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Arts at Lincoln Center in New York City, the reviews of Osborn's plays, Mr. Osborn's personal letters and scrapbooks, his plays, and interviews with him held in New York City and New Milford, Connecticut, in 1972 and 1973. I have also examined the letters and theatre programs sent by Mr. Osborn to the University of Wisconsin where a "Paul Osborn Collection" is being started. Among the materials there are personal letters from Thornton Wilder, Robert Frost, Edward Albee, and Elia Kazan. These materials might be of use to future studies of Paul Osborn.

The material has been arranged chronologically. Early attempts to arrange the material into specific areas failed, for the biographical data kept eluding such a format. Since a man's work reflects his character as well as his character affects his work, most facts and opinions which might be helpful in presenting the man and the playwright have been included. It is hoped that the inclusion of so many related areas has not weakened the unity of the work.

Chapter I (1901-1928) is mainly a biographical account of Osborn's first twenty-seven years that attempts to present the influences that helped shape both the man and his work. Chapter II (1928-1934) is concerned with the direction that Osborn's writing took in his first four plays for the New York stage. Chapter III (1935-1939) considers three plays that were the logical outgrowth of
of heavy iron girders, to play up the murder of the Swedish sea captain, and to play the children as pathological "little devils." Piscator was shortly released from his contract. Although Theresa Helburn took over as director of the production, Osborn received credit for the staging in the program. Miss Helburn told Osborn she would direct but give him the credit, and, if the play were a "hit," she would change the billing in the program. Unfortunately the program needed no change: The Innocent Voyage closed after forty performances.

The production opened at the Belasco Theatre in New York on November 15, 1943, with Oscar Homolka, Herbert Berghof, and Clarence Derwent. Stewart Chaney, a Yale classmate of Osborn's, designed the settings. The reviews, although mixed, were not unfavorable. Lewis Nichols of the New York Times said,

Mr. Osborn seems to have been uncertain whether to stress the natural comedy of a group of tough citizens trying to control a group of tougher children or to bear down on the melodrama brought about by the murder of a captured Swedish captain. . . .

Normal children on a pirate ship would immediately wish to be pirates which Mr. Osborn realizes but which he expresses without the naturalness of his Pud in On Borrowed Time. The stabbing turns the whole mood to one of instant hysteria which is obviously normal but it doesn't blend with the air of fantasy which has gone before.4

Stark Young, in the New Republic, agreed with Nichols that Osborn had not prepared for the intense passages of the script in the tone or the stage intention
and wondered if Osborn wanted the pathological impressions and the horror of the novel in the play.\textsuperscript{5}

The \textbf{Catholic World} commented that

Paul Osborn now comes close to the Barrie menu--the mate of a pirate ship is seen mending the children's underwear--shades of Peter Pan. Hughes had no intention of being Barriesque. On the contrary, the point of his sardonic tale was that children at heart are more piratical than the pirates. Since, however, no one dared put so uncomfortable a thesis on the stage, Osborn has revamped the material without much regard to the pattern. The result is a play full of action and color but without any point whatsoever.\textsuperscript{6}

Howard Barnes stated that Osborn had established the irrational and fearsome world in which aware children live.

He has not always given his play the continuity and dramatic accents that it might have had, but the acid test of his chemistry is the fact that the play builds steadily and with emotional clarity. . . . 'The Innocent Voyage' may not be as memorable, disturbing, or what you will as 'A High Wind in Jamaica,' but it is easy to sit in on these lean days of playgoing.\textsuperscript{7}

George Freedley championed the production at the Belasco Theatre.

This morning's column is by way of a reminder and an admonition. Paul Osborn's \textit{The Innocent Voyage}, . . . is announced to close on Saturday night at the Belasco. You will certainly regret it if you let slip this chance to see a tender, touching and terrifying and humorous play beautifully performed. This is the Theatre Guild definitely at its best, performing the function to which it was originally dedicated, that of staging plays which would not likely be done by other Broadway producers. . . . One regrets that the thousands and thousands of people who would like the play and whose children
would enjoy it, will never see it.\textsuperscript{8}

The story of \textit{The Innocent Voyage} is set in the 1860's and takes place in Jamaica, on the high seas, and in England. Mr. and Mrs. Thorndyke put their five children on a sailing vessel bound from Jamaica to England where the parents plan to join their children later. The ship, however, is attacked by pirates, who unwittingly take the children with them. In time the children prove to be tougher than the pirates, but a friendship develops between Emily and Captain Jonsen.

After a raid on a Swedish vessel, the pirates take the children to the captured ship but leave Emily, whose leg has been accidentally wounded, and the crazed halfbreed Margaret on board with the bound Swedish captain. He asks the two girls to untie him but cannot make them understand. When he sees a knife on the deck and begins to inch toward it, Margaret thinks he is going to kill them. Just as the captain reaches the knife, Emily, seeing that she is hemmed in, becomes hysterical, grabs the knife, and stabs him. When his body is discovered by the pirates, they think Margaret has killed him.

When the pirates are captured by the British navy, the court tries to make the children admit that there was a body on board the pirate ship. Emily finally confesses to killing the Swedish captain, but no one believes her. Her confession, however, has established the presence of a body,
Burns Mantle called The Innocent Voyage "a comedy in three acts"; the plot however, includes rape, a murder, and a hanging. Although Osborn was experienced with comi-tragedy, he had trouble sustaining the humor throughout this play. The first half of the play is a comedy-fantasy, the end of act 2 is a melodrama, and act 3 is a realistic drama. Although act 1 has a slow start, it contains some delightfully comic scenes that give insight into the world of the children. In one such scene the other children have ignored their parents but Emily has bid them a tearful good-bye. As soon as her father and mother have disappeared down the gangplank, however, Emily stops crying miraculously.

RACHEL: (tauntingly) Emily cried!
EMILY: (with great superiority) Oh, you are stupid!
RACHEL: Then why did you cry?
EMILY: You just didn't know enough to cry.
RACHEL: I did, too!
EMILY: Then why didn't you?
EDWARD: Why should she?
EMILY: Oh, you are all stupid! That was a parting!
People always cry at partings!
(There's a moment's pause as the truth of this statement sinks into the children's minds.)
EDWARD: They do?
EMILY: Of course they do! If they are mannerly. Some people just don't know how to behave!
(Suddenly RACHEL starts to cry. Immediately EDWARD joins in with a loud sobbing. LAURA takes it up in a moment and cries with anguish. They all start running to the rail of the boat, wailing and waving their hands frantically toward shore.)
THE CHILDREN: Good-bye! Good-bye! Mummy, dear—goodbye, Daddy, dear—good-bye—.
CAPTAIN MARPOLE: Poor little devils! Poor little
The comedy and fantasy work well together until the murder in act 2, scene 3, which is carefully explicated in the script. Osborn, perhaps, provides Emily with enough motivation to commit murder; but the emphasis placed on the action only heightens the melodramatic impact of the scene.

(There is a moment's rest, and once again he rolls very near the knife. Again he looks at the children and makes a threatening sound. They shrink back. MARGARET suddenly lets out a scream, sitting where she is, frozen.)

MARGARET: He's going to kill us!

(Emily makes an attempt to get up and run away. She cannot because of her leg. She falls back, staring at the SWEDISH CAPTAIN. He rolls again toward the knife. She watches him, terrified. Again he rolls. He is on top of the knife. His fingers, bound, reach out slowly to get it. Suddenly, EMILY gives a wild look around, sees that she is hemmed in, sees the SWEDISH CAPTAIN has rolled so near her she couldn't get by him, and suddenly lets out a scream of utter terror. SHE cries in hysteria. The SWEDISH CAPTAIN makes another grab for the knife and nearly has it.)

EMILY: (panic-stricken) He is going to kill us! He is going to kill us!

(EMILY throws herself out of the cot, grabs the knife and, raising it high in the air, starts to bring it down on the SWEDISH CAPTAIN.)

The humor in act 3 cannot restore to the play the air of fantasy and lightness that it lost by the melodramatic murder in act 2 and the realistic treatment of the interrogation in act 3.

The world aboard the pirate ship, however, is a unit—a world of James M. Barrie. In it men and children alike need never grow up: men can play pirate by dressing
up as women, the mate can play mother and sew the children's underwear, and Captain Jonsen can play father to Emily. The men are no different from the children: Rachel who mothers the belaying pins and revolvers, John and Edward who play pirate and maroon people on desert islands, or Emily who plays prophet with the help of "The White Mouse with the Elastic Tail."

The ending of the play, however, contains only bitterness.

JONSEN: Goot-bye, my little Emily. You haf a big life ahead of you. You iss a goot leetle keed. And remember, don't you worry, Emily. Ven you grow up you vill understand a lot of t'ings you don't now. Sometimes it is easier to understand t'ings ven you iss grown up. (He starts to go.)

EMILY: Captain Jonsen!

JONSEN: Yes, Emily?

EMILY: How long does it take to grow up?

JONSEN: Not long, Emily--a few years ...

EMILY: (looking out to sea) I wish it would hurry! ll

Eventually, Osborn seems to be saying, all must end the innocent voyage of childhood and face life--the young and old.

Paul and Millicent Osborn did not go to Hollywood in the winter of 1944, for on opening night of The Innocent Voyage, November 15, 1943, their daughter, Judith Judson Osborn, was born. Instead of writing a screenplay that winter, Osborn began another stage adaptation of a novel. Leland Hayward had approached Osborn with John Hersey's novel A Bell for Adano, suggested that such a play might help the morale of a nation at war, and asked him to do a
dramatization of it. Osborn agreed. In an article in the New York Times, Osborn recounted some of the difficulties he had in getting the action of the novel into a single set on stage.

The most disheartening thing about making a play from a novel you have liked is that you must leave out a great deal of the novel and invariably the parts you must leave out are the parts you enjoyed most reading—in fact, the parts you enjoyed enough to make you want to make a play out of it in the first place. For example: the scene in the harbor where Lojacano, the local painter, is painting a picture of Major Joppolo on the bow of one of the fishing boats. It is a fine scene full of irony and warmth and one of my favorites. Knowing that I could not get in the scene at the harbor—how could I bring a boat onto the stage for only one short scene which really has no plot purpose. Still I did everything I could to bring Lojacano into the play and have him paint the major's portrait. I devised a scheme by which he was brought onto the stage by the fishermen because they demanded that he paint Major Joppolo at this desk where he had given "good orders for Adano." (In the portrait used in the play the desk is still visible.) The device seemed fairly authentic, the scene played well; in it we recaptured much of the spirit of the scene in the book, sacrificing only the porpoise. As we continued to play the play out of town, however, it became increasingly clear that this scene was holding up the action of the play. Interesting as it may have been in itself, the play faltered and got off the track during it—it was obvious that the scene had no structural function in the play and it finally had to go. The next day the whole character of Lojacano had to go. Thus one of my main reasons for wanting to write the play went with it. Other scenes from the book had to be discarded, or partially so: the three GI's getting drunk and getting Joppolo a going-away present is now merely a matter of a few lines; the ribald scenes in Tomasino's house are now only referred to.

In other words, a novel may take the reader wherever the author desires; to the wharves, through the picturesque streets, into the homes of the peasants. In putting this on stage, however, it becomes exceedingly dangerous. The 'tighter' construction of the
play form demands that no scene be written for picturesqueness alone. Each scene must clearly and definitely take the plot one step nearer to the conclusion. There can be no idling, no taking off a few minutes for charm, no fooling. It is the hope of the playwright always that as he proceeds with his inevitable plot line, he may instill some of this charm in passing—use it to cloak the mechanics of the ever-unfolding plot and in so doing capture the interest of the audience by keeping them interested in the story and at the same time giving them color and richness.

There is another difficulty in making a play from a widely read and popular book. That is the casting. You may have an actor that looks the part and one that does not but who understands the part beautifully. You engage the one who understands, for it is more important to have the character played sympathetically than to have him look right physically.

All the playwright can hope to do in transferring a novel to the stage is to retain as closely as possible the essential spirit of the book, to fashion it as best he is able into a telling play and to hope that the play will be enjoyed as a play and not as a novel—because there is a vast difference between the two forms.12

A Bell for Adano opened at the Cort Theatre on December 6, 1944, and ran for 304 performances. Henry C. Potter, who had been at Yale with Osborn, directed the production, which starred Fredric March, Everett Sloan, and Margo. The critical response to the play was exceptionally good. Wolcott Gibbs called A Bell for Adano "The best thing to come out of the war."13 John Mason Brown found the play moving "because it is good in the human sense as well as in the technical sense."14 The Catholic World concluded its review by saying that "A Bell for Adano is the most important play of the season—as rich in human comedy as it is in sympathy."15 Robert Garland,
It's not until you've left the playhouse with encores ringing in your ears that you realize that you've been seeing a comedy about a tragedy, a tale of stupidity in high places, a narrative of blundering bureaucracy the like of which are apt to be repeated and repented around the world. Having opened your mouth with laughter, a tragic, far-reaching truth is shoved down your throat before you know it.

A Bell for Adano is a well-written, well-staged, well-acted tragi-comedy about something actually important. The season is bigger and brighter and better for A Bell for Adano.

The story of A Bell for Adano, like the novel, demonstrates that the insignificant often takes precedent over the significant.

The town of Adano has fallen to its deliverers. The townspeople are frightened, confused, mistrustful, helpless. They need food and water; faith and guidance; cleanliness and rest. But most of all they need their bell, a bell which, for 700 years, has struck the hours, a bell which from babyhood, has regulated their nights and days.

All these things the American-born Major Victor Joppolo works his heart out to provide. But, because an unoffending Adano water-carter gets in an offending American general's way, the entire town must suffer; the major who is its saviour must be removed; the Adanions' innate distrust of Americans must be renewed.

A Bell for Adano, like On Borrowed Time, was good material for a tragi-comedy, for the characters are warm people and the conclusion is both triumphant as well as heartbreaking. The Italian peasants, who are drawn rather broadly, are a major source of warmth and humor in the play. Wolcott Gibbs remarked that both the novel and the play perpetuated the master-race theory by drawing the
American soldiers, good or bad, with full stature as human beings while the Italian peasants were the broadest possible caricatures without dignity or very much human stature at all. Robert Garland raised the question: "Why should native Sicilians use broken English to one another? Again, why are the troops of occupation past masters of the difficult Sicilian dialect?" Regardless, the broad writing does contribute warmth and humor to the play.

ZITO: The bell, Mister Major.
JOPPOLO: What's that?
ZITO: You were wondering about the bell?
JOPPOLO: Oh, yes, I've been thinking—if we get one it wouldn't want to be just any bell, understand—it would want to be a bell with some meaning. Zito, what would you think if we got you a Liberty Bell?
ZITO: What is this Liberty Bell?
JOPPOLO: It's the bell the Americans rang when they declared themselves free from the English.
ZITO: (slowly) The idea is good. But would America want to part with this bell for Adano?
JOPPOLO: Well, no, I hardly think they would, Zito. We'd have to get a replica.
ZITO: Describe this bell.
JOPPOLO: Well, it's bronze, I think. It has a large crack near the bottom, from its age. And it says on it: "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof."
ZITO: The words—are good. How is the tone?
JOPPOLO: That would depend on the replica.
ZITO: Now about this crack. How old is this bell?
JOPPOLO: Oh—nearly two-hundred years old, I guess.
ZITO: And it has a crack? Couldn't you get us a Liberty Bell without a crack?
JOPPOLO: But without a crack it wouldn't be a Liberty Bell.
ZITO: Then I think Adano would not like this Liberty Bell. Adano would not like to have a crack, I am sure.
his previous work and concluded what might be considered a period in his career that represented a unified body of work.

Chapter IV (1940-49) is concerned with the years when Osborn established a reputation not only as a successful adapter of novels for the stage but also as a successful writer of screenplays at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios. Chapter V (1950-59) concentrates on his two most successful adaptations and his one original comedy of the period *Maiden Voyage* and its revision. Chapter VI (1960-69) deals with his last two adaptations and his last comedy *Come Out. I Know You're There*, his most autobiographical play since *Morning's at Seven*.

It is hoped that the biographical material will provide a foundation for further study of Paul Osborn and the critical material will reaffirm his position as a significant American playwright.
Osborn focuses his attention on Adano in the opening and the closing moments of the play; John Hersey, focused the opening and the closing pages of the novel on the American soldiers. Osborn's is the better idea, for he sees Adano as a collective hero and the lasting testament of a good that was accomplished in the closing months of the war. In the opening moments of the play, Osborn relies on sounds coming through the window of a deserted office to indicate the conditions in Adano.

After a moment in the distance, not loud enough to be at all startling, there is the faint sound of scattered machine-gun fire. A dog barks. Then silence again. A deserted, empty feeling. Then the large doors at the back are thrown slowly open and Major Victor Joppolo enters.21

At the close of the play, Osborn again relies on sound to reveal the conditions in Adano.

JOPPOLO: Well, anyway we gave them a good start here, didn't we, Borth?
BORTH: We sure did, Duce.

(JOPPOLO turns and starts briskly out the door. As he does so, a sudden clear, loud, vibrant tone fills the air. It is the bell and it rings with great clarity and power. It stops JOPPOLO in his tracks. He looks up to where the sound is coming from. Then turns to BORTH, listening. The bell fills the whole room, the whole audience. Slowly a broad smile comes to Joppolo's face.

JOPPOLO: Listen! (We begin to hear the voices of the crowd, excited offstage.) It shakes the whole damn building!

(For a second they stand, then JOPPOLO turns abruptly and goes out of the door, followed by BORTH. The crowd outside builds to a crescendo. The bell does not stop. It rings on and on, full and vibrant.22
Most critics agreed that *A Bell for Adano* was more than a dramatization—it was a play in its own right.

In January of 1945 the Osborns returned to California where Paul wrote the screenplay based on the Marjorie Kinan Rawling novel *The Yearling*. The film starred Gregory Peck, Jane Wyman, and Claude Jarman. In 1946 he wrote the screenplay for the motion picture *Homecoming*, a vehicle for Clark Gable, Lana Turner, and Anne Baxter. In 1947 he wrote the screenplay *Forever*, which was never filmed. According to Osborn, the plot concerned reincarnation. On a "loan-out" from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1947, he wrote the screenplay *Portrait of Jennie*, which neither he nor the critics understood. The David O. Selznick film, starring Jennifer Jones, Joseph Cotten, Ethel Barrymore, and Lilian Gish, was based on the novel by Robert Nathan.

On their return from the West coast, the Osborns stopped in Michigan to visit his sister and mother. An article in the *Grand Rapids Press* indicates that Osborn had written a new play by April of 1947.

Playwright Paul Osborn, who wrote the screen version of Marjorie Kinan Rawlings' *The Yearling*, ranked by many as the foremost motion picture of the season, declared Thursday on a visit to Grand Rapids that he was not perturbed that the picture did not win the Academy Award, which went to *The Best Years of Our Lives*.

'Best Years is a wonderful picture,' Osborn said generously. 'Of course, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, producer of *The Yearling* was disappointed but gained some consolation from the special award given Claude Jarman for his role as Jody.'
Osborn, visiting his sister, Mrs. Robert S. Tubbs, 502 Mulford Dr. SE, is on his way from Hollywood to New York where his new play, as yet unnamed, is to be produced by Billie Rose. He went to Kalamazoo Thursday noon for a brief visit with his mother, Mrs. E. F. Osborn. He is accompanied by his wife and daughter Judith.

Osborn, rather indefinite in dating the start of this new play, says he worked on it through most of the forties. Although the title page reads only A New Play by Paul Osborn (First draft, uncut version), he calls it The Bridge. The presence of Billie Rose's address on the title page suggests its being the play mentioned in the Grand Rapids Press article. The Bridge, the only play he ever wrote in blank verse, is the closest Osborn ever came to writing pure tragedy. According to Osborn, he often went to Vermont to get advice from Robert Frost on verse form. A letter from Robert Frost to Osborn, dated July 7, 1945, indicates the existence of a script at that time.

It's fun entering into your puzzlement over blank verse. There are some simple things I could tell you. But this latest consignment is surprisingly close to the idea. Lines don't have to be end-stopped. In fact too many end-stopped lines are objectionable. There should be something of a pause whether punctuable or not or of emphasis on the last word to set off the line. The aim is to lay the sentence in the blank verse form as easily and as naturally as if the form wasn't there. The verse must be at least as good as the equivalent prose. Any difficulty with the verse betrayed must be got away with playfully. The assumption that more of intensity and elevation is expected of verse must not be made an excuse for pretentiousness as it is in one recent dramatist that we know of. Let's leave it to talk out with examples in front of us when you come up.
The recent dramatist to whom Frost refers is probably Maxwell Anderson whose early background strongly parallels Osborn's. Anderson, a Midwesterner whose father was a Baptist minister, taught in college a few years before he sold his first script to Brock Pemberton. Anderson, however, attempted to restore verse drama to the American stage. Although Anderson is considered a major playwright of the American theatre, he has often been accused of pretentious verse. George Steiner of Princeton University said:

Verse drama itself has rarely crossed over from literature to Broadway. Or it has done so at the cost of cheapening and self-denial. The costume tragedies of Maxwell Anderson are written in a style never spoken by any living creature. . . . They belong to the dust and tinsel world of the Victorian charade.26

William Clark Smith II of the University of Cincinnati remarked that Anderson's verse "often displays the Elizabethan tendency to wordiness and rhetoric. At such moments the pretentious verbal machinery obstructs the drama. . . ."

Another letter from Frost, dated July 19, 1945, suggested that Osborn did have some difficulty with the verse form.

Don't go and give up blank verse for that play. The bridge model is suspended poetically in my mind.28

Eight months after the Grand Rapids Press article announced that Osborn's new play was to be produced by Billie Rose, another letter from Frost indicates Osborn was
reworking the script.

Two masques might be staged together in the big city—I am shy enough about the theatre to be stopped in my tracks by a very little discouragement from one of your authority. So much for my blank verse. The question is how goes it with your blank verse?29

The major character in The Bridge is Paul Brent, a famous architect and engineer whose best work has gone into a suspension bridge, a model of which he keeps in his room. He is especially attached to the bridge, for it alone, of all his work, came the closest to defeating him. Home from the war for two weeks, he has ignored his wife Mary and his daughter Ann, for he reads in his own room during the day and goes to the bridge at night.

The play opens on the day before his daughter's marriage to John Dodd, a young man who has studied and admired Brent's work. Brent is visited by Michael Heyman, an ex-serviceman whom Brent blackmails into helping him with a mysterious project by which he tells Heyman he can get even with the world. Ray Stone, Brent's attorney, arrives, and Brent asks if his life insurance will cover Mary and Ann in case he is committed to an institution, is imprisoned, or commits suicide. Having assured Brent that he is protected, Stone advises him that Mary and Ann feel they have lost his love. Brent calls his family and Dodd to his room, but a quarrel develops between him and Dodd: Dodd argues that man is a builder, not a destroyer; Brent argues that man in his soul is a destroyer and that the
sooner man is destroyed, the better for the world.

Act 2 takes place the following day. Brent has missed the wedding, and Mary Ann Dodd, and Ray Stone celebrate in the Brent apartment. While Ann and her mother are in the kitchen, Heyman enters and tells Stone and Dodd that they must prevent Brent from dynamiting the bridge. Although Stone warns Dodd to stay away from Brent, Dodd confronts Brent and tries to persuade him that he is a creator, not a destroyer. Brent claims dynamiting the bridge will unleash a chain of destruction throughout the world that will rid the Earth of man. To prove to Brent that he cannot destroy his creation, Dodd smashes Brent's model of the bridge. Brent, in a fury, kills Dodd. His killing Dodd to save the model makes him realize he has discounted love in his evaluation of man, and, rather than live with guilt, he kills himself.

Osborn heeded Frost's warning that "the assumption of more intensity and elevation must not be made an excuse for pretentiousness. . . ." for he avoids the wordiness and the purple passages of the Elizabethans in his verse.

BRENT

How beautiful they are, these lines up here.
They seem to flow, have movement all their own.
There is movement to rigidity
A movement in a stationary line.
The sweep of railroad tracks, converging as
They enter a great city, the lines of buildings
That race up to touch the sky - and all so fragile!
Like strings on harps! And yet they carry tons!
The slender understatement of pure steel.
A speech about one of John Dodd's war experiences illustrates Osborn's narrative poetry.

I saw a woman in a town in Holland. A little woman - shrunk with hunger - Spent and dying - a ghastly color - I can't describe it -- Her bones were through Her skin and all you saw of her were eyes That seemed to hang out from her face. And she Was searching in a heaped-up pile of bodies. Most of them dead. The smell was something awful. But I stayed on there for a moment, watching. And suddenly - she paused. I mean - she stopped. Just like a clock that stops in a big room And leaves the silence beating after it. And then she slowly sank back on her haunches - Her body drooped - no sound - no tears -- Not even an expression in her eyes -. I don't know what it was that came from her - I felt it though. I knew. I knew that in That pile of flesh she'd found what she was seeking. I knew that she had found - repose - respite - And peace.32

During Paul Brent's climactic quarrel with John Dodd, Osborn holds his diction and his imagery in control.

If with some unknown dazzling energy I could unleash a power on the world That would destroy man and all his makings, Destroy the seeds from which he sprung so that No semblance of him could be born again - And in one bright and blinding light the world Would melt away, dissolve to nothingness -- I'd throw the switch this minute! Swiftly! Now! 33

Throughout The Bridge Osborn never resorts to prose for casual, short lines or the speech of uneducated characters like Michael Heyman.

(There is a sudden knock on the hall door. Both MICHAEL and BRENT pause abruptly and look up at it.)
BRENT
Yes. Who is it?

ANN
Ann.

BRENT
Yes, Ann?

ANN
I've got to see you, Father.

BRENT
Well -
I'm very busy at the moment, Ann.

ANN
I won't stay long. I want to say goodbye.

BRENT
All right, Ann. Just a minute, then. . . .

Here, Michael.
Here is a chart I've drawn up of the bridge.
It shows just what each part is called: the piers,
Abutments, span - you might as well learn them.
Be handy later on.

(HE motions curtly with his head)
All right, I'll call you.

(MICHAEL goes out to the bedroom. BRENT
stands a moment, looking around, then goes
to the hall door, unlocks and opens it.

ANN stands there. There seems to be some-
thing cold about her. SHE is stiff and
somewhat formal. BRENT stands looking at
her, questioningly, hiding his impatience)

ANN
May I come in?
BRENT
Yes - Ann - of course. Come in.

ANN
I had two glasses of champagne.

BRENT
Champagne?

ANN
It does give you some extra courage, doesn't it.\textsuperscript{34}

Simple diction and the use of cliches make the dero-
dict Michael Heyman's blank verse appear natural.

