

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 283

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



**Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol.
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Project Editor: Kathy D. Darrow,

Editorial: Dana Barnes, Sara Constantakis,
Matthew Derda, Kristen Dorsch, Dana
Ferguson, Jeffrey W. Hunter, Reed
Kalso, Michelle Kazensky, Jelena O.
Krstović, Michelle Lee, Marie Toft,
Lawrence J. Trudeau

Content Conversion: Allie Semperger

Indexing Services: Laurie Andriot

Rights and Acquisitions: Leitha
Etheridge-Sims, Elaine Kosta

Composition and Electronic Capture: Gary
Oudersluys

Manufacturing: Keith Helmling

Product Manager: Mary Onorato

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Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)* has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” *TCLC* “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author’s works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey on an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism, (CLC)* which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*.

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

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A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in *TCLC* as well as other Literature Criticism series.

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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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William Inge

1913-1973

(Full name William Motter Inge; also wrote under pseudonym Walter Gage) American playwright, novelist, and screenwriter.

The following entry provides an overview of Inge's life and works. For additional information on his career, see *CLC*, Volumes 1, 8, and 19.

INTRODUCTION

Inge was one of the most successful American playwrights during the decade of the 1950s. Beginning with his first Broadway production, *Come Back, Little Sheba* (1950), he wrote four successive plays that achieved both critical and popular acclaim and established his reputation as an important new voice in American theater. These works include, in addition to *Come Back, Little Sheba*, *Picnic* (1953), *Bus Stop* (1955), and *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* (1957). All of these plays portray, in one way or another, lonely and frustrated people who seek love and happiness in small towns in Inge's native Midwest, and each deals with a recurring set of themes, such as family relationships, sexuality, loneliness, and spiritual fulfillment. In these and other works, Inge also sought to overthrow the accepted view of the Midwest as a wholesome and nurturing environment, offering instead a picture of Midwestern life as intrusive, inflexible, and emotionally repressive.

After 1958 Inge failed to achieve the critical success in New York that he earlier enjoyed, though he wrote several more plays, screenplays, and novels. Yet, despite the relative brevity of his literary fame, he remains for many critics one of America's greatest playwrights in the realist tradition, comparable to such towering figures as Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. As Jordan Y. Miller wrote in 1970, Inge's plays of the 1950s "remain four of the best examples of the conventional realistic dramatic style that the American theatre has produced. Their original success and continuing widespread popularity are a tribute to Inge's amazing skill in converting formula drama from a rapidly disappearing age into an emotional experience of great compassion and appeal."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Inge was born May 3, 1913, in Independence, Kansas, to Maude Sarah Gibson and Luther Clayton Inge, a traveling salesman. The author was predominantly

raised by his mother, an experience that affected both his personality and his art. Inge developed an interest in performance early in life and began acting and cheerleading during high school. After graduating in 1930 the author studied drama at the University of Kansas. During his college years he wrote dialogue for musical comedy productions and spent his summers touring with a vaudeville show. After graduating in 1935 Inge decided not to pursue an acting career but accepted a scholarship to George Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee, to pursue his master's degree in education. Questioning this decision, Inge returned to Kansas before completing his studies and held various jobs, eventually accepting a position teaching high school English in 1937. The experience was positive enough to prompt the author to return to Nashville to complete his degree.

Upon graduating Inge accepted a post teaching English and drama at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. At Stephens, his interest in drama was renewed after he began working closely with retired stage actress Maude Adams. He was unhappy, however, and his personal life deteriorated, a situation that some scholars have attributed to his closeted homosexuality. Inge drank heavily during this time, but after a brief emotional breakdown, he began writing to release tension. While these early efforts were not published, they provided the author with enough confidence to begin writing critical reviews for the *St. Louis Star-Times* in 1943. The following year Inge interviewed playwright Tennessee Williams, initiating their lifelong, competitive friendship. Williams encouraged Inge's literary ambitions, and in less than a year, Inge completed his first play, *Farther Off from Heaven* (1947), which was later revised and performed as *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* in 1957.

In 1946 Inge relinquished his job at the *St. Louis Star-Times* and accepted a teaching position at Washington University in St. Louis. During this time he continued to write plays, only one of which, *Front Porch* (1948), was produced, in a limited run in St. Louis. In 1949, however, the New York Theatre Guild accepted Inge's breakthrough play, *Come Back, Little Sheba*, for production. The success of this work enabled Inge to quit teaching and concentrate on writing full time. Over the next decade the author enjoyed success and won critical acclaim for his subsequent plays, *Picnic*, *Bus Stop*, and *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*. All of these works were also successfully adapted for film. Despite his success the author continued to suffer from alcoholism

and depression. He had begun psychoanalysis in 1949, and continued treatment throughout the 1950s, but was ultimately unable to accept his homosexuality.

In 1959 Inge suffered his first Broadway failure, *A Loss of Roses*. He experienced significant financial losses as a result of staging the play and took the harsh reviews of the work personally. Feeling hurt and rejected, he moved to Hollywood at the end of the 1950s and began writing the screenplay *Splendor in the Grass* (1961), which turned out to be a heartening success. During the 1960s the author continued to write plays, many of them one-act productions, but he failed to recapture the success of the previous decade. Inge spent the final years of his life in California with his widowed sister, Helene Inge Connell. He taught playwriting at the Irvine campus of the University of California and continued to write, producing plays, novels, and an autobiographical work, none of which attracted significant critical notice. Inge fell into a deep depression, and on June 10, 1973, committed suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning.

MAJOR WORKS

Inge is best remembered for his first four plays written during the 1950s, all of which are set in small Midwestern towns. These works generally reveal the repressive forces and emotional traumas that characters face in this seemingly wholesome environment, and focus on themes related to familial and sexual relationships.

Inge's breakthrough play, *Come Back, Little Sheba*, depicts the frustration, disappointment, and dissatisfaction of a childless, married couple, Doc and Lola Delaney, who struggle with the reality of their lost youth, lost potential, and failed ambitions. Lola, once beautiful, has now gained weight and avoids her own disappointments by escaping into the fantasy world of movies and radio, or living vicariously through her young boarder, Marie. Throughout the play Lola calls for her lost dog, Little Sheba, who becomes a symbol for her former youth and beauty. Doc also struggles with the disappointments of his life, including Lola's lost beauty and his own thwarted medical career. Doc, however, finds an escape through alcohol. In an effort to regain control of his life, Doc joins Alcoholics Anonymous and sustains himself by reciting the alcoholic's daily prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom always to tell the difference," which echoes the primary theme of the play. As the action progresses, tension between Doc and Lola builds until Doc finally breaks upon discovering that Lola has encouraged an affair between Marie and Turk, an athletic college student. After a year of sobriety, Doc binges and returns home in a

violent, drunken rage, threatening both Lola and Marie. When he is hauled away by police, Lola is left alone and realizes how much she relies on her husband. They reconcile at the end of the play, but the hope of their reunion is tarnished by Inge's final suggestion that their marriage is based, not on true love, but on dependence and self-delusion.

Inge's second Broadway success, *Picnic*, is concerned with the unexpected arrival of an outsider, named Hal Carter, to a small community in Kansas. The presence of Hal, who is handsome and virile, has a strong effect on the town, particularly a group of lonely, frustrated women in the community. Among this group are Flo Owens, a widow, and her two daughters, Millie and Madge. While Millie is an intellectual tomboy, Madge is the most beautiful girl in town, who maintains a steady, chaste relationship with a shy, wealthy man named Alan Seymour. Hal also attracts the attention of Rosemary Sydney, an aging schoolteacher. Tensions among the group escalate as they prepare to attend the town's Labor Day picnic. Hal abandons his date, Millie, and runs off with Madge, while Rosemary, also rejected by Hal, leaves with her boyfriend, Howard. At the end of the play, Rosemary coerces Howard into marrying her, while Alan runs Hal out of town. In accordance with the wishes of the play's first director, Joshua Logan, Madge ignores her mother's objections and follows Hal out of town. In a later version of the work, Madge complies with her mother's request. Although sexuality is an important theme in the play, much of the work is concerned with familial relationships and the particular frustrations of women at various stages of life.

Although set in a small town in Kansas, Inge's next major play, *Bus Stop*, differs in theme and tone from the rest of his oeuvre. Often described as a romantic comedy, *Bus Stop* addresses themes related to love rather than familial relationships and provides a light-hearted central conflict, as well as a happy ending. The play takes place at a bus stop during a blizzard and centers on the relationship between two travelers waylaid by the storm: Bo Decker, a brash cowboy from Montana, and Cherie, a performer. After a brief sexual encounter Bo convinced Cherie to travel to Montana with him and his fellow cowboy and surrogate father, Virgil Blessing, but Cherie begins to question her decision while waiting for the bus to leave. While Cherie finds Bo charming and attractive, she resents his possessive nature and the fact that he treats her like an object. She claims to have been abducted, but after Bo is subdued by a local sheriff, Cherie reconsiders and determines to accompany her lover to Montana. In contrast to the humorous conflict that unfolds between the two main characters, several of the minor characters introduce somber topics more in keeping with Inge's previous works. Grace, the bus stop operator, is lonely but has rejected

the idea of finding a lasting relationship, while Dr. Lyman is a drunken former professor disgusted by his failures, who believes that the complications of life prevent meaningful human relationships. Bo's mentor, Virgil Blessing, is a well-mannered and loyal friend, but he decides to stay behind when Cherie leaves with Bo; he is subsequently "left out in the cold" with nowhere to go.

Inge returned to more familiar themes in his final Broadway success, *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, which addresses the psychological tension of familial relationships. The play deals with the Flood family, closely modeled after Inge's own family, and takes place in a small Oklahoma town during the 1920s. In this work Inge explores the fears that each member of the family experiences and the resulting tensions that threaten to tear them apart. The patriarch of the family, Rubin Flood, struggles to provide for his wife and children, although his work as a traveling salesman keeps him isolated. Cora Flood harbors conflicted feelings for her husband, but she also fears that she has overprotected her children, Reenie and Sonny, to compensate for Rubin's absence. As the play progresses Rubin loses his job and threatens to leave his family, and Cora is forced to confront her fears and overcome them. The play also examines themes related to sexuality. Cora and Sonny have developed an oedipal bond, which is challenged at the end of the play when Rubin and Cora reconcile. In addition, the women of the play, including Cora, Reenie, and Cora's sister, Lottie, all struggle with their fear of sexuality.

Along with his Broadway plays, Inge is remembered for the screenplay *Splendor in the Grass*. In this work the author explores the unfulfilled love of a young couple, Bud Stamper and Deanie Loomis, who are raised by overprotective parents in a small, gossiping town in Kansas. As a result of their repressions the lives of Bud and Deanie are radically altered, and they eventually have to accept the changes that life brings. The title of the screenplay is taken from William Wordsworth's poem "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," which counsels that "We will grieve not, rather find / Strength in what remains behind," a primary theme explored in the work.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Although Inge began writing plays and fiction during the 1940s, it was not until the Broadway production of *Come Back, Little Sheba* in 1950 that he achieved serious recognition as a playwright. The work was well received by New York critics, although its Broadway run was shorter than that of his subsequent plays *Picnic* and *Bus Stop*. Reviewers generally praised Inge's psycho-

logical treatment of his characters, especially his portrait of the alcoholic Doc Delaney, and his ability to express the traumatic aspects of small-town Midwestern life. The critic for the *New York Times* hailed Inge as Broadway's "most promising" new playwright. The success of *Come Back, Little Sheba* was followed a few years later with *Picnic* and *Bus Stop*, both of which received even greater acclaim than Inge's debut New York production, thereby cementing his reputation as a leading American playwright. *Picnic* won a Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, and it tied Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* for the Donaldson Award.

The motion pictures made from Inge's four major plays, each of which was a commercial success, furthered his popularity and, according to some estimates, earned him more than a million dollars in fees. Despite these accomplishments, Inge was not universally praised by critics during this time. Both Eric Bentley and Robert Brustein, writing at the peak of the author's fame, noted significant limitations in his plays. In his 1954 review of *Picnic*, Bentley described the work as "tiresome to the extreme" and "patronizing" in its blatant appeal to the cult of masculinity in America. A few years later, Brustein, in a frequently cited essay, called Inge "a dramatist of considerable limitations" and maintained that all of his major plays demonstrate the same "romantic" pattern, in which the rebel men are tamed, or "emasculated," by the "domestic love" of women.

With the exception of the screenplay *Splendor in the Grass*, Inge's plays and fiction produced after *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* were seen as inferior to his earlier works. The plays *A Loss of Roses*, *Natural Affection* (1963), and *Where's Daddy?* (1966) were all poorly reviewed by critics. Many regard the last of these as one of his worst efforts as a playwright, and after its failure in New York, Inge never brought out another play on Broadway.

The author turned to fiction late in his career, with the publication of the novels *Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff* (1971) and *My Son Is a Splendid Driver* (1971), but by the time he wrote these works he had been largely abandoned by critics and readers. As such, both novels received only limited reviews. While Inge's later writings suffer from a number of faults, such as melodramatic plots and a simplistic and redundant treatment of Freudian themes, their poor reception was due not only to their own shortcomings but to changing trends in American literature beginning in the late 1950s, which favored more experimental forms of drama and art. By the time of his death in 1973 Inge was nearly forgotten as a writer, slightly more than a decade after he was lauded as one of America's greatest playwrights.

Criticism of Inge's work and career since the author's death has tended to focus on his treatment of male and

female relations and, more specifically, gender roles within 1950s American society. In addressing these concerns many commentators have responded, either directly or indirectly, to Bentley's and, especially, Brustein's earlier interpretations of Inge's dramatic canon. For example, writing in 1976, Philip M. Armato regarded the figure of the rebel Hal in *Picnic* as not simply the phallic male tamed by the force of patriarchy, as Brustein suggested, but as the mythic and timeless figure of the "scapegoat." Also focusing on *Picnic*, Jane W. Lange praised the author's portrait of a "paradoxical period" in American history, saying that the play was "prophetic" in its treatment "of men and women caught in a web of fear, repression, and rigidly defined social roles." In her 1986 essay, Janet Juhnke directly countered Brustein's assessment of *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, contending that this work and all of Inge's major plays "neither depict nor favor patriarchy" over male sexuality, and that the issues of "sexual politics" these dramas explore are not "trivial," as Brustein asserted, but "are among the most important questions of modern life."

Such commentators as Jane Courant, Susan Koprince, and Jeff Johnson also discussed questions of gender politics in Inge's major plays. Like Lange, Courant argued that Inge was a decade or so ahead of his time in his explorations of the paradoxical role of the emerging mass media in American society during the 1950s, particularly in his treatment of women, while Koprince noted the ways in which the playwright evokes our sympathy for the numerous "childless women" in his plays and, simultaneously, questions the "cultural expectations" that led these women "to view themselves as abnormal and inferior." In his important book-length study of Inge's treatment of gender in his works, Johnson studied the author's use of the technique of "gendermandering" in his major writings, stating that while he drew his leading characters based on gender stereotypes, he "subverts" these roles in order to highlight the artificiality of the culturally accepted ideas of male and female sexuality.

Besides issues of gender, recent critics have also addressed the more familiar themes of identity and family relationships in Inge's canon, as can be seen in the essays by Jasbir Jain, William J. Scheick, R. Baird Shuman, and David Radavich. What has emerged from these and other studies of Inge's work is a more convincing view of the author as an acute social critic of his time, who used the conventional elements of realistic and domestic drama to probe deeper questions of human relationships, sexuality, personal identity, and the power of popular culture to dictate the lives of his leading characters. As Jane Courant observed, "With acute insight into impending social change, Inge brought the struggles of ordinary women and men to the stage with striking clarity. . . . Expressing his vision in the

colloquial, cliché-ridden speech of characters distorted by illusions produced by a technologically sophisticated culture, he paved the way for later dramatists such as Edward Albee and Sam Shepard who would forge a new dramatic language from the popular cultural idiom. Although he spoke in the quieter, more modulated tone of comic realism, he, too, investigated the dark side of a vanishing American dream."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Farther Off from Heaven (play) 1947
Front Porch (play) 1948
Come Back, Little Sheba (play) 1950
Picnic (play) 1953
Bus Stop (play) 1955
The Dark at the Top of the Stairs (play) 1957
A Loss of Roses (play) 1959
Splendor in the Grass (screenplay) 1961
**Summer Brave and Eleven Short Plays* (plays) 1962
Natural Affection (play) 1963
Where's Daddy? (play) 1966
†Two Short Plays (plays) 1968
Overnight (play) 1969
Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff (novel) 1971
My Son Is a Splendid Driver (novel) 1971

*This work includes the plays *Summer Brave*, *The Boy in the Basement*, *Bus Riley's Back in Town*, *An Incident at the Standish Arms*, *The Mall*, *Memory of Summer*, *People in the Wind*, *The Rainy Afternoon*, *A Social Event*, *The Strains of Triumph*, *The Tiny Closet*, and *To Bobolink, for Her Spirit*.

†This work includes the plays *The Call* and *A Murder*.

CRITICISM

Eric Bentley (essay date 1954)

SOURCE: Bentley, Eric. "Pathetic Phalluses." In *The Dramatic Event: An American Chronicle*, pp. 103-06. New York: Horizon Press, 1954.

[In the following essay, Bentley considers Inge's dramaturgy in his play *Picnic* "tiresome to the extreme" and "patronizing," and he contends that the author acquiesced to the "cult of Priapus" in the work in order to appeal to the expectations of his audience.]

On the face of it you'd think a playwright would make an effort to conceal his borrowings. That William Inge parades them is not, however, a sign of naiveté, it is a

declaration of allegiance. The torn shirt of Stanley Kowalski is no mere fact in another author's story, it is a symbol, a banner, an oriflamme. It stands for the new phallus worship.

There is of course no denying that a hero has a body and that it is a male body. What is remarkable in certain plays of Tennessee Williams and William Inge is that so much is made of the hero's body and that he has so little else. The rose that, for Mr. Eliot, is rooted in so deeply and broadly human a garden blooms, for Mr. Williams, on the bared chest of quasi-primitive man.

Admittedly, it may be impossible nowadays to sustain the attitude of the phallus worshipper in its purity. Kowalski is an impure phenomenon: if he is the full-blooded husband that every woman craves, he is also destructive and evil. In fact it is the cunning mixture of good and evil, health and sickness, that, for millions of spectators, has proved a fascination.

William Inge's *Picnic* may prove an equally effective piece of synthetic folklore—a folklore that is created, not *by*, but *for* the folk, the folklore of the age of mechanized mass media. Mr. Inge, too, gives his Priapus a bad character, but he is careful to stipulate that the badness is the kind the public sympathizes with: this Priapus is pathetic. To offer pity to the kind of man upon whom contemporary civilization has showered its praises might seem, from the utilitarian point of view, unnecessary: why stack cards that are already stacked? But from the point of view of synthetic folklore, it may well be a stroke of (synthetic) genius.

On the lowest estimate, it is a very happy accident. On the one hand, we have our alienated, homeless author, on the other our comfortable public, very much at home. How can the two meet to their mutual advantage? Well, for one thing, the indelicate public can decide it likes its authors delicate. For another, the authors can prove they aren't as delicate as all that, they can concede that indelicacy is a mighty fine thing. They can yearn for their opposite, they can indulge in orgies of overcompensation, they can flirt with the common man. A generation has passed since a movie star earned the title of the world's sweetheart. The Broadway public is not the world, nor is it composed of common men, but it is prepared to play the lover to any playwright-sweetheart who offers the right combination of coyness and compliance.

Second only in importance to the polarity of playwright and public is that of playwright and director. Until recently it seems to have been assumed that a director would merely re-inforce an author's effects, accenting what was already accented, to A adding more A. Our more sophisticated theatre prefers to give a play "the treatment"—adding to quality A a directorial tempera-

ment or idea of quality B. If a script A is deficient, and B is precisely what was needed to make good the deficiency, the partnership of author and director is a triumph. Though one can criticize Mr. Kazan's directing on various grounds, there is no denying that he brought to *Death of a Salesman* something that Jed Harris failed to bring to *The Crucible*, notably the tension of personal, not to say neurotic, relations. To *Mister Roberts* it was the author, Thomas Heggen, who brought the guilt, the director, Joshua Logan, who brought the innocence. Reviewing the play several years ago, I defended Mr. Heggen at the expense of Mr. Logan; in retrospect, it seems only charitable to acknowledge that, without Mr. Logan, Mr. Heggen would probably not have been able to give us an evening of theatre at all.

Picnic, also, is directed by Joshua Logan, and those who find Mr. Inge a self-sufficient playwright have understandably complained of the B which the director adds to the author's A. For my part, I am not so sure that it is the writing which gives the evening its undoubted interest. Mr. Inge's main story seems to me tiresome in the extreme: that is why my comment on it has had to be solely sociological. I can accept it only as a libretto for Mr. Logan's directorial music and (what is closely connected) as material for his admirable actors. It is very lucky for Mr. Inge that his hero and heroine are not type cast. Mr. Logan was shrewd enough to allow for the fact that the phallus is much too featureless for drama. Ralph Meeker may have played Stanley Kowalski but (like Mr. Brando for that matter) he could never be *taken* for Stanley Kowalski: an actor can bring B to a character that is all A. With Mr. Inge's phallic hero goes a heroine of equal crudity and equal appeal: the dumbest and loveliest girl in town. Though, in a sense, it is her dumbness that makes her beauty irresistible (gives it "mass appeal," assures that it is "democratic"), I personally was glad that the actress (Janice Rule) did not humiliate herself that much but intruded a pleasantly human intelligence. Kim Stanley contrived to make the most brilliant performance of the evening out of one of those Hollywood-Broadway adolescents who are bookish because they are not beautiful.

The subplot of *Picnic* is quite a different matter. It is another of those rather patronizing tales of amorous old maids, yet I feel patronizing in calling it patronizing, for certainly I found myself drawn into the joke and thoroughly enjoying it. Here too the acting and directing are first rate. Eileen Heckart and Arthur O'Connell manage to be both very funny and very real in parts that encourage the actor to be simply one or the other. But, in this section of the play, the acting is strongly underpinned by a script. One cannot help asking why an author who can create the school-teacher Miss Rosemary Sidney and her cheery colleagues who have seen life in New York (at Teachers' College and elsewhere)