

## “American Homespun Fascists”:

### Sean O’Casey and the Returning Veteran at the American Negro Theatre

**Abstract:** This article explores four works produced by the American Negro Theatre for stage and radio between September 1945 and July 1946: Arthur Laurents’s “The Face” (1945), Samuel J. Kootz’s *Home is the Hunter* (1945-46), Erik Barnouw’s “The Story They’ll Never Print” (1946) and Sean O’Casey’s *Juno and the Paycock* (1946), arguing that they collectively constitute a coherent, if uneven, set of responses to what A.N.T. co-founder and director, Abram Hill, had called in September 1945 “one of the most pressing questions facing the world today: What is the reaction of the returning Negro GI to his land of democracy?” This essay identifies the interrelatedness of these four works and draws on archival sources to pay close attention to the production of *Juno* (which has never previously been discussed at length or in connection with the A.N.T.’s other returning veteran dramas). Analysing the A.N.T.’s *Juno* as an oblique “returning Negro soldier drama” that critically retools what Judith Smith terms “trading places” stories of the immediate post-war years, this essay further contends that the company tread a fine line between an explicit and implicit critique of the U.S., between protesting against “American homespun fascists” and asserting the ordinariness of African American soldiers. While this strategy sometimes risked opacity, it invited astute audiences to make connections that were inferred rather than asserted and thus circumvented accusations of anti-Americanism.

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In the fifth volume of his autobiography, *Rose and Crown* (1952), Irish playwright Sean O’Casey recalls his visit to the United States in 1934. On a train bound for Boston, he was waited upon by an African American Pullman porter from Alabama which causes O’Casey, narrating in 1952, to reflect on the only other Alabamian of his acquaintance: a white G.I. whom he met, several years after the 1934 train journey, outside his home in Totnes, Devon. Recalling the G.I.’s longing to return to Alabama, and comparing him with the Pullman porter, O’Casey writes: “Two men, one a negro, anxious to keep away from the cotton fields or from a job in Mobile; the other, a white, eager to get back once more to Alabama; and God deciding. Nothing in the State for one; everything in it for the other.”<sup>1</sup> The coordinates of O’Casey’s musings in *Rose and Crown* – segregation, racism, nostalgia (or lack of it) for home and the prospect of return from combat after World War II – are deeply suggestive, given that the summer after World War II ended, O’Casey’s 1924 play, *Juno and the Paycock*, was staged for eight performances with an all-black cast and a black director,

Charles Sebree, at the American Negro Theatre (A.N.T.) in Harlem. Preoccupied with the Irish national conflicts of the 1910s and 1920s, *Juno* features a physically and psychologically scarred war veteran. His post-conflict trauma and divided loyalties resonated with both its 1946 audiences in Harlem and with the team behind the production, several of whom, including Sebree, were themselves war veterans.

In fact, the staging of *Juno* in July 1946 must be seen as one of a series of efforts on the part of the A.N.T. to address the returning veteran, a “problem” that was then receiving widespread attention in the U.S. broadly and on Broadway in particular. Arnaud D’Usseau’s and James Gow’s *Deep are the Roots* (1945), Robert Ardrey’s *Jeb* (1946), Don Appell’s *This, Too, Shall Pass* (1946) and Maxine Wood’s *On Whitman Avenue* (1946) dealt specifically with the returning African American soldier. Arthur Laurents’s *Home of the Brave* (1945) and Don Appell’s *This, Too, Shall Pass* (1946) confronted the prejudices suffered by Jewish American G.I.s at the hands of their fellow American servicemen. Meanwhile, Edward Chodorov’s *Decision* (1944) traced a white returning soldier’s eventual realisation that, as Abram Hill, A.N.T. co-founder and director, put it in his review of the play, “American homespun Fascists” comprise “a second front” that must be challenged as vigilantly as fascist enemies in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

The A.N.T.’s production of O’Casey’s play – along with Samuel J. Kootz’s *Home is the Hunter* (December 1945 to January 1946, dir. Abram Hill), the broadcast of Arthur Laurents’s award-winning radio play, “The Face” (September 1945) and Erik Barnouw’s “The Story They’ll Never Print” (May 1946) on WNEW radio – collectively constitute a coherent, if uneven, set of responses to what Hill had called in September 1945 “one of the most pressing questions facing the world today: What is the reaction of the returning Negro GI to his land of democracy?”<sup>3</sup> Identifying for the first time the interrelatedness of these four

works produced by the A.N.T. for stage and radio between September 1945 and July 1946 and drawing on archival resources to pay close attention to the production of *Juno* (which has never previously been discussed at length or in connection with the A.N.T.'s other returning veteran dramas), I argue here that the company's performances of these four dramas can be understood as "trading places" narratives. In these narratives, the specifically racialised experiences of returning African American veterans are smuggled into plays that were originally cast with white – qua "universal" – actors. These "trading places" gestures on the part of the A.N.T. thus keep in play the African American soldier's "two-ness," as W.E.B. DuBois put it in 1903, as a figure embodying both national and minority identities where one is, at times, subsumed by the other while at other times one is in profound conflict with the other.<sup>4</sup>

