, are questions which need to be addressed anew. Anderson was a compelling playwright whose debut theatrical success, *What Price Glory* (1926a), was at the forefront of a whole new theatrical age in the United States.

His numerous successes notwithstanding, it is difficult to establish which critics completely favor Anderson and which do not, since very often those who praise him have equally critical things to say about the dramatist. Furthermore, one is hard pressed to find authors who only assess his work from a literary perspective, or who concentrate solely on the his ideology; or who analyze the productions strictly from a technical perspective. Nor can one easily separate the ideological prejudice of some authors from their assessments of the works of this polemical playwright, who reached his prime at a time when the world was politically divided: the 1930s, World War II, and the cold war.

Therefore, in order to classify the critics and their assessments in a manner that is (broadly speaking) homogeneous, I have opted to organize this critical the state of the art in three sections, representing what I feel are the major periods in Anderson's playwriting career. The extents of time I have chosen cover the prewar years, World War II, and the postwar era.

Finally, I have included in this overview a fourth section dedicated to the two plays (seen back-to-back) that Anderson wrote on the Sacco-Vanzetti case: *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) and *Winterset* (1940a). The way Anderson handles the subject so differently in both dramas is significant in that it encapsulates the playwright's philosophy–seemingly both liberal and conservative, yet anarchistic at bottom. The latter play is especially significant in that, while it treats the tragic subject with panache, it reveals the shortcomings of the dyadic association, which I will explain in Chapter Four.

1. The Early Period: Prior to World War II

a) The Plays

Maxwell Anderson wrote his first known play, *The Masque of Pedagogues* (1957a), as an undergraduate student at the University of North Dakota, where he was a charter member of the Sock and Buskin Society (a theatrical group led by Professor Frederick H. Koch, whose enthusiasm for Elizabethan drama was passed on to many of his students). This early theatrical influence would have a lasting effect on Anderson. The influence of two other professors would also remain with the playwright: Gottfried Hult instilled in him an appreciation for Greek philosophy, and Professor John M. Gillette introduced him to populist socialism. Shakespeare, Ancient Greece, and social injustice were three subjects to which Anderson returned time and again in his plays.

After receiving a Masters in English literature from Stanford University in 1914 (significantly, his thesis was entitled "Immortality in the Plays and Sonnets of

Shakespeare"), he became a High School English teacher in Palo Alto, California. At the same time, he wrote poetry.

In the fall of 1917, he was named chairman of the English Department at Whittier College, and he also had his poem "Sic Semper" published in *New Republic* (1917, 159). When the *New Republic* published two more of his poems in December, his future as both a professor of English and a practicing poet seemed bright. But he was dismissed from Whittier College because of his pacifist views. The following year he changed occupations: The *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* hired him as an editorial writer. But in the fall, he started working for *The San Francisco Chronicle*, a job which he soon would quit after being offered a post on the staff of *New Republic* in New York. (The scholar, poet and journalist would soon add "playwright" to his already long and varied résumé.)

However, he was not satisfied with this job either. In the spring of the following year, Anderson became an editorial writer for *The Globe*, where, according to L. Avery, Bruce Bliven considered him "'a philosophical anarchist' with utter pessimism about reform and reformers" (1979, xxxvii).

Still the aspiring poet, he wrote verse and essays about poetry, as his letter in defense of "One Future for American Poetry," published in *The Dial* (1919a), reveals. Moreover, in 1920 he had poems published in *New Republic* and *The Nation*, as well as essays in *The Freeman* and *The Nation*. Significantly, one of his essays was entitled "The Revolution and the Drama" (1920). In late 1920, he and eight others began the monthly poetry magazine, *The Measure*.

Anderson's editorials for *The Globe* attracted the attention of Herbert Bayard Swope, who invited him to join the editorial staff of *The New York World* in 1921. He resigned from the editorial board of *The Measure*, and dashed off *Benvenuto* (1922),

his first full-length play. That winter, he wrote his first full-length drama in verse: *White Desert* (1923), which Brock Pemberton produced, but which closed after only twelve performances. Unshaken by failure, he wrote his second verse tragedy, *Sea Wife* (1924), based on Mathew Arnold's poem "Forsaken Mermen." But it did not attract the attention of any producers; however, his next play, written in collaboration with Laurence Stalling, would. *What Price Glory* (1926a)–an antiwar play about American soldiers in World War I that became a landmark in the American theater–opened in New York on 5 September 1924. As a result of the success of the play, Anderson decided to become a full-time playwright. He had thus already given up promising careers as a teacher, a journalist, and a poet before finally settling into his chose career.

In the winter, he wrote *Outside Looking In* (1925a)–based on Jim Tully's *Beggars of Life*–which was fairly successfully produced by the Provincetown Players. His next two plays were collaborations with Stallings again: *First Flight* (1926b), which opened on 17 September, and *The Buccaneer* (1926c), which premiered on 2 October. Both plays failed commercially and critically. Undaunted by these setbacks, he wrote a French history melodrama, *Chicot the King* (1926d), which was never produced, and *Saturday's Children* (1927a), a comedy in prose that opened on 26 January 1927, that ran for 310 performances–Humphrey Bogart played the part of Rims O'Neill when the play moved to the Forrest Theatre in April. It was Anderson's own first complete success (commercially and critically). Later that winter, he wrote *Gypsy* (1927b), a melodrama in the naturalist tradition. Though the play did not "bomb," it nevertheless was not well received. His next play was a musical (his first), *Hell on Wheels* (1926e), written in collaboration with Jack Miles and Douglas Moore. But then the Sacco-Vanzetti executions compelled him to write *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a), in collaboration with Harold Hickerson. Many critics considered it a political pamphlet and panned it. The play, therefore, had a very short run.

It was during this period in his life that Anderson began working on Hollywood screenplays. He wrote the script for the film *All Quiet on the Western Front* in the winter of 1929. But he continued writing plays: *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d), a play written in verse–the first of his three Tudor dramas to be produced on Broadway–was successfully staged by the Theatre Guild in November, 1930, with the well-known husband and wife team Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in the title roles. Another play in verse, *Night Over Taos* (1940g), was unsuccessfully produced by Theatre. (Anderson was a member of the Advisory Board of Theatre at the time.)

F. D. Roosevelt's election to the office of President of the United States coincided with the opening of Anderson's successful political satire, *Both Your Houses* (1933), a spoof of Congress that the Theatre Guild produced. The play earned Anderson the Pulitzer Prize for the 1932-33 season. Having won acclaim for satirizing the government, Anderson decided to write a deeper comment on the corrupting influence of political power in general–a subject to which he would repeatedly return in his plays. In 1933, the Theatre Guild successfully staged *Mary of Scotland* (1940e), Anderson's second Tudor drama in verse.

Anderson made no secret of his distrust of governments and governmental measures such as Roosevelt's New Deal. Hence, in 1934 Anderson wrote *Valley Forge* (1940f), which the Theatre Guild produced in December. With a critical view of the Continental Congress and the American merchant class in general (and its unconventional view of General George Washington), the play was poorly received.

Soon after learning that Judge Webster Thayer (the man responsible for the executions of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti on 23 August 1927) "was just about out of his mind" (Avery 1979, 313), Anderson wrote his verse drama on a modern theme: *Winterset* (1940a). The play opened on 25 September 1935, and won Anderson the first Drama Critics' Circle Award ever presented–which encouraged

him to continue writing verse drama. *The Wingless Victory* (1940h), a verse tragedy with a critical view of New England Puritanism at the turn of the nineteenth century, was fairly successful; however, *The Masque of Kings* (1940i), also in verse, was not well-received. But *High Tor* (1940c) earned Anderson his second New York Drama Critics Circle Award (for the 1936-37 season).

Anderson's next production, *The Star-Wagon* (1937), a science fiction play, was also a hit (233 performances). It was followed by *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), with music by Kurt Weill, and was the second play produced by the newly formed Playwrights' Company, founded by Anderson, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, Elmer Rice and Robert E. Sherwood. The musical comedy–a humorous glimpse of old New Amsterdam–ran for 168 performances. Plans for another musical, *Ulysses Africanus* (1945b), with Paul Robeson in the title role, were scrapped, though.

In 1939, national attention was focused on the events taking place in Spain as the Spanish Civil War drew to a bloody close. In the summer, Anderson finished writing his verse drama, *Key Largo* (1940b)–the Prologue to which opens on a hillside near the Ebro River and criticizes the Loyalist government. Though Anderson had earlier indicated that he opposed the Fascists and supported the Spanish Loyalists, he changed his mind after Stalin intervened. The playwright was subsequently attacked by Leftists. It is interesting to note that Anderson's one-act radio play *Bastion Saint-Gervais* (1938c), which was never produced, resembles the Prologue to *Key Largo*; however, unlike *Key Largo*, in *Bastion Saint-Gervais* the four Americans defending the retreating Loyalist forces remain at their posts and are killed, while in *Key Largo*, one of them deserts.

His next play, *Journey to Jerusalem* (1940k), was about the boy Jesus of Nazareth (called of Jeshua in the drama because at that time it was illegal to mention Christ's

name in theaters in the State of New York) as a youth. The play received harsh criticism, and was subsequently forced to close after only seventeen performances.

Anderson wrote several plays in this period. Those which were never published include *Benvenuto* (1922), *White Desert* (1923), *Sea-Wife* (1924), *First Flight* (1926b); *The Buccaneer* (1926c), *Outside Looking In* (1925a), (*Chicot the King* 1926d), *Hell on Wheels* (1926e); *Gypsy* (1927b), *The Princess Renegade* (1932), *Vithymiri* (1936) and *The Bastion Saint-Gervais* (1938c).

b) The Style of the Plays

Prior to World War I, realism in Europe had lost ground to the expressionism of dramatists like Toller, Strindberg, Wedekind and Brecht. In The United States, Eugene O'Neill's early works were an attempt by an American playwright to break with the "well-made" play mold. Though expressionism had lost much of its verve by the end of the 1920s, dissatisfaction with realism in the theater continued. One critic claimed that "realism sacrifices the glory of the Word" (W. P. Eaton 1934, 523). Anderson was one playwright who agreed.

Anderson had one foot–the formative one–in the 1920s and the other in the crusading social milieu of the 1930s. The plays he wrote in the former decade–*Outside Looking In* (1925c), *What Price Glory* (1926a), *Saturday's Children* (1927a), *Gods of the Lightning* (1928)–were largely journalistic and prosaic, while the works he wrote in the following decades were of a more varied style. He was a versatile playwright, and skillfully managed several literary registers: he wrote historical plays, verse dramas, musicals, comedies, prose plays and adaptations of novels.

Anderson's skill and originality as a dramatist was evident in several plays, most notably in his political satire *Both Your Houses* (1933); his Tudor plays, especially

Anne of the Thousand Days (1948); his verse drama on a modern theme, *Winterset* (1940a); and the comic fantasy *High Tor* (1940c). The playwright's sentimental science fiction fantasy, *The Star-Wagon* (1937), was also acclaimed, running for 223 performances.

His appreciation of the classics, especially Shakespeare, affected his writing style. Moreover, like Shakespeare, Anderson was fond of interpreting history in his plays. Journalism also influenced his playwriting: he could give his texts a sense of immediacy–*What Price Glory* (1926a) and *The Bad Seed* (1955a) are examples. As E. J. R. Isaacs remarks, "An episode in the life of Queen Elizabeth becomes, to the dramatist, not the story of what happened then, but that story happening now–history relived as news" (1936, 796).

c) Simply Shakespeare

In this section I will briefly review the critics' general assessments of the Shakespearianisms in Anderson's plays. Though I will concentrate mainly on the prewar authors, in the following paragraph alone I will also mention authors from the postwar period–if only to introduce the subject to the reader in a broader way.

Anderson attempted to modernize the Elizabethan style and thereby make it more appealing to American playgoers. Many critics applauded the dramatist's efforts in this respect. H. Cantor comments that during its run on Broadway, *Winterset (1940a)* was considered an "Elizabethan East Side" drama (1991, 34). Similarly, O. Ferguson uses the term "East River Hamlet" to describe the play (1937a, 1937b); and G. W. Gabriel characterizes it as being "Shakespearean? Precisely, patently–and successfully," and he insists that even though *Winterset* is Shakespeare in shirt-sleeves," it is "not a jot incongruous because of that undress" (1936, 465); moreover,

B. Hewitt remarks that the play takes one look back "with nostalgia on the days and ways of Bill Shakespeare" (1959, 396). Finally, M. E. Prior observes, "For all its modernity of setting and theme, *Winterset* is an elaborate and original combination of Shakespearian situations" (1966, 321).[1]

Anderson clearly relied on Shakespearianisms in several of the plays he wrote in the 1930s–most notably in the first two Tudor plays, *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) and *Mary of Scotland* (1940e); and in *Winterset* (1940a), a play on a modern theme. (In Chapter 4 I will go into more detail about each of these dramas.) M. M. Colum notes, the Shakespearianisms are "deliberate" (1936, 345). The other plays he wrote that are Shakespearean, but to a lesser degree, are *Valley Forge* (1940f), *The Wingless Victory* (1940h), *High Tor* (1940c) and *Key Largo* (1940b).

There is nothing unusual about authors making literary allusions in their works. Literary cross-reference, when skillfully done, can be very effective: the Elizabethans in particular borrowed extensively from other ages. Nor was their use of ancient parallels and motifs random. The Elizabethan playgoer was expected to recognize the literary allusions and to appreciate them in the context of the play. So too did Anderson expect his audiences to identify the allusions he employed. In this respect, G. R. Kernodle notes, "The resemblance to the older plays gives breadth and universality to the modern figures" (1941, 331).

In Anderson's Tudor dramas, the Shakespearianisms were generally acceptable to critics and audiences alike. However, when the playwright chose to write a Shakespearean drama on a modern subject as controversial as the Sacco-Vanzetti case, critics were divided in their opinions. At first, those authors who were positive in their assessments of Anderson's Shakespearean modern drama *Winterset* (1940a)

[1] See Appendix 2 for a summary of the plot and a comparison of the play with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

were foremost. *The New York Times* critic B. Atkinson found it "courageous" (1935a) and "overwhelming" (1935b); the drama critic for *Theatre Arts Monthly* called it "magnificent" (G. W. Gabriel 1936); and W. R. Benet, writing for *Saturday Review of Literature*, claims he "deeply enjoyed it" (1935). Furthermore, D. Burtons holds that "the slings and arrows of good fortune" (1935) accompanied the play, which, as I have already mentioned, won the first New York Drama Critics Circle Award ever presented. J. W. Krutch–a member of the New York Drama Critics Circle at the time– writes in *The American Drama Since 1918* that he approves of Anderson's "attempt to treat some of the material of contemporary life in a manner more richly imaginative than the method of realism permits" (1965, 296). He finds it agreeable that "even the lowest of his characters is, like the characters in Shakespeare, permitted to be both a poet and a philosopher" (297). Moreover, Krutch takes issue with those who would criticize the play because "'gangsters don't speak verse,'" calling such an attitude "frivolous," and adding, "Neither do fourteen-year-old Italian girls, early Danish princes or, for that matter, any other persons whatsoever" (298).

Contrary voices were raised against the prospect of writing modern verse dramas even before *Winterset* (1940a) opened at the Martin Beck Theatre in New York on 25 September 1935. Claiming that the Elizabethan verse style is out place in modern drama, W. D. Zabel asserts, "it is one thing for an audience to attend an Elizabethan play, with its sanctions of tradition and reverence, and quite another to find the same literary process applied to the events and speech of contemporary life" (1934, 153-4).

After *Winterset* (1940a), the inappropriateness of Anderson's having used verse to write about the Sacco-Vanzetti case was mentioned by several authors. They did not agree with authors like C. V. R. Wyatt, who praised the play for "presenting a poetic theme in a gangster setting" (1937, 600). To many, representing an international *cause célèbre* "swathed in poetic disguises" (A. C. Block 1939, 240) was simply wrong. S. Young remarks that in *Winterset*, "we have only verses that are sucking a sugar-teat in

the Muses' nursery" (1935a). Similarly, E. Wilson narrates that before seeing the play he heard that *Winterset* was a "great American poetic drama on the theme of Sacco and Vanzetti," only to discover that "what I was confronted with when I got into the theatre was a belated and disembodied shadow of the productions, so unpopular in their day–universally neglected by the critics–of the old New Playwrights' Theatre in Grove Street" (1937, 193).

He further remarks,

> There were the Jews out of Em Jo Basshe's 'The Centuries,' the street scene, with its agitators and policemen, out of Dos Passos's 'Airways,' and a general influence of the open-air stages of John Howard Lawson. During the first act ... it seemed to me that the writers of the New Playwrights might have founded a school, after all, and that Mr. Anderson might have improved on his originals. (193)

In addition, "the revolutionary social content had been extracted," and in short, what remained was simply Shakespearean form, which the playwright seemed to be forcing on a modern subject. Wilson concludes that Anderson is trying to "impose an old technique which has nothing to do with his material" (194). Along similar lines, Colum notes that though Shakespearianisms have been "imposed" on the play, "its conception is very far from Shakespearean," and the result is that, for a play about the Sacco-Vanzetti case, "Anderson did not really achieve the proper form" (1936, 345).

Some authors, however, claim that the verse style is hardly detectable when spoken on stage. Remarking that it is not "the blank verse of Shakespeare's time," A. H. Quinn notes that it is a "flexible, four-stressed measure which is quite natural in its expression and which never gets between the audience and the idea" (1935b, 3).

Film versions of Anderson's Shakespearean plays were made, but the screenplay adaptations of the playscripts were written in prose. RKO/Radio released Anderson's

second Tudor play, *Mary of Scotland* in 1936, with Katherine Hepburn and Fredric March in the title roles and under the direction of John Ford. M. Vanderlain asserts, "The film does not succeed," and "a good deal of the fault can be found in the material with its lack of historical balance" (1980, 1549). In 1939, Warner Brothers released Anderson's first Tudor drama–the original playscript title was changed to *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*–starring Bette Davis and Errol Flynn.. With regard to the quality of the film, R. E. Morsberger mentions, "Despite the spectacle of *Elizabeth and Essex*, the pageantry is too often static, too often a series of tableaux" (1387). *Winterset* was released by RKO/Radio in 1936. According to R. Angel, the film version of the award winning drama "achieves no higher status than the general gangster melodrama" (1860). Similarly, O. Ferguson asserts, "What we have here is little more than a sort of Hamlet of the gangster films–without Hamlet, of course" (328, 1937a). Elsewhere, while reviewing the film, he further states, "The movie covers up some of the play's weak spots, manufactures some of its own, and places others in merciless focus," adding that "a stageful of corpses at the curtain does not necessarily make tragedy" (1937b). Also, M. Van Doren remarks that the film "bears only the most superficial resemblance to the tragedy which won prizes" (1936, 741).

The stage productions of Anderson's Shakespearean plays were successful, though the film versions, which had eliminated the Shakespearianisms, were not. However, while in the postwar period the once popular stage versions have all but been forgotten, occasionally the film versions can still be seen.

d) The Critics' Evaluation

Anderson's reputation as a dramatist became substantive when he received the 1933 Pulitzer award for his comedy *Both Your Houses* (1933). *Theatre Arts Monthly* reports that the decision was met with "far more general approval than usual" (Unsigned, 1933, 406). Furthermore, the author remarks that the award was in fact, "a

recognition not only of this one play but of years of theatre work of high standard" (405).

Anderson was at the height of his playwriting career in the 1930s. G. Seldes comments, "Since Mr. O'Neill has the Nobel Prize, Mr. Anderson must be called the second most significant of our serious playwrights," adding that after seeing *Winterset*, "I believed it was quite possible that he could easily be the first" (1937, 70).

Even prior to winning the Pulitizer Award Anderson had earned the favorable notice of critics such as R. Littel, who lamenting the overall "mediocrity" that he encountered in the theater at the end of the 1920s, remarks, "I find but one American play which I am likely to keep thinking about from time to time" (1929: 11). The play in question is Anderson's first success, *What Price Glory* (1926a). Fellow playwright R. E. Sherwood likewise admits that "the most exciting opening night I have ever seen in the theatre was that of Arthur Hopkins' production of *What Price Glory?* [*sic*] in 1924," which Sherwood calls a "wonderful play" (1955, 28).

However, rarely does an author come out completely for or against the playwright's works. G. J. Nathan hedges in his assessment of Anderson's plays: in one place he calls the playwright one of "the three outstanding American dramatists" (1936, 3)–the other two being Eugene O'Neill and S. N. Behrman. But in *The Theatre of the Moment*, a book which was originally published in 1936, he focuses on Anderson's "faults" (1970, 235).

Similarly, P. Rahv, who is generally critical of Anderson's work, concedes that of the members of the Playwrights' Company, Anderson and Behrman were "undoubtedly the most accomplished members of the group" (1940, 468); and R. D. Skinner,

comparing Anderson to other playwrights in the 1930s affirms, "He has grown more than the others in dignity and power of expression" (1934, 20).

His early Tudor plays were especially indicative of this qualitative improvement. By 1935, Anderson's accomplishments as a verse playwright were notable: *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d), *Mary of Scotland* (1940e), and *Winterset* (1940a).

However, in the latter part of the decade, Anderson's esteem among the critics was on the wane. Echoing the general disapproval of other authors, Rahv notes, "A small minority, whose opinion I share, regard him as the most overrated writer for the theatre in America" (1940, 468). Similarly, V. F. Calverton claims, "He has a little theatre mentality which has gotten by in the big theatre environment" (1937, 4). E. Wilson finds him "rather disappointing" (1937, 193); M. Eastman thinks Anderson's plays are "mushy" and "uneducated" (1937, 52); and G. J. Nathan affirms, "it still remains a matter of doubt to me if Mr. Anderson has entirely made up his own mind whether he wishes to address his plays to literary critics or to drama critics" (1970, 236).

Nevertheless, productions like *Winterset* (1940a) and *High Tor* (1940c) were both critical and financial successes. But part of their success was also due to the impressive staging. As to that, the members of the New York Drama Critics' Circle assert

> that, since the production of *Winterset* so admirably projected Mr. Anderson's conception, special appreciation must also be expressed to Guthrie McClintic, the producer and director, to Jo Mielziner, the designer, and to the members of the cast. Courage and wisdom were clearly required in both the writing and presenting of *Winterset*. (Unsigned, 1936)

Drama Critics Circle member J. W. Krutch narrates, "At 'Winterset' (Martin Beck Theater) the curtain rises on a stage of somber but breath-taking beauty," and he adds,

> During the three or four seconds which immediately succeeded the rising of the curtain, many spectators must have had time to reflect that if Maxwell Anderson's play could live up to the promise of Jo Mielziner's set it would win for itself a very high place in our dramatic literature. (1935b)

The fact that some of Anderson's plays were both visually impressive and well performed contributed in no small measure to the successes the playwright achieved on Broadway. Though critics were divided at times over the worth of Anderson's texts, they were mostly unanimous in their approval of collaborators such as Jo Mielziner for his sets, Guthrie McClintic for his directing, and Burgess Meredith for his acting.

e) The Playwriting Theory

In the mid-thirties, Anderson published various essays on playwriting. The first group of his essays was gathered and published in a single volume entitled *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers* (1939). The first essay--much of which had earlier appeared an article in *The New York Times* (1935a)–was read at a session of The Modern Language Association in 1938. In it he explains that after having "re-read Aristotle's *Poetics*"(1939, 5), he came to realize the importance of "the recognition scene as Aristotle isolated it in the tragedies of the Greeks"; and he concludes that in the modern theatre the element of discovery is "just as important as ever" (6). He further suggests that the appropriate language for tragedy is not prose, but poetry: "To me it is inescapable that prose is the language of information and poetry the language of emotion" (34); thus verse is his preferred style when writing drama. (Anderson's poet side, it seems, needed to share the spotlight with the dramatist.)

The critics, though, generally found the dramatist's theory less a matter of new and revolutionary theatrical method than a revamping of an old style. *The New York Times* critic Brooks Atkinson says that the theories in Anderson's essays "are not all fresh," though the critic feels that they do "give us a sensible impression of the breadth and range of a man who has left his mark on the theatre all over the country by obstinately holding it and himself up to high standards" (1939).

It is doubtful whether Anderson's playwriting theory as such contributed to the success of his dramas. In the 1930s, he was searching for a cognitive way in which to channel his own creative energy.

f) Verse in the Plays

Anderson believed that a society with too strong an emphasis on rationalism and scientific advancement was doomed without the aid of metaphor, fantasy and philosophy. Language, he felt, needed to suit poetic thoughts. In *The Essence of Tragedy* he writes, "I have a strong and chronic hope that the theatre of this country will outgrow the phase of journalistic social comment and reach occasionally into the upper air of poetic tragedy" (1939, 32); adding "the best prose in the world is inferior on the stage to the best poetry" (34); and seeing how "verse was once the accepted convention of the stage," the dramatist concludes that the best modern plays should likewise be written in verse. Thus it was that America's "first important dramatic poet turned from the lyricist's eclectic art to the universal canvas of plays in verse" (R. W. Sedgwick 1936a, 54).

It was not the first time a contemporary English speaking playwright had attempted to write verse drama. In the early twentieth century, the British actor, poet and playwright Stephen Phillips wrote several poetic dramas (he was compared to

Shakespeare for his *Paolo and Francesca*), which were well received. Unlike Anderson, though, Phillips died in poverty. One reason for Anderson's material success might be, as C. V. R. Wyatt suggests, that Anderson gave importance to "the modern implications that Stephen Phillips ignored" (1937, 600).

In the 1930s drama critics saluted the idea of modern verse dramas. J. W. Krutch asserts, "It is Maxwell Anderson's attempt to naturalize verse in our theatre which gives him an important position" (1938, 76). The author acknowledges that "Mr. Anderson is trying to take advantage of the fact that men may most truly reveal themselves in language better than any they have ever actually spoken" (81).

Searching for a heightened form in which to express his tragic themes, Anderson concluded that iambic meter was the best way to sustain maximum intensity and elevation in tragedy. In the following speech by Mio, the rhythmic flow sustains the intense emotion:

> But I'm not silenced! All that he knew I know,/ and I'll tell it tonight! Tonight–/tell it and scream it/ through all the streets–that Trock's a murderer!/ and he hired you for this murder!/ Your work's not done–/ and you won't live long! Do you hear?/ You're murderers, and I know who you are! (*Winterset* 1940a, 132).

Clearly Anderson's meter is uneven. But the iambs are detectable, and the speech builds effectively to an effective crescendo at the end.

However, Anderson's language style does not always suit the characters. For example, he has Mio, who is seventeen years old, speak with a grandiloquence that is hardly credible for a boy his age–as when the teenager says, "Never knew anybody else that could track me through the driven snow of Victorian literature;" and his adolescent friend Carr responds, "Now you're cribbing from some half-forgotten criticism of Ben Jonson's Roman plagiarisms" (1940a, 27).

The playwright's sought to reverse the trend of prosaic realism and bring poetry to the modern stage. But as for the effectiveness of the style, Krutch observes that "long before the final curtain went down, the audience had divided itself into two camps" (1935b).

Notwithstanding the fact that Anderson could write effective verse, when he wrote in prose the language was often, as E. Wilson points out, "close to real American speech" (1937, 194). But in the 1930s, Anderson was determined to write plays in verse. It was a goal of his that harked back to the early 1920s. As I mentioned before, after his first verse drama, *White Desert* (1923) failed, he waited a few years before giving a second verse play a try. *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) was a success in 1930, and *Mary Queen of Scotland* (1940e) even more so in 1933. Moreover, in spite of the failures of two subsequent verse dramas, *Night over Taos* (1940g) and *Valley Forge* (1940f)–both plays also on historical subjects, like the Tudor dramas–Anderson decided to venture into writing verse dramas on modern themes: *Winterset* (1940a), *High Tor* (1940c) and *Key Largo* (1940b) were innovative in this respect.

Prior to World War II, there were authors who accepted the idea of dramatic verse. C. Carmer, for example, calls *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) a "completely poetic play" (1933, 444). The author further notes, though, that Anderson evades "the issue of poetic drama by writing as if it were out of the past, taking advantage of the convention by which modern audiences give characters in costume special privilege in verse" (446). Moreover, because the Great Depression was at its peak, the author challenges the dramatist to put into a drama "all of his gift for poetic expression, all of his fine frenzy against the injustices of the world about him."

Anderson's plays were not the only verse dramas on Broadway in the 1930s. T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and W. H. Auden's *The Dance of Death* were also staged and well-received. Eliot and Auden were respected poets, and naturally their poetic dramas were compared with Anderson's. The poet and occasional playwright Archibald MacLeish asserts, "From the point of view of those interested in the reform of the existing stage, the Anderson play is much the most interesting of the three named. From the point of view of those interested in poetry and a poetic drama, it is much the least" (1935, 39).

The importance of effective commercial theater production–was not overlooked by critics. H. Hatcher observes that, so as not to lose the interest of the audience, and thereby "conforming to the demands of the practical theatre, Anderson has taken care to restrain these flights into verse within limits of verisimilitude, seldom permitting them to outrun or weigh down the action of the character" (1936, 4). The author adds, "Anderson's work is close to the great tradition of the English stage, and when it touches the level of verse, it slides pliantly in and out of a pattern recognizably similar to Marlowe's mighty line" (6).

Similarly, though in less resounding terms, E. J. R. Isaacs congratulates Anderson for "finding his way slowly back to a successful use of words in a form grown unhappily unfamiliar to the theatre, its home"; and he concludes that Anderson writes dramas that, "whether they are prose or verse" are both "poet's plays" (1936, 799) and "inherently and inescapably theatrical" (802); and V. Loggins applauds Anderson for having shown "that drama in verse, long thought impossible for this age of prose, can still be a most fluent medium" (1967, 12).

But many critics were not enthusiastic about the idea of verse on the modern stage. In an article entitled "Poetry Seeks a New Home," G. Bottomley observes that poetry is serious and that "the making of fun is no part of its business, although the modern

theatre exists mainly to do just that" (1929, 925); while, on another note, V. F. Calverton, in comparing Anderson's verse dramas with O'Neill's dramas in prose, maintains that Anderson's verse plays have "an essential esthetic dishonesty running through them" (1937, 4) as a result of the poetic convention employed.

Along similar lines, H. Gregory mentions that "to champion bad verse in the cause of poetic drama may arouse discussion if not controversy, yet however noble the cause may be, it perishes before the text sustains a second reading" (1936, 224); and Krutch wryly states, "Mr. Anderson has a facility in versification greater than is perhaps good for him and a merely romantic fancy which sometimes tempts him to put into verse scenes for which prose might do as well" (1938, 76). Similarly, V. F. Calverton criticizes Anderson's apparent concern "with turning a pretty line" or "extending a happy metaphor" (1937, 5), which Eastman asserts has "no effect upon the action" (1937, 52), and Rahv claims only serves "to call our attention to the plight of a Broadway writer who is trying to lift himself up by his bootsraps" (1940, 468). Other authors who are equally critical about Anderson's poetic style are H. Gregory (1936), K. Quinn (1937), and R. C. Healey (1940).

The fact that a few of Anderson's prose dramas are still staged in America today, while his verse plays rarely are supports the claims of those authors who criticize Anderson's dramas in verse. Anderson was apparently right when, in *The Essence of Tragedy*, he wrote that "endurance, though it may be a fallible test, is the only test of excellence" (1939, 38). Today, his early Tudor plays and *Winterset (1940a)* are practically ignored, and few people are aware that *Key Largo* (1940b) was a Broadway play before the famous film version was made.

g) Ideology in the Plays

The "Red Scare" and the Sacco-Vanzetti case notwithstanding, in the 1920s people generally found aesthetics more appealing than politics. H. Clurman notes: "It was the artistic pleasure of the twenties to deride, curse, bemoan the havoc, spiritual blindness and absurdity of America's materialistic functionalism with its concomitant acquisitiveness and worship of success" (1959, 5): But towards the end of the decade, plays became more socially critical: Lawson's *Processional* and *The International*, Anderson and Hickerson's *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) and O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* are examples.

Elmer Rice is emblematic of the Leftist leaning playwrights in the 1920s. His expressionistic play *The Adding Machine* depicted workers trapped in the daily drudge of office life and technological regimentation, and his *Street Scene* portrayed the harshness of proletarian existence in a big city tenement. Rice wrote political propaganda pieces in the 1930s until he finally joined forces with Anderson and three other well-established American playwrights to form the Playwrights' Company in 1938.

The founding of the Playwrights' Company coincided with a general decline in the number of social dramas produced on Broadway, and with the outbreak of war in Europe. Moreover, it was a sign of the times that the Company gave top priority to financial matters. As J. F. Wharton claims in his book *Life Among the Playwrights*: "Because of our outside stockholders, we were meticulous..." (1974, 94) .

That the playwrights Maxwell Anderson, Robert Emmet Sherwood, Samuel Nathaniel Behrman, Sidney Howard, and Elmer Rice (Kurt Weill later became a member of the Company) eliminated the traditional figure of the producer and stage their own plays was something unheard of till then; and few people at that time believed the

Playwrights' Company would survive. That it prospered for twenty years was in large part due to the strong mutual respect its members had for each other. Politically, they were liberals–with the exception of Anderson–and all of them participated in various liberal causes such as aiding refugees from Nazi Germany in the late 1930s.

Anderson was the only member of the group who was against big government. Till the late 1930s he held firmly to his conviction that no government or politician could act in a just manner. It was his feeling that one needed to remain skeptical about politicos. He had more faith in the fallibility of human nature than in its perfectibility. To his mind, a corrupt governmental institution was a corollary to the imperfection of human beings.

At a time when large, centralized governments were consolidating the world over, Anderson, a staunch individualist, took an unequivocal stand against the trend. While Leftists were clamoring for government to do something about the social misery that swept the country (and indeed the entire world) during the Great Depression, Anderson held the opposite view: to him politicians were opportunists and exploiters of the common man, and he used his plays as a mouthpiece for this belief.

Prior to World War II, Anderson was an acknowledged pacifist and an unacknowledged anarchist. In "Maxwell Anderson: The Last Anarchist," an article originally published in *Sewanee Review* in 1941, V. Wall discusses Anderson's anarchism. He notes that the playwright believed it was "better to have no government at all, or at least as little as possible since then and then only can one's personal freedom and dignity can be assured" (1965, 171); Wall adds that "Anderson feared and hated the servile state with as violent a fear and hatred as did G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc in the early years of the century when state socialism was being so vigorously defended by Shaw and Wells" (171).

Like well-known anarchists such as Mikhail Bakunin in the nineteenth century and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in the twentieth century, Anderson was at odds with the Marxist world view. In his essay "Yes, By the Eternal," the playwright affirms that "Marxism is an ingenious political invention which would work if the majority of men were honest and unselfish, which they are not. They may be later on. My hope is that they will be" (1939, 53).

Communists naturally criticized Anderson. But so did others. Wall, who in his essay generally defends Anderson, finds that the playwright's criticism of the New Deal was "probably the gravest flaw in Anderson's political economy" (1965, 171). Where professional dramatists like Clifford Odets supported strikes and political activities, Anderson–skeptical of political organizations–took the opposite view. However, as W. E. Taylor points out, "Maxwell Anderson offers no programs for salvation, no economics of the body and the soul, no politics for eradicating corruption" (1968, 48).

Anderson defended the values traditional American values of individualism, independence and the frontier spirit at a time when collectivism was in vogue in America. M. Y. Himelstein mentions that John Cambridge, a Marxist critic, once affirmed, "'Anderson's individualism was really anarchy'" (1963, 145). He further explains that Anderson in *Both Your Houses* (1933) "could not satisfy the Party because of the playwright's anarchistic point of view; he had failed to advocate communism as the only alternative to democracy" (1963, 225). Additionally, the author mentions that the *New Masses* reviewer of *Valley Forge* (1940f) thought Anderson's George Washington was "'a Fascist dictator,'" and the Party disliked *The Masque of Kings* (1940i) because "Rudolph's revolt was bourgeois, not Marxist Leninist" (133).

However, by the late 1930s, though, Anderson's thesis in *The Masque of Kings*–that revolution ultimately breeds more tyrants–seemed to apply to Joseph Stalin. But when

war broke out in Europe, Anderson dropped his thesis that the individual needed to be protected from the state, and became an avid statist himself.

In the 1930s Anderson never rallied the proletariat around the banners of any particular political ideology. Nonetheless, E. J. R. Isaac affirms that Anderson's plays show the dramatist to be a man "with a far vision and an active social conscience" (1936, 799).

But some authors found Anderson's political ideas inappropriate when millions of Americans were living in poverty. A. C. Block objects to "Anderson's escape from the realities of his own age" (1939, 240). Wall asserts that Marxists would never forgive Anderson's wanting to write tragedies when they "wished him to write propaganda" (1965, 166). Other authors disagreed with the playwright's faith in the nature of humankind to find a solution. Eastman, for example, claims that "to take up with a 'faith in things unseen'–and not even that, but a 'faith that men will have a faith' in things unseen–is to shirk the duty and abdicate the dignity of man's destiny" (1937, 52).

Another aspect of Anderson's writing that Leftists bridled at was the way his heroes often went down in defeat. Eastman claims that the dramatist "has no faith in intelligence," and yet it is precisely because he "is too intelligent to have faith in anything else, that Mr. Anderson offers in the name of dramatic poetry an evangelic of obscurantism and a spectacle of general surrender" (1939, 52). (As I will point out later, these Andersonian figures in fact necessarily establish the dual character as the abstract hero in his tragedies.) In response, Anderson explains, "Knowing that Mr. Eastman is a Socialist I may be pardoned for suspecting that what he really wants is a poetic theatre devoted to Marxism;" and he adds, "Though Mr. Eastman is highly scornful of any 'faith in things unseen,' surely Marxism is such a faith, for the Marxist state has never been seen, and can only be hoped for by its devotees."

Thus at a time when the widespread economic hardship demanded that something be done and quickly, Anderson, the "poet and champion" playwright who in the late 1920s and early 1930s was known for his "crusading spirit" (C. Carmer 1933, 437), opposed the New Deal because he was against incrementing governmental bureaucracy. Hence, his political shift during World War II was a serious contradiction.

2. The War Years

World War II was pivotal in Anderson's career. The playwright who would not vouchsafe to use his art as a weapon on behalf of the poor during the Great Depression, eagerly offered it to the very government he had once belittled in his works.

With Europe at war, Anderson wrote *Candle in the Wind* (1941), the first of his three full-length war plays. The drama is about an American actress in Paris who is in love with a French Resistance hero. By and large, the critics found it garish and sentimental. But when *The Eve of St. Mark* (1942a)–his second war play–opened a year later, the milieu had changed: the United States was at war, recovering from the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and preparing to go on the offensive. The play, about an American youth who is shipped overseas and dies defending a beachhead in the Pacific, was a dramatic call to arms that ran for 307 performances. (Unlike *Candle in the Wind*, which was written entirely in prose, *The Eve of St. Mark* has a smattering of verse.) But in *Storm Operation* (1944), a war propaganda play in prose that closed after 25 performances, Anderson not only stumbled but, in my opinion, fell completely.

In addition to the three war plays mentioned above, Anderson's World War II propaganda works include a short radio play entitled *The Miracle of the Danube* (1957c), about a German officer who is sentenced to die for having helped political prisoners escape; *Your Navy* (1942c), which was broadcast nationally on four radio networks, with Fredric March and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. as the narrators and music by Kurt Weill; and *Meeting in Africa* (1943), a play about Allied troops fighting in Algeria, which was also never staged and never published, though a corrected manuscript can be found at the Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austen.

In 1943, Anderson sailed to England and North Africa after having visited several military camps in the United States. *Storm Operation* (1944), about Allied troops battling Rommel's Afrika Korps, was the result of his protracted stay abroad. For all his efforts, though, the play was a resounding failure. Not only did the drama not succeed financially but it had the added stigma of having been written on assignment for the United States Department of Defense. In a letter to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, dated 1 July 1943, Anderson , the one-time pacifist, writes,

> I'm extremely grateful to you for your kindness and for stimulating suggestions concerning the play I'm planning to write. You helped me more than you will ever know, just by being the leader you are, and with the vision you have. (Avery 1979, 181)

However, in the end, the play Anderson finally wrote did not please the military authorities. For, as Avery explains, it "focused on the demoralizing effect of the war on those engaged in it" (185).

Anderson had earlier agreed to have the final version of the play approved by the military authorities before it was produced. He sent a draft to General Surles, Director of the Bureau of Public Relations in the War Department, who later told the

playwright that he had to delete certain parts, in particular a scene "in which American and English soldiers mistreated German prisoners of war" (188). Anderson, who was previously notorious for refusing to alter his texts for producers and directors, did as he was told: "His agreement with the War Department compelled him to revise the play as Surles indicated" (187). I believe that Anderson made a serious mistake when he did not refuse to rewrite *Storm Operation (1944).*

Anderson's commitment to the war effort, and his allowing his play to be censored, both constituted a disavowal of his previous works. In essence he turned his back on much of what he had formerly stood for, professionally, philosophically and artistically. The turnabout made a mockery of his plays that had been critical of war, *What Price Glory* (1926a) and *Night over Taos* (1940G); and of the dramas that criticized the United States government, *Valley Forge* (1940F) and *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938A). It disclaimed earlier positions he had held by showing that the corrupt, gangster-ridden world of *Winterset* (1940a), *High Tor* (1940c), and *Key Largo* (1940b) was really worth defending after all.

