THE FIRST LADY OF AMERICAN DRAMA: SUSAN GLASPELL

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Susan Glaspell (1876-1948) is a prime example of the "peculiar eclipsing " so frequently suffered by women writers[1] . She devoted eight years to the Provincetown Players, and her plays alone would have justified the claim that the sand dunes of Provincetown were the birthplace of modern American Drama[2]. But Glaspell's voice was silenced, and although feminist literary criticism has rediscovered some of her work she is still largely unknown[3] . Experimental in form and content, her plays brought expressionism and social criticism to the American stage, and her contribution on this count is so signicant that it cannot be treated adequately in a short essay. I have here set myself a less ambitious goal: by focusing on those facets of her work which constitute a threat to male authority, I hope to account for Glaspell's exclusion from the dramatic canon.

1.-Tillie Olsen, *Silences,* London: Virago, 1978, p. 40.
2.-The Provincetown Players produced their first plays in Provincetown, Cape Cod, in the summer of 1915. George (Jig) Carm Cook had cajoled Mary Heaton Vorse into letting him take over a disused fish shed on her wharf for the repetition of performances of *Suppressed Desires* (Cook and Glaspell) and *Constancy* (Neith Boyce), previously done in Boyce's drawing room before an audience of friends. The following summer Cook organized a whole season of plays and in the autumn, with the support of John Reed and Eugene O'Neill, founded the Playwright's Theatre in Greenwich Village. (For a first hand history of the Players, see Helen Deutsch and Stella Hanau, *The Provincetown: A Story of the Theatre*, New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1931. A more recent and objective account is Robert Karoly Sarlos, *Jig Cook and the Provincetown Players: Theatre in Ferment*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982.) In her autobiographical *Time and the Town: A Provincetown Chronicle*, Mary Heaton Vorse quotes the critic William Archer's words: "In the region of Washington Square or Greenwich Village, or...among the sand dunes of Cape Cod - we must look for the real birthplace of the American Drama" (New York: The Dial Press, 1942, p. 126)
3.-Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar include *Trifles* in *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Tradition in English*, New York: Norton, 1985, pp. 1388-99. Of Glaspell's work, this play, and the short story it gave rise to , "A Jury of Her Peers", are the most frequently chosen for comment by feminist critics. Both the play and the story are generally seen as early attempts to signal gender marking in language. See for example Annette Kolodny, "A Map for Rereading: Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts" in Elaine Showalter (ed.), *The Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*,, New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, pp. 46-62. Gilbert and Gubar adopt a somewhat different attitude in *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century.Vol. I. : The War of the Words,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, p. 91. For a fuller treatment of Glaspell's life and work, see Arthur Waterman, *Susan Glaspell*, New York: Twayne, 1966, and Marcia Noe, *Susan Glaspell: Voice from the Heartland*, Illinois: Western Illinois University, 1983.

The American Dream is undeniably a man's dream: "the green breast of the new world" flowered for Dutch sailors while Margaret Fuller's earlier cry in vindication of women's rights, "Let them be sea-captains", became the butt of sexist jokes[4] . History has shown that "the essence of American culture means that the matter of American experience is inherently male" and that it is conditioned by a deeply romantic promise, the myth "that a person will be able to achieve complete self-definition"[5] . This quest for identity is threatened by society, embodied in woman; as a result, women protagonists - and authors - are virtually eliminated from the literary canon. Glaspell's protagonits are women; they are infinitely superior to the male characters, and they have a disturbing habit of arrogating to themselves divine powers over life and death. Patriarchal authority is clearly endangered. We should not be surprised to know that many contemporary critics dismissed her plays as nonsense and that the management of the Players deleted from their repertoire once she had left.

Glaspell started her writing career in the Midwest as a newspaperwoman, short story writer and novelist; it was not until her marriage to George (Jig) Cram Cook catapulted her into the very heart of the Greenwich Village Bohemia that she tried her hand at playwriting. In the summer of 1915 Cook's enthusiasm for the theatre, which he saw as the life-giving force of ancient Greece, culminated in the first productions of the Provincetown Players - in a rickety old fish-house on the end of a disused wharf. The following summer Glaspell wrote *Trifles* which was an immediate success and is still her best-known play. That autumn Cook galvanised the Players into opening their first season in a converted warehouse on MacDougal Street, New York, where their principal playwrights were Eugene O'Neill and Susan Gaspell.