These articulations echo what Judith Smith identifies as the "trading places" stories prominent on page, stage and screen in the immediate post-war years while also repurposing Smith's concept. According to Smith, such stories "allowed characters, as surrogates for the audience, to discover that the apparently fixed racial and sexual boundaries that legitimated exclusions from citizenship were in fact permeable."<sup>5</sup> Encompassing examples such as Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit* (1944), Laura Z. Hobson's *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) and Laurence's *Home of the Brave*, these narratives relied upon

presenting the different victims of discrimination as interchangeable in order to reveal the dangers of "domestic fascism." Writers of these stories assumed that they could challenge racist ideas by revealing the fallacies of anti-Semitism *or* racism, that they could show the social costs of segregation by exposing discriminatory practices in housing and employment toward Jews *or* African Americans.<sup>6</sup>

In some cases, “trading places” occurs within the narrative universe of a given text: Philip Green in *Gentleman’s Agreement*, a gentile, passes as Jewish in order to gain insights into anti-Semitism for the story he has been assigned to write for a national magazine. In others, “trading places” transpires in the adaptation of a text for the stage or screen: in the Hollywood adaptation of Laurents’s play (dir. Mark Robson, 1949), the Jewish soldier, Peter Coen, became Peter Moss, an African American G.I. For Smith, the potential of “trading places” stories (all of them penned by white writers, some of whom were Jewish) to “represent the possibilities of a racially inclusive and cosmopolitan citizenship” was often undermined by their tendency to elide difference and naturalise boundaries of exclusion.<sup>7</sup> Was it therefore impossible for the A.N.T., a predominantly African American company, to deploy similar tactics to more liberatory ends?

If the resolutions to the “trading places” stories that Smith discusses “emphasized everyone’s ‘sameness’” and therefore “risked discouraging a deeper inquiry into the historical production of race and racialization,” the A. N. T.’s productions of “The Face,” *Home is the Hunter*, “The Story They’ll Never Print” and *Juno*, sought *both* to elide *and* highlight “difference.”<sup>8</sup> The A.N.T. hoped to draw attention to the general challenges facing the returning veteran. But through casting, staging and the potentialities offered by the aural medium of radio, it also hoped to suggest the specific obstacles facing African American returning soldiers. The four works are thus of a piece with the aims of the A.N.T., one of which was to develop plays that “furnish commentary, interpretation, illumination and criticism of *our common lives* during contemporary times.”<sup>9</sup> They also echo some of the rhetorical strategies deployed in contemporary journalism and other commentaries about the returning African American soldier, which also maintained a productive tension between the general and the particular. For instance, a 1945 editorial in *Opportunity* devoted to the

topic “The Negro Veteran Comes Home” emphasised that while “the Negro veteran” might be particularly “embittered by our consistent refusal to give democracy a chance here at home, [. . .] *all* our soldiers, black and white alike, [deserve] the chance to forget the hell of war, and the opportunity to live in peace and in security.”<sup>10</sup>

Two of these works, “The Face” and “The Story They’ll Never Print” were “readymade” trading places stories: they already featured characters who, in Smith’s terms, invited audiences to see “different victims of discrimination as interchangeable”: a disabled veteran in “The Face”; an African American veteran in “The Story They’ll Never Print.” However, *Home is the Hunter* and *Juno and the Paycock* were originally penned for casts unmarked by race. In *Home is the Hunter*, their whiteness was, therefore, assumed; in *Juno and the Paycock*, the nationality of the characters as written (Irish) also covered their race. The A.N.T.’s casting of these plays with African American actors invited audiences to engage in a different kind of “trading places” experience that linked African American veterans’ post-war struggles with all veterans impacted by participation in World War II. Thus, the A.N.T.’s *Juno* might be considered a – perhaps oblique – variation on Smith’s “trading places” scenario, one that imports an Irish veteran character (who is implicitly white) from a remote national conflict to reflect on the more immediate and proximate experiences of African American participation in and return from World War II.