MICHAEL
It's just the breaks you get, that's all it is! I never had a chance! These God-damn millionaires! They've got it all sewed up and in the bag! I suppose you think I'm not as smart as they are? You're God-damn right I am. A damn sight smarter! Listen, if I had half a chance right now I would be sitting on top, and then - Oh, boy, maybe you think I wouldn't make Them jump?\textsuperscript{35}

There is much about the character of Paul Brent to suggest that Osborn intends him to be a hero of tragic stat-
ture: his objective is on a grand scale, his ignorance of himself leads to his downfall, and through his downfall he gains self-knowledge.

BRENT
Have men gone mad? Have they gone mad as I was? Do they think with destruction in their soul They can sneak out themselves - avoid the payments? Destruction doesn't strike as you direct it! Destruction's in the heart - it's in the mind! And once unleashed all life becomes its target!\textsuperscript{36}
Brent admits to an incalculable power above man, but assumes the responsibility for his own actions.

BRENT

We're in the hands
Of an inaccurate, unskillful Fate
With nothing to combat it but our small,
Inadequate and helpless minds. And logic,
With cunning and disarming falsity,
Leads us from one black blunder to another
Until a greater force - unmindful of us -
Manipulates us as we would a toy
And brings about our final, fatal blunder!
And yet what am I saying? Fate? What Fate?
Am I afraid to bear my guilt alone?
And have to have recourse to mystic words?
Run cringing back to what my father believed?
There is no dark and devious plan to Nature!
It's I alone who am responsible!37

Although Brent fulfills many of the qualifications of the classic definition of tragic hero, the concluding lines of the play suggest he may have been a victim of his age.

BRENT

If sometime in the years to come she asks
A question about me, Ray, tell her that
The madness of the time that I lived in
Became a part of me and I of it -
And that this thing I did - this monstrous thing -
Was done when only twisted reason ruled the world
And I forgot - with other men - to love.38

The poetry of The Bridge is most effective in its directness and simplicity but fails somehow to exalt Ann and John Dodd's love above the commonplace.

ANN

Look at him, Dad! Take a good look! He's mine!
Look at his eyes! Look at his forehead there!
He's better even when he talks!—Talk, John!
MRS. BRENT

Oh, Ann!

ANN

I'm acting like a perfect fool!
It can't be helped! I'm dizzy with excitement!
I'm eight years old and on a roller coaster!
Just one more of those sudden turns and I'll
Be slung smack into heaven and be lost forever!

BRENT

Ann! Ann!

MRS. BRENT

Stop it now, Ann!

ANN

Hold me tight, John!
I mustn't go too far--so that I can't
Get back!39

Although the form was new for Osborn, The Bridge contains some characterization similar to that found in earlier plays. Osborn himself feels that he unconsciously included his own father's fanaticism into the character of Paul Brent.40 Mrs. Brent, especially in her passivity and inability to be of any help to her daughter in word or deed, resembles Hattie Rushbrook of Hotbed and Mrs. Allen of Tomorrow's Monday, for mothers in Osborn's plays would rather endure than enter into life. Like Lila Rushbrook and Esther Allen, Ann Brent cannot find room in her life for both her father and the man she loves.

ANN

I loved two people more than all the world.
NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1S. N. Behrman, "People in a Diary," New Yorker, 13 May 1972, p. 44.

2Wolcott Gibbs, Commonweal, 12 August 1955, p. 469.

And somehow I thought they would merge to one
And in that strength I would be safe forever.
But those loves met - and killed each other. . . .

Paul Osborn devoted several years to the writing of
The Bridge and refused several lucrative offers to write
adaptations during those years. In 1947 he had been asked
by Joshua Logan to write the book for the musical South
Pacific, but Osborn had not been interested. In spite of
the time and the effort Osborn put into The Bridge, he
never has found a producer for it. "Nobody liked it. Le-
land Hayward didn't like it. Josh hated it--but I thought
it was a good play." Osborn has a strong ally in his
wife Millicent, who thinks it "a beautiful play."

During this same period, however, Osborn and Logan
did collaborate intermittently on a play they tentatively
titled Miss Price, an adaptation of two children's books by
Mary Norton: The Magic Bed-Knob and Bonfires and Broom-
sticks, which told of "... three children and their adven-
ture with an old bed which had a magic knob on it and which
took them wherever they wished."

In spite of the success Morning's at Seven was hav-
ing in the theatres outside New York, Osborn during the
1940's did not write back-porch comedies nor tragi-comedies
in the Chekhovian manner. The failure of Morning's at Seven
turned him in a different direction. Possibly in an effort
to please Robert Frost, he had attempted the verse drama.
Perhaps the form was wrong for his idea, but the poetry was
surprisingly strong, beautiful and unpretentious.
NOTES

CHAPTER IV

1 Interview held with Paul Osborn, New York City, 25 January 1972.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 New York Times, 16 November 1943, p. 27.

5 New Republic, 29 November 1943, p. 746.

6 Catholic World, 4 January 1944, p. 393.

7 New York Herald Tribune, 16 November 1943.

8 New York Morning Telegraph, 16 December 1943, p. 2.


10 Ibid., pp. 79-80.

11 Ibid., p. 112.


13 New Yorker, 16 December 1944, p. 40.


15 Catholic World, January 1945, p. 356.

16 New York Journal-American, 7 December 1944.

17 Ibid.

18 New Yorker, Ibid.


21. Ibid., p. 5.

22. Ibid., p. 79.


33. Ibid., p. 106.

34. Ibid., pp. 86-87.

35. Ibid., pp. 27-28.

36. Ibid., p. 112.

37. Ibid., p. 111.

38. Ibid., p. 116.

39. Ibid., p. 42.


CHAPTER V

THE 1950'S

Although John P. Marquand's novel Point of No Return had been serialized in the Ladies' Home Journal in 1947, had been distributed by the Book-of-the-Month Club in 1949, and had remained on the best-seller lists for months, Leland Hayward did not consider it a vehicle for Broadway until 1950. He gave Paul Osborn a copy of the novel hoping Osborn would make an adaptation for the stage. Osborn recalls, "I read it and it sort of fell into the grooves of a play, which often doesn't happen. But somehow, this felt like a play. . . ."¹

Marquand divides his novel into parts: Parts 1 and 3 deal with the banking career of Charles Gray; part 2 deals with his years as a youth in Clyde, Massachusetts. Parts 1 and 3 serve as a prologue and an epilogue for part 2 which makes up the bulk of the novel. Of the theme of the novel, Marquand said:

I think the theme of my book is for once fairly implicit in the title. That is, anybody reaches a certain time in his life when he has got to go along the track he has built, and he can't turn back and do something else. In other words, he loses all choice--he's reached the Point of No Return.²
While Marquand felt the theme of the novel was implicit in the title, the theme created considerable problems for Osborn in his treatment of the conclusion of the play. In Osborn's words:

The first writing took very little time because of the natural format which the book fell into, in terms of a play. Most of the time, as you know, is spent on the conceptual aspects of a play—but this was spared me in this case. I liked the plot of the novel, the characters and the story—but felt let down by the end of it. I had the feeling that Gray's going back into the old groove after all that he was shooting for was sort of an anti-climax. If a play or character doesn't progress one whit from where you started, you wonder what all the fuss was about. It may not be necessary for the novel form, but it is essential to a play.3

To provide for the character development that Osborn deemed necessary in the dramatic form, he ended the play with Gray's accepting the vice-presidency of the bank but refusing to join the "proper" country club suggested by the bank's president. Marquand, however, felt the ending sacrificed the tragic element in the novel and provided Gray with an escape from the point of no return. Osborn cited an observation of George Bernard Shaw's in defense of his ending:

In one of Bernard Shaw's prefaces, in which the play seemed to have a happy ending, Shaw said that it all didn't really happen that way in life. They got married, had troubles, Shaw said, but you can't end a play that way. And I agree with him. I guess Marquand and I just have a different slant.4

In the final week of the New York run, however, Osborn reworked the conclusion by adding new dialogue that
indicated Charles Gray, in spite of his refusal to join the country club, recognized that he had reached the point of no return in his life and no longer was in a position to exercise free choice. "With this change," Marquand commented, "Paul Osborn's adaptation could very well be the best and most successful adaptation ever made of a novel." 5

Even though Marquand had not approved of Osborn's original ending of the play, he admired Osborn's foreshadowing in act 1. Osborn explained it thus:

One of the problems was to dramatize Charley's reminiscences about Clyde. In the book, it was easy because he always slips back while shaving, or something like that. Originally, I had his father and mother appear while he was thinking about them. My idea was that I could prepare for the second act by establishing Charley as one who constantly thought of the past. I hoped the device would put everything into focus for an entire act is supposed to take place twenty years earlier. But when we opened out of town, the audience was confused by the appearance of the father in the first scene. I'm sorry we had to change it because it gave the play wonderful poetic overtones. It gave undercurrents to Charles and teased you about Clyde, so that when you went to Clyde later you were interested in seeing it. It's funny we had to change this because it was this very technique of foreshadowing that gave me the original impetus to adapt the novel into play form. 6

The transition from present to past and back again was handled by the sound of car horns. After Gray's wife exits to get the car to drive him to the station, Gray's parents enter. Charles Gray has now slipped into his past and recalls a day when his mother was to present a paper to the Clyde Historical Society. Gray's father lectures him on
the dangers of "creeping" in life. When an old-fashioned car horn is heard, the father says that their friends have come to take them to the meeting. As the parents leave, the sound of the horn dissolves into the sound of a modern horn and Gray's wife enters to tell Gray she has been waiting for him. The removal of this scene from act 1 to act 2 forced Osborn to tell the whole story of Gray's youth in a consecutive group of sequences contained within act 2. Possibly this change was suggested by the producer Leland Hayward.

Hayward had other suggestions for Osborn as well. Osborn began the play on a rainy day with Gray in a cantankerous mood.

The original opening was changed because Leland Hayward took one look at it and said, "My God, when you see that on stage, you think it's going to be an old-time murder show." Hayward also requested the omission of a scene in act 2. The act opened on a train for Clyde. When the train entered a tunnel, a blackout occurred, and the following scene took place in Clyde still in the present. A dissolve to the past led into scene 3. Hayward suggested that Gray continue to talk during the blackout, eliminate scene 2, and go directly into scene 3.

Osborn received suggestions not only from Marquand and Hayward but also from the set designer Jo Mielziner, who had previously worked with Osborn on *On Borrowed Time*
and Morning's at Seven. In an interview with the New York Times, Mielziner stated that the American theatre had been progressive, imaginative, and original in its musicals but had remained "creaking" with its conventional three-act form in legitimate plays. Since the musical has inspired experimental and expressive means of production, Mielziner suggested the musical-play technique for Point of No Return. He wished to keep the important action in a full-stage setting and put the transitional action on the forestage; therefore, he recommended that the Johnston Street scene be played on the forestage and that several scenes be reduced to telephone calls played on the forestage. He concluded the interview by saying that "Osborn reworked his script completely to conform to such production scenes."  

Probably because of the number of changes being made in the production, the director, Henry C. Potter, left the show. When Joshua Logan refused to step in for Potter, Elia Kazan flew in from Italy and worked with the show for two weeks, but Leland Hayward finally took over and stayed with the production until it opened in New York on December 13, 1951, at the Alvin Theatre.  

Osborn said in 1972 that the productions of The Vinegar Tree and On Borrowed Time were his favorites because everyone had had such a good time. Concerning the production of Point of No Return, Osborn said:
I was in such a fog by the time we got to New York, I hardly knew what had happened. I was pleased, of course, with the reviews. But I felt we hadn't touched the surface of what was in the original script. A certain slickness had crept in, and no one seemed to know how it got there.9

Perhaps Wolcott Gibbs gave Point of No Return its best review.

Point of No Return . . . is unquestionably the most intelligent and interesting contribution that has been made to the theatre this season. . . . Considering the limitations of the stage as to time and space, and its incapacity, without the use of Shakespearean asides and other melancholic devices, to report the thoughts as well as the speech of the people with whom it is dealing, it seems to me that Mr. Osborn has come amazingly close to the spirit of the book. It is an impressive accomplishment, and my admiration for him, and everybody else connected with the offering at the Alvin, is practically unbounded.10

John Mason Brown, too, liked Osborn's script and compared it to George Kaufman's adaptation of another Marquand novel The Late George Apley.

In addition to being a proven craftman, Mr. Osborn is a highly sensitive and subtle observer. Where Mr. Kaufman is a brilliant gagster and a Times-Square sophisticate, Mr. Osborn is a dramatist capable of tenderness, no less than wit. In Mr. Marquand's fashion he is unfrightened by emotion.11

Brooks Atkinson, however, was not impressed with the script, for he said, "... Mr. Osborn has had a little trouble in making the novel fit the stage. Point of No Return is more of an adaptation than an organic work of art."12 Walter Kerr found the play successful when dealing with Gray's state of mind but got into trouble in its
CHAPTER I
THE EARLY YEARS

Paul Romaine Osborn, born on September 4, 1901, in Evansville, Indiana, was the youngest of the four Osborn children. Two of the Reverend and Mrs. Edwin Faxon Osborn's children were to know success in the tradition of Horatio Alger: one became a successful playwright; another became Chairman of the Board of Consolidated Oil. In those early years in Kalamazoo, Michigan, however, the Osborns had all the appearances of an average Midwestern family.

It was a kind and close-knit family—no doubt about that—very, very close. But it was awfully strict, too, in a religious way.¹

The strict religious discipline was administered by the Reverend Edwin Osborn, an ordained Baptist minister who had given up the ministry and devoted his life to Biblical evangelism and moral reform.

According to Paul Osborn, his father was

... a kind of maverick. He couldn't get along with the powers that be. He was very, very literal about the Bible, and to run a healthy church you can't be literal about the Bible. I can remember that he was very shocked when some kind of athletic event came into the church. He thought that that had nothing to do with religion. I can remember that I was shocked at the time too.²

"Maverick" seems an appropriate word to apply to
efforts to explain the man's motives and the nature of his social drives. In 1960 John Gassner commented on the play in retrospect.

The invariably scrupulous Paul Osborn fashioned it out of the novel by invariably scrupulous J. P. Marquand. It was an honest and at the same time skillful dramatization. Osborn managed to say much of what Marquand said and to retain the scope of the novel. . . . A play that changes style midstream and then returns to its original matter and style is apt to disintegrate, but this was not true of Osborn's dramatization. . . . Osborn's competence in dramatizing fiction is the result of considerable experience. . . .

Whether John Gassner is justified in assuming that On Borrowed Time (1938), The Innocent Voyage (1943), and A Bell for Adano (1944) constituted "considerable experience" in the dramatization of fiction is debatable, but that Osborn was already considered to be "the great adapter of the novel for Broadway" is significant.

Early in 1952 Osborn resumed his screenwriting but gave up working in California to avoid interrupting his daughter Judith's education. Osborn wrote the screenplay for the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer motion picture Invitation in Brookfield Center, Connecticut. In 1954 his film adaptation of John Steinbeck's novel East of Eden for Warner Brothers won him a nomination for an award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. His good friend Elia Kazan directed the film, which starred James Dean, Julie Harris, and Raymond Massey. In 1956 Osborn wrote the screen adaptation of James Michener's novel Sayanora,
which was filmed by Warner Brothers and directed by Joshua Logan. For *Savanora* Osborn received his second Academy Award nomination.

Between 1952 and 1955 Osborn seemed to have had no major project for the stage. In 1954 there was talk that he might do a dramatization of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, and Leland Hayward had expressed interest in the project. Although Osborn's copy of the novel had been heavily marked and annotated, he never completed even a rough draft. In the same year he did help Joshua Logan on the musical *Fanny*. Since Osborn and Logan often read whatever the other was working on, Logan asked Osborn to help with the script of *Fanny*, which, in the typical Logan manner, he was writing with S. N. Behrman, co-producing with David Merrick, and directing.

I always listen to outside opinions. I need help—and I don't care where it comes from. Emlyn Williams reads all my scripts and cuts them. Williams cut *Mr. Roberts* and *South Pacific*. Paul Osborn is reading *Fanny* now. I expect him to cut the hell out of it.15

How much Osborn did with the script of *Fanny* is speculative; it is likely that he did a great deal.

The 1953 revival of *On Borrowed Time* at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York must have been gratifying to Osborn. The production, starring Victor Moore and Beulah Bondi, had opened in San Francisco for a successful run before the opening in New York. The reviews gave evidence
that the play had lost none of its charm since its opening in 1938. The *Saturday Review* said, "Certainly the most relaxed and funniest play to reach Broadway this season is the current revival of Paul Osborn's *On Borrowed Time*." *Newsweek* claimed that the revival put the new shows to shame. Wolcott Gibbs remarked that "Fantasy is one of the most precarious of literary forms, liable to turn in the author's hands and cut him severely. This is not the case here."

Encouraged by the success of *On Borrowed Time*, the Cherry Lane Theatre revived *Morning's at Seven* in June of 1955, and the critics were unanimous in their approval of the play which had closed after forty-four performances in 1939. Brooks Atkinson, in the *New York Times*, said, "It is a genuine comedy tied with the thread of laughter. The characters are fools; yet they assume they are normal people. Osborn has a true sense of comedy—the true comedian's gift for seeing the grotesqueness and the imbecility under the surface of sober, experienced people who have no idea what they are doing and understand nothing about themselves."

Late in 1955 Anna Deere Wiman gave *Morning's at Seven* its first London production.

Perhaps encouraged by the success of the revivals at the Cherry Lane Theatre, Osborn began sometime in 1954-1955 a rather free version of Homer's Odyssey for the stage, which he called *Maiden Voyage*. In an interview for the *New York Times* shortly before the comedy was to
open in New York, Osborn told where his idea for the play had originated.

One afternoon, three or four years ago, I stopped at a bookstore to buy a child's version of the Odyssey. My daughter, age 10, needed it for school. While I was waiting for the clerk to wrap it, I noticed a particularly attractive 'fuzzy animal.' I can't remember now whether it was a bear or a lion, but since there is a dilapidated lion still around the house—and no signs of a bear—I suspect it was the latter.

I went out of the store, 'fuzzy animal' under one arm, Homer's Odyssey under the other—and it must have been at that moment, quite unbeknownst to me, that the idea of the play Maiden Voyage was, in some way, germinated.

Of course, when I got home what happened was exactly what I knew would happen. 'What's that under your arm?' my wife said. 'Homer's Odyssey,' I answered. 'No,' she said, 'I mean what's that under your other arm?' 'Oh, that,' I said, 'just a fuzzy animal.' 'A fuzzy animal!' She turned and started walking down the hall.

'Now wait a minute,' I called after her. 'This is a lion. She hasn't got a lion.'

'She's got every other animal that God or man ever thought of,' my wife called back. 'I pick them up by the dozens every morning. Her room is so full of them now that there's hardly room for her!' She turned back to me and delivered the lines with which, some three years later, I open Maiden Voyage.

'I tell you, Zeus,' Hera says, 'you're going to ruin that child just as sure as I'm standing here! How do you think she can cope with all this? You give her everything she wants—you load her down with presents! Oh, when I think of how she's indulged and protected and spoiled—yes, spoiled, there's no other name for it! Why sometimes I'm surprised the child has turned out as well as she has!'

That night I picked up the child's version of the Odyssey. It seemed rather stark . . . so I picked up the Lang translation and began to read.

'Oh, Father, throned in the highest,' said Athena to Zeus. . . . It rang a bell.

Years before I had owned a top hat. My wife and I were going out for the evening and I wore it. My daughter, age 4, had seen me and had looked at me in wonder. 'Father, you look like---' She couldn't find words, her awe was so great—then she found them—'You look just like one of those men who drove the
hansom cabs down at the Plaza.' Sheer flattery, of course— but it sounded very much like, 'Oh, Father, throned in the highest—.' And it is at this moment, I think, that Zeus slipped in and took over. His wife, Hera, slipped into my wife—and so on.

I picked up the Odyssey again and found Athena cajoling her father into releasing the man Odysseus from his captivity. . . . And as I read on I began to see that Athena protested a little too much. 'Oh, Father, my heart is rent for wise Odysseus, the hapless one—.' 'So,' I thought, 'she's in love with that man! What will Zeus do about this? Odysseus is obviously a scoundrel, how will Zeus react when he catches on? How will he feel when he sees his daughter is in love with a "not-too-moral" man—who has a wife and a son and is old enough to be Athena's father?—Yes, and how would I react if my daughter, later, falls in love with a scoundrel 'old enough to be her father?'

So I worked several years trying to figure this out and trying to come to some solution in my play that will serve as a guide in years to come.20

Maiden Voyage was produced by Kermit Bloomgarden in association with Anna Deere Wiman, widow of Dwight Deere Wiman who had died in 1951. Joseph Anthony directed the production, and Jo Mielziner designed the settings. It was apparent that the producers were seeking a cast of "name" actors. First Jean Simmons, then Claire Bloom, and finally the unknown Bryarly Lee were sought for the part of Athena. Although Lorne Greene, later famous for his television series Bonanza, announced interest in the role of Odysseus, the part went to Walter Mathau, who also received good reviews. Both Bruce Gordon and Melvyn Douglas were approached to play Zeus, but Douglas played the role. Mildred Dunnock as Hera, Colleen Lomax as Penelope, and Tom Poston as Hermes completed the cast.

The production went into rehearsal in January of
1957 and was scheduled for a mid-March opening at the Barrymore Theatre in New York after a tryout at the Forrest Theatre in Philadelphia in early March. The show, however, closed on March 9, 1957, in Philadelphia to mixed reviews. Even today Osborn is puzzled over the failure of Maiden Voyage, for he feels it is a stageworthy play.

The two Philadelphia critics differed in their reviews of the play. Henry T. Murdock found the comedy tedious at times.

The Maiden Voyage referred to in Paul Osborn's comedy of that name which opened at the Forrest last night, is a young girl's first passage at love. With tenderness, which unfortunately often has tedium as its handmaiden, Osborn points out that whether mortal or Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, Virtue and other things, the questing maiden must become reconciled to a measure of disillusionment mixed with the grand passion.

And as the corollary to his tale of Olympians enmeshed in mortal emotions, Osborn also indicates that doting fathers, also whether mortal or Zeus himself, are prone to jealous rage when a well-beloved daughter strays from the realm of father worship.

After a while one finds the interest in the blunderings and the thunderbolts of Zeus (even though the role is played with proper paternal explosions by Melvyn Douglas) or for that matter, the essential problem of Athena herself, somehow wavering, meanwhile waiting for another of the generally comic appearances of Walter Mathau, as the weary Odysseus, or Tom Postom, as Hermes, the eternal messenger who rather suspects he's not so bright as some of his fellow Olympians.

Max de Schauensee, more enthusiastic than Murdock, found deeper meaning in the play.

Mr. Osborn brings us a play, which opens rather dully, hits its stride a scene or two later, and ends on a note of lofty idealism and exaltation. This is a strange play—a play which has much to recommend in its charm and variety. Though there are several very funny scenes, the actual core of Mr. Osborn's script is dead serious in its plea for toleration.
and understanding, in its hope for law and order out of chaos, in its final optimistic outburst prophe­sying a new day.

The lofty things that Mr. Osborn puts into the mouths of his gods and goddesses, sitting on the clouds of Olympus, are hardly anything new in their range of thought and meditation, but they are the things that lie so close to the roots of human necessity, they can stand being said over and over again, especially in a world trembling on the brink of oblivion.22

The reviewer continues with a summary of the plot of Maiden Voyage.

Mr. Osborn ... tells the story of Athena, the virgin goddess, descending from Olympus to become en­tangled with the hero, Odysseus, returning to the side of Penelope after his epic wanderings far from his Ithaca fireside.

Family life on Olympus is amusingly spoofed as we meet these very human gods: Zeus, the bellowing, blustering and ultimately wise father; Hera, the pre­occupied, resigned mother, beset by small worries; Athena, lovely and desirous of growing up and tasting life, and callow young Hermes, with his wistful accept­ance of being a constant errand-boy.

Greek mythology and saga is treated with a delight­ful tongue-in-cheek airiness. ... Mr. Osborn's lines are not so actually witty, as they are charmingly silly in their ridiculous tomfoolery--the blurring out of an outrageous platitude in a grandiose situation. This is not a new trick, but Mr. Osborn has used it so cleverly as to make it appear fresh.

When Hera looks imploringly at Zeus and says, 'Please, don't start thundering,' and when Penelope gazes at the returning Odysseus and casually asks, 'When did you get in?' the sense of absurdity cannot fail but hit its mark.

Mr. Osborn's pattern is a constant play of light and shade--chuckles, guffaws, poetry, the human touch, and eternal truth.23

Certainly Maiden Voyage called for more sheer theatricalism than any other script Osborn had written at this point in his career. Following the "musical" format used in Point of No Return, Osborn's script contained
transitional scenes in the clouds and on Mount Olympus and full scenes that took place on the Island of Ogygia, in the house of Odysseus at Ithaca, and on a beach in Ithaca. Perhaps Mielziner enforced his production design, or perhaps Osborn was adopting the theatricalism so prevalent in legitimate plays in the fifties.

Osborn's interview in the *New York Times* about the genesis of *Maiden Voyage* points out another difference in the play—Osborn's basis for his characterization previously had been the Michigan Osborns; now he was using the New York Osborns. Although Zeus' holding onto his daughter Athena under the guise of protecting her is reminiscent of Rushbrook's situation in *Hotbed*, Zeus is not protecting her soul but her heart. Hera, unlike the passive Hattie Rushbrook, is most candid in her conversation with Zeus.

HERA: You're so obvious, Zeus. You really don't remember about this man and yet you're building up a case against him, denying him every virtue, and damning him solely because he's married, has a child, and is well on into middle age. Whereas your real anger against him — the only sin he's really committed in your eyes — is that — you're afraid Athena is in love with him.

ZEUS: I know she is. I know Athena so well. I've watched over her and loved her — for so many years. Athena is in love. I don't think she knows it — she's too pure — too innocent — but —

HERA: Then all the more reason for sending her down! If Odysseus is the scoundrel you think he is — let her find it out. Oh, Zeus, it's time she found out some things!

ZEUS: It would break her heart.