O'Neill had joined the Players that summer with a "trunkful" of plays awaiting performance; Glaspell, not being so equipped, conceived her plays specifically for the Provincetowners, experimenting with their "untramelled little stage" and working out "her ideas in freedom"[6].

A stint on the Des Moines Daily News had early aroused Glaspell's interest in local and domestic politics; she was assigned to the statehouse and legislature, and this experience gave her material for many short stories and plays. It convinced her too that the local Socialist Party was much too

4.-F. Scott Fitgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967, p. 187. Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), New York: Norton, 1971, p. 174.
5.-Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors", in Elaine Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism*, pp. 70-71.
6.-Provincetown Players Announcement, 1917-1918, in the Povincetown Scrapbook held by the Beinecke, Yale University. Gerald Bach offers a methodical study of Glaspell's work with the Provincetown Players, showing how development reflects theirs, in "Susan Glaspell : Provincetown Playwright", *Great Lakes Review*, 1978, IV pp. 31-43.

conservative, and she readily abandoned it when Jig Cook founded the more liberal Monist Society. New York City widened Glaspell's horizons still further; but whereas Cook plunged joyfully into the "New Bohemia" - an exotic amalgam of the old Parisian bohemia, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the New Feminist Movement - Glaspell's poor health, which included a weak heart and gynaecological problems, forced her to remain on the sidelines. In an interview in 1921 she justified her position by saying, "I am interested in all progressive movements, whether feminist, social or economic, but I can take no very active part other than through my writing"[7]. And it was indeeed through her work that she voiced her dissatisfaction with dirty right-wing politics, forcefully expressing that "concern with the wrongs to human beings in their times" which marks her out as a feminist writer[8].

At a time when the established American theatre refused to deal with social problems (excepting those of marriage), Glaspell dared to tackle various hot issues, among them political dissent and the ambitions of a female Zarathustra.

The 1917 and 1918 Espionage and Sedition Acts, for example, outraged her democratic spirit and she responded with *Inheritors*, which The Provincetown Players produced in 1920. The setting is a Midwestern college campus which had been founded by the idealist Silas Morton, one of the earliest settlers, and Felix Fejevary, an exiled Hungarian revolutionary whose son is now on the Board of Trustees. The play opens in 1879 with a discussion of the pioneer days and of the importance of learning, and Act I ends with Morton's decision to bequeath his best land to the building of a college. Act II shows how the expansion of the college has brought about financial problems that must now be solved. Felix Fejevary Junior does his best to convince Senator Lewis that the state should appropriate the college and so assure its future. Lewis agrees but imposes one condition: Professor Holden, a radical idealist and supporter of conscientious objectors, must go. By Act IV Fejevary has persuaded Holden of the advantages of silence, but he is then defeated by his niece - the grand-daughter of both Silas Morton and Felix Fejeravy Sr. -who insists on supporting Hindu students in their fight for Independence. As the play ends, Madeline Morton leaves for the court hearing; and there is no doubt that she wil be sentenced to prison for her ideals.

This play is a feeling riposte to an historical moment, and although it is the least overtly feminist of Glaspell's plays the surface plot is but a thin disguise for her disappointment with patriarchal society, with man's weakness and his readiness to forgo his ideals under pressure. Discretely,

7.Alice Rohe, "The Story of Susan Glaspell", *New York Morning Telegraph*, 18 December, 1921.
8.-Tillie Olsen, *Silences*, p. 42.

Glaspell mocks a number of male myths: the frontier myth, the myths of progress, learning and civilisation, and an particular, the myth of male superiority. Her "leading" men, though endowed with redeeming virtues, are far from being supermen and frequently frustrate the expectations of the female protagonists. In *Inheritors* Glaspell intelligently refuses to condemn or praise the individual outright, and her sympathies waver between Holden and Madeline, finally coming down on the side of the latter. The former's pusillanimous decision is excusable in the light of Mrs Holden's costly illness, while Madeline's action, though it will bring sorrow on the family, is seen in the idealistic terms of the individual's self-sacrifice in the cause of freedom.