Scholarly conversations regarding the significance and legacy of the A.N.T. have become more sustained and energetic since the publication of Max Shulman’s 2016 article on the A.N.T.’s radio dramas, Jonathan Shandell’s full-length study *The American Negro Theatre and the Long Civil Rights Era* (2018) and Julie Burrell’s *The Civil Rights Theatre Movement in New York City, 1939-1966: Staging Freedom* (2019). Devoting three chapters to the work of the A.N.T. and three to case studies of key figures who cut their creative

teeth with the company (Frederick O'Neal, Alice Childress and Sidney Poitier), Shandell draws attention to "the real tensions that the company felt throughout its history: between uptown and downtown, between amateurism and professionalism, and most importantly between the competing ideologies of ethnocentrism and integrationism." For Shandell, the A.N.T. "labored to carve out a sustainable position amid these competing influences."<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, Burrell, who discusses the A.N.T.'s production of Theodore Browne's *Natural Man* (1941) among several other examples of theatre making in New York at mid-century, singles out the A.N.T. as being of "outsized importance to the civil rights theatre movement."<sup>12</sup> She also dedicates a chapter to what she calls, after Smith, "returning Negro soldier dramas" *Deep are the Roots, Jeb* and *On Whitman Avenue*, arguing that they "index the postwar national consensus on race, which was moving into the era of racial liberalism" in which "the federal government began to actively intervene in the dismantling of Jim Crow" because it perceived that de facto segregation might prove an obstacle to U.S. economic success.<sup>13</sup> Shulman discusses the A.N.T.'s performances on WNEW radio, particularly Laurents's "The Face," to argue that in spite of the network's strenuous efforts to encourage "colour-deafness" in its audience, the A.N.T. nonetheless managed to infuse "its performances on the radio with an unexpected challenge to the racial status quo in the country."<sup>14</sup> Building on the work of these scholars, the discussion that follows groups together in one section "The Face," "The Story They'll Never Print" and *Home is the Hunter* and devotes a second section to *Juno and the Paycock*. Because the latter performance has received no attention in previous discussions of the A.N.T., I will devote the most substantive section of the essay to it. Moreover, it represents the most obvious departure from Smith's model of "trading places" and thus makes available a new way of approaching the genre of "returning Negro soldier dramas," illuminating the work the A.N.T.

accomplished in emphasising both the “universal” and “particular” experiences of African American veterans.

The A.N.T. was founded by Abram Hill, Frederick O’Neal and others in Harlem in 1940. Many of its members and supporters emerged from the New York “Negro Unit” of the Federal Theatre Project, which ceased operations in 1939. It envisaged itself as a “people’s theatre which shall in effect, be a national theatre.”<sup>15</sup> The A.N.T proposed, in its Constitution and By-Laws, to devote itself to “the honest portrayal of Negro life and character,” to seek “to avoid the distorted patterns of the past” and “to relegate them into oblivion or at least present [a] more balanced picture of his life.”<sup>16</sup> By 1946, it had approximately 100 members, 90% of whom were black.<sup>17</sup> For the first five years of its existence, the A.N.T.’s plays were performed in the basement of the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library at W.135<sup>th</sup> Street. Thereafter, the company attempted to raise \$300, 000 for the construction of its own theatre; in the meantime, it found a new home at W.126<sup>th</sup> Street. The A.N.T.’s greatest success came in 1944, when it staged *Anna Lucasta*, a theretofore unknown play by a white playwright, Philip Yordan, about a Polish American family, with an all-black cast. The play ran for nineteen performances in Harlem before being bought by producer, John Wildberg, who took the play to Broadway’s Mansfield Theatre, where it ran for two years. The production also spawned national and international tours and two film adaptations. In June 1942 the A.N.T. launched its School of Drama.<sup>18</sup> In 1945, the A.N.T. added a third activity to its portfolio: a Sunday afternoon radio series for the New York City radio station, WNEW. But by this time, arguably, the A.N.T. had entered its downward spiral, leading to Hill’s resignation of his directorship in February 1948 and culminating in the termination of the A.N.T.’s activities by 1950. The most commonly cited reasons for the decline of the A.N.T. are, first, the Broadway and international success of