HERA: Oh, no, it wouldn't! Don't spare her everything! Let her go! Let her grow up!
Both Zeus and Rushbrook would destroy the man that threatens to take their daughters away in spite of their daughter's defiance. The parallel conflicts can be pointed out in corresponding scenes from the two plays. At the close of act 1 in *Maiden Voyage* Athena asks,

ATHENA: Oh, what kind of father are you? What kind of mad, horrible father?
ZEUS: Now come the greatest wave of all and pull him under! Ha! To the very top of the mountain, that one!
ATHENA: Stop!
ZEUS: Another! Another!
ATHENA: Hold on, Odysseus! Hold on!
ZEUS: Where are you going?
ATHENA: Into the sea - ! I'm going to save him!
ZEUS: Go to your room!
ATHENA: No!
ZEUS: Do as I tell you!
ATHENA: I won't! You've told me all my life what to do! Now I do defy you!
ZEUS: Athena, I warn you - if you leave now you don't have to come back!
ATHENA: Do what you want to me! I don't care what you do! I hate you - I really hate you now -

In the closing scene in *Hotbed* a defiant Lila faces her father.

RUSHBROOK: I do not understand you, Lila. You are very queer tonight. Not like my little girl at all.
LILA: Don't call me that. I detest hypocrisy--even though it's naive.
RUSHBROOK: Lila, this has gone far enough. You are evidently trying to anger me. I hope you won't make me forget myself.
LILA: Do you think that's possible?
RUSHBROOK: Young woman, I'll break this stubborn spirit of yours if I make it my life's work. My patience can be stretched so far, and then--
LILA: And then you're a beast.
RUSHBROOK: You're not too old to whip. Go into my study.
LILA: You think you can beat out of me contempt for you? You think you can outlive the contempt my mother has for you? Or that any decent person feels at the
sight of you? Go through with your duty, let everyone know about it. Publish it in your rotten newspaper. It can't hurt me.
RUSHBROOK: Lila!
LILA: And tell them who the girl was. It was I. I'm the girl you're to make an example of with this young instructor who's going to hell.
RUSHBROOK: Lila, don't jest with me.
LILA: Jest? With you? It won't be hard to prove.
RUSHBROOK: Lila--why do you say--such things?
Lila--what have you done?
LILA: I've been rash--for once.

The positioning of the two exchanges of dialogue within the structure of the plot suggests the form of drama with which Osborn is working. The Maiden Voyage dialogue is the turning point of a comedy; the Hotbed dialogue is the climax of a drama. Time remains for Zeus and Athena to come to a reconciliation within the plot. There is no time for Lila and her father. In the concluding passages of Maiden Voyage, Athena returns to Olympus.

ATHENA: I'm home, Father. I have nowhere else to go.
ZEUS: Well, of course - naturally - I never meant - Sit down, Athena. Or stand up - whichever one - I don't mean to seem - after all, you're certainly old enough to know whether you want to sit down or - the point is - as things are organized - the Universe, I mean - and there are bad gods as well as good ones - naturally - but on the whole - the overall picture - well, what do you think?

Seeing Athena as an adult, Zeus helps her discover a reason for being other than human love.

ZEUS: And then I came and - despite all my mistakes - I've tried to shape it even more. We've come a long way from the dark and formless Chaos to what we have now, haven't we, Athena?
ATHENA: Yes - I suppose we have - ZEUS: And you will bring even more - order and intelligence. Athena?
ATHENA: Yes, Father?
ZEUS: That's what the gods are for - to try to blunder on one little step ahead of man - and show
the Reverend Edwin Faxon Osborn, for his strict religious discipline and his lack of diplomacy often cost him his employment and cost his family their financial security as well as their home. His ministerial positions took him and his family to Massachusetts, New York, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois. Between church positions he attended Kalamazoo College, Newton Theological Seminary, Rochester Theological Seminary, and received Honorary A.M. and D.D. degrees from Ewing College in Illinois. He also held the position of professor of literature and history from 1899-1900 at Ewing College. In 1902 Osborn gave up the ministry, settled down in Kalamazoo, and became an evangelist. His lecture tours eventually took him to twenty-seven states east of the Rocky Mountains.

In addition to his evangelism, the Reverend Edwin Osborn was also active in reform work. In his battle against tobacco and alcohol, he formed the Narcotics Abstinence League in 1920 and worked for a merger with other tobacco-reforming leagues. When these efforts failed, he formed the Life Conservation League, became its first president, and wrote articles for its periodical _The Bulletin of the Life Conservation League_. According to his son, however, he was more than a contributor to the _Bulletin_. I think he wrote the whole damn thing himself and he printed it himself. I never read any of
the way.
ATHENA: That does seem to make a reason, doesn't it?
ZEUS: The only one I know.
ATHENA: But at least a reason.
ZEUS: It's all that I can give you, Athena.
ATHENA: Yes. Thank you - Father -. I think I understand.28

In *Maiden Voyage*, fathers—Odysseus and Zeus both—love and are loved in return.

ODYSSEUS: Look, child, I cannot deceive you. I'm old enough to be your father - I am a married man - I have a son I've just seen after many years - Out there are fields of corn that must be tended - and land that must be tilled - and goats and swine that must be fed -.
And all these things - the wife, the child, the fields of corn - the land the goats the swine - are all one thing, so mixed and intertwined that I swear I don't know which is which.
And it is this thing that I love. And if by chance a young girl pass my way - or a lovely lady thinks I'm pleasing--what has that to do with anything? What has that to do with what I love?29

And at the final curtain, the stage directions read:

(HERA has moved over to ZEUS. SHE has put her hand on his arm, holding it tightly. ZEUS is watching ATHENA, proudly.)30

Another effect that Osborn's change in viewpoint had on the characterization in *Maiden Voyage* lay in the nature of Athena's concept of love at the end of the play. A hopeless romantic at the start, she says to the earth at the close

ATHENA: Oh, I love you - your islands sparkling down there in the sun! I love you, all you people of the world who so desperately need a goddess to love!
Well, here I am! Take me! Love me! Worship me! I am your Goddess! I dedicate myself to you. And I will do my best for you - to make you great - and
wise - and good.
I'll make your corn to grow, your olive trees to flourish, I'll make your arts, your handicraft, your poetry, your State, your philosophies, your very way of thinking - to become great - and good. I will do my best to teach you - protect you - and make you sing - you islands that I love down there! - Only - do you continue loving me! I need your love as much as you need mine! This will be our covenant.\textsuperscript{31}

In previous Osborn plays, the ingenues have remained decidedly romantic throughout the play. During the closing moments of \textit{Maiden Voyage}, however, A\textit{thena} and Hermes appear far older than their years because of their perspective of life and love than do Lila Rushbrook, Louis Willard, and even Ann Brent. Since Osborn no longer identified with the young, his play ends not with revolt and separation but with love and reunion.

Shortly after the close of \textit{Maiden Voyage}, Osborn began the screenplay for the Mike Todd Corporation's film version of \textit{South Pacific}, which Joshua Logan was to direct. Although most of the film was made on location in Hawaii, Osborn wrote the script in Connecticut and New York City. \textit{South Pacific}, however, was not to be Osborn's last script with a Far-Eastern setting: while \textit{South Pacific} was being filmed, Osborn read Richard Mason's novel \textit{The World of Suzie Wong}. According to an interview in the \textit{New York Times}:

\ldots playwright Osborn fell in love with Suzie the moment he met her last year in the galley proofs of what was to become a best-selling novel, and set to work immediately to present her to the theatre. \ldots
'Egad, it's a soap-opera!' people said of the book and during out-of-town tryouts of the play. Except that Osborn saw Suzie as 'a terribly-funny character—beautifully simple, adjusted.' The prostitute-with-heart-of-finest-gold angle never interested him at all.

Changes from the sprawling plotty novel were predicted and inevitable. 'Characters who were charming in the book simply had to be dropped for lack of space.' Osborn reports, 'A wonderful fellow, O'Neill, who told marvelous anecdotes about the girls all through the book, becomes a walk-on in the play—he was too literary, too talky. And Rodney, whom the girls called 'the butterfly man' because of his insatiable flitting from one to another, is out altogether. I found him disgusting. Robert Lomax was changed from a Britisher to a Canadian because our leading man, Bill Shatner, is a Canadian and fitted that description more easily, and the part of Kay Fletcher, who was sketchy and really nothing in the book becomes important in our play because Sarah Marshall, who acts the part, is the down-to-earth, vividly-humorous kind of girl she is.'

Osborn went on, 'And Suzie is considerably different from Mason's Suzie, in large part because France Nuyen is playing her. France was physically ideal for the part from the beginning—19 years old, half Chinese-half French—with the proper fatalistic Oriental personality and a kind of old-age wisdom and intuition about her that was just right. But could she learn enough English in time, could she carry a whole play on her inexperienced shoulders? Remember, she's been in this country less than two years, and learned the part of Liat for the movie version of South Pacific largely by rote. Big problems, all of them, but I have tried to tailor the writing closely to the girl's natural abilities and by trying to keep her cozy and comfortable with lines that suit her as tightly as her cheongsams, I think we have overcome these potential hazards. In fact, I even gave France most of the laughs. . . .'

After Suzie settles down, however, in her own little world at the Broadhurst, Osborn plans to re-vamp his own play, Maiden Voyage.32

The World of Suzie Wong opened at the Broadhurst Theatre on October 14, 1958, and ran for a record 508
performances—the longest running play in Osborn's career. The majority of critics disliked the play. Walter Kerr praised the externals but found the inner structure of the play static and unreal. John Chapman called it "the corniest tearjerker imaginable" and Brooks Atkinson said the play "is flaring in style and sophomoric in viewpoint and on the artistic level of a comic book." The critic from Commonweal, however, liked it, thought it was fun to watch, and wondered if he were selling out and becoming a tired businessman. The critic for the Catholic World summed up the hostility toward the production by asking the question: Why should men like Paul Osborn, Joshua Logan, and Jo Mielziner reduce the theatre to this level?

According to Osborn, he had seen the basic situation in the plot as "a little thing—small and touching—but it had got blown up way out of proportion and turned into a hokey extravaganza. You know, years later I thought of doing it as a musical and mentioned it to Al Hirschfield. He said that he always thought that it was a musical." Hirschfield was partially correct according to the reviewer for Theatre Arts.

... it is the sort of thing that gives a Logan and a Mielziner plenty of footing, and those old South Pacific warriors have gone to town. There is no full musical score, it is true, but there is a resounding stroke of a gong to start the proceedings, and plenty of overpowering jazz for the brothel scenes. There is also some on-stage rain during a concluding flood sequence that dooms Suzie's baby, plus a variety of picturesque sets
that glide and descend from everywhere. There are plenty of split skirts, an abundance of handsome Oriental girls and enough hip-swinging to rejuvenate even the most infirm of us.  

In spite of its long run, Osborn has never released the script for production or publication. Because he feared that he had gone commercial, he said, "The whole experience threw me."  

Perhaps to forget The World of Suzie Wong, Osborn immediately began a revision of Maiden Voyage. The most significant features of the revision are the addition of verse passages and its presentational style. A long soliloquy by Zeus in the revision precedes the opening quarrel between Zeus and Hera.  

The stage is nearly dark. Only the figure of a man, ZEUS, is dimly seen. For a time nothing is heard except the MUSIC.  
Then--  

ZEUS  

This is the moment I love the most,  
The night is old—the day unborn—  
And everyone asleep but me—  
And here on Olympus, home of the gods,  
I have this precious moment free  
To listen to this symphony.  

(There is a pause as HE listens to the continuing MUSIC)  

It speaks of matters  
I know not of—  
It's not concerned  
With hate or love  
Or any part  
Of man's emotion...  

And infinity keeps
All her secrets and creeps  
Remorselessly on  
Again--

Forever--

Remorselessly--

On again--

Keeping her thoughts  
From the gods  
And from men  
Again--

It's frightening!

(HE rouses himself from his thoughts. HE turns to the AUDIENCE)

I am Zeus! The most powerful of all the gods on Olympus! Supreme Ruler of Heaven and Earth! The Hope and Prayer of every Mortal!

(HE gestures into space)

I didn't make it all! I just run it!

(HE sits and turns pleasantly to the AUDIENCE)

We gods, you know  
Were made by the Greeks,  
Untold centuries ago.  
Man always seeks  
A god to worship and to blame. 41

Throughout the play Osborn avoids a definite verse form; the dominant meters are dimeter and tetrameter and the dominant measures are iambic and anapaestic. Osborn suggests Elizabethan comedy in his use of soliloquies and speeches requiring a presentational manner of delivery. Zeus, who can step outside the action whenever necessary, momentarily becomes a narrator, or master of ceremonies, at the end of the opening soliloquy when he invites the
audience to watch the play and proceeds to introduce the other characters.

ZEUS

Real problems we have in these skies!
And if our problems overlap with theirs--

(HE points downward)

Coincidence! Mere chance! Who cares?
As you will see,
If you will follow carefully.42

Like the use of song in a musical play, the use of verse permits Osborn to halt the action of the play and develop fully the character's feeling. In the original script Athena described human love as follows:

ATHENA: Then I got out of my bed and looked down at Apollo's sun. And suddenly I found myself thinking, true mortal love is like Apollo's sun. It is whole and it is everything. It always shines, it never falters and if anything were to split it - there would be nothing left.43

In the revision the thought is expanded.

ATHENA

True mortal love is like Apollo's sun,
It's whole and it is everything,
It's one!
You cannot split the sun! . . .

And there's no man
Could ever take the stead
Of this one man for this one woman!
His head
Rests sweetly on her breast in bed--. . . .

And there's no woman,
None out of all the rest,
Could take the place of this one woman!
Co'lesced!
And in their union blest!
Because they're one!
They're like the sun!
They're like the star!
They are!
They're one!
You cannot split the sun!

And just as sure that Father's here above,
You cannot split true mortal love! 44

The verse also gives Osborn the freedom to prepare for the sexual encounter between Athena and Odysseus, an act that seemed out of character for Athena in the original script. Before she sees Odysseus on the Island of Ogygia, Athena says,

ATHENA

I don't know what's come over me,
This April day.
So swiftly and so suddenly
I feel my personality
All changed!
What can it be?
I'm still just me,
And yet I feel I'm me and someone else,
Yes definitely me and someone else.

Someone to fear!
Someone not nice!
Someone who's past all sane advice,
Who'll make all mortal men look twice
When I am near!
I want to hear
The screams of lust and sin and vice!

I'd like to see
The vilest sight
Earth has to offer, deep at night,
And share in it with all my might!
I want to see
Depravity!
The evil things all out of sight!

Inside my breast
A storm's gone wild!
I want to see all things defiled!
Smash all these toys like a child!
And what is best
Of all the rest
I want to see myself defiled.45

Since the poetic passages extended a great deal of the dialogue, the plot had to be cut and restructured. In the original script act 1 consisted of four scenes: (1) Olympus, (2) the Island of Ogygia, (3) the House of Odysseus at Ithaca, and (4) Olympus. Act 2 consisted of three scenes: (1) the Beach at Ithaca, (2) the House of Odysseus at Ithaca, and (3) Olympus. In the revision, act 1 consists of four scenes: (1) Olympus, (2) the Island of Ogygia, (3) Olympus, (4) the Beach at Ithaca; act 2 consists of two scenes: (1) the House of Odysseus at Ithaca and (2) Olympus. By ending act 1 with Odysseus setting out to slay the suitors and find Penelope, Osborn has found a more logical break in the action for the act 1 curtain, for the Odysseus plot remained static in the original script until act 2.

The plot of the revision is much tighter and the motivation much stronger; Osborn fears, however, that he has overwritten the dialogue, particularly the verse. In 1965 Monos Hajdidakis, the composer of the film score for Never on Sunday, was interested in composing a score for Maiden Voyage, but the project never materialized. Osborn, however, is still hopeful there will be another production of Maiden Voyage.
The years between 1951-58 had brought financial and commercial success to Paul Osborn but had left him dissatisfied with himself and the theatre. The madcap revisions of Point of No Return had left him in a "fog," the failure of Maiden Voyage on its Philadelphia tryout had hurt and puzzled him, and the overwhelming success of The World of Suzie Wong had embarrassed him. For a playwright to refuse the release of a "hit" show is a most unusual action, but Osborn obviously places his reputation above financial gain. There is great integrity in his retiring a script from which he could have earned a substantial amount of money in royalties. Neither was Osborn interested in writing the film adaptation of his play.

During these years he had abandoned the realistic production design of his early plays and had adopted a theatrical one: in revising Maiden Voyage Osborn had even included speeches directly addressed to the audience. There is no indication that he would return to the type of play he had written in the thirties.
it, and I doubt if anyone else did. I don't think he ever sold anything to anybody.4

In addition to the Bulletin, the Reverend Edwin Osborn wrote several religious books and a novel: Some Essentials of Christian Growth (1896), The Vanishing Prince (1898), Some Foundation Stones of Christian Character (1906), The Teaching of the Parables (1906), and the novel Onar (1909). In his later years he wrote three texts to be used for religious education in the elementary schools. The collection, entitled The Words and Deeds of Jesus was published in 1927.

Having an author for a father did not impress the young Paul Osborn: in fact, it had a negative effect upon him.

I had a slight scorn for writing, you know. I thought it was kind of an effeminate thing to do. I was going to be an engineer.

Do you remember the writer Donald Hamilton Haines? He wrote a lot of short stories for the Saturday Evening Post. He was the writer of the town. He went around in plus-fours. He was twenty years or so older than I was. I was just a kid. I'm sure now that he was a nice guy, but then I used to look at him with disdain. I remember one day I was down digging a ditch—all dirty and sweaty—and he walked by. All kinds of elegant. I thought he was some kind of dandy.5

Neither was Laura Osborn impressed with her husband's career.

Her attitude toward my father, who never earned much of a living, was one of—well contempt is too harsh a word—maybe dissatisfaction. Her attitude was somewhat like that
NOTES

CHAPTER V


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 32.

5 Ibid., p. 33.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., p. 32.


9 Aulicino, Ibid., p. 33.

10 Wolcott Gibbs, "Sometimes I'm Happy," New Yorker, 22 December 1951, p. 47.


15 Theatre Arts, October 1954, p. 10.

16 Saturday Review, 28 February 1953, p. 37.

17 Newsweek, 23 February 1953, p. 62.
22. Max de Schauensee, "Maiden Voyage Gets Off to Good Start at Forrest," An unidentified article from Philadelphia newspaper.
23. Ibid.
25. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
27. Osborn, Maiden Voyage, p. 103.
28. Ibid., p. 105.
29. Ibid., p. 90.
30. Ibid., p. 108.
31. Ibid., pp. 107-108.


Ibid., p. 3.


CHAPTER VI

THE 1960'S

The World of Suzie Wong did not close until January 2, 1960. By then Osborn had finished his revision of Maiden Voyage, but no ideas for another original script had materialized. During the year he wrote the screen adaptation of B. Deal's Dunbar Cove for Twentieth-Century-Fox Studios. The film, released under the title of Wild River, was directed by Elia Kazan and starred Lee Remick, Montgomery Clift, and Jo Van Fleet.

Still searching for an idea for a script in 1961, Osborn received from Ray Stark of Seven Arts Production, Inc., a stack of novels Stark considered suitable for dramatization. Osborn selected Maurice Druon's The Film of Memory, which he had read in 1955 when it had first appeared in an English translation. The fact that Druon himself had made a dramatization of the novel did not deter Osborn who completed the first draft during the summer of 1963, for an article in the July 17, 1963, issue of the New York Times reported that Film of Memory would be produced by Feuer and Martin. Osborn's personal copy of the play substantiates the summer of 1963 as the time of completion, since it contains revisions dated September 5, 1963,

Over a year passed, however, before any further news of *Film of Memory* appeared in the newspapers. In December of 1964, the *New York Times* announced that Leland Hayward, Hugh Beaumont, and Ray Stark would produce the play. According to Osborn, finding a suitable actress for the leading role had caused the delay. When Vivian Leigh expressed a desire to play the role, the producers agreed to her condition that a London production precede the New York opening. Although *Film of Memory* was scheduled to open in London on May 17, 1965, after a tryout tour, the production closed in Manchester in April of 1965. Neither the London nor the New York productions materialized.

*Film of Memory*—a mixture of Pirandello's *Henry IV*, Giraudoux's *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, and Vicki Baum's *Grand Hotel*—concerns the death of the Contessa Sanziani, once the most beautiful woman in Europe. The action takes place in the fourth-floor rooms of a decaying hotel in Rome. The plot consists of a series of flashbacks that present the eighty-year-old Contessa at progressively younger ages: in the first she is fifty-eight; in the second, thirty-eight, and so on until in the last scene she is asking for dolls. The stage directions indicate that Sanziani "becomes younger and more alive as the play goes on." The framework into which these flashbacks are set tells the story of the hotel maid Carmela, whom Sanziani befriends.
A love interest also develops between Carmela and Garani, a writer of screen plays.

The transitions between the past and the present are skillfully handled. In the first one, Carmela is unaware for a time what has happened.

SANZIANI: —Open the door, someone knocked. (CARMELA looks at her, surprised, not having heard the knock)

the door, little one—open the door—(Still puzzled, CARMELA obeys)

CARMELA: There is no one at the door, Contessa. (SANZIANA comes forward to greet an imaginary guest, whose hand she shakes warmly)

SANZIANI: Lydia, my dear, come in. How glad I am to see you. How are you?

(To CARMELA)

Carlotta, take the Duchess' coat—and start unpacking my baggage. (CARMELA looks at SANZIANI, a little frightened. She realizes that her mind is wandering. She presses herself against the door, torn between the desire to run out, and the fascination SANZIANI has for her. SANZIANI takes CARMELA'S hand and leads her to the center of the room, shows her a chair)

Sit down, Lydia, let me look at you! You are incredible! Here I am—all of fifty-eight years of age—and you are ten years older than I—and you do not change! You are an act of defiance! (She sits down and motions to CARMELA to sit in an empty chair near her. CARMELA does so, timidly. She has become LYDIA)²

As it happens to Carmela, so does it happen to all in the play. Each character has his turn "to become" a person from Sanziani's past. Some of the early flashbacks are humorous. In act 1, scene 2, Sanziani dictates a will to a young attorney.

PAVELLI: Contessa, may I interrupt you?

SANZIANI: What is it, my dear Tosio?

PAVELLI: Pavelli, Contessa! My name is Pavelli!
Tosio was my predecessor! He is ninety-five years old and has not been able to move a finger for the last fifteen years! My name is Pavelli!
SANZIANI: Ninety-five! You don't look like it, Tosio. 3

In act II, scene 2, Sanziani encounters Pavelli during another flashback.

SANZIANI: Tosio! How nice of you to come!
PAVELLI: You recognize me then! You know my name!
SANZIANI: Tosio, would I ever forget it!
DR. WOLF: She knows your name? She called you Tosio!
PAVELLI: Yes—well, you see—it's really too long to go into now—. 4

By the conclusion of the play the flashbacks have become pitiful. The last occurs at dusk in the Contessa's room.

SANZIANI: Hold me--
CARMELA: What, Contessa?
SANZIANI: Hold me.
( CARMELA puts her arms around SANZIANI)
CARMELA: (To GARANI) Put the pillow under her head, please. Thank you, Mario.
GARANI: Carmela, I came because I--
CARMELA: I know. Later. I think the world is full of time for us.
SANZIANI: My dolls—I want my dolls--
CARMELA: Yes, Contessa—go to sleep now—you can have your dolls when you wake up.
SANZIANI: Rock me.
CARMELA: There, there—go to sleep now, little one--
SANZIANI: Sing to me--. When I wake up I want to play in the forest.
(A moment longer, CARMELA continues rocking her and humming softly. She looks up, meets Garani's eyes and smiles gently.
SANZIANI sinks back. CARMELA rocks her.) 5

For his comi-tragedy Osborn has created an extravagant, grandiose role dressed in extravagant language and emotion. If each succeeding flashback were to be played by different actresses, each younger than the one before, the role would be a cliche. But to see an older woman play all
the flashbacks must have been a bitter experience. Sanziani, in a lucid moment, says to Carmela, "I am a reproach. Old age is always a reproach, a menace they would rather forget." Throughout the play the incongruity of the old Contessa behaving as a younger beautiful woman provides humor; but at the same time the old Sanziani, whether a young girl in the arms of her lover or a child asking for her dolls, never lets the reproach of old age be forgotten.

In Film of Memory, Osborn does not need the theatricality of the modern stage, for he uses the theatricality of the Elizabethan stage. Time and space no longer are restrictions, for the play moves from Paris to Rome to Venice within the mind of the Contessa, and her speeches set the stage wherever necessary. The set pieces used in the production are necessary only for the subplot.

While Hugh Beaumont was making arrangements with Vivian Leigh to have Film of Memory produced in England, Osborn and Harold Rome, the composer, were collaborating on a musical version of On Borrowed Time to be called Mr. Brink. According to an article in the New York Times, Rome had finished the songs for the proposed production and Osborn had completed a rough draft of the book. Near the end of the year, however, Osborn was busy writing the book for Hot September, a musical version of William Inge's Picnic, and Mr. Brink was set aside. Leland Hayward and David Merrick's production of Hot September, which was said
to have cost $500,000 had music by Kenneth Jacobson and lyrics by Rhoda Roberts. Logan, who had directed the original production of Picnic for the Theatre Guild as well as the screen adaptation, directed the production.

Scheduled to open in New York at the Alvin Theatre on October 20, 1965, after a tryout tour, Hot September had trouble in New Haven and closed in Boston. According to Osborn:

Hot September didn't turn out with the dignity that the play had. They kept trying to make it a show piece. I wanted to keep the story line going and you can't do that with a musical. There's a dialogue and then you have to entertain. I didn't go along with that entertainment thing. The whole thing was filled with kids hanging from the rafters. It didn't make any sense at all.

The production numbers were the major reason for the loss of dignity in Hot September that Osborn mentions. The lyrics fit neither Inge's story nor his characters: the diction of Picnic had been Midwestern; the diction of Hot September, lower West side. The musical opens with a production number called "Delilah," sung by a group of teenage boys led by Bomber, Beano, and Rubberneck.

NEWSBOY

Hey, Delilah

BEANO

Hey, Delilah

BOMBER

Hey, Delilah
NEWSBOY, BOMBER, BEANO

Hey, Delilah
Say, Delilah
Have a heart, come out and play, Delilah
Let me see that beautiful face.
If you got the time,
I'll find the place!

RUBBERNECK

Kiss me

BEANO

Squeeze me

BOMBER

I can be had

GUYS

Give the boys a break
We got it bad!

MILLIE

Face it, you jerks. You wouldn't know what to do if she let you in.

BOMBER

Oh, yeah . . .
I'd leap up the stairs to her bedroom

RUBBERNECK

Bang down the door

BEANO

She'd writhe on the floor screeching with ecstasy!...