As a result of her first-hand experience Susan Glaspell was never tempted to sentimentalise pioneer life. She was a Midwestern by birth and spent many years on Cape Cod, only a few miles from the Mayflower Pilgrims' reported first landing place and still a rough place to live in the 1910s. Thus she could authoritatively expose the frontier myth of machismo, with the white man defending his womenfolk from savage Indians and wresting the land from barbarity, and she did so in a number of her novels and plays - nowhere so incisevely as in *Inheritors*. Silas Morton's grandmother used to give cookies to the Indians who, in her words, were "mostly friendly when let be"; they did not attack or rape till the white man had "roiled them up" by taking their land(*I.* p.104). Grandmother Morton had observed in the white man a similar attachment to the land, and her sympathetic understanding of his weaknesses is mingled with disgust at his love of violence. She herself had always been prepared to feed and help the stranger, and finds it difficult to accept that "nothing draws men together like killing other men" (*I.* p.106). She knew the hardships of pioneer life for a woman, and the news of the death of a Civil War veteran's wife provokes from her the heavily laden comment, "Well, I guess she's not sorry" (*I.* p. 107). Self-reliant and hard-working, Grandmother Morton is reminiscent of Willa Cather's Alexandra in her love of the land: "A country don't make itself. When the sun was up we were up, and when the sun went down we didn't"(*I.* p.106).

The myth of learning is also stripped of its romantic fallacies. Morton's generous spirit, love of the land, hard work and initial friendship with the native Indians, inspired him to build a College on a hill, visible for miles "for the boys of the cornfields - and the girls...'Twill make a difference - even to them that never go" (*I.* p.113-14). In Silas Morton's "dreams for the race", the college offered a "vision of what life could be", and it atoned for the wrong the white man had done to the native: "That's what the hill is for! Don't you see it ? End of our trail, we climb a hill and plant a college" (*I*, p.113). Echo of the Puritan City on a hill, and founded with the explicit purpose of redeeming the white man's bloody role in the Blackhawk War, the

college ultimately generates the overwhelming desire for expansion and state appropriation - a "sivilization" which not all are free to reject. Holden's Whitmanesque vision of each man "being his purest and intensest self" is sourly compromised by financial interests - a consequence of patriarchal society Glaspell deplored (*I.* p.134).

Founder Morton's expansionist dream has failed on another count. He had worked the fields to bring wealth to his family and community, but now his son Ira, who has experimented with corn and created a greatly improved variety, curses the wind for carrying seeds to his neighbours' farm. The community tries to excuse Ira's obsession as a mental disorder and believes he is the price the white man pays for progress and growth, the "scar" left by "the lives back of him" which were too hard (*I.* p.141).

Ira's daugther Madeline compensates for his meanness of spirit when she takes up the cause of a group of Hindu students who have been inconsiderately "preaching the gospel of freee India - non-British India" precisely on the day when Senator Lewis visits the College (*I.* p.122). Madeline is first depicted as a carefree, fun-loving, tennis-playing college senior who has no time or respect for her ancestors or elders. By the play's end, however, she has shed her egotism and conscioulsy adopted ideals which will require the sacrifice of her freedom. Madeline's first act of rebellion is to hit a policeman with a tennis racket: a childish reaction to the police harassment of the Hindu students, for which she is taken to prison. Released almost immediately through the intervention of her uncle, she is shocked to discover that Fejevary has done nothing for the Hindus and horrified at their imminent deportation. The ensuing argument with Fejevary transforms the naive and impetous college girl into an articulate adult aware of her feelings for her Grandfather, the college, freedom, and what she always, though only half-consciously, believed to be the ideal of American democracy:

> Madeline: (in a smoldering way) I thought America was a democracy.
> Fejeravy: We have just fought a great war for democracy.
> Madeline: Well, is that any reason for not having it ? (*I.* p.140).

Moments later, when the gang of students led by Fejevary's son provokes the Hindus and the police intervene once again, Madeline has so far learnt to control her impulses that she can articulate her response without needing to have recourse to the childish action of hitting out. Her impassioned speech proves her worthy of both of her grandfathers: "My grandfather gave this hill to Morton College - a place where anybody - from any land - can come and say what he believes to be true!".(*I.* p.142).