*Anna Lucasta*, which meant that “new actors joined the group with an eye fixed firmly on Broadway opportunities”;<sup>19</sup> and second, the fact that “After 1945 the company produced a series of mediocre plays and received a series of mediocre reviews.”<sup>20</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the A.N.T. was both affected by and deeply engaged with the global conflict that had already begun when the company launched in 1940. It had its most obvious impact on the A.N.T. in terms of members of the company who entered the armed forces during World War II. According to Claire Leonard, Yordan’s agent, the company had started out with “a cooperative founding group of 30” but, by July 1944 – when she profiled the A.N.T. for *Theatre Arts* – this number had been “reduced by a third engaged in wartime service around the globe.”<sup>21</sup> Shandell notes, moreover, that due to increasingly strained [resources and staff] during the World War II years, the A.N.T. “paused its production activities” between June 1942 and November 1943.<sup>22</sup> If the membership and endeavours of the A.N.T. were curtailed by war, the conflict nonetheless provided opportunities, many of them unexpected, for creative enlistees and draftees. Owen Dodson, whose play *Garden of Time* was staged by the A.N.T. in 1945, was Director of Drama at the Hampton Institute in Virginia when he enlisted in the U.S. Navy in September 1942 and was sent – along with artist Charles Sebree and actor Frank Silvera, among other artists and intellectuals – to the Camp Robert Smalls (segregated) training facility at Great Lakes Naval Base, Illinois. Because of his expertise in theatre arts, Dodson was charged with putting on “a series of skits of military heroism as well as outstanding events from Negro life.”<sup>23</sup> Sebree collaborated with Dodson on these productions, using his background in both choreography and costume design to good effect and, presumably, acquiring further skills that would subsequently lead him to design sets and costumes, and, eventually, direct *Juno and the Paycock* for the A.N.T. After the war ended, the company welcomed returning and new members who had served

in the armed forces. Elwood Smith, who went on to star in *Home is the Hunter*, was a second lieutenant in the army, trained to be a pilot and became a special service officer before being honourably discharged in late 1944. He enrolled in the A.N.T.'s drama school in September 1945.<sup>24</sup> Evelio Grillo, who also appeared in *Home is the Hunter*, read a story about the A.N.T. in a newspaper while he was serving as a member of the 823<sup>rd</sup> Engineering Aviation Battalion in India and resolved, then and there, to join the company upon his return.<sup>25</sup>

On the home front, what has perhaps been under-recognised to date is how exceptionally well versed the A.N.T.'s director, Abram Hill, was in the activities of both Broadway and "little" theatres (and the wider entertainment industry) and how substantial a network he had in theatre circles in New York City and beyond. He had his finger on the pulse of both the commercial and social activist theatre and, presumably, drew liberally on this well of knowledge in his dealings with the A.N.T. In his column for the weekly *Amsterdam News* (New York), Hill reviewed the latest Broadway theatre productions, including returning veteran plays such as *Decision*, *Deep Are the Roots* and *Jeb*. Moreover, Hill's association with Stage for Action (SFA) – with which *Decision* playwright, Chodorov, and *Deep Are the Roots* co-author, d'Usseau, were also involved – points to his interest in the challenges facing returning black veterans and how these obstacles might be highlighted and negotiated on stage. Stage for Action was a theatre group initiated in New York City in 1943 by the white actress Perry Miller as an organisation that "saw performance as *the* solution, the ideal weapon for combating native fascism, unemployment, atomic warfare, and other serious social problems."<sup>26</sup> In January 1945, Chodorov was elected Chairman of the SFA's Board of Directors and, in April of the same year, Hill assumed duties as Vice Chairman.<sup>27</sup> At least two SFA performances engaged directly with the experiences of African

American servicemen. In October 1945, SFA produced a play entitled *Skin Deep* by Charles Polacheck, which invites its audience to take an imaginative bus journey. The stops along the way – “a medical tent in the South Pacific during World War II, a blood specialist center and a psychologist’s office in New York City, and the Tuskegee Institute” – serve to debunk “common prejudices of the 1940s regarding racial differences in blood type, brain size, intelligence, and contributions to civilization.”<sup>28</sup> One of the play’s set pieces sees a black medic donating blood to an injured white soldier, a scene that clearly alludes to the Red Cross’s policy of segregating blood from the initiation of its blood donor programme in 1941 to 1950. Meanwhile, Arnold Perl’s *Dream Job*, presented by Stage for Action in March 1946, tells the story of African American veteran Ted, who “[returning] from war with a Purple Heart, [. . .] finds a segregated homeland where he is denied service in a bar and unable to find a job because of his race.”<sup>29</sup> Hill’s involvement with SFA bespeaks an engagement with the challenges facing returning veterans that went beyond his directorship of the A.N.T.