Furthermore, by allowing the United States Army to censor *Storm Operation* (1944), and agreeing to write a play under the auspices of the very government he had so criticized in the 1930s, Anderson not only betrayed himself but also the artistic independence of the Playwrights' Company. Hence, the war years mark a turning point for the worse in his career. This is not to say that Anderson did not write good plays after the war. I believe that *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) is one of his best dramas. But his turnabout contributed to his decline in the postwar years

In his critique of *The Eve of St. Mark*, J. S. Rodell explains that "In Marxist terms, the fashionable terms of adverse criticism in the recent past," it easy to criticize the play (1943, 272). In my opinion, Anderson's about-face made it even easier to do so.

Rodell comments on the weakness of the play, making sure that he includes earlier works by the playwright as well in his analysis:

> It is only when you look very carefully at *Winterset*, *Key Largo*, and *The Eve of St. Mark*, that you see how, although the material is indeed our own most pressing stuff, it begs its questions by shoving them all aside and ends by being the vacuum stuff again and again. (274)

In *Winterset* (1940a) Mio's victory in the end is his death. For his "triumph comes when he transcends reason and its powers" (H. H. Watts 1943, 227). Mio thus "transcends" when he is gunned down, while Judge Gaunt "yields" because he goes mad and Trock, the real assassin, is punished because he is to die soon of an incurable illness; similarly, in *Mary of Scotland* (1940e), though Mary is executed (her death is a noble one), Elizabeth is condemned because she must rule alone and unloved. Thus, prior to World War II Anderson's answer to social injustice was poetic justice.

However, when the United States entered the war, Anderson suddenly took a very unpoetic position. As a result, his view of the world stopped being what P. Rahv calls "at bottom genteel and academic" (1940, 468). During the Great Depression, Anderson took refuge in poetic drama. But when war broke out, he put his poetry aside and used his prosaic voice again. The pacifist and anarchist who had once claimed that verse was the appropriate language for high drama during the Depression, suddenly turned to writing war plays in prose.

Anderson's war plays have rightly been forgotten. Artistically, they cannot be compared with much of what he wrote for the theater in the 1930s. It is therefore understandable that, during the war period, authors turned their attention to his earlier plays. E. Foster wonders "how an intelligent person, with vision sharp for realities" could have gone from the "skeptical realism" of *What Price Glory* (1926a) to the "poetic affirmations" of a play like *Key Largo* (1942, 88). Nor was the contradiction

overlooked by other authors. H. Rosenberg recalls the "metaphysical oratory" of *Winterset* (1941, 259), and A. M. Sampley observes that Anderson "has himself refuted his own words" (1944, 418).

As for the polemics his modern Shakespearean drama had once caused, the issue was dropped in a nanosecond after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The subject of verse drama was left to the recondite discussions of academics. B. Boyce does alludes to it when he asserts that Anderson's elegiac style in *Winterset* (1940a) is not unlike the verse written by the "Victorian poets" (1944).

This is not to say that Anderson lost all critical support during the war. He was still an outstanding playwright with a sizable following. A. G. Halline asserts,

> To have evolved a profound and noble theory of drama, rooted in the classic age and transcending the present, is a significant achievement in criticism; to have created and impressed upon the consciousness of an age a body of drama measuring up to this ideal should prove to be a lasting contribution to art. (1944, 81)

However, H. Rosenberg notes that Anderson in his dramas has not "created or unearthed new types, as the realistic American theatre has succeeded in doing. His queens, noblemen, thugs, adolescents, are invariably stock figures grown familiar through the motion pictures" (1941, 260). Most of the critics agreed.

As for the poet-playwright turned propagandist, critics began to express doubts as to whether Anderson was indeed a poet. Rosenberg asserts, "In eleven plays 'poetic' from beginning to end, Maxwell Anderson, America's chief verse writer for the theatre, has produced very little poetry" (258). Additionally, J. S. Rodell affirms that Anderson "is neither poet nor dramatist" (1943, 273). With such remarks as these, it is little wonder that Anderson's star faded in the postwar years.

Notwithstanding *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a)–a Tudor drama with some verse in it–Anderson abandoned verse drama and wrote lyrics for musicals instead; however, *Lost in the Stars* (1949a) was the only musical comedy of his that was staged in the postwar period. Additionally, he wrote several plays that were never published: *Meeting in Africa* (1943), *Fortune, Turn They Wheel* (1945a), *Ulysses Africanus* (1945b), *April with Emily* (1945c) and *Warrior's Return* (1945d).

3. The Postwar Years

a) The Plays

Truckline Cafe (1946b) was Anderson's first play to be staged after World War II. Bad reviews forced the play to close after thirteen performances. Anderson responded by attacking the critics, calling them "a sort of Jukes family of journalism," in reference to the name given to a family "of low physical and moral standard" (1946c) who were notorious in the State of New York. Anderson's criticism of the critics got him nowhere–the play remained closed. It was his second failure in a row. But with the same tenacity he had shown when *White Desert* (1923) had failed at the beginning of his playwriting career, Anderson rose to the challenge. Nine months later his *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a) successfully opened on Broadway, with Ingrid Bergman as Joan of Arc, and it ran for 199 performances. In the play, Anderson once again returned to his prewar tragic hero model (Joan is victimized by the power elite), and he criticized the state. But he did not represent sensitive political issues as he had earlier done in *Winterset* (1940a) and *Key Largo* (1940b), and he did not write in verse.

Moreover, *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a), his fifth prose play in a row, was followed by another hit on an historical subject, *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a), also in prose (though, Anderson peppered the play with verse), with Rex Harrison as King Henry VIII and Joyce Redman as Anne Boleyn. Anderson scored yet another hit with his

next play, a musical, in collaboration with Kurt Weill: *Lost in the Stars* (1949a)–based on Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*–ran for 273 performances. So successful was it, in fact, that Anderson immediately went to work on another musical, *Raft on the River* (1950), based on Mark Twain's novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. But when Kurt Weill suddenly died of a heart attack in 1950, work on the play came to a halt, while Anderson searched for a new musical collaborator. Irving Berlin agreed to collaborate with Anderson on the musical comedy, but he later withdrew from the project.

Joan of Lorraine (1946a), *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) and *Lost in the Stars* (1949a) all shared the previous characteristics of Anderson's prewar tragedies (the heroes triumph after being defeated by institutionalized power, and the state is criticized) but with one exception: prose, and not verse, had become Anderson's preferred writing style for tragic dramas. As I have already noted, he only used verse sparingly in his third Tudor play, *Anne of the Thousand Days*, and instead of verse he wrote song lyrics in *Lost in the Stars*.

Anderson had only two dramas produced on Broadway in the 1950s: *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a) and *The Bad Seed* (1955a). Of the two, only the former play was original drama, latter text being an adaptation of William March's novel *The Bad Seed*.

The early 1950s found the United States embroiled in another costly armed conflict abroad. In *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a), another historical play about the last days of Socrates, Anderson draws a parallel between ancient Athens, which had been conquered by Sparta, and the United States, which the playwright believed was in danger of being conquered by the Soviet Union. By and large, the critics disapproved of the play, (bad reviews forced it to close after thirty performances), and in later

years, most authors took a critical view of the work. J. V. Szeliski considers it "an escape from life pessimistically prejudged" (1971, 42).

Anderson wrote the play after having previously traveled to Greece, which was politically unstable at the time. He also wrote articles in support of the Greek government. In one essay he asserts, "A victory for the Communist guerrillas in Macedonia would be a disaster for all free men" (1948b), and once again urged Americans to prepare for war.

Barefoot in Athens (1951a) strongly reflected Anderson's obsession with Communists and the politics of war. As to that, Anderson writes, "To the Communists here and elsewhere there's nothing wrong with the Russian methods, for the Communists have made a religion of slavery and appear content to see Russia enslave the earth" (1948b).

In an article about the play published in the *New York Times*, Anderson warns his readers that drifting "toward the ethics of Hitler and Alcibiades" can only be avoided "when life is constantly examined and there are no censors to tell men how far their investigations can go" (1951b, 1). Moreover, Anderson included the essay in the published version of the play:

> If there arose a great philosopher in Russia today (supposing this possible), and he were put out of the way because his sayings became an offense to the authorities, no record of his sayings or his trial or his death would ever see the light. (1951a, xv)

Additionally, he writes elsewhere,

> A great many of our well-intentioned people are shrieking 'Peace! Peace! At any cost we must keep the peace!' while Russia methodically and fanatically enslaves her neighbors and hopes the peace will last long enough to solidify her defenses and give her time to match our weapons with her own. (1948c)

Similarly, in 1950, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin attacked "'the whole group of twisted-thinking New Dealers,'" referring to them as Communists who "'have led America near to ruin at home and abroad'" (W. D. Jordan et al 1985, 419). Anderson also found that: former Party members and their associates "looked traitorous" (Avery 1979, 255). Though he signed a letter from the National Institute of the Arts and Letters in protest against investigations by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, Anderson nevertheless believed that something urgently had to be done to stop what he considered to be the rampant infiltration of Communists into the institutions of America.

Finally, Anderson wrote several plays that were not published in this period. They include *Raft on the River* (1950a), *Adam, Lilith and Eve* (1950b), *The Art of Love* (1950c), *Cavalier King* (1952); *The Masque of Queens* (1954a), *The Christmas Carol* (1954b), *Richard and Anne* (1955b), *Madonna and Child* (1956) and *The Day the Money Stopped (*1957b).

b) The Style of the Plays

After the Second World War Anderson followed the same pattern that he had used for writing tragedies in the 1930s, with the exception being that he did not write in verse. After the failures of *Storm Operation* (1944) and *Truckline Cafe* (1946b), Anderson bounced back with three successes: two historical dramas–*Joan of Lorraine* (1946a) and *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a)–and a musical, *Lost in the Stars* (1949a).

I think it is significant that, of the six Broadway productions he had in the postwar years, three were historical plays: *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a) and *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1949a) were successful; and *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a). Of his other three

Broadway productions, *Truckline Cafe* (1946b) was original, and the musical *Lost in the Stars* (1949a) and *Bad Seed* (1955a) were successful adaptations.

Throughout his playwriting career Anderson showed a penchant for writing about historical subjects. H. E. Woodbridge holds that the dramatist "discovered himself ... in the historical plays" (1945, 60). Certainly the playwright's interest in history was substantial, as evidenced by the many historical plays he had produced on Broadway: *First Flight* (1925a), about Andrew Jackson; *The Buccaneer* (1925b), about Captain Henry Morgan; the three Tudor plays–*Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d), *Mary of Scotland* (1940d) and *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a); *Night Over Taos* (1940g), about the fall of the feudal domain of Taos, New Mexico; *Valley Forge* (1940f), about General George Washington; *The Wingless Victory* (1940h), about a village in New England in the early nineteenth; *High Tor* (1940c), about, among other things, the ghosts of a group of seventeenth century Dutch inhabitants dwelling along the Hudson River; *The Masque of Kings* (1940i), about Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria and his heir Prince Rudolph; *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), a musical comedy about Peter Stuyvesant; *Journey to Jerusalem* (1940k), about Jesus of Nazareth; *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a), about Joan of Arc; *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a), about Socrates. Additionally, though *The Golden Six* (1961) was not staged at a Broadway theater, it was produced at Boston University in May 1958 and again in New York at an off-Broadway theater in October where it ran for only seventeen performances.

He also wrote a couple of historical plays for radio that were later published. *Second Overture* (1940l), a one-act play about the Soviet Union in 1918, was never broadcast; and in 1937 the National Broadcasting Company aired *The Feast of Ortolans* (1940j), about the French Revolution.

His historical plays are metaphorical: *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a) satirizes Franklin D. Roosevelt, and in *The Wingless Victory* (1940h)–which is set in Salem,

Massachusetts in the years before the War of 1812–Anderson criticizes racism, bigotry and hypocrisy in America. Years later, Arthur Miller would set his play, *The Crucible*, in the same place, but at a different time, in order to attack McCarthyism. Miller's drama on the Salem Witch Trials of 1692 was written in prose and based on actual court records. He explains that after having "searched the records of the trials" in the Salem courthouse (1985, 155), he felt compelled to represent the "historical facts that were immutable" (157). However, Anderson was not constrained by historical veracity in *The Wingless Victory*. As G. McCalmon and C. Moe observe, he "combines fictional characters and the Medea legend and sets them in early puritanical New England to heighten a modern comment on racial prejudice" (1965, 5).

Moreover, Anderson wrote plays in various theatrical styles: realism in *What Price Glory* (1926a); naturalism in *The Bad Seed* (1955a); Greek tragedy in *The Wingless Victory* (1940h); opéra comique in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a); Romanticism in *Night over Taos* (1940g); Aristotelian tragedy in *Key Largo* (1940b); comedia dell'arte in *High Tor* (1940c); and the Tudor style in *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) and *Mary of Scotland* (1940e).

As to that, V. Wall–the importance of whose essay, "Maxwell Anderson: The Last Anarchist", originally published in 1941, was noted twenty-five years later when A. S. Downer included it in his book *American Drama and its Critics*–remarks:

> Anderson brought to the theater not only the journalist's and editor's awareness of contemporary events, and the poet's depth of feeling and sense of language but also the scholar's knowledge of the heritage of the theater from Aeschylus to Ibsen. (1965, 149)

Anderson was a great admirer of the classics of Western Civilization, and in writing his plays, he borrowed from them in a creative and independent way. The results

went, as A. Lewis observes, "beyond realism" (1970, 141). *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a), for example, was an original rendition of a figure that Schiller and Shaw had already represented on stage. In Anderson's version, a group of actors rehearse a play about Joan of Arc. Audiences enjoyed the unusual representation of this well-known historical figure. A. S. Shivers observes, *Joan of Lorraine* played "to packed houses, and would have run longer if its stars had not had contractual engagements elsewhere" (1985, 23); and in his next play on Broadway, *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a), Anderson effectively used flashbacks to represent Anne Boleyn's tumultuous marriage with King Henry VIII.

However, postwar critics generally consider Anderson's historical plays too distorted, and some, like D. Gerstenberger, take him to task for not representing "the historical past *per se*" (1963, 318). Moreover, for T. E. Porter, the "Shakespearean style" of Anderson's plays seems "almost as dated as Boker's *Francesca da Rimini*" (1969, 181); and E. Lewis calls *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a)–one of Anderson's longest running plays on Broadway–"a flop" because stylistically it was "pretentious" (1969, 70).

That Anderson broke with stylistic trends early in his career is in part due to the playwright's independent nature. In an essay entitled "The History of Dramatic Criticism," Anderson affirms his admiration for artistic self-sufficiency:

> In the end the palm goes to those who refuse to commit themselves to any law– to Saint-Evremond and Molière and Goethe, who say frankly that no rule should be binding upon artists, for if an artist is to be worth anything he must be first of all sufficient to himself (1919b, 284).

Some authors find Anderson's stylistic diversity a welcome addition to the American theater fare. E. M. Gagey says of Anderson's plays that "even when not fully successful, they offer a sharp and welcome contrast to the run-of-the-mill Broadway

play" (1947, 88). Moreover, because of independence, Anderson was able to explore dramatic styles that many authors otherwise ignored, especially those who felt that "contemporary life could only be expressed realistically in prose" (Wall 1965, 148). Nevertheless, postwar authors generally agree that Anderson's masterpieces, for all their stylistic variety, "now seem archaic" (T. F. Driver 1970, 303).

With the exception of the politically satirical *Both Your Houses* (1933), which H. E. Luccock calls "real drama" (1970, 258), authors generally conclude that, stylistically, Anderson's plays are out of touch with reality. J. Gassner, holds that the playwright "is at heart a romanticist who deals in generalities, valid for the spirit but not for the actual realities he himself stresses by the choice of his themes" (1954, 679). J. Milstead thinks Anderson's dramas seem false because they lack "true tragic power" (1958, 367); and L. R. Morris finds Anderson's frightened heroes unbelievable because they appear to be "whistling in the dark" (1947, 196).

In the age of cinema, videos, televised news reports and realistic drama, Anderson's plays do not measure up to works like Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf*, where realism and fantasy are effectively blended. E. M. Jackson affirms that what Anderson represents on stage is "inconsistent with the physical, psychological, and social settings of the transplanted actions" (1973, 28). Moreover, M. Matlaw concludes that Anderson's attempts to modernize older "foreign" dramatic conventions, considered appropriate in the early 1930s, kept him from breaking "new paths" (1972, 23) after the Second World War.

After World War II, Anderson's tragedies of the 1930s seemed rather farfetched and outdated. Certainly the compelling dramas written by some of the younger American playwrights–Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, in particular–underscored the ineffectiveness of Anderson's style.

c) Simply Shakespeare

J. W. Krutch holds that Anderson's prominence in the history of American theater is based "principally upon the tragedy *Winterset*" (1965, 295). I believe that, though this is true to some extent, it is also unfortunate. For *High Tor* (1940c) and *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) are much better plays. Broadway was abuzz with debates over *Winterset* (1940a) for several years after its premiere, and as a result a great deal more was published about it than any of the dramatist's other plays. I think that did Anderson a disservice, for much of the criticism of his first modern verse drama was unfavorable.

After the initial critical raves, negative opinions as to the quality of *Winterset* (1940a) were increasingly heard. These were echoed by many postwar authors. B. Hewitt holds that a close examination of the play convinces him that *Winterset* is "no masterpiece" (1959, 396). He further maintains that the superbness of the production–especially Burgess Meredith's performance and Jo Mielziner's settings–concealed the flaws of the playscript.

As I have already mentioned, Anderson's most Shakespearean modern drama is *Winterset* (1940a). In the postwar period, several authors have studied the influence in detail: M. E. Prior (1966), J. H. Adler (1954), R. C. Roby (1957), and J. B. Jones (1973). Other postwar authors have also written on the subject. As is usually the case when Anderson's works are discussed, opinions vary. As Jones points out,

> Those who have written the most thoughtful discussions of Shakespearean echoes in *Winterset* reach no consensus of opinion regarding the precise relationship between Maxwell Anderson and the materials of Shakespeare's plays. (1973, 42)

Of those authors who have written about the Shakespearianisms in *Winterset* (1940a), Jones takes the most favorable view. As he sees it, in *Winterset* Anderson purposefully suggested four of Shakespeare's better known dramas: *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Macbeth*. Though admitting that "taken as a whole, the agglomeration of Shakespearean allusions and parallels in *Winterset* is indeed a mixed bag," Jones indicates that the allusions are "easily recognizable by the laymen" (36). He further explains that "a single moment in the play may simultaneously call to mind a number of incidents from Shakespeare, all crashing together in a kind of dramatic phantasmagoria" (37). In addition, the author maintains that Anderson's use of familiar literary images is effective because

> the characters of Lear, Romeo, Hamlet, and the rest have indeed taken on the power of archetypes themselves–have, as it were, become archetypes as far as modern Americans are concerned–and the stories they enact have consequently become myths in the modern mind. (44)

Similarly positive is H. Cantor, who asserts that in *Winterset* (1940a) the playwright achieves "a synthesis between colloquial speech and high romantic verse" (1991, 33). He adds that "those who criticize Anderson's verse in this play should be forced to sit through the execrable film version of *Winterset* in which his language has been "'translated' into prose." In addition, several other postwar authors approve of Anderson's use of Shakespearianisms in *Winterset* (1940a). V. M. Roberts thinks that it is only logical that the playwright who is "amazingly fecund and versatile" (1962, 450) would experiment; and H. Taubman admires this "most ambitious" of playwrights for trying to raise the theater over its "earthbound style" (1967,179). Furthermore, pointing to the fact that Anderson was both a poet and a journalist, E. J. R. Isaacs sustains that "in *Winterset* the two ways meet" (1948, 632).

But there are more authors who are critical of Anderson's modern Shakespearean drama than there are who are favorable. G. J. Nathan considers the playwright's

poetics insufficient, and–though he concedes that the shortcomings are also the result of the high expectations many people have–he nevertheless concludes, "Were he more modest in his aims, we should probably take him, for better or worse, as we find him" (1953, 41). Others who likewise disapprove of Anderson's use of Shakespearianisms in *Winterset* (1940a) include A. Lewis, who contends that "Anderson's people recite rhetorical speeches and move in prearranged directions" (1970, 141); and R. C. Roby, who finds the play wanting because "the plot of *Winterset* is largely a pastiche of various actions and characters from Shakespeare in a setting of typical problem-play materials" (1957, 196). Similarly, B. Hewitt, observing how excessive the effect can seem to a modern spectator, asserts that *Winterset* is "so Shakespearean that Mr. Anderson himself points to his master with good grace in the very last line of his play," when "the old Rabbi, pronouncing his noble valedictory over the slain lovers, ends with that very same command to take them up and bury them, which was the standard close of all Elizabethan tragedy" (1959, 395).

Additionally, while J. H. Adler does not criticize Anderson's Shakespearianisms, the author nonetheless holds that "a greater playwright might have borrowed less" (1954, 248). To some extent this is true: even Elizabethans were never asked to believe that their contemporaries spoke in verse. V. Wall comments on the difficulty that many critics have in accepting "gangsters, hoodlums, and a judge from the bench all speaking in iambics" (1965, 156).

Furthermore, in addition to the Shakespearianisms, *Winterset* (1940a) reveals literary borrowings from sources other than Shakespeare. S. Kliger analyzes "the strong Hebrew element" (1946, 219); W. L. Dusenbury refers to Anderson's "obvious use of myth" (1963, 295); and W. H. Davenport asserts that Mio's sixth speech in Act III "is a reworking of the opening six lines of T. S. Eliot's 'Gerontion'" (1952). In my opinion, the literary cross-references weaken rather than enhance the drama. Moreover, the obvious literary associations in a play with the Sacco-Vanzetti case as

its background are definitely out of place. As to that, M. E. Prior observes "the conjunction of the Shakespearean and modern idioms has the effect of blurring the sentiments and thus of detracting from the urgency and significance of what is being said" (1966, 325).

Additionally, E. Flexner contends that in the topic of the drama "lies the difficulty for the critic striving for detachment in order to assess the play purely in terms of theatre" (1969, 104). She concludes that *Winterset* (1940a) is "confused and distorted" by, among other things, its "Romeo and Juliet finale" (110).

On another note, several authors comment on the melodramatic tone of the play. In my opinion, those authors who think *Winterset* (1940a) is a melodrama are mistaken. Although C. W. E. Bigsby feels that *Winterset* is "bathetic" and "crude melodrama" (1982, 152), I believe Anderson makes it difficult for one to call *Winterset* a sentimental problem-play, or a murder mystery. If the story is "little more than a murder mystery" (A. T. Tees 1972, 412), then the case is resolved too soon; and if it is a play about vengeance, then the love theme is jarring. However, Anderson was too good a craftsman to have resolved his drama with such theatrical conventions. I think he scrambled conventions in the play on purpose so that it would not fall into the categories of "murder mystery," "love story," or "vengeance melodrama." Nevertheless, Tees is right when he affirms that the unexpected turns are a "source of confusion in understanding the play" (408).

In my opinion, a subject as controversial as the Sacco-Vanzetti case cannot be dramatically represented in a Shakespearean manner. Sacco and Vanzetti were anarchists who became famous during the trial. Therefore, they could not be represented in the theater as poetic abstractions. Nevertheless, the modern theater should be grateful to Anderson for having unwittingly proved as much.

d) The Critics' Evaluation

With over forty plays and radio scripts to his credit–covering a range of theatrical forms that included comedies, musicals, prose drama, poetic tragedy and fantasy– Anderson was in the Broadway limelight for over thirty years. When he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1955, *The New York Times* reported, "A Pulitzer Prize winner and twice the recipient of the New York Drama Critics Circle prize, Mr. Anderson has a long list of Broadway successes to his credit" (unsigned 1955). R. J. Buchanan asserts that "in volume of work alone, Anderson stands above most of his contemporaries, and in variety both of subject matter and dramatic form he has few if any peers" (1991, 60). Moreover, in the 1930s the playwright even challenged Eugene O'Neill's preeminence in the American Theater. G. B. Wilson remarks that "for a time, when Eugene O'Neill's reputation was suffering a temporary eclipse, Anderson was considered America's best dramatist" (1982, 266).

However, though M. Matlaw observes that critics "have always disagreed in their evaluation of Anderson's writings" (1972, 23), and M. E. Prior claims that he feels "predisposed to deal favorably, or at least cautiously, with a dramatist who has repeatedly forced verse on Broadway and apparently made the audiences like it" (1966, 318), Anderson's star faded in the postwar period, as evidenced by the large number of authors who are critical of his works . D. Gerstenberger holds that, though Anderson was "a factor to be dealt with" between the wars, the final report "is a negative one" (1963, 316). In addition, just a few years after his death in 1959, Anderson's stature had diminished to such an extent that A. Lewis felt that the playwright did not warrant a chapter in his book *American Plays and Playwrights of the Contemporary Theatre* (1970), which had originally been published five years before. As to that, E. Lewis remarks, "Once upon a time, it was thought that Anderson ... had a touch of genius. In retrospect, he seems mediocre" (1969, 59). On a similar

note, G. Steiner refers to Anderson's "dust and tinsel-world of the Victorian charade" (1961, 312), and K. Tynan concludes that after the war the dramatist never wrote "a first-rate play" (1961, 257). Likewise, E. M. Jackson refers to the playwright's not having lived up to expectations: "The verdict of the major body of Anderson criticism" is that his plays "do not achieve that level of poetic expression to which the dramatist aspired" (1973, 22); and more recently, J. Y. Miller and W. L. Frazer hold a similar opinion: recognizing "the dignity and sense of decorum that Anderson brought to the American theatre," the authors nevertheless feel that they "must acknowledge a lack of artistic depth" (1991, 127).

As I have already mentioned, I believe that Anderson's wartime turnabout is in part to blame for the playwright's decline. It is one of the reasons why postwar authors do not take him seriously: the independent thinker, having turned to writing propaganda plays, had disavowed what he had previously defended. Nor, for that matter, was it the first time that he had had a change of mind. Ten years separate the anarchist sympathizer who wrote *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) and the denouncer of Stalinism in *Key Largo* (1940b). Politically, by 1939 his views could no longer be interpreted as Leftist, as they were in the late 1920s. His style had changed as well. *Gods of the Lightning* was written in realistic dialogue; journalistic comment and melodrama were used to protest against the injustice of the Sacco-Vanzetti executions. Seven years later, Anderson approached the same subject from a much different perspective. In *Winterset* (1940a), the Sacco-Vanzetti case was blurred and the journalistic elements were supplanted by poetic devices such as verse and Hamlet-like philosophizing. By 1935 Anderson had dropped out of the Leftist mainstream and entered a more private and poetic domain. He had been in the process of doing so from the beginning of the decade.

That he wrote verse plays on figures from long ago was a disappointment to Leftists in the 1930s (many of whom would continue writing about the theater from a Leftist

perspective after the war). But Shakespearianism imposed on modern issues as politically explosive as the Sacco-Vanzetti case or the Spanish Civil War was inappropriate to many, including authors like Harold Clurman and Brooks Atkinson, who were influential drama critics in the postwar years.

Anderson went from being one of the favorites of the New York Drama Critics Circle to being their declared enemy. In the late 1940s he declared war on the New York theater critics, openly confronting them as earlier he had confronted the Leftist artistic and intellectual elite. However, gone were the days of his *Winterset (1940a)* success, when, though radicals denounced his having allowed Mio–the defender of the Sacco-Vanzetti cause–to die, liberal critics like J. W. Krutch (1935a, 1935b, 1936) approved of his ideological position and the literary style he had adopted for it. Gone too were the glorious months that followed the reasonable success of *Key Largo* (1940b), when he seemed not to care about the political radicals who took him to task for his attack on Stalinism and his criticism of the Spanish Loyalist regime in the play.

As I have already noted, when critics panned *Truckline Cafe* (1946b) and *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a), Anderson took the offensive. He claimed that they had become tyrannical censors: in an essay entitled in defiantly large letters "The Mighty Critics," which was published by the *New York Times*, Anderson claims: "Like all censorship, it degrades and diminishes the art it sets out to serve. Any group that stands between the public and an art form, dictating what the public may see, is a damaging force in a democracy" (1947b, 1).

Theatergoers of the forties and fifties were more influenced by the opinions of the critical experts of the press than had been the case a generation before. Anderson likened this alteration to the conditions that had lead to Fascism and Stalinism in Europe. In his essay "Thoughts about the Critics," which was a republished version of the essay the *New Times* had earlier printed, Anderson affirms, "A tyrant is a tyrant,

beneficent or maleficent" (1947a, 6). In so far as the playwright was concerned, the theater critics had become censors, which he felt was totally undemocratic: "For the theater public contains audiences of many kinds, overlapping but almost infinite in variety. Left to themselves, these audiences would find out and support the plays that suited them" (7).

Anderson accused theater critics of using cheap tactics such as amusing readers with "a public execution" of a play in order to increase their readership (8). Furthermore, critics, he claimed, went to the theater out of routine, it being their job to see plays and quickly review them for the morning paper the next day; and as such he felt that they were not the best judges, for they simply did not have time to meditate sufficiently on a production and thus give it a valid critique. Nor for that matter, he felt, were the critics the best arbiters of what the public really wanted to see. For they usually belonged to an intellectual elite. Anderson held that the New York theater critics in particular represented "a little group of theatre-wise, picture-wise, café-society-wise people, who go to first nights ... to show themselves and their clothes and to be in on whatever is new" (9).

It seems to me that this openly hostile attitude toward critics was in part linked to his wartime turnabout. Anderson was unsettled and thus could not endure the harsh criticism that *Truckline Cafe* (1946b) and *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a) received. A consequence of his public outburst against the critics–of airing his grievances in the press–was that it showed a weakened Anderson resorting to force in his own defense. Turning his back on the artist within him, Anderson stepped into the politico-journalistic arena. But a weakened Anderson could hardly defend himself from the barbs of a skillful and influential critic like Brooks Atkinson, the *New York Times* drama critic from 1924 to 1960, whose writings influenced other American journalists at the time and afterwards. Such was Atkinson's power, that when he lambasted Anderson's *Barefoot in Athens*, the play was forced to close:

> Atkinson's opening-night review of *Barefoot in Athens* had condemned the play as 'high-minded and pedestrian, sincere and perfunctory,' and had even indulged in sarcasm, unusual for Atkinson, by concluding that the play was 'not only barefoot but heavy-footed and slow'. (Avery 1979, 249)

Interestingly enough, however, it was a play that Brooks Atkinson himself acknowledged had at first been successfully received by critics: "Most of the town's reviewers have a very high opinion of Maxwell Anderson's 'Barefoot in Athens.' Some of them regard it as his finest work" (1951). Yet the critic's negative review was instrumental in forcing the play to close. In a letter to Atkinson, Anderson writes, "I do honestly believe that the critics on the daily papers have too much power over the theatre, and ... advertisements that quote the critics add to their power," finishing the letter by stating in a gallant flourish, "May we both live long enough to continue our feud through the next decade" (Avery 1979, 228). Their feud lasted many years, and this in part might explain some of the disdain for Anderson expressed by later authors.

I think that by writing propaganda plays, campaigning for warfare in the postwar years and carrying on a feud with the critics all contributed to his being ignored by authors in the 1960s, when the cold war divided not only countries but people within countries. It was a time when "progressives" were pitted against "reactionaries" over political issues such as the revolution in Cuba and the war in Vietnam. Moreover, I believe that as a result of divisive politics, authors in the 1960s and 1970s were often blinded by conceptions that, unfortunately, were as much a part of the times as was racial segregation and the burning of flags.

Some critics, with hindsight to support them, even voiced disdain for the era in which Anderson wrote. It strikes me as being rather unseemly that a highly respected and influential author like Eric Bentley would assert that

the inner circle of the Broadway intelligentsia belongs to such organizations as the Theatre Guild, the Playwrights' Company, and Theatre Incorporated. Its most dignified mouthpiece is *Theatre Arts*. A 'serious play' is one with a message or a least with modern–preferably liberal–ideas in it. The formula for serious drama is: non-serious drama plus a small dose of 'modern ideas.' (1953, 6

A less disdainful tone would have been critically as valid. But smugness was a mutual characteristic of opposing ideological blocks during the cold war era, when intolerance and hostility among huge sectors of American society was widespread; it certainly did little to improve the country, let alone its theater.

e) The Playwriting Theory

Anderson's playwriting theory was neither innovative nor influential. I believe his academic background had a lot to do with his efforts to articulate a playwriting theory. The result was more of an academic exercise in dramaturgic theorizing than a dynamic contribution to modern playwriting.

In *Off Broadway: Essays About the Theatre* (1947a), Anderson summarizes his rules for writing plays. Briefly, they are as follows:

First, "The story of a play must be the story of what happens within the mind or heart of a man or woman. It cannot deal primarily with external events. The external events are only symbolic of what goes on within" (24-5).

Second, "The story of a play must be a conflict, and specifically, a conflict between the forces of good and evil within a single person. The good and evil to be defined, of course, as the audience wants to see them" (25).

Third, "The protagonist of a play must represent the forces of good and must win, or, if he has been evil, must yield to the forces of the good, and know himself defeated."

Fourth, "The protagonist of a play cannot be a perfect person. If he were he could not improve, and he must come out at the end of the play a more admirable human being than he went in."

Fifth, "The protagonist of a play must be an exceptional person. ... The man in the street simply will not do as the hero of a play."

Sixth,

> Excellence on the stage is always moral excellence. A struggle on the part of a hero to better his material circumstances is of no interest in a play unless his character is somehow tried in the fire, and unless he comes out of his trial a better person. (26)

Seventh, "The moral atmosphere of a play must be healthy. An audience will not endure the triumph of evil on the stage."

Eighth,

> There are human qualities for which the race has a special liking on the stage: in a man, positive character, strength of conviction not shaken by opposition; in a woman, fidelity, passionate faith. There are qualities which are especially disliked on the stage: in a man, cowardice, any refusal to fight for a belief; in a woman, an inclination toward the Cressid.

Critical opinion of the rules is generally unfavorable. D. Gerstenberger finds Anderson's theories "traditional and romantic" (1963, 317). For A. R. Thompson, the resulting Shakespearean effect is rather "too conventional" (1946, 387). Moreover, P. J. Rice thinks that the imposition of the recognition scene merely weakens the plays

because it is too obviously "only a dramaturgic device" (1953, 369). Finally, E. M. Jackson affirms, "The function which he was to fulfill for later dramatists–for Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, and others–was essentially academic" (1973, 17).

Furthermore, authors like V. R. J. Buchanan (1991), when referring to Anderson's dramaturgic theory, merely summarize the rules. Similarly, V. M. Roberts (1971), who quotes from Anderson's *The Essence of Tragedy* (1939) in her study of what different authors understand tragedy to mean, refers to it without objective commentary.[1]

f) Verse in the Plays

As I have already pointed out, by the 1940s Anderson himself had given up writing verse drama. He wrote his war propaganda plays in prose. Even his Tudor play *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) has only a sprinkling of verse. To most authors, Anderson's particular style of dramatic verse–which E. M. Gagey describes as an "irregular blank verse intermingled with prose" (1947, 77)–was a thing of the past. Though a few authors recognize that Anderson's verse at times rises "to high levels of imaginative beauty" (H. E. Woodbridge 1945, 60), and that the playwright "gets his main heightening effect from his use of unrealistic diction" (A. R. Thompson 1946, 386), most agree that other playwrights developed a more powerful poetic language in prose for the American stage. As to that, E. M. Jackson notes, "Perhaps the dramatist most consistently effective in shaping a poetry for the American stage has been Tennessee Williams" (1973, 17).

[1] For a more detailed summary of the playwriting rules, and Anderson's ideas about playwriting, see Appendix 1.

Prior to the war, criticism of his verse drama focused on whether it was necessary for effective tragic drama and on the quality of his verse in particular. But after 1945, critics concentrated principally on the worth of Anderson's verse. J. Gassner refers to the playwright's verse as having "pseudo-Shakespearean wings" (1968, 149), with "greater verbosity than power" (298). Elsewhere he notes its incongruent use, which "sometimes sounds forced and decorative" (1954, 679). Even to an author as favorably disposed to Anderson's works as V. Wall, the dramatist's speeches at times "become bombast and rhetoric" (1965, 159). Similarly, M. Matlaw remarks, "Unquestionably his plays often are flawed by verbosity" (1972, 23). Moreover, J. Y. Miller and W. L. Frazer point out, "The most serious problem is a sense of pretentiousness" (1991, 127); H. J. Muller calls Anderson's poetry "banal" (1968, 316), and G. Steiner remarks that Anderson's "costume tragedies" are "written in a style never spoken by any living creature" (1961, 312).

The sort of verse drama favored by Anderson in the 1930s did not respond to the practical world view of the war years and the cold war era. It is small wonder then that in the postwar years Anderson, a professional playwright, disclaimed verse drama by writing his plays in prose.

g) Ideology in the Plays

Postwar authors have a lot to say about Anderson's ideology. This is all the more notable when one considers that, with the exception of the propaganda plays–*Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) and the World War II dramas–and his satiric swipe at F. D. Roosevelt in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), the dramatist whose pet themes were faith in the individual and freedom above all never committed himself in his works to any of the mainstream political ideologies. Rather, he wrote from a perspective which is difficult to categorize in conventional political terms. Anderson was neither a Rightist nor a Leftist: traditionally, Rightists do not criticize the free enterprise

system–*High Tor* (1940c)–or defend a Communist newspaper the way Anderson did when, as R. P. Wilkins points out, he joined others to defend the right of the *Daily Worker* to publish after it was threatened under New York's Criminal Anarchy Law of 1902 (1970, 92); and for their part, Leftists are not contrary to the idea of a large, centralized government the way Anderson was. As W. E. Taylor observes,

> Though he likes the fruits of materialism and the exploitation of the weak by the strong as little as any playwright of the 30's, his political philosophy and his hopes for the future are based on an entirely different concept of the nature of man and man's social and political institutions from those of the more revolutionary Marxians who were his contemporaries. (1968, 48)

Loggins' assertion that Anderson had "no consistent social philosophy, no consistent philosophy of any kind" (1967, 100), is inconsistent with the content of many of the dramatist's works. He was, as G. Rabkin notes, a "non-Marxist" (1964, 38). who in the spring of 1938 joined together with "the foremost non-Marxist dramatists of the age" (1964, 38) to form the Playwrights' Company. It is relevant to note that the founding members were all liberals. J. F. Wharton, the company lawyer, asserts that when "an organization calling itself America First, backed by wealthy pillars of the then current Establishment" expressed willingness "to do business with Hitler," Playwrights' Company member Robert E. Sherwood actively campaigned in opposition to the proposal, and Anderson "supported him in this to the best of its ability" (1974, 108).

Neither a Leftist nor a liberal, Anderson strongly attacked authoritarianism in his plays. Though the Soviet Union and the United States became allies in the war against the Nazis, Anderson did not distinguish between Hitler and Stalin. He attacked the Nazis in his war propaganda plays *Candle in the Wind* (1941) and *The Second Overture* (1940l), and likewise, in addition to the short Prologue in *Key Largo* (1940b), he assailed the Soviet Union in his one-act drama *Second Overture* (1940l). Set in a Russian execution chamber near Moscow in 1918, the play is about a Soviet

commissar who, having decided that the revolution has become a tyranny, casts "his lot with the victims" (M. D. Bailey 1970, 30).

In an earlier play, *The Masque of Kings* (1940i), Anderson had also come out against violent revolution. In the drama, the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph convinces his son Prince Rudolph, who has been plotting to overthrow his father and establish a revolutionary government, that in the end he would have to throw into prison those enemies he had not already killed. The allusion to the Soviet Union was plain. M. Goldstein notes that the play contains "reminders of the aftermath of the Russian Revolution ... and the news then spreading from Moscow of the trials of Stalin's old rivals" (1974, 343).

The Communist Party, with its slogan 'drama as a weapon,' tried to establish itself in the American theater at a time when the Works Progress Administration created the Federal Theatre Project; and they were naturally critical of Anderson's position with regard to the state. Moreover, the playwright was also taken to task by liberals and moderate Leftists for his failing to suggest solutions to the problems engendered by the Depression. As M. Y. Himelstein, a non-Marxist, observes, Anderson never specified "what system, if any, would meet his requirements for an honest government" (1963, 130)". But, Anderson did not believe that any government could find a solution. However, he criticized others without offering alternatives. A. R. Celada notes, "Anderson no ofrece programas de salvación ni políticas para eradicar el vicio y la corrupción" (1994, 20). Yet L. R. Morris rightly asserts, "Is there no hope for a better society, for social justice? If conscience makes us hate oppression, shall skepticism make us think futile those who dedicate their lives to the long, disheartening struggle against it? (1947, 198).