Madeline, although she does not come anywhere near the "superwoman" stature achieved by the protagonists of the later plays, does at least prefigure them - in particular the heroine of *The Verge* (1921). Claire is

an older Madeline, weighed down by social and moral pressures; whereas Madeline is ingenuously prepared to sacrifice her physical freedom for the ideal of democracy, Claire is conscious of mankind's inherent bondage and despairs of ever attaining real freedom for woman, artist or humanity in general. She realises that the older order - symbolised in the play by a plant that grows in the shape of a cross - has failed her, but she is still afraid of challenging it; she finds it difficult to believe in the existence of a new and better dispensation or to express her vision of it coherently.

The Verge is Glaspell's most provocative play. The Provinceton Players "kept alive a stage dedicated to the experimental production of plays by American playwrights", and by 1921 Glaspell was sufficiently self-confident to make use of the many innovations both in content and in stagecraft that the Players had adopted from Europe[9] . They took Strindberg, Ibsen and Shaw for their models, although the Players' insistence on their own nationalistic aesthetics made them highly reluctant to stage the Europeans; they assimilated the work of Stanislavski and of Reinhardt, and they were ready to incorporate at least some of the tenets of expressionism then coming to the fore in Germany. Cook insisted on building a dome for O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* in order to create an illusion of expanded space, for example, and he was impatient to try out the ideas of Adolphe Appia and Edward Gordon Craig. *The Verge* is an example of the assimilation of European trends in using characteristically expressionistic settings to reveal the mind of the protagonist; as to content, the play criticises the stifling doll's house a marriage can become, but by not insisting on the gender of the protagonist it succeeds in portraying the lot of mankind, trapped by established norms an unable to overcome itself.

The play opens in a luscious and over-heated greenhouse where Claire (who is reminiscent of E.T.A. Hoffman's protagonists in her obsessiveness) experiments with plants. She believes she can exploit a technique of transplanting to create wholly new organisms which are liberated from the previous forms and functions of plant life. Tom, Dick and Harry (confident, lover and husband) violate this sanctum when they seek out a warm spot for breakfast. Hoping to end the farcical bickering which follows, Claire attempts to express her Nietzschean desire to overcome established patterns and to break through into whatever lies beyond; of the three men in her life, only Tom gropes towards an understanding of her disjointed sentences. In Act II, Claire's sister Adelaide invades her study, a strangely twisted and uncannily lit tower which is an outward sign of Claire's disturbed mind. Adelaide's mission is to convince her sister to play the part

9.-Provincetown Interim Announcement, 1922-23, in the Provincetown Scrapbook held by the Beinecke Library.

of the dutiful mother and wife, but Claire is too close to transcendence to take heed; being on the brink of uncovering her latest experiment, the plant she calls 'Breath of life', she is staggered by fear of the retaliation of the God whose life-giving powers she has appropriated, Claire seeks a haven in the consummating of her relationship with the sympathetic Tom, but in deference to her superior spirit, he denies her that ordinary human refuge whereupon the second act ends with Claire, hysterical plea for "Anything - everything - that will let me be nothing!" (*V.* p. 92). In Act III, back in the greenhouse, we witness the unveiling of the new plant and Claire's success in creating a hitherto unknown life-form. Yet the achievement is clearly ambivalent; any organism is condemned to repetition and stagnation unless it continually overcomes itself. Claire is fully conscious of that baleful dilemma; when Tom finally offers his love she is appalled at the prospect of being engulfed by mediocre patterns and so she relentlessly chokes him to death. The murder parallels the suffocating norms of society which inevitably silence the creative urge in those who refuse to conform, but the family see Claire's convulsive action as final proof of her insanity. The play ends on a savagely ironic note as Claire chants the hymn 'Nearer, my God, to Thee' which Adelaide, intuiting blasphemy, had previously refused to sing in her presence. Claire, a female Faust, is now her own God and cannot be reached by societal structures and compunctions; she has broken out and is existentially free, alone in the trascendental beyond. Like the protagonist of *Inheritors*, Claire rejects the laws of the patriarchal world, but unlike her she refuses to deal with them on their own terms.