### **I. Returning Veterans and the A.N.T.: On Radio and on Stage**

Perl’s *Dream Job* was based on the same material as an earlier radio play of his, “The Glass,” which had been banned from CBS’s airwaves in August 1945.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the controversy regarding “The Glass” helps to triangulate the relationship between the A.N.T. (through Hill), radio, and returning veteran dramas. The A.N.T. made its début on WNEW radio just a month after CBS attempted to have Perl’s play broadcast as an episode of *Assignment Home*, a series designed to educate the public regarding “veteran readjustment.” As Barbara Savage details, the script foregrounded the contrasting experiences, upon arriving home, of two returning veterans – one black, one white – who had fought alongside one another at the Battle of the Bulge, been treated for injuries in adjacent hospital beds, and

received Bronze Star medals. After the War Department withdrew its support for the broadcast – because of a stated aversion to “presuming to dictate to civilians how they should act towards other civilians” – CBS never aired the programme.<sup>31</sup> The controversy was reported reasonably widely in the liberal and black press. Abner W. Berry of the *Daily Worker* wondered why CBS was happy to air an *Assignment Home* episode the previous December dealing with “the problems facing a crippled vet” but not “The Glass,” where the veteran in the latter is “crippled by color instead of enemy bullets.”<sup>32</sup>

The implications of Berry’s comment are significant given that the A.N.T.’s début performance on WNEW was of another *Assignment Home* script: Laurents’s “The Face.” The play, which was first performed in December 1944, concerns a soldier called Harold Ingalls, who suffers severe facial disfigurement when, under enemy fire in Casablanca, a can of gasoline explodes in his face. Given the War Department’s reluctance to represent “ordinary returning soldiers as black, or to us[e] black veterans to represent postwar citizens,” Smith argues, it is perhaps unsurprising that there was a “turn toward the disabled vet – who was symbolically, if not socially, less challenging than the black vet.” Because “Hitler’s version of Nazi eugenics had singled out physical disability as a threat to the Aryan nation,” the disabled veteran stood in “for all those threatened by fascism.”<sup>33</sup> By performing “The Face” as an all-black cast some nine months after its original broadcast, the A.N.T. encouraged listeners to make precisely the connection that Berry identified between “The Face” and “The Glass” (“a crippled vet” / a veteran “crippled by color”), a connection that the play itself already invited. As Harold’s psychiatrist tells him at the end of the play: “Harold, every single day, people get slapped [. . .] for religion, for color, for how they talk or what they look like,” but “a man’s face doesn’t matter any more than his religion, his color, his clothes.”<sup>34</sup> Indeed, noting the prominence of “the defacement of the individual” in several

works of fiction dealing with World War II, such as Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions* (1948) and Harry Brown's *A Walk in the Sun* (1945), George Hutchinson argues that "Losing the memory of faces or losing one's own face is the ultimate trope for not just anonymity but disappearance."<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the aural medium through which the work was transmitted withheld from listeners what Gayle Wald terms "the visual protocols of racial classification," forcing them to reflect upon and reckon with their tendency to arrange fellow human beings into hierarchies according to their physical appearance.<sup>36</sup> As Shulman puts it, "The radio abolishes the primary signifier of skin colour, leaving the voice to take on a synecdochic predominance in which it is the sole conveyor of a host of referents."<sup>37</sup> By casting "The Face" with African American actors, the A.N.T. both expanded and qualified the figure of the "returning veteran" put forth in CBS's *Assignment Home* series.

The A.N.T.'s subsequent experience with Barnouw's radio play, "The Story They'll Never Print," underscores the astuteness of the decision to begin their WNEW series with Laurents's "The Face." "The Story They'll Never Print" was broadcast on WNEW on 5 May 1946 in the A.N.T.'s regular 5pm slot and featured Eugene O'Neill, Jr. as narrator. It was produced (as usual) by Jack Grogan in association with the Urban League, a (fictional) representative of which appears in the play to advise a factory on implementing their new plan to hire African Americans. It is titled "The Story They'll Never Print" because it charts the peaceful integration of the Smith & Harris factory, emphasising the ordinariness and everydayness of the new policy. A reporter lurks around the factory hoping to witness a conflict that will generate a sensationalist headline – "QUOTE. SIX SLAIN AS RACE RIOT BREAKS OUT IN FACTORY LOCKER ROOM. HIRING POLICIES BLAMED. UNQUOTE"<sup>38</sup> – but Jack Wells, an African American war veteran, is greeted with nonchalance, and even a degree of friendliness, by white coworkers on his first day at the factory. The play certainly

pays attention to the challenges facing African American veterans: prior to securing a job at Smith & Harris, Jack works as a dishwasher in a cafeteria because, upon his return from the war and with the privations of the Great Depression etched in recent memory, he “grabbed what [he] could get” (210). However, “The Story They’ll Never Print” is more interested in the “Road to Damascus” conversion undergone by the President of the factory, Harris, after having a conversation with his black gardener, whose son was killed in action during the war:

When my gardener told me about it he said, without any seeming bitterness: “If he had come back, I wonder if he could have landed a job?” From that moment on, I could never forget that if he had come back, with his medal for bravery, he couldn’t even have gotten a job in *my* plant. I couldn’t rest until I’d set that right, as I should have done long ago. (212)