Anderson owes the start of his career as a professional playwright to the success of *What Price Glory* (1926a)–a play against militarism that was denounced by the

Secretary of the Navy, a rear admiral and a Marine Corps major among others for representing American soldiers at the front during World War I in an unheroic way. In typical Andersonian fashion, the play–which he wrote with Laurence Stallings, a disillusioned former Marine who had been wounded in France–fictionalized history, passing over historical details for the sake of dramatic effect.

However, in the 1930s Anderson shifted away from writing plays like *What Price Glory* (1926a), *Saturday's Children* (1927a) and *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a)– dramas that take an unequivocal stand on subjects of social import. As a result, his dramas obfuscated issues, ending, as J. Gassner points out, with "dubious solutions" (1954, 679).

But this is not to say that Anderson totally eschewed social issues in his plays after the 1920s. *Both Your Houses* (1933) satirizes corruption in the Capitol; *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a) denounces despotism; *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) and *Mary of Scotland* (1940e) take up the ruinous problems stemming from lusting after power; *Night Over Taos* (1940g) denounces a patriarchal system of society and imperialism; *Valley Forge* (1940f) reinterprets the American War of Independence; *Winterset* (1940a) denounces the American legal system; *The Wingless Victory* (1940h) rails against puritanical hypocrisy and racism; *High Tor* (1940c) defends ecology; *Lost in the Stars* (1949a) attacks Apartheid; *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a) assails short-sighted gregariousness and majority rule intolerance; and *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) takes a hard look at the dark side of matrimony.

Prior to World War II, Anderson was considered a pacifist, to whom, as W. E. Taylor observes, "all politicians and politician-generals were opportunists and exploiters of the common man" (1968 46-7). Anderson the individualist denounced both Fascism and Communism. M. Y. Himelstein observes, "The Marxist press, defender of a strong central government in control of the national economy, was distressed... . One

critic, John Cambridge, complained with some justification that Anderson's individualism was really anarchy" (1963, 145).

As I have already mentioned, I believe Anderson was an anarchist. Several authors, have noted his anarchism. A. S. Shivers refers to Anderson's "radical libertarianism" (1983, 97); and H. Clurman calls the playwright "a quiescent anarchist," adding, "no man or government, he feels, is truly just" (1948, 29). Similarly, L. G. Avery remarks,

> All of his life Anderson followed Thoreau in thinking that the government is best which governs least. With Anderson, as with Thoreau, the concern underlying this skeptical attitude toward government was a concern for individual freedom. (1970, 20)

I believe that the introductory words to H. D. Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience" summarizes in part the themes of all the plays Anderson wrote in the 1930s: "I heartily accept the motto, 'That government is best which governs least;' and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically" (1960, 235). Hence, in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), the protagonist, Brom Broeck says, "Let's keep the government small and funny, and maybe it'll give us less discipline and more entertainment!" (88). Furthermore, H. D. Thoreau's affirmation in "Civil Disobedience," that the government "is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it," (1960, 235), applies to Anderson's *Both Your Houses* (1933); and Thoreau's assertion, in the same paragraph, "Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool," is relevant to the playwright's *Night over Taos* (1940g).

For his part, Shivers similarly observes that Anderson shared with Thoreau "a lifelong, profound distrust of 'big' government and a lofty individualism that is Thoreauvian if not Emersonian" (1976, 19). He further explains,

> Emerson's dictum that 'Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members' is remarkably apropos to the mind that created such beleaguered individualist heroes as Alan McClean in *Both Your Houses* and Van Van Dorn in *High Tor*. (19)

Anderson and his colleagues in the Playwrights' Company–as well as other American dramatists in the 1930s such as Lillian Hellman, Irwin Shaw–were strong supporters of individualism. K. Tynan observes that they wrote "in the conviction that modern civilization was committing repeated acts of criminal injustice against the individual" (1961, 257). It was one of Anderson's favorite themes, and is found in most of his plays in one fashion or another. With regard to the brand of individualism Anderson espoused, V. Wall remarks,

> He is first of all the anarchist, the arch-individualist who is actually of the opinion that the best government probably is a democracy, since in its fumbling, stumbling inefficient way it brings about a maximum of civil liberty and personal freedom. (1965, 168)

The author supports this view by noting that "besides the two plays based on the Sacco-Vanzetti legend, he has also discussed in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a) the meaning of democracy" and in *High Tor* (1940c) "the possibilities of anarchism." In essence, with the exception of his World War II plays, one theme alone runs through most of Anderson's works: governmental power, whether institutional or not, is a corrupting influence on individuals; and if is left unchecked, it ultimately leads to tyranny.

Was Anderson ever a Socialist? As a young man he seems to have had socialistic inclinations. R. P. Wilkins asserts that Anderson was influenced by Orin G. Libby and John M. Gillete, Socialists and professors of his at the University of North Dakota (1970, 4). In a letter to Gillette, dated 15 September 1912, Anderson confesses: "Since I have left the University ... I have become a Socialist" (Avery 1979, 3). Six years later, however, he wrote to the Socialist fiction writer Upton Sinclair, "I agree

with you about religious and political conditions almost always, but you are more hopeful than I am about getting out of the mess. The individual seems the only hope, and nobody gives him a chance" (5).

Sinclair later went on to write the novel *Boston*, about the Sacco-Vanzetti case and eventually won the Nobel Peace Prize. Interestingly enough, Anderson won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for a play on the same subject.

Anderson's distrust of governmental institutions included the legal system. The playwright believed that institutional justice was virtually impossible. *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a)–a play which A. T. Tees calls "the most devastating indictment of courtroom jurisprudence" to come from Anderson's pen (1970, 26)–was a preview of the sort of criticism of the legal system that Anderson would return to throughout his career as a playwright. Staged soon after the executions of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, the Anderson-Hickerson drama was, in M. Goldstein's opinion, "the decade's most forceful play on a specific incident" (1974, 9). It was also Anderson's only clearly Leftist propaganda play. Tees further observes, "Eleven of his thirty-one Broadway productions were directly concerned with justice inside and outside the courtroom" (1970, 25). The playwright's view is that inside the courtroom justice inevitably miscarries. But outside the courtroom poetic justice prevails. From 1928 to 1951 Anderson wrote five trial plays; these include *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a), *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a), *Lost in the Stars* (1949a) and *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a).

Anderson's wariness of government and institutionalized justice are collateral in all of the above mentioned plays. In them, the only justice possible is the poetic sort. As Tees notes, "Where legal justice failed, poetic justice took over" (30). Similarly, W. E. Taylor affirms that Anderson did not "put much faith in history as a final arbiter of truth and justice" (1968, 50); as to that, S. Kliger observes, "The governing idea of

Winterset is of 'justice deferred' until a final Judgment Day" (1946, 219); and W. L. Dusenbury asserts, "In the conflict of love and justice, love wins" (1963, 295).

This, however, was not the sort of justice that Leftist critics were prepared to accept during the difficult years of the Depression, or to judge lightly after the Second World War. Anderson's view of social justice was, to the minds of many left-wingers, too "tempered and tinged" with stoicism (Wall 1965, 157) for an era in which social reformers were confronting a wide range of problems, including the conflict between big business and labor, governmental corruption on both the local and national level; immigration, poverty, racism, and the struggle for women's rights. E. A. Wright's assertion that there is "no real enlightenment in defeat" (1958, 69), epitomizes the Leftist critical viewpoint that Anderson's stoicism and poetic justice was a mockery in an age when millions of people were jobless and the New Deal–which "commanded the loyalty of the great majority of Americans, as shown by election results" (W. D. Jordan et al, 1985, 379)–was under attack by conservatives.

In the forties and early fifties the United States was involved in two costly wars, and afterwards, a worldwide ideological struggle was waged: few were exempt from or could ignore the cold war. In effect, there was no middle ground.

So strong was Anderson's belief in the inevitability of a military confrontation between the capitalist democracies and the Communist block that the former journalist turned poet-playwright took to writing political commentaries that were published and widely read. In one text he writes,

> Greece, on the frontier between Communism and capitalism, and fighting a Communist rebellion which is supported by all the nations along her northern border, has done very well to keep many of the freedoms which men hope for in a peaceful society... . To the Communists here and elsewhere there's nothing wrong with the Russian methods, for the Communists have made a religion of slavery and appear content to see Russia enslave the earth. (1948b)

Elsewhere he remarks,

> It has been obvious to both professional and amateur observers for a long time, though there seems to be a conspiracy to keep quiet about it, that unless the United States forces a showdown of military strength with Russia before Russia's military strength has caught up with ours we shall have to fight a third world war, which will destroy most of us. (1948c)

As I have already noted, *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a) reflects the way Anderson viewed the world both politically and philosophically in the early 1950s. To him, Socrates symbolized a free and independent spirit struggling against tyranny. The character is similar to the less sophisticated Brom Broeck in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a). But unlike *Barefoot in Athens*, which is a tragic drama, *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a) is a musical comedy in which the protagonist's life is spared in the end. The difference between these two plays is revealing. Whereas before the war Anderson had faith in the ultimate triumph of individualists like Brom Broeck, in the postwar period he took the opposite view: mobs egged on by tyrants ultimately made martyrs out of true individuals like Socrates. Anderson held that Socrates had been tried and sentenced to death because his open-mindedness and love of freedom had made him an easy target in an era that was dominated by Spartan (e.g., Communist) militarism.

Moreover, according to Anderson, we have a distorted image of Socrates thanks to Plato who, unlike the philosopher he described in the dialogues, "hated democracy and toward middle life became convinced that a communism controlled and governed by a specially bred and trained worker class would produce the ideal state" (1951b, 1).

As to that, Anderson concludes,

> When you read Plato's 'Republic' now you find that he is not describing a republic at all, but a communism very much like the dictatorship of thugs which

> exists in Russia today, and with many similarities to the communism which existed in Sparta in Plato's own time. Plato wanted his governing class to consist of philosophers rather than thugs, but he was never able to explain how the philosophers would get and keep power in a state. And the philosophers of Plato's ideal state act like thugs, for they use murder, torture and official living without scruple to keep the population in line.

Anderson's obsession with what he saw as the Soviet threat lasted till the end of his life. Shortly before his death he wrote,

> The United States is facing the greatest danger and most fearful challenge in all its history. I think that it is true. If the Russians win the game of power politics they are playing against us we shall be a second, or third, or tenth-rate power. Democracies aren't emotionally equipped for tyranny. (1958)

In my opinion, Anderson's obsession with Communists made him lose touch with his art. Moreover, the critics in particular did not applaud his cold war jingoism; and the success of Arthur Miller's plays showed that people were more interested in hearing about industrial greed and corruption during the war (*All My Sons*); the illusion behind the American dream (*Death of a Salesman*); and the mass hysteria engendered by the McCarthy era in (*The Crucible*) than about the Soviet menace.

Anderson's jingoism contradicted his position in defense of individualism, coming as it did at a time when investigations by the House Committee on Un-American Activities were violating the very spirit of independent thinking that Anderson claimed to admire. If one considers also that Tennessee Williams' plays were ushering in a new kind of poetic theater, based on poetry in prose, and that Anderson had given up on verse drama as he had on pacifism and anarchism, it is plain to see why Anderson's suffered after the Second World War.

In the end, Anderson's search for a "higher realism" and a style that would bridge the great classics with the modern theater was supplanted by the hard-hitting realism of another generation of American playwrights. As a result, the product of his efforts to change the style of drama in America can be found today not on the theater stages around the country but on the library shelves.

4. *Gods of the Lightning* and *Winterset*

The earliest play on record about the Sacco-Vanzetti trial is *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a)[1] by Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings. The play was inspired by what H. E. Woodbridge describes as "a deep indignation at the travesty of justice in the Sacco-Vanzetti affair" (1945, 58-9). C. H. Nannes observes that it opened in New York city on 24 October 1928, coming "to the Broadway stage when the echoes of the case had not yet died down" (1960, 92).

Gods of the Lightning (1928a) is set in an industrialized area of the United States in the 1920s. Macready and Capraro are labor union leaders who are supporting a strike in a local mill. Like Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, they are accused of murdering a payroll carrier. In the ensuing trial, false evidence is used to get the men convicted and sentenced to death. V. Wall describes *Gods of the Lightning* as being "a bitter, searching melodrama but it is primarily a play of journalistic comment on the injustice of the conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti" (1965, 157). Furthermore, Woodbridge notes that it is Anderson's "only thesis play," adding it "was probably handicapped in the theatre by the intense feeling which the case aroused" (1945, 59).Subsequently, the drama closed after a mere 29 performances. In Woodbridge's opinion this was because "it was tagged as a piece of radical propaganda, and could not get a hearing on its dramatic merits, which are not very considerable."

[1] The drama can be found in *Twenty-Five Best Plays of the Modern Theatre,* edited by John Gassner (1949a).

E. J. R. Isaacs contends that "*Gods of the Lighting* was a noble-hearted venture, but not a good enough play to do the job it set out to do. It was a propagandist's play," and she adds,

> But facts and anger, even in a noble cause, do not make good plays. Men and women who cared about what happened to Sacco and Vanzetti, or about abstract justice, cared about *Gods of the Lightning*. Others said, 'Too bad, but what's done cannot be undone. They were anarchists anyway. Not a very good play. They're dead; to whom can it matter now?' (1935, 816)

In the play, Anderson and Hickerson obviously sympathize with the anarchists' position. However, it is obvious that the playwrights have no faith in the ultimate triumph revolutionary anarchism. Suvorin, the old anarchist, tells the prosecutor and judge,

> You would rather pin this crime on a radical than on a criminal. It suits your plans better. The radicals are not criminals. They are young fools who think they are saving humanity. They think they will change government and bring in the millennium. (M. Anderson 1949, 569)

Suvorin has lost his faith in the ultimate triumph of social justice. His speech gains more significance when one considers that Anderson and Hickerson wrote it with the recent deaths of Sacco and Vanzetti fresh on their minds. Furthermore, *The Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti* were published in 1928. It is possible that at least one of the playwrights would have read them, and was familiar with Vanzetti's famous final testimony:

> I am not guilty of these two crimes, but I never committed a crime in my life,–I have never stolen and I have never killed and I have never spilt blood, and I have fought against crime, and I have fought and I have sacrificed myself even to eliminate the crimes that the law and the church legitimate and sanctify. (M.D. Frankfurter and G. Jackson 1956, 377)

In *Gods of the Lightning*, (1928a) Macready and Capraro are innocent. But although the play shows traits that would later appear in other works by Anderson (i.e., martyrs, injustice in the courts, abuse of power, corrupt figures of authority), it cannot be taken as one of Anderson's major works for two reasons: Anderson was co-author of the play, and it was pamphletary, a "journalistic dramatization of the Sacco-Vanzetti trial" (Shivers 1985, 4). Perhaps what is most significant about the *Gods of the Lightning* is how it differs from *Winterset* (1940a).

In *Winterset* (1940a), young Mio Romagna is trying to locate the perpetrators of a murder for which his father, Bartolomeo (an anarchist), was charged and ultimately executed. He meets Judge Gaunt, who is losing his mind from the guilt his having sentenced the innocent man to death is causing him. Mio eventually discovers that the gangster Trock and his band are guilty of the crime. In the meantime, Mio falls in love with Miriamne, whose brother, Garth, witnessed the murder but never testified about it. After a mock court session on stage in which Mio accuses the Judge of having wittingly condemned an innocent man to die, the boy announces that he is going to report his findings to the authorities. Mio and his lover are subsequently gunned down by Trock and his gangsters after Judge Gaunt has been escorted safely away by the police.

What was represented as a travesty of justice in the earlier play remains the basis of *Winterset* (1940a). But the playwright's attitude towards his audience in the later play has changed significantly. Whereas in *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) the dramatists assumed their audiences would react favorably to a blatant denouncement of injustice (they did not), in *Winterset*, a more cautious Anderson transformed the innocent victims into martyr figures, and pitted them against a complex figure–Judge Gaunt. As H. E. Woodbridge observes, though "the author is still obsessed by the Sacco-Vanzetti case", in the later play Anderson gives "prominence to Judge Gaunt" (1945, 63).

As was earlier mentioned, *Winterset* (1940a) and *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) were just two of several plays by Anderson that deal with judicial unfairness. A. T. Tees (1970) points out that the subject of injustice and the faultiness of the legal system in general was one of Anderson's favorite topics. Thus *Winterset* and *Gods of the Lightning*, though different in the way they treat the Sacco-Vanzetti case, both are indictments against courtroom jurisprudence.

However, where *Gods of the Lighting* is a direct indictment against injustice, written in prose and direct statements, *Winterset* treats the Sacco-Vanzetti case obliquely and in verse. R. L. Gilbert notes, "Many critics saw in *Winterset* a regression from Anderson's previous treatment of the Sacco-Vanzetti case" (1970, 34). On a similar note, C. H. Nannes sustains, "*Gods of the Lightning* was an angry play, a play that came searing hot from an event whose shadow was still present," while *Winterset* "represents a change from high to low tempo, from rapid and tense action to action subordinated to philosophical speculation" (1960, 94).

In both *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) and *Winterset (1940a)* Anderson defends anarchy. Wall asserts, "His defense of anarchy itself indicates a very radical stripe in his make-up" (1965, 171). Moreover, that Anderson "could rise to such a vigorous defense of Sacco and Vanzetti places him at once in the 'liberal' camp." Nevertheless, in *Winterset* the playwright has obviously tempered his consideration of social injustice since writing *Gods of the Lighting*, and tinged his second Sacco-Vanzetti drama "with the stoicism which has colored so many of his later plays" (157).

But though stoicism pervades the later play, *Winterset*, the play, like *Gods of the Lightning* before it, takes a stand against governmental abuse of power. On that point Anderson does not waver.

As I have already said, Anderson was no believer in the remedies of government or state institutions till the Second World War. Additionally, he had little faith in the judicial system. Nor did he believe in the working class revolution; for to his mind it too was anchored to notions of changing, not abolishing, a strong, centralized government. In *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) he showed how much he admired Macready and Capraro, the two anarchists condemned to die; but later he also showed that he admired Mary Queen of Scotland and Joan of Arc, whom he considered victims of those who lust for power–people like Judge Gaunt, Elizabeth Tudor and Henry VIII, who to Anderson's mind are neither totally sinister nor absolutely corrupt, but great worldly figures.

Anderson's struggle, then, was not political as much as philosophical. He defends Macready and Capraro as individuals, not for their politics; he admires Romagna, but, like Joan of Arc, the character is of a goodness that is not of this earth. To the playwright's mind, the worldly are invariably in positions of power. The struggle for power, whether it be on the Left or the Right of the political spectrum, must eventually produce someone like Judge Gaunt or Henry VIII or Joseph Stalin. Anderson seems to be saying in both *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) and in *Winterset (1940a)* that people like Sacco and Vanzetti, Capraro and Macready, and Bartolomeo and Mio Romagna inevitably become victims of the worldly lust for power of others; and that no political party or government on earth can prevent this from happening.

Thus the protagonists of these plays seem like martyrs. K. Tynan argues that this is not only characteristic of Anderson, but also of American playwrights in the 1930s. Tynan observes, "Their heroes were victims, such as Mio in *Winterset*, and they devoted themselves to dramatising the protests of minorities"; and as the author sees it, "The mission of martyrology has been taken up by the younger generation, by Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams" (1961, 257).

Many of Anderson's dramas essentially repeat the same idea–expressed in embryonic form in *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a), and more elaborately in *Winterset*(1940a)–that the powerful who govern live off the martyrs of this earth. Hence, power is administered by a corrupt legal system in *Gods of the Lightning* and *Winterset*; it is used for the imperialistic designs of the United States government in *Night over Taos* (1940g), and it motivates the ruthlessness of the Crown in *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d), *Mary of Scotland* (1940e) and *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a). In all of these plays there is a martyr figure. Furthermore, the worldly figures and the martyrs are shown to be invariably locked in a mortal struggle that inevitably brings the martyr to a glorious death, and the power grabber to an ignominious triumph. The owners of the Mills in *Gods of the Lighting* triumph by having the strike leaders condemned in court and legally murdered; and the corrupt system that Judge Gaunt defends by sending Romagna to his death in *Winterset* carries on, as does the state, along with the judges, and the police officers that defend it.

The Shakespearianisms notwithstanding, a stir was raised in the 1930s over the figure of Judge Gaunt, representing Judge Webster Thayer–the man who condemned Sacco and Vanzetti to die in the electric chair. But in the postwar era, few would agree with G. Vernon that in the magistrate, "Maxwell Anderson has truly touched the heights–and plumbed to the depths," because "in the subtlety of his thought, in the intensity of his torment, Judge Gaunt is a figure that is unforgettable" (1936, 218).

E. Flexner criticizes the intruding "sentimentalization of Judge Gaunt" (1969, 110), and she finds Gaunt to be inconsistent with logic. She observes, "It was largely due to Gaunt that Mio's father was sent to the chair," and yet the judge's "pitiable condition cannot fail to arouse compassion;" and moreover, "dramatically he is invested with considerable nobility" (107). The author disapproves of the way the judge's character diminishes Mio (110).

In my opinion, Judge Gaunt is consistent with the tragic figures Anderson created in his Tudor dramas–dual characters for abstract heroes, about which I will explain in more depth in Chapter Four. Briefly, the tragic hero of *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) is an abstract blending of both Elizabeth and Essex. Similarly, in *Mary of Scotland* (1940e) Mary and Elizabeth are the two faces of the abstract tragic hero of the play; and Anne and Henry VIII in *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) have also been shown to coalesce into the abstract tragic figure that neither of them alone can represent, but which Anderson believed was incumbent on a tragedy to depict. Like these plays, *Winterset* (1940a) has a martyr figure, Mio Romagna, and a worldly survivor, Judge Gaunt. The judge uses every means to defend the power he represents. In this sense, Gaunt is no different from Elizabeth or Henry VIII. Furthermore, like the Tudors, Gaunt falls as a result of his fatal flaw: a lust for power; but his fall does not cause him to die, as it also does not bring about the deaths of Elizabeth or Henry VIII. Gaunt's tragic fault has made him lose his mind; he wanders about in the rain, only to be rescued by the agents of the law who will ultimately lock him away somewhere for his own safety. His–like Elizabeth's and Henry's–is an unenviable triumph.

Those critics who, like Woodbridge, feel that "Judge Gaunt is an excrescence on the play" and only "distracts attention from the main theme–the struggle in Mio between his duty to avenge his father and his love for Miriamne" (1945, 63), are right as long *Winterset* (1940a) is seen as being a melodrama. Furthermore, if, as in Luis Araujo's play "Vanzetti" (n.d.), the judge is portrayed as a full-fledged villain, with no saving grace, then the play should be considered as such. However, there is a depth of character in *Winterset* that Araujo's *Vanzetti* utterly lacks. No one can pity the judge in the latter play–there is no trace of humanity in him. Araujo's judge is a genuine melodramatic villain; when he makes his entrance on stage, one wants to boo and hiss him off in no time. One would like to do the same with Anderson's Judge Gaunt; however, the playwright's text does not allow the spectator do so. For Anderson has

made Gaunt in the image of the Judge Webster Thayer that W. G. Thompson, Sacco and Vanzetti's defense lawyer, once described as a "narrow minded man" who was "full of prejudice" and was "carried away with his fear of reds, which captured about 90 per cent of the American people" (O. K. Fraenkel 1969, 546). As to that, soon after sentencing Sacco and Vanzetti, Judge Thayer is quoted as having told reporters, "I have done my duty as God gave the power to see it" (H. B. Ehrmann 1969, 475); and "I want to be through with this case. I want to have the happiness of life to which I am entitled." This was the judge Anderson (mistakenly in my opinion, as I will explain in Chapter Four) sought to represent in *Winterset.*

Similarly, V. Wall explains that Anderson would have his audience believe "The judge who condemns the anarchists to death is himself a victim of class justice," and therefore, "he is not made the villain of the play" (1965, 166). Furthermore, "Anderson's pity and understanding of both the judge and the condemned anarchist as victims of class justice recommends him as a tolerant, and perhaps very shrewd, critic of the radical movements of the third decade."

For some critics, Anderson's capacity to be impartial is one of his strongest points. Wall sustains, "This impartiality, this passionate sense of justice which is revealed in so many of his plays is one of Anderson's noblest qualities" (167).

Nevertheless, Anderson's sentimental treatment of the judge lends credence to R. C. Roby's contention that *Winterset* (1940a) is "a sentimental problem-play with some of the trappings of tragedy" (1957, 197). The author is right to feel that the death of Mio and his lover Miriamne at the end "is a pitiful deceit." For Judge Gaunt has likewise earned the audience's pity. Thus the sense of tragedy is diluted, and there is no hero: that is, if one considers the drama from the traditional perspective of tragedy as described by Aristotle, which critics tend to use as a guideline in their reviews. I also feel that there is no hero in *Winterset* (1940a). As a tragedy, the drama fails because,

as I will explain in Chapter Four, Anderson's hero is an unsuccessfully drawn abstraction that is the result of the dual character dyad represented by the dramatic figures Mio and Judge Gaunt in opposition.

CHAPTER THREE

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TRACES OF ANARCHISM

I have already pointed out that, in the prewar period, Anderson held an anarchistic point of view. In this chapter I will explain how anarchism is represented in several of his plays, and how this contributed in part to his being ostracized by conservatives, liberals, Leftists, and Communists alike.

1. The Three Strands of Anarchism in Anderson's Plays

Anarchy is a term that is often loosely used, as when J. Gassner asserts, "The first ruling idea of modern theatre, and one that is still dominant and most productive, although also conducive to some anarchy, is the idea of anarchy" (1956, 7). But the principles of anarchy also respond to the notion of independent communities voluntarily cooperating without the agency of the state.

In several plays Anderson depicts one or more of three types of anarchism: transcendental (especially Thoreauvian), individualistic, and violent, which is often associated with the word "terrorist," and brings to mind such violent events as the Haymarket Square massacre of last century and the bombing spree in 1919 and 1920 that intensified the "Red Scare" and culminated in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. The three strands of anarchy appear together in the following plays by Anderson: *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a) and *Journey to Jerusalem* (1940k). Two strands (transcendentalism and individualism) are jointly represented in the following plays: *First Flight* (1925a), *The Buccaneer* (1925b), *Outside Looking In* (1925c), *Both Your Houses* (1933); *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), *Valley Forge* (1940f), *High Tor* (1940c); *Journey to Jerusalem* (1940k) and *Barefoot in Athens*

Sacco-Vanzetti case. Both dramas plainly show the impact the event had on the playwright. In both dramas, Anderson reveals a strong compassion for the two immigrant anarchists.

The Sacco-Vanzetti trial began on 31 May 1921 in the town of Dedham, Massachusetts, a few miles south of the city of Boston. For seven years the event was a cause célèbre, during which time the trial, convictions, petitions for a retrial and a stay of execution captivated not only the attention of the American public but of people all over the world. As M. E. Prior observes, the Sacco-Vanzetti case was an "episode which touched on some of the most serious issues of the life of our times" (1966, 324).

Many Americans believed Sacco and Vanzetti had been treated unjustly. Sixteen years after their death, *Vogue* magazine referred to the two anarchists as having been "legally killed for their convictions, not their crimes" (Unsigned 1943b, 81). However, P. Avrich asserts that though Sacco and Vanzetti may well have been innocent of the South Braintree murders, they nevertheless participated in various bombing attempts in 1919 and 1920 (1991); and F. Russell holds that Sacco, though not Vanzetti, may have been guilty of the South Braintree murders (1986). Additionally, B. Jackson uneasily expresses some measure of doubt: "Were they guilty or not? I had no doubts whatsoever in the beginning. They were clearly innocent"(1981, xi). But he adds, "And yet as I investigated the case, I found my mind changing–often against my will."

Other authors, though, continue to defend the innocence of the two Italian immigrants (W. Young and D. E. Kaiser 1985; H. B. Ehrmann 1969, D. Rappaport 1992) who were executed at midnight, on 23 August 1927, amidst an uproar of national and international protest.

Before the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, the "Red Scare" had swept the country in large part because of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's highly publicized crusade against suspected radicals in 1919 and 1920. With the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918 as a basis, Palmer ordered his agents to round up thousands of suspects in cities across the country, disregarding the basic civil liberties of many of them. Aliens were especially targeted during the campaign. Thus, when Fredrick Parmenter, a paymaster, and a guard Alessandro Beradelli were gunned down in a robbery in South Braintree, foreign radicals immediately became the prime suspects.

The Sacco-Vanzetti trial came on the heels of two years of national hysteria. From the very beginning of the trial it was feared that the two Italians would not get a fair trial, for they were both aliens and radicals. Judge Webster Thayer–later personified in Anderson's *Winterset* (1940a)–presiding over the trial and subsequent hearings for a retrial, "was accused by some of 'extreme bias' in conducting the case" (C. H. Nannes 1960, 92). In addition, P. Avrich notes,

> Outside the courtroom, during the trial and the appeals which followed, he made remarks that bristled with animosity towards the defendants ('Did you see what I did with those anarchistic bastards the other day? I guess that will hold them a while')... . (1991, 4-5)

In the *Transcript of the Record of the Trial*, W. G. Thompson and H. B. Ehrmann, counsel for Sacco and Vanzetti, attest that "the state of mind and conduct of Judge Thayer made a fair trial impossible," adding, "It has been established by incontrovertible evidence that from the very beginning he entertained a strong prejudice and hostility against both defendants by reasons of their anarchistic views" (Massachusetts Dept. of Justice 1929, 5352). Governor Alvan T. Fuller called on a number of influential citizens to review the case, in light of evidence that Judge Thayer was prejudiced against the defendants for their anarchistic views. Finally, the governor appointed a special advisory committee to review the case. In the end, the

committee sanctioned the conviction. Avrich notes, "The Lowell Committee, as it became known, though finding Judge Thayer guilty of a 'grave breach of official decorum' in his derogatory references to the defendants, nevertheless concluded that justice had been done" (1991, 4).

In his book *The Sacco-Vanzetti Case* (1969), O. K. Fraenkel asserts that Thompson, a prestigious attorney-at-law in Massachusetts, told the Lowell Committee, "I have known Judge Thayer all my life... . I could not honestly say that I think Judge Thayer is all the time a bad man or that he is a confirmed wicked man. Not at all. That isn't so" (1969, 546). And he adds,

> His categories of thought are few and simple–reds and conservatives, and 'soldier boys.' No margin between them. No intermediate ground where people cannot be placed in the one class or the other. He knows only a few simple things; the country, the war, the reds. That is the way I size him up.

Taking the conciliatory position that Anderson also eventually takes when depicting the judge in *Winterset* (1940a), Thompson underscores his belief that deep down Judge Thayer is not a sinister being. "Not that he intended to be wicked, or that he intended to be bad. I think he thought that he was rendering a great public service. As he said to Benchley: 'I will protect the citizens against the reds'."

Thompson's description of Judge Thayer coincides with Anderson's Judge Gaunt in *Winterset (1940a)*. It is possible that Anderson had read Fraenkel's book, which was first published in 1931. In any case, that Fraenkel's book was edited at all shows that there were readers enough to warrant its publication; and that Anderson wrote a play about the case a few years later leads me to think that the playwright knew that there would be an audience interested in seeing the subject represented on stage.

Moreover, in writing *Winterset* (1940a), Anderson annexed not only the figures of Judge Thayer (Gaunt), and Bartololmeo Vanzetti (Bartolomeo Romagna) but also of

Sacco's son Dante. Shortly before dying, Vanzetti wrote a letter to Dante urging him to

> remember these things; we are not criminals; they convicted us on a frame-up; they denied us a new trial; and if we will be executed after seven years, four months and seventeen days of unspeakable torture and wrong, it is for what I have already told you; because we were for the poor and against the exploitation and oppression of the man by the man. (M. D. Frankfurter and G. Jackson 1956, 323)

Mio Romagna, the protagonist of *Winterset* (1940a), inevitably comes to mind when one reads the closing words of Vanzetti's letter to the boy. "The day will come when you will understand the atrocious cause of the above written words, in all its fullness. Then you will honor us." Ironically, unlike Anderson's Mio Romagno–who dies trying to avenge his father's death–Dante Sacco grew up to be a respectable member of his community. F. Russell notes, "He belonged to the Norwood Chamber of Commerce and the Businessmen's Bowling league. Sundays he ushered at the neocolonial brick Congregational Church" (1986, 184).

Other authors wrote poems, plays and novels about the case. Louis Joughin has written one of the most extensive reports available on the subject of the creative literature the event inspired. In it he asserts,

> The Sacco-Vanzetti case has become a powerful attractive force. The quality of the two central figures and the passions which moved their ardent defenders have led to the writing of sympathetic plays, poems, and novels. (Joughlin and Morgan 1978, 501)

Joughlin sustains that there are 144 published poems on Sacco and Vanzetti, though he considers only twelve of them to be worthy of inclusion in "any anthology of significant American verse" (385): Witter Bynner's "The Condemned"; Countee Cullen's "Not Sacco and Vanzetti"; Edna St. Vincent Millay's three poems "Justice Denied in Massachusetts," "Fear," and "Two Sonnets in Memory"; E. Merrill Root's

"Lost Eden"; Malcom Cowley's "For Bartholomew's Day"; Arthur Davison Ficke's "Prayer in Massachusetts"; James Rorty's "Gentlemen of Massachusetts"; Brent Dow Allinson's "For the Honor of Massachusetts"; and finally, Lola Ridge's "Two in the Death House" and "Three Men Die."

Joughlin further claims, "The chief literary use of the case has been in prose fiction" (421). He cites related works by the following eight authors: Louis Thinet's *Le Drame Sacco-Vanzetti*; a collection of satiric conversations by C. E. S. Wood entitled "God's in His Heaven–All's Wrong With the World" in his *Heavenly Discourse*; Upton Sinclair's *Boston*; H. G. Wells' *Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island*; Nathan Asch's *Pay Day*; Bernard De Voto's *We Accept the Pleasure*; John Dos Passos's *The Big Money*; Ruth McKenney's *Jake Home*; and James T. Farrell's *Bernard Clare.*

Finally, the author lists six plays that show a "variety of treatment with regards to the Sacco-Vanzetti case" (393). These include the following dramas: *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a), by Maxwell Anderson and Harold Hickerson; Pierre Yrondy's *Sept ans d'agonie: le drame Sacco-Vanzetti*; Samuel N. Behrman's *Rain from Heaven*; Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset* (1940a); James Thurber and Elliot Nugent's *The Male Animal* (1939); and *The Sacco-Vanzetti Case*, in the radio series *Those Sensational Years!*

Moreover, to this day audiences still find the Sacco-Vanzetti case a subject of interest. Recently, the drama *Vanzetti*, by the Spanish playwright Luis Araujo, was successfully staged in theaters across Spain, including El Micalet in Valencia and the Sala Cuarta Pared in Madrid, as well as at the Carabanchel prison, where Rosana Torres reports for the newspaper *El País* that the prisoners "aplaudían y vitoreaban" (1993).

On 23 August 1977 a Proclamation of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts declared that Sacco and Vanzetti were unfairly convicted and executed. But the Proclamation signed by the then Governor of Massachusetts, Michael S. Dukakis, came short of an actual pardon. The Sacco family has since been trying to get the President of the United States to grant Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti a full pardon.

8. The Erstwhile Anarchist

Radical Marxist-Leninists and Bible waving preachers to the contrary, today few authors would risk brandishing a miraculous key to resolve the great problems facing the world on the threshold of the twentieth century. The facts stand: miasmic blights have always been around, like wars and famine, stagecraft democracies and puppet Popular Republics–thinly disguised autocracies both–and Fascism. But how one interprets the facts still determines the overall view.

Two decades separate the Russian Revolution enthusiast who wrote the poem "Sic Semper" (1917) and the Popular Front opponent whose assault on Stalinism in the late 1930s became part and parcel of his cold war forays against Communists in letters and essays and plays. Anderson did not live to see the end of the cold war. It would be incongruous to make conjectures as to how the playwright who had confronted Communism so squarely would have evolved in the years that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. But perhaps the incongruity would seem less, if we were to consider Anderson's works. It is significant that, with the exception of *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a), for all his harping in public about the Communist threat, none of his postwar Broadway plays dealt with the issue.

As I have already mentioned, seven years after *Gods of the Lighting* (1928a) was dismissed by critics, in large part for being too quixotic for Broadway, Anderson rehashed the Sacco-Vanzetti theme. However, in *Winterset* (1940a) he took a contrary

(1951a). Finally, the violence reminiscent of the early years of the American labor movement is represented in his only anarcho-syndicalist play: *Gods of the Lightning*.

Because Anderson's anarchistic views ran contrary to those of the liberals, Socialists, Communists, and conservatives of his generation, he was isolated, left alone in his individuation in the late 1930s. *High Tor* (1940c) is indicative of the playwright's growing sense of aloneness during that period. One of his most successful plays critically, artistically and economically, *High Tor* takes place on a mountain overlooking the Hudson River, just a few miles north of New York City–not far from where the playwright himself lived. Van Dorn, a Thoreauvian figure (whose companions are an old Indian, the last survivor of his tribe, and the ghosts of a Dutch community that has been marooned there since the 17th century) does all he can to keep the real estate agents from gobbling up his land. But in the end he comes to the conclusion that, like his Indian companion, he is the last of his kind in the region, and because further resistance would be in vain. While the ship that the Dutch spirits have been waiting centuries for arrives and they sail away forever, Van Dorn surrenders his mountain to the rapacious land developers, and heads out west where an individual can supposedly still live as he sees fit.. Van Dorn declares to those who do not share his views, "I want to have it back the way it was/ before you came here. And I won't get that. I know/ what kind of fool I look to all of you... . But I'll be a fool" (1940c, 126).

Knickerbocker Holiday (1938a), an earlier play which M. D. Bailey describes as "a genuine expression of the American spirit, the spirit of laughter in the face of danger" (1970, 76), is a rollicking comedy, that includes the first two strands of anarchism and alludes to the third–as when, for example, Brom, suggests they "throw out" (by force of arms if need be) the professional politicians (Anderson 1938a, 88). The third strand, that which the Sacco-Vanzetti case represented, is clearly seen in *Gods of the Lighting* (1928a) and obliquely approached in *Winterset* (1940a)–a play whose

protagonist, like Van Dorn in *High Tor (1940c)*, yields in the end to the modern world.

Journey to Jerusalem (1940k) is the last of Anderson's plays to depict the three strands of anarchism: Ishmael, an outlaw from the mountains, struggles against the Roman Empire. Like McCloud–and the volunteers fighting against Franco–in *Key Largo* (1940b), he loses his life defending the victims of tyranny; but unlike McCloud, there is never any doubt in Ishmael's mind that absolute authority must be challenged at whatever price.

Finally, it is interesting to compare the prewar *Journey to Jerusalem* (1940k) with his postwar drama *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a), a transcendentalist play. Whereas the former play suggests the need to use force at times, in the latter play, Socrates, who is condemned to die because he is a free thinker, stoically accepts the verdict and goes quietly to his death: there is no allusion to the third strand of anarchism in this drama.

The strands of anarchism are woven into these texts not as ideology but rather as a personal philosophy, which Anderson articulates in his essays *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers* (1939) and *Off Broadway: Essays About the Theater* (1947a). However, nowhere does the playwright uphold anarchism as it was defined by such noted anarchist thinkers as Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Mijail Bakunin, and Pyotr Kropotkin. Nevertheless, strands of their anarchistic ideology frequently surface in Anderson's works.

2. Anderson in Relationship to the Anarchists

Pyotr Kropotkin, one of the leading anarchist theorists of the early twentieth century, was invited to write an essay about anarchism for the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Having lived in England for many years, Kropotkin was

familiar with the interests of his readership, and thus focused much of his essay on how anarchism evolved in Britain and the United States.

Kropotkin defines anarchism as

> the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government–harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups... . (1910, 914)

According to Kropotkin, William Godwin formulated the political and economical conceptions of anarchism in the early nineteenth century. Godwin asserted that justice is not found in courts of law, and society does not need a government, for it can function in small autonomous communities. In the 1840s Pierre-Joseph Proudhon began using the word "anarchy" to mean a society without government. But rather than Godwin's Communism, Proudhon proposed a social system based on "mutualism," in which exchanges of service would be equivalent and money would be lent without levying interests.

Kropotkin holds that "mutualism" had a precursor in America in the early nineteenth century in the writings of Josiah Warren, who additionally criticized "suppression of individuality," advocating "complete individual liberty" (915). Kropotkin further notes, "the economical, and especially the mutual-banking ideas of Proudhon found supporters and even a practical application in the United States" more than in France, where the State-Socialism of Louis Blanc and the followers of Saint-Simon "were dominating" (916).