In Inge's play Bomber had one line that revealed that the whole town knew about Hal and Madge. The fact that Millie was his antagonist in the play made him appear harmless.
of Elinor Frost's, Robert Frost's wife. Whenever Frost was asked what his wife thought of his poetry, he replied, 'Oh, she puts it in its place.' My mother was like any other preacher's wife at that time. It's not a world that's a successful one. She had a hard row to hoe with four kids.

Laura Bertha Judson had been the oldest of the four Judson girls whose people had been farmers in the upper peninsula of Michigan. Paul Osborn remembers her as

... a lovely person with a dry sense of humor—a very good sense of humor. She was both stern and gentle—perhaps austere is the word. She was religious but not religious the way my father was—not devout. In my later years I don't remember going to church much except when we kind of had to. We'd all file in—sometimes just kind of a show, you know.

When the Osborns had settled in Kalamazoo in 1902, Laura Osborn and her children frequently visited her two married sisters who lived side by side a few blocks away. Her father lived with one sister, and her unmarried sister lived with the other. The Reverend Edwin Osborn rarely accompanied her on these visits, for he found his in-laws dull and insipid.

We used to go down there a lot when I was a kid. I remember I used to keep bumping my head on their crystal chandeliers, and you couldn't go near the rubber plant that came up so high it almost blew the room out.

My father hated them. They were basically farm people. They sat on the porch all day and gossiped about each other. That Arry—Thor thing. There was a hell of a lot more going on there than I let on in the play. I knew about that as a child. We all did.

The "Arry—Thor thing" was a choice bit of gossip about
BOMBER: Hey, Madge! Wanta go dancin'? Let me be next, Madge!
MILLIE: You shut up, crazy!
BOMBER: My brother seen 'em parked under the bridge. Alan Seymour was looking for them all over town. She always put on a lot of airs, but I knew she liked guys.
MILLIE: Some day I'm really gonna kill that ornery bastard.

The expansion of Bomber's role in the musical brought crudity into the dialogue. Surrounded by his gang, he confronts Hal during a production number, Hal hits him, and a brawl follows. In the musical the diction and the position of the scene between two production numbers expand the brief moment in Inge's play into a crisis. Bomber's being the leader of a gang and his confrontation with Hal make him appear to be a "tough" rather than a "tough kid."

BOMBER: Hey, look who's here! How are you. Great Big Lover Boy!
(The dancing stops suddenly. There is a menacing something in the air. JUANITA giggles)
HAL: Hi, kid.
BOMBER: Don't be in a rush. We all want to look at you! Hey, fellows, we want to hear all about it, don't we? How is she? Any good? We thought we'd all take turns if you could give her a good recommendation.
HAL: I don't get you.
BOMBER: Oh, sure you do! You and Madge? Under the bridge? Come on, tell us! Does she put it out lady-like to--
(HAL, angry, starts toward him)
We want to know, don't we, fellows? We always knew Madge liked guys--but none of us got there--at least not up to now. You've opened up new territory.
(Suddenly HAL swings at BOMBER. A fight ensues)12

In order to keep the production numbers at appropriate intervals in the musical and keep the gangs off the
Owens' porch for two acts, the locale had to be changed frequently during the production. This change of locale put a focus on Hal, the only character in the play who has the freedom to be where the chorus is. Consequently the focus is taken off the women, where it was in Inge's play, and put on Hal and the chorus. The shifts in locale also destroy the juxtaposition that Inge worked out so carefully in his play.

The musical opens, as did the play, in the yards of two small houses in a small Kansas town. The scene then shifts to the locker room at the pool.

The lights dim to BLACKOUT as the ORCHESTRA blasts an electronic chord. The stage starts to turn. BOYS in bathing suits come by, chasing each other, snapping at each other with towels. There are yells and scuffles and violent threats as the ORCHESTRA continues with electronic shocks of music.13

In a matter of eight pages, the scene shifts to the pool.

As the scene changes, the stage is filled with a swarm of young people in bathing suits, engaging in sports and acrobatics around a swimming pool. A beach ball is being tossed; some boys are walking on their hands with girls admiring them. There is the usual chase, with someone trying to avoid being pushed in the pool. JUANITA BADGER is parading in a bikini, to admiration and shock.

Stage right is a platform with a diving board pointing offstage.

Center Stage, and dividing two playing areas, is a lifeguard's tower, with a LIFEGUARD seated talking to a couple of GIRLS who have climbed up and are kidding with him.

MADGE is lying under a beach umbrella.14
After a song sung by Hal, Alan, and the "Kids,"

THEY go into a wild, rebellious, defiant dance. THE BOYS on the trampoline bounce more daringly, the 'cage' dancers perform on the diving platforms. Athletics, handsprings, etc.

There is an almost savage feeling as THE STAGE starts turning to--the houses.  

In act 2, Hal, after leaving Madge at the house, goes to the pizza parlor where he joins the chorus for the number "I Got It Made."

A PIZZA JOINT
A group of young people are watching the PIZZA BOY throw his dough into the air, spinning it skillfully. Each time it goes up into the air a shout goes up. They chant and yell at him, 'higher—higher—higher!'
Several of the booths are filled with amorous couples.

At the final curtain the front porches slide off, "opening up to a full vista of the countryside as MADGE walks, with MUSIC rising, her head held high." Hot September, the last adaptation that Osborn has done, became another show piece like The World of Suzie Wong. Osborn's dialogue had closely followed the intent of Inge's and, whenever the play settled down in the front yard of the Owens' place, gave credence to the fact that Hot September was a musical version of Inge's Picnic.

Perhaps Osborn thought that a musical did not have to sacrifice its plot values for the sake of entertainment, for, according to an article in the New York Times, he was contemplating another one even before Hotbed opened.
Whatever the outcome of *Hot September* . . .
Paul Osborn evidently will still be a busy man.
Mr. Osborn . . . has another musical in mind,
this one based on *Maiden Voyage* shown here in
1957 [sic]. . . . He's also contemplating
another treatment for *La Contessa*, in which
Vivien Leigh appeared in England, and he has
finished the first act of a new comedy. 18

Although he had written the first act of a new
comed y *Come Out, I Know You're There* before *Hot September*
had opened, Osborn did not complete it until 1968, and for
a time Leland Hayward was interested in producing it with
Henry Fonda in the leading role. The style of the play is
a mixture of expressionistic devices, absurdism, and realis­

A square of light on the stage. Larry Brown's room.
It is late afternoon. LARRY sits at the typewriter,
thinking. Near him sits the FRIEND, watching him.
The FRIEND is dressed exactly like LARRY, to the last
detail.

LARRY never addresses the FRIEND directly. It is as
though HE were talking to himself.
LARRY: What does a guy like me do?
FRIEND: I know what you could do! Of course, you
wouldn't go for it at first—you're such a Puritan
—but you'd be surprised the number of guys your
age who do!
LARRY: That was a damned attractive girl I saw
lunching at the Colony the other day!
FRIEND: Ha! You took the thought right out of my
mind!
LARRY: Seemed to be sort of looking at me, too!
FRIEND: Looking at you? She couldn't take her
eyes off you!
LARRY: Oh, I'm imagining that! Why should she look
at me?
FRIEND: Because you're attractive--glamorous--famous--why, you could have had that girl as easy as--
LARRY: Now what the hell am I thinking of!
FRIEND: I know what you were thinking of then!
That's why you got her name and address from the bartender. Waldorf-Strand, wasn't it?
LARRY: I've got a wife and kid and--
FRIEND: So what? Now don't give up this idea too quickly!
LARRY: The whole thing's idiotic!19

When Brown at last is willing to admit the possibility of such a presence and such an influence, he is able to both see and hear The Friend.

LARRY: I'm alone. You might as well come out. I know you're there.
FRIEND: Naturally. Where else would I be?
LARRY: I've been doing a lot of thinking.
FRIEND: Going to let me in on it?
LARRY: Yes, I'm going to let you in on it.--Priscilla was never the answer.
FRIEND: Answer to what?
LARRY: Anything. She never filled up any of the empty space.
FRIEND: What space is that?
LARRY: Rachel was never the answer.
FRIEND: I swear I think you've gone out of your mind--
LARRY: And Ruth was never the answer either. Love, marriage, kids--none of them really does the trick. You can't suck life out of one another! It's got to be yourself--alone! Your own self that you live with! That's the crux of it! No--Priscilla, Rachel, Ruth--none of them is the answer!
FRIEND: You're talking in riddles. All right, I'll play along! Who is the answer?
LARRY: You, you bastard!20

Seeing and hearing are all, for Brown struggles with The Friend, defeats him, and learns to control him. Another expressionistic device Osborn uses is a nameless, dehumanized character who speaks in clipped sentences and repeats the phrase "That is correct."
(The lights go up on: The Entrance to Eternity. A MAN sits at a desk, papers before him. HE looks up)

MAN: Next please.

(LARRY comes to the desk nervously)

Heaven on your left—hell on your right.

LARRY: You mean that door leads to Heaven—and that one to Hell?

MAN: That is correct. Please don't take too long. There are others waiting.

LARRY: But—what do I do?

MAN: You go through one of them.

LARRY: You mean—I have to make a choice.

MAN: That is correct.21

A similar device is used at the airport where a mechanical voice named The Announcing Speaker calls off flights throughout the dialogue.

(Lights go up on AIRPORT: INFORMATION DESK

LARRY: sits there waiting. GEORGE sits next to him. Every little while, GEORGE turns and looks LARRY over. You have the feeling of people going to their planes in the surrounding darkness.)22

Toward the end of the scene The Announcing Speaker calls: "Special Flight Number 230 now loading for Bagdad, Singapore, Calcutta, Babylon, Tyre, Sodom, Gomorrah and points earlier."23

The speeches that the character Priscilla makes are typical of absurdist drama: cliché-laden, extremely long, and illogical.

Noise of shouting, timbers falling, crowds surging, sirens, flashes of flame.

PRISCILLA--
She sits calm and self-possessed

PRISCILLA: I always knew I would be calm in the face of death. Even as a child I was never frantic. I was always cool and self-possessed and took things as they came. When I was seven, and word arrived that my father had been captured and eaten by a tribe of
inoffensive yet uncultured aboriginal gourmets in the depths of Africa, I am told that I said to my mother, 'Stop your hysterics, Mother. There are worse things than to be eaten in the line of one's work.' -- Not that I welcome death! Far from it! I love life! I adore it! I have always taken it to my breast and lived it to the fullest, as it has come to me! . . . but--here I am trapped on the sixth floor of the Waldorf in New York City--and the hotel seems to be burning. My screams have not been heard--a fallen beam blocks the door--Room Service doesn't answer. What am I to do? Run around in circles? Tear my hair? Why? After all, death is but a part of life and, as I say, I adore life, so why should I hammer at it and make myself unhappy now at the end? I think, perhaps I should read.

(She picks up a book) I've always wanted to read this book. Somehow I missed it all through Vassar and the Sorbonne--well, I'll get as far as I can.

(The telephone rings) Oh, how nice! Hello--Oh, hello, Michael! How sweet of you to call,--Tonight? Oh, I'd love to but I'm afraid I can't make it--! No, No, it isn't that! You know I'd love to go but I'm trapped here in my living room in the hotel--and it's burning.--Oh, you couldn't possibly get here in time! Yes, I had a very pleasant two weeks. . . . No, No, it's sweet of you Michael, but you couldn't possibly get here in time. In fact, I think I can hear the flames crackling quite near now. Do ask me again if you should ever have the chance.24

Not only does Larry Brown take part in the expressionistic and absurdist scenes which are concerned with his coming to terms with himself, he also takes part in the realistic scenes which are concerned with coming to terms with his wife Ruth and his daughter Rachel. At the close of the play, Brown's disciplining his neglected daughter gives her a security she has needed.

LARRY: I haven't really taught you much about anything
have I, Rachel?
RACHEL: What?
LARRY: Haven't really taught you about--Tell me, Rachel, is there nothing in life that you love? Nothing that you respect? Nothing that you regard worthy of love and respect?
RACHEL: I don't know what you mean.
LARRY: I think you do.--You're rude--you're headstrong--you're cynical and you're confused--and, as I say, a lot of it is my fault.
RACHEL: I don't know what you mean.
LARRY: I've ducked--I've run--I've been afraid to make a scene with you because I've wanted things to be peaceful--I've tried to paint a rosy picture of things for you--when everything isn't rosy by a long shot--and you've seen through it all. You do know what I'm talking about, don't you?
RACHEL: Maybe.
LARRY: Okay. You're fifteen years old, Rachel. I have legal rights over you until you're eighteen. That's three years. Rachel, I'm moving in.
RACHEL: What?
LARRY: Things are going to change. For three years you're going to listen to me--after that I hope maybe you'll want to. But one thing at a time. All we can decide now is that you're going back to school Monday morning--and you're not going to think of quitting high school again. You hear me?
RACHEL: I hear you.25

The following dialogue, in which Larry and Ruth resolve their differences, recalls certain dialogues in Morning's at Seven: the dialogue in which Esther Crampton tells her husband David she is beginning to like the idea of being on the second floor and the dialogue in which Esther tells Carl Bolton that everyone has "Where-am-I" spells.

RUTH: I heard you go out. The thought went through my mind, 'Maybe he's leaving for good! Maybe he'll never be back!'
LARRY: Oh?
RUTH: I was in a panic--I was miserable--.
LARRY: I'm sorry, Ruth, I--
RUTH: --really miserable for all of twenty minutes.
LARRY: Twenty minutes?
RUTH: I didn't time it--but about twenty, I should say--and then I caught myself up short and--well, you know the first thing I decided to do?
LARRY: What?
RUTH: I decided--if you didn't come back--I'd have that sofa re-upholstered. I've always hated that pattern.
LARRY: This is nothing to joke about!
RUTH: I'm not joking! I'm trying to tell you I can get along without you just as well as you can without me! I planned out a whole life without you . . . and it wasn't too bad--in fact, there were a lot of things in it more desirable than there are now.
LARRY: What is this--an ultimatum?
RUTH: No. I'm trying to say this miserable unrest you have--this feeling that you've missed something--it isn't yours alone by a long shot! It's mine, too! Prick me--you'll see--I'll bleed! Tickle me--I'll laugh! Poison me--I'll die--just the same as you!26

Come Out, I Know You're There is a brilliant exercise in style, for the use of styles illustrates the thought of the play: Priscilla, or fleshly temptation, is absurd; The Friend, or the alter-ego, is expressionistic; and only the family are real.

In addition to a new style for Paul Osborn there is a bit of the old as well, for the dialogue contains allusions to his grandfather, his mother, his father and Osborn himself. One such passage refers to his Grandfather Judson who had been a farmer in the upper peninsula of Michigan.

LARRY: Sometimes I hate this town! Sometimes I wish we were farmers!
RUTH: Farmers?
LARRY: Yes, farmers! Had a few square acres of land out in the country somewhere--like my grandfather did
and I had to get up at dawn—milk the cows—plough all day long—! You had to—to do whatever the hell a farmer's wife has to do—and
Rachel had to—to—
RUTH: Do whatever a farmer's daughter has to do! 27
LARRY: Yes, damn it!—God, you can be irritating! 

Another passage refers to Edwin Faxon and Laura Judson Osborn who had been the bases for so many of Osborn's characters.

PRISCILLA: My father was an archeologist—
LARRY: Really? My father was a Baptist minister.
PRISCILLA: Really, darling?
LARRY: He preached the fear of God. Oh, not steadily —in one place—where he could be paid for it. He roamed the country-side near our town bringing men to God for free. While he did it, my mother and I sat in the living room at home very quietly—so that the bill collector at the door would get tired of knocking—decide no one was home—and go away.
PRISCILLA: How sad, darling.
LARRY: So when I got older, I knew I didn't want any part of that set-up! God's wrath, according to my father, was so fearsome it scared me. I didn't want any part of him! As a matter-of-fact, I used to figure that if I ever had any big decisions to make, I'd take them to the devil. He was more human! —Of course, that was all when I was just a kid!
PRISCILLA: It must have been, darling.
LARRY: Anyway, it all boiled down to the fact that there wasn't any meaning to life in anything my father had to offer—.28

And one that refers to a boy in Kalamazoo who dug ditches and stared with disdain at a writer for the Saturday Evening Post and a young man who found an apartment on Columbus Avenue in Greenwich Village and had "500 bucks" in his pocket.

LARRY: I never wanted to be a writer anyway!
Why couldn't I have been an engineer—or a doctor—or a scientist—or any one of those guys who gets out and does a man's work every day? No, I had to be a miserable writer! . . .
an illicit affair between his unmarried aunt and one of his uncles. Paul Osborn was to use "these tales that you hear as a child and embellish them" in his play *Morning's at Seven*. Osborn continued to describe his visits to his mother's people.

We played a lot with our cousin Kenneth, but we never really liked him. We hated him. I remember when he was older his father built him a house, but Kenneth never moved into it. He never could get himself to go into it.9

Osborn's remembrances of Kenneth became the basis for the character Homer in *Morning's at Seven*.

Osborn concluded his retrospection by saying, "it wasn't bad the way I'm painting it, for my father was a kind man."10 A character sketch of his parents that Osborn wrote during his senior year at the University of Michigan reveals far better than the interviews this kindly nature of his father's. The sketch, a rare example of Osborn's narrative style, pictures the Osborns as they were six years after the death of Judson Osborn, Paul Osborn's oldest brother.

When the Avery's oldest son had died, after a long illness, father Avery had fallen upon his knees, with tears streaming from his eyes, and, lifting his face toward heaven had muttered brokenly, but determinedly, 'Oh, God! Thy ways are just but inconceivable.' And then he had fallen prostrate on the floor and had sobbed piteously. But mother Avery had not cried. She had said nothing, but had been led by the children to a chair, where she had sat down stiffly and had gazed unseeingly before her. Then she had said in a calm voice, 'My legs are all numb.' And then the children had rubbed her legs with cold water and had told her to cry, that it would do her good. But she did not cry; not until sometime
LARRY: Well, I'd better get this---. Of course, it was all pretty wonderful when I had that little room down in the Village---
FRIEND: Oh, God!
LARRY: All sort of seemed to make sense then---
FRIEND: Never knew where your next meal was coming from---
LARRY: Freedom--living--had so many ideas to write about there wasn't time enough in the day to get them all down!29

In the seventies Osborn had ventured into impressionism in *Film of Memory*, the musical in *Hot September*, and absurdism and expressionism in *Come Out, I Know You're There*. His observations on his problems with the musical indicate his dissatisfaction with a form that stresses the entertainment values over the plot. *Come Out, I Know You're There*, however, gives evidence that Osborn may return to the idiom of the Midwest, for allusions to his family in Michigan are numerous. At the present time, Osborn is completing three one-act plays: "The Little Elephant," "New Rules for an Old Game," and a third based on the "Hell Scene" from *Come Out, I Know You're There*. With the exception of the last one-act, the plays appear to be realistic in style and deal with the topical problems of racial tolerance and sexual freedom. Although his last original play, *Come Out, I Know You're There*, is an experiment in styles, the main plot is reminiscent of Osborn's plays of the 1930's. The two one-acts, which are also stylistically realistic, might be indicative of his return
to a form and a style he had used in *Tomorrow's Monday* and *Morning's at Seven*. 
NOTES

CHAPTER VI


2Ibid., p. 38.

3Ibid., p. 10.

4Ibid., p. 69.


6Ibid., p. 34.


8New York Herald Tribune, 5 October 1965.


12Osborn and Roberts, Hot September, p. 94.

13Ibid., p. 20.

14Ibid., p. 29.

15Ibid., p. 36.

16Ibid., p. 91.

17Ibid., p. 113.


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20 Ibid., pp. 105-106.

21 Ibid., pp. 43-45.

22 Ibid., p. 83.

23 Ibid., p. 91.

24 Ibid., pp. 30-31.

25 Ibid., pp. 99-100.

26 Ibid., pp. 101-102.

27 Ibid., p. 79.

28 Ibid., p. 11.

29 Ibid., p. 3.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

Paul Osborn's major contributions to the American theatre are contained for the most part in those plays he wrote in the thirties, a period in which the American theatre either sought to expose the ills of society or attempted to reaffirm the ways and mores of the American middle-class. Osborn himself admits that his own personal nature prevented him from writing plays of the agit-prop school; therefore, his plays, like those of Thornton Wilder's and Lindsay and Crouse's, search for values in the life of the common man.

That his plays are representative of the plays of the thirties is confirmed by Gerald Neales, drama reviewer for The Reporter.

... to put my finger on the 1930's play, I would reach into the repertory open-handed, my fingers spread wide so that I could come down on more than one play. On Odets' Awake and Sing! as the exemplary social play with its urban idiom and its amorphous Leftist solution. On Three Men on a Horse, in which John Cecil Holm and George Abbott caught a tone of knowing innocence and a tempo of word and movement that marked much of the comedy of the decade. Perhaps on On Borrowed Time, the play in which Paul Osborn made from Lawrence Edward Watkin's novel, openly stuffed with the throat-lumping sentimentality that also lurks behind the seriousness of Awake and Sing! and the toughness of Three Men on a Horse.
Although Osborn's plays were representative of the American theatre of the 1930's, they possessed a provincial nature as well, for he spoke in the idiom of the Middle West. Perhaps the only other American playwright who has written so consistently about the American Middle West is William Inge. Inge, however, depended upon sexual matters to provide interest in small-town affairs; Osborn relied upon the humanity of his Midwesterners to enliven the proceedings of his plays. Osborn's concentration on the Midwest is due to the intensely biographical nature of his work during the 1930's. Using his family as a model, he has drawn a host of small-town characters: ministers, brow-beaten wives, spinsters, scholars, and rebellious children. With uncommon facility he has incorporated the colloquialisms, mannerisms, and idioms of the Midwest into his dialogue and yet kept his plays representative of the American middle-class at large.

Another unique factor in Osborn's plays of the 1930's is their similarity to the plays of Anton Chekhov. Osborn wrote comedies about tragedies during this period. The tragi-comic form is also closely associated with Chekhov even though his comedic intentions are not so readily apparent as Osborn's.

The Cherry Orchard has many comic passages, some of them so broad as to approximate farce but, generally speaking, directors have been unable to fathom the author's comedic intention. The reason is not far
to seek. The play, on the whole, is not funny. The characters have their comic side, but the situation is sad.²

The same might be said of the characters in Tomorrow's Monday and Morning's at Seven.

Another similarity to Chekhovian drama exists in the lack of dramatic conflict onstage. Both playwrights have been accused of writing plays with no dramatic structure or climaxes. Mantle claimed in his review of Morning's at Seven that nothing much happens until act 2 is almost completed. In describing the lack of onstage conflict in Chekhovian comedy, A. Skaftymov might be describing the situation in Tomorrow's Monday and Morning's at Seven.

No one is to blame. Then, since no one is to blame, there are no real adversaries; and since there are no real adversaries, there are not and cannot be struggles. The fault lies with the complex of circumstances which seem to lie beyond the influence of the people in the play. The unfortunate situation is shaped without their willing it, and suffering arrives on its own.³

Objectivity in viewing his characters—a viewpoint so necessary in comedy—was difficult to sustain for Osborn since many of his plays dealt with his own family. To become a disinterested observer required graduated steps. In Hotbed, he judged some of his characters too severely and sympathized with others regardless of their actions. In The Vinegar Tree and Oliver Oliver he managed to include a bitter strain in the comedy but did not have much empathy for the characters. In Tomorrow's Monday, he tenuously
held the perspective but drifted into too much empathy with the characters of Mrs. Allen and Esther. In *Morning's at Seven*, however, he sustained a cohesive balance between humor and compassion.

The characters Osborn chooses to write about are also similar to Chekhov's, for they are commonplace, even pedestrian, people. In a letter Chekhov once said:

> I should like to describe everyday love and family life without villains and angels, without lawyers and female devils; I should take as a subject life as it is in fact—even, smooth, ordinary.

And so does Paul Osborn describe Midwestern family life without villains and without angels. The conversations of his characters reveal that they are weakly immersed in life, for they discuss trifling things and are upset with trivial matters. As in the Chekhovian dialogue, however, beneath their trifling conversation lies a subtext that contains the laughter and the heartache of life. A second meaning rises to the surface in their conversation which gives the everyday and commonplace words an important and vital meaning. Osborn, like Chekhov, lets his characters speak and do what they wish rather than manipulate them into the well-made-play formula. He is content to observe. As Brooks Atkinson said in his review of *Morning's at Seven*, Osborn was wiser than his characters but not too smart to enjoy them.

In addition to the Chekhovian elements in his plays,
Osborn also readily recognized the significance of the director, a recognition not generally apparent in the American theatre until the late forties. His observations and comments on the contributions directors have made to his plays are perceptive. A good director, according to Osborn, is as much a playmaker as the playwright, for he should be a carpenter who works with the internals of a play as well as the externals. He has never objected to a director's wanting him at rehearsals, for it is a necessary procedure, he feels, if the play is to be "right." Although his concept of the director has become a truism in the theatre today, Osborn subscribed to the practice as far back as 1930 when he worked with Winchell Smith on The Vinegar Tree.

This dependence on the director, however, has been a drawback as well as a help. In The World of Suzie Wong and Hot September, Osborn found himself working on showpieces rather than honest attempts at drama, for both productions were "blown up out of proportion" by the director, and the script consequently was lost in the process. Although The World of Suzie Wong was a "hit," critics did not mention Osborn's honesty as they had in his first play Hotbed, a play that failed. His dependence on collaborators at times seems to have been responsible for the many dramatizations he wrote in the 1950's and 1960's, for Osborn's craftsmanship and adeptness at characterization are well known. In spite of his unique success in the
dramatization of novels, Osborn regrets that this aspect of his career has received undue attention. He is hopeful, however, that he will be remembered as the author of *The Vinegar Tree* and *Morning's at Seven* rather than as "the great adapter of the novel for Broadway." His advice to aspiring playwrights is "You should do your own stuff."

The drastic changes in the American theatre since 1950 have left him perplexed as to his place in it. His search for a theatre for which to write has led him into musical comedy, melodrama, expressionism, and absurdism, but these later plays do not represent a unified body of work that his earlier plays do. If there has been a failing in Osborn's work that might be the cause of a relative lack of recognition today, the fault is not his lack of craftsmanship, but rather that he has not produced during the later years of his career a unified body of plays readily identified as the work of Paul Osborn.