If “The Face” invites audiences to see the “crippled vet” as a stand-in for a veteran “crippled by color,” Harris in “The Story They’ll Never Print” is inspired to change his business practices after an instructive encounter with his black gardener. Two opportunities to air “The Story They’ll Never Print” to wider audiences after its initial WNEW broadcast were thwarted, however. The Urban League hoped that CBS would air the play but, as Savage recounts, “network officials felt that the script was too hard-hitting on the racial question for its national audience.”<sup>39</sup> It was, however, approved for broadcast over the Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) only to be canned at the last minute by an official who, according to Barnouw himself, refused to “have any of this nigger-loving shit on this network.”<sup>40</sup>

In its stage endeavours, too, the A.N.T. was committed to exploring the experiences of the returning veteran. From December 1945 to January 1946, the A.N.T. produced an original play, *Home is the Hunter* by Samuel J. Kootz, which was concerned with a returning

soldier who, in the author's own description, "went abroad to fight Fascism and became converted to it because he would like to exercise such power himself and because he would like to enjoy the ruthless, brutal control which Fascism had over its subjects."<sup>41</sup> The play was a four-hander, featuring Elwood Smith as the returning soldier, Dawson Drake, Jr., Evelio Grillo as his father, Clarice Taylor as his wife, Ann, and Maxwell Glanville as Rusty Saunders, a labour activist with whom Ann has fallen in love during her husband's absence at war.

Samuel Sillen of the *Daily Worker* provides the following synopsis of the play's plot:

[Kootz] introduces a soldier, Dawson Drake Jr., who returns from Germany hopped up with fascist ideas. Inheriting his father's huge factory, he wants to beat down the unions and help American big business succeed where the Nazis, through "over-haste" failed. The soldier discovers that his wife hates his ideas and the sexual brutality to which they are linked. Ow[n]ing a third share in the factory, she joins with a union leader in trying to persuade Drake's father that the workers should share the profits. The vet shoots his wife and the labor leader, and the curtain drops as the senior Drake calls the police to nab his son.<sup>42</sup>

The play received very negative reviews. The reviewer for the *New York Times* found that Kootz's play amounted to "a windy dissertation on capital and labor that well might have come out of pamphlets representing the divergent views of the United Automobile Workers and General Motors."<sup>43</sup> George Jean Nathan echoed this criticism, writing that *Home is the Hunter* is "infinitely less a play than a series of quotations from pamphlets arguing the causes of capital and labor."<sup>44</sup> Burton Rascoe of the *New York World-Telegram* was affronted by the play's suggestion that those who remained at home during the war were the "real" heroes but he singled out Maxwell Glanville as having risen "above the juvenile quality of the script."<sup>45</sup> *PM* took the play to task for Kootz's "clumsy stagecraft and feeble

talk” while the *Daily Worker* lamented that the play was “heavily melodramatic” given that Kootz was clearly “troubled about the menace of fascism lurking in anti-labor attitudes.”<sup>46</sup> The play fared no better in the black press. The *Amsterdam News* praised Elwood Smith’s acting ability but noted that Kootz’s “sharp and deserved barbs at Naziism” were “done without finesse or subtlety, and leaves one cold.”<sup>47</sup> F.W., for *The People’s Voice*, wrote that the cast of four “was handicapped by a series of long, repetitious speeches, which went around and around getting nowhere.”<sup>48</sup>

Despite the negative reviews, it is important to recognise what the company may have been attempting to achieve in staging *Home is the Hunter*. At a moment when “problem plays” broadly, and “returning Negro soldier dramas” more specifically, were prominent on Broadway, the A.N.T. eschewed the specificity of the African American soldier’s experience by choosing to stage *Home is the Hunter*. In so doing, it also sidestepped one of the major shortcomings of *Deep are the Roots*, *Jeb* and *On Whitman Avenue*: as Burrell notes, while they all “all ostensibly center on a valiant black soldier fighting for civil rights, it is ultimately the struggle of white characters to eliminate prejudice from their hearts and minds that is privileged.”<sup>49</sup> The Broadway plays, then, tend towards white solipsism. Smith, who played the returning soldier in *Home is the Hunter*, professed himself attracted to the play in part because it was not specifically written for a black cast. As a result, it features “No ‘Negro twists.’ [. . .]. All in the good fight to prove that Negroes are like any other people – no better, no worse, and no different.”<sup>50</sup> Whereas the African American soldiers in the three Broadway plays are exemplary and highly decorated patriots, the returning veteran in *Home is the Hunter* – here (but not by necessity) played by an African American actor – has been won over by Fascist ideologies in Europe. However, while the production itself relies on the audience accepting that Dawson Drake, Jr. might be “any



soldier,” the programme notes for the play emphasised the fact that the male actors were themselves all war veterans: Smith “spent three years in the Army, attaining the rank of second lieutenant”; Glanville “is returning to the American Negro Theatre after almost three years in the Army Air Forces; Grillo “entered the Army in 1941, and was honorably discharged in 1945.”<sup>51</sup> In other words, the A.N.T. adopted the “trading places” story’s commitment to portraying racialised others as “ordinary Americans” (or “ordinary Americans” as racialised others) while simultaneously asserting the specificity of the black soldier’s experience.

Moreover, the reaction of former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt – who attended the play’s premiere – provides an additional clue as to why the play might have been received so negatively. She wrote in her “My Day” column that, while she found the play “interesting,” she “thought it unfortunate that the playwright had cast a returning soldier as the Fascist.”<sup>52</sup> For Roosevelt, it was unsavoury and uncomfortable to be confronted with the possibility that a U.S. citizen-soldier might also be a Fascist. However, in casting the play with African American actors, the A.N.T. provocatively encouraged audience members to acknowledge that, for African Americans, Fascism might not seem all that far removed from U.S. ideologies. Despite the rhetoric vaunting democracy, equality and economic opportunity as fundamental U.S. values in opposition to Fascism, African American experiences of racial terror belied such self-congratulatory discourses.

## **II. “My fault that he was done in”: The Returning Veteran in *Juno and the Paycock***

While *Home is the Hunter* was panned by critics, it made quite an impression on a young Harold Belafonte. A janitor in the building where Clarice Taylor and Maxwell Glanville lived, Belafonte had just been discharged from the navy in December 1945. Taylor offered him

two tickets to see the play, in which she was appearing, to thank him for hanging her Venetian blinds. As he puts it:

I knew these characters. I knew the problems they were talking about. That play didn't just speak to me. It mesmerized me. This was a whole new world – an exhilarating world. And there onstage, among the other actors, were my tenants, Clarice Taylor and Maxwell Glanville. Outside the theater, I was just their janitor, but here in the darkness, I felt a kinship with them.<sup>53</sup>

Shortly after, Belafonte joined the A.N.T. and appeared in the revival of *On Strivers Row* and the student play, *Days of our Youth*, before taking on the role of Johnny Boyle, the traumatised war veteran, in *Juno and the Paycock*. *Juno* was the first of three plays comprising the company's summer series of 1946, the others being Patrick Hamilton's *Angel Street* and *You Can't Take it With You* by Moss Hart and George Kaufman. Finding it "impossible to find a worthwhile new play" (and perhaps stung by the unanimous criticism of its most recent new play, *Home is the Hunter*), A.N.T. founding member James Jackson wrote to Frederick O'Neal in May 1946 that the company "decided to revise some of the old good plays."<sup>54</sup> Indications are that the company initially envisaged performing J.M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* (1907) rather than O'Casey's play. Jackson wrote to O'Neal:

The idea of doing summer stock appeals to us and we intend to do about six plays during the summer. At present, we are reading "PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD." It is an Irish script and Charles Seebree [sic] will direct. This is, in a way, varying from our original perspectus [sic]. I would appreciate learning your views on this matter.<sup>55</sup>

The *New York Times* confirmed Synge's play in the A.N.T.'s summer line-up on 31 May.

It is not known why the switch to *Juno and the Paycock* was made, though it is intriguing to conjecture why the company replaced Synge's play with O'Casey's.<sup>56</sup> Set in a Dublin tenement building during the Irish Civil War in 1922, *Juno* is a tragicomedy that traces the disintegration of the Boyle family. When the play opens, the mother, Juno, is the only member of the household of four who is working. Her husband, Jack, is a ne'er-do-well who spends his time drinking and carousing with his good-for-nothing friend, Joxer Daly; their daughter, Mary, is on strike and their son, Johnny, is unable to work after returning from active duty in the Civil War having lost an arm. When Jack is informed that a distant cousin has willed him some money, it looks as though the Boyles' fortunes are about to change: they purchase new furniture and clothing in anticipation of the forthcoming legacy. However, by the end of the play, the inheritance turns out to be a fiction; neighbours and local businesses reclaim the money or items they loaned or sold to the family; Mary is discovered to be pregnant by Charlie Bentham, an English schoolteacher who abandons her and returns to England; and Johnny is revealed to have betrayed his comrade-in-arms, Robbie Tancred, to the Free Staters, resulting in Robbie's death. Johnny is apprehended by his superiors and killed for his actions. The play ends with Juno and Mary leaving the tenement together, determined to make a better life for Mary's baby.

In one of the few extant reviews of the A.N.T. production, M. Vicker of the *Daily Worker* observed that it was unsurprising that the company staged the play: "The bleakness and misery, the strength and faltering induced by oppression might have been passed on by some universal genes of common suffering, their outcroppings in enslaved nations are so similar."<sup>57</sup> While the review perhaps overstates the analogy between the oppression of the Irish and that of African Americans, the play may well have been chosen for its potential to speak to its Harlem audiences regarding the (comparatively) mundane challenges faced by

returning veterans: the effort to find employment, especially if the soldier is now suffering from a physical disability. Juno bemoans the fact that her injured son “wore out the health insurance long ago, he’s afther wearin’ out the unemployment dole, an’, now, he’s thryin’ to wear out me! An’ constantly singin’, no less, when he ought always to be on his knees offerin’ up a Novena for a job.”<sup>58</sup> The play is astute on the extent to which reintegration after war is disproportionately more challenging for the poor. When Johnny reiterates that he fought for his country because “a principle’s a principle,” his mother retorts that he “lost [his] best principle [. . .] when [he] lost [his] arm; them’s the only sort o’ principles that’s any good to a working man” (18). Moreover, the impact of the conflict is felt very keenly by the residents of the tenement house itself. As Juno notes, “Hasn’t the whole house, nearly, been massacred? There’s young Dougherty’s husband with his leg off; Mrs Travers that had her son blew up be a mine in Inchegeela, in Co. Cork; Mrs Mannin’ that lost wan of her sons in an ambush a few weeks ago, an’ now, poor Mrs Tancred’s only child gone West with his body made a colander of” (36). Even at the level of plot, then, *Juno* invited its audiences to make connections with the contemporary moment, if not to the global conflict that had just ended, then to the localised Harlem riots of August 1943 that ensued when an African American veteran, Private Robert Bandy, was shot by a white police officer for intervening in the arrest of Margie Polite at the Braddock Hotel. The riots resulted in six deaths and damage to property amounting to an estimated \$5 million. However, I want to consider the possibility that the play, through its portrayal of Johnny Boyle’s post-traumatic state, could evoke the particular psychological pressures faced by African American soldiers and veterans. Such pressures would have resonated not only with the audience but also with the play’s performers (such as Belafonte) and the director (Sebree).

Sebree (1914-1985), who directed *Juno* was, at that point in his career, better known as a painter and dancer who was connected, via Chicago's artistic circles, to prominent figures such as Katherine Dunham, Langston Hughes, Gordon Parks, Charles White and others.<sup>59</sup> Sebree also knew and corresponded with Alain Locke, who included him in *The Negro in Art* (1940) and secured a commission for him to illustrate Countee Cullen's children's book, *The Lost Zoo* (1940).<sup>60</sup> Discussions of his stage career tend to mention collaborative theatrical efforts during his time in the navy and *Mrs. Patterson*, a play he co-wrote with Greer Johnson and which opened on Broadway in December 1954, starring Eartha Kitt. In the intervening decade or so, he had designed the sets for three A.N.T. productions, his friend Owen Dodson's *Garden of Time* (March to April 1945), Dan Hammerman's *Henri Christophe* (June 1945) and the February 1946 revival of Hill's *On Strivers Row*.<sup>61</sup> In June 1946, he made his A.N.T. directorial debut with *Juno and the Paycock*. Sebree's involvement with the A.N.T. may have sprung from his friendship with Dodson. During his time at Camp Smalls, he was involved (along with Dodson and Silvera) in staging several all-black productions, including *The Ballad of Dorie Miller* (February 1943), about the African American messman awarded the Navy Cross for his heroism during the attack on Pearl Harbor, and *Freedom, The Banner* (June 1943), a "dramatic hymn to the struggle of the Russian people against the Nazis."<sup>62</sup> The production's praise of Russia raised concerns among Dodson's and Sebree's superiors, who feared it was evidence of their pro-Communist leanings. When it became known to naval intelligence that not only had Sebree participated in the production of *Freedom, The Banner* but that he and Silvera had been attending meetings of the communist-leaning John Reed Club, he was discharged from the navy "on a kind of mental disaffection."<sup>63</sup>

Of course, June 1943 was also the month when the Detroit race riots broke out, which made quite an impression on both Dodson and Sebree at Camp Smalls. Dodson explained in an interview:

What I'm trying to tell you is that one night, in this camp, we heard that there was a terrible riot in Detroit, and these big strong black men began to cry. How were their mothers? How were their sisters? How were their brothers? How were their neighbors? Some of the soldiers tried to climb over the barbed wire, but they came back down with blood dripping from their hands. That hurt me a great deal. I had no one in Detroit. I'd never been to Detroit. But what struck me was the idea that these fellows were fighting or preparing to fight for this country, and at the same time there was a fight, just a few miles away, in their own city; