

Sandburg's 'War Years' Is Finished

Thirteen Years of Research, Writing Represented by Manuscript

After thirteen years of research, Carl Sandburg has just delivered the complete manuscript of his "Abraham Lincoln: The War Years" to his publishers.

This completes Sandburg's life of Lincoln, the first two volumes of which, "Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years," were published in 1926 and immediately assumed their place as an authoritative and classic biography of wide popular appeal.

"The War Years" is at least five times as long as "The Prairie Years." The manuscript comprises some 3800 pages, and the three volumes in which its publication is contemplated will contain some 800 pages each, together with profuse illustrations and a full index.

It is not too much to say that, following the publication of "The War Years," the reader need not look elsewhere for any significant piece of authentic and now known Lincolniana except for verification. In addition to this chronicle, the work contains hundreds of biographical and critical sketches of the figures of the period.

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Beginning: 'The Poet and The Playwright,' the Story Of Maxwell Anderson

America's Best Known Writer of Verse Plays Was Once a Newspaper Man; Before That, a Schoolmaster

By GLENN HASSELROOTH

Back in 1923 a verse play called "White Desert" was one of the biggest flops of the season. It was an honest, strong-meated piece of fare, filled with a deep insight into human frailties and strengths, but the customers did not like it.

The play was reasonably well motivated; it could not have been called melodramatic, but New Yorkers failed to be more than vaguely interested. They found nothing cheap or humorous about the tale of North Dakota marital troubles, but its tragic consequences failed to exalt them as the playwright had hoped.

The dramatist who wrote "White Desert" was Maxwell Anderson, erstwhile school teacher and newspaperman, who was trying to get theater goers interested in plays written in verse. He was not a success yet, but he had come a long way from his days as the son of a humble Pennsylvania parson.

Married in 1911

Anderson was born at Atlantic, Pennsylvania, on December 15, 1888. Before he hardly knew how to walk, his father had whisked him and his family westward. The Anderson family weathered various pastorates in Ohio, Iowa, and finally North Dakota, where the young Maxwell, at the age of 19, entered the state university. He got his bachelor's degree there and married Margaret Haskett in the same year, 1911.

But this was not what he wanted. He wanted to write—plays—in verse. Until he would be able to get a firm foothold in the writing game, he would have to make a little money; for a wife and children do have to eat. They could eat on the professor's salary, but there was not too much extra time for Anderson to spend writing, so they headed back to North Dakota. The potential playwright had to keep up some kind of regular writing, even if it were grueling journalism, so he obtained work on the staff of the Grand Forks Herald.

Worked on Chronicle

But not for long. Soon he was back in California, where he worked successively on the San Francisco Chronicle and the San Francisco Call Bulletin. He made more money writing editorials than he had teaching. Soon he began to contribute articles and poems to various magazines. The editors of the New Republic took notice, and it was not long before he was writing on the magazine's staff. With George O'Neil, Padraic Colum, Genevieve Taggard, Frank Hill, and others he helped found The Measure. Back in newspaper work once more, he wrote editorials for the New York Globe and later the Morning World.

It was during his days on this last-mentioned paper that Anderson wrote "White Desert." He was not badly discouraged and embittered because of its failure, at least not far enough to make him give up. He returned to his "grind" on

the World, much wiser, much surer of dramatic technique. Much of what he knew he had learned from the leading man of "White Desert," that versatile actor-director-playwright, George Abbott, who had a fine knowledge of thorough theater-craft.

'The Terror' Flopped

Conversations on the merits and faults of "White Desert" brought about collaboration of a play, "Feud," later called "The Terror" when produced by John Golden. It failed to add even the tiniest sparkle to the bright lights of Broadway.

Anderson stayed on with the World. There he became interested in the World war experiences of his co-worker, Laurence Stallings, who was anxious to write of his adventures. Stallings, having lost a leg in the war, was tired of all the pretty and phoney patriotism that had been so fashionable since the Armistice. The two decided to combine the true facts into a play.

What Price Hit?

When "What Price Glory?" produced by Arthur Hopkins in the Plymouth theater, opened in New York the evening of September 3, 1924, the rumble of its guns echoed far beyond the stately palisades of the Hudson. Reverberations were heard far and wide, not only because it brought the stench of the trenches right to the very noses of the staid Manhattan crowds, but because it broke down the restrictions with which all the Puritanical nice-nellies had literally bound and gagged the American theater.

The cynical, wisecracking Captain Flagg and Sergeant Quirt not only called spades spades but hit the war-makers and each other over the head with them. But the playgoers lived through it, just as their British friends had lived through the immortal "bloody" that Mrs. Patrick Campbell had expressed in Shaw's "Pygmalion," and just as the same Americans a decade later were going to endure the cursing and lechery of "Tobacco Road." Not only the religious groups attacked the profane idiom in which the men of the army spoke, but the American Legion complained that it was a slander to the life of the American soldier.

War the Villain

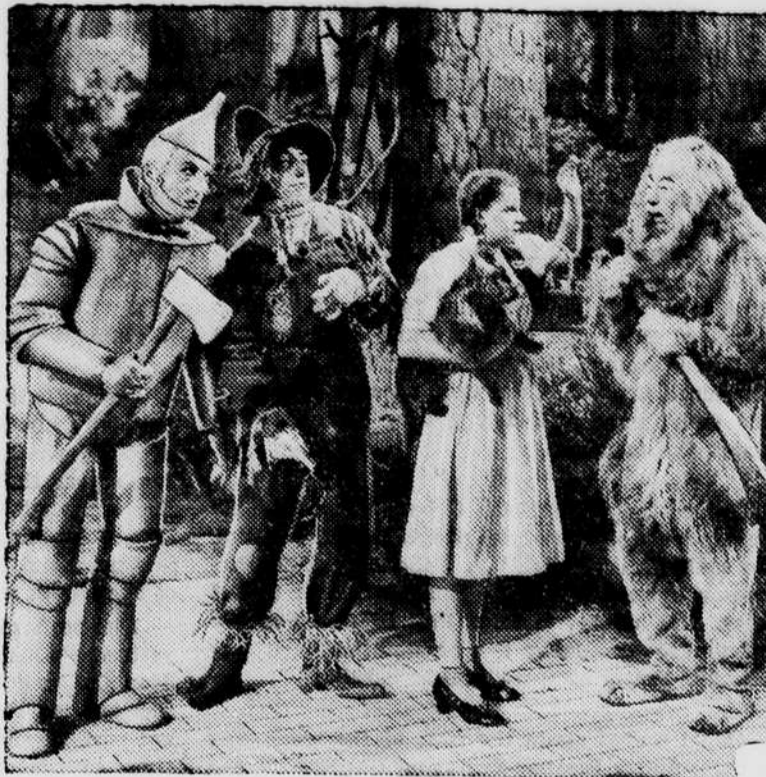
But Anderson and Stallings were not worried. Their play had become one of the outstanding hits of the twenties, they had unmasked many of the frauds and fallacies of the life "over there," they had made memorable characters out of toughened blasphemers, who, in spite of their oaths and unadmirable traits, betrayed through their rough veneer qualities that were fundamentally generous, noble, and tender.

The playwrights had shown up war as the real villain of the piece. Its outstanding good points were two: 1) the revelation of the war business; and 2) the breakdown of the unwritten rules for stage dialogue. In the words of Stark Young, "What Price Glory?" had established new standards of truth in what had been a quibbling theater." Most important of all, Anderson was no longer a journalist, but a playwright.

The Anderson-Stallings team was to continue for two more plays. "First Flight," their second, was an amusing but superficial character study of the brash young redhead, Andrew Jackson, who courted with timidity but fought his duels with audacious enthusiasm. It had a great deal of "local color," and lasted as long as it did only because New Yorkers thought its broad humor and backwoods dialogue were "quaint."

(Editor's note: This is the first of a series of articles on Maxwell Anderson which will be published on the Reader's page. The second will appear next Saturday.)

Oz—in Technicolor



Finished in Hollywood and now awaiting general release is the filming of an old childhood classic, "The Wizard of Oz." Done in vivid-technicolor fashion, the picture will star such favorites as (left to right) Jack Haley as the Tin Woodman, Ray Bolger as the Scarecrow, Judy Garland as Dorothy, and Bert Lahr as the Cowardly Lion.

'Tree of Liberty' Proves Vigorous Historical Novel

By PAUL DEUTSCHMANN

For those who appreciate their history but shudder at the thought of dusty and pedagogical tomes, Elizabeth Page, in "The Tree of Liberty," has written a book that will be applauded.

She has taken the turbulent revolutionary period, peopled it with such characters of her imagination, associated them with the actual leaders of those days, and fused the whole into an exciting and interesting novel.

The story traces the life of Matt Howard, a Virginia frontiersman, planter and statesman. He is an intimate of Jefferson, a political opponent of Hamilton, a member of Washington's staff, and closely connected with almost every important political event of the period from 1770-1810.

Theme of the book is the conflict between freedom and privilege, personalized in Matt and his wife Jane. Though at times tedious through continuous repetition, the conflict is a stirring one, and in view of the present turbulent times, an appropriate one.

Today, when the policies of the fathers of America, the fundamental principles of democracy, and a strange new creed of "Americanism" are being discussed with vigor and violence, it is interesting to rediscover what men like Jefferson, Washington, Hamilton, and others thought. Miss Page's book, while it lays no claim to being a purely historical work, contains many excerpts from the speeches, letters, and writings of these characters. She has done a wonderful job of setting her story in a realistic background—a task which doubtless required many hours of careful research.

To the reader of quickly-consumed mystery novels, it might be said that the book is long and deep—definitely not something to be read in an evening. "Tree of Liberty" is an important book, one which takes careful reading and thoughtful consideration for full appreciation.

The book will be greeted enthusiastically by those who already enjoy history; those who hesitate before taking up chronologies will find it an interesting substitute; those who dislike the past will leave it alone.

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Clifford Odets' Problems Of Play Composition Told In Discussion of Drama

Material for 'Till the Day I Die' Given Playwright by Friend Who Had Smuggled Letter, Information Out of Germany

By JOAN JENNESS

Material for the play "Till the Day I Die" was given to Clifford Odets by a friend of his, who received the information in a letter which was smuggled out of Germany. Although the plot of the play is confined to Germany and to German opinions the author does not lose his Bronx technique of writing—the action could easily have been pictured in New York.

The majority of plays and novels written on this subject deal with the persecution of the Jews, but Odets ignores this phase of the present German regime and centers his violent protest on the Hitler Brown shirt activities against communists. The two main characters, Carl and Ernest Tausig, are shown as two brothers who are fighting together for the good of the Communist party in which they believe but they prove to be two entirely different personalities—one is selfish and bitter and the other is kind and forgiving.

Odets presents Tillie as the girl who leads the two brothers out into the light by announcing that she and Carl are about to be the parents of a child born out of wedlock. The author tries to put her upon a pedestal and have the readers feel sorry for her, but I think the days of quiet, hushed scenes are over. The people of today enjoy the bloody gruesome facts.

"Golden Boy" has the most forceful characters of all Odets' plays, I believe, because it shows a young Italian boy, who is forced to make a decision between being a celebrated violinist some day or being a prize fighter of renown. Joe Bonaparte, the fighter, is used to life in the Bronx and he yearns for gaiety and money. So he eagerly accepts Promotor Tom Moody's offer to make him a "big-money" fighter in spite of the fact that his father has hopes of some day hearing him acclaimed one of the world's greatest violinists.

He falls in love with Lorna Moon, Tom's common law wife, thus bringing about a suicidal ending for both Joe and Lorna. Joe realizes that his poor broken hands could never again wield the bow of his violin with deftness and that his father's broken heart could never be mended. So in a fit of madness he drives his Dusenberg over the cliff. Odets' treatment of the characters' actions and realistic attitudes is very commendable, but the plot is a little worn.

In 1936 "Paradise Lost" gained fame on Broadway. It is the story of a Jewish family and it deals with their financial situations, political beliefs, variety of confusion and their ultimate personal relationships.

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Criticism of E.M. Forster In New Book

Rose Macauley Gives Analysis Of Novelist's Life and Work

Rose Macauley's new book, "The Writings of E. M. Forster," is a critical study of the life and work of the celebrated English novelist who has not written a novel since "A Passage to India" appeared in 1924. Like so many others, Miss Macauley wonders if E. M. Forster will write another novel.

"If it should be another novel of the contemporary scene, it would be exciting. He might catch its flickering aspect before the next great cataclysm. I do not know if there is anyone else now writing who has just the right mirror to catch all these shifting reflections, public events and passions impacting on private, private distorted by public . . . Never has such stabilizing imagination as his been more needed to focus and interpret the human scene."

In her concluding chapter, Miss Macauley revives the old-fashioned word, doxies. It has a welcome sound to ears suffering from the percussions of the new-fangled word ideologies. E. M. Forster's doxies are summed up as follows by Miss Macauley:

"From certain root beliefs in Morgan Forster, his political and public views and sympathies naturally grow. He believes, for example, in the permanent value and importance of human beings, and perhaps of their relationships with one another; he believes in cultures, that can understand and receive beauty; and he believes in freedom, intellectual, social, and personal."

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