Glaspell had taken care in *Inheritors* not to be too harsh on the male characters, but in *The Verge* she is not so generous; she allows each in turn to prove his inferiority to Claire. Tom, Dick and Harry, as their names suggest, are stereotypes; they are incapable of helping Claire define herself fully in a patriarchal society or of protecting her from the consequences of transcending it. Harry, the husband, does his utmost to understand her, but his down-to-earth character is an impossible barrier to comprehension or communication. Dick paternally dismisses Claire's strange behaviour as "the excess of a particularly rich temperament" (*V.* p. 65), whereas Tom commits the unforgivable error of offering her a bourgeois relationship. In the earlier play, which is less fiercely feminist, Fejevary and Holden are neither dim-witted nor guilty of paternalism; they are motivated by less idealistic concerns than Madeline, and Fejevary duly convinces Holden that his wife's health is more important than his ideology: "You'd like of course to be just what you want to be - but isn't there something selfish in that satifaction? he asks (*I.* p.136).

Claire is selfish - a male prerogative in the 1920s - and it is precisely her determination to create a satisfactory life for herself that aroused the fervent admiration of the Greenwich Village feminists and brought "religious

excitement" to their voices and eyes when talking of *The Verge* [10]. This was Glapell's most impiously feminist play, although she had certaninly touched on the same issues in *Inheritors*; in the earlier play she had established Madeline's need for the freedom to define herself as an individual - contrasting physical with mental imprisonment, and allowing her to chose the former. As a result of her death-dealing, Claire will also be confined to four walls, but she too will have the satisfaction of a mind free of the restrictions society imposes. Both women rebel against conventional roles in their determinations to "make themselves new" (*V.* p.96); and even though the author approves their defiance, she places it before us as meriting social punishment.

The protagonist of an earlier play, *Bernice* (1919), escapes society by literally moving into another life: she dies, and in death wields absolute power over her husband. Neither the husband Craig, nor the trusted friend Margaret who "sees everything" (*B.* p.10), arrive in time to hear Bernice's last words. The cause of death is never revealed; a long illness, and a sudden, unexpected death are all we know about. Bernice's marriage had not been successful; she was too independent to need Craig, an inferior writer whom she could never admire, and he accordingly sought admiration from other women and was openly unfaithful to her. As in Claire's case, patriarchal society imposes on Bernice a two-fold denial of self-definition; as a woman in her own right she is trapped by marriage, and as a woman bound to her husband's love and professional unsuccess she is trapped by his inadequacy. Craig is a more dangerous opponent to Bernice than any of Claire's to her; he wishes for the power to destroy and to reshape the terms of existence but that is a faculty only Glaspell's female protagonists are given to exercise. Craig had presumably battled with Bernice for this power and had always lost; "her life wasn't made by my life", he complains to Margaret (*B.* p.17). In death, Bernice wins the battle once and for all. Before dying she extracts from Abbie, her servant, the promise to tell Craig that she has taken her own life. Through this ruse she hopes to confer on him the delusion of power over herself which he had always coveted, and indeed Craig convinces himself that he was "everything to Bernice" (*B.* p.19). On the other hand, Margaret cannot believe that her friend could have taken her own life and finally works out Bernice's Freudian logistics. Even from the grave, the female protagonist assumes power over the living, and as in the later plays the principal male character is shown to be undoubtedly weaker than his female counterpart.

10.-Hutchins Hapgood, *A Victirian in the Modern World,*(1939), Seattle and London; University of Washington Press, 1972, p. 377.

Glaspell's men canot understand their women; with the one exception of Silas Morton, they are vastly inferior intellectual and moral beings[11] . The logical corollary of this inequality would be that the women join forces against them, creating a higher caste. But Glaspell has no preconceived notions of woman's superiority. In *The Verge*, Claire cannot bond with her daughter, that "creditable young American" who goes with "all the girls" or with her sister, the prototypical self-sacrificing Mother (*V.* p.74). Bernice and Margaret, whose bonding ensures the latter's final comprehension of her friend's action, have to contend with Craig's sister who is prepared to defend him come what may, while in *Inheritors* Mrs Fejevary, in spite of her maternal feelings towards Madeline, can only echo her husband's arguments. Nonetheless, the possibility of real understanding between women attracted Glaspell, and her first play was in fact a study of female bonding.