Osborn says that he has been unable to find a core to the theatre of today, for he observes that many playwrights today write well but their plays have neither form nor thought. It is hoped that he finds that core to which he can make a contribution, for the theatre, beset with problems as the theatre of today is, needs playwrights of Paul Osborn's caliber--playwrights who can capture the mood of America within their own form and style as Paul Osborn did in the 1930's.
Gordan remembered that well. All had cried but his mother, and he had wondered why that was. Had not she loved his dead brother as much as his father, or as much as his sister who had cried so hard? Yes, he thought so. He thought she had loved him more, maybe. Well, anyway, he had noticed later that his father went about praying and attending church as much as he ever had, but that his mother did not go to church anymore, and that she gave up teaching a Sunday school class of little girls that she had. Maybe his mother was angry with God.

But now sometimes, although it was six years since his brother had died, he would come home from school and find his mother crying quietly over her sewing and he would know that she was thinking of her 'big boy.' . . .

He looked at his sister. Now what a funny girl she was! but so smart—much smarter than he! Why, she was only seventeen and was already a senior in high school. He wondered if he would be that far along when he was seventeen. Oh, well! She always studied so hard; and he didn't like to study. What difference did it make anyway? The teacher always said to him, 'You'd be smart if you'd only study and pay attention.' Some­day he would study and pay attention; someday when there weren't so many other interesting things going on. . . .

Ah! this is the one he likes to study the best. What a nice face his father has. It has ever so many lines and creases in it; and there are little wrinkles by his eyes that deepen and wrinkle more when he smiles. He is bald-headed, too, and now a fly is on the bald place. It is walking around, stopping every now and then to twiddle its legs, but his father is too absorbed to feel it. Isn't he going to hit it at all?—Ah yes, there. No, he didn't hit it, he just brushed it away. Gordan smiled to himself; his father wouldn't even kill a fly that was bothering him. And now he is cry­ing softly to himself, crying over his book. Gor­dan always had to laugh when his father cried over his book.

'Oh, look at Papa,' Mother Avery suddenly cries. 'He is crying over his book again.' Then she adds in a slightly disgusted tone, 'I'd never cry over anything in a book.' They all look at him then,
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**Interviews**


and he glances up and laughs whimsically through his tears. 'Well, p-p-poor fellow; his girl went back on him.' And then he laughs again and shakes his head. 'Oh, you hardhearted people.' And then he goes back to his book.

Gordan didn't like to have his mother say things like that; and she said them all the time, too. It was all right for him to laugh quietly at his father; he wasn't exactly laughing at him. But his mother did laugh at him, and his father knew that she did because he always looked up with a sort of apologetic laugh at such times. No, his mother shouldn't do that. His father was a dandy man. He wanted to be just like him... True, his father didn't make much money. Why was that? He had a fine education and knew about everything. He was a minister, but he didn't preach anymore. There was some trouble. Gordan didn't know exactly what. His mother had once said, 'Your father's too stubborn. He can't get along with people because he has so many views of his own and is bound to use them. He isn't diplomatic,' whatever that was. There had been some in church, some old deacons, who didn't agree with his father's views about the minoleum, or was it millenium? Oh, bother! His father was probably right anyhow. His education, he had heard his mother say, didn't fit him for anything; he had just learned a lot about philosophy, and botany and such things, and one couldn't earn big money that way. That was the only trouble with his Dad.

In his youth Paul Osborn had no interest in writing, but he was an avid reader. Neither his father's books nor his library, however, interested him.

My father's library had all the books you didn't want to read. There were some novels like those of E. P. Rowe—terribly religious, sweet, sentimental things. Of course, Horatio Alger and G. A. Henty were forbidden. My father wouldn't have any of that.

G. A. Henty, a specialist in historical fiction for young boys, wrote *In the Reign of Terror* and *With Wolfe in Canada* and at least thirty-four other such novels. The young Paul
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PAUL OSBORN: A PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY.
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read all the Alger and Henty he could get his hands on. Not only was popular fiction forbidden, but also coffee, newspapers, and card games other than "flinch."

Although Paul did not read his father's books, he did help him print them. According to the title page of each of the Reverend Edwin Osborn's books, the publisher was the Sylvan Press, but according to Paul Osborn the publisher was the Reverend Edwin Osborn himself.

I think he made the 'Sylvan Press' thing up himself. The printing press was at home in the basement, and he set up the type and did all the printing and everything. I used to help him set type and things.13

Paul's father incorporated his religion into the daily life of his family. Sundays, of course, included church in the morning and an afternoon discussion of the sermon, and during the week

. . . we were awakened every morning by my father playing ghastly chords of a Bible hymn on the piano. He couldn't play the piano at all, but he did manage to hit some chords while he sang the hymn.14

Since the income from his father's lecture tours and books was limited, Paul Osborn had to earn the money for his schooling, his books, and his other expenses. He delivered the Kalamazoo Gazette, dug ditches, worked in a paper-mill, and ushered at the Fuller Theatre. The latter job Osborn never mentioned to his father, who thought the theatre was "one straight path to hell." Osborn recalls seeing Up in Mabel's Room, Charlot's Revue, and several
Avery Hopwood farces. Although he enjoyed the performances, he remembers that the theatre held no special attraction for him at that time.

In an interview with the Kalamazoo Gazette, Laura Osborn recalled that her son

'. . . was doing outside work to pay his own way through school, and was showing up particularly well in dramatics. He was in several plays and scored high grades in English work.

'As a matter of fact, most of his study seems to have been put in on his English and related subjects. He flunked history one year and had to pay $10 out of his hard-earned funds for a special tutor to make up the course. He never forgot the experience and gave the subjects he didn't like a little more attention from then on.'15

After graduation from Central High School in 1939, Osborn entered a pre-engineering program at Kalamazoo College. His brother Harold had enlisted in the army a few years before; Lurene had graduated from Kalamazoo and was teaching English in Ann Arbor. After a year at Kalamazoo College, Paul Osborn transferred to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. His parents also moved to Ann Arbor to provide a home for him while he worked his way through the university. The year was 1920.

The years at the University of Michigan were significant ones for Paul Osborn, for two teachers there had a marked influence upon him: Roy W. Cowden, a professor of junior composition and Robert Frost, the poet.

I lost the desire to be an engineer while I was at Michigan. That's where I really got the urge to write. I had a very provocative professor there who encouraged me a lot--Roy W. Cowden.
Physics, math, and all that I wasn't too excited about. I wrote short stories and a novel, of course, for classes in composition. The novel was autobiographical—a sympathetic treatment of my family life and my father, mother, brother and sister.

But I think that was where I found that my interest was in writing—but that was before I thought of writing plays. He recalls sending the novel to H. L. Mencken who returned the manuscript with the advice: Young writers should practice writing telegrams. "A very smart remark," Osborn says.

Robert Frost had come to the University of Michigan in the fall of 1921 as Poet in Residence. Since his presence was meant to provide stimulation for creative thought and effort, little in the way of formal instruction was demanded of him. Frost was forty-seven at the time.

I saw a lot of Frost in and out of class, and he gave me a lot of encouragement. He read everything I wrote both then and in the years to come. He came to all the openings in New York.

He wasn't the kind of guy to sit down and say, 'Look, I think you can do it,' or 'Don't do this,' or 'Don't do that.' It was just kind of his influence which was helpful about life itself. That's why he was such a wonderful teacher.

You never really thought of him as a teacher—but as a friend. He wasn't interested in telling you how to cross your 't's' or dot your 'i's.' His influence wasn't like Roy W. Cowden's who was a literal professor of English. You wrote stuff for him and he would criticize it. Frost was just another person you knew. He was much more of an influence that way. He was inspiring.

Robert Frost went to Amherst in the spring of 1922 but returned to the University of Michigan for the academic year 1924-1925. During the years at Michigan, Osborn and
Frost developed a friendship that must have bordered on a father-son relationship--a relationship that continued through the years. In 1930 Frost wrote Osborn to tell him he would be at the opening night performance of *The Vinegar Tree*. In the letter he said, "I shall feel as if it were my own play--I had so much to do with your education." 18

In 1923 Osborn, a graduate of the University of Michigan with a B.A. in English, was still uncertain about his future.

I didn't know what the hell I wanted to do next. From the time you graduate you stall. Life is taken care of until you graduate. I took a Master's Degree because I didn't know what else to do.

I wandered around the law building thinking maybe I'd like law, but I took a drink of water from a cooler in the law building and discovered the water was warm. I thought, 'This isn't the place for me.'

Then I thought maybe if I took psychology I'd learn about people--which was my main interest anyway. But all I learned to do was cut up frogs. 19

In 1924 Osborn, now with a Master's Degree in psychology from the University of Michigan, was still undecided about a career. Therefore, he accepted a position as instructor of rhetoric at the university for $1,500.00 a year. To supplement his income, he worked in the offices of a construction firm building dormitories on the campus. Perhaps Frost's return to the Michigan campus that year was an incentive for Osborn to remain in Ann Arbor.

A close friend and fellow-instructor by the name of Walter Donnelly was the stimulus that prompted Osborn
to write plays. Donnelly, also dissatisfied with the in-
come of an instructor, suggested he and Osborn find some
means of earning extra money. Osborn suggested they write
plays. Osborn says that had he known then what he knows
now, he never would have suggested writing plays as a
source of extra income. But write plays they did.

Their first, a mystery called Jim Prior's Brother
Comes Home was "a terrible thing, but it was a start." The plot of the melodrama is most confusing. Jim Prior's
brother comes home after spending several years in the
Orient to escape imprisonment for a crime his brother had
committed. He poses as a deaf and dumb paralytic to gather
evidence to prove his innocence. During his stay at his
brother's home, he becomes devoted to his niece. When
he witnesses his brother murder a blackmailer, he realizes
that he must continue his role of a paralytic for the rest
of his life if he is to avoid testifying against his broth-
er and sending him to prison.

The production by a local group known as the Ann
Arbor Playmakers must have been somewhat successful for
Osborn and Donnelly wrote A Bauble for Baby, and several
one-acts--"The Clearing House," "Whole-Heartedly to Clotho,"
and "Becoming Mrs. Howard"--for the Playmakers.

From this experience Osborn learned that he enjoy-
ed writing dialogue. He wrote a one-act himself called
"The More Interesting Way" and a full-length play, Side show, whose plot depicted the conflict between a liberal young instructor of rhetoric at a large university and a crusading reformer who wished to make religious training compulsory at the university. That Osborn was writing from personal experience is apparent. Writing plays for the Playmakers, however, did not relieve the tedium of teaching.

By the fall of 1925 Frost had returned to Amherst, Lurene had married and moved to Grand Rapids, Harold was doing extremely well in business on the East coast, and his father and mother had returned to Kalamazoo.

I was getting fed up. I was fed up with the university and everything. If you are not interested in scholarly things, college can become a trap. Too much education for some people can be bad. You can get wrapped up in other people's accomplishments too much. I was more interested in doing something myself rather than in helping someone else. I wanted out.21

Someone in the rhetoric department, perhaps it was Donnelly, suggested that Osborn apply for admission to George Pierce Baker's 47 Dramatic Workshop at Yale University. Osborn sent in his application and his script of Sideshow. According to the Kalamazoo Gazette "competition was stiff for Baker . . . chooses 30 applicants to work under him from more than 400 or more a year that seek the privilege."22 Baker accepted Osborn after reading Sideshow.

When the spring term of 1926 closed, Osborn decided
to get out of Ann Arbor as soon as possible and work in New York City for the summer before he attended Yale in the fall. Hearing that Professor Hildner of the German Department and his wife were driving to New Rochelle, Osborn quickly offered to share the driving if Hildner would take him along. Hildner, a close friend of Osborn's, accepted the offer. Hildner, his plump German frau, and Osborn squeezed into the seat of a Ford coupe and drove non-stop to New Rochelle. After staying with the Hildners for a few days, Osborn took the train to New York.

Osborn says he loved New York at first sight. It was home and he never wanted to leave. After riding the subways for most of the day, he found a room on Eighteenth Street and a job at the Chase National Bank on Wall Street. Although he saved no money that summer for his coming year at Yale, he made enough to live on until the fall term began.

Yale, however, was a disappointment. In spite of the new Yale University Theatre and its remarkable facilities, the curriculum and the students did not live up to Osborn's expectations.

What they wanted you to do there, you see, was the stuff I wasn't interested in. I wasn't interested in the actual physical putting in a stage brace and putting up scenery and all that. I was interested in writing plays and acting—not in acting myself but in casting and stuff like that.

I wasn't interested in lighting. You were supposed to take all that stuff—which probably
would have been helpful. I did get something out of it though.\textsuperscript{23}

Osborn found that he was older than the other students and could not fit in with what he calls the "theatre types." Among his classmates were Henry C. Potter, Stewart Chaney, and George Freedley. One friend, however, Osborn found in New Haven was not a student at Yale. Thornton Wilder spent the better part of 1926-1927 in New Haven working on The Bridge of San Luis Rey. The two writers spent many evenings reading each other's work and exchanging criticism. Twelve years later both men had plays on Broadway opening on succeeding nights: On Borrowed Time (February 3, 1938) and Our Town (February 4, 1938).

A compensation for his disappointment with Yale, however, was the purchase of his script Sideshow by Brock Pemberton, the Broadway producer. Occasionally a student of Baker's did sell a script to a producer: Maurine Watkins had sold her Chicago to Sam Harris the year before. That spring, in a letter to a former student, Baker wrote:

Have you heard that Lemist Esler's Machiavelli is sold to Wm. Brady for Lionel ATWILL, an autumn production? You know, of course, that Paul Osborn has sold as the year closed, a play of his to Brock Pemberton. . . .\textsuperscript{24}

Osborn signed a contract that gave Pemberton the rights to Sideshow and Osborn's next two plays and gave Osborn a $500.00 advance. "I got that 500 bucks in my pocket and I never felt so elated in my life."\textsuperscript{25}

I was supposed to go back to Yale for the
second year but I didn't. I had had enough of that too. I was fed up. All the time I felt myself trying to get out. I hadn't had enough of New York.26

Even George Pierce Baker could not change Osborn's mind. Osborn was experiencing the trapped feeling he had experienced at the University of Michigan.

I remember Baker's saying to me the summer after my first year, 'It sounds to me as if you want to come back and have me as your sole adviser.' And I answered back, 'That's exactly it.' But of course he didn't function that way. Baker was helpful though and corresponded with me long after.27

After a brief vacation at Cape Cod in the summer of 1927, Osborn left New Haven for New York. He found an apartment on Columbus Avenue and furnished it with second-hand furniture bought in the Bowery. His Bohemian life as a professional playwright ended, however, when Pemberton's advance had been spent. Out of necessity Osborn took a job with the Long Island Railroad as a gatetender.

In the meantime Brock Pemberton, who had scheduled his production of Sideshow for the fall of 1928, had hired Antoinette Perry to direct the production. Naturally Miss Perry wanted to meet Osborn. When she learned that he was working on the railroad, she made him a most generous offer: she would give him an allowance so that he might continue to write. Osborn remembers her saying his job was writing plays, not working on the railroad.28 He accepted the allowance, quit the railroad, and resumed writing. After the success of The Vinegar Tree, he repaid her in full
During that same winter of 1927-1928 Osborn met Florence Louchheim and married her on March 31, 1928. In April he took her to Kalamazoo to meet his parents.

Paul Osborn and the New York girl he married March 31 visited his parents here in April. She is a graduate of an Eastern school and has travelled in Europe extensively. They were here several weeks.

Osborn and his bride plan to go to Europe soon for a few scenes and experiences to broaden the young author's scope in playwriting.29

In those first years in New York, Osborn found that

'The hardest thing a dramatist has to face is commercial criticism. The play may be a literary masterpiece, but unless it has the stuff producers want—plot more than characterization—it hasn't the value commercially of a "Rhetoric I" theme.' 30

Osborn has always considered character to be the most significant element in a play. In an interview in 1972 he said:

Aristotle made an awful lot of sense with his emphasis on plot. Plot, however, is not the most important thing. I admit that a play with no plot is boring, but perhaps a play with a plot and no characterization is even more boring.31

In the fall of 1928 Sideshow finally went into production. By October the title had been changed to With Headlines to avoid the impression that the play dealt with circus life. Shortly before the opening, the title was again changed for fear of implying that the play was another Front Page. Under the title of Hotbed, Osborn’s play opened on November 8, 1928, at the Klaw Theatre in New York after a brief tryout in New Rochelle on November 1, 2, and 3.
PAUL OSBORN: A PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Earl Charles Lammel, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1973

Reading Committee: Approved by

Professor Roy H. Bowen, Chairman
Professor John A. Walker
Professor John C. Morrow

Roy H. Bowen
Adviser
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For Paul Osborn New York City, and Broadway in particular, had become a symbol of freedom, both personal and professional. He had spent most of his youth suppressing his rebellion against his father's demands. Except for his experiences with Cowden and Frost, he felt his years at the University of Michigan had been time wasted in cutting up frogs and other such pursuits. As an instructor he felt he had become an observer of life rather than a participator. Understandably, the desire to escape restriction and conformity is a dominant theme in *Sideshow* and most of his other plays.

Throughout the years Osborn has refused offers to take the chairmanship of several university theatre departments for fear of confinement. A few years ago, before an afternoon performance in Boston, Osborn and Joshua Logan strolled across the Harvard campus in Cambridge. Osborn said the sights and sounds of college life brought on mingled feelings of nostalgia and homesickness, "but I felt itchy to get out at the same time. I guess I was just not cut out to be a teacher."
NOTES

CHAPTER I


2 Ibid.


5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.


13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Kalamazoo Gazette, 14 October 1928.


17 Ibid.
18 Robert Frost, letter to Paul Osborn, 31 October 1930.


20 Kalamazoo Gazette, 14 October 1928.

21 Interview held with Paul Osborn, New Milford, Connecticut, 26 July 1972.

22 Kalamazoo Gazette, 14 October 1928.


28 Ibid.

29 Kalamazoo Gazette, 14 October 1928.

30 Ibid.


CHAPTER II

THE EARLY PLAYS

According to the Kalamazoo Gazette

the first night of Hotbed was a triumph. Generous rounds of applause greeted the work of the players at frequent intervals. The play itself was most cordially received, as evidenced by the ovation which followed its conclusion. Curtain call after curtain call was required to appease the audience. Finally there was a call for the author, and with evident reluctance Mr. Osborn appeared but made no remarks. Again he was dragged forth by members of the cast, and finally Mr. Pemberton came before the house. An unusual demonstration for a customarily blase New York audience.

The opinion of the New York critics, however, differed with the opinion of the opening-night audience.

Burns Mantle found Hotbed

... a thoughtful, intelligent, adult, and generally interesting drama dealing with the human weakness of the student body and the studied blindness of their professors. Not always entirely credible in the workings of its plot, particularly in the implausible meeting of the guilty lovers, the play largely overcomes the discrepancy by the sincerity of its statement and motives that actuated its writing by Paul Osborn.  

Gilbert W. Gabriel also remarked on Osborn's honesty.

Another clergyman's house comes under the footlights' scrutiny. But this time a clergyman's house in a college town. This time the accent is on what blank stupidities are committed in education's name, and what duffers are
the deans and dons. Speaking as an ex-faculty member of a university faculty I say aye to every honest word of Paul Osborn's play. Adding what I must as a dramatic critic, I have to report that it is very little else but honest.

Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times faulted not only the plot but also the characterization.

Mr. Osborn is hot on the trail of hypocrisy and bigotry in general. So awkwardly has he put his polemic together, however, that one is never sure the bigotry lies all on one side. It is easier far to paint a bigot in all his malevolence than to create an honest man.

St. John Ervine pointed out that Osborn needed detachment in his character portrayal.

No writer can present a character with verisimilitude when he transparently hates that character. The failure of Mr. Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry* was due to the loathing Mr. Lewis felt for Gantry. When we hate a man intensely we strip him of his humanity, and when we strip him of his humanity we make him incredible. Mr. Osborn hates the Rev. David Rushbrook so heartily that he takes the life out of him, and, in taking his life, takes also his play's. It is clear that he has acute powers of observation. He presents his pedagogues with some veracity because, although he seems not to care much for them, he does not actively detest them.

Let me not conclude with harshness. Mr. Osborn can, when he likes, observe and I am certain that he presently will write a play with quality in it. But he must rationalize his beliefs and bring them into contact with reality before he writes another play. We wish to see people, not puppets, on the stage.

According to the critics, the staging did nothing to help Osborn's script. Percy Hammond of the Herald-Tribune said, "The facts may have been present last night at the Klaw Theatre, but the likeness was often lost in awkward
playwriting and stage direction." Brooks Atkinson commented, "... Mr. Pemberton has been of scant assistance either to the author or the players." Arthur Pollock remarked:

Brock Pemberton is the producer and he and Antoinette Perry have, without excuse, staged the play. If it were not for their direction a number of actors in the cast might seem considerably better than they do under the circumstances.

No one was surprised when *Hotbed* closed after nineteen performances.

The only script of *Hotbed* in Osborn's possession today carries the title *Sideshow* and the address "Forest Hills, New York." The title and address would indicate the script be dated no earlier than April 1928, the time of his marriage. This script, which is the basis for the following synopsis and the source of the quotes used in the discussion of the play, should approximate the final script of November 1928.

The action of the play is set in a small college town in the present. Act 1 takes place in the study of the Reverend David Rushbrook. Rushbrook is a bigoted reformer who bullies his wife Hattie and their two children Lila and John, both students at the university.

Rushbrook, who wishes compulsory courses in morality to be taught at the university, has asked Louis Willard, a young rhetoric instructor at the university, to call on him. After hearing Rushbrook's attacks on the morality of the students, Willard accuses him of muck-raking and making
virtue a hobby. In a rage, Rushbrook leaves the room. As Willard leaves, he encounters Lila, who arranges to see him later. Act 2, scene 1, takes place in Willard's rooms later the same day. John Rushbrook warns Willard that Rushbrook is making trouble for him. As soon as John leaves, Lila arrives. Obviously she and Willard are lovers. During the conversation Lila rejects Willard's proposal of marriage, for she feels marriage destroys love.

Act 2, scene 2, takes place in the office of Dean Slawson. Slawson has called a meeting of the heads of the Rhetoric, English, and German Departments to discuss Rushbrook's charges against Willard and the possible dismissal of Willard. Rushbrook has charged that Willard is having an affair with a coed whose identity Rushbrook is trying to discover. Rushbrook threatens to smear the university on his lecture tours if Willard is not discharged as morally unfit to teach. Although Professor Clark of the German Department defends Willard, the others timidly concede to Rushbrook's demands.

Act 3 takes place in Rushbrook's study. Lila, alone with her mother, tells her about her affair with Willard. Clark arrives to denounce Rushbrook's actions but leaves after a talk with Lila. When Rushbrook returns, Lila tells him she is the girl who has been seeing Willard. In the ensuing quarrel, Lila tells her father how much contempt she has for him. Willard arrives to tell Lila he is leaving and
asks her to go with him. Rushbrook then telephones the newspaper to add Lila's name to the story he has already given.

Hotbed is a significant play in the discussion of Paul Osborn as a man and as a playwright, for in addition to offering insight into his years at the University of Michigan, the play serves as a prototype of many of his later plays in terms of themes and characters. The themes of rebellion, both filial and marital, and escape from mental confinement as well as characters who derive their qualities from members of his family recur throughout his plays. Osborn has said,

you have to look inside yourself when you write right. You have to be interested in the people. You have to be able to say, 'This is part of me too.' You have to see yourself in the thing.9 This statement is true of Hotbed and most of the plays that follow.

According to Osborn he put many of his father's qualities into the character of the Reverend David Rushbrook, a former minister who has taken to evangelism and reform. Osborn establishes the fact early in act I.

RUSHBROOK: I repeat, I would rather my children had the simple faith of an old cobbler I was talking to the other day on my lecture tour, than all the education in the world.10

Rushbrook uses his tours to pressure the faculty into dismissing Willard.

RUSHBROOK: I travel extensively on lecture tours, and I shall make it a personal charge to see that
I, as well as the lecturers under my control, make this matter perfectly clear to the people of this and other states.¹¹

Neither does Rushbrook make much money. Lila describes what her parents' marriage has been like when Willard proposes marriage.

LILA: And what would be the result? You know as well as I: drudgery, fighting to keep clothes to our backs; trying to hitch a star to an ash can. I've seen it too close, Louis.¹²

Osborn has his minister write a religious textbook to be used in the universities. Although The Words and Deeds of Jesus was not published until 1927, the Reverend Osborn must have been writing his text while Paul was still in Ann Arbor. Osborn uses the text as a device to bring Rushbrook and Willard together.

RUSHBROOK: I am objecting to the God-lessness of the present generation, and I am firmly convinced that the university is responsible for it. I am not saying that the university teaches immorality, but I object that it does not teach morality.

WILLARD: The curriculum contains no class in morality, you're quite right.
RUSHBROOK: Ah--you are beginning to understand. But you do not see into the problems deeply enough. Morality is based upon fundamental laws of Being.---
WILLARD: Of what?
WILLARD: Ah, yes. Being.
RUSHBROOK: And these laws are laws laid down by Moses. I wish to incorporate a study of them in every university in the country, so that each young man and woman will be enabled to give them a careful and considerate study, and not be trained entirely in the un-morality of science.
WILLARD: Why not make the course compulsory, sir--like rhetoric, for example?
RUSHBROOK: Ah, my dear young man, that is exactly the point. It must be made compulsory.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the devoted cooperation and effort of my wife, Kathleen; the persistence, encouragement, and advice of Professor Roy H. Bowen of The Ohio State University; and the cooperation and hospitality of Paul and Millicent Osborn. Without these people and their sincere efforts, this dissertation could not have been written.
WILLARD: Could you not give the course yourself, in this university, perhaps?
RUSHBROOK: I would be glad to accept it. I have nearly completed the course of study here, and wish to get it to the attention of those persons who have authority. It will bring Christ to every youth in the nation.
WILLARD: You mean Moses.
RUSHBROOK: Moses and Christ preached the same doctrine, sir. 

Edwin Osborn's literal interpretation of the Bible is indicated in David Rushbrook's interpretation of the doctrines of Moses and Jesus.

Osborn's description of his family life—"it was awfully strict too—in a religious way"—applies as well to the Rushbrook family life. Rushbrook attempts to keep a tight hold upon his children to keep them from temptation.

HATTIE: . . . I should think you'd be proud of them, the way they're doing.
RUSHBROOK: If I could take a worldly view of the matter, as you seem to, I might. From a worldly standpoint, they are fine—fine—. But they have no spiritual stamina, no moral fibre—and how could you expect them to have, under the tutelage of such men as teach here? They can destroy in a year what it has taken me a lifetime to teach. I'm sure I've done all I can. You have more influence with them than I have.
HATTIE: Well, I'm satisfied with them.
RUSHBROOK: It is very queer how no one in my own family seems to think I have any insight into human character. I fear John has already been caught by the things of the world. I tremble for him. And I tremble for Lila—to think of the influences she is subjected to daily at the hands of the Godless people one meets in a university town. However, I am sure she has taken my lessons to heart; and I will see that she meets as few people as possible. Yes, Lila is a saintly girl.
HATTIE: I don't see what harm it would do if you let her go out a little. I'm afraid she doesn't have a good time at—.
RUSHBROOK: Hattie! Do not presume to question my insight. It is your paganism that has resulted in John's evil life.
HATTIE: John is a good boy.
RUSHBROOK: A good boy in your sense, my dear. He is utterly Godless, I fear.14

Rushbrook applies his stringent discipline more severely to Lila than he does to John. This same father-daughter relationship recurs in many of Osborn's later plays.

JOHN: Speaking of spring, Deacon, I've got to have the old horse and cart tonight.
RUSHBROOK: You know the agreement. Ten-thirty at the very latest. It is a very moral car. . . .
JOHN: What is the matter with Lila?
RUSHBROOK: Your sister is the model of womanhood.
JOHN: Oh, yes, of course, I know all that. You ought to let her go out some, you know, Dad. Let me bring around Mike Langis for her. He's a good sort, and--.
RUSHBROOK: John!
JOHN: Oh, all right, all right. But darn it all, Lila's going through school here as though she were in a convent. . . .
RUSHBROOK: John! The evenings you spend in riotous living I cannot help.
RUSHBROOK: I repeat, I cannot help that. If my training has fallen on barren ground, I regret it, but I cannot help it now. With Lila I can help it, and I will.15

According to Osborn, because of his father's continual efforts to convert anyone and everyone, he cannot force his opinions or attitudes upon others, for he would rather walk away than argue. Therefore, he says, his plays do not belong to the school of didacticism as do the plays of Lillian Hellman and Arthur Miller.

Although the character of Hattie Rushbrook is not so well developed as that of her husband David, similarities between her and Laura Osborn do exist. According to Osborn,
he had his mother in mind when he drew the character, but
Jospehine Hull did not play the role with the concept he
had used in creating it. "Josephine Hull fluttered every­
thing she did, but my mother was no flutterer."16

In describing his mother's attitude toward his
father, Osborn had thought the word "contempt" was too
strong a word. Perhaps it is the correct word for Hattie's
attitude. Osborn is careful to stress the strife between
the husband and wife in his description of her on her first
entrance.

The door opens to let in Hattie Rushbrook, a woman
of fifty-five who at times looks much younger and
at other times much older. (It is at once evident
what is Hattie's relationship to her husband. It
is when she is with him that her face looks old.
One could easily imagine her as a young sweetheart
whose devotion to her lover, at eighteen years, was
one of sublime dependence; but, with years, this
has changed into a smoldering rebelliousness and
scorn of a life which had brought her little but
hardskip. It is not to be supposed that Hattie
has any modern ideas as to her rights; she has no
ideas other than she ever had. On the other hand
she has a certain pride which had asserted itself
once, many years ago, when she had realized for the
first time, after all, perhaps in one or two things
she was as good as her husband.)17

Hattie Rushbrook is similar to Mrs. Avery of "Gordan's
Father," the character sketch Osborn had written during his
senior year at Michigan.

Osborn himself is the basis for two characters:
John Rushbrook and Louis Willard. The character of John is
based upon Osborn's attitudes and experiences as a college
student at Michigan; and the character of Willard, upon
Osborn's attitudes and experiences as an instructor of rhetoric at Michigan. John Rushbrook is the only character in Hotbed that has any affection for David Rushbrook. In creating David Rushbrook, however, Osborn concentrated on the zealot, not the kindly aspect he drew upon in "Gordan's Father." The affection John displays for his father, therefore, seems unmotivated.

JOHN: Hello, everybody. (He seats himself with a spring on his father's desk, somewhat disturbing its precise order.) Spring is here ..... (He ruffles his father's hair.) Get up and turn a handspring, elder. You're getting old.18

In Act 2 John's defense of his father recalls the Avery boy's hurt when his mother rebuked his father.

JOHN: You see, it's rather hard with Dad sometimes ... You have to know how to take him, and tell him those things he ought to know. It's sort of awkward, having your family live in the same town with you when you're going to school.
WILLARD: Must be.
JOHN: Dad moved up to protect us, you know.
He's kind of old-fashioned in some ways.19

John, caught between love and resentment, has difficulty suppressing his idealism.

RUSHBROOK: Am I to be told what to do and what not to do by a young--young--
JOHN: God damn fool?
RUSHBROOK: What?
JOHN: I don't see the least difference between thinking it and saying it.
RUSHBROOK: You young whelp, if you were two years younger I'd flay you for that.
JOHN: Oh, all right. Sorry. Let's not fight about it.20

Osborn uses Louis Willard to express his dissatisfaction with education and educators.
WILLARD: As the custodian of the youth of the nation, speaking to the youth of the nation, I agree that unless drastic measures are taken, you are imperiled to being turned out of this factory so many inches high, so many inches around and so many inches through, as it is befitting an American citizen to be. And what's more, truthfully representing the faculty, I don't give a damn what happens to you.21

Concerning the hypocrisy required to be an instructor, Willard comments:

WILLARD: ... I am an instructor in the department of rhetoric, in which capacity I endeavor to instruct one hundred and five potential Rotarian and Kiwanis members how to become poets, novelists, dramatists or what you will, for the noble stipend of $1500.00 a year, providing I am a good boy, and let no one suppose I have the gumption of a louse, the brains of an idiot, or that there is a quart of whiskey on the shelf which is covered most efficiently at the present time by a beautiful volume of William Shakespeare. Believe me, kind sir, these are the requirements to be faithfully lived up to if, in the course of years, one is to be affiliated with that honorable title of professor. . . . 22

Concerning the doctoral degree and its benefits, Willard remarks:

As regards my whiskey, my dear Doctor? Ah, yes—a much better grade is found behind the Shakespeares of professors, because they have written theses on the number of misplaced commas in Homer, for which they have been given the dignified title of Doctor of Philosophy, sir, with which comes an increase of salary and a better grade of whiskey. Do not begrudge them that, Reverend. They are but poor devils, in whom the fire of youth has burned to the ashes of wisdom, for which they try to reap a small profit by showing the sagesness of such a process. What else can they do?23

Willard, like Osborn, feels that education is a trap—an opportunity to stall in life that can become a rut.

LILA: Why don't you go then?
WILLARD: Why don't I? That's what I ask myself
over and over again. My God, am I on the road to
being one of them? Is this the beginning of it--
and the end, a wistful old pedant? Is this the way
they started, and got caught in the rut? My God,
it's appalling! I know them--Lord, how I know them,
with their old woman's back-biting. I haven't
taught three years without seeing through their
hide of respectability. My God, sooner than that
I'd cut my own throat.24

After describing the faculty for half the play,
Osborn brings onstage four faculty members: the cold and
smooth Dean Slawson, the nervous and obsequious Kimball,
the sullen and pugnacious Staton, and the dignified and
exuberant Clark. Osborn must have had certain faculty mem-
bers in mind when he drew these characters. He does admit
that Professor Clark is a portrait of Professor Hildner
from the University of Michigan. Of the scene in Dean Slaw-
son's office, Richard Lockridge said,

He has laid his play in a college town, and in one tell­
ing scene has collected a varied handful of professors
for the painting of as shrewd and malicious a portrait
of hypocrisy and pettiness as one is likely to find
anywhere.25

They are a petty and obsequious lot.

SLAWSON: It would make me very unhappy to have to re-
commend that you find Mr. Willard a position elsewhere.
KIMBALL: (nervously) But Mr. Willard always--
SLAWSON: (smoothly) I am glad you have such a high
opinion of Mr. Willard's work. ... It is an affair
doubtless disagreeable for Mr. Willard; but we must
bear in mind, it is likewise disagreeable for the
university. You agree with me I trust.
KIMBALL: Why, but--
SLAWSON: Will you smoke, Professor?
KIMBALL: Thank you. Thank you. Yes, I quite agree
with you.
SLAWSON: I was sure you would. I have asked Professor
Clark and Professor Staton to be with us this evening.
KIMBALL: (pettishly) What have they to do with it?
SLAWSON: (with grim humor) They are intelligent men, are they not?
KIMBALL: (quickly) Yes, yes. Of course. But extremely dull.
SLAWSON: (smiling) Ah--. You find them so?
KIMBALL: (nastily) But very intelligent men. Yes, yes.26

Their bickering concerns foolish pedantic matters.

KIMBALL: You must admit, Professor, that Lyly wrote extremely--to use your own term--decent literature.
STATON: What if he did? What has that to do with the women's reading him?
KIMBALL: (becoming excited) My dear Professor, by saying that you are casting a disparaging comment upon womanhood, sir.
STATON: (irritably) Womanhood be damned.
KIMBALL: You are saying, then, that decency does not appeal to women. It is heresy, sir.
(SLAWSON is watching the argument with amused contempt)27

Osborn managed in this scene to present a rather ugly situation in a very humorous manner.

There is a touch of classicism in the structure of Hotbed. Not only did he uphold the classical doctrine of unity of time, but he also underscored the onstage action in act 3 with an offstage glee club, which served the function of a Greek chorus. At the beginning of act 3 the dramatic irony is intensified, for the audience, but not Lila, is aware that she must make a choice between her parents and Willard that evening. As she waits for her father to return from his meeting with the dean, the chorus sings:

Fare thee well, for I must leave thee,
Do not let this parting grieve thee,
Remember that the best of friends must part.
I can no longer stay with you . . .

Put tombstones at my head and feet,
And on my breast just carve a turtle dove,
To signify I died of love.  

Upon Hattie's entrance, the chorus sings "Drink to Me Only" which underscores the bitter dialogue that follows. The song sets Hattie's marriage, Lila's love affair, and Lila's attitude toward her parents in sharp relief.

**LILA:** I hate him.
**HATTIE:** Why, Lila! How can you say such a thing?
Your own father.
**LILA:** I've always hated him even more than you have.
**HATTIE:** Lila! You don't know what you're saying.
He is my husband.
**LILA:** Your owner!
**HATTIE:** You are too young to know what marriage is.
It is the duty of--
**LILA:** Duty! Duty! Don't talk to me of duty.
It's what I've heard all my life. His excuse for being a bully and a beast.
**HATTIE:** You're not well. Come, come--.
**LILA:** Don't--touch me--please. Sometimes--I hate you.  

At the close of the play, the chorus speaks for Rushbrook, Lila and Willard.

**RUSHBROOK:** This is Dr. Rushbrook. I gave you a story to print concerning a young rhetoric instructor on this campus—Mr. Willard.
**CHORUS:** To the gallows I must go,
While my friends all stand below
Saying 'Sam, I told you so,'
Damn their hides.
**RUSHBROOK:** Add to the story the name of the girl--Lila Rushbrook--daughter of the Reverend David Rushbrook, of this city.
**CHORUS:** Let this be my parting knell,
Hope to see you all in hell,
Hope to hell you sizzle well,
Damn your hides.  

Two major weaknesses in the play are the characterization of David Rushbrook and the romance between Lila and
Louis Willard. Had Osborn included some of the qualities of his father he had used for Father Avery in "Gordan's Father" into the character of the Reverend David Rushbrook, Rushbrook might have been more believable. With the exception of the romantic subplot, Osborn wrote from experience. With the exception of the subplot, there is honesty in Hotbed.

Osborn's A Ledge, an adaptation based on the Henry Holt short story "On the Plinth" which had appeared in Liberty magazine, was done for Brock Pemberton. Osborn calls it "a little thing I did for Pemberton." There is some confusion in dating the completion of the script, for in October of 1928 an article in the Kalamazoo Gazette claimed that:

Dr. Edwin Faxon Osborn and Mrs. Osborn of 806 Wheaton Avenue are planning to attend the opening performance of A Ledge in Philadelphia between Oct. 15 and 28. They expect to receive the date of the premiere soon. The producer plans to run A Ledge in a Philadelphia theatre for a few days before opening on Broadway.31

Since Hotbed opened November 8, 1928, and the article is dated October 14, 1928, it would seem safe to assume that A Ledge was completed before Hotbed opened.

Osborn, however, states that the story is incorrect.32 The Gazette must have confused Hotbed and A Ledge. It must be assumed that his parents were waiting to hear the date for the opening of Hotbed. It would appear, therefore, that Osborn had at least agreed to write A Ledge.
before Hotbed opened. The writing of the script occupied most of 1929.

**A Ledge** opened on November 18, 1929, at the Assembly Theatre on West 39th Street. However, the New York Theatre Assembly, not Brock Pemberton, produced **A Ledge**. The production, which marked the return of Augustin Duncan to the New York stage after a long illness, lasted a mere sixteen performances. As they had with Hotbed, the critics found fault with the plot.

The plot . . . is extremely clumsy and implausible. That the play has moments in which the illusion of reality is created is due entirely to the competent performances of Mr. Duncan, Mr. Mudie, and Mr. James S. Barrett . . . .

Since Osborn has no script of **A Ledge**, a synopsis of the plot from William G. King's review follows:

George Veranger, a ruthless and unscrupulous business man, suspects his young wife of infidelity with his friend and partner Richard LeGrange. The lady, however, regards Richard merely as a good friend and really is plotting to run away with her husband's confidential secretary, Geoffry Clark.

This secretary steals a packet of money and bonds from his employer's safe to finance the escapade. The money, it chances, is desperately needed by Mr. Veranger and his associates to cover their illegal speculations. It has to be deposited in the bank within twenty-four hours.

Young Mr. Clark, for some strange reason, gives the precious packet to Mrs. Veranger when he meets her at the house of Mr. LeGrange. She in turn has LeGrange place it in his library safe.

When the loss is discovered, Veranger calls a meeting of his partners, LeGrange and two other gentlemen, in his skyscraper office. They alone, so he thinks, know the combination of the office safe from which the secretary stole the
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1951. . . . . .  B.A., Heidelberg College, Tiffin, Ohio

1951-1955 . . . .  The United States Air Force


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Studies in Directing and Acting. Professor Roy H. Bowen (The Ohio State University).

Studies in Musical Theatre. Professor Roy H. Bowen (The Ohio State University).

Studies in Theatre History and Criticism. Professors John H. McDowell and John C. Morrow (The Ohio State University).
packet. It does not take LeGrange long to conclude that Mrs. Veranger has taken the bonds, and to shield her he declares that he is the thief. His partners agree to allow him to go free, provided he returns the money and walks around a narrow ledge between the windows of his office—with a drop of 200 feet if he slips.34

The news of the theft has to be withheld, for the speculation is illegal. Since the partners cannot turn LeGrange over to the police, they concoct this punishment. If he falls, his death will be reported as a suicide. They are aware that LeGrange has a fear of high places.

LeGrange accomplishes the feat, and the partners hurry to his home to recover the cash. Unfortunately, Mrs. Veranger and her lover have been there before them and have persuaded the old family butler to open the library safe. The rascally secretary goes outside to wait in the taxi when Mrs. Veranger refuses to elope until she has said farewell to LeGrange. Veranger and the other partners return, discover that the money once more is missing, and the whole story of LeGrange's nobility comes out. Mrs. Veranger confesses. The secretary is captured and all ends happily, with Veranger announcing that his wife will be freed of him, so that she may marry LeGrange. She loved him all the time and didn't realize it, you see.35

As Osborn would say, he had nothing to draw on in this play, for he did not understand the characters. "There is nothing autobiographical in that one, I assure you," he remarked and dismissed the play with a wave of his hand.36

After A Ledge had closed, Florence Osborn suggested that he finish the script begun in 1927 about a middle-aged matron on the point of elopement with an old flame. She
thought the script had possibilities. Taking her advice, Osborn completed the script during the winter of 1930 and called it *The Vinegar Tree*.

The title caused a stir on Broadway. Theories on its meaning circulated. Some thought it alluded to the axiom:

A woman, a dog, and a walnut tree,  
The more you beat them, the better they be.

Others thought it merely referred to the staghorn sumac tree. In his column Walter Winchell advised Osborn to drop the title. Only after the opening of the play did Osborn reveal the source of the title.

'Well, the explanation is quite simple.' he said. 'When I was up in Cape Cod one summer, my landlady kept talking about her vinegar tree and it so amused me that I decided to use it as a title for my play. There actually is such a tree, you know. At least you can find it in New England.

'About two weeks before my play was produced, someone wanted to buy my title, and I decided that if it was that good, I'd better keep it myself. That's all there is to it except that the title seemed to fit the mood of the play.'

Pemberton, not enthusiastic about *The Vinegar Tree* when Osborn had presented it to him, asked for revisions.

Pemberton had *The Vinegar Tree* but kept me writing and rewriting. I didn't think I was getting anywhere. Pemberton finally said, 'Look, if you think I'm holding you up, go and see if you can sell it to anyone else.' So I did.

I got it to Jed Harris and he just kept me hanging around. Then I met Billy Rose and he wanted to do it. Harris had told me I had written a star vehicle. I didn't know at that time what
a star vehicle was. He explained that you get a star—the star—and you're all right.

Rose and I wanted Mary Boland and Dwight Deere Wiman had her at the time. Dwight then got the script and he wanted to do it, but Boland wouldn't do it if Rose were in on it. So Rose stepped out but not before he took a lien on it. So Dwight did it.

Dwight was not just a tough, theatrical producer, you know. They called him a dilettante, but he was a lot more than a dilettante. He was a much more sensitive guy than Shubert or someone like that. 38

The selection of Winchell Smith to direct The Vinegar Tree was a fortunate one according to Osborn. He was a good director and playwright as well. He not only worked with Osborn but taught him.

I learned more from him than anyone else. He was an experienced theatre man—not a literary type. He was interested in clarifying—making it work.

I remember in the opening of the third act the characters Winifred and Max came on and talked and then Boland came on. I could just smell it dragging. I turned to Smith and said, 'I think the third act should open with Boland.'

He said, 'Pauly'—he always called me "Pauly"—I think you're going to be a good playwright. I've been thinking this for some time, but I didn't have the nerve to tell you or the actress.'

I said I'd tell her and I did and it worked. That's half of it. It's a combination of writing and being a carpenter. 39

The Vinegar Tree opened at the Playhouse in New York City on November 19, 1930, and ran for 229 performances. In the audience that first night was Osborn's friend and teacher from the University of Michigan, Robert Frost. The Ann Arbor News reported:

Robert Frost was present in New York for a few hours for the express purpose of seeing the
play and hurrying away immediately after, due to the illness of Mrs. Frost. This poet it was who some years ago, selected Mr. Osborn as one of the three members of the university class of 1923 who would be heard from in due time. The Vinegar Tree bears out Mr. Frost's predictions; he admitted as much in the foyer of the Playhouse between the acts.40

On December 8, 1930, Frost wrote Osborn a congratulatory letter concerning the play.

Dear Paul,

I wanted to say for myself before anybody else said that first night and I did say. Plainly the play was a fine bold stroke—and nothing schoolboyish left lingering in it. I was dead sure your audience liked it. You had them crowing like babies. All that remained was to see how the critics in their profundity would pronounce.41

Neither Frost nor Osborn needed to have worried, for the critics pronounced with favor. Brooks Atkinson said:

Like a good craftsman he brings down his second-act curtain on a line so fantastically ridiculous that you become his servant completely. He concludes his play with a comic thought that amounts to inspiration. . . . Two years ago Mr. Osborn was represented here by a serious drama of college life labeled Hotbed. His frivolity is a vast improvement.42

John Heywood Broun also commented on the line that closed the second act.

When Paula Tanqueray discovered that her former lover was about to marry her stepdaughter, she walked slowly from the stage and committed suicide. Audiences wept at the woman's fate and applauded her tact and discretion in difficult circumstances. But by a shift in theatrical manners an almost identical situation furnished the hilarious ending for the second act of Paul Osborn's new farce The Vinegar Tree.
Now a reformer might say . . . that a plot which includes the possible marriage between a middle-aged man and the daughter of his former mistress is an ugly and unspeakable thing. I would reply that any such criticism must depend upon the mood and treatment. But I hold that hearty laughter is far to be preferred in such a situation than sudden suicide.43

The laugh line that both Atkinson and Broun refer to occurs when Laura Merrick discovers that her lover from pre-nuptial days is about to marry her daughter. She sits on a stool stage center completely alone and mutters, "Incest—that's what it is. Incest."44

The plot of The Vinegar Tree, said by one critic to be a cross between George Bernard Shaw's Heartbreak House and Noel Coward's Hay Fever, is best summed up in Atkinson's review.

In 1930 Mrs. Malaprop becomes Mrs. Merrick, middle-aged wife of a testy curmudgeon. On the afternoon when the play opens her mind clatters a little more than usual, for she is expecting as guests an old flame of her pre-nuptial days, a sister whose morals are a scandal the world over and her daughter home from her first year in college. Since her sister is secretly the mistress of her old flame, since her daughter is in the throes of first love with a college man and since Mrs. Merrick, bored by life in the country, fondly imagines that the old fire may burst into consuming flame again for her, things at the Merrick home are madder than usual. Love begins to strike in strange places. The old flame burns hot for the daughter. The wanton sister enchants the daughter's sententious suitor. Mrs. Merrick imagines herself on the point of a wild and illegal elopement. If this report seems like mere confusion, it is fair to remark that the play is confusion worse confounded and discharged from the stage like a barrage of laughter.45

In his review of The Vinegar Tree Atkinson commented
that Osborn’s frivolous comedy was a vast improvement over his serious drama Hotbed. But the play is more than a frivolous comedy, for, in addition to being a comedy of errors, it is a comedy of bitter experience. Robert Garland, critic for the Evening Telegram, saw through the frivolity.

... The Vinegar Tree is, as I have said, a sustained and sophisticated comedy possessing the breath of bitterness and the touch of tragedy without which a comedy is never quite complete. 46

The bitterness and touch of tragedy that Garland observed rests mainly in the character of Laura Merrick—a sentimental matron, fair, fatuous and in her forties who still retains the aspect of ample blonde beauty—a shade too full blown—and the muddled, unreasoning mind of a romantic schoolgirl. 47

Laura is constantly trying to impress Max Lawrence, the artist.

LAURA: Don't you simply adore Rembrandt? His best ones, you know. Of course, he had a younger period. I have a positive passion for old painters. Now take Holstein, for example. I simply worship him. By the way, someone the other day said I reminded them of a Holstein. Is there anything in it? 48

Max paints Laura as a middle-aged frivolous matron.

AUGUSTUS: May I see it?
MAX: What? Oh! Yes, of course. It isn't much good.
AUGUSTUS: You knew her when she was a girl?
MAX: Yes.
AUGUSTUS: Pretty little thing, wasn't she?
MAX: Charming.
AUGUSTUS: Natural, unaffected.
MAX: Exactly.
AUGUSTUS: Something like Leone, don't you think?
MAX: Yes, now that you speak of it.
LEONE: What do you mean by that, Father?
AUGUSTUS: Now look at her.
LEONE: I know. I saw it. Well, everyone gets older, don't they?
AUGUSTUS: Not like that.

The turning point in the comedy for Laura occurs at the opening of act 3.

She seats herself, takes up sketch, and begins to study it. Takes pose in Act 2. She compares it with her reflection in the glass. Again looks at the sketch. Pause. She pulls her face. It begins to depress her. She shakes her head hopelessly and after a moment is crying softly.

The critic of the Berlin newspaper Der Essigbaum commented that "the picture makes her realize that a middle-aged mutton has been behaving like a spring lamb."

A few moments later Laura, after a moment of retrospection, accepts her position in life with no regrets.

LAURA: Oh, I knew something like this would happen to Leone sooner or later. She's so mulish. Even as a child she had to have her oatmeal so dry. Do you remember, Augustus?
WINIFRED: I think you can stop her.
LAURA: I? How?
WINIFRED: Tell her.
LAURA: (Softly) Tell her--what?
WINIFRED: Tell her just what it means to--marry a man that--much older than herself. Tell her the regrets you have. (Pause. LAURA is silent. AUGUSTUS stares out into the garden.)
LAURA: (After a moment) I have no regrets.
AUGUSTUS: (After a moment) Of course you have.
LAURA: None, Augustus. I swear it on the table.
AUGUSTUS: You must tell her.

By telling Leone about her loveless marriage, Laura becomes Leone's mother rather than her rival.

LAURA: You don't know what it is to be married to
a man you don't love—if he loves you. If you're both indifferent, it's easy; if you're both in love you can separate because your pride will give you the strength to do it. But if you're married to a man who has done everything in the world for you—you become grateful to him and sorry for him. It's a stronger bond than most women are able to break.

LEONE: But, you don't understand. Max isn't like Father.

LAURA: You don't think Augustus was like he is now when I married him? He had everything, darling. Much more than Max. He was the most charming, graceful, agreeable person in the world. Everyone adored him. Everywhere we went we were sought after. I used to be charming too, you know. People were always laughing at me. But after a while one grows tired of those things. You want love, Leone.

When Leone ignores her advice, Laura finally admits that Max was her lover.

LEONE: You mean to say you've remembered Max ever since you knew him?

LAURA: Remember him? The only love I have known in my life was Max. Max was my lover!

LEONE: Mother!

LAURA: He was my lover. (Max enters. LAURA sees MAX; a step to him; turns to LEONE.) He doesn't seem to remember it, but he was.

The double humiliation of telling her daughter of a lover and being rejected by that same lover is another bitter experience for Laura. A wiser and more mature Laura sits in her husband's lap at the close and asks, "Aren't I a fool?"

After the opening of The Vinegar Tree, Paul and Florence Osborn visited the playwright's parents in Michigan for several months before embarking on a lengthy tour of Europe. By the spring of 1932 they were in England for the London opening of The Vinegar Tree.

The London production starred Marie Tempest, Henry
Daniell, Celia Johnson, and Louis Hayward. Marie Tempest, one of Britain's leading actresses at the time, was most taken with Osborn's script.

*The Vinegar Tree* is written in the best English I have ever found in an American play. It is fine, cultured dialogue and some of the wit in the leading character's malapropisms, for instance, is so delicate that it is not always, I am afraid, perceived by the audience.\(^5^5\)

The production opened at the St. James Theatre in London on June 8, 1932, but closed in four weeks.

The Berlin production with Rosa Valetti, however, did well, for, according to the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*, Osborn's script possessed a vinegary quality which appealed to the German taste.\(^5^6\) In the United States, Billie Burke, who had refused the role in 1930 when Billy Rose had offered it to her, starred in a successful road company in 1932. Shirley Booth and Spring Byington have had equal success with the role of Laura Merrick in later years. In 1933 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer filmed *The Vinegar Tree* under the title of *Should Ladies Behave?* with Lionel Barrymore and Alice Brady and a screenplay written by Sam and Bella Spewack.

After the London opening the Osborns travelled to Italy where he was to write a new play for Marie Tempest.\(^5^7\) Although Osborn does not recall starting another play for Miss Tempest, it may be that the new Tempest play was Osborn's next comedy *Perhaps We Are*, for the comedy follows the formula used in *The Vinegar Tree*. As in *The Vinegar*
Tree, the story concerns weekend guests at the country home of a scatter-brained matron. Another young lady wishes to marry for reasons other than love, and a young man will not marry even if he is in love. In The Vinegar Tree a consistently interrupted game of "twenty-questions" provided much humor; in Perhaps We Are a game of bridge serves the same purpose. Since the comedy is in the vein of The Vinegar Tree which Miss Tempest liked and the leading role is another frivolous woman, a part Miss Tempest did so well, there is reason to suspect that the play Osborn began in Italy was Perhaps We Are.

Before the Broadway opening, Perhaps We Are had a tryout run at Southhampton Memorial Hall on Long Island during the summer of 1933. Under the title of Oliver Oliver the new comedy opened at the Playhouse on January 5, 1934, and ran for only eleven performances.

Again Dwight Deere Wiman had produced Osborn's play and, according to Osborn, both the men missed Winchell Smith. Oliver Oliver had been staged by Auriol Lee.

She was not the playwright Winchell Smith was. She was an external director. She merely moved actors around and did not work until the play was right. Rather she worked with what was given her.58

Atkinson in the Times remarked:

After listening to the persiflage of Oliver Oliver which opened at the Playhouse last evening, it is difficult to forget The Vinegar Tree which was visible at the same caravansary two or three seasons ago. Paul Osborn, who has written
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Oliver Oliver, wrote The Vinegar Tree. . . . The new play is frisky to the point of tedium. The former play was vastly entertaining. And how can that be, for certainly the lines of Oliver Oliver show no falling off in facetiousness. Line for line they may even be better. But to this column's recollection, The Vinegar Tree told a story that was more continually crack-brained. . . . When Mr. Osborn strings his jests on a more common framework and falls into the abyss of serious romance, the evening is less ebullient. Oliver Oliver is that sort of evening.59

The plot of Oliver Oliver involves . . . another tempestuous-minded mother whose mental processes have the logic of an aspen leaf. She is Constance Oakshot, self-centered and silly, whose weekend balm is so much poison. After five minutes of her hospitality all her guests devoutly wish they were home. At the present moment her present business is that of marrying her futile son Oliver to the moneybags of Phyllis who loves him. The Oakshots need a treasury. But things have such a harum-scarum tempo in the Oakshot house that before the weekend is concluded, Constance finds herself safely engaged to a dull but wealthy Ohio banker who was a misogynist when the weekend began. This makes it possible for Oliver to marry Phyllis for love, which is what he wanted to do all along.60

The character of Justin Stock, the Ohio banker, is a descendant of the "Yankee character," popular in the nineteenth-century American theatre.

The Yankee was the symbol of the American common man, simple and naive on the surface, but upholding democratic principles and despising pretense and sham.61

The Midwesterner Stock, naive and sincere, serves as a foil for the Eastern Oliver, superficial and conniving. Osborn contrasts the work ethic of the industrious Midwesterner and idleness of the wealthy Easterner. To accomplish this
contrast he provides Stock with a history of odd jobs of epic proportion, most of which were ones that Osborn himself had had as a youth in Michigan.

JUSTIN: And then I was a newsboy.
CONSTANCE: You were not!
JUSTIN: Oh, yes, look here! I really was, you know. I carried papers four years.
CONSTANCE: Imagine Oliver. By the time he was fifteen he had carried papers four years.
OLIVER: That's a long time.
JUSTIN: Oh, I think in that time I must have handled oh, thousands of papers.
OLIVER: That certainly is a lot of papers.
JUSTIN: And then I worked in a Post Toasties factory—
CONSTANCE: Heavens!
JUSTIN: And after that I had a job on the railroad, loading freight, and then I was an expressman for a while, and then a bellboy and I've been a mortar-mixer and a hod-carrier. . . .
OLIVER: Well, what else did you do? You were never a chimney sweep, were you?
JUSTIN: No, I don't think I ever did that. But I worked three years in a paper mill.
CONSTANCE: A paper mill?
JUSTIN: With practically nothing on, you know. Just pants.
CONSTANCE: Did you like working that way better?
JUSTIN: We had to. Hot, you know, around the machines. Oh, I could tell you some fascinating stories about the paper-mills. A man had his hand chewed off once right in front of me.
CONSTANCE: How horrible! Chewed off?
JUSTIN: Right up to the wrist!
CONSTANCE: But that must have been dreadful for you. Did you faint?
JUSTIN: No, I was all right.
OLIVER: He was rather provoked about it, though wasn't he?
CONSTANCE: Well, I think it's all too fascinating. With a start like that to build up to one of the greatest fortunes Ohio has ever known—! And you did all of those things right there in Ohio?
JUSTIN: Yes, when I was a boy. Before I went to work in the bank.
CONSTANCE: How awfully clever of you!
JUSTIN: Oh, I don't know. Everyone works in Ohio.
admirable while Justin upholds the tradition of the East.

OLIVER: It really is marvelous. It's just that type of thing that makes the Middle West what it is and makes it develop the type of person that it does. There's nothing makes a boy develop into a fine, honest, wholesome man as much as having had fine, honest, wholesome work as a boy.

JUSTIN: I don't know about that, Oliver. I think I'm inclined to disagree with you. When I think of the years I've wasted at stupid, worthless jobs instead of developing myself in a cultural way—Now, here in the East, where a boy is brought up with all the advantages—Leisure, you know! Charm, culture! Now, I doubt whether you could find a roomful of people comparable to this one right here anywhere in the Middle West.

In a most naive manner, Justin tells Oliver that a good-for-nothing is unappreciated in Ohio.

OLIVER: Is Ohio really as bad as that?
JUSTIN: Oh, look here, it's different, you know.
OLIVER: What is it like?
JUSTIN: Flat.
OLIVER: Flat?
JUSTIN: Nothing but miles and miles of concrete roads, you know. And you won't like the people either.
OLIVER: What are they like?
JUSTIN: Just like me. (Rises, crossing R. below sofa R.) Not your type at all. You'd have nothing in common with them. You'd die of loneliness. (Pause. Oliver is depressed. Justin watches him anxiously.)
OLIVER: I can probably adapt myself.
JUSTIN: But you'd have to do more than that. You'd have to reconstruct your entire life.
OLIVER: Well—that's exactly what I was thinking of doing.
JUSTIN: Oh, that would be a great pity.
OLIVER: Don't you think I ought to make something of myself?
JUSTIN: Oh, no! You mustn't make anything of yourself.
OLIVER: It seems to be the accepted thing to do.
JUSTIN: Not for you! When a person has gifts the way you have—
OLIVER: Gifts?
JUSTIN: Of course you have gifts. Didn't you know that?
OLIVER: I've never seen many indications of them.
JUSTIN: I did right away. When I first saw you
I said to myself, 'Now, there's a person who doesn't
have to work.' Most people have to, you know.
Not for money, I mean. They can't help it. I
never could help it. But you don't have to. You
can just do nothing. I think that's a great gift.
It's very rare. Your place is here. And look
here. I don't think you'd be very much appreciated
out there.
OLIVER: You make it sound all quite impossible.
JUSTIN: It would be just throwing yourself away.
I think it would be tragic.

In his review of The Vinegar Tree, Brooks Atkinson
remarked that Paul Osborn's frivolity was a vast improve-
emnt over his seriousness in Hotbed, and audiences and other
critics agreed. Within that frivolous comedy, however,
there was a bitter strain that most critics, including
Atkinson, failed to mention. In Oliver Oliver the serious
romance and the rather commonplace plot were cited as
reasons for the failure of the play. The Midwestern banker
Justin Stock went unnoticed. The critics were correct in
their assessments of the two plays, however, nor were they
expected to predict the direction Osborn's plays would take.

His next three plays moved with rapid progression
toward a type of comedy similar to Chekhov's. The comedies
became more serious in subject matter and more light-heart-
ed in tone. Tomorrow's Monday, not so jovial as the two
comedies that were to follow, marked Osborn's return to the
Midwestern character—a return foreshadowed by the character
Justin Stock. On Borrowed Time, Osborn's first adaptation
of a novel for the stage, was a comedy about death—a type
of play that Osborn said was "in his gut." With these two comedies behind him, Osborn proceeded to write Morning's at Seven, which Brooks Atkinson called "a pure comedy in the vein of American folkways."
NOTES

CHAPTER II

8. Brooklyn Eagle, 10 November 1928.
11. Ibid., p. 58.
12. Ibid., p. 35.
15. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
17. Osborn, Sideshow, p. 3.
18. Ibid., p. 9.
Ibid., pp. 11-12.

21 Ibid., p. 18.

22 Ibid., p. 21.

23 Ibid., p. 22.

24 Ibid., p. 35.

25 New York Sun, 10 November 1928.

26 Osborn, Sideshow, pp. 43-44.

27 Ibid., p. 45.

28 Ibid., p. 66.

29 Ibid., p. 67.

30 Ibid., p. 92.

31 Kalamazoo Gazette, 14 October 1928.


33 New York Post, 19 November 1929.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.


37 Kalamazoo Gazette, 7 January 1931.


39 Ibid.

40 Ann Arbor News, 21 November 1930.

41 Robert Frost, letter to Paul Osborn, 8 December 1930.


46 New York Evening Telegram, 20 November 1930.

47 New York Times, 30 November 1930.

48 Osborn, The Vinegar Tree, p. 40.

49 Ibid., p. 51.

50 Ibid., p. 78.

51 Newspaper article contained in scrapbook belonging to Paul Osborn.

52 Osborn, The Vinegar Tree, p. 84.

53 Ibid., pp. 88-89.

54 Ibid., p. 89.

55 London Observer, 1 June 1932.

56 Newspaper article contained in scrapbook of Paul Osborn.


60 Ibid.


63 Ibid., p. 41.
64 Ibid., pp. 82-83.
CHAPTER THREE

THREE TRAGI-COMEDIES

In 1934 Paul and Florence Osborn purchased a farm in Hawleyville, a small town near Brattleboro, Vermont. Their summer home, however, did not provide an escape from the theatre, for during the summer of 1935 Osborn became involved in a little theatre movement in Brattleboro, and during the summer of 1936, the Brattleboro Theatre presented the premiere performance of Osborn's new play, Tomorrow's Monday.

Osborn must have been at work on Tomorrow's Monday in the fall of 1935, for an article in the Kalamazoo Gazette reported:

Osborn is now working on a manuscript of a play of mid-western life and it is hinted that he is drawing some of the material from his Kalamazoo boyhood.¹

The play opened on July 15, 1936, under the direction of Paul Stephenson. Stephenson, the director of the Kalamazoo Civic Players, had been the stage manager of Oliver Oliver in New York and had worked with Osborn in 1935 in the establishment of the Brattleboro Theatre.²

The New York Times, in a brief review of the
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production, remarked on the serious quality of the play.

With a thoroughly competent cast, which included Millicent Green, well-known on Broadway and wife of Rion Bercovici, Henry Pierce, another Broadway player, and Constance Morrow, sister of Mrs. Charles A. Lindbergh, Miss Morrow, playing under the stage name of Constance Reeve, the initial performance of Paul Osborn's new play, Tomorrow's Monday, was given tonight before an audience that packed the summer playhouse of the Brattleboro Theatre. Paul Stephenson directed the performance. Mr. Osborn, author of The Vinegar Tree, Broadway success of several seasons ago, attended tonight's premiere.

The cast gave a smooth presentation of the family relations play, whose serious mood is a distinct departure from Osborn's sophisticated comedies of the past.3

Variety, however, classified the play as a comedy.

Author of The Vinegar Tree and Oliver Oliver turns to the middle west for locale of his new one. Play starts off with an unusual twist for comedy in what seems to be a deathbed scene, but turns into hilarious moment when it is learned that the patient has nothing more serious the matter with him than indigestion.

Author, as usual, has several amusing characters, particularly that of the mother who is content to watch the machinations of her family without undue interference.

Plot is slight and sometimes confusing, with too many scenes lacking conflict or drama. Story revolves around the Allen family, living in a small mid-western city. Richard Allen and his wife Lora fly to his mother's bedside when a frantic wire from his sister Esther informs him that Mrs. Allen is dying. Arrived, they find that mother only had acute indigestion and Esther, humiliated, takes out her resentment on Lora.

Lora finds young John, Richard's brother, an intelligent boy and decides to do something for him. Esther is violently opposed to Lora's influence and tries to undermine her with Richard and the family, but is unsuccessful. John decides to go to New York with his brother and his wife and Esther realizes that she cannot guide her brother's life any longer.
An excellent cast makes the most of the comedy opportunities and Osborn has supplied many of them. 

Tomorrow's Monday suffers at present from too much talk and needs pulling together and clarification. If this is done, it may have a chance on Broadway.  

Tomorrow's Monday might be called comi-tragedy or even Chekhovian. Osborn's Morning's at Seven has also been called Chekhovian: Grenville Vernon, in his review of the original production, said that Osborn had written the play in the manner of Chekhov; Wolcott Gibbs, in his review of the New York revival, concluded that "the play translates into the American grain the mode and intention of Chekhov." Although a chronological listing of Osborn's plays would indicate that three years elapsed between the writing of Tomorrow's Monday and Morning's at Seven, Osborn began the rough synopsis of the latter soon after he had completed Tomorrow's Monday but set it aside to write the adaptation of On Borrowed Time for Dwight Deere Wiman. Tomorrow's Monday, it might be said, was an early attempt at the form so successfully developed in Morning's at Seven.

The Chekhovian characteristics applicable to Tomorrow's Monday are most concisely described by Andrew R. MacAndrew of the University of Virginia. According to MacAndrew, the plays of Chekhov

... have no plots, no dramatic climaxes, and what little action there is occurs offstage; his characters, instead of talking to one another, deliver a series of parallel monologues reflecting their individual dreams, aspirations and delusions.
As the reviewer for *Variety* noted, the plot of *Tomorrow's Monday* is slight. The plot takes the form of a series of conversations concerning the pros and cons of young John Allen's going to New York City. As the various characters try to influence his decision, they often slip into narratives concerning their past and, in so doing, reveal their loneliness and emptiness.

Each character sees John's decision as a means of fulfilling his own longings. Richard, who never went to college, is willing to pay John's expenses if he will attend the university.

ESTHER: I think it's wonderful what you're offering John.
RICHARD: No, it isn't wonderful. If John could go ahead and not make the same mistake I did, it would mean a great deal to me.
ESTHER: Mistake?
RICHARD: Don't you think I regret not having gone to college?

Mary, John's fiancee, sides with Richard, for she fears if John goes to New York, he will never return.

MARY: You see, John sort of spoiled everyone else for me. I tried going out with other boys but it wasn't any fun. John was so much more interesting. And he didn't like it when I went out either. --I never wanted it to get so serious. He was really the one who wanted that. I was afraid all the time something like this would happen. --I knew I wasn't as intelligent as he was and wasn't an interesting enough person for him. I used to tell him that but he wouldn't believe it. And then I just let it go because I was so fond of him. . . .

Esther, too, wishes John to attend the university, for she has used him as a substitute for Richard. She fears
Lora will take John too.

ESTHER: I often think back over it all. Sometimes just as I am going to sleep I have a little review of our life together. First as children, you know, with Father and Mother. Before John came. Our games, our books, our little houses. And then as we got older our long talks and walks in the woods.

RICHARD: Yes.

ESTHER: We were very close to each other then—. And then the time when you were becoming a young man and wanting to go away from us. I just skip them all over in my mind and it comforts me. . . . And now this time— you're a married man and— we've seen so little of each other that it's difficult for me to fit in this last piece. 10

Lora, however, encourages John to go to New York City, for she feels by helping him she can ease her own sense of unworthiness.

LORA: Everytime I hear of someone who is being prevented from making the most out of himself just because he hasn't had the chance to do it, I feel terribly responsible. As though it were my fault some way.

MRS. ALLEN: That's curious.

LORA: Not really. You see, I've had so many chances.

MRS. ALLEN: Well, that's all right.

LORA: It would have been if I had ever been able to do anything with them. But I've never been able to make anything worthwhile out of myself even with chances. And I feel guilty that they should have been wasted on me. 11

Mrs. Allen exerts no influence on John. In her role as confidante she listens to the characters talk of their aspirations, disappointments, and emptiness. She speaks of reality; they, however, speak of delusions.

ESTHER: Heaven knows when we'll see him again though. Doesn't it give you a horrible sinking feeling— in here— when you realize it may be years before we see
him again?
MRS. ALLEN: Some sort of feeling.
ESTHER: And it must be worse for you than it is for me. As you sit here day after day--thinking--. It's a tragic thing for a mother to have a child torn from her breast.
MRS. ALLEN: It was hardly that. He was twenty when he first left. He hadn't been at my breast for some years.
ESTHER: I haven't had a chance to see him alone yet at all. I wish he wouldn't go tomorrow. You know, I think if it were just Richard, he'd be willing to stay on for nearly a week.
MRS. ALLEN: What makes you think that?
ESTHER: I just think so. I think it's Lora who wants to go back.
MRS. ALLEN: I don't. I think Richard feels he should get back to his work. . . .
ESTHER: . . . He must have arranged things--. I'm sure it's Lora who wants to go--. I wish she'd go without him!
MRS. ALLEN: Why should she?
ESTHER: She'd just as soon.
MRS. ALLEN: I don't think so.
ESTHER: Why does he do everything she wants! Why does he wait on her.12

Eight years had passed since the production of *Hotbed*. In his review of that play, St. John Ervine had said that Osborn must rationalize his beliefs and bring them into contact with reality if he wished to create more than puppets on the stage.13 In *Tomorrow's Monday* Osborn applied an objective viewpoint to the same characters and created life-like people. Chekhov, it has been said, smiled tenderly and sadly at his unheroic characters, who are "immersed in their petty but (to them) urgent destinies."14 In his tragi-comedy Osborn framed a family portrait with tenderness and understanding.
In Tomorrow's Monday, another minister's daughter has suffered loneliness because of her father's domination. Richard could be describing Lila Rushbrook's childhood when he says

RICHARD: You can't imagine what her childhood was like! Being kept in the way she was! Father never let her go anywhere without him. Unless it was with me, of course. She's always been pretty lonely.15

Yet Osborn created a character more touching than Lila ever was. In the quiet closing moments of the play Esther, in a far-away voice, says

ESTHER: You know, Mother, I wish Father had let me go out more when I was a girl.
MRS. ALLEN: I wish he had, Esther.
ESTHER: That boy who wanted to take me to the senior ball—when I was in college. Remember? I wish Father had let me go.
MRS. ALLEN: Yes.
ESTHER: He was a nice clean fellow. Not as nice as Richard or John, of course, but—. I don't think it would have done me any harm.16

Mrs. Allen, like the other minister's wives in Osborn's works, had a disdain for her husband. Like Osborn's mother, Mrs. Allen did not share her husband's devoutness.

MRS. ALLEN: Sundays never seem like Sundays to me anymore anyway, thank heavens! (She goes out)
RICHARD: What did she mean by that?
ESTHER: Church, I suppose. Don't you remember all the bustle we used to have on Sundays?
RICHARD: Oh, Good Lord! Yes!
ESTHER: Getting us all to church on time, getting dinner— and then spending all afternoon repeating to Father what we had got out of the sermon. It always used to depress Mother.
RICHARD: It depressed us all.
ESTHER: Oh, I don't know. There was something rather lovely about it. It used to thrill me hearing Father
up there in the pulpit. He seemed so wise. He
never seemed wise to Mother though.
ESTHER: She never really understood him, I
suppose. I think Father would have been a great
man—a great teacher—if he had had the sympathy
and understanding that he deserved.
RICHARD: I think Mother understood him pretty
well.17

Osborn used his brother Harold as the basis for the
classical of Richard Allen. Harold Osborn had joined the
army after two years at Kalamazoo College, had gone East
after his discharge, married a wealthy girl, and eventually
became the Chairman of the Board of Consolidated Oil.
Richard, who had not gone to college, went East, married
a wealthy girl, and also had had a successful business
career.

MARY: Esther said he had an important position.
JOHN: He's got a job. How important it is
I don't know.
MARY: He's good-looking
JOHN: That's a photograph and it's ten years
old.
MARY: Lots of people remember him. My sister
does. She says he was handsome. And he married
some girl in New York who has millions.
JOHN: Her father has.18

In this play Paul Osborn is represented by the
classical of John Allen, who, like so many of Osborn's
characters, is restless and desires change.

JOHN: She asked me what I was planning to do.
I said nothing except I'd like to quit college.
And she said why didn't I? I said what would I
do and she said travel for a year. Of course,
she could see I was restless and uncertain about
everything—. Haven't you ever noticed how restless
I am?
MRS. ALLEN: Yes, I've noticed it.
JOHN: I haven't a point of view. Any values.
I'm not definite. A year of travel and I'd probably know what I wanted out of life.

John also has a playwright's interest in motivation and human behavior. He is not satisfied with Richard's pragmatism.

RICHARD: I can't see that there's anything more worthwhile than something that furthers civilization.
LORA: But perhaps John can.
JOHN: Ideas, you mean! . . .
RICHARD: . . . And you think there aren't any ideas concerning electricity? Mechanics? It took ideas for you to fix up that croquet ground.
JOHN: But those aren't the kind of ideas I mean. I mean something deeper. The reason behind my wanting to fix up the croquet ground, for instance.
RICHARD: So you could play croquet!
JOHN: But why did I want to play croquet? I'm interested in explaining why anyone wants to do anything! The deeper motive.

Although these people hurt each other, they do care about each other. Osborn has provided them with a home life based on his own memories of family life: playing croquet, playing "flinch," making popcorn every Sunday, and drinking sodas at the corner drugstore.

Although many theatre groups, such as the Kalamazoo Civic Players, have produced Tomorrow's Monday, the play has yet to receive a Broadway production. In 1964 Osborn submitted the script to the American Playwrights' Theatre. Although the script was endorsed by the Managing Committee, it failed to receive the required fifty production pledges from the membership.

Shortly after the Vermont opening of Tomorrow's
Monday Osborn began work on another original comedy based on his memories of his aunts, uncles, and parents. He tentatively titled the comedy *Summer Solstice* but later called it *Morning's at Seven*. For inspiration he even returned to Kalamazoo for a brief visit.

By early 1937 he had almost completed the rough synopsis of the plot when Dwight Deere Wiman gave him a copy of a new novel by Laurence Edward Watkin called *On Borrowed Time* and asked Osborn to write an adaptation. Since Osborn was having trouble with the plot of *Summer Solstice*, he said he would try but cautioned Wiman that he was not sure he could do an adaptation.

I wrote out two pages of the opening scene on a yellow legal pad and gave them to Dwight. I told him I didn't know what it was worth. Dwight told me to give him the pages and he'd take them to Jack Whitney, who was going to back the play. Whitney was crazy about it and wanted me to go on. So I did.21

So Osborn set aside *Summer Solstice* and worked on the adaptation the summer of 1937. On July 27, he received word that his father, the Reverend Edwin Faxon Osborn, had died. In December *On Borrowed Time* went into production under the direction of a young man named Joshua Logan, who reminded Osborn of Winchell Smith, the director of *The Vinegar Tree* who had taught Osborn so much.

We had a wonderful time on that one. It was Josh's first Broadway job as director. He had done some stuff in Princeton and had stage-managed on Broadway, but this was his first directing job.
I met Josh and he, Dwight and I just clicked and got along great. He had very much that same thing that Winchell Smith had—that hard-boiled playmaking thing.

People forget and they think that directing is just telling actors what to do, but it is getting the script right too. We had a very good time on that one—it was very exciting.22

Osborn continued with two examples of Logan's directing.

The original actor contracted to play Gramps was Richard Bennett—a fine actor but he had problems, you know, and had to be replaced by Dudley Diggs. When Dudley came out on stage for the first rehearsal, he was tough—as if he were from the wrong side of the tracks. It was all wrong. Josh went up to him and said: 'Dudley, look, just take all that stuff and strip it off and let us see the Dudley Diggs that everybody loves.' And he did. And it worked. It shows that instinctive thing that Josh had. He didn't say 'Do this' and 'Do that' but he said 'Strip it all off.' That was one of the best bits of direction I've ever seen.

Josh directed everybody, you know. Even me. I remember watching one rehearsal from out front and Jean Adair, who played Demetria, went up to Josh and said: 'Mr. Osborn doesn't like me. He hates me.'

When Josh told me later, I said: 'I think she's fine.'

Josh said: 'Well, show it.'

So the next day when she came in through the stage door, I threw my arms around her and yelled: 'Hello, Jean! I think you're wonderful.' The poor woman nearly fell on her head.23

On Borrowed Time opened at the Longacre Theatre in New York on February 3, 1938. According to Burns Mantle the 1937-1938 Broadway season had been lacklustre with the exception of Clifford Odets' Golden Boy and John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men. Suddenly "there was a burst of
good plays": Paul Vincent Carroll's *Shadow and Substance* (January 26, 1938), *On Borrowed Time*, and Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (February 4, 1938). The reviews of *On Borrowed Time* were excellent. Atkinson in the *New York Times* said:

Something blissful has come to town. Paul Osborn's *On Borrowed Time* has arrived at the Longacre, where it opened last evening. If that item of theatrical news did not seem especially important a day or two ago, it seems uncommonly joyous now. For Mr. Osborn, who wrote *The Vinegar Tree*, has made a vastly enjoyable fantastic drama out of an enjoyable novel by Laurence Edward Watkins, and the first night audience blubbered and roared at it in just the proper places. Nothing so original and jovial has turned up on our stages for a long time.

... Mr. Osborn and Mr. Watkin before him have created some remarkable characters and put some hilarious words in their mouths. On the dust cover of the novel, Mr. Watkin, a college teacher, confessed who the models of his characters are. Most of them have come out of his personal experiences. And if they appear to be, for all their homely plainness, untouched by the stale sentimentality of the theatre, it is because Mr. Osborn and he regard them as grand company.

When the awards for the season were given, however, the Drama Critic's Awards went to *Shadow and Substance* and *Of Mice and Men* and the Pulitzer Prize to *Our Town*; Burns Mantle, however, felt *On Borrowed Time* more universal than the award-winning plays.

*On Borrowed Time* proceeded without a prize or a citation to boast about, but it may easily outlast and outdraw either of the other two [*Shadow and Substance* and *Our Town*]. Its appeal is, if anything, a wider appeal and is based on a human response to sentiment and humor that is a shade more universal than either Mr. Carroll's contrast of an intellectualized Catholic faith opposed to that of childlike acceptance of the religious mysteries, or Mr. Wilder's simple study of life and death in a small New England town.
INTRODUCTION

Who and what is Paul Osborn? It is a question difficult to answer, for the critical and biographical work concerning this American playwright comprises only brief critical introductions to his plays contained in anthologies and brief, but incomplete, biographical entries in general reference works. No chronicle of his professional life nor compilation, let alone evaluation, of his total literary output has been attempted thus far.

Since his career in the American theatre has spanned a period of more than forty years, this relative lack of recognition is surprising. He has had ten of his plays produced on Broadway, five plays which had long runs, and five plays selected by Burns Mantle for his Best Plays Series. Two of his plays—On Borrowed Time and Morning's at Seven—are considered to be minor classics of the American theatre. In addition to his work in the theatre, he has had a successful career as a screenwriter. Twelve of his screenplays were made into major Hollywood films and two received Academy Award nominations: Sayanora and East of Eden. Neither has his experience been restricted to the commercial theatre. After earning his B.A. and M.A. at the University of Michigan, he attended George Pierce
Mantle's prediction that Osborn's play might outdraw the other two was partially correct: the original production of *On Borrowed Time* outran the original production of *Our Town*.

Even though *On Borrowed Time* is an adaptation, Osborn incorporated material from his own experiences into the script.

When you write an adaptation, you incorporate autobiographical material but keep the plot the same.26 He admits to putting much of his Grandfather Judson into the character of Gramps. Many of the old gentleman's expressions such as "My Lord and Miss Boopy-doop, you sure do beat the cars" were included in the dialogue.

Josh came up to me and said, 'What cars?' I said, 'I don't know. I suppose the trolley cars.' Josh said, 'Well, then, you've got to say "trolley cars."' I said, 'No, the expression is "You sure do beat the cars."' Well, we finally put it in Josh's way. Years later Josh came up to me and said, 'Well, damn it! You were right. I just heard someone say "You sure do beat the cars."' 27

The character of Demetria Riffle represented to Osborn "that whole set-up of that sanctimonious religious stuff that would press a kid into a pseudo-Christian background."28 One change that occurred in the transfer from novel to stage play was the denomination of the boarding school Demetria had chosen for Pud. Osborn claims the change from a Presbyterian school to a Baptist school was an unconscious one.
A plot synopsis would suggest that *On Borrowed Time* is domestic tragedy, but, in spite of the sentiment and the death of the major characters, the play is a comedy.

... although the play has all the elements of tragedy at its command, it chooses to be a comedy. When Mr. Brink (Death) stalks into Granny's bedroom to take her away, her first reaction is, 'What right do you have to come bustin' into a lady's bedroom like this?' And when, right after the death of the son and daughter, Gramps sits down to write a letter to the parson thanking him for the funeral sermon, he finishes reading the letter with a terse line that convulses the audience.

The result is that the audience associates itself with the characters on stage, and Mr. Brink appears devoid of terror or the mysticism which generally clouds the role of Death in plays. With Gramps they take courage to resist the intruder and scoff at his helplessness when he is stuck in the tree. Finally they are convinced, as Gramps is, that Mr. Brink isn't too bad a fellow and that the world needs him.29

Osborn's script is filled with such moments, dramatic moments turned by a short line of dialogue into moments of hilarity. After Gramps has shot Grimes in the stomach, he turns to the tree and says with childlike trust, "Stay up there, Mr. Brink. If you come down now, by God, I'm in a hell of a fix."30 In the conclusion of the comedy Mr. Brink takes Gramps and Pud, and a laugh line prevents a possible tawdry moment.

PUD: How long is eternity, Gramps?
GRAMPS: Right smart piece of time, boy.
PUD: Anyway, we'll be there together, won't we, Gramps?
GRAMPS: You're damn right we will be! You're damn right!
GRANNY: (Offstage) Juleyun! Juleyun, do you have to use such language in front of the boy?
Osborn's original script of *On Borrowed Time* called for three individual sets: the backyard, the living room, and Granny's bedroom. In 1942 a production at the Cleveland Playhouse reduced the setting to a single set by making a few revisions in the script, which are credited to K. Elmo Lowe, the director of the production. The revision, copyrighted by Osborn in 1942, is the edition now published by the Dramatists Play Service, Inc. Of the revision Osborn says,

I approve of it from a purely practical point of view. If it had three sets like that, it wouldn't have been done in stock and the world over as it has been done. It didn't really lose anything by it. I thought it did when I first saw it. I would probably do it that way now: it's a lot cheaper.

The stage play successfully survived its adaptation to the screen by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer with Lionel Barrymore and Beulah Bondi but not its adaptation to the London stage. To obtain the Lord Chamberlain's seal of approval, the profanity had to be cut and Pud's age advanced to twelve, for the British law forbids children under the age of twelve to appear on the stage. In the mouth of a twelve-year-old, many of Pud's lines were ludicrous. To add a British flavor to the script, Ian Hay, the adapter, set the scene in a British seaport and made Gramps an old sea captain. The production had a short run at the Haymarket Theatre in October 1938.
Shortly after the opening of *On Borrowed Time*, Paul and Florence Osborn agreed to end their marriage, which had been in trouble for some time. That spring David O. Selznick offered him a contract to write the screen adaptation of I. A. R. Wylie's *The Gay Banditti*, and Osborn accepted.

Leland Hayward had encouraged me to go to Hollywood and I had laughed at him for a while. But I was getting a divorce and there was no sense in wasting time. So I went to Las Vegas and commuted. My idea was that I could go out there and toss off a screenplay with my left hand and finish *Summer Solstice* at the same time, but it doesn't work that way.33

Osborn's screenplay, *The Young in Heart*, was directed by Richard Wallace and starred Janet Gaynor, Billie Burke, Paulette Goddard, and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. After the granting of his divorce, Osborn returned to New York and the unfinished *Summer Solstice*.

In May of 1939 Paul Osborn married Millicent Green, a New York actress who had appeared in Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal*, Elmer Rice's *Street Scene* and *Left Bank*, and the Chicago production of Sidney Kingsley's *Dead End*. She had also played Lora in the Brattleboro Theatre's production of Osborn's *Tomorrow's Monday*.

By the end of the summer Dwight Deere Wiman had agreed to produce *Summer Solstice*, Joshua Logan had been hired to direct, and Osborn had finished the script. Sometime during the summer, the title had been changed to
Morning's at Seven.

I was afraid no one would know what the hell 'solstice' meant. The title Morning's at Seven was a dig at Browning's poem. The poem implies that when people get up early, everything is gay and wonderful, you know. At the end of the play, everybody still has his problems. Nothing's changed.34

An article in the New York Post gives a fairly detailed timetable of the production.

Accordingly last summer was devoted to tinkering and tightening, and along about August casting began. Ordinarily that only takes a week or so. But this was no ordinary chore. Mr. Osborn, in his usual unpredictable way, had blithely written his play with nine characters, all of equal importance. . . .

But after eight weary weeks the feat was accomplished. That occurred on October 6. Then with a week out for loin girding and six weeks for rehearsals and tryouts performances, the show finally opened. . . .35

The cast selected by Wiman, Osborn, and Logan included Dorothy Gish, Jean Adair, Kate McComb, Enid Markey, Thomas Chalmers, Russell Collins, John Alexander, and Herbert Yost.

We all had reservations on the cast. It wasn't what you'd call a star vehicle, you see. With that kind of show, you get your star and you're all right. You can compromise on some of the other parts. Here you couldn't compromise too much.36

Morning's at Seven opened at the Longacre Theatre in New York on November 30, 1939, after a tryout in Boston. Brooks Atkinson called the play a "pure comedy."

Paul Osborn, who dramatized On Borrowed Time, continues his investigation of small town affairs in Morning's at Seven, which was acted at the
Last evening. Out of respect for the droll quality of humor it is possible to wish that he had written a sturdier and ampler comedy on a stouter framework. But since that is wishing for the moon in the present instance, we may as well content ourselves with enjoying what he has accomplished, which is considerable. Out of the commonplaceness of family relations he has created delightfully comic characters, pushed them gently into ludicrous situations and, without resorting to gags, he has written genuinely comic lines for them to speak. It is original, simple, generally pleasant and sometimes heartily amusing.

Morning's at Seven is not so much casual as tenuous, for Mr. Osborn is content just to keep the ball rolling at times. But his insight into the gaucheries of old age is unconventional and his humor is original and friendly. At its best his drollery is immediately funny. It is pure comedy in the vein of American folkways.37

Time, more enthusiastic than Atkinson, considered it a better play than On Borrowed Time and "closer to the United States common denominator than Our Town and Life with Father."38 The Catholic World called it "excellent fun and sound art."39 In spite of the good reviews, Morning's at Seven closed after forty-four performances.

Osborn gives two possible reasons for the failure of the play on Broadway.

... Some of them farced it a little too much. You know the part where Arry tells them all that Ida had said she could come and live with them? And Ida says 'yes.' Well, Kate McCombs, the actress who played Ida, said 'yes' with such a long face and with such depression. We had to cut that out, of course. There could have been too much of that sort of thing. Neither are Broadway audiences interested in a bunch of old biddies.40

Joshua Logan, in a series of articles he wrote for Look, gave another reason.
Within a year I had four hits but I was physically and emotionally exhausted. Without my realizing it, the backbreaking schedule was wearing me down—as I understand now—and probably opening old psychological wounds. That old obsession about being too fat now returned. I went on an impossibly rigid diet and lost fifty pounds in a few weeks. I started to direct another Paul Osborn play, Morning's at Seven. On the sixth day of rehearsal I collapsed. I was rushed to the hospital with a mysterious 106 degree fever. After about a week, my temperature dropped and I soon was back directing the play. It got poor reviews though it is now considered a minor classic. It did no business at all and closed in about six weeks.41

Atkinson's review of Morning's at Seven and his following comments on the tragi-comic aspects of the play refute Logan's recollection of poor reviews.

After the opening performance, this department described Morning's at Seven as 'pure comedy.' Very pretty to be sure, but what is comedy? There are at least two sides to that. About a month ago a scholarly definition of comedy was quoted in this corner of the page: 'The greatest comedy is rooted, not in the social order, but in the supreme paradox that man, who lays claim to an immortal spirit, is nevertheless confined in a body and must rely upon the exercise of five imperfect senses for his perception of order, truth and beauty in his earthly pilgrimage.' Almost in the next mail an alert Maryland pedagogue wrote in to say that the same definition would do just as well for tragedy.

And Mr. Osborn's amiable discursion is a case in point. Most, if not all, the things that stir up his characters might as well be tragic as comic. . . .

. . . From one point of view it is tragic that three old couples that have gone through the best years of their lives together should be haunted with illusions or cursed with doubts in the years that are supposed to be serene.

But that is where the personality of the author comes in. 'Life is a tragedy for those who feel, a comedy for those who think,' Horace Walpole said in an explanation that is now classic; and Mr. Osborn chooses the side of the thinkers. . . .42
Louis Kronenberger finds different types of comedy as well as a "touch of tragedy" in the play.

There is domestic comedy, with all the immemorial frictions of family life, and with the seeming moral that not even two houses are big enough to hold one family. There is social comedy, the capturing of middle-class existence at its most circumscribed and parrotlike. And there is a comedy of old age, which is where Morning's at Seven achieves its high-pitched petulant squeaks but also its occasional momentary cello notes: a comedy of age that has its touch of tragedy not because its people stand so near to death but because they have been immersed so weakly in life. . . .43

Thus the tragic elements of which both Atkinson and Kronenberger take note warrant Morning's at Seven being called a comi-tragedy or Chekhovian.

Perhaps the most Chekhovian element in the play is the characterization. These unheroic characters who pursue petty destinies, are viewed with compassion by the playwright.

. . . the play has a solid human base, and penetrates below what constitutes domestic or family comedy to comedy of characters: ultimately that is to say, Mr. Osborn makes us care about his people in terms of themselves rather than of the situations they create, or even the social or satiric comment they engender. Morning's at Seven has something in common with certain plays of George Kelly: if one were to use the cliché word that differentiates it, it would be that it is more compassionate; but it seems sounder to call Morning's at Seven the work of a humorist. Which is to say that, right in the midst of Mr. Osborn's exposing and satirizing of his very limited people, there is yet a vast amount of fellow-feeling: he brings us to see at last how in terms of essential fate, or fundamental desire and frustration, our lives can be as petty as theirs, and theirs every
bit as poignant as our own. . . .

Each character nurses some hidden wound or unresolved discord, but the more he tries to heal or resolve his problem, the more tangled his life and the lives of the others become.

One of the aging wives decides that she cannot endure living in the same house with her unmarried sister any longer although she has succeeded for forty years. When the sister finds this out and other things, she feels that the bottom has dropped out of her universe and that her whole life has suddenly been rendered void. The venerable builder next door, husband of a third sister, is obsessed with a queer notion that he might have been a dentist, if at some crucial moment in his career he had not veered off the main road. An old scholar around the corner, husband of a fourth sister, feels that his wife's relatives have suffocated him all his life with stupidity.

The foolish actions these decent and respectable people take against the trifling things that unreasonably torment them injure the other people around them. In their efforts to heal or resolve their problems, they know not what they do. Cora, to rid herself of her unmarried sister, rents Homer's house from Carl, and Homer is suddenly homeless. When Carl leaves Ida and moves in with David to find out once and for all "where he is," Homer breaks off his engagement with Myrtle rather than leave Ida alone. David, who has threatened to move Esther to the second floor if she ever visits her sisters again, does so when he discovers her at Ida's house.

Their petty but valiant struggling is in vain,
however, for they are torturing themselves for no good purpose. Since they learn nothing about themselves, they do not resolve their problems: Arry simply moves next door, Homer marries Myrtle because he has to, Carl returns to the certainties of life with Ida, and David takes Esther back because a new bathroom on the first floor would be too expensive. Although Chekhov's characters represent all social classes and Osborn's only the middle-class, neither set of characters profits by the struggle.

As he did in Hotbed and Tomorrow's Monday, Paul Osborn used his memories of Kalamazoo as a basis for his characters in Morning's at Seven. Osborn had remembered his aunts and uncles sitting on their front porches and gossiping about the passers-by and each other, and with such a scene he opens his play.

THOR: See anything yet, Arry? Arronetta?
ARRY: (Still looking down the street) What?
THOR: See anything yet?
ARRY: The Davises just drove by.
THOR: Which way they going?
ARRY: Toward town.
THOR: Going to have supper down there and going to a movie--No sign of Homer and Myrtle?
ARRY: Not yet.47

Soon the gossip turns to matters closer to home.

ARRY: Thor, you know what I've been wondering about Homer and Myrtle?
THOR: What?
ARRY: I wonder if there isn't something going on there.
CORR: Oh, Arry!
ARRY: Oh, you can be as innocent as you like but I know what men are. Something could be going on there every night for all we know.
THOR: Nope! Couldn't be going on every night! She
Perhaps this lack of recognition is due, in part, to his refusal to develop a typical "Osborn" play which might have become a commercial trademark. Unlike Neil Simon, Osborn is a difficult playwright to categorize. S. N. Behrman said, "For a time Philip Barry, Arthur Rich­man, Paul Osborn, and I were the only American writers of high comedy."¹ Wolcott Gibbs, on the other hand, has given Osborn the credit for being the originator of "the play of back-porch life."² John Gassner found still another title: "the great adapter of the novel for Broadway."³

His long and sustained career in the American theatre, his unique ability to portray the small-town Midwesterner, and his unrivalled success in adapting novels for the stage warrant a study of Paul Osborn. Therefore, with no pretense at writing a definitive study of Paul Osborn, this professional biography including critical comments on his plays is presented.

The purpose is threefold: (1) to compile a professional biography of Paul Osborn, (2) to discover a core of his work that might be considered truly representational of the man and playwright, and (3) to discover the reason why his later plays have not lived up to the promise of his earlier ones.

This work is based on the scores of newspaper arti­cles and theatre programs held by the Library of Performing
lives in North Lyons. They don’t see each other every night.
CORA: Well, I think that’s a terrible thought to have about your own nephew.
ARRY: Well, it certainly could be true, couldn’t it, Thor?
THOR: Well, it’s hard to say. If it was anybody but Homer I’d be inclined to say it could be. But Homer— I don’t know.
CORA: Well, I know it isn’t. Homer has never spent a night away from home in his whole life as far as I know. He’s always here in the mornings.
ARRY: Well, my goodness, he wouldn’t have to spend the whole night, would he?48

The characters of David Crampton, the old scholar, and his wife Esther, the eldest of the sisters, are the playwright’s parents. Crampton’s professorship was based upon the Reverend Edwin Osborn’s one-year term as a professor of literature and history at Ewing College. Homer, whom Osborn drew with his cousin Kenneth in mind, describes accurately the estimate of his wife’s family held by the Reverend Edwin Osborn.

HOMER: Then there’s Aunt Esther, too.
MYRTLE: Oh, yes, Aunt Esther.
HOMER: She lives up the street about a block and a half.
MYRTLE: And she’s married too--?
HOMER: Uncle David.
MYRTLE: That’s right. He’s the one who studies all the time.
HOMER: He’s a very highly educated man. He doesn’t like us.
MYRTLE: Why not?
HOMER: He thinks we’re morons.
MYRTLE: Morons? Why does he think that?
HOMER: I don’t know. He says we don’t think about important enough things.
MYRTLE: Does he think about important things?
HOMER: Practically all the time.
MYRTLE: What does he do?
HOMER: Doesn’t do anything now. He used to be a college professor. But he couldn’t get along with the
college president.
MYRTLE: Oh.
HOMER: He said the president was a moron too!
MYRTLE: Well, he doesn't think you're a moron, Homer?
HOMER: He thinks we all are except my father.
MYRTLE: Why, what's the matter with your father? 49

David Crampton, beholding his in-laws in a group, sarcastically quotes from Genesis: "And God created man in his own image; male and female created he them." 50 After he has reminded Esther that she will now reside on the second floor and he on the first because of her disobedience in visiting her family, he tells the group to be quiet when they visit her because they depress him so. Thor remarks, after David's departure, that David can be awfully nice when he wants to be. They are more impressed with the manner than the matter.

Like the other characters based on Osborn's mother, Esther Crampton has not been completely happy with her husband. Cora and Ida, on the other hand, have no complaints.

CORA: Well, he's just trying to scare you, Esty! And I think you ought to make a stand against him! You ought to be able to come down here any time you want to. David's just jealous.
ESTHER: I know it, Cora. He gets more so all the time. If he'd only stop talking about his Crystal Fortress.
CORA: You know, Esty, I always thought that Crystal Fortress was rather a lovely idea.
ESTHER: You wouldn't if you'd lived in it fifty-five years. 51

When Carl Bolton moves in with David so that he can "find out where he is," the differences between husband and wife become even more distinct.
DAVID: You see, Carl, as I was saying, there are some people who never ask themselves the question: Where am I?

ESTHER: There are some people who don't have to. I know where I am. I'm on the second floor. And to tell the truth, I'm beginning to like the idea pretty well.

DAVID: Well, I'm glad if the arrangement pleases you, Esther.

ESTHER: It does. I've had more fun last night and tonight than I've had in a long time.

DAVID: Ah, yes. Your games and so forth.

ESTHER: That's right. I like games. With lots of people on both sides.

DAVID: Ah, yes. Well, you're a free agent now, Esther.

ESTHER: I know I am. When I sat outside that locked door a few minutes ago waiting for you two to come out, I suddenly said to myself: "There's no fool like an old fool." And I was thinking of you and Carl. And then I said it again and it suddenly meant me. For fifty years I've washed and cooked and brought up children and now suddenly I've got a chance to be free. I can come down here any time I want to, can go to the movies with the girls--do anything. It's nice.

Osborn viewed with compassion in *Morning's at Seven* what he had heard as a boy about his maiden aunt and one of his uncles. The discovery of the truth about Arry and Thor is one of the moments in the play where tragedy lightly touches the antics of its characters.

ESTHER: Arry just gave me this letter. Do you remember--oh, it must have been all of forty years ago--after Arry had been living with them about a year--Cora had to go to the hospital for a couple of weeks?

DAVID: I think I do--vaguely--.

ESTHER: Thor and Arry were alone. She didn't know much about anything. Right off the farm. She was pretty, full of life. You remember how Arry was. And--(SHE reads) "... and I don't know how it happened, Esty, I just don't. I loved Thor so much. I didn't realize it. I should have gone away but I couldn't. We were both so miserable and scared. We
didn't know what to do. But never after that
time, Esty. Never. If Cora should ever know,
I'd just die.' And so she just went on—living
with them—because there wasn't any other place
for her to go after that.\textsuperscript{53}

The critics claimed that \textit{Morning's at Seven} was
plotless: \textit{Time} said the play had "scarcely a shred of a
plot,"\textsuperscript{54} Brooks Atkinson remarked that the plot was ram­
bling and unresolved\textsuperscript{55} (Osborn, however, had said that the
lack of resolution was the point of the comedy), and Burns
Mantle commented that the play was "placid to a degree, and
practically without anything resembling a stirring episode
until it is well into its second act."\textsuperscript{56} Chekhov, too,
was accused of writing plotless plays, but Osborn, like
Chekhov, had constructed inside a rambling and placid ex­
terior a tight and seamless structure.

Osborn's heavy use of subtext and a musical scheme
of theme and variation have a Chekhovian touch also. The
subtext, or inner meaning of the line as opposed to its
textual meaning, reveals that his people do not talk with
one another but carry on inner dialogues. In the casual
and parrotlike conversation about the Bolton backyard, each
character plays a role for the other: Myrtle appears pro­
per, polite, and impressed; Homer, indifferent to his
mother and his girl; Ida, polite and cordial. In the sub­
text Myrtle is afraid of rejection, Homer is afraid his
family will discover he has been sleeping with Myrtle, and
Ida fears that she will lose her son and her husband who
has been having another "spell." In the Arry-Thor-Cora dialogues both women attempt to establish their rightful claim to Thor regardless of the topic of conversation.

Morning's at Seven deals with themes of marriage, home, parenthood, adultery, and pre-marital sexual relations. Each character varies the theme. The characters discuss marriage intermittently throughout the play. Cora thinks David's idea of marriage as "a crystal fortress" is a lovely idea, but Esther assures her she would not think so had she lived in one for fifty years. During his "spells," Carl reveals that marriage has meant the loss of his goals in life while Ida maintains that marriage signifies cooking, washing, and fidelity. To Homer it means a loss of identity; to Myrtle, a means of combating loneliness.

That Paul Osborn's Morning's at Seven should have failed is ironic, for it is his best play. Had the comedy succeeded, he might possibly have continued to write about the Midwest and its people and might possibly have become the American Chekhov; however, Morning's at Seven failed, but On Borrowed Time, an adaptation, and his first screenplay had been successful. Osborn, therefore, may have concluded that success for him did not lie in original comedies about small-town life. He never ceased to think of himself as a writer of original drama, but his adaptations outnumbered his original comedies after 1940.
NOTES

CHAPTER III

1 Kalamazoo Gazette, 19 January 1936.
2 Ibid., 26 January 1936.
4 Variety, 22 July 1936.
5 Commonweal, 15 December 1939, p. 186.
6 Commonweal, 12 August 1955, p. 469.
9 Ibid., p. 55.
10 Ibid., p. 79.
11 Ibid., pp. 94-95.
12 Ibid., p. 60.
13 New York World, 9 November 1928.
15 Osborn, Tomorrow's Monday, p. 50.
16 Ibid., p. 132.
17 Ibid., pp. 75-76.
18Ibid., p. 72.
19Ibid., p. 107.
20Ibid., p. 9.
22Ibid.
23Ibid.
24New York Times, 4 February 1938, p. 16.
28Ibid.
29New York Herald Tribune, 7 August 1938.
31Ibid., p. 67.
33Ibid.
35New York Post, 2 December 1939.
38Time, 11 December 1939, p. 48.
39Catholic World, January 1940, p. 468.


Ibid.

Theatre Arts, February 1940, p. 88.


Paul Osborn, Morning's at Seven (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1940), pp. 5-6.

Ibid., pp. 9-10.

Ibid., pp. 21-22.

Ibid., p. 50.

Ibid., p. 41.

Ibid., pp. 91-92.

Ibid., p. 127.

Time, 11 December 1939, p. 48.


CHAPTER IV

MID-CAREER

After Morning's at Seven closed on January 6, 1940, Paul Osborn did little, if any, writing for a time. In an interview Osborn, when asked what he had done during a specific period in his life, thought for a moment and then said with a smile, "I don't know. Sometimes we just lived, you know." The year 1940 must have been a year when the Osborns "just lived." He did, however, sign a contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer that required him to be in Hollywood for the months of January, February, and March. During the 1940's he and Millicent spent their winters in California, their springs and falls in New York City, and their summers in Brookfield Center, Connecticut, where they had purchased a farm. They were pleasant years for the Osborns.

In January of 1941 Osborn reported to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer for his first assignment which was the screenplay for the motion picture Madame Curie, which starred Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon. He recalls that the memory of his mother's austerity helped him characterize Madame Curie and the weeks of research at the library at California Tech helped him with the technical data required in the script.
In 1942 Osborn returned to Hollywood for his next assignment adapting the Broadway play *Cry Havoc* by Allan R. Kenward into a screenplay. *Cry Havoc*, a story about the fate of thirteen nurses left on Bataan after the fall of the Philippine Islands during World War II, starred Margaret Sullavan, the wife of Leland Hayward and a close friend of the Osborns. Osborn must have finished this screenplay quickly for, during this same period, the studio asked him to assist the team of writers working on the screenplay for *Mrs. Miniver*.

In 1942, probably in Connecticut, Osborn must have begun his adaptation of Richard Hughes' *A High Wind in Jamaica*, a novel that had always appealed to Osborn because of its "lightness, its undertones, and its fantastic element." For his adaptation, which he finished in the spring of 1943, Osborn used Hughes' original title *The Innocent Voyage*. Although Dwight Deere Wiman had the rights to the script, he relinquished them to the Theatre Guild because of his wartime activities.

By August of 1943 *The Innocent Voyage* went into rehearsal. Early in the rehearsal period Paul Osborn and Theresa Helburn of the Theatre Guild were disturbed by the interpretation of Erwin Piscator, the famed German director. According to Osborn, Piscator was using a heavy, Germanic hand with the script: he wanted to build the set out