According to Kropotkin,

> The ideas of Proudhon, especially with regards to mutual banking, corresponding with those of Josiah Warren, found a considerable following in the United States, creating quite a school, of which the main writers are Stephen

> Pearl Andrews, William Grene [*sic*], Lyander Spooner ... and several others, whose names will be found in Dr. Nettlan's *Bibliographie de l'anarchie.* (917)

Moreover, Kropotkin maintains that

> a prominent position among the Individualist Anarchists in America has been occupied by Benjamin R. Tucker, whose journal *Liberty* was started in 1881 and whose conceptions are a combination of those of Proudhon with those of Herbert Spencer. Starting from the statement that Anarchists are egoists, strictly speaking, and that every group of individuals, be it a secret league of a few persons, or the Congress of the United States, has the right to oppress all mankind, provided it has the power to do so, that equal liberty for all and absolute equality ought to be the law.

Kropotkin further observes, "Tucker thus follows Spencer, and, like him, opens ... the way for reconstituting under the heading of 'defence' all the functions of the state." As to that, Kropotkin says,

> The Individualist Anarchism of the American Proudhonians finds, however, but little sympathy amongst the working masses. Those who profess it–they are chiefly 'intellectuals'–soon realize that the *individuation* [*sic*] they so highly praise is not attainable by individual efforts, and either abandon the ranks of the Anarchists, and are driven into the liberal individualism of the classical economists, or they retire into a sort of Epicurean a-moralism, or super-man-theory ... (917)

Kropotkin returned to Russia in 1917 after having spent forty years of his life in exile, the last thirty years of which he lived in England. However, when the Bolsheviks seized power he became disenchanted. Having observed how authoritarianism was rapidly gaining ground again in his homeland, he is quoted as having told a friend, "'This buries the revolution'" (P. Avrich 1992, 12). Under the leadership of the Soviet vanguard, Communism supplanted anarchism in the world. But anarchism did not disappear. Though Lenin, and later Stalin, repressed the anarchists in Russia, and the commissars, supported by the Communist Spanish Loyalists in particular, succeeded in neutralizing the resistance of those anarchists that were not killed in the early stages

of the Civil War, and though anarchists were (and still tend to be) disparaged in Leftist and Rightist circles alike, anarchism survived as an ideological alternative in the postwar era. It contributed to Ghandi's success in India; and anarchy became a way of life for many people in the 1960s and early 1970s.

The American Benjamin R. Tucker was instrumental in propagating a kind of anarchism that many Americans found appealing in the late nineteenth century. Tucker attacked Marxism the way Mijail Bakunin had earlier done. In 1864, the International Working Men's Association was founded by "mutualists" meeting in London. The Association was divided in the 1870s between the Social Democrats, led my Karl Marx (who favored parliamentary agitation) and the anarchists, whose spokesman, Mijail Bakunin, was against parliamentary politics and sought the immediate abolition of the state. Similarly, Tucker's views were at odds with the political and economic theories of Marx, and in *Instead of a Book: A Fragmentary Exposition of Philosophical Anarchism*, and with his translations of anarchist authors, Tucker tried to present anarchism to his countrymen in a respectable light and as a viable alternative to Marxism. However, Tucker's philosophical anarchism eventually evolved into chauvinism and conservatism.

In addition to the "mutualism" of Josiah Warren–as expressed in his *True Civilization: A Subject of Vital and Serious Interest to All People*–and the genteel individualism of B. R. Tucker, anarchism in the United States, has its roots in the rugged individualism of the frontier tradition on the one hand, and in the writings of the transcendentalists R. W. Emerson (who valued insights transcending logic) and H. D. Thoreau (who supported passive resistance to governmental authority) on the other.

The violent revolutionary events in Europe in the nineteenth century had their American counterparts in such bloody incidents as the Haymarket Square bombing of

4 May 1886; and later, the assassination of President William McKinley by Leon Czolgosz, a Polish anarchist, in 1901; the bombing spree that swept across the country between 1919 and 1920; and the Sacco-Vanzetti case, which was declared an "unfair trial" in 1977 by Chief Legal Counsel, D. A. Taylor in his "Report to the Governor in the Matter of Sacco and Vanzetti" (B. Jackson 1981, 187).

More recently, "anarchism," and its near equivalent "libertarianism," are used to refer to a growing social movement in the United States, resembling traditional anarchism only in its avid opposition to centralized government. The American libertarian historian Murray N. Rothbard, asserts, "The central axiom of the libertarian creed is nonagression against anyone's person and property" (1973, 23). Additionally, he states, "If there is anything a libertarian must be squarely and totally against, it is *involuntary servitude* [*sic*]" (86), this includes military service (89); moreover, libertarians are against "laws outlawing strikes" (92); and as for taxes: "The entire system of taxation is a form of involuntary servitude" (93); furthermore, the judicial structure "rests upon *coerced* [*sic*] testimony" (95-96), and is therefore invalid. In addition, American libertarians believe in total "freedom of speech and the press" (104). Rothbard affirms that "for both the libertarian and the believer in the American Constitution the government should withdraw completely from any role or interference in all media of expression" (111); and, finally, they hold that welfare is wrong, and is the main reason why the "an ever-increasing proportion of the population lives as idle, compulsory claimants on the production of the rest of society" (160).

Other American authors have written about libertarianism as well. They include Doug Bandow–*The Politics of Envy: Statism as Theology (1994)*–and Tibor R. Machan, whose *The Libertarian Alternative: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy* (1974) presents essays by a number of American libertarian authors. Moreover, books like *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964) and other works by Ayn Rand, who claimed a sizable

readership in the United States in the 1960s, also center on individualism and strongly come out against encroachments on individual freedom by the Federal Government; as do the works of more recent authors such as R. W. Whitaker in *The New Right Papers* (1982) David Green in *The New Conservatism* (1987).

Anderson's recurrent, if displaced, anarchism harks back to Godwin and Proudhon rather than to Bakunin, who had been in favor of the total and immediate destruction of the state. Against the suppression of individuality, and in support of individual liberty above all, Anderson was ideologically in line with the American anarchists Josiah Warren and Benjamin Tucker (especially Tucker, who had defended philosophical–as opposed to revolutionary–anarchism); and like Proudhon had done in his day, Anderson supported the idea of private property, and was no admirer of the state-Socialist tradition of Louis Blanc and Saint-Simon, or of the Social Democratic theories of Marx–who vented his spleen on Proudhon in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, because, as Marx's opponent in the First International Bakunin asserted, "'Marx aborecía a Proudhon'" (H. Saña 1976, 34).

Anderson's ideology coincided with Tucker's mixed conception of Proudhon's "mutualism" and Herbert Spenser's preeminence of the individual over society. Like Tucker, Anderson differed with his left wing contemporaries, and attacked what he saw as the inherent authoritarianism of the state and of Marxist thinking; furthermore, like Tucker, Anderson became chauvinistic and conservative later in life.

G. Rabkin notes the traditional anarchistic echoes in Anderson's works. The author holds that Anderson's "anarchistic" position is

> a compound of ideas derived from Rousseau (a benevolent primitivism and a sporadic faith in the goodness of man), Proudhon (property is theft), Thoreau (civil disobedience as the corollary of freedom), and Jefferson (that government is best which governs least). (1964, 265)

The playwright embraced a kind of anarchism that displayed a keen respect for liberty (Warren), individuality (Thoreau), and private property. He was impatient with both Rightists and Leftists. But he was never one to bandy political slogans about rhetorically. In the 1930s he seemed to be the eternal rebel. However, as Rabkin notes, "Anderson is never, in the tradition of Kropotkin or Bakunin, a revolutionary anarchist; one of his perennial themes is the futility of revolutionary action."

Hence in *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a)old Suvorin refers to his comrades as "young fools" (M. Anderson 1949c, 569), and in High Tor (1940c) Van Dorn ultimately abandons his mountain to the speculators and land developers.

3. Disillusion and Seclusion

Anderson's poem, "Sic Semper," which was published in 1917, shows his early alliance with revolutionary change. In the poem he addresses "the old kings," who, "Knowing death, and white death's decree," should "lift their voices to hopeless clouds in a dolorous cry" (1917). A. S. Shivers observes that in the poem, Anderson "celebrates the Russian Revolution as symbolic of the fall of kings and tyrants everywhere" (1985, 50). The poem reveals flashes of authentic compassion for those who "have had enough of kings/ And of fools that stutter and creep,/ Of courts and of courtly things" (1917). But Anderson clearly indicates that his support of the Russian Revolution is not blind: "And not for the kings alone/ Is our fury loosed like hail;/ Let the devil look to his own/ In the day of the flashing flail/ Or we strike the invisible kings whose hearts are of gold and stone."

Anderson also warns the bankers and capitalists, "We shall drive forth with goads/ The money changers of earth." He concludes on an optimistic note: "The night of tyrants is seen in the thickening sky."

Little if any of Anderson's revolutionary fervor in 1917 remained twenty years later, as his plays *The Masque of Kings* (1940i), *Key Largo* (1940b), and *Second Overture* (1940l) reveal. Whereas in "Sic Semper" (1917) he is ecstatic and hopeful that tyrants will disappear at last ("Let the heavy waters fold like lead about them and leave no mark"), in *The Masque of Kings* he holds a pointedly different view. The events following the Russian Revolution led him to infer that revolutionaries are fallible, and when one king is removed a tyrant is quick to take his place: "Thus is mankind, at heart" (1940i, 49), says Franz Joseph to his idealistic son (1940i, 49); and in *Second Overture*, a play about the Russian Revolution, Gregor a miner who is under arrest tells Commissar Charish, "But to free a world/ Of the old oppressions, to set up a heaven on earth,/ You use the method we learned long ago/ To hate under all the Czars!" (1940l, 15).

Anderson's views in *The Second Overture* (1940l) are not unlike the ones expressed by the American immigrant anarchist Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Vanzetti asserts,

> So that it is now experimentally, historically proved what the 'damn fool anarchist' [*sic*] are saying from [*sic*] a half a century at least: The proletariat cannot become a ruling class; it can dethrone the actual ruler and place its leaders in their place, but in so doing the revolution would be in vain. (M. D. Frankfurter and G. Jackson 1956, 214)

Similarly, another American immigrant anarchist, Emma Goldman, expressed her disillusion with the Russian Revolution and strongly criticized the Soviet Union. Whereas, like Anderson she had supported the Russian Revolution in the beginning (she even helped a contingent of exiles and refugees return to their native land), she soon became critical of the tyrannous measures employed by the Soviet regime; she eventually published *My Disillusionment in Russia*, amassed "data and documents about political persecution under the Soviet dictatorship," edited pamphlets, and with

other anarchists generally made "a collective indictment of Bolshevik terror" (E. Goldman 1970, 976).

I mention Vanzetti and Goldman here only to draw attention to the fact that the anarchists were strongly critical of the Russian Revolution, after evidentiary testimony of widespread repression was revealed. Communists being statists and anarchists not, it seems therefore reasonable to assume that an anarchist–if unacknowledged–like Anderson would find himself at odds with the Soviet sympathizers of the 1930s.

It is important to stress again that Anderson's anarchistic political views ran contrary to those held by the liberals, Socialists, Communists and conservatives of his generation. Conservatives did not approve of his pacifism in *What Price Glory* (1926a); his unconventional treatment of marriage in *Saturday's Children* (1927a); his support of Sacco and Vanzetti in *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a); his denouncement of American imperialism in *Night over Taos* (1940g); and his sally against hypocrisy and racism in *The Wingless Victory* (1940h). Nor did liberals appreciate his attacks against them in *Valley Forge* (1940f), or his assaults on the critics of the liberal press in the postwar era. Similarly, Leftists were riled by the way he represented the Congress in *Both Your Houses* (1933); by his ridiculing the New Deal in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a); by the way he handled the subject of the Sacco-Vanzetti case in *Winterset* (1940a), and his seemingly complacent attitude toward McCarthyism. Finally, the Communists could hardly be expected to favor a playwright who broadly assailed revolution in *The Masque of Kings* (1940i) and pointedly condemned the Soviet Union in *The Second Overture* (1940l), *Key Largo* (1940b), and *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a).

Anderson's anarchism pitted him against conservatives, liberals, Leftists and Communists alike. Rightists in general, and liberals, Leftists, and Communists in

particular, are all united by a common belief in statism; that is, they would all agree that there can be no alternative to the state and to governmental rule. Hence, their rhetoric and ideological jostling all have the same aim: most broadly, to gain political power and wield it over their adversaries. As M. Bookchin points out in *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship*, they all wed politics "so closely to the state ... that its practice is seen as unavoidable" (1987, 31). He further adds, "Modern social ideologies tend to blend politics with the state almost unthinkingly" (32); and he concludes that many people, "by virtue of the all-pervasive role the state plays in their private lives, draw no distinction between 'government' and 'society,'" and likewise neither do they make "theoretical distinctions between society and the state."

Additionally, E. S. Herman and N. Chomsky affirm that the workings of the mass media

> serve to mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity, and that their choices, emphases, and omissions can often be understood best, and sometimes with striking clarity and insight, by analyzing them in such terms. (1988, xi)

Thus, the dominance of capitalists, liberals, Socialists and Communists (of the Right and the Left in general, with their essential faith in the state and government), in relationship to a reduced number of anarchists, sparked the sort of exclusion that Anderson's prewar works were subjected to in the postwar era. Notwithstanding J. F. Wharton's assertion that Anderson was unable to adapt to the "artistic revolution" that was "bearing down on the drama" in the early postwar years (1974, 213), the dominant sectors of society–which included "a number of voluble drama reviewers" whose "fulsome praise was reserved for an entirely different type of play"–excluded the dramatist in the postwar period, especially in light of the political divisiveness of the cold war years.

As I have already pointed out, Anderson fell into disfavor with the media after writing essays like "Thoughts about the Critics," in which the playwright claims that the theater critics of New York "constitute a censorship board for the theater of the United States" (1947a, 4); and he concludes, "Any group that stands between the public and an art form, dictating what the public may see, is a damaging force in a democracy" (5). Furthermore, he was ignored to some extent by scholars because, as G. Rabkin notes, "Anderson's work now seems less experimental than derivative" (1964, 263); and by other authors because of his "essential paradox" (265)–as when in wanting to rein in the power of the press, he fell into a gross contradiction by condoning the governmental abuse of power in the early postwar years. I must insist again that, to my way of thinking, the position of those who would ignore Anderson for personal and ideological reasons was strengthened by the fact that Anderson reneged on his own anarchistic beliefs.

4. Anderson and the Group Theatre: A Parting of Ways

The Group Theatre was founded by Harold Clurman, Cheryl Crawford, and Lee Strasberg during the Great Depression, when many people "were inclined to radicalism" (H. Clurman 1959, 3). Elia Kazan asserts that some of the members of the Group Theatre shared the Communist world view, which Clifford Odets' agitprop one-act play *Waiting for Lefty* effectively depicted (1990, 125). G. Bordman quotes Cheryl Crawford as having said, "Never before or since have I heard such a tumultuous reaction from an audience. The response was wild, fantastic. It raised the roof"(1987, 427). Bordman asserts, "At a time when many Americans were being polarized politically, this play was one of the most effective propaganda pieces for the left."

Like many Communist sympathizers at the time, Odets bridled at people whose political opinions differed from those of the Party. Hal Cantor narrates an incident that occurred when Odets visited the Anderson in 1935.

> A violent quarrel between the two playwrights erupted concerning the possibility of a humanist society developing in Soviet Russia. Anderson believed that Russia would soon become 'a frank tyranny' and said so. Disturbed and irritated, Odets lost control of himself and shouted at Anderson, '... You are a damned reactionary, a fascist!' Deutsch was horrified at his attack on her close friends and had to drag the enraged and abusive Odets away as he continued to shout epithets at Anderson from the driveway. (1991, 34-5)

Before Hitler and Stalin made a pact in 1939, many Americans supported the Soviet cause. Intrigued by the results of the Revolution in the Soviet Union, Group Theatre cofounders Harold Clurman and Cheryl Crawford (like John Dos Passos and other Leftists) traveled to the Soviet Union in 1935. (The year *Waiting for Lefty* was produced.)

As I pointed out earlier, Anderson was associated with the Group Theatre. In 1931 he contributed almost two thousand dollars to help finance the Group Theatre's first summer at Brookfield Center (28). The following year, the Group Theatre produced *Night Over Taos* (1940g), and in the summer of 1934, they staged *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a). As a Group Theatre Associate, Anderson offered to let them produce *Winterset* (1940a). But the script was refused. Cantor observes, "Clurman made a serious mistake–which he later acknowledged–by rejecting *Winterset*; he was uncomfortable with what he called its "'Elizabethan East Side'" (1991, 34).

After their production of *Night Music* failed, the Group Theatre disbanded in 1940. The former members, though, scattered among the many walks of theater life in the United States, would continue to be active and influential in the decades that followed. Former Group cofounder Lee Strasberg was influential in establishing the Method-driven style of acting that is still preeminent in the United States. Strongly

psychological and realistic, the style is the artistic opposite of Anderson's poetic theater.

Additionally, aside from being a successful theater director and producer, Harold Clurman also became an influential drama critic for the *New Republic* from 1949 to 1953, and for many years was also with the *Nation*: both publications were popular reading among educated, white middle-class Americans with liberal and Leftist leanings. It is significant that, in an article he wrote for *The Tulane Drama Review* in late 1959 entitled "The Theatre of the Thirties," Clurman disregards Maxwell Anderson and asserts that "historically speaking," Group Theatre member Clifford Odets was "the dramatist of the thirties *par excelence*. His immediate sources of inspiration, his point of view, his language, his import and perhaps some of his weaknesses are typical of the thirties" (1959, 6).

That Clurman the drama critic ignored Anderson in his summary of the American theater in the 1930s shows how far apart the former Group Associate and the Group Theatre leader had grown. The relations of these two men with one another being strained even further by political events in the 1950s (most notably with respect to the Soviet threat and HUAC), it seems reasonable to suppose that the critic would disregard the dramatist. I maintain that the treatment the playwright received by influential authors like Harold Clurman, and the preeminence of former Group Theatre cofounder Lee Strasberg's acting method, certainly contributed to Anderson's being overlooked by young scholars and aspiring theater professionals in the years following the playwright's death.

5. Anderson's Anti-Communism

As we have already seen, the hardship brought on by the Great Depression stimulated

unrest among the various social classes, and as a result, people from all walks of life became more politicized. For some, as J. Coy observes, literature became "an instrument serving social protest or the revolutionary purposes of its authors" (1980, 115).

When Anderson wrote *Winterset* (1940a) in 1935, no one thought that Hitler and Stalin would sign a treaty, or that the United States and the Soviet Union would become allies. The tumultuous events leading up to the Second World War forced many people to alter their views–some radically so. Maxwell Anderson was one of them. As I have already noted, the war years marked a wrenching transition in the playwright's career.

In the years following the Second World War, Anderson believed that war between the Soviet Union and the United States was inevitable. In a letter to the Playwrights' Company lawyer, John F. Wharton–who along with Elmer Rice argued with Anderson about the blacklisting of Communists–Anderson defends the measure, affirming "that the Communists, while waging a real though undeclared war against us, have gophered themselves inside the U. S. into our key labor unions, into our government, into the publishing field" (L. G. Avery 1979, 257).

In another letter, this time to his Playwrights' Company associate Elmer Rice in early 1952, Anderson explains his position:

> As I see it, the Communist Party is an international Ku Klux Klan devoted to the extirpation of all human rights and liberties among nonmembers and the destruction of all governments which it does not control. It has enslaved the peoples of Russia and her neighbors, it has murdered millions, it is conducting a war against the United Nations, it has undercover agents in every country trained to destroy and taught that any method that wins for their despotism is a good method. Some of these agents sit on the Council of the Authors' League and protest vehemently when their continued advocacy of Russian policy brings them into disrepute. I think it should bring them into disrepute. I think they should be ousted from any position of influence or honor which they hold. I

> think this should be done legally and deliberately, and why an honest man like yourself thinks it should not be done is what I cannot understand. (256)

He concludes,

> The heart of our argument, of course, is that you believe our local Communists to be acceptable citizens, while I believe them to be enemy agents, engaged in wrecking us from within. The evidence on this side is over-whelming. I think you are ignorant of it or prefer to ignore it.

Fearing widespread subversion, President Truman ordered a "loyalty investigation" of federal employees in 1947. In the words of W. D. Jordan et al, "Among the 'standards for refusal of employment' was 'sympathetic association' with any foreign or domestic organization designated by the attorney general as subversive" (1985, 419). That same year, the attorney general issued a list of ninety organizations–prepared in large part by the head of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover–that were declared disloyal to the United States without being allowed a rebuttal. Then, in 1949, eleven Communist party leaders were convicted of conspiring to overthrow the government. However, though attempts to prove the extensive Communist presence in the theater, film and television industries ultimately failed, many blacklisted playwrights, actors and directors subsequently found it hard to get work for decades. The federal investigation of disloyalty continued till April 1951. But the hearings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) was revived by the Eightieth Congress. During all that time Americans were encouraged to spy on one another in the name of internal security.

Anderson's position while all this was taking place was in direct contradiction to his ideas about individual freedom and governmental abuse of power. When on 7 January 1952 the Author's League of America drew up a resolution to defend writers whose names appeared in a booklet entitled *Red Channels: The Report of the Communist Influence in Radio and Television* (published by Counterattack in 1950), Anderson

opposed the resolution because, as Avery remarks, "it failed to discriminate between the innocent and the guilty" (1979, 256). In this way, Anderson severed all ties with the playwright he had been in the 1930s: the pacifist–*High Tor* (1940c); the critic of large centralized governments–*Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a); and the humanist, capable of forgiving even a hanging judge like Gaunt in *Winterset* (1940a), and a coward like King McCloud in *Key Largo* (1940b).

Anderson's ideological turnabout may in part be due to what Clurman refers to as the near "hysteria" (1959, 3) that encapsulated the American psyche in reaction to the 1930s. The "hysteria" also affected ex-Group Associate and former Communist Party member Elia Kazan, who voluntarily testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee, giving names of other Group Theatre associates who had been members of the Communist Party. In his autobiography, Kazan explains that, at the time, he felt that the Government was right in investigating the Communist movement in the United States. Like Anderson, he believed that the Communist Party was not just any political group, but rather it was a conspiracy that was taking place around the world (Kazan 1990, 503).

Unlike Kazan–whose early films, liberal and socially critical, never embraced and jettisoned positions–Anderson's reversal made a mockery of his earlier socially critical themes. First came his war propaganda plays, then his condoning of *Red Channels*, a publication that J. F. Wharton says "viciously but effectively set countless Americans against their fellow citizens on the basis of flimsy evidence" (1974, 208). With the exception of A. Miller (who was plagued by HUAC for years), no other leading American dramatist wrote a play in protest. Of Anderson's liberal colleagues in the Playwrights' Company, Wharton mentions that "Sherwood wrote a preface for a book attacking *Red Channels*, and Rice, who had predicted just such a wave of bigotry years before, labored hard and long with the American Civil Liberties Union" (209).

Furthermore, blacklisting and HUAC brought dissension to the Playwrights' Company, above all because Anderson condoned *Red Channels*. In a letter to Anderson, Elmer Rice summarizes their difference in viewpoints.

> 'We both are deeply concerned about the preservation of freedom and the defeat of totalitarianism. You believe that the American Communists gravely threaten these objectives. I believe that a far greater danger lies in yielding to fear and thereby irreparably impairing the very freedom that we want to preserve. I doubt if we'll ever reach an agreement.' (212-13)

Thus, by condoning blacklisting Anderson not only broadly cut himself off from Leftist and liberal support, but he also strained his relationship with his colleagues in the Playwrights' Company. As Wharton asserts, "The internal impact on the Company was sad and disturbing" (209). Rice tells Anderson how troubled he is "'by the fact that two such wholehearted believers in democracy should be so diametrically opposed upon a fundamental issue.'"

As we have already seen, Anderson directly contradicted his earlier stand against centralized governments, which inevitably fall into the hands of a corrupt few–*Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a); against empire–*Journey to Jerusalem* (1940k), and imperialism–*Night Over Taos* (1940g). Furthermore, Anderson's ideological position no longer permitted him to write the sort of plays he had been accustomed to conjuring up before World War II. Wharton is right when he remarks that the dramatist could no longer analyze honor in his works "when HUAC suddenly adopted one of the most un-American and dishonorable rules ever promulgated: the test of a citizen's loyalty was his willingness to squeal on the friends of his youth" (208).

On another note, Anderson's hostility towards Communism was already apparent in the late 1930s when, as I have already mentioned, he wrote *Second Overture* (1940l), a never staged one-act play, strongly critical of the Russian Revolution; and *Key*

Largo (1940b), which opened in late November, 1939 which was a blatant attack on the Loyalist Spain during the civil war. In *Key Largo*, four American volunteers are seen defending a position on the Ebro River battle front. During a lull in the battle, there is a discussion about whether or the not the Stalinists are subverting the Spanish Republic for their own political ends:

> *Jerry.* You wonder, for one thing, why the Red Ogpu's running our Brigade, and why you're likely to disappear if you can't pretend you're a Communist. Are we fighting for a democratic Spain or to make the world safe for Stalin?
>
> *Monte.* The Loyalists wouldn't have got this far without Stalin–and naturally the leaders take help wherever they can get it.
>
> Jerry. He charges a high price for his help. I don't like the Ogpu any more than Franco. The question is whether Spain would be free even if the Loyalists won.
>
> *Monte.* She won't be free if the Loyalists lose, of course. (1940b, 10)

Not until much later would other writers (those who were not committed to the Rightist political camp) criticize the Stalinists in Spain; and then only briefly, the way G. Brenan alludes to it in the final chapter of *The Spanish Labyrinth* (1960).[1] F. Borkenau's personal narrative of the war, written in 1937, is the outstanding exception. Borkenau took a decidedly critical view of events in Loyalist Spain, claiming that the Communists had installed a "Police Régime" (1971, 236) in the Republic. In the Preface he writes, "I do not expect that any of the parties involved in the struggle, either in the Right or in the Left camp, will be pleased with my description. It is critical of all of them" (x); furthermore, as to "the developments in the camp of the Republican Government in Spain, the author observes that "relatively

[1] William Herrick, whose novel of the Spanish Civil War Hermanos (1973) strongly criticizes the Soviet influence in the antifascist zones, was a combatant in the Abraham Lincoln Battalion. P. Berman quotes Herrick as stating that for years he never told the truth about what he had seen in Spain; however, he says, "'I've kept feeling recently that I should get it out'" (1986, 25). Berman observes, "Need it be said that Herrick's novels are less than loved by some of his old comrades from the '30s? Those of the old Lincoln volunteers who remain loyal to the Communist Party or at least to its past have never forgiven Herrick his heresies and revelations. It was some of these vets who got him blackballed from his union staff job in 1939."

little has been said in the already voluminous literature about the Spanish civil war" (vii).

In the previous decade, others had raised their voices against the Communists. Bartolomeo Vanzetti–whom Anderson showed he admired by virtue of having written two plays about him–sternly criticized the Soviet Union: "The communists want power, and this explains all; they ruin of the revolution" (M. D. Frankfurter and G. Jackson 1956, 131). Vanzetti further claimed, "The communists are for 'the power to themselves,' the name don't matter."

Like Anderson, Vanzetti was critical of left-wing faith in large, centralized governments. He tells a Leftist,

> I cannot share your confidence in 'better government' because I do not believe in the government, any of them, and because we have witnessed the utterly [*sic*] failure of both the social-democratic governments in Germany, and the bolsheviki government in Rusia. (143)

Another author who spoke out against the Communists was Katherine Anne Porter after she had been involved in the defense of Sacco and Vanzetti in the final, desperate weeks before their execution. A liberal, she traveled to Boston and was assigned to a defense group. But she was dismayed when "the grim little person" who headed her particular group during the Sacco-Vanzetti demonstrations in Boston "snapped at me when I expressed the wish that we might save the lives of Sacco and Vanzetti: 'Alive–what for? They are no earthly good to us alive'" (1977, 5-6). The author further claims that "some of the groups apparently working for them, people of their own class in many cases, were using the occasion for Communist propaganda, and hoping only for their deaths as a political argument" (11).

Having been assigned to a committee from the Communist line of defense (a splinter group from the national and world organization, whose volunteers were mostly non-Communists), Porter worked under the orders of Rosa Baron, a Party member, to whom "I was another of those bourgeois liberals who got in the way of serious business"; and she adds, "Yet we were needed, by the thousands if possible, for this great agitation must be made to appear to be a spontaneous uprising of the American people, and for practical reasons, the more non-Communists, the better" (19).

The list of the thousands of non-Communist "sentimental bleeders" was long. It included Felix Frankfurter, who would become an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court; a future US Ambassador to Norway, Mrs. J. Borden Harriman; writers such as John Dos Passos and Edna St. Vincent Millay; as well as journalists and political figures–"Some of them risking their careers by their appearance in Boston" (33).

When reports of repression in the Soviet Union did not dampen the revolutionary enthusiasm of Communists, Anderson distanced himself from the United Front. He was one of the few leading American playwright in the 1930s to acknowledge what Vanzetti had earlier claimed: that the Bolsheviks "ruined the Russian Revolution" (Frankfurter and Jackson 1956, 116). It is the same message Anderson conveys in *Second Overture* (1940l); and also in *Key Largo* (1940b), where in referring to Loyalist Spain during the Civil War he states, "If they won it and it came to a vote, and one party was in power, would it make hash of the other fifty-six varieties!" (1940b, 9).

When Anderson's play *Key Largo* (1940b) opened a few months after the Loyalist debacle, only the Rightists and the anarchists refuted the opinions of the Leftist and liberal pundits. However, with regards to the anarchists' view of the events, M. Bookchin asserts, "virtually no literature existed in English" until 1969 (M. Bookchin 1977, 3)–ten years after Anderson's death. In the late 1930s, with the exception of

George Orwell's critique of Stalinism in *Homage to Catalonia* (1974a), and Ernest Hemingway and Benjamin Glazer's cloak-and-dagger play *The Fifth Column*, most liberals and Leftists were unwilling to face or speak the truth.

Unlike Hemingway and Glazer's Philip Rawlings, the American counterespionage agent for the Spanish Republic who despite all opts to fight against the Fascists till the end, Anderson's King McCloud deserts his comrades, who are ultimately killed defending the Loyalists. Similarly, a disillusioned Orwell heads for home at the end of *Homage to Catalonia* (1974a), leaving his comrades-in-arms behind. But though Orwell abandoned the Loyalists and denounced the Stalinists in *Homage to Catalonia*, and later in *Animal Farm*, he was not ostracized the way Anderson was. I believe Orwell was spared because, despite his independent and often critical position with regard to the Left (in particular, centralized government), he nevertheless continued to defend Leftist and liberal ideals till the end of his life. At the close of *Homage to Catalonia*, the author–far away from Spain–recalls sadly, "The clear cold light of the Barcelona mornings ... back in December when people still believed in the revolution," and "the red and black flags and the faces of Spanish militiamen" (1974a, 219). He concludes: "Good luck to them all; I hope they win their war and drive all the foreigners out of Spain, Germans, Russians and Italians alike." However, before closing, Orwell cautions his readers not to be misled by the account he has given of events: "Beware of my partisanship, my mistakes of fact, and the distortion inevitably caused by my having seen only one corner of events. And beware of exactly the same things when you read any other book on this period of the Spanish war" (220).

It seems to me that when Orwell wrote these words he was either racing headlong for cover after his devastating criticism of the Spanish Republic or unconsciously revealing the extent of his own romantic naïveté and the depth of his loyalty to the Leftist mentality. Years later, G. Jackson, in referring to *Homage to Catalonia*, felt it incumbent on him to caution his readers to "bear in mind Orwell's own honest

statement that he knew very little about the political complexities of the struggle" (1972, 370).

Orwell fought in Aragon with the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM); he was in Barcelona in May, 1937, when the POUM was declared illegal because of the Stalinist "pathological hatred of the POUM," which had been resisting the control of the commissars. Jackson observes, "Stalin's paranoid purges were at their height in the spring and summer of 1937. The Russian dictator did not hesitate to extend his police activities to Spain" (403). Consequently, around forty leaders of the POUM were arrested, including the leading spokesman for the party, Andrés Nin (a former anarcho-syndicalist), who shortly afterwards disappeared and was never heard of again. However, the Leftists and Socialists did not rise up against the Stalinist dictatorship, but submitted instead to what Borkenau, unlike Orwell and Jackson, described in no uncertain terms as "the type of bureaucratic tyranny towards which the communists are driving Spain, and have achieved in Russia, as others have achieved it in Germany and Italy" (1971, 241). Moreover, Leftist and Socialist submission conveniently led to the liquidation of their ideological opponents in the POUM, and afterwards, in the anarchist organizations the Confederación Nacional de Trabajo (CNT) and the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI). For his part, the anarchist historian, Abel Paz, recalls with bitterness "la política contrarevolucionaria, desarrollada ... por el Partido Comunista y por el Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya" (1978, 551); and, furthermore, how "la España llamada 'roja,'" was "abandonada a su suerte por el socialista Léon Blum" (554).

Reports of the events leading up to the Loyalist debacle were generally Rightist or Leftist oriented, as were most of the accounts in the years that followed. In the Foreword to the 1963 edition of *The Spanish Cockpit*, Brenan observes that Borkenau's narrative, coming out a year after the outbreak of the Civil War, "made an

immediate impression on everyone who had not been blinded by the propaganda of one side or the other" (1971, vii); and he adds,

> We learned that the Communists were not playing their historic role of leading the proletariat, but on the contrary were allying themselves with the shopkeepers and rich farmers and doing their utmost to damp down the revolutionary impulses of the peasants and factory workers.

As to that, Borkenau points out,

> For a correct interpretation one must remember that usually socialists, communists, and republicans are not politically divided... . The law hands over municipal administration to the party bureaucrats, which are guaranteed equal rights as to their different groups, whereas no heed is taken of the wishes of the population. (1971, 209)

Nevertheless, despite having personally experienced the May events in Barcelona in 1937, and witnessed the way the Republican police acted "in the recognized Ogpu or Gestapo style" (Orwell 1974a, 213), Orwell remained loyal to his Leftist ideals, as his association with the left-wing Socialist paper the *Tribune* indicates. In an essay entitled "Looking Back on the Spanish War," originally published in 1953, Orwell summarizes his view of the debacle: "The struggle for power between the Spanish Republican parties is an unhappy, far-off thing" (1974b, 233); and he later adds, "Who can believe in the class-conscious international proletariat after the events of the past ten years?" (239).

Anderson was definitely one individual who could not. Furthermore, though he had never visited Loyalist Spain, he seemed to be even more disillusioned by events and pessimistic than Orwell. In *Key Largo* (1940b), Anderson has Monte, one of the American volunteers, announce, "The honeymoon's over" (9); and King McCloud later says, "I'm beginning to wonder if a cause is sacred when it's lost" (17). He adds,

> Spain was a bugle call. Up and to Spain and save the world! Byron went out to Greece ... and died in a swamp of fever... . I know I'm a turncoat; it was my romantic notion to save Spain... . The best I can do now is be fairly honest about it, and get you out and get myself out. (18)

When his comrades in arms–in spite of all–decide to stay and fight at the risk of almost certain death, McCloud deserts and ends up fighting alongside Franco's troops in order to save his own life. Though the protagonist later regrets having done so, and eventually loses his life in atonement for his earlier cowardliness, Anderson's authentic compassion for the depth and complexity of the protagonist's humanness, and for the bravery of McCloud's colleagues who died at the front in Spain, is not depicted in a politically partisan manner the way Orwell's narration is. That is, Anderson praises them not because they died for Loyalist Spain, or to save an old man and his daughter and some Indians from a band of gangsters, but because they sacrificed themselves for an ideal. By the same token, one could assume that Anderson's heroes might also include even some of Franco's troops who died for the same reason. Therein lies the essential difference between King McCloud's–i.e., Anderson's–abandonment of the Leftist cause, and Orwell's tactical retreat at the end of *Homage to Catalonia* (1974a). Looking back, Orwell concludes unequivocally:

> In essence it was a class war. If it had been won, the cause of the common people everywhere would have been strengthened. It was lost, and the dividend-drawers all over the world rubbed their hands. That was the real issue; all else was froth on its surface. (1974b, 240)

Orwell acknowledged his own ideological "partisanship" in the 1930s and 1940s. (Anderson did not take a firm political stand until he became a propagandist during World War II and a warmonger during the cold war.) At the end of *Homage to Catalonia* Orwell concludes that, apart from the disaster in Spain, "the result is not necessarily disillusionment and cynicism" (1974a, 220). Furthermore, though Orwell continued to attack Stalinism in *Animal Farm*, and revealed both his conservative side in *Coming up for Air* and his patriotic bent by heading the Indian office of the British

Broadcasting System during World War II, his credibility as a writer and an independent thinker remained intact largely because he became, as I have already mentioned, literary editor of the *Tribune*, a left-wing Socialist newspaper associated with the British Labour Party; and though, he supported a decentralized kind of socialism, unlike the majority of the Labour Party members, his political affinity with the party was enough to keep his writings from being ignored and ultimately forgotten, the way much of Anderson's works eventually were.

Anderson put himself directly at odds not only with those who–like the honest volunteers he represented in *Key Largo* (1940b)–had sacrificed so much in the bitter struggle against Fascism in Spain, but also with a cabal of drawing-room radicals, not to mention the many truly dedicated Leftists and Loyalist sympathizers who were outraged by the position he took in the *Key Largo* (1940b). M. Y. Himelstein says that the critic for *New Masses*, Alvah Bessie, "denounced this 'slander' on the Spanish popular front" (1963, 146); and G. Rabkin observes, that once again Anderson asserts his "familiar thesis of the betrayal of all revolutionary ideals" (1964, 286).

As I have already pointed out, Anderson was not supported by any Leftist party or liberal group. Nor was he a Rightist for all the enmity he showed the Communists–emnity which many anarchists in Spain and elsewhere still feel toward the Communists; as G. Rabkin affirms, "Anderson never accepts social injustice. The difficulty arises in attempting to determine how much social evil resides in transformable institutions and how much in the black heart of man" (264).

Moreover,

> There can be no denying that despite his abhorrence of political dogma, Anderson does affirm a political position. Time and again he asserts the destructive influence of all organized government, the inevitable tyranny of authority, and the necessary resistance to all organized authority in defense of personal freedom. In short, Anderson's position is anarchistic.

Unable to fit into the mainstream political ideologies because of his anarchism, Anderson was an easy mark for the critics's barbs. Brooks Atkinson, drama critic for the *New York Times*, asserts that "probably Mr. Anderson does not aspire to be the poet laureate of the National Manufacturers Association, but there is nothing in these political sentiments to disqualify him" (1939).

When he reneged on his ideas during World War II, and in the postwar years, Anderson was isolated and, with the exception of his colleagues in the Playwrights Company who remained loyal to him–in spite of their political disagreements–left to fend for himself. Anderson's response to being ostracized was angrily to take the offensive against the liberal press after the Second World War and to cast a cold eye on blacklisting, the imprisonment of Communists and the ruin of the careers of many who were not. I believe that these factors, along with his becoming a warmonger, contributed both to Anderson's falling into disrepute early in the postwar period and subsequently to his being virtually ignored in the years following his death.

6. Three Plays Criticizing the Government of the United States

Prior to the Second World War, the subject of the state and governmental power were recurrent themes in Anderson's plays. From *What Price Glory* (1926a) to *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a), the dramatist repeatedly presented his Broadway audiences with one theme in particular: whether it is central to the play–as in *Both Your Houses* (1933)–or not, Anderson tells his audience that governments are inherently corrupt. Sometimes the theme interrupts the action of a scene, as when Sheriff Gash in the middle of a dramatic moment–he is about to pin murder charges on a couple of innocent Indians–stops to philosophize:

> I've heard it said/ there's honest government elsewhere, here and there,/ by fits and starts. Maybe there is. I don't know./ I don't see how it could last. It might

> come in,/ but it wouldn't be natural. There's a John Chinaman/ runs the laundry down at the Star Key. He says in China the same word that means to govern/ means to eat. They've worked it out in China./ The government eats you, but it protects you first,/ because if it didn't you wouldn't get fat enough/ to make good eating. (1940b, 105)

Three of Anderson's plays directly impute to the United States Government leadership which is characterized by unscrupulousness, and run by individuals out solely for their own gain; the works are *Both Your Houses* (1933), *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a) and *Valley Forge* (1940f). Significantly, the plays were all presented during the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Both Your Houses (1933), opened just two days after F. D. Roosevelt took office as president on 4 March 1933–three and half years after the financial crash of October 1929. The comedy premiered when thirteen million people were unemployed and the nation was "experiencing failure on a scale unprecedented in its history" (W. D. Jordan et al 1985, 362). The play is significant for two reasons: it came at an apparent crossroads in American history, and it was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

Soloman Fitzmaurice is a likable and seasoned politician who lives off the corrupt system of government in the United States. He tells young Alan McClean, a Congressional freshman on a crusade to straighten things out on Capitol Hill, that "the sole business of government is graft, special privilege and corruption–with a by-product of order. They have to keep order or they can't make collections" (103).