Trifles (1916) opens with the sheriff and his men hopelessly looking for clues to the murder of Minnie Temple's husband, who has been strangled with a rope. While they cannot bring themselves to believe that a woman - Minnie herself - could have done the deed, their wives, who visit the house to collect some clothes for Minnie to wear in prison, spot and interpret certain clues: a dirty kitchen, bread not made, crooked sewing, a broken canary cage, a dead canary. The women had been prepared to condemn Minnie, but as they talk of her they learn to give credit to old Grandmother Morton's knowledge of pioneer life and realise how they could have helped: "Oh, I wish I'd come over her in a while! That was a crime! That was a crime!...We live close together and we live far apart. We all go through the same things - it's all just a different kind of the same thing" (*I.* p.44). They begin to perceive that Minnie Temple has "effectively triumphed over a cruel male jailer" and to understand that the annihilation of male authority, which oppresses them too, depends on their bond[12]

Though Glaspell never again used female bonding as the main theme of a play, it surfaces in *Bernice* and is significant in the late *Alison's House* (1930). This thinly disguised life of Emily Dickinson begins after the protagonist's death, when we learn that Alison, the poet, had long since sacrificed her forbidden love in order not to bring scandal on the family. Elsa, her niece, has run off with a married man, and even though that is precisely what Alison had not done, Elsa feels a special understanding

11.-Issac Goldberg, comparing the plays of Eugene O'Neill and Susan Glaspell, observes: "O'Neill's women do not understand their menfolk; Glaspell's men do not understand their women." In Glaspell's case, Goldberg attributes this lack of understanding to the fact that the men are "eminently normal". *The Drama of Transition: Native and Exotic Playcraft*, Cincinnati: Stewart Kidd, 1922, p. 477.)
12.-Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land*, p. 91.

betweeen them. When a cache of unpublished poems by Alison is discovered, Elsa claims them for herself because she alone can "know their value" (*AH.* p.145). Alison, the seer, the one who always "knew" and understood, and had the courage to sacrifice love and to find "victory in defeat", has left a legacy for all women in the form of her poetry (*AH.* p.147).

Susan Glaspell's attitude to society and to woman's duty towards it is ambivalent. Rejection of responsibility to a society which "exerts an unmitigatedly destructive pressure on individuality" is the inescapable consequence of the patriarchal American myth[13] . In men's writings society is assumed to be the adversary, the obstacle to self-definiton, and is depicted as female. As women, the life-givers and educators, we cannot blithely cast ourselves in the role of the enemy and are faced with a confusing equivocalness which is the source of our fascination with our position in society. In our texts society is not simply the enemy that must be defeated but an integral part of our lives, to be examined and if possible understood. Glaspell's women seek self-definition as women at home and beyond ; that is, they enter the male sphere thus being both inside and outside society.

Glaspell is torn between the patriarchal myth she had been taught to respect and her realisation that it is false. Women must choose between their individuality and their role in society, but Glaspell never presents this choice in clear-cut terms of right and wrong. Madeline must satisfy either herself or her family; Claire's impulse to create new forms of life is commendable, and yet it brings anguish to herself and those who love her; Bernice's lie, viewed from the outside, is wicked, but it gives Craig confidence in himself. Alison rejected love, gave her life to her family and poetry, and achieved self-definition which love on its own, as Elsa learns, cannot offer. Susan Glaspell cannot condemn her women for opposing society - an attitude which would have found acceptance in the patriarchal world - but she is painfully conscious of the consequences of their rebellions.

Glaspell's protagonists do rebel: they insist on appropriating to themselves the traditionally male quest for self-definition. They are aware that they transgress the laws of society and that retribution will follow. This is abundantly clear in *Trifles* and in *Inheritors* where the Law steps in bodily. Retribution in *The Verge* is more subtle and ironical; Claire is conscious that she has gone too far, and that the law of man no longer applies to her. Yet she has put herself under the supposedly higher law of a man-made God and realises that her only salvation lies in insanity.

In her plays Susan Glaspell challenged the prevailing patriarchal myth and she paid the consequences. While she enjoyed the "protection" of her husband and the circle of friends that had originally formed the

13.-Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood", p. 71.

Provincetown Players, her plays were produced, published and praised. In 1922, however, just before the first night of *Chains of Dew*, she left for Greece with Cook; and when she returned after his death two years later the Provincetown Players had already forgotten their founder and his wife. Lacking support, Glaspell retired to her clapboard cottage in Provincetown and returned to writing fiction - the only medium in which she could examine her discontent with society in relative independence.