McClean learns that "parties may come and parties may go–administrations come in and go out, but the graft varies only in amount, not in kind" (161). Fitzmaurice then tells him, "By God, if there's anything I hate more than store bought liquor it's an honest politician! There's something slimy about a man being honest in your position" (42). Fitzmaurice later explains that in Congress "everybody wants something, everybody's trying to put something over for his voters, or his friends, or

the folks he's working for... . That's the whole government" (54); and further on he remarks, "God, what a government! It's bad enough to have to have it, but imagine having to pay for it!" (78).

Fitzmaurice explains to McClean that, as a freshman, he had also wanted to change Congress. But after being elected he saw what Congressional incumbents were like:

> I was shocked and I started making radical remarks. Why, before I knew where I was I was an outsider. I couldn't get anything for my district... . My constituents complained and I wasn't going to be re-elected. So I began playing ball, just to pacify the folks back home. And it worked. They've been re-electing me ever since–re-electing a fat crook because he gets what they want out of the Treasury, and fixes the Tariff for 'em, and sees that they don't get gypped out of their share of the plunder. That's what happened to every man of us here, but that's the way the government is run. If you want to be in Congress you have to do it. (55)

In one of his last speeches in the play, Fitzmaurice affirms that the United States has always been a nation of bandits and should never change its ways. "Graft, gigantic graft brought us our prosperity in the past and will lift us out of the present depths of parsimony and despair"; and he concludes:

> Brigands built up this nation from the beginning, brigands of a gigantic Silurian breed that don't grow in a piddling age like ours. They stole billions and gutted whole states and empires, but they dug our oil-wells, built our railroads, built up everything we've got, and invented prosperity as they went along! Let 'em go back to work! We can't have an honest government, so let 'em steal plenty and get us started again. Let the behemoths plunder so the rest of us can Eat! (176)

In the end, Fitzmaurice carried the show. The critics joined in the ovation, and Anderson won a Pulitzer Prize, as the effects of the Depression became worse.

A setback in the New Deal added four million workers to the unemployment figures in 1937, compelling Roosevelt to intensify his attacks on the very rich and step up government spending as he went on a trust-busting campaign; however, these

measures ultimately proved ineffective, and by early 1939 the New Deal was dead. W. D. Jordan et al observe,

> Two years earlier, Harry Hopkins had reached the conclusion that Americans had become 'bored with the poor, the unemployed and the insecure.' Recovery had not been achieved. It was not as though the ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished were any less visible. But the need to do something about them seemed less urgent, and the chances of getting more reform legislation were much poorer. (1985, 379)

Knickerbocker Holiday (1938a) opened just three months before Roosevelt announced, in his annual message to Congress in January 1939, that the New Deal had come to an end. Significantly, Anderson's musical comedy celebrates the theme that the best government is that which governs least.

Set in New Amsterdam during the Dutch colonial days, the play narrates the arrival of Pieter Stuyvesant, who is bent on improving the administrative capacity of the local government. Anderson introduces Brom Broeck, the protagonist, who supposedly represents a typical American: that is, he is "a national type," the kind of person that "harbors a complete abhorrence for governmental corruption, and an utter incapacity for doing anything about it" (1938a, 27).

Governor Stuyvesant, though, deplores this sort of individual: "From now on, citizens of New Amsterdam, you will have to do with a different and, let us hope, less stupid form of government" (36). Of their freely elected Council he says–in Fitzmaurice-like fashion–that there has never been "a more preposterous, muddle-headed, asinine, crooked, double-dealing, venal, vicious, fat-headed group of men in charge of a nation's destiny." He then announces, "People of New Amsterdam, I come to save you," and he further proclaims, "From this date forth the council has no function except the voting of those wise and just laws which you and I find that we need"; then

he cautions them that "nothing gives me more pain than the violence which I commit when I discover the least breath of opposition to my altruistic policies" (37).

The chorus caps the scene, singing, "This modern alchemy/ Transmutes our age to gold;/ The man who would be free/ Must do as he is told." They continue singing, "No man shall want for food,/ Nor ditto any wife;/ All hail the bright, the good,/ The regimented life!" (38).

Graft is an accepted way of life among the colonists. Stuyvesant, however, is determined to clamp down on those who are illegally selling arms and liquor to the Indians, "And no doubt sharing gains with all of you, because you've all winked at it!" Then he adds, "My regime will require a good deal of ready cash. From now on the sale of drink and muskets to the savages is a government monopoly." He then assures them that "the government can do no wrong" (40).

Anderson has the dictator sing, "Under any government there is one man who handles the cash. The payoff man" (41). He adds, "In every government/ Whatever its intent/ There's one obscure official with a manner innocent; His job invisible/ In purchasing good will/ With wads of public money taken from the public till."

In the Second Act, Tenpin observes, "Brom, you should see the Governor out there now. He's got the population lined up like so many suits of winter underwear on a clothesline. Every time he pulls the string they jump," and Brom replies, "It's all rather disturbing, of course, but on the whole I'm inclined to welcome any change after that three-ton congress of imbecility" (56).

Then the Stuyvesant has Brom condemned on trumped up charges. Brom says to him, "I've been occupying myself with philosophical reflections on the nature of government"; and he further comments:

> You see, it's a very difficult problem for me. I naturally want to think well of myself in spite of this anarchistic disease you know about. I try to excuse myself in every way I can.–But I always come up against the fact that we have to have a government. (59)

He immediately adds, "But then, on the other hand, you have a disease, too. You want everybody to think as you think and do as you say, and that's even a more dangerous mania than mine."

Anderson's point is that, bad as American democracy appears to be, it nevertheless is better than any other political system. Thus, towards the end of the play he has Brom say to Stuyvesant,

> Last night in jail I got to thinking about that ridiculous council of ours you shoved into the background when you came in. You said it was stupid, and it was. It was so inefficient and witless that we could get away with a little fun once in a while. I guess all governments are crooked, I guess they're all vicious and corrupt, but a democracy has the immense advantage of being incompetent in villainy and clumsy in corruption. Now, your tyranny's another matter. (88)

He continues, "It's efficiently vicious and efficiently corrupt! They're both bad. But since we have to have one or the other let's throw out this professional and go back to the rotation of amateurs!"

The play ends on a festive note. The chorus sings praise to the one who "does his own living, he does his own dying,/ Does his loving, does his hating, does his multiplying/ without the supervision of a governmental plan–/ And that's an American" (95).

In his essay, "On Government, Being a Brief Preface to the Politics of *Knickerbocker Holiday,*" which *The New York Times* published in its entirety, Anderson claims that his intention in the play is

> to remind the audience of the attitude toward government which was current in this country at the time of the Revolution of 1776 and throughout the early years of the Republic. At that time it was generally believed, as I believe now, that the gravest and most constant danger to a man's life, liberty and happiness is the government under which he lives. (1938b)

Anderson further points out,

> It was believed then, as I believe now, that a civilization is a balance of selfish interests, and that a government is necessary as an arbiter among these interests, but that the government must never be trusted, must be constantly watched, and must be drastically limited in its scope, because it, too, is a selfish interest and will automatically become a monopoly in crime and devour the civilization over which it presides.

Moreover, in Anderson's opinion, "the coddled young reformer of our day," though sincerely out to make the world a better and more just place to live in, nevertheless "throws prudence to the winds and grasps blindly at any weapon which seems to him likely to destroy the purse-proud haves and scatter their belongings among the deserving have nots."

He further says,

> Now he is right in believing that the accumulation of too much wealth and power in a few hands is a danger to his civilization and his liberty. But when the weapon he finds is a law, and when the law he enacts increases the power of the government over men's destinies, he is fighting a lesser tyranny by accepting a greater and more deadly one.

This same essay was published again a year later in *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes* (1939). However, within two years he was dedicating much of his time to the war effort and thus contributing to the growth of the very governing body he had previously so criticized before. *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a) was the last of Anderson's satires about the government.

In *Both Your Houses* (1933) and *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), Anderson expressed in comical fashion a political viewpoint that favored a small, amateur government, however corrupt and inefficient, over a larger and more efficient one run by professional politicians. In both plays the decision to support democracy, however corrupt, is humorously expressed. The dramatist satirizes the shortcomings of powerful rogues without dismissing them.

Valley Forge (1940f)–a play which G. Beiswanger says "reaches tragic heights" (1943, 748)–Anderson's criticism strikes hard, without a dose of comedy to lessen the impact. Unlike the fast paced *Both Your Houses* (1933), the tone of the play is plodding and gloomy. It is important to note that Anderson wrote it in 1934, a year after F. D. Roosevelt had taken the oath of office as president. In twelve months the new administration had turned the system around. Within a week after moving into the White House, Roosevelt suspended all banking operations (most of the banks were closed anyway because of the Depression), and pushed the Emergency Banking Act through Congress. Conservatives were suspicious that he might eventually nationalize the banks. But though he did not choose to do so in the end, he nonetheless provided the government with unprecedented powers.

The demoralizing effect Roosevelt's election had on the playwright is seen in *Valley Forge* (1940f). Whereas in *Both Your Houses* (1933) the American governing body is corrupt in a laughable way, and in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a) it is humorously shown as being preferable for all its ineptness to any other, in *Valley Forge* (1940f) the government is traitorous and seemingly unworthy of its charge. The scope of variance in Anderson's viewpoints may be seen in these three plays. In *Both Your Houses*, Anderson did not take Roosevelt seriously. But the events of a year, and Roosevelt's consolidation of power, worried him. Hence, the gloom in *Valley Forge*. But by 1938, the political panorama had changed. Anderson wrote the musical comedy *Knickerbocker Holiday* at a time when the New Deal was in decline. The

playwright found his sense of humor on this occasion, though it would only remain with him a short while.

In *Valley Forge* (1940f), a solemn Anderson shows none too delicately the Continental Congress in the process of abandoning the revolutionary army and discussing rendition to the British. Noteworthy in this play is the absence of complaisance. The author does not wink approvingly at congressional rascality in *Valley Forge*, the way he previously did in Both *Your Houses* (1933). Anderson's contempt for the government is explicit, and not to be laughed here.

S. E. Morison observes that during the American Revolution,

> the principal reason why Washington's army, at Valley Forge and later, went hungry, unpaid, unclothed, and unshod, was not lack of supplies in the country, but the reluctance of farmers and merchants to exchange food and clothing for a Continental chit. (1972, 303)

With *Valley Forge* (1940f), Anderson, in outrage, will have his audience know that the members of the Continental Congress were more concerned about their immediate loss of revenue than they were about winning the war:

> King George pays cash and we pay in continentals. Did you ever meet up with a Quaker that didn't prefer a guinea in the hand to any amount of liberty in the bush? You can shoot 'em, hang 'em, damn 'em, give 'em the water cure, rip their guts out and fill 'em up with old iron, they go right on selling hogs to the English. (1940f, 12)

Similarly, the playwright has another soldier complain, "Sure, the big-hearted patriots of Pennsylvania–we fight for their liberty and they carry their butter and eggs to Philadelphia in a steady stream to feed King George's troops. And you can't stop 'em. Shoot 'em dead and you can't stop 'em" (12).

Teague, a militiaman, declares that he is in the war to the end "to keep King George out of my backyard! I moved west three times to get away from his damn tax-collectors, and every time they caught up to me! I'm sick of tax-collectors, that's why I'm in it!" (23). But Washington advises him not to put too much faith in any government: "You'll get death and taxes under one government as well as another." He further explains,

> What I fight for now is a dream, a mirage, perhaps, something that's never been on this earth ... something that's never existed and will never exist unless we can make it and put it here–the right of free-born men to govern themselves in their own way. (23-24)

In addition, he says, "Now men are mostly fools, as you're well aware. They'll govern themselves like fools. There are probably more fools to the square inch in the Continental Congress than in the Continental army, and the percentage runs high in both" (24).

Then he adds,

> When you deal with a king you deal with one fool, knave, madman, or whatever he may be. When you deal with a congress you deal with a conglomerate of fools, knaves, madmen and honest legislators, all pulling different directions and shouting each other down. So far the knaves and fools seem to have it. That's why we're stranded here on this barren side-hill, leaving a bloody trail in the snow and chewing the rotten remains of sow-belly on which some merchant has made his seven profits.

The war is being fought "against the hereditary right of arbitrary kings." But Washington admits,

> So far our government's as rotten as the sow-belly it sends us. I hope and pray it will get better. But whether it gets better or worse it's your own, by God, and you can do what you please with it–and what I fight for is your right to do what you please with your government and yourselves without benefit of kings.

British General Sir William Howe describes in verse his American rival: "This Washington of yours,/ he's a Virginia squire at heart, he has/ about as much to gain as you or I/ out of this war" (49). As for the sons of the revolution, Howe observes that they are

> Sick of it, one and all. The Boston merchants/ and Massachusetts officers are plotting/ to put Gates in his place and sue for peace/ on any terms. They're ruined by the war... . all/ the fat-backed Puritans ... retching with fear to think how big they signed their names to the Declaration.

Despite the bleak prospects of victory, Tench, a Continental soldier, swears, "I'd see the Congress/ damned in hell, before I'd let them ruin/ our campaign for us!" (60); and he assures Washington, "This country'd come to you/ with open arms. One word, one breath from you and/ you'd blow/ the Congress from here to Maine!" (61).

But Washington is repulsed by the idea of a dictatorship, however benevolent it might seem: "Has it escaped you, sir, that we fight this war/ against usurpation of power? Should I usurp/ the powers of Congress, which gave me what power I have,/ I'd have nothing left to fight for."

Further on, a Continental soldier observes, "This war's for liberty; and the government/ we've set up freely for ourselves, we're here/ to defend it–for nothing else" (63). But another soldier disagrees:

> Well, when it comes/ to governments you'll have to let me out./ They're all alike, and have one business, governments,/ and it's to plunder. This new one we've set up/ seems to be less efficient than the old style/ in its methods of plundering folk, but give them time;/ they'll learn to sink their teeth in what you've got/ and take it from you.

The young Marquis de Lafayette, recently arrived from France, has been following the conversation, and he remarks, "The name of Washington/ is magical in France. It

conjures up/ all we have hoped to dare, all or young men/ have deemed worth dying for" (65).

However, Washington tells Lafayette, "If you heard of a martyr/ I fear I'll disappoint you. I'd rather live/ and have my fun in my time, before my face hardens/ into a mountain crag. I have no taste/ for being stood into a hero" (67-8).

Washington learns that General Gates has offered the British terms which "would be acceptable to General Howe/ and the English crown if the Continental army/ were willing to surrender" (112). He hears from Harvie, a Congressional emissary,

> It has not yet been brought to a vote in Congress ... but this is true./ There are those among us who know that a war is worth/ what it brings on the exchange, no more. And when/ your stock is going down, it's best to sell/ before it goes to nothing. (115)

When Washington asks, "This sentiment/ prevails in congress?", the emissary replies, "It does, or it will shortly." And Stirling, a soldier cries out, "Then fig your Congress!" (119). He later states,

> Do you know what I think of governments, by and large,/ I mean in general? They're run by pimps/ who get kicked out of hothouses for picking/ the customers' pockets. This one we've got–we made it,/ set it up, picked the best men we could find/ and put them in–and their brains began to rot/ before the year was out. It rots a man's brains to be in power, and he turns pimp, and picks pockets; the scavengers! At least, when you have a king/ you can chop his head off. (123)

Washington comes to the conclusion that he has "Been a gull./ They've led me by a ring, like a circus bear" (124). He adds, "The revolution's sold out! ... What's left of the revolution/ you see here, in these windy shacks and starved men" (125).

In a meeting with British General Howe, Washington informs him,

> By all rules of the game/ we're beaten, and should surrender. If this war/ were for trade advantage, it would end to-night. It was made over subsidies, or some such matter, but it's been taken over. Let the merchants submit/ if that's any good to you, then come out and find/ my hunters and backwoodsmen, and beat us down. (163-4)

Howe and his staff retire. In this way, Anderson will have his audience know that the American cause triumphed not because but in spite of the Continental Congress. But the victory was not complete: Washington sadly remarks, "This liberty will look easy by and by/ when nobody dies to get it" (166).

Valley Forge (1940f) was an attack on the New Deal, the merchant class, and Congress. But the America-is-in-peril platform of the Republican Party in the elections of 1936, and the campaign warnings that the institutions of America were being overthrown, in the end rang hollow. For Roosevelt was reelected, carrying every state in the Union but two. *Valley Forge* had not been any more convincing than the Republicans: the play closed after only fifty-eight performances.

With the exception of *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a), *Both Your Houses* (1933), *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), and *Valley Forge* (1940f) are the three plays that most explicitly depict Anderson's political ideology prior to World War II. In all three plays his critical position with regard to government is unequivocally sustained throughout. Moreover, as I have already mentioned, Anderson's anarchistic beliefs are also revealed in *Winterset* (1940a), *Key Largo* (1940b), *High Tor* (1940c), and *Journey to Jerusalem* (1940k); all of which were written prior to the Second World War.

7. The Sacco-Vanzetti Case

As we have already seen, Anderson wrote two plays that were directly related to the

Sacco-Vanzetti case. Both dramas plainly show the impact the event had on the playwright. In both dramas, Anderson reveals a strong compassion for the two immigrant anarchists.

The Sacco-Vanzetti trial began on 31 May 1921 in the town of Dedham, Massachusetts, a few miles south of the city of Boston. For seven years the event was a cause célèbre, during which time the trial, convictions, petitions for a retrial and a stay of execution captivated not only the attention of the American public but of people all over the world. As M. E. Prior observes, the Sacco-Vanzetti case was an "episode which touched on some of the most serious issues of the life of our times" (1966, 324).

Many Americans believed Sacco and Vanzetti had been treated unjustly. Sixteen years after their death, *Vogue* magazine referred to the two anarchists as having been "legally killed for their convictions, not their crimes" (Unsigned 1943b, 81). However, P. Avrich asserts that though Sacco and Vanzetti may well have been innocent of the South Braintree murders, they nevertheless participated in various bombing attempts in 1919 and 1920 (1991); and F. Russell holds that Sacco, though not Vanzetti, may have been guilty of the South Braintree murders (1986). Additionally, B. Jackson uneasily expresses some measure of doubt: "Were they guilty or not? I had no doubts whatsoever in the beginning. They were clearly innocent"(1981, xi). But he adds, "And yet as I investigated the case, I found my mind changing–often against my will."

Other authors, though, continue to defend the innocence of the two Italian immigrants (W. Young and D. E. Kaiser 1985; H. B. Ehrmann 1969, D. Rappaport 1992) who were executed at midnight, on 23 August 1927, amidst an uproar of national and international protest.

Before the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, the "Red Scare" had swept the country in large part because of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's highly publicized crusade against suspected radicals in 1919 and 1920. With the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918 as a basis, Palmer ordered his agents to round up thousands of suspects in cities across the country, disregarding the basic civil liberties of many of them. Aliens were especially targeted during the campaign. Thus, when Fredrick Parmenter, a paymaster, and a guard Alessandro Beradelli were gunned down in a robbery in South Braintree, foreign radicals immediately became the prime suspects.

The Sacco-Vanzetti trial came on the heels of two years of national hysteria. From the very beginning of the trial it was feared that the two Italians would not get a fair trial, for they were both aliens and radicals. Judge Webster Thayer–later personified in Anderson's *Winterset* (1940a)–presiding over the trial and subsequent hearings for a retrial, "was accused by some of 'extreme bias' in conducting the case" (C. H. Nannes 1960, 92). In addition, P. Avrich notes,

> Outside the courtroom, during the trial and the appeals which followed, he made remarks that bristled with animosity towards the defendants ('Did you see what I did with those anarchistic bastards the other day? I guess that will hold them a while')... . (1991, 4-5)

In the *Transcript of the Record of the Trial*, W. G. Thompson and H. B. Ehrmann, counsel for Sacco and Vanzetti, attest that "the state of mind and conduct of Judge Thayer made a fair trial impossible," adding, "It has been established by incontrovertible evidence that from the very beginning he entertained a strong prejudice and hostility against both defendants by reasons of their anarchistic views" (Massachusetts Dept. of Justice 1929, 5352). Governor Alvan T. Fuller called on a number of influential citizens to review the case, in light of evidence that Judge Thayer was prejudiced against the defendants for their anarchistic views. Finally, the governor appointed a special advisory committee to review the case. In the end, the

committee sanctioned the conviction. Avrich notes, "The Lowell Committee, as it became known, though finding Judge Thayer guilty of a 'grave breach of official decorum' in his derogatory references to the defendants, nevertheless concluded that justice had been done" (1991, 4).

In his book *The Sacco-Vanzetti Case* (1969), O. K. Fraenkel asserts that Thompson, a prestigious attorney-at-law in Massachusetts, told the Lowell Committee, "I have known Judge Thayer all my life... . I could not honestly say that I think Judge Thayer is all the time a bad man or that he is a confirmed wicked man. Not at all. That isn't so" (1969, 546). And he adds,

> His categories of thought are few and simple–reds and conservatives, and 'soldier boys.' No margin between them. No intermediate ground where people cannot be placed in the one class or the other. He knows only a few simple things; the country, the war, the reds. That is the way I size him up.

Taking the conciliatory position that Anderson also eventually takes when depicting the judge in *Winterset* (1940a), Thompson underscores his belief that deep down Judge Thayer is not a sinister being. "Not that he intended to be wicked, or that he intended to be bad. I think he thought that he was rendering a great public service. As he said to Benchley: 'I will protect the citizens against the reds'."

Thompson's description of Judge Thayer coincides with Anderson's Judge Gaunt in *Winterset (1940a)*. It is possible that Anderson had read Fraenkel's book, which was first published in 1931. In any case, that Fraenkel's book was edited at all shows that there were readers enough to warrant its publication; and that Anderson wrote a play about the case a few years later leads me to think that the playwright knew that there would be an audience interested in seeing the subject represented on stage.

Moreover, in writing *Winterset* (1940a), Anderson annexed not only the figures of Judge Thayer (Gaunt), and Bartololmeo Vanzetti (Bartolomeo Romagna) but also of

Sacco's son Dante. Shortly before dying, Vanzetti wrote a letter to Dante urging him to

> remember these things; we are not criminals; they convicted us on a frame-up; they denied us a new trial; and if we will be executed after seven years, four months and seventeen days of unspeakable torture and wrong, it is for what I have already told you; because we were for the poor and against the exploitation and oppression of the man by the man. (M. D. Frankfurter and G. Jackson 1956, 323)

Mio Romagna, the protagonist of *Winterset* (1940a), inevitably comes to mind when one reads the closing words of Vanzetti's letter to the boy. "The day will come when you will understand the atrocious cause of the above written words, in all its fullness. Then you will honor us." Ironically, unlike Anderson's Mio Romagno–who dies trying to avenge his father's death–Dante Sacco grew up to be a respectable member of his community. F. Russell notes, "He belonged to the Norwood Chamber of Commerce and the Businessmen's Bowling league. Sundays he ushered at the neocolonial brick Congregational Church" (1986, 184).

Other authors wrote poems, plays and novels about the case. Louis Joughin has written one of the most extensive reports available on the subject of the creative literature the event inspired. In it he asserts,

> The Sacco-Vanzetti case has become a powerful attractive force. The quality of the two central figures and the passions which moved their ardent defenders have led to the writing of sympathetic plays, poems, and novels. (Joughlin and Morgan 1978, 501)

Joughlin sustains that there are 144 published poems on Sacco and Vanzetti, though he considers only twelve of them to be worthy of inclusion in "any anthology of significant American verse" (385): Witter Bynner's "The Condemned"; Countee Cullen's "Not Sacco and Vanzetti"; Edna St. Vincent Millay's three poems "Justice Denied in Massachusetts," "Fear," and "Two Sonnets in Memory"; E. Merrill Root's

"Lost Eden"; Malcom Cowley's "For Bartholomew's Day"; Arthur Davison Ficke's "Prayer in Massachusetts"; James Rorty's "Gentlemen of Massachusetts"; Brent Dow Allinson's "For the Honor of Massachusetts"; and finally, Lola Ridge's "Two in the Death House" and "Three Men Die."

Joughlin further claims, "The chief literary use of the case has been in prose fiction" (421). He cites related works by the following eight authors: Louis Thinet's *Le Drame Sacco-Vanzetti*; a collection of satiric conversations by C. E. S. Wood entitled "God's in His Heaven–All's Wrong With the World" in his *Heavenly Discourse*; Upton Sinclair's *Boston*; H. G. Wells' *Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island*; Nathan Asch's *Pay Day*; Bernard De Voto's *We Accept the Pleasure*; John Dos Passos's *The Big Money*; Ruth McKenney's *Jake Home*; and James T. Farrell's *Bernard Clare*.

Finally, the author lists six plays that show a "variety of treatment with regards to the Sacco-Vanzetti case" (393). These include the following dramas: *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a), by Maxwell Anderson and Harold Hickerson; Pierre Yrondy's *Sept ans d'agonie: le drame Sacco-Vanzetti*; Samuel N. Behrman's *Rain from Heaven*; Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset* (1940a); James Thurber and Elliot Nugent's *The Male Animal* (1939); and *The Sacco-Vanzetti Case*, in the radio series *Those Sensational Years!*

Moreover, to this day audiences still find the Sacco-Vanzetti case a subject of interest. Recently, the drama *Vanzetti*, by the Spanish playwright Luis Araujo, was successfully staged in theaters across Spain, including El Micalet in Valencia and the Sala Cuarta Pared in Madrid, as well as at the Carabanchel prison, where Rosana Torres reports for the newspaper *El País* that the prisoners "aplaudían y vitoreaban" (1993).

On 23 August 1977 a Proclamation of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts declared that Sacco and Vanzetti were unfairly convicted and executed. But the Proclamation signed by the then Governor of Massachusetts, Michael S. Dukakis, came short of an actual pardon. The Sacco family has since been trying to get the President of the United States to grant Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti a full pardon.

8. The Erstwhile Anarchist

Radical Marxist-Leninists and Bible waving preachers to the contrary, today few authors would risk brandishing a miraculous key to resolve the great problems facing the world on the threshold of the twentieth century. The facts stand: miasmic blights have always been around, like wars and famine, stagecraft democracies and puppet Popular Republics–thinly disguised autocracies both–and Fascism. But how one interprets the facts still determines the overall view.

Two decades separate the Russian Revolution enthusiast who wrote the poem "Sic Semper" (1917) and the Popular Front opponent whose assault on Stalinism in the late 1930s became part and parcel of his cold war forays against Communists in letters and essays and plays. Anderson did not live to see the end of the cold war. It would be incongruous to make conjectures as to how the playwright who had confronted Communism so squarely would have evolved in the years that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. But perhaps the incongruity would seem less, if we were to consider Anderson's works. It is significant that, with the exception of *Barefoot in Athens* (1951a), for all his harping in public about the Communist threat, none of his postwar Broadway plays dealt with the issue.

As I have already mentioned, seven years after *Gods of the Lighting* (1928a) was dismissed by critics, in large part for being too quixotic for Broadway, Anderson rehashed the Sacco-Vanzetti theme. However, in *Winterset* (1940a) he took a contrary

position; that is, in the play the dramatist holds that it is futile to put an end to injustice. Furthermore, whereas in the earlier play, he relied heavily on realistic dialogue and journalistic comment, in *Winterset*, he uses verse and Hamlet-like philosophizing. The difference in the playwright's attitude in the two dramas is patent.

In seven years Anderson's plays had shifted from prose to poesy as the playwright himself drifted away from the mainstream of Leftist ideas. As I have already stated, I believe this change in large part stems from his essential disagreement with the Left as to the role of the state in society, and governmental rule in particular; and with his growing antagonism toward the Communists as a result of the authoritarian regime that developed in the Soviet Union, most notably after Lenin's death. It is interesting to note that Anderson's change both in attitude and playwriting style coincided with the forced collectivization and massive social reorganization of the Soviet Union under Stalin, which anarchists the world over decried. It seems to me that rather than mince words with the Left over the issue (which is understandable given that Leftists were wont to disavow as counter-revolutionist all manner of criticism at that time) Anderson chose to take refuge in Elizabethan England, broadly criticizing statism in his Tudor dramas *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) and then *Mary of Scotland* (1940e). In both plays he attacked the ruthlessness of the power elite and abuse of political authority. But he did so from a safe distance, as it were.

As long as Anderson dwelled on events in the distant past, he did not run the risk of offending the Leftist camp. His American history plays, written in serious mode, *Night Over Taos* (1940g)–critical of the American annexation of Mexican land in the Southwest–and *Valley Forge* (1940f)–a ponderous assault on the Continental Congress–cost him a slap in the hand by the Establishment: the former play, produced by the Group Theatre, closed after 13 performances, and the latter play after only 58 curtains.

Winterset (1940a), however, represents a divide in the playwright's career. After his second Sacco-Vanzetti drama it could not be supposed that Anderson sided with either the Leftists or the Rightists. Furthermore, while his anarchism, as expressed in the comedies *High Tor* (1940c) and *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), earned him considerable disfavor in both political camps, the liberals made both plays successful. Therefore, I believe that Anderson wrote not only *Winterset* but also his later plays with liberal audiences in mind.

The premiere of *Winterset* (1940a) on 25 September 1935 caused a critical stir in the United States that lasted for several years. According to V. Wall, "*Winterset* was attended by as much criticism as was Victor Hugo's *Ernani*" (1965, 156). Political attitudes affected the reception of the play, as Anderson knew they would. Only seven years before, the country had been divided over the issue of Sacco and Vanzetti. H. E. Woodbridge notes that *Winterset* "was probably handicapped in the theater by the intense feeling which the case aroused" (1945, 59); and O. K. Fraenkel observes, "The prominence accorded the case in the press becomes strikingly evident from a review of the following headlines in the *New York Times*" (1969, 4). The author then proceeds to list 22 case related headlines for the month of August 1927, among which the following serve as examples: "World Stir Over Decision" (August 5th); "British Labor Makes Protest" (August 9th); "Rome Relies on our Justice" (August 12th); "Boston Besieged; Scores Arrested" (August 23rd); "Paris Mobs Loot Shops" (August 24th). Furthermore, whole sectors of Boston were closed off in the days leading up to their executions; protesters were herded off to jail, and in the final hours, "outside the barred area around the prison great crowds gathered" (25).

After such an uproar, it is hard to imagine that anyone deciding to write a Broadway play about the case, even seven years after Sacco and Vanzetti were put to death, would not have weighed the consequences very carefully first. Surely Anderson was aware of the magnetism of the subject he was presenting on Broadway, where

audiences tended to represent the social values of those people who could afford a ticket. I contend that Anderson, the professional playwright, took their interests into consideration while writing *Winterset* (1940a). In "A Prelude to Poetry in the Theatre," an essay which accompanied the original *Winterset* text, Anderson indicates,

> Nobody has ever known definitely what any audience wanted. A choice must be made with only intuition... . One who thinks more of his job than his fame will therefore play safe by repressing his personal preferences and going all the way in the direction of what he believes the public wants. One who thinks as much of his fame as of his job will often hope the public is ready for a theme only because he wishes to treat it. (1939, 32)

Furthermore, the Sacco-Vanzetti case was still in the news at the time. Judge Thayer's home was bombed in 1932. P. Avrich suspects the bombing "originated among the Needham anarchists" (1991, 215). Would a Broadway producer risk a large sum of money on a play that would fuel an anarchist bombing spree? I do not think so. Yet the Sacco-Vanzetti case attract attention to any play; and if the subject were handled in a way that did not infuse the potentially explosive event with new-found life, then a financial success might almost be guaranteed.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that, as a veteran professional playwright, Anderson would have been careful not to offend his paying audiences in representing the case. (Earlier, he had failed to do just that in *Gods of the Lightning*, and as a result the play flopped.) Hence, although he takes an anarchistic position with regard to government, and attacks injustice in *Winterset* (1940a), he nonetheless astutely does it in such a way as to capture and hold the sympathies of the average middle-class, liberal spectator; while at the same time he avoids offending the conservatives (which he does by absolving Judge Gaunt, who is represented has having sent an innocent man to his death out of a patriotic belief that he was defending his country). The liberal

press in New York fervently showed its approval by awarding Anderson the Drama Critics' Circle Award.

Without a doubt it was a risky venture both to write and produce a modern verse drama on a subject as politically sensitive as the Sacco-Vanzetti case. R. J. Buchanan holds that in writing *Winterset* (1940a), Anderson was "risking failure" (1991, 63); and even one of Anderson's strongest critics, E. Flexner, acknowledges, "In *Winterset* Anderson unquestionably set himself his most difficult task to date" (1969, 103). However, it is my belief that Anderson chose his theme–the Sacco-Vanzetti case–knowing that it would be a potboiler. Furthermore, he wrote the play in the ponderous and impenetrable way that he did in order to satisfy the liberal camp, which had supported him in his earlier successes such as *What Price Glory* (1926a), *Saturday's Children* (1927a), *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d), *Both Your Houses* (1933), and *Mary Queen of Scotland* (1940e).

There is nothing unusual about a dramatist catering to audiences. Shakespeare was a master at writing for both the nobility in the balconies and the groundlings in the pit. My major concern with *Winterset* (1940a), though, is that the Sacco-Vanzetti case was not an appropriate subject for the sort of play Anderson wrote; furthermore, that the dramatist chose to write his first verse play on a modern theme using the Sacco-Vanzetti as its background is troubling for two reasons: first, the issue had not been resolved by their deaths; and second, Anderson seems to have been content to leave it that way. Moreover (and what is more alarming), I suspect that Anderson was aware of the impact the subject matter would have on his audiences when he sat down to write the play; and that he ultimately devised it in an ethos perfectly suited to both liberals and conservatives, without likewise taking the necessary precautions to satisfy the Leftist camp. (That he did not, I believe, may have had something to do with the purges that were going on at the time in the Soviet Union, which Leftists in general complacently–if conveniently–ignored, while applauding the achievements of the

same revolution that anarchists like E. Goldman condemned, and criticizing all those who did not kowtow to the Party line.)

Moreover, despite the anarchistic positions that he defends in the play (i.e., the government is corrupt and injustice in the interest of the state carried the day), Anderson nevertheless reneged on his beliefs by purposefully making the Sacco-Vanzetti tragedy easier for his liberal and conservative audiences to take. In my opinion, the Sacco-Vanzetti case is one subject that simply ought not to be depicted obliquely, especially when, as Avrich notes, "Millions were convinced of their innocence, and millions were convinced that, guilty or innocent, they had not received impartial justice" (1991, 4). Nevertheless, Anderson tried to get the audience to suspend judgment; to accept that the worldly power brokers always triumph on earth, and that the martyrs go nobly to their deaths in the end. This sort of thinking was appropriate for his Tudor plays, where the events had occurred in the distant past. But, as I pointed out earlier, it rings hollow when the subject is one that is as controversial as the Sacco and Vanzetti case was in 1935, and still is, as the recent success in Spain of L. Araujo's *Vanzetti* (n.d.) indicates (R. Torres 1993).

Anderson seemed to be trying to play both sides of the ideological fence in his treatment of the Sacco-Vanzetti case. W. E. Taylor notes "the scholar's tendency to hesitate in the face of generalizations, even to suspend judgment between conflicting alternatives" (1968, 48). Similarly, J. S. Rodell observes that in *Winterset* (1940a) "Mr. Anderson refuses to take a chance" (1943, 274). I maintain that Anderson deliberately made *Winterset* abstruse so that the greatest number of people would leave the theater satisfied with the way the Sacco-Vanzetti case was represented. Hence, by swathing the Sacco-Vanzetti tragedy "in layers of poetic disguises" (A. C. Block 1939, 240), the playwright skirted the important issues of the case. (Was the FBI involved? Was the Jury's verdict the result of the "Red Scare?" Should Judge Thayer have been dismissed after making biased statements in public?)

However, the play is not apolitical. J. S. Rodell (1943) and W. E. Taylor (1968) are mistaken in thinking that Anderson refused to take any point of view at all. In *Winterset* (1940a), as in the Tudor plays, Anderson defends the anarchistic position that power corrupts and destroys; that the state is intrinsically evil and attractive to the worldly, who are thus transformed by it (regardless of how noble their original intentions might have been); and that those who are not drawn to the state, and do no lust after power–or who confront the state the way Romangna does in *Winterset* and Sacco and Vanzetti did in Massachusetts–are invariably sacrificed.

That Anderson exploited the Sacco-Vanzetti tragedy is further supported by the fact that he authorized a watered down Hollywood film version of the play. Furthermore, in an article by Anderson, which the *New York Times* took the liberty of subtitling "Veteran Dramatist Reveals He Began Writing Plays Mainly for Money," the playwright acknowledges that *Winterset* (1940a) did not earn enough money, and so "I went back to prose with 'Star Wagon,' another potboiler" (1954c); and he alludes to Molière, who, like Anderson, aimed "at quality and perfection as well as immediate receipts."

In one of his last interviews, Anderson–in a susprising display of deflation before a representative of the fourth estate–reflected on *What Price Glory* (1926a), a play which took Broadway by storm with its depiction of the moral relativism rampant among American soldiers stationed in Europe during World War I. He called the play "a potboiler" (L. Nichols 1959). With its fast paced and realistic language, it influenced American theater in the early 1920s: J. M. Brown mentions that Sherwood Anderson decided "'it would be a wonderful thing to be a playwright'" after seeing *What Price Glory* performed (1965, 163); and M. Freedman calls it one of the two "most successful plays in the twenties" (1971, 82). However, regarding this fairly important event in the history of the American theater, Anderson, in a manner that strikes me as being rather droll, confesses "I wrote it just because I wanted to make

some money" (L. Nichols 1959). That statement may have raised the eyebrows of more than one reader–it certainly did mine. As it stands, then, the question may well be asked, though never satisfactorily answered: How much of *Winterset* (1940a) was just another "pot-boiler?"

CHAPTER FOUR

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THE DUAL CHARACTER AS THE ABSTRACT HERO

1. The Andersonian Tragic Hero Loser

Anderson's political disillusion can be traced back to events in the Soviet Union: in the poem "Sic Semper" (1917) he supported the Russian Revolution; and as a result of the authoritarian regime that developed in that country in subsequent years, Anderson lost faith revolutions, including the American Revolution, as his play *Valley Forge* (1940f) indicates. The works that he wrote after 1929 reflect his belief in the essential goodness of those who, like the Russians who toppled the Czarist regime or the Americans who withstood the longer winter at Valley Forge, struggle against tyranny, but are inevitably trampled underfoot by the power seekers.

Hence, a fundamental characteristic of Anderson's heroes is that they are losers. But in losing, they triumph. They are doomed from the start. (Mio will never succeed and Mary never has a chance.) However, the playwright elevates them to heroic status. They are anti-heroes that break with the tragic hero icons of the past. As P. J. Rice observes, "Throughout practically every play that Anderson has written since *Elizabeth the Queen* in 1930 runs the pattern of a hero's victorious emergence from apparent defeat" (1953, 368). Unfortunately, the extent of the hero's victory is not always left clear in the spectator's mind. Does Elizabeth triumph at the end of Anderson's first Tudor play because she saves her crown? Absolutely not.

With *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d), which he wrote in 1929, Anderson created a character model that he would follow till the end of his days: the tragic hero as a loser.

Elizabeth–like Mary and Anne in the other Tudor plays, and Mio in *Winterset* (1940a)–is, in effect, an Andersonian loser. For she has lost her only love and will live out the rest of her days in abject loneliness, feeling "bitter" (*Elizabeth the Queen* 1940d, 123). At the end of the play she laments, "I'm old, girl, I'm old. It shows in my eyes" (122). Also, in *Mary of Scotland* (1940e), Mary–against whom "all the dice are loaded" (A. H. Quinn 1935a, 34) from the start–becomes Queen Elizabeth's prisoner, and is eventually executed for refusing to abdicate. Yet her death morally ennobles her as much as Elizabeth's success leaves the Tudor queen morally crippled. Thus, the apparent loser–Mary of Scotland–is transformed into a metaphysical winner.

In Anderson's plays, the heroes eschew power, which the playwright maintains is the basis of corruption. However, the playwright invariably has the power seekers ultimately succeed. As to that, Anderson's message is clear: the noble losers morally prevail over the those who prosper by grubbing for power. The Broadway plays produced as of the 1930s show just how much the dramatist was partial to noble losers.

In *Night over Taos* (1940g), Pablo Montoya realizes that his old world has succumbed to the new order from the north. He prefers a noble death to a dishonorable existence. Before taking poison he says, "In all Taos/ There's only one man who could not surrender and live,/ And his heritage is darkness" (132). Moreover, before dying, Anderson has Montoya express the playwright's own sense of disillusion: "The Kings will come back, and they'll be right again/ When they win again." Montoya is a loser, but there is nothing pathetic about him; nor is he a martyr. As he dies he tells his son, "If I lived/ We'd be enemies, and I'd kill you" (133).

Switching to a comic mode, Anderson creates another heroic loser who pulls himself out of the ignominious race for power in *Both Your Houses* (1933). Though Alan McClean is not killed off in the end, he recognizes that the corrupt Congress he

thought he could rehabilitate is really invincible; and rather than succumb to it, he removes himself from the capital city to live out the rest of his life in noble obscurity in the American hinterland: "I didn't lose because I was wrong," he says, adding, "I'd feel pretty damn pitiful and lonely saying it to you, if I didn't believe there are a hundred million people who are with me, a hundred million people who are disgusted enough to turn from you to something else. Anything else but this" (178-79).

Anderson's fondness for heroes takes a different turn in his next play, *Mary of Scotland* (1940e). Whereas the autocrat Montoya's death does not produce sorrow, and young McClean can count on the company of the silent majority as he forges an existence for himself in obscurity, Mary's helplessness makes her death at the hands of Elizabeth strike a more sentimental chord. She is, as A. S. Shivers notes, "crushed beneath the heel of the political realist, of which there is never any shortage in the royal courts of Andersonia" (1976, 85). Like his two earlier tragic hero losers, Anderson has Mary bring about her own downfall when she is faced with the prospect of submitting to "an eater of dust" (*Mary of Scotland* 1940e, 151). As a result, she snatches a moral victory from defeat and proclaims, "I win here, alone" (152).

George Washington–the man who, as most American children learn, could not tell a lie–is an American symbol of nobility. The playwright, however, transformed him into a noble Andersonian loser. Towards the end of *Valley Forge* (1940f), Washington tells his starving and poorly clad troops,

> I promise those/ who'll follow me further, no chance of victory,/ for, by my God, I see none, no glory or gain,/ or laurels returning home, but wounds and death–/... . Close in and take/ your place in my ranks if you like. If you don't,/ and none will blame you, go your road as you have/ and find yourselves food, and live! (160)

As we have already seen, he claims his men have not lost the war, but the merchants have given up, and he dares the British to "come out and find/ my hunters and backwoodsmen, and beat us down/ into the land we fight for. When you've done that–/the king may call us subjects. For myself, I'd have died/ within if I'd surrendered" (163-64).

Unlike the other plays, though, in *Valley Forge* (1940f) Anderson gives his hero both a moral and an earthly victory: the French-American alliance comes to the rescue of Washington and his troops when all seems lost. However, portraying the figure of Washington as something less than a powerful hero of the Revolutionary War, was not well received.

So Anderson tried his hand at a fictionalized rendition of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti rolled into one character who never sets foot on stage. The hero of Anderson's next drama, *Winterset* (1940a) is already dead when the play begins. But Mio Romagna, the seventeen year old son of the dead man–an anarchist who was falsely accused, unfairly tried and sentenced to death–has vowed to find the guilty party and clear his father's name. Mio is similar to Mary in *Mary of Scotland* (1940e) in that both characters are innocent and, from the start, neither stands a chance to succeed: at the end of *Winterset*, Mio is gunned down. But prior to getting shot, he shows little will to carry on in this world: "They say/ they'll cross the void sometime to the other planets/ and men will breathe in that air./ Well, I could breathe there,/ but not here now. Not on this ball of mud./ I don't want it" (82).

Mio's opponent, the gangster Trock, also has his revenge on another innocent character, Miriamne (feisty and clearly unafraid), who for love of Mio elects to share Romagna's fate. Thus, in *Winterset* (1940a) there are two noble losers in addition to the third one, dead at the outset, whose spirit is present throughout the drama.

In *Winterset* (1940a) and the Tudor plays, Anderson employed an Elizabethan style to underscore the fact that he was writing tragedy. Mio, Elizabeth, Essex, Mary and Anne illustrate the loser trend in Shakespearean terms. In *Winterset* the practical and, thus, unheroic Esdras stands over the dead bodies of the heroic losers and declares, "Oh, Miriamne,/ and Mio–Mio, my son–know this where you lie,/ this is the glory of earth-born men and women,/ not to cringe, never to yield, but standing,/ take defeat implacable and defiant,/ die unsubmitting" (133).

The recurrent loser as tragic hero figure is also innocent in Anderson's next play: *The Wingless Victory* (1940h). The heroine Oparre morally triumphs by taking her own life. But before doing so, she kills her two children and announces to her husband, "It's burned out./ Only you and yours will cling to a tawdry end/ of remembered love, till it's down to rags and habits/ hung on your hate" (1940h, 130). Thus, unlike the other innocent Andersonian heroes, there is a cruel edge to Oparre's innocence, which the playwright would not represent in another character until *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a) and again in *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a)–both postwar dramas.

Two Andersonian losers made back-to-back debuts on Broadway in early 1937. The Thoreauvian Van Van Dorn in *High Tor* (1940c) abandons the property he inherited from his forefathers to the greedy land developers: "I want to have it back the way it was/ before you came here. and I won't get that. I know" (1940l, 126). Thus, Van Van Dorn abandons the stage and seeks refuge, like Alan McClean in *Both Your Houses* (1933), in the American hinterland.

The other debut was *The Masque of Kings* (1940i). In it, the tragic hero loser is Crown Prince Rudolph, who rather than become a tyrant like his father Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria, decides to kill himself after his lover, Mary (another Andersonian loser, but one with a minor role in the play), has taken her own life for his sake.

Rudolph tells his father, "I've learned/ from the little peddler's daughter .../ how to keep faith with the little faith I have/ quite beyond time or change" (1940i, 136).

Stephen Minch in Anderson's next play, the nostalgically sentimental *The Star Wagon* (1937), is a humble and somewhat nondescript scientist who, bearing his greatness quietly, builds a time machine. But the message of the play is that time defeats all in the end: Minch, for all his talent, is just another loser in time. Additionally, in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938a), written in collaboration with Kurt Weill, Brom Broeck is a hayseed heroic loser who, if the play were not a musical comedy, would in all likelihood have died by hanging in the end. (The ending reminds me of the incongruous way Bertolt Brecht saved the hero from certain death at the conclusion of *The Three Penny Opera*, for which Weill had also composed the musical score.)

The Andersonian heroes at the beginning of *Key Largo* (1940b) are the American volunteers who, despite all their doubts about the intentions of the Stalinists, knowingly sacrifice themselves defending the Spanish Loyalists, while their comrade in arms King McCloud, who saves his own life by deserting his comrades, spends the rest of the play running away from his own cowardice until, in the end, he his redeemed by death. The underlying theme of *Key Largo* is that what common sense deems practical is not necessarily right; that impractical behavior can also give life meaning at times. McCloud cannot find peace until he can atone for his cowardice in Spain. McCloud discovers that "if you want to live/ you must die now–this instant–or the food/ you eat will rot at your lips, and the lips you kiss/ will turn to stone" (117). His moral salvation–his victory in the end–comes when he is killed fighting the gangster Murillo. Mortally wounded, McCloud says, "Is this dying, Alegre?/ Then it's more enviable than the Everglades, to fight .../ and to win, dying". (124)

As to that, E. M. Jackson makes an interesting assertion in claiming that King McCloud "is the precursor of the anti-hero of existential definition" (1973, 28).

Unfortunately, the author diminishes her creditability somewhat when, in commenting on the Prologue of the play, she writes "a company of American volunteers is about to be overrun by Spanish Loyalist troops." (The Americans, of course, are defending the Spanish Republic in the play.)

The tragic hero losers in Anderson's plays never inherit the earth. But rather they sacrifice their lives for a belief. In *Journey to Jerusalem* (1940k), Jesus of Nazareth is not the heroic loser in the play. (Though he is not killed in the drama; the audience is aware that he will be crucified when he grows up.) The Tragic hero loser of this play Ishmael, a guerrilla fighter who sacrifices himself to save the Messiah. Ishmael says before dying, "I looked to my God for an answer, and within/ I heard his voice: 'Speak to the soldier boldly and say, "this is the Messiah."' (1940k, 84).

After *Journey to Jerusalem* (1940k), Anderson turned to writing war plays. What characterizes them, what separates the three war dramas from the earlier plays, is the element of propaganda. However, the first two plays, *Candle in the Wind* (1941) and *The Eve of St. Mark* (1942a), both reproduce the Andersonian pattern. In *Candle in the Wind*, American Madeline Guest loses her liberty in Nazi occupied France after she unsuccessfully tries to save Resistance hero and freedom-fighter Raoul St. Cloud; and the farm boy Private Quizz West in *The Eve of St. Mark*, like the American volunteers in *Key Largo* (1940b), has the option of retreating, but he chooses instead to fight a superior enemy force and is killed. Quizz explains that he remains at his post "because I must see what's true .../ I must look at our dark old plodding earth/ the way she is, and then do what I must" (1942a, 91).

But in *Storm Operation* (1944), Anderson breaks the heroic loser trend: there is no protagonist who fits the mold of the Andersonian tragic hero loser. In this way, the play harks back to *What Price Glory* (1926a). But without the theatrically entertaining

skullduggery of the dynamic duo protagonists of the earlier war drama, *Storm Operation* fizzles into mumbo jumbo.

Anderson also obfuscates *Truckline Cafe* (1946b), his first play on Broadway after the war, by transgressing for a second time in a row his tragic hero loser pattern. There are far too many losers in the play, and no one character has the emotional appeal and the moral depth of Mary or Mio.

After unsuccessfully veering from his tragic hero loser pattern on two occasions, Anderson successfully returned to the mold in *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a); however, though the heroine, like Oparre in *The Wingless Victory* (1940h), is innocent, there is also a cruel side to her character (Joan of Arc is a killer on a crusade); moreover, like King McCloud in *Key Largo* (1949b), she compromises her beliefs at one point in order to save her own life. Naive and upright Mary Grey, the actress who portrays Joan in this play within a play, asserts, "The meaning of Joan is not a small thing to me. She was clear and clean and honest and I want her shown the way she was" (1947c, 62). However, though Mary Grey loses some of her naïveté during the drama, she is nonetheless bolstered by Joan's example. In the end; Mary discovers that at times one is forced to compromise many things in life, but never one's ideals.

In *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a), the process that was begun in *The Wingless Victory* (1940h), and was improved on in *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a), was perfected. In Anne innocence and cruelty are adroitly united in a powerfully convincing manner. She is not the rousseauistic noble and pious barbarian that Oparre represents in the Salem drama; nor is she the religious visionary on a crusade that Anderson describes in the Joan of Arc play. Anne is the culmination of a series of characters (more or less convincingly drawn) that illustrate the tragedy of the incongruity of life itself. They are all tragic hero losers. But whereas Mary and Mio are martyrs, Oparre is a betrayed "noble savage" and Joan is a saint, Anne is eminently more complex and, hence, more

believably human than others. For the first and only time, Anderson was able to incorporate in one character the intense, roiling emotions of young, unblemished innocence (Mio, Miriamne); the canny deliberation of the practically minded survivalist (King McCloud); and the capacity to sacrifice all for an ideal (Mary and Joan).

Anne Boleyn, a paragon of Victorian innocence at the outset of the play, is driven to worldliness when Henry VIII pressures her into becoming his mistress. She later forces him to divorce his wife and kill all those who will not accept her as Queen. However, Anne becomes ruthless not to gain power for herself but to legitimize the child she has had with Henry: "Once we danced together, and I told you/ any children we had/ would be bastards./ You promised me/ to change that–now you dance out of your promise/. .../ We were king and queen, man and wife together. I keep that./ Take it away from me as best you can" (1948a, 117).

Similarly, in Anderson's final Broadway play, *Bad Seed* (1955a), the innocent protagonist resorts to committing a barbarous act. Christine, an Andersonian loser like the others, decides to kill herself and her murderous, though angelic looking, child Rhoda. Prior to doing so she says, "Rhoda, dear ... you are mine, and I carried you. ... So sleep well, and dream well, my only child, and the one I love. I shall sleep, too." (1955a, 93). But, though Christine dies, Rhoda is saved. Thus, Anderson's recurrent theme is sustained: Christine is a tragic hero loser who wittingly sacrifices her life and, as a result, is morally ennobled. Nonetheless, evil triumphs, for Rhoda survives.

2. The Character Contrasts

Nowhere in his essays on playwriting does Anderson mention the tragic hero loser concept that I have just presented. In fact, the playwright himself led critics to believe

that he was following Aristotle's concept of the tragic hero and Shakespeare's tragic model in his plays. Thus, it was only logical that A. G. Halline would observe that, though *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) "measures up to the specifications for tragedy," nevertheless "in the main, it falls well short of the ideal tragedy," because Elizabeth "is not changed for the better" (1944, 72-3).

As I have already noted, Anderson wrote that "the protagonist of a play must represent the forces of good and must win, or, if he has been evil, must yield to the forces of the good, and know himself defeated" (Anderson 1947a, 25). Yet Elizabeth in *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) represents neither the forces of good nor of evil. This is because the character is complex. The play is not just what A. H. Quinn sees as a "conflict between her fancy for Essex and her determination to rule alone as Queen of England" (1935a, 33). Elizabeth is an Andersonian loser. For in spite of the fact that she keeps her crown, she loses her love–never to be regained.

In contrast, Mary in *Mary of Scotland* (1940e) comes across to some critics as being too good, and as a result, her downfall seems more melodramatic than tragic. A. M. Sampley concludes that *Mary of Scotland* "ceases in a large measure to be a dramatization of life and becomes a romantic melodrama" (1944, 414). In my opinion, this is a misconception. As I will later point out in more depth, the key to Anderson's tragic figures lies not in the discovery scene or the "tragic fault" of the hero, but in the dyadic association of an abstract hero with two contrasting protagonists. Moreover, because Anderson does not allude to this in any of his essays on playwriting, I believe that he himself was not aware of it. He intuitively seems to have fashioned a very original notion of tragedy.

Anderson's research on playwriting rules naturally led him to Aristotle, and to the Elizabethans, which explains the Shakespearianisms in the Tudor plays and *Winterset* (1940a), and, furthermore, accounts for the arbitrariness of the tragic elements that

one finds in these plays. Anderson endeavored to write well-made tragedies in the Elizabethan style. But as F. H. O'Hara rightly points out, the model seems "imposed" (1939, 34); that is, Anderson's tragic plots do not "grow through inevitability" (35). Likewise, A. M. Sampley mentions that where Anderson "has followed most faithfully his own doctrine that tragedy is the hero's self-discovery of a weakness within him, he has achieved only indifferent success" (1944, 418).

As I have already mentioned, Anderson is to blame for the fact that critics observed his dramas in the light of traditional notions of tragedy. In "Prelude to Poetry in the Theatre," which served as the Preface to *Winterset* (1935b) and was later republished in *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers* (1939), he pays homage to Aristotle. Yet, Mio was no Aristotelian hero. Tragedy for the average playgoer vaguely meant the Shakespearean sort. Yet Mio lacks the stature of Hamlet. F. H. O'Hara notes, "It may seem fair enough to look at his play as he himself must look at it–which would be to call it a 'variety of contemporary tragedy' if we were reaching for a label" (1939, 30). But O'Hara's label is not satisfactory because it belies any claim that Anderson's work might have to greatness. The early Tudor plays, *Winterset* (1940a) and *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) must all reach beyond conventional Aristotelian notions of tragedy if they are to be regarded as more than just mediocre melodramas. The problem is that Anderson himself led people to believe that he was following the Aristotelian model. Considered from this perspective, H. H. Watts is not mistaken when he says that Anderson "had exhausted the potentialities of the tragic formula he was investigating" (1943, 227). Similarly, P. J. Rice was correct when he affirmed that Anderson's dramas are hardly tragedies because they do not produce "fear in the souls of spectators" and rely too much on Aristotelian "dramaturgic device" (1953, 369).

I believe Anderson veered from tradition not only in the kind of tragic heroes he depicted–losers and anti-heroes–but also in his refusal to restore unbalanced justice at

the end of the tragedy. In all his verse tragedies, the state inevitably has its way, crushing the heroes underfoot each time: the crown survives (the Tudor plays); an unjust judiciary system triumphs with impunity (*Winterset*); and, with the exception of Elizabeth in *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d), the victims all go heroically–if stoically– to their deaths. However, if that were all Anderson had to say in his dramas, then the unfavorable criticism of his tragedies is sustainable.

But Anderson's tragic figures are not just anti-heroes or triumphant losers. It seems to me that Anderson uses contrasting figures in his plays to achieve a heightening dramatic effect. For example, the comedy *Both Your Houses* (1933) is full of unscrupulous congressmen who only pursue their own interests. But one of them, old Sol Fitzmaurice, the craftiest of them all, is contrasted by the pious Alan McClean– one of Anderson's honest champions (like Mary, Mio and Washington) of what the playwright himself "consciously held to be humanly impossible" (Avery 1970, 6).

The contrast between McClean and Fitzmaurice makes for effective comedy. In some of Anderson's plays, the contrast is embedded in the characters themselves as well as in their character in opposition, and the results are more patent. For example, while in *Winterset* (1940a) pure and innocent Miriamne's death is moving, it is not nearly as gripping as the downfall of the protagonist in *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a). For Anne's ruthlessness (she has all her opponents killed) makes her more complex and dramatically intriguing than both innocent Mio and Miriamne. To this effect, by making her more worldly, Anderson humanizes her and the resulting contrast sharpens her essential innocence and intensifies the impact of the tragedy.

Whether they are worldly or saintly (Rudolph and Anne both share these qualities), Anderson's heroes gain stature from their contrasting figures on the stage. The virtue of Mary, Miramne, Mio, Oparre, and Prince Rudolph is matched by the decadence of

Elizabeth, Judge Gaunt, Reverend Phineas McQuestion and Emperor Franz Joseph respectively.

In *Winterset* (1940a), Mio's noble spirit is contrasted by the falsely convincing grandiloquence of Judge Gaunt (who is a complex character because he suffers and loses his mind for what he has done). Similarly, in *The Masque of Kings* (1940i), Emperor Franz Joseph's corruption (made complex because he suffers for his love of the Prince) is eloquently expressed in opposition to Prince Rudolph's integrity.

However, some authors do not give much importance to these contrasts. A. M. Sampley can only see "the interplay of irony within and among the characters. (1944, 416). The "irony" that Sampley refers to is in fact the basis of the dramatic action of both plays. The character of Mio is actually heightened by the contrasting complexity of the character of the Judge, as is Prince Rudolph made more complex by the presence of Emperor Franz Joseph. Deprive *Winterset* (1940a) of the complex Judge Gaunt or *The Masque of Kings* (1940i) of the worldly Emperor Franz Joseph, or ignore that both characters suffer from guilt, and what is left is strictly melodrama. No matter how well the protagonist's discovery scene is constructed, without the presence on stage of these complex characters in contrast, the tragic fault of Mio or the heroic downfall of Crown Prince Rudolph would only be ineffective.

Additionally, Halline's observation that Prince Rudolph does not gain the admiration of the audience because, among other reasons, "he has led a dissolute life in the past" (1944, 77), is less remarkable for what it reveals about the character than what it says about the critic's judgment. What the author cannot appreciate is that in Rudolph, Anderson has created a noteworthy protagonist because of the character's contradictory past. Prince Rudolph tells his lover Mary, "If I wanted empire,/ I'd have the empire, and you, and Stephanie,/ and anything I whistled for." (30). He further claims that he has been trained to be what he is. "What have I found instilled in me/ to

make me king–to fit me to be king–?/ the morals of a wolf in a court of wolves/ and bitches... no truth, no honor..." (48). That Rudolph breaks out of the pattern fixed by his training is Anderson's way of showing the Prince's essential greatness as an individual.

The effectiveness of the play is skillfully achieved by the depth of Prince Rudolph (stemming in part from his own contradictions and the changes he has undergone during the play) and the contrast his father, the Emperor, represents. If the complexity of the protagonist is not observed, and the contrast his father poses (which heightens that character's complexity) is not ascertained by the spectator, then the play is reduced to melodrama.

However, the result of the contrast between opposing characters in this and other plays by Anderson's can produce theater that is "truly flaming" (Unsigned, 1949).Yet, opinions differ as to which dramas depict the most complex and intriguing characters. H. E. Woodbridge ranks *The Masque of Kings* (1940i) over *Mary of Scotland* (1940e). He rightly claims that, though the former play may have more well-drawn individual characters, "The bitter sincerity of the young prince is deeply moving" (1945, 62); and he further notes that, due to the contrasts–or contradictions–in the character of Franz Joseph, "the cynical old Emperor is more fully revealed to us" (1945, 62). To save his son in the end, Franz Joseph asserts, "Lest you should think I deal/ in crocodile promises, Rudolph, I have here/ three long state papers,/ drawn in a sleepless night,/ and signed and sealed. One is full pardon for/ your friends and you." (Anderson 1940i, 133).

But Rudolph refuses the royal pardon. In typical Andersonian fashion, he would rather save all that is "worth the saving in me" (132) by dying.

In essence, Rudolph endures his bitter fate, as do Mary, Mio, Joan and Anne. But the strength of all these characters is not what H. H. Watts describes as "the glory of the pose" (1943, 226), which they maintain to the end. But rather, the effectiveness of these characters is achieved by their own strength in relation to the strength of their contrary characters: Franz Joseph, Elizabeth, Judge Gaunt, the Inquisitor, and Henry VIII respectively.

If one ignores the fact that Franz Joseph is a complex character, then Rudolph is a merely a martyr figure, and *The Masque of Kings* (1940i) becomes a melodrama. Moreover, the same can be said about the other tragic hero losers and their corresponding plays.

Many people saw Anderson's heroes as martyrs. His Playwrights Producing Company colleague Elmer Rice observes that Anderson had "an obsession with the concept of martyrdom" (1963, 394); and J. Szeliski notes that even the warring Essex in *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) seems like a "passive martyr," although his choice of death "is preceded by some very active struggles to attain fulfillment in love and power on earth" (1971, 43). Thus, without the contrast of complex characters, this passive martyr syndrome transforms into melodramas the Tudor plays as well as *Night over Taos* (1940g), *Winterset* (1940a), *The Wingless Victory* (1940h), and *The Masque of Kings* (1940i) (223-37). Martyrdom robs Anderson's characters of complexity and richness; it gives E. Flexner cause to censure Anderson for lapsing "repeatedly into triteness ... and sentimentality" (1969, 97); it justifies E. Wilson's assertion that Anderson's "heroes are always resigning ... and this makes his dramas rather disappointing. There is never any real fight" (1937, 193).

Martyr figures are too good to be believed in drama. Mary, Mio, Oparre, Rudolph, Joan, Absalom, Socrates are indeed too much like paradigms of goodness, unless they are considered jointly with their contrasting characters, without whom their downfalls

come across as being simply melodramatic. Unless one considers each character in direct contrast to the other main character, Mio, Mary and the other Andersonian heroes do indeed seem like two-dimensional figures.

3. The Abstract Hero

Anderson held that the best plays ever written all had scenes in which the hero discovered something about himself that would ultimately lead to his downfall. He asserted that this "recognition scene," or anagnorisis, was inevitably followed by a profound emotional reaction on the part of the hero that would subsequently alter the entire play: "The recognition scene, as Aristotle isolated it in the tragedies of the Greeks, was generally an artificial device" (1939, 5). Anderson further observed that one of the dramatists he most admired, William Shakespeare, had used a recognition scene in each of his tragedies. Moreover, Anderson deduced that, though subtler and harder to find in modern plays, recognition scenes "are none the less present in the plays we choose to remember" (6). He believed that the recognition scene should occur about two-thirds through the play, and everything else had to be subordinated to it. "A play should lead up to and away from a central crisis, and this crisis should consist in a discovery by the leading character which has an indelible effect on his thought and emotion and completely alters his course of action" (7).

Anderson's tragedies followed this model prior to 1935, when his dramatic theory was first made public. In *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d), his first successful verse drama, Elizabeth discovers that her love for Essex means more to her than her crown: knowing that her lover is about to be put to death, she tells Essex, "I'd rather you killed me/ Than I killed you" (129); and in *Night over Taos* (1940g), the destructiveness of Don Pablo Montoya's excessive pride is revealed to him: "I was a dream" (130), he tells his son; "I'm old and alone." In *Mary of Scotland* (1940e), Elizabeth discovers just how loveless and barren her life is: in a scene between the

queen and her prisoner, she tells Mary that she can "weep/ to see you here," and to know "what I have lost" (147). Additionally, General Washington in *Valley Forge* (1940f) learns that Congress is corrupt: he tells his men there was a time when "if you starved and died/ you died for a purpose. That's gone now. If you die/ you die for nothing" (160). Similarly, in the comedy *Both Your Houses* (1933) the idealistic freshman Congressman Alan McClean ultimately concedes that the US House of Representatives is irremediably rotten: "I lost because I tried to beat you at your own game–and you can always win at that" (178).

After the publication of his essay on playwriting in the Preface to *Winterset* (1935b), Anderson continued to use the device as a fixed and acknowledged rule. Mio in *Winterset* (1940a) discovers that his desire to avenge the death of his father has triggered both his and his love's ruin: "I've lost/ my taste for revenge if it falls on you" (125). In *The Wingless Victory* (1940h), Oparre, a Malayan, learns too late that Christianity is no match for racism and greed: she tells her white, Christian husband, "You've been ashamed/ to call me yours... / and I'm ashamed/ to say that you were mine, and my dark body/ remembers you" (128-29). In *The Masque of Kings* (1940i), the essential wretchedness of those who rule autocratically is tragically brought to bear on the mind of Prince Rudolph, who says of himself, "This prince is only a walking apparatus/ for oxidation" (137). In *Key Largo* (1940b), King McCloud comes to realize that he can no longer keep running from himself. To save two Indians falsely accused of murder he falsely confesses, "I'm guilty," and tells Sheriff Gash to "let the Indians go" (120). Even the fantasy comedy *High Tor* (1940c) is provided with a suitable recognition scene. Conceding that industrialization cannot be avoided or stopped, Van Van Dorn decides to sell his mountain to the moguls. He says, "Better than living on a grudge, I guess" (139). Furthermore, in his last play produced on Broadway, *Bad Seed* (1955a), Anderson wrote a powerful scene in which Christine Rhoda finally comes to accept the fact that her eight-year-old daughter Rhoda is a murderer: "She killed him. And I love her.–Oh, my baby, my baby" (89).

Thus, in play after play till the end of his prolific career, Anderson wrote a recognition scene for each of his dramas. He did it intuitively until 1935. Thereafter, it became a conscious tool in the playwright's craft.

Anderson's second rule of playscript writing coincided with what Aristotle called the hero's "tragic fault." According to the Oedipal tradition, the discovery of a tragic flaw leads to great suffering, and in the end the hero becomes more admirable as a result of the torment. Anderson explains that, typically, the hero "suffers death itself as a consequence of his fault or his attempt to correct it, but before he dies he has become a nobler person because of his recognition of his fault and the consequent alteration of his course of action" (1939, 9).

Anderson believed that well depicted tragic fault was absolutely essential to drama. To observe the uplifting downfall of an imperfect hero was, in Anderson's mind, one of the main reasons why spectators went to the theater in ancient times. This was because "Greek tragedy was dedicated to man's aspiration, to his kinship with the gods, to his unending, blind attempt to lift himself above his lusts and his pure animalism into a world where there are other values than pleasure and survival" (11).

According to the dramatist, people still go to the theater for a similar reason. He maintained that "forms of both tragedy and comedy have changed a good deal in non-essentials" (12), but not the essence of drama, which will always remain unaltered because it is eternal. Anderson agreed with the Aristotelian idea that audiences expected to witness the exaltation of the human spirit in tragic drama, and that people needed to see a hero discover some mortal frailty, suffer as a result, and then obtain final wisdom. It was so, Anderson held, because they were looking for heroes that could "break the moulds of earth which encase them and claim a kinship with a higher morality than that which hems them in" (13). Anderson further maintained that tragic

fault was linked to a deeply rooted religious affirmation, "an age-old rite restating and reassuring man's belief in his own destiny and his ultimate hope" (14).

As I have already pointed out, tragic fault is depicted in all of Anderson's dramas, though in different ways: Elizabeth is attracted to power; Mary is too naïve; Mio is too bent on revenge; Oparre has too much faith; King McCloud is a coward; and Joan is blinded by her crusade. However, as a rule, it is difficult to classify Anderson's heroes and heroines as such. For they are rarely heroic in absolute terms. The protagonists of the tragicomic *What Price Glory* (1926a) are too brutish; George Washington in *Valley Forge* (1940f) is clearly a mouthpiece for Anderson's political views; and the playwright's war play protagonists are propagandistic tools. In *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a), Macready and Capraro are too obviously modeled after Sacco and Vanzetti to be heroes; furthermore, Mio in *Winterset* (1940a) is too innocent to be heroic.

If then the figure of the tragic hero is so important in Anderson's plays, how does one explain that the playwright wrote dramas with no heroes at all? The answer is that the hero in each of Anderson's tragedies is an abstraction that is represented by the two main characters of the play. Whereas alone, neither character is heroic, when coupled, the two figures together fulfill the requirement of Anderson's rule. From Elizabeth and Essex in *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) through Mio and Judge Gaunt in *Winterset* (1940a), to Christine and Rhoda in *Bad Seed* (1955a), Anderson created two characters that taken together represent a single abstract hero in each play. This can be clearly seen in his Tudor plays: *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d), *Mary of Scotland* (1940e) and *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a), as we will see.

In the first of his three Tudor plays, *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d), Elizabeth I becomes the victim of her tragic fault: her attachment to power. In the end, she saves her crown; however, her victory means that the man she loves must die: young Essex is

put to death and Elizabeth keeps her crown, though she remains unwed till the end of her days.

Elizabeth's downfall is not at all obvious. Anderson shows her suffering quietly within. Moreover, when her fault is revealed to her with tragic force, Elizabeth does not resort to the use of a dagger or otherwise do herself retributive harm. On the contrary, she lives on, suffering quietly with her grief. Her tragedy is that her hurt will be life-long and remain unsung. Anderson purges her fatal flaw–her lust for power–by having Essex, rather than Elizabeth, put to death. Essex and Elizabeth are both brought down by the same fault: he is put to death and she is left to rule alone and unloved. His death signifies the demise of Elizabeth's love. Hence, Essex's execution is essentially Elizabeth's fall. For though the former loses his life, the latter forfeits all hope of ever loving or finding happiness again.

Furthermore, the love that Elizabeth and Essex share is passionate. Thus the mutual loss of love is dramatic. Upon the return of Essex from Ireland, Elizabeth, seeing her lover after his long absence from the court, cannot help but exclaim, "I can't breathe–/ Or think," to which Essex responds, "Nor I" (1940d, 98). However, she knows that she cannot love a man whom she suspects of treason and at the same time remain faithful to her crown. She will have to choose between the two. This is no easy task for her. She beseeches him, "Come, kill me if you will. Put your arms round me–/ If you love me." When Essex swears he loves her still, Elizabeth declares, "If this were false, then, then truly–then I should die." Her inarticulateness, brought on by her confused state of mind, quickly dissolves when he assures her of his love, and she becomes eloquent.

> We have so few years./ Let us make them doubly sweet, these years we have,/ Be gracious with each other, sway a little/ To left or right if we must to stay together–/ Never distrust each other... . Let us make this our pact/ Now, for the fates are desperate to part us/ And the very gods envy this happiness/ We pluck out of loss and death. (99)

Essex encourages her. "If two stand shoulder to shoulder against the gods,/ Happy together, the gods themselves are helpless/ Against them, while they stand so"; and Elizabeth ecstatically replies, "Take this my world, my present in your hands!/ You shall stand back of my chair and together we/ Shall build an England to make the old world wonder/ And the new world worship!"

But Essex's fatal flaw is immediately revealed. He has been taken aback by her words, and asks, "We being equal in love,/ Should we not be equal in power as well?" He further inquires, "Am I not–and I say this too in all love–/ As worthy to be king as you to be queen?/ Must you be sovereign alone?" (100).

For the sake of their love for each other, Elizabeth tries to reason with him. "My Essex, if you do not see that if I/ Should grant high place to you now it would show ill to the kingdom–/ It would be believed that you had forced this on me,/ Would be called a revolution. It would undermine/ All confidence" (101).

Essex, however, doubts her true intentions: "But is this your reason/ Or have you another? Would you trust me as king?" Elizabeth truthfully tells him no. Further on, he asks her, "Is it so hard to share your power with your love?" (102). This she now knows she can never do. In the end, the practical strategist in Elizabeth gains the upper hand. As her captain of the guard appears, Elizabeth says, "I have ruled England a long time, my Essex,/ And I have found that he who would rule must be/ Quite friendless, without mercy, without love" (106). She then has Essex arrested and taken to the Tower.

Her love for Essex, though, does not vanish incarceration. On the contrary, she suffers as a result of his imminent execution. Just before he is put to death, she offers to pardon him. But Essex reminds her that if she frees him, he will only try to take the

crown away from her. For he cannot turn his back on his fatal flaw. "I have loved you, love you now, but I know myself... . I have a weakness/ For being first wherever I am. I refuse/ To take pardon from you without warning you/ Of this. And when you know it, pardon becomes/ Impossible" (127).

He then explains that they both know she is better fit to rule than he is. "You govern England better than I should./ I'd lead her into wars, make a great name,/ Perhaps, like Henry Fifth and leave a legacy/ Of debts and bloodshed after me. You will leave/ Peace, happiness, something secure."

When Elizabeth pleads, "It cannot go this way," Essex replies, "Ay, but it has./ It has and will. There's no way out." He then asks her, "Are you ready to give/ Your crown up to me?" She tells him, "No. It's all I have" (128). So that she will know how deeply he loves her, Essex declares,

> If we'd met some other how we might have been happy.../ But there's been an empire between us. I am to die... . I can tell you that if there'd been no empire/ We could have been great lovers... . Remember... I am to die.../ And so I can tell you truly, out of all the earth/ that I'm to leave, there's nothing I'm very loath/ To leave save you. (129)

Furthermore, Elizabeth confesses, "I'd rather you killed me/ Than I killed you." But Essex reminds her, "It's better/ To die young and unblemished than to live long and rule,/ And rule not well," and Elizabeth sorrowfully admits it is so: "Aye, I should know that."

When her lover at last bids her good-bye forever, she ruefully exclaims, "Oh, then I'm old, I'm old!/ I could be young with you, but now I'm old./ I know now how it will be without you. The sun/ Will be empty and circle round an empty earth.../ And I will be queen of emptiness and death" (130).

In a last desperate attempt to save her love's life, Elizabeth cries out, "Take my kingdom. It is yours!" But her words go unheard. In the end she can only bow her head and cover her ears as the clock strikes six and her love is no more.

Once again, I should point out that according to Anderson, tragic figures "must represent the forces of good and must win," or if they are evil they "must yield to the forces of the good," and know that they are "defeated" (1947a, 25); moreover, at the end of the play they must come out "more admirable" human beings than they "went in."

Taken alone, Elizabeth does not satisfy these requirements. She neither represents the forces of good nor of evil; neither does she come out of the play a more admirable human being than when she went in. Essex forces her to be a ruler. He leads a rebellion against her and when he is captured he is sentenced to death. But even as she is willing to renounce her throne for him, he compels her to desist, telling her, "You govern England better than I should./ I'd lead her into wars... and leave a legacy/ Of debts and bloodshed after me. You will leave/ Peace, happiness, something secure ..." (127).

Essex is ostensibly the more admirable of the two. For (in typical Andersonian fashion) he heroically prefers death to betraying himself. He swears he would wrench the throne from her. So it is just as well that be put to death, since "A woman governs/ Better than a man, being a natural coward./ A coward rules best" (127); and he concludes, "It's a bitter belief to swallow, but I believe it./ You were right all the time." This of course is passable melodramatic material. But Essex's moral fortitude and courageousness do not make the drama a tragedy. Neither does Elizabeth's quiet suffering.

I maintain that both characters together make the abstract hero that generates the tragedy of this play: Essex is a warrior and Elizabeth is the practically minded "natural coward" that is necessary for peace. Essex and Elizabeth both fall while defending their individual natures: he is the warrior whose nature it is to usurp power, and she is the ruler who must preserve her status. That they love each other matters little. He loses his life defending his warrior nature, and she loses her love defending her crown. Together they generate the abstract hero that allows the play to be considered a tragedy.

In his second Tudor drama, *Mary of Scotland* (1940e), Anderson again shows the consequences of Queen Elizabeth's power, but in a different light. In this play, she is old, unloved and barren. On the other hand, her rival for the crown, Mary, is just the opposite: she is young, beautiful and loved by the Earl of Bothwell. Furthermore, unlike Elizabeth, she has an heir.

As Essex in *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) would rather accept death than renounce his claim to power, so too Mary prefers dying to abdicating. However, unlike Essex, Mary is the victim of the tragic fault of another–in this case Elizabeth I. Mary is a martyr figure, like Mio and Miriamne in *Winterset* (1940a). Nevertheless, just like the tragic combination of Essex and Elizabeth in the earlier Tudor play, the protagonist role is divided between two characters in *Mary of Scotland* (1940e).

Mary represents the forces of good, and as such, she "must win" (1947a, 25), according to Anderson's playwriting rule. But her death is certain. She prefers death to renouncing her right to the throne. Elizabeth is driven by her love of power. She triumphs in the end, but knows that she is morally defeated. She confesses that she envies Mary's "Stuart mouth/ And the high forehead and French ways and thoughts" (*Mary of Scotland* 1940e, 140). But Elizabeth cannot love. Nor can she provide her

kingdom with an heir. Each has what the other woman lacks; each lacks what the other has.

In the end, Mary (the martyr figure) loses her life–as do Mio and Miriamne in *Winterset* (1940a)–and Elizabeth, like Judge Gaunt, lives with her crown securely on her head, though in the process she has forfeited all claim to an ethical existence. Elizabeth and Mary both lose. But in typically Andersonian fashion, Mary's loss of life makes her glorious; while Elizabeth's survival lessens her stature.

But Mary has no flaw worthy of heroic status. She is the victim of Elizabeth's lust for power. Mary is worthy of admiration, for she is willing to accept death rather than renege on her principles. But her virtuousness makes her seem too innocent. Mary is not faulty enough to be a tragic figure. Nor is Elizabeth virtuous enough to be allotted heroic status. However, Mary's death and Elizabeth's worldly triumph jointly heighten the abstract heroic image depicted in the play.

That the two characters considered jointly represent the abstract tragic figure of the drama becomes especially apparent when Mary and Elizabeth confront one another in Act III, when it becomes obvious that Mary's moral salvation, which means her inevitable execution, is Elizabeth's loss. Mary chooses to die rather than succumb to Elizabeth's designs. As a result, Elizabeth's victory over her rival, and indeed her achievements as Queen of England, are shown in a rather inglorious light. But be that as it many, Elizabeth is still no villain. For, like Mary, she is a victim of circumstances.

Just how much Mary and Elizabeth jointly represent a single abstract heroic image is further delineated in the confrontation scene that takes place at the end of Act III. Anderson reveals the duality of the abstract figure when, noticing Elizabeth coming to her doorway, Mary observes, "I have seen but a poor likeness, and yet I believe/ This

is Elizabeth" (1940e 139). That is to say, the figure of the Queen is incomplete. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is aware that something in her make up is missing, which the other possesses: "It seemed if I saw you near, and we talked as sisters/ Over these poor realms of ours, some light might break/ That we'd never see apart."

We have already seen that Mary has what Elizabeth lacks: youth, love, beauty, innocence. Elizabeth tells her, "The center/ Of all this storm's a queen, she beautiful–/ As I see you are–." She further adds,

> Aye, with the Stuart mouth/ And the high forehead and French ways and thoughts–/ Well, we must look to it–Not since that Helen/ We read of in dead Troy, has a woman's face/ Stirred such a confluence of air and waters/ To beat against the bastions. (139-40)

When Mary replies, "You flatter me," Elizabeth responds "It's more like envy" (140). That is to say, Elizabeth would have what Mary possesses. For her part, Mary confides, "I had wished myself/ For a more regal beauty such as yours,/ More fitting for a queen."

Statements such as these cannot be interpreted as being merely hollow gestures of propriety. Anderson makes sure of this by having Elizabeth clarify her position: "Believe me,/ It's envy, not flattery."

The blending of the characters is further seen when Mary informs Elizabeth that she has a "right to a place beside" her, and Elizabeth expresses her agreement with a deeply felt "Aye." Mary responds yearningly, "Oh, if that were so,/ I have great power to love!" (141), meaning that she could love Elizabeth, "someone to whom I can reach a hand/ And feel a clasp and trust it. A woman's hand." But Elizabeth, the realist, quickly retracts her momentary display of sentimental weakness, before she betrays something more pressing within her. She remarks that she could become "a most

unchancy friend." Mary asks, "But does that mean you can lend/ No hand to me, or I'll pull you down?" And Elizabeth tells her:

> I'm so old by now/ In shuffling tricks and the huckstering of souls/ For lands and pensions. I learned to play it young,/ Must learn it or die.–It's thus if you would rule;/ Give up good faith, the word that goes with the heart,/ The heart that clings where it lives. Gives these up and love/ Where your interest lies, and should your interest change/ Let your love follow it quickly.

Mary's potential to love (Darnley, her son and even Elizabeth) is exactly what the Tudor Queen, with all her power to rule, painfully lacks. Elizabeth has renounced love for the sake of keeping her throne. She bitterly, and regretfully confesses, "It's thus if you would rule;/ Give up good faith, the word that goes with the heart,/ The heart that clings where it loves. Give these up, and love/ Where your interest lies" (142).

But Mary cannot (will not) perform what Elizabeth says it takes to rule. Nor is this because of ignorance, for she says, "I, too, Elizabeth,/ Have read my Machiavelli." Her refusal is based on mature thought. The dire consequences notwithstanding, she insists on abiding by what Elizabeth calls Mary's "too loving heart." Elizabeth remarks that Mary has "too bright a face to be a queen." It is the face that Elizabeth only wishes she could have, a reflection of inner joy and goodness, but which her obligation to defend her crown will never allow her to possess.

Neither woman, however, is superior to the other. Mary speaks to her "as an equal," and Elizabeth asserts, "Here is our love." But here is also the seed of tragedy: they cannot live and love in peace, for the presence of Mary is a threat to Elizabeth's crown. Nor can Mary abdicate and thus remove the threat, for if she did so, their relationship would no longer be equal and ultimately their love would vanish.

Both women are aware that the rift between them is too wide to be bridged, in spite of the affection each feels for the other. Like two soldiers in opposing armies who share

a mutual affection but who at the sound of the bugle will jump to their posts, Mary and Elizabeth must inevitably confront each other. Elizabeth fires the first volley by declaring, "You will never govern, Mary" (143).

It is only fitting that Elizabeth should be the aggressor. She is more worldly and aggressive, and has taken the full weight of the kingdom on her shoulders; and in Andersonian fashion, she must use her power at Mary's expense. Elizabeth's ultimate victory over her rival is assured from the start. However, there can be no joy in her conquest. She goes about her royal business with a sad and stoic demeanor. Observing Elizabeth, Mary refers to "this basilisk mask of yours" (145).

If Elizabeth is to rule, Mary, the other part of herself, must be shut away where she can do no harm to the Crown. As Mary refuses to abdicate, Elizabeth the ruler has no other choice but to bury her "power to love" even deeper, even if it means taking Mary's life. Elizabeth explains, "What becomes a queen/ is to rule her kingdom" (146). It is no easy task, nor is her choice glorious or spiritually uplifting. For all of that, there is something almost tragic about her resolution.

> I am all I women must be. One's a young girl,/ Young and harrowed as you are–one who could weep/ To see you here–and one's a bitterness/ At what I have lost and can never have, and one's/ The basilisk you saw. This last stands guard/ And I obey it. (147)

As for Mary, she can only obey her heart. She stands firmly on her convictions. "Win now, take your triumph now,/ For I'll win men's hearts in the end–though the sifting takes/ This hundred years–or a thousand."

In a last effort to sway Mary to see reason, Elizabeth replies

> Child, child, are you gulled/ By what men write in histories, this or that,/ And never true. It's not what happens/ That matters, no, not even what happens that's true,/ But what men believe to have happened. They will believe/ The worst of

> you, the best of me. I have seen to this./ What will be said about us in after-years/ By men to come, I control that, being who I am. (150)

Nevertheless, faced with certain death Mary steadfastly holds her ground, declaring: "And still I win" (151). However, neither woman can claim total victory. As we have already seen, Mary does not abdicate, though her refusal will cost her life; and though Elizabeth saves her crown, she nonetheless loses her love. In the end, the summation of both downfalls is the tragedy of the play. The heroic figure is neither character but rather the combination of Mary, the martyr figure, and Elizabeth, the epitome of worldly power.

Similarly, in Anderson's third Tudor play, *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a), the dual nature of an abstract tragic hero is represented by two characters: Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII, two complex figures. The play begins with a soliloquy given by Anne in her cell before being executed. In it, she reveals her guilt and admits her capacity for ruthlessness.

> Would he kill me? Kill me?/ (She laughs) Henry? The fool? That great fool kill me?/ God knows I deserve it. God knows I tried to kill,/... . I know too well I succeeded,/ and I'm guilty, for I brought men to death unjustly,/ as this death of mine will be unjust if it comes–/ only I taught them the way. And I'm to die/ in the way I contrived./... . No, but Henry./ He could not. Could not.../ Could I kill him, I wonder?/ I feel it in my hands perhaps I could./ So–perhaps he could kill me. (2)

The scene shifts to the past, and Anne is seen in a different light as an innocent young lady to whom the King has declared his love. But she is enamored of Percy, Earl of Northumberland. Henry, however, will have his way. But Anne is like him in that she is resolute and passionate. She rejects him outright: "I've hated him from the beginning. I hate him now" (34). Though the king is overbearing, Anne defies her sovereign's will and vows, "I shan't go to him, nor let him come to me. I'm not sure I shall live. Tell me why I should want to live?"

As king, Henry gives free reign to his designs. He is neither troubled by scruples nor weakened by ethics and doubt. Yet Anderson will have us know that Henry was not always so. Elizabeth Boleyn remarks that when the king was young, "He had the face of an angel... . and danced like an angel" (33). She further remarks, "There was something innocent and pure about him then. He wanted to be a great king–almost a Messiah." Anderson thus presents the corrupting influence of power. Henry has not only changed with age but also has been conditioned by his position to behave in a certain way. Mary Bolyen observes, "He's changed indeed," and Elizabeth concurs, "Yes. He reads Machiavelli now," and, she adds, "He has grown infinitely more complex."

Rather than allow herself to be victimized, Anne decides that if she cannot keep the king at bay, then she will deliver herself to him, but only as his equal. She tells him she will marry him on the condition that he should make her queen. In the end, she gets her way. Henry declares, "I shall make her queen./ If it breaks the earth in two like an apple/ and flings the halves into the void, I shall make her queen" (40). The church, however, will not sanction a divorce: he cannot rid himself of his wife Katherine. But Anne is pregnant and presses Henry to act. The king confesses, "I'm your prisoner, Nan. Little as I like it, I'm your prisoner, and I mean to make you my queen" (62). But he will have Anne realize first what their marriage will cost in terms of lives:

> Suppose I set out to make myself head of the church. I shall be opposed by many who are now my friends. They will be guilty of treason and I shall have to kill them. Those whom I like best–those who have some integrity of mind–will speak first against me. They must die. Parliament and the nation can then be bludgeoned into silence–but a lot of blood will run before they are quiet... . Yes, I can make my Nan queen–but we must consider the price... . Are we willing to pay it?

Anne unhesitatingly says she is willing. Nevertheless, Henry warns her, "You are new at this work, of course. You don't know quite what it means. To see blood run. If you

knew, I wonder if you'd still wish it" (63). But Anne quickly reminds him, "I am with child." When Henry repeats, "The altar at St. Paul's will stand ankle-deep in blood," Anne, hesitant for the first time in the scene, inquires, "Must so many die?" Henry replies, "Many must die," adding, "And it will look as if I had done this for money. Like my father." Finally, Anne decides she is prepared to pay the price.

Like Elizabeth I in the previous Tudor plays, Anne is aware of her capacity to love. But she is determined to deny love for the sake of power. In all three Tudor plays, love is subordinate to political power. This has led some authors to believe that Anderson, at least in his earlier plays, was unable to represent love convincingly. L. G. Avery observes,

> Especially when it came to love, Anderson had in the period of his better known plays a set of stereotyped sentiments, and it was only with deliberate effort that he could work himself free of the clichés and record a feeling that has valid emotional content, that vibrates in harmony with the emotions of real men and women. (1967, 241)

Certainly the love between Anne and Henry is much more dramatic and fully developed than the love between Essex and Elizabeth in the earlier Tudor play. Psychologically, the protagonists of *Anne of the Thousand Days* are more complex and believable.

The protagonists in Anderson's earlier plays are too set in their ways, and their behavior at times seems too determined. A. T. Tees notes, "Elizabeth and Mary reject Essex and Bothwell respectively because they realize they would have to surrender power to their husbands" (1974, 58). But Anne is more psychologically complex than Elizabeth and Mary. Anne knows in her heart that she cannot simply bury her love. She confesses as much in a soliloquy: "He knew very well I'd love him when once he'd make me his. And so it was... . After that night I loved him more and more/ and hated him less and less–/and I was lost. (41)

For all his vanity, Henry, too, shows how much he can love. After Anne is crowned he tells her, "Now I've done all you asked of me," and he adds, "I think there's never been/ in all this world/ a king who gave so much to find his way/ to the heart of her he loved" (71). He also reminds her,

> I have fought and chopped/ and hacked and stabbed my path through the jungle of laws/ and events and churchly rules–/ and the flesh of friends–/ to come to this day./ To come to this day when I can say it's done,/ and I have earned her love... . But not once, not once have you said,/ 'I love you.'/ Surely now–surely/ my Nan will say it now?

However, when for the first time she says she loves him, Henry laments, "I still don't have you. You're not mine." When Anne then asks him, "Isn't it better so?," Henry replies, "Because you might lose me? No–don't answer that" (72) But even if declaring her love for him means losing him, Anne can no longer keep her love a secret. In a sudden outburst of unguarded passion she bares her heart to him for the first time: "It doesn't matter about the divorce–or the marriage–/ or having this palace... . Let Katherine keep her throne... . You love me, and I love you and I can say it"; and she concludes, "Let it come, whatever it brings. I'm deep in love./ With one I hated" (74-5).

But in the end, Anne is no match for the crown. Because she has not born Henry a son, the monarchy is in jeopardy. Henry says, "I am the king, God's chosen/ ... the woman's failed me./ I must look elsewhere" (96). Yet he confesses that he still loves Anne. But she urges him, "Play your play" (98), even though she knows that this will mean her death.

Like Elizabeth I in the earlier plays, Henry must bury love for the sake of the throne. Though he suffers for it, his torment remains within, where he bears it stoically. As he signs the order to have Anne put to death, he says, "Oh God, oh God,/ sometimes I

seem to sit in a motionless dream,/ and watch while I do a horrible thing/ and know that I do it,/ and all the clocks in all the world stand still–waiting" (119-20).

Before being executed, Anne tells Henry, "Go your way, and I'll go mine./ You to your death, and I to my expiation./ For there is such a thing as expiation./ It involves dying to live"; and she concludes, "A coroner wouldn't know you died young, Henry./ And yet you did" (121).

Anderson has Henry tell Anne's ghost: "No doubt I'll sometimes see you when I'm alone./ It's not over yet between us, is it?" Hence, his victory is not a triumph. Nor is Anne's death her defeat. But taken together, the fate of both characters creates an abstract tragic hero.

The impact caused by the fall of the abstract tragic figure represented in *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) is much stronger than it is in the other Tudor dramas. In this play Anderson has once again concluded that it is better to die for a noble cause than it is to live ignobly. But unlike Mary, Anne is no innocent martyr. She sends many people to their deaths in order to secure her position. As we have already seen, she was unable to ward off Henry's advances. Therefore, she reconciled herself to circumstances and managed to get the king to accept her as an equal. She struggled to remain so throughout the play. However, by using treacherous means to have her removed, Henry irremediably debased himself. Thus, in dying, Anne is superior to him.

Because her character is complex, Anne Boleyn comes closer than Mary Stuart to being a tragic figure. But her character's greatness is also in large part the result of Henry's loftiness. A lesser figure than Anne would either have chosen suicide when pressed by Henry, or allowed herself to be victimized by his royal highness. But

Anne, for all her noble qualities, is bolstered by Henry–a complex character, who makes her queen. The dyadic association thus creates the abstract figure.

In Anderson's play, Henry is unworthy of being called a tragic hero because he ultimately has Anne removed so he can marry Jane Seymour. But he must do this, for he is King. Moreover, in typically Andersonian fashion his political power destroys his love. However, he is too complex to be considered a melodramatic villain. Henry's love for Anne compelled him to risk a great deal for her sake (for the sake of their love). But Anderson affirms that being a king, Henry must defend his crown above all else. For those with absolute power cannot act otherwise.

In all three Tudor plays Anderson represents in dyadic association two characters who, when considered jointly represent an abstract heroic image. The playwright follows this pattern in plays like *Winterset* (Mio and Judge Gaunt); *The Wingless Victory* (Oparre and Reverend Phineas McQuestion); *The Masque of Kings* (Prince Rudolph and Emperor Franz Joseph; *Joan of Lorraine* (Joan and the Inquisitor) and *Bad Seed* (Christine and Rhoda). But nowhere do two strong, complex figures jointly represent the abstract hero as effectively as they do in *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a), where love and a passion for power are confronted in moving scenes. Therefore, it is no wonder that, with the exception of *Bad Seed* (1955a), *Anne of the Thousand Days* is the only one of Anderson's plays that is still regularly produced in regional theaters, high schools and universities and by theater groups across the United States.

4. The Misplaced Dyadic Association in *Winterset*

Aside from the fact that American audiences were not pleased with the way Anderson represented the War of Independence in *Valley Forge* (1940f), I believe the play also failed because Anderson did not create a strong dyadic association for it. In that sense,

it resembles *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a), another play that failed: Macready and Capraro are too innocent, and their accusers seem too sinister. It is significant then that in the play followed Anderson returned to the dyadic association pattern that had earlier worked so well for him in *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) and *Mary of Scotland* (1940e). But though *Winterset* (1940a) won the playwright the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, I believe it was a failure–as I will explain later in this section–because the dyadic association is misplaced. For the abstraction cannot represent as important and recent an event as the Sacco-Vanzetti case was.

In *Winterset* (1940a) Judge Gaunt and Mio Romagna are in dyadic association. Both are homeless (the former figuratively and the latter truly) and searching for the same thing, if for different reasons. Gaunt enters holding "a small clipping" (22), and Mio appears on stage as a result of having read the same article about new evidence pointing to Bartolomeo Romagna's innocence. Additionally, Gaunt is "well dressed but in clothes that have seen some weather;" and though Anderson does not describe what Mio is wearing, one can imagine what a seventeen year old who has been on the road for some time would be dressed like: hence Anderson establishes a physical similarity between them.

No sooner does Mio appear on stage than the Judge disappears, like the night fading as the sun approaches the horizon. Later in the scene, Gaunt tells a policeman, "I have sent men down that long corridor into blinding light and blind darkness!" (37). In that way, Gaunt is shown as also being a bearer of light, but of a different sort than Mio's innocent luminosity.

Gaunt is guilty of sending an innocent man to his death. This fact sets Gaunt apart not only from Mio, but from all the other characters in the play (with the exception of the gangsters, who are murderers and also stock figures).

When Mio and Gaunt meet in Esdras' basement apartment, the boy immediately accosts the judge, saying that he is "the fountain-head of the lies that slew" his father (73). But Gaunt assures him, "It's necessary that we be cruel to uphold" certain laws (a common Andersonian theme), and "this cruelty is kindness to those I serve." But the innocence that Mio represents makes the Judge despair: "Could I rest or sleep while there was doubt of this?"

This time the table has been turned around: the boy, embodying the spirit of his condemned father, has become the judge, and Gaunt the accused: "Your charge/ misled the jury more than the evidence" (76). Standing before the son of the innocent man he sentenced to die, the judge realizes he has "a short way to go to madness" (77). Mio tells him, "you should be mad, and no doubt you are."

Gaunt is tormented by the vision of his own wicked acts. He longs to be as innocent as Mio (and Mio's father) again. But like Elizabeth and Henry, Gaunt knows this can never be. Thus, he says to the boy, "I ask this/ quite honestly–that the great injustice lies/ on your side and not mine?" (78). In essence, Gaunt is trying to absorb the boy's light, to put it out of his sight (and his mind). But to do so, he must first deprive the boy and his father of their innocence. Gaunt says, "Time and time again/ men have come before me perfect in their lives, loved by all who knew them, loved at home, gentle not vicious, yet caught so ripe red-handed in some dark violence there was no denying where the onus lay." But Mio protests, "That was not so with my father!"

Gaunt hastily replies, "And yet it seemed so to me." At this point, the judge manages to plant the seed of doubt in the boy's mind: "Can you be sure–/ I ask this in humility– that you,/... may not have lost perspective–may have brooded/ day and night on one theme–till your eyes are tranced/ and show you one side only?"

Suddenly Mio, like his father before him, stands accused before this judge, who is no longer trying to flee from himself. Like Henry and Elizabeth, Gaunt ultimately accepts that he is inextricably rooted in power. Gaunt tells Mio that "one spectre haunted you and me–and haunts you still, but for me it's laid to rest/ now that my mind is satisfied. He died justly and not by error" (79).

Thus, Gaunt has managed to make the innocent Mio suspect that his rage, though seemingly justified, is in fact murderous. Mio asks, "Do you know/ there's murder in me?" Gaunt replies, "There was murder in your sire,/ and it's to be expected!"

But Mio sees what the other is trying to do: "Yes, you'd like too well/ to have me kill you!" For that would absolve the judge. He tells Gaunt, "You'll not get that from me!"

Further on in the scene Gaunt confesses, "You will hear it said that an old man makes a good judge, being calm, clear-eyed, without passion. But this is not true. Only the young love truth and justice. The old are savage, wary, violent, swayed by maniac desires" (93).

Mio later tells Gaunt: "Now let the night conspire/ with the sperm of hell!" (98). Thus, Mio encapsulates the dyadic relationship (Mio/ Bartolomeo Romagna and Judge Gaunt) by saying about his father, "He was as I thought him,/ true and noble and upright even when he went/ to a death contrived because he was as he was/ and not your kind!" (100).

Furthermore, Mio will follow in his father's footsteps, and in the end he allows himself to be killed. Gaunt thus succeeds in putting a stop to this dredging up the past. But he loses his sanity in the process. Thus, in Andersonian fashion, Gaunt's ostensible triumph is in fact his loss.

The dyadic association in *Winterset* (1940a) is not readily apparent. This is the main reason why Anderson's drama troubles so many authors. If it is not considered from the perspective of the dual character relation, the drama seems superficial to some and exasperating to others: J. S. Rodell understandably rails, "Why? Why is the judge relieved, when everything cries out for retribution and the stage is set for it, of paying the penalty of his monstrous crime?" (1943, 272). Nor is it unreasonable that F. H. O'Hara can only consider the play to be "a melodrama presented in the guise of tragedy" (1939, 25). For, to the author's mind, the cause of the tragic event was an unjust society.

> In so contemporary a tragedy Fate, as we would expect, lurks in the socioeconomic order. Forces beyond Mio's control or understanding have produced the 'criminal' who committed the murder for which his father was convicted; those same forces wrought the miscarriage of justice and then sanctioned the injustice by decree of the sovereign state. Unrelenting, the same forces work on, not with the placable anger of the gods but with the impersonality of some vast, diabolical machine. (32-3)

If one does not consider the dyadic association, then O'Hara's sociological assessment makes sense. But Anderson claimed that his play was a tragedy. Certainly the Sacco-Vanzetti case was tragic. *The Male Animal* (J. Thurber and E. Nugent, 1966) is a fairly good melodrama on the same subject. The plot of *The Male Animal* spins around the case and strongly criticizes the injustice and hypocrisy surrounding the event in an effective–if conventional–way. But being high tragedy, *Winterset* does not have the necessary center around which good melodrama must revolve in order to produce a truly successful dramatic effect. However, without seeing the play from the perspective of the dyadic association, one could hardly call *Winterset* a tragedy at all; and as melodrama it is ineffective and deserves to be criticized, as E. Flexner suggests, for the "idle vaporizing and self-delusion" (1969, 90).

It is understandable that, given the subject matter, people expected the play to be more politically committed. Hence, Flexner's criticism is not unfounded when she writes,

"If Anderson wanted to reveal and excoriate the class basis of justice in *Winterset*, which appeared to be his purpose at the outset, he signally failed to do so" (110). Nor is Rodell being unfair when he asserts that Anderson seems to have fallen "not merely in a social, but also in a moral vacuum" (1943, 272).

Furthermore, without considering the dyadic association of the characters, one could also argue that Anderson's play reflects the imminent collapse of world order, when old enemies will forget the wrong each has done to the other and join together against a common threat, as indeed the United States and the Soviet Union would do during the Second World War. The imminent collapse of world order is reflected in *Winterset* (1940a) as despair and futility. Nor is it surprising that it should be so depicted. R. Brustein observes that similar emotional states infect "both the Hellenistic culture and the culture of the late Renaissance Europe" (1964, 5)–Anderson's favorite eras.

Something was indeed rotten not only in Denmark but in most of the world in 1935. Anderson wrote *Winterset* (1940a) at a time when reality was on the threshold of being radically transformed. Those difficult years could be compared to the age of William Shakespeare and John Donne–the era that Anderson so identified with and admired. Charles I was beheaded a generation after Queen Elizabeth's death and, for better or worse, a new age emerged. Brustein observes that at times of impending social upheaval "tragedy loses its clear definition, and good and evil become confused." Certainly the abuses and contradictory experiences of the French Revolution in the eighteenth century and the Bolshevik revolution in the twentieth century gave pause to the revolutionary fervor of many a socially discontented individual in the 1930s. Leastwise, it seems to have had that effect on Anderson.

Winterset (1940a) was an original drama not only because it reflected a sense of impending social upheaval but also because it represented a dyadic association in a

modern play about a well-known, if unresolved, issue (at least to many people's minds) in recent American history. The play blends the characters of Mio Romagna (and his father Bartolomeo) and Judge Gaunt, the man who sentenced the boy's innocent father to death, into a single abstract tragic hero. As I have already mentioned, Anderson did something similar in the earlier plays *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) and *Mary of Scotland* (1940e), and in a later Tudor drama *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a).

Winterset represents his first depiction of the dyadic association in a modern play about a familiar event that people still felt strongly about. Anderson would never repeat such an undertaking. In a later modern play, *Bad Seed* (1955a), he successfully depicts the dyad, but the story is purely fictional: in it, Christine Penmark has a strong capacity to love. The utter sinisterness of her daughter Rhoda serves to intensify that love to a dramatic degree. Without her mother's love, Rhoda would be just a villainous child; and without the murderous Rhoda, Christine would not nearly be as interesting. The dyad, in effect, elevates the play above melodrama. However, *Bad Seed* (1955) does not represent a politically explosive event the way *Winterset* (1940a) and *Key Largo* (1940b) do. For its part, the dyadic association in the latter play is not as strongly defined. King McCloud is neither innocent like Mio nor complex and potentially evil like Christine. Nor is he capable of doing harm to others the way Anne is; furthermore, the gangster Murillo has no attributes that humanize him the way Judge Gaunt does. The abundance of weak dyadic associations, therefore, allows one to call *Key Largo* a melodrama.

Both *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948a) and *Bad Seed* (1955a) were successful dramas, as were the two earlier Tudor plays: *Elizabeth the Queen* (1940d) and *Mary of Scotland*(1940e). They all have one thing in common with *Winterset* (1940a): they depict dyadic associations. I believe, however, that unlike the other plays *Winterset* was a failure–notwithstanding the fact that it was a box office success and won the

playwright a prestigious award. I think it was a failure because Anderson made the mistake of using the Sacco-Vanzetti case in the expedient way that he did. As I have said, it was not an appropriate subject for the sort of poetic drama the playwright wrote. (Sacco and Vanzetti cannot be considered as Andersonian losers.) Anderson's use of dyadic associations to represent a politically divisive issue like the Sacco-Vanzetti trial was thoroughly out of place and, hence, counterproductive. It is no wonder, therefore, that with the exception of a production staged at the University of California in 1988, the play is ignored today.

Anderson dared to challenge a cardinal assumption that said prose and realism were indispensable in the modern theater. But in the end, the plays that he wrote did not have much of an impact on the American theater. Nevertheless, I believe Anderson wrote a few good and significant plays, and that if they were considered from the perspective of the pattern that I have suggested (of the dual character as the abstract hero), they might be better appreciated in this more eclectic and open-minded post cold war age.

CONCLUSION

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For upward of two decades, Maxwell Anderson was at the forefront of the American theater, during which time it was thought that he would replace Eugene O'Neill as the leading American playwright. Drawing on his background as a scholar, journalist, and poet, and with a passion lying behind all that he did, Anderson wrote with a mixture of the professional and the autodidact, flooding Broadway with his plays over a thirty year period.

His decline in the postwar years coincided with that of each aging member of the Playwrights' Company, whose dramas were reminiscent of another era. American audiences applauded a new style of theater, which dramatists like Miller and Williams ushered in with plays that were hardedged and remarkably honed. Though Anderson scored some victory points with *Joan of Lorraine* (1947c), *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1948), *Lost in the Stars* (1949a), and *Bad Seed* (1955a), his works were increasingly disregarded by authors who exposed the inadequacy of his plays. In subsequent years the analyses and sundry disclaimers of those authors still remain plausible.

At the height of his playwriting career in the 1930s, Anderson's work was held in esteem, though a few critics regarded him with considerably less revere–as many would in later years. The prewar dithering about verse drama, which seemed rather self-indulgent to some during the Depression, ceased with the war and was never resumed. The effective musicality of Williams' prose and the raw, rough-and- tumble language of plays in the 1960s make Anderson's overblown trailblazing efforts to establish a poetic modern theater seem, today, rather effete in comparison.

Regardless of his narrow politics and jingoistic world view in the postwar era, and the

outdated tone of his plays, I believe his works warrant fresh analyses. Anderson made a significant contribution to playwriting with something that has not been noted in his works by authors up till now, and which I suspect the playwright himself did not consider, though intuitively he seems to have realized it.

Anderson established an original notion of poetic drama: the abstract hero figure. His wont to imitate the great Elizabethan dramatists notwithstanding, his plays are remarkably original when considered from the perspective of the dyadic association. This seems especially patent in the current age of virtual reality. Seen from the perspective of the dual character as an abstract hero, plays like *The Masque of Kings* (1940i) and *Valley Forge* (1940f), which are rarely produced or studied today, become relevant.

Winterset (1940a) and *Key Largo* (1940b) were the only two verse dramas written by Maxwell Anderson that represented as poetic tragedy matters of pressing current events. He had earlier dealt with contemporary issues in plays, but not in verse.

However, all of his plays–even the historical tragedies–made comments on contemporary human problems. Anderson was very much caught up by the outstanding issues of the times. He was interested in history and culture, and he especially admired the high spots in Western culture: the Greek age of Pericles, the Italian Renaissance and, in particular, Elizabethan England, whose literary styles he studied at great length and grafted to his own.

He tried to imitate the best dramatic literature of the past. The debut of his playwriting rules, based on Aristotle's notions of drama, coincided with the premiere of his modern tragic drama *Winterset* (1940a), a unique play in the history of the American theater because it was a modern drama written in Elizabethan verse style. It was a risky venture in an age when, on the one hand, garishness and glitter offered better

terms for immediate success, and on the other, the harsh reality of the Great Depression made many people bridle at the sort of poetic esthetics proposed by Anderson in articles like "Prelude to Poetry" (1935a) and in the Preface (1935b) to *Winterset*.

Following his own playwriting rules, Anderson built into each of his tragedies a recognition scene, in which the leading, if tragically faulty, character made an important discovery, whose effects radically altered the lives of the principal dramatic figures as well as the action of the play. The tragic faults and weaknesses of Anderson's heroes and heroines, however, varied from the model of Aristotle's *Poetics*, which Anderson himself in various essays on the subject led people to believe that he was following. Without the analog of a Hamlet or Oedipus, losers as tragic figures often resemble martyrs more than heroes or heroines. (The tragic figure represented as a loser was a characteristic of Anderon's works.) For this reason his dramas seem melodramatic to many authors.

According to the playwright, a professional dramatist should keep the audience's perspective in mind at all times. Anderson maintained that the handling of a particular theme needed to agree with the world view and deeply felt convictions of the majority of the people in the audience. Otherwise, he asserted, the play would fail. Anderson was a professional dramatist writing plays for Broadway. So I suspect that venality in part influenced not only his choice of the subject but also the way he dramatized it in *Winterset* (1940a). He intentionally represented the Sacco-Vanzetti case in a manner that would satisfy liberal playgoers. For the failure of his earlier Sacco-Vanzetti drama *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) had taught him to weigh more carefully the dichotomy of truth versus expedience in plays intended for Broadway audiences.

Anderson firmly believed that audiences went to the theater to reaffirm their faith in humankind. To him, the theater was, in essence, a religious rite whose spiritual

function had not changed since the days of the ancient Greeks. To him, the theater was a place where good and evil were exhibited, and where good would inevitably triumph–even at the price of the hero's untimely death. A successful play, then, had to present a criterion for judging good and evil; it needed to give testimony of the ensuing eternal battle and the ultimate triumph of good. Anderson represented good and evil in dyadic contrast: for example, Elizabeth and Mary; Mio Romagna and Judge Gaunt; and Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. However, his strongest characters are those who are too complex to be taken as either good or bad in absolute terms. In this sense, his best drawn protagonists are Joan of Arc, Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn.

Anderson had supported the Russian Revolution in its incipient stage. But especially after Stalin came to power, he became hostile towards the Soviet Union. The dramatist was suspicious of large governments, and when the Federal Government of the United States was granted extensive power to find a solution to the widespread misery engendered by the Great Depression, Anderson attacked the New Deal. His criticism was especially frowned on by those who had previously thought that Anderson was in the Leftist camp. Moreover, as Hitler consolidated his position in Central Europe and Stalin began to rule unopposed in the Soviet Union, Anderson's ideological position shifted. He maintained that all governments were bad, but considered some to be worse than others. In the end, he concluded that the bungling democratic system of government was preferable to the dictatorships in Germany and the Soviet Union. Hence, when the United States entered the war, the pacifist and anarchist radically switched course. It was a wrenching transition in his career.

His plays consistently represent the dramatist's belief in individualism, as well as his opposition to of state and large governments, and depict what he considered to be the ineluctably corruptible nature of powerful individuals such as monarchs and judges. But he contradicted himself during World War II, and even allowed the War Department to censor *Storm Operation* (1944). Previously he had resisted altering his

plays whenever he was asked to do so. In fact, the Playwrights' Company, which he was a cofounder of, had been established precisely so that he and his colleagues in the group could write and produce plays without having to allow producers and directors to bowdlerize their works.

Storm Operation (1944) failed dismally, as did also his first postwar drama, *Truckline Cafe* (1946), which was produced by Elia Kazan and Harold Clurman, and starred Marlon Brando. Thus, after two theatrical failures in a row (both plays were on modern subjects), it seemed as if Anderson's career was in a terminal tailspin. But then, as he had done after *Gods of the Lightning* (1928a) had flopped, he sought refuge in the past, popping back with *Joan of Lorraine* (1946a), which was a commercial success.

Anderson was a poet before becoming a professional playwright. He tried to keep the poet in him alive by writing dramas in verse. But he could not return verse drama to currency. It seems reasonable to suspect that his publicized vexation with the drama critics of the fourth estate in the postwar era derived in part from his frustration at knowing that he had not written the poetic dramas he had hoped he would. Moreover, in my opinion, his playwriting rules were the result of his rather excessive determination to succeed in this respect. However, they were not original, and are ignored today.

Anderson continued to write–I would even say compulsively so–till the end of his days, as if something momentous were at stake. With his dread and nostalgia, he was dislocated in a cold war hallucination, an individualist famous for his riffs on freedom, Communists, and the metaphysical quest of humankind. But the dramatist who was once considered the doyen of American playwrights after O'Neill retired from the stage in 1934, has been practically ignored since the 1960s, while many of O'Neill's plays are popular to this day.

After World War II, Anderson struggled to fit the pieces of his lost ideal back into something morally sustainable–a difficult, if not impossible, task. Of course, he had a few stage successes left in him, but no real following. Like the natives who have lost their tribal roots in *Lost in the Stars* (1949), he was alone in the metropolis, an outcast. He sought refuge in the institutional demilitarized zone, and from there went on a crusade in the name of conservatism. Considering everything, I am tempted to think that Anderson might have done better had he retired after the war.

Anderson was morally troubled in the postwar era. One senses that he spent those years in decline fleeing from what he had stood for in the past. In the end, the onetime poet-playwright, pacifist and anarchist cashed in his chips and bought a mansion on the coast of Connecticut (the consummate American dream).

At the end of his life, Anderson cast a disillusioned eye back on his long and passionate career as a playwright. The way he did so brings to mind the lines of an early poem of his:

> Your love is like quick-sand where men build
> Day after day, bright palaces of years,
> Walling them in with music they have willed,
> Hanging them with dark tapestries of fears,
> And finding there when next they see your face
> No tower or image out of all that dream
> They set upon you; only in its place
> Sweet disenchanted laughter mocking them. (1928b)

Miller and Williams surpassed him, but they were not necessarily greater playwrights. They surpassed him as one generation will another after the older generation has laid a proper foundation for growth. Anderson was one of the leading figures of an outstanding generation of playwrights who, unfortunately, have practically been

forgotten. Robert Sherwood, Sidney Howard, Philp Barry, are but a few of the many names.

The method-driven style which the Group Theatre made famous was especially suited to the sort of plays that Miller and Williams wrote, many of which former Group Theatre member Elia Kazan successfully staged on Broadway and later directed the film versions for in Hollywood. For several decades directors have been devising films with actors who have been trained to interpet their characters and depict reality in a certain way, which Group Theatre co-founder Lee Strasberg was instrumental in establishing in the United States. The works of the thirties were by and large not written for this particular style of theater production.

The 1940s and early 1950s found the United States involved in two costly wars. During that time, an ideological struggle that few were exempt from or could ignore divided the world. In essence, there was no middle ground. The cold war perpetuated a syndrome of divisiveness that lasted well into the 1980s, and the vestiges of the effects are still felt.

Perhaps the time has come to reevaluate Anderson's damaged image before another holocaust or struggle for ideological supremacy divides humankind. Just how seriously we are to entertain an examination of Anderson's works needs to be addressed further now that the partisan icons of yesterday are melting away with the other divisive effects of the cold war. One could say that Maxwell Anderson was a victim of the Stalinist purge (the playwright lost his faith in revolution in the 1930s); of World War II (he reneged on his former beliefs); and of the cold war, when his staunch opposition to the Communists, and his fear of the Soviet threat, compelled him to justify blacklisting, and thus to contradict his own faith in individual freedom. He reminds me somewhat of a soldier who, certain that the cause is just, marches off to war and is subsequently traumatized by the experience of battle. In the 1950s, he

was a wounded playwright, and as a poet, virtually dead. Maxwell Anderson once had a poetic and anarchistic dream. In the end, human frailty made him lose it. The dream, however, remains.

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1923. *White Desert*, unpublished

1924. *Sea-Wife*, unpublished

1924. *What Price Glory*, in collaboration with Laurence Stallings

1925. *Outside Looking In*

1925. *First Flight*, in collaboration with Laurence Stallings

1925. *The Buccaneer*, in collaboration with Laurence Stallings

1926. *Chicot and the Kings*, unpublished

1926. *Hell on Wheels*, unpublished

1926. *Saturday's Children*

1927. *Gypsy*, unpublished

1928. *Gods of the Lightning*, in collaboration with Harold Hickerson

1929. *Elizabeth the Queen*

1931. *Night Over Taos*

1932. *The Princess Renegade*, unpublished

1932. *Both Your Houses*

1933. *Mary of Scotland*

1934. *Valley Forge*

1935. *Winterset*

1935. *The Wingless Victory*

1936. *Vithymiri*, unpublished

1936. *The Masque of Kings*

1936. *High Tor*

1937. *The Star-Wagon*

1938. *The Feast of Ortolans*

1938. *The Duquesnes*

1938. *The Second Overture*

1938. *Knickerbocker Holiday*, music by Kurt Weill

1938. *The Bastion Saint-Gervais*, unpublished

1939. *Key Largo*

1940. *Journey to Jerusalem*

1941. *Candle in the Wind*

1941. *The Miracle of the Danube*

1942. *The Eve of St. Mark*

1942. *Your Navy*

1943. *Storm Operation*

1943. *Meeting in Africa*, unpublished

1944. *Warrior's Return*, unpublished

1945. *Fortune, Turn Thy Wheel*, unpublished

1945. *Truckline Cafe*, unpublished

1945. *Ulysses Africanus*, unpublished

1945. *April with Emily*, unpublished

1946. *Joan of Lorraine*

1948. *Anne of the Thousand Days*

1949. *Lost in the Stars*, music by Kurt Weill; from Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*

1950. *Raft on the River*, unpublished

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

Summaries of and Brief Commentaries on the Essays in *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes* and *Off Broadway: Essays about the Theatre*[1]

In the following pages, the essays of *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes* (1939) and *Off Broadway: Essays About the Theatre* (1947a) are summarized and comments are given as to the content of each. The essays in the first book explain Anderson's playwriting theory and his philosophy of the theater. The second book repeats much of what he already said in the earlier work. I have summarized only those essays that are not found in the first book.

1. *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers*

The book is made up of five essays: "The Essence of Tragedy," "Whatever Hope We Have," "A Prelude to Poetry in the Theater," "The Politics of *Knickerbocker Holiday,*" and "Yes, By the Eternal." The first essay summarizes much of what the other essays discuss.

a) "The Essence of Tragedy"

In January, 1938, Anderson read his paper "The Essence of Tragedy" to the Modern Language Association in New York City. The essay was later published by the Anderson House (1939). In it the playwright states that "theorists have been hunting

[1] The first book of essays was published in 1935, and the second in 1947. Access to both books is not easy, and therefore I have summarized them so that the reader can more readily obtain additional information about Anderson and his work.

for the essence of tragedy since Aristotle without entire success" (3). Anderson acknowledges "that Aristotle came very close to a definition of what tragedy is in his famous passage on catharsis." Anderson says that with the purpose of finding a playwriting formula, he studied Aristotle's *Poetics* and compared ancient and modern playwriting methods. He wanted to find the eternal aspects of dramaturgy. In the process, he discovered the importance of the "recognition scene as essential to tragedy" (5). Anderson asserts that, "the recognition scene, as Aristotle isolated it in the tragedies of the Greeks, was generally an artificial device." As a result of a recognition scene, there is an instant and profound emotional reaction on the part of the hero and the entire play is altered.

Anderson observes that the recognition scene is present in all of the best plays ever written. Though subtler and harder to find in modern plays, "they are nonetheless present in the plays we choose to remember" (6). In all those plays, there is a scene where the hero discovers something about the environment, or his own person that he previously did not know. "A play should lead up to and away from a central crisis and this crisis should consist in a discovery by the leading character which has an indelible effect on his thought and emotion and completely alters his course of action" (7).

According to Anderson, the recognition scene should occur about two-thirds through the play. Everything else is subordinated to it.

The second rule that Anderson mentions is what Aristotle called the character's "tragic fault"–that is, the hero should not be perfect. The hero's discovery of this fault and the suffering that this induces effect a change for the better in the character; he or she becomes more admirable or noble. "In a tragedy he suffers death itself as a consequence of his fault or his attempt to correct it, but before he dies he has become a nobler person because of his recognition of his fault and the consequent alteration of his course of action" (9).

Anderson holds that the audience expects to see this tragic fault in the hero; the recognition scene and uplifting downfall are an intricate part of any successful tragedy. It was, in fact, the main reason why spectators went to the theater in ancient times. "Greek tragedy was dedicated to man's aspiration, to his kinship with the gods, to his unending, blind attempt to lift himself above his lusts and his pure animalism into a world where there are other values than pleasure and survival" (11).

Theater has changed very little in this respect, for the essence of drama is eternal. Anderson points out that "the forms of both tragedy and comedy have changed a good deal in non-essentials" (12).

What the audience expects is the exaltation of the human spirit. Following the Aristotelian rule, Anderson maintains that people go to the theater to see a hero discover some mortal frailty, suffer as a result, and obtain final wisdom. Anderson holds that audiences go to the theater in search of heroes that can "break the moulds of earth which encase them and claim a kinship with a higher morality than that which hems them in" (13). He further asserts that in all the best theater there has always been a religious affirmation, for he believes that theater is "an age-old rite restating and reassuring man's belief in his own destiny and his ultimate hope" (14).

Destiny, however, is to be "glimpsed but never seen, perhaps never achieved." He was thus at odds with the materialists, realists, and Marxist idealists of his age.

b) "Whatever Hope We Have"

Anderson writes about the artist's faith and place in the universe. In his opinion, the artist is above all an individual. The playwright asserts:

> Whether he chooses to conform or not to conform, every man's religion is his own, every man's politics is his own, every man's vice or virtue is his own, for he alone makes decisions for himself. Every other freedom in this world is restricted, but the individual mind is free according to its strength and desire. (19)

Furthermore, in his opinion, the condition of mankind has always been such that "each must make his choices, now as always, without sufficient knowledge and without sufficient wisdom, without certainty." For Anderson, science is too limited in its capacity to provide people with wisdom. Rather, he holds that wisdom is to be found in

> the idealism of children and young men, in the sayings of such teachers as Christ and Buddha, in the vision of the world we glimpse in the hieroglyphics of the masters of the great arts, and in the discoveries of pure science, itself an art, as it pushes away the veils of fact to reveal new powers, new laws, new mysteries, new goals for the eternal dream. (20)

Moreover, the eternal dream of mankind has always been "that it may make itself better and wiser than it is." Until the end of his life, Anderson maintained that "every great philosopher or artist who has ever appeared among us has turned his face away from what man is toward whatever seems to him most godlike that man may become." What people are matters less than what they imagine or to be. This propels the race forward, according to Anderson. But by falling short of achieving their dreams, people suffer and, as a result, acquire spiritual wisdom. Only then does the world obtain meaning for them and do human beings find dignity. This is the message of "the great spirits who have preceded us and set down their records of nobility or torture or defeat in blazons and symbols which we can understand" (21).

Anderson holds that there have only been a few cultural peaks in Western history–the age of Pericles, the era of Dante and Michelangelo, and the reign of Elizabeth in

England: "Between these heights lie long valleys of mediocrity and desolation, and, artistically at least, we appear to be miles beneath the upper levels traversed behind us" (22). But he maintains that people, as individuals, as a nation, and as a "race" never lose hope of reaching a similar peak; and that the nobility of humankind, "is not buying or selling" (23); finally, "mere rationalism is mere death."

He further asserts that "the artist has usually been wiser even about immediate aims than the materialist or the enthusiast for sweeping political reform." At a time when materialistic views predominated in politics (Marxism), in science (physics), in psychology (Freudianism), in sociology (behaviorism), in linguistics (structuralism), Anderson saw fit to assert, "The materialist sees that men are not perfect, and erects his philosophy on their desire for selfish advantage. He fails quickly always, because men refuse to live by bread alone." He fails because he cannot build an unselfish state out of selfish citizens" (24). Moreover, Anderson holds that "the concepts of truth and justice are variables approaching an imaginary limit which we shall never see" But he adds, "Those who have lost their belief in truth and justice and no longer try for them are traitors to the race, traitors to themselves."

The playwright asserts that "the greatest achievements have occurred in the absence of endowments, or professional critics or prizes" (25). But this, of course, is a subject that lends itself to debate: in Shakespeare's time, artists were financially supported by aristocrats.

c) "A Prelude to Poetry in the Theatre"

This essay was originally published as the Preface to the first published edition of *Winterset* (1935b). In the essay, Anderson attempts to establish a system by which chance–which to him is inartistic–is excluded from the theater. His aim is to strike a

point midway between what an audience needs to see, and what the playwright as an artist wants to express. As to that, Anderson observes,

> A certain cleverness in striking a compromise between the world about him and the world within has characterized the work of the greatest as well as the least successful playwrights, for they must all take an audience with them if they are to continue to function. (31)

Anderson agrees with Goethe and the earlier writings of Bernard Shaw that the theater is "essentially a cathedral of the spirit, devoted to the exaltation of men, and boasting an apostolic succession of inspired high priests" (32). For such a theater, Anderson feels that verse is the most appropriate style. "The best prose in the world is inferior on stage to the best poetry," he writes, adding that "prose is the language of information and poetry the language of emotion" (34). In his opinion, prose on stage represents the inarticulateness of ordinary life. "Hence the cult of understatement, hence the realistic drama in which the climax is reached in an eloquent gesture or a moment of meaningful silence." For a man who considers the stage a cathedral, ordinary is not sufficient; therefore journalism, which is "dominated by those who wish to offer something immediate about our political, social, or economic life" (35) is inappropriate for serious drama.

The playwright is certain that the age of reason will decline, and be followed by an age of faith, when the theater will once again praise the mysteries of life. Anderson affirms, "In the end, science itself is obliged to say that the fact is created by the spirit, not spirit by fact. Our leading scientists are already coming to this conclusion, rather reluctantly."

Anderson predicts that the new age to come will "involve a desire for poetry after our starvation diet of prose" (36). He therefore urges young playwrights to be first and

foremost poets; that is to say, dreamers and prophets, for "what we are to become depends on what we dream and desire."

Furthermore, it was with this in mind that Anderson approached the writing of *Winterset*:

> I had discovered that poetic tragedy had never been successfully written about its own place and time. There is not one tragedy by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Corneille or Racine which did not have the advantage of a setting either far away or long ago. (37)

Written largely in verse and on a contemporary theme (the Sacco-Vanzetti case was still a subject of public interest), *Winterset* won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, as did *High Tor;* and *Key Largo*, which also dealt with a current event and followed the rules of playwriting that Anderson had established, ran for over a hundred performances. The three poetic tragedies were staged on Broadway between 1935 and 1939: the high point in Anderson's career as a playwright.

d) "The Politics of Knickerbocker Holiday"

Anderson blends his political views with his literary style in such a way that it is impossible to separate the one from the other. In his essay "The Politics of Knickerbocker Holiday," he states: "There has been a good deal of critical bewilderment over the political opinions expressed in the play, and not a little resentment at my definitions of government and democracy" (41).

He further points out that the general attitude of Americans toward government in 1776 and in the early years of the Republic were altogether different from what it was in the 1930s. In the years immediately following the Declaration of Independence, "it

was generally believed, as I believe now, that the gravest and most constant danger to a man's life, liberty and happiness is the government under which he lives."

Anderson states that at heart "civilization is a balance of selfish interests" and that, though a government is a necessary arbiter, it nevertheless "must never be trusted, must be constantly watched, and must be drastically limited in its scope, because it, too, is a selfish interest and will automatically become a monopoly in crime and devour the civilization over which it presides" (41-2).

Also, "The members of a government are not only in business, but in a business which is in continual danger of lapsing into pure gangsterism, pure terrorism and plundering, buttered over at the top by a hypocritical pretense at patriotic unselfishness" (43). *Both Your Houses* and *Knickerbocker Holiday* focus on this point.

Anderson's obsession with gangsters is reflected in much of his work. In both *Winterset* and *Key Largo*, they are the immediate cause of the deaths of the protagonists: Mio Romagna is gunned down in a street on the opposite bank of the great metropolis, and King McCloud is shot dead in a house on the Florida Keys. In the former play, the gangsters are protected by the courts; in the latter play, the local sheriff sees eye to eye with the racketeers.

But even more than gangsters, government is a threat to the individual: "Whatever the motives behind a government-dominated economy, it can have but one result, a loss of individual liberty in thought, speech and action." The playwright had a great fear of people losing their sense of independence. To his mind,

> The greatest enemies of democracy, the most violent reactionaries, are those who have lost faith in the capacity of a free people to manage their own affairs and wish to set up the government as a political and social guardian, running their business and making their decisions for them. (43-4)

At a time when an increasing number of people considered Marxism as the only sensible solution to widespread social imbalance and injustice, Anderson was an outspoken critic of governmental solutions. However, in the late 1930s (after the New Deal), Anderson, underwent a change heart, and began to publicize his faith in the American system of government as the only sensible alternative to the absolute dictatorships then threatening to overrun Europe.

e) "Yes, By the Eternal"

Anderson defends poetic drama: "Never in the history of the world has poetry of any excellence thrown its weight toward the practical or scientific reorganization of the affairs of men" (49). Anderson further holds that "a play in prose loses its franchise over an audience the moment it begins to discuss the blueprints for an almost perfect state" (50). Poetry to him can never be constructive, scientifically or practically, because poetic language needs to soar above political economy towards the heights of emotion. Thus, "It cannot be hitched to the Marxian plow."

Verse drama was an expression of faith for the playwright. He asserts that "the authors of tragedy offer the largest hope for mankind ... a hope that man is greater than his clay, that the spirit of man may rise superior to physical defeat and death. The theme of tragedy has always been victory in defeat, a man's conquest of himself in the face of annihilation" (51). In both *Winterset* and *Key Largo* he makes a similar political statement in verse: tyranny must be met–at home, in *Winterset*, and at home and abroad in *Key Largo*. Furthermore, Anderson relies on what he considers to be the highest and thus most appropriate literary style in which to do it: tragedy (and also comedy, as in the case of *High Tor*) in verse, following the examples of the ancient Greeks and the Elizabethans. "The message of tragedy is simply that men are better than they think

they are, and this message needs to be said over and over again in every tongue lest the race lose faith in itself entirely" (52).

Tragedy and high comedy not only require an appropriate literary style but also they tend to elude the more practical–if mundane–aspects of life. Hence, the poetic theater Anderson defends is the sort that is "indulged in by dreamers, and not by practical men."

2. *Off Broadway: Essays About the Theater*

The book is made up of the following essays: "Thoughts about Critic," "St. Bernard," "Off Broadway;" "Whatever Hope We Have"; "Poetry in the Theater," "The Essence of Tragedy," "Cut is the Branch That Might Have Grown," "Compromise and Keeping the Faith"; "The Politics of *Knickerbocker Holiday,*" and "Uses of Poetry." Four of the essays also appear in *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers* and are therefore not summarized here.

a) "Thoughts about Critics"

In the late 1940s, Anderson was at odds with the New York theater critics. To his mind, this was due "entirely to the enormous increase in the reviewers' power" (1947, 3-4). Undoubtedly, production costs had risen to such an extent, that a bad review could mean economic ruin; Anderson felt that the power critics wielded was unfair and even counterproductive, since many plays which might otherwise have been produced were not because of the enormous financial risk involved.

One of Anderson's pet themes is the abuse of power by worldly figures. But not only is it the habit of governments to do so. He asserts, "The newspapers, which are quite

properly jealous of their own freedom, have set up and are conducting a censorship over the theater which is in absolute contradiction of the principles on which journalistic freedom is founded" (5).

b) "St. Bernard"

Anderson was a great admirer of George Bernard Shaw: "I set him at the head of all modern playwrights. He is a more considerable figure than Molière or Schiller or Chekhov or Strindberg or Ibsen" (13). The irony in this is that Shaw was a Socialist, and Anderson was against the state and strongly centralized government. Another paradox was that Kurt Weill and Anderson became very close friends. Weill and the well-known Communist poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht had also worked together. (Brecht ended up living in East Germany after the war.) Thus, Anderson's friendship with Weill seems to indicate his political attitude was less dogmatic than it otherwise appeared.

Anderson affirms that Shaw was a man with an exceptional intellect, and observes, "Shaw didn't stop at the boundaries of dialectic. He pushed dialectic over into the realms of the spirit" (15). But, "As time went on he began to see that he could not change the world, that reform was not the answer–and then he went over to evolution and the Life Force as his hope for mankind."

Much the same could be said about Anderson. After the days when he wrote *What Price Glory?* (an anti-war play) and *Gods of Lightning* (which defended anarchists), the dramatist applied his faith to a more abstract "Life Force" in *Winterset* and *Key Largo*. But unlike Shaw, Anderson blatantly turned his back on his beliefs. He wrote the war propaganda plays *Candle in the Wind, The Eve of Saint Mark* and *Storm Operation*; the cold war essays, and his anti-Soviet allegory, the gloomy drama *Barefoot in Athens*. His analysis of Shaw seems to reflect the way Anderson saw his

own career: "And when he began to have doubts that the Life Force could work fast enough to save us, he stepped across still another line into the kingdom of despair which Shakespeare and Sophocles had occupied before him." In another statement, in which Anderson again seems to be reflecting himself in referring to Shaw, he writes,

> In his greatest plays–*Saint Joan* and *Heartbreak House*–he has come out on the other side of hope and is with the great poets of all time, no longer a reformer, no longer a partisan–and, though a debater still, his debate is, in these plays, over the great problems of life and death, the eternal insoluble human dilemma.

Anderson also appears to be mirroring his own condition when he remarks that Shaw "knows that the burning questions of reform are all old, that men have sought the answers since the morning of history, and that the answers will not be found in this time, that nothing final will come of anything he does or says" (15-16).

Anderson further observes, "Shaw began, as a young man, with a belief that all the ways to salvation were plain before humanity and only needed pointing out. He ends as a mystic who knows that we begin and end in mystery and that all faiths are delusions" (16).

c) "Off Broadway"

In his essay "Off Broadway," Anderson discusses the importance of current events in the lives of individuals. He admits that the war experience greatly altered his view of things:

> During the Second World War it seemed obvious that we were fighting to protect the earth and ourselves from men who believed that might makes right, that control of the sources of information makes truth, and that power makes justice... . When the war was over, the people of the democracies began to look hard and perhaps a little resentfully at these principles which had cost us so many billions, so many years, and so many lives... . We had emerged into an age of complete unfaith. (18)

Anderson maintains that a playwright must have a conviction if his plays are to be taken seriously. Even at a time of "complete unfaith ... no audience is satisfied with a play which doesn't take an attitude toward the world" (20).

Looking back on the 1920s, he observes that people saw "the earth and its creatures in a bright new scientific light... . Religion was not only questioned but put aside. Social codes were scrutinized under microscopes, and scrapped... . There was a general belief that men were done with the foolishness of wars" (21).

Moreover,

> Villains, we said, are made villains by circumstances, and we must fight the circumstances, not the poor individual wretches whose anti-social actions caused trouble... . It was an era of reason and good feeling... . Crime was a disease, and curable. Poverty was a disease, and curable. (22)

Anderson in the postwar era can only look back on those years with disillusion. He observes sardonically,

> God was to be replaced by a sort of higher expedience, arrived at by laboratory methods. There was no sin except that which made for inefficiency. Honor was a holdover from the past... . The need for sexual restraint was abolished... . All lacks could be supplied by the multiplication of machinery.

The period in which he wrote *Winterset* and *Key Largo* marked a crossroads between the socially idealistic modern young playwright of the 1920s and the ultimately disenchanted old man of the 1950s. The years roughly spanning 1935 to 1939 correspond to Anderson's greatest achievements as a poet-playwright. It was during this time that he expressed himself both poetically and as a former stage writing apprentice turned master craftsman playwright. It was a time when he most clearly and eloquently established himself politically, spiritually, and professionally.

Years later he observed,

> It was in these godless nineteen-twenties that I stumbled upon the only religion I have... . I was a journalist, and I knew nothing about the theater except casually from the outside. But I wrote a verse tragedy, being bored with writing editorials, and a gallant producer put it on the stage. (23)

The failure of *White Desert* on Broadway and the subsequent success of *What Price Glory* prompted Anderson to ask himself what went into making a play a hit or a flop?

> Success on the stage seemed to be one of the ultimate mysteries. Leaving aside the questions of acting and directing, the problems of theme, story, and writing appeared only more confused when discussed by the professors of playwriting. I developed a theory which still looks cogent to me. (24)

One of the first rules he established was that "intuition is an unreliable guide." He could not trust in mere luck, because, I believe, having given up a steady job for the theater, he needed a reliable income to support a family. "I needed a compass ... or some theory of what the theater was about."

In his essay, Anderson once again points out that his playwriting rules have long been adhered to by the writers of the most extraordinary plays ever written–those of Shakespeare and the Greeks. He further maintains that over the centuries the aim of theater has been "to find, and hold up to our regard, what is admirable in the human race" (27). This in essence forms the basis of his conclusion that "the theater is a religious institution devoted entirely to the exaltation of the spirit of man" (28).

Never a religious man himself–though his father was a minister–Anderson shows in the essay his spirituality. To the playwright, "The theater is a religious institution devoted entirely to the exaltation of the spirit of man. It has no formal religion. It is a

church without a creed" (13). Furthermore, he again points out that modern theater "is as much a worship as the theater of the Greeks, and has exactly the same meaning in our lives."

He reasserts that the audience plays a special part in Anderson's theater-as-church notion:

> The worshippers pay a fairly high rent for their pews... . And not many of them realize that they are assisting in a worship, but they sit in church nevertheless, and acquire virtue thereby according to their understanding and the wisdom and skill of the functioning playwright. (31)

The spectators, like members of a church sitting in their pews, expect certain eternal truths to be reenacted: "Analyze any play you please which has survived the test of continued favor, and you will find a moral or a rule of social conduct or a rule of thumb which the race has considered valuable enough to learn and pass along." However, there was really nothing new the play itself could discover, for it could only exhibit the long standing values of humankind: "Put on a play which sets out to prove that dishonesty is the best policy and vice is triumphant in human affairs, and the audience will refuse it coldly" (32).

Having been brought together in a communal religious service, audiences expect certain eternal values to be faithfully projected in terms they can clearly comprehend: "If morality depends on the existence of good and evil, then the good and evil of the theater are those acceptable to the present audience." Furthermore, a playwright cannot alter this; nor can he "run so far ahead of his audience, for he must find a common denominator of belief in his own generation, and even the greatest, the loftiest must say something which his age can understand" (33).

In Anderson's opinion, eternal truths need to be addressed in a language that pertains specifically to the age in which the audience lives. Ultimately the audience is the judge of the appropriateness and effectiveness of a play. Anderson likened this system to a democracy: "The heart of the theater is a belief in democracy, a belief that the people must make their own standards, must decide for themselves what to worship."

Anderson concludes that the theater he defends

> denies the doctrine of the nineteen-twenties emphatically... . It denies that good and evil are obverse ... that wars are useless and that honor is without meaning. It denies that we can live by the laboratory and without virtue. It affirms that the good and evil in man are the good and evil of evolution, that men have within themselves the beasts from which they emerge and the god toward which they climb. It affirms that evil is what takes man back toward the beast, that good is what urges him up toward the god. It affirms that these struggles of the spirit are enacted in the historic struggles of men–some representing evil, some good. It offers us criteria for deciding what is good and what is evil. (33-4)

Moreover,

> A hero may have his doubts and indecisions, for that's only human, but when it comes to the test he must be willing to take steel in his bosom or take lead through his intestines or he resigns his position as a man. The audiences, sitting in our theaters, make these rules and, in setting them, define the purposes and beliefs of Homo Sapiens. (34-5)

Anderson, however, does not define his audience. Audiences differ, especially in a society as racially and culturally mixed as that which is found in the United States. However, he mentions "the race" without qualifying the term or alluding to the fact that Americans are not a race of people.

d) "Cut Is the Branch That Might Have Grown Straight"

Though many good writers were working in cinema in the 1940 (including Anderson), and people seemed to prefer films to plays, Anderson defended the theater. To him, theater in general "is the phoenix of the arts. It has died many deaths in many cities and many languages–and come to life again, sometimes in the same cities and languages, sometimes in other languages and in cities across the sea."

Moreover, "Time after time you gamble your brains and lose. Only once in a while you gamble and win. This incredible and exhilarating state of anarchy obtains nowhere else" (70).

Anderson further states in his essay that if a writer "isn't up to swimming the waters of chaos" and "prefers security to freedom" then maybe he is not cut out for the theater: "A playwright on Broadway fails far oftener than he succeeds, but he's nobody's hired man... . Our anarchy, our failures, our freedom, and our achievement go hand in hand" (71).

However, Anderson does not acknowledge in his essay the contradiction implicit in anarchy (in the sense of chaos and disorder) and that of precisely gauging correctly the likes and dislikes of the public. On the one hand, he affirms that playwrights lose their labor if they do not gauge their audiences right, and on the that other a dramatist is "nobody's hired man." While Anderson establishes rules for writing plays that eliminate chance, he believes that a playwright should swim in "the waters of chaos" (70). By not alluding to this obvious contradiction, Anderson's thesis is weakened.

e) "Compromise and Keeping the Faith"

Throughout his career Anderson defended the integrity of his plays. When theater

critics began panning them, he took the offensive. I believe that this was a mistake. The polemicist overshadowed the poet in the postwar era. The playwright lost his faith in poetry.

After the war, Anderson's discourse was more combative than it had previously been. He affirms,

> A play that doesn't have an essential integrity, and hasn't kept it throughout the million and one decisions of revision ... isn't wanted by any public, and will be refused. Almost always, of course, that central essential soul is supplied by the playwright in the writing, and must be defended by the playwright throughout. (76)

He reiterates that a play and a playwright must have a conviction: "And unless you can defend that conviction against death and hell and the wiles of experienced tricksters, your play isn't worth producing." However, he concedes, "Unless you are willing to make nearly every possible business and artistic concession to the play producing setup, you'll probably never get your play on at all."

Moreover, "If you let these concessions touch and injure the dream (or conviction) ... it isn't worthwhile putting on your play at all." That is, if one writes a play it will only get produced if the dramatist is willing to turn it over to the censors; and yet, by doing so, one fails as a playwright.

Anderson's experience in writing propaganda affected him greatly. The dramatist of the postwar era asks himself, "How much will I adjust to the practical conditions of the world in order to gain ground for my faith?" (79). He concludes rather pessimistically, "None of us ever knows what comes, finally, of his decisions. Usually not much" (80).

Anderson's faith had clearly weakened in the eight years that separated the publishing of his two books of essays. His debut collection of essays, *The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers*, articulates the thoughts and aspirations of the playwright at the height of his career in pursuit of a poetic grail. However, *Off Broadway: Essays about the Theater* seems jaded in comparison. It reflects the thoughts, tinged with sadness, of a man who was living in the aftermath of a heyday and scanning an uncertain future.

Appendix 2

Hamlet in *Winterset*

Anderson was influenced by Elizabethan drama, and Shakespeare in particular. Unsatisfied with the prosaic times in which he lived, he yearned for a more poetic age–the Ancient Greece of Pericles and the English Renaissance. He was fascinated by the past, and in his plays, endeavored to uphold the traditions of Sophocles and Euripides and the great Tudor dramatists, in an attempt to portray humankind at its loftiest.

The Elizabethan stage tragedies were more romantic than the ancient Greek dramas; however, in the plays of both ages the tragic figures suffer and ultimately fall as a result of their tragic weaknesses. This is precisely the model that Anderson attempts to follow in *Winterset* (1940a). Sophocles' Oedipus blinds himself in the end, and so does Anderson's Mio Romagna, though in a different way: like Oedipus, who does not see when he has his sight, Mio is sightless till his love for Miriamne opens his eyes to the truth, and thus forces him to lose sight of the life he has been living till then. Furthermore, like Hamlet, Mio is haunted by his father's ghost and, while seeking revenge, is killed at the end of the tragedy.

In no other play by an American author can one find so many traces of Shakespearian drama as there is in *Winterset*, where Mio resembles Hamlet and even Trock the gangster takes after Richard III; furthermore, Macbeth comes to mind when Trock's murdered partner suddenly enters ghost-like; additionally, one is reminded of Lear when Judge Gaunt appears wandering about insanely; and the star-crossed lovers are very much like Romeo and Juliet. However, of all of Shakespeare's tragedies, *Hamlet* is most clearly reflected in *Winterset*.

Winterset takes place in the dead of winter on the bank of a river, under an enormous bridgehead that links the area with the great metropolis on the other side. Mio, an adolescent, is trying to uncover evidence that will clear his father's name: Bartolomeo Romagna, an anarchist, was falsely accused of murder, tried and subsequently executed when Mio was a child. In the play, Mio comes upon the judge who presided over the case. Mio and Judge Gaunt debate the issue of Romagna's innocence or guilt, and the young man, swayed by Gaunt's rhetoric, begins to doubt his father's innocence. But then Mio also learns who the real killer is: a gang leader by the name of Trock. Trock is there to make sure that Garth–who formerly belonged to the gang and who witnessed the murder Romagna was accused of–does not reveal the truth.

In the meantime, Mio and Miriamne, Garth's sister, fall in love. When Miriamne learns that her brother was in on the crime for which Romagna was accused, (and that Trock will kill him if he talks), she decides to protect him. But this is no easy task, for if she takes Mio's side, she will betray her brother. When the police arrive, she lies in order to protect her brother, thus betraying Mio. As the officers leave with the Judge, they warn Mio to leave town because he is a troublemaker. Mio vows to reveal all he knows to the authorities, thus putting his life in immediate danger. Trock is out to kill him before he can get away. In the end, Miriamne apologizes to Mio for having covered up the truth to save her brother's life; and to prove her love and devotion, she faces the gangsters with Mio. They are both gunned down as a result.

Having summarized the plot briefly, I will now indicate how Anderson's play resembles *Hamlet*. The first scene of *Winterset* immediately brings to mind the opening scene of Shakespeare's tragedy. In the elaborate stage directions, Anderson describes an enormous bridge, which can be compared to the castle of Elsinore, with its towers and spires looming above a remote quarter of New York City quarter (perhaps Brooklyn); the rest of the set is described as being "a wall of solid masonry"

and an apartment building that "abuts against the bridge" that "forms the left wall of the stage" (1940a, 3). Additionally, there is darkness all about, with the exception of "a glimmer of apartment lights in the background beyond," like distant stars the castle guards at Elsinore might observe through patches in the clouds on a similar late December evening.

Scene One of *Winterset* opens with "Two Young Men in Serge"; in *Hamlet,* Shakespeare has Bernardo and Francisco in uniform standing guard. At the outset of Anderson's drama, the residents of the quarter are nowhere to be seen, when Trock, the gangster, enters and, facing the great metropolis across the river, says in a Shakespearian tone, "Sleep, cling, sleep and rot" (3).

Shadow, the other gangster, and Trock quickly engage in the subject at hand. Having only just been released from prison, Trock finds that the ghost of one of his victims has made an appearance. Though not a ghost like the one in Shakespeare's play, the phantom in Anderson's tragedy is what has been unearthed as a result of the reopening of the investigation into the case against Bartolomeo Romagna, the Italian immigrant anarchist who was put to death for a murder that Trock committed. The appearance of the ghost (i.e., the possible reopening of the case) has the gangsters worried. Trock, self-proclaimed king of the local hoodlums, is like King Claudius in *Hamlet* in that both are hiding the fact that they are guilty of murder. Trock is uneasy about the reopening of the case–the ghost's arrival–and demands to know who "started looking this up?" (12).

The possible reopening of the case also affects Garth. His sister Miriamne (who resembles Ophelia, as I will illustrate shortly) notices that her brother is worried. She sees that her father is uneasy as well. The ghost's presence is felt in the house (the castle). She senses that something is rotten, and she wants to find out why. But instead

of telling Miriamne the truth, her brother Garth, like Laertes, merely treats his sister like a senseless child. To him, she is just "a good kid" (10).

Miriamne, like Ophelia, is aware that "there is death somewhere behind us–/ an evil death" (10). She confesses that if she has to lie and live, "I think I'd die" (20)–which is just what happens to Ophelia. Miriamne is thus already in danger when Judge Gaunt appears. Gaunt, the real King Claudius figure, is responsible for sending Bartolomeo Romagna to the electric chair: "Before God, I held the proofs in my hands. I hold them still," he clamors (23). Then Mio Romagna, the "Hamlet" figure, also arrives on the scene. A precocious boy, Mio is accompanied by his friend Carr (the "Horatio" figure).

Though attracted to Miriamne right off, Mio–like Hamlet–cannot let himself be swept away by amorous feelings. For he has something far more pressing on his mind–getting the case reopened and avenging his father's death.

Like Hamlet, Mio tells his companion that he has been "cut off from the world" as a result of his father's execution (murder) and his mother's subsequent death from grief. (Hamlet's mother is dead to him after she marries his father's brother.)

Mio has "got wind of something" (28): the ghost of Bartolomeo Romagna is on the loose. Like Hamlet, Mio rushes to encounter the specter; and as Horatio tries to stop his friend Hamlet from continuing any further with the investigation, so does Mio's good friend Carr attempt to get him to desist: "They'll never let you get anywhere with it Mio." But like Hamlet, Mio will not be swayed; he insists he cannot do otherwise: "For my heritage/ they left me one thing only, and that's to be/ my father's voice crying out of the earth" (29).

In essence, Mio has become the medium of Bartolomeo's ghost. Enraged, the boy is determined to see that vengeance will be his, and hopes, "Maybe I can sleep then./ Or even live" (30). Hamlet-like, Mio assures his friend that he has tried to forget. But he claims

> that the memory won't let me alone. I've tried to live/ and forget it–but I was birthmarked with hot iron/ into the entrails. I've got to find out who did it/ and make them see it till it scalds their eyes/ and make them admit it till their tongues are blistered/ with saying how black they lied! (30)

Further on in the play, when Miriamne tries to come between Mio and his father's ghost, Mio will tell her, (in a manner reminiscent of Hamlet's "get thee to a nunnery" speech) that "there's too much black/ whirling inside me–for any girl to know./ So go on in. You're somebody's angel child/ and they're waiting for you" (46). However, unlike Hamlet, Mio is swayed by love, which in the end proves stronger than his passion for revenge. Nevertheless, Mio resists the force of love as best he can–his lust for revenge, like Hamlet's, is too strong.

Taken aback when Miriamne first offers to go with him anywhere, Mio lashes out at her, "What do you know about loving?/ How could you know?" (46). But Miriamne holds firm, and Mio softens: "When I first saw you ... I heard myself saying/ this is the face that launches ships for me–/ and if I owned a dream–yes, half a dream–/ we'd share it" (47).

But Mio will not allow himself to say such things, and certainly not to feel them. He immediately turns away from her, the way Hamlet does from Ophelia, and swears, "I have no dream." The force of love wanes with the waxing of his hate. He explains, in a Shakespearian manner,

> These blind worms of the earth/ took out my father–and killed him, and set a sign/ on me–the heir of the serpent–and he was a man/ such as men might be if the gods were men–/ but they killed him–/ as they'll kill all others like him. (47)

Mio praises his father's memory, as does Hamlet when he says, "So excellent a king" and "so loving to my mother." It is this love for his father–translated into revenge–that competes with the incipient love Mio feels for Miriamne–a love he cannot allow himself to indulge in, without betraying the love he feels for his father. Hamlet must deal with a similar dilemma. But in Shakespeare's drama, Ophelia's suicide sets the stage for the only recourse left possible: vengeance. Anderson in *Winterset* has, by contrast, chosen to bring love and hate together, and finally, to allow love to gain the upper hand.

But Mio's lust for revenge makes him retract. He tells Miriamne, "Go in/ before you breathe too much of my atmosphere/ and catch death from me" (47). This sounds again like Hamlet's words to Ophelia, "Get thee to a nunnery."

Though there are similarities between Shakespeare's Ophelia and Anderson's Miriamne, the latter figure shows more strength of character, for Miriamne is modern–Ophelia is a child of the Renaissance. Miriamne promises the man she loves, "I will take my hands/ and weave them to a little house and there/ you shall keep a dream" (48). And Mio replies, "I tell you there's death in me/ and you're a child! And I'm alone and half mad/ with hate and longing."

But Miriamne will not be packed off in such a manner. (She is far too modern a woman to give up without a fight.) Mio lets himself fall in love with her, which is something Hamlet could never do.

However, once he is separated from Miriamne, Mio's mind wanders back to the memory of his father. (In *Hamlet*, the father's ghost calls out to him again.) The love Mio bears his father, however, is not the pure, untried love that brings together Mio and Miriamne (Hamlet and Ophelia). As with Hamlet, the tenderness with which he

regards the memory of his father is tainted by too much suffering and hate. No sooner does he recall the sweetness of the man than his grief takes over, and with it a passion for revenge, which Mio expresses in Hamlet-like fashion.

> Lie still and rest, my father/ for I have not forgotten. When I forget/ may I lie blind as you./ No other love,/ time passing, nor the space light-years of suns/ shall slur your voice, or tempt me from the path/ that clears your name–/ till I have these rats in my grip/ or sleep deep where you sleep. (50)

Like Hamlet, Mio will have his Ophelia get herself to a nunnery, meaning a sacred place for the pure of heart and righteous, while his lust for vengeance compels him to follow the road to destruction. "I have no house/ nor home, nor love of life, nor fear of death,/ nor care for what I eat, or who I sleep with... . Love somewhere else/ and get your children in some other image."

Finally, Mio concludes, "I'm a cry/ out of a shallow grave and all roads are mine/ that might revenge him!" (51). Then Carr (Horatio) appears. Sensing danger, he tells Mio that he had "better forget it" (55). But Mio, like Hamlet rushing to meet the specter, does not heed his colleague's advice.

At the end of Act I, Maxwell Anderson has Mio sitting alone on the edge of a rock, unaware of the passers-by. One almost expects him to recite a soliloquy reminiscent of Hamlet's speech, "To be or not to be." The stage is thereby set for the next sequence of parallel events.

Garth and Miriamne's father, Esdras, resembles Shakespeare's Polonius in that both men are prattlers. Esdras, who has been talking to his daughter, realizes that she has not been listening, and he remarks, "It doesn't matter./ It's useless wisdom. It's all I have" (60). Esdras, like the old man Polonius, paints a somewhat
likable yet pitiful figure. However, unlike the lord chamberlain in Shakespeare's play, Esdras is aware of his own foolishness, and ponders the circumstances that have led

him to misfortune: "How have I come/ to this sunken end of a street, at a life's end?" (60).

Judge Gaunt (Claudio), Esdras (Polonius), Garth (Laertes) and Miriamne (Ophelia) are all present when Mio (Hamlet), the medium of the Romagna ghost, appears before them at the beginning of Act Two. Judge Gaunt is directly responsible for the execution of Bartolomeo Romagna. He is, in effect, Romagna's murderer, the way King Claudius is his brother's killer. In both cases, premeditation was involved and a subsequent attempt to cover up the evidence was undertaken in order to sustain personal gain. Judge Gaunt is, after Trock (the real murderer), the one most responsible for Romagna's death. Claudius, after murdering his brother, invites his brother's son Hamlet to join him at his side in Elsinore. In a similar fashion, Judge Gaunt, directly responsible for the execution of the innocent Romagna, appeals to Mio's sense of reason and proposes an alliance–which I will illustrate shortly.

Judge Gaunt's mental imbalance gives the character dramatic depth. Like Claudius, Gaunt endures "some hours of torture" for his acts, and has "wandered from my place, wandered perhaps in mind and body" (65). But even as he is being hounded by the ghost (his conscience), the obstinate judge–like King Claudius–will not be overruled. Garth and Judge Gaunt arm themselves against the impending revolt, the way Laertes and Claudius do in *Hamlet*; and Esdras, like Polonius, is also implicated by virtue of his allegiance to his son and, hence, to Judge Gaunt. As Claudius does Polonius, Gaunt asks Esdras to investigate Mio's (Hamlet's) state of mind. Thus the triumvirate pact (Garth, Esdaras and Gaunt) is sealed against Mio, the phantom's medium in *Winterset*, just as it is against the young prince in *Hamlet*.

When Mio presents himself to the company gathered in Miriamne's cellar flat, Esdras politely inquires as to his business with them. (Like Polonius, he dissimulates.) But

Mio, like Hamlet, is impatient with pretense: "Could you tell me then/ in a word?– What you know–is it for him or gainst him?–/ that's all I need" (69).

Esdras, in Polonius-like fashion, is prone to assess reality rather too simply. (Polonius assures the King and Queen that Hamlet's problem is "love" and nothing more.) Esdras suggests that the boy should let sleeping dogs lie: "If he was innocent/ and you know him so, believe it,/ and let others/ believe as they like" (70). In short, it would be best for everyone if the ghost were turned away or finally put to rest.

But Mio is not to be swayed by practical advice. "Will you tell me how a man's/ to live, and face his life, if he can't believe/ that truth's like a fire,/ and will burn through and be seen/ though it takes all the years there are?"

Furthermore, Mio promises to be "one flame of that fire;/ it's all the life I have." He also adds, "It's the only way/ of life my father left me."

With eloquent casuistry, Judge Gaunt defends his having sentenced (murdered) Mio's father: "You are your father's son, and you think of him/ as a son thinks of his father" (73); and when the judge reminds the boy that, in the end, a jury of his own peers convicted Bartolomeo Romagna (i.e., the judge defends his own innocence), Mio accuses Gaunt: "Your charge/ misled the jury... [and] distilled/ the poison for them!" (76). (The word "poison" is significant here, since poison is what Claudius used to kill Hamlet's father.)

Gaunt has one clear objective: to forestall the reopening of the case by weakening Mio's will. To succeed, the judge needs to plant the seeds of doubt in the boy's mind. Gaunt uses a refined dialectical approach–something that he has often done while presiding over court cases. Like King Claudius, he has authority and experience working in his favor.

Inasmuch as Gaunt can only keep the ghost at bay with firm logic, and by using his power over others, it is imperative that he win Mio over to his point of view. The judge says, "For me, it's laid to rest/ now that my mind is satisfied. He died/ justly and not by error" (79). This is exactly what King Claudius tells himself, and what Hamlet later succeeds in unmasking.

As a means of sustaining the tension caused by the resurrected specter's constant presence throughout the play, and, at the same time, as a way of involving even the sinister gangster Trock in the heightened dramatic effect, Anderson has the mortally wounded Shadow–who was believed dead–appear at the door "white, bloodstained and dripping" (91). Shadow is on stage just long enough to accuse Trock of having committed the murder for which Romagna was charged. Trock is thunderstruck by the apparition. In a scene not unlike the one in *Hamlet* in which Claudius breaks down during the players' performance, Trock cries out, "He was dead, I tell you!" His mind in a whirl, he hastily adds, "And Romagna was dead too, once! Can't they keep a man under ground?" (94). The gangster is further exasperated by Mio (the way Claudio is by Hamlet), who tells him, "Yes! And Romagna was dead too, and Shadow was dead, but the time's come when you can't keep them down these dead men! They won't stay down!" (95).

Anderson further alludes to the play within a play scene in *Hamlet* by having a mock trial take place, in which the murder suspect, the gangster Trock, is called to the witness stand. Still shaken by the specter's appearance, Trock screams out that he is not Romagna's murderer, but rather it "was Shadow killed him!" (97). But Mio badgers the gangster and accuses the judge. "You lied! You lied!/ You knew this too!" (98). Accordingly, the judge–no longer sure of himself– submits, "You/ will not repeat this? It will go no further?" (99). Mio firmly replies, "Wherever men/ still breathe and think, and know what's done to them/ by the powers above, they'll know.

That's all I ask./ That'll be enough." Consequently, Mio's tragic fate (like Hamlet's) is sealed by his intransigence. Trock warns, "It won't go far," not any farther than the very room they are standing in.

Inasmuch as the truth is revealed and Hamlet's fate sealed at the end of the play-within-a-play scene ("the Mouse-trap"), the revelation in Anderson's mock court scene means the end is near for Mio. Mio acts in accordance with his role as medium for his father's ghost: the specter that has come to haunt Garth, Esdras, Trock, Shadow, Miriamne, and Mio–to the extent that the boy's life is completely absorbed by the tragic event of his father's death–exists now in ,and has power over, them all.

Esdras (the Polonius figure of weakness who justifies hypocrisy with syllogisms and false reasoning) tries to reason with Mio: "What will be changed/ if it comes to a trial again? More blood poured out/ to a mythical justice, but your father lying still/ where he lies now." But Mio adamantly resists the old man's appeals to common sense: "All my life long/ I've wanted only one thing, to say to the world/ and prove it: the man you killed was clean and true/ and full of love ... I can say that now/ and give my proofs" (110).

He adds: "You stick a girl's face/ between me and the rites I've sworn the dead/ shall have of me! You ask too much!" And, in a manner that brings to mind the way Hamlet abruptly dispenses with Ophelia, Mio tells Miriamne "Your brother/ can take his chance! He was ready enough to let/ an innocent man take certainty for him/ to pay for the years he's had. That parts us, then,/ but we're parted anyway, by the same dark wind that blew us together."

Having thus renounced his love for Miriamne, and knowing that his life is in danger, Mio abandons the flat after vowing, "I shall say what I have to say." For to him, siding with Esdras (with common sense) would be tantamount to living with a lie and

betraying his father's ghost. This is something Mio, like Hamlet, cannot do, even if it costs him his life. Mio declares, "Let the winds blow, the four winds of the world,/ and take us to the four winds."

But Miriamne joins Mio outside, where she hopes to convince him to save himself. Only Mio will not acknowledge her logic either. Like Hamlet, Mio is heading straight towards a fatal ending and dragging his loved one with him, and he does nothing to impede it. He says to Miriamne: "At the moment I'm afflicted with claustrophobia. I prefer to die in the open, seeking air" (115).

Esdras appears again with his Polonius-like discourse of mundane logic, saying that he wants to help Mio escape. But Mio reminds him unequivocally, "I shall the lie not keep quiet" (118). Esdras tries to reason with him: "But you/ could make it easier, so easily." But Mio, like Hamlet, is determined to see this through to the end.

Carr, the Horatio-figure, appears. But like Horatio, he cannot save his friend.

Moreover, as Hamlet forgives Laertes at the end of Shakespeare's drama, so does Mio pardon Garth. But unlike Hamlet and Ophelia, Mio and Miriamne bring their lips together in perishing. The closing lines of *Winterset* are given in Shakespearean fashion. Esdras' tells those remaining on stage that "Our part/ is only to bury them. Come, take her up./ They must not lie here" (134).

None of the characters in *Winterset* is evil. Judge Gaunt, Garth, and Esdras are subject to human feelings of remorse, and, hence, suffer in mind and body for their misdeeds; and though Gaunt–like King Claudius in *Hamlet*–is despicable, he nevertheless cuts pitiful figure. Esdras, who unlike Polonius, lives on after the tragedy, with his ineffectual logic and philosophical discourse; and his son, Garth is morally condemned for his cowardice–a fate worse than death, as Anderson reveals in a later

verse play, *Key Largo* (1940b). In *Winterset*, like in Shakespeare's tragedy, the hero and his lover die in the course of events brought on by a lust for revenge.

Though much of *Winterset* resembles *Hamlet*, Anderson's play is unique, as I mentioned earlier, in that in writing the drama the playwright tried to depict tragedy in Elizabethan proportions for the modern stage. The success or failure of the endeavor notwithstanding (opinions do vary), *Winterset* stands as a memorial to Shakespeare, whose works inspired Anderson till end of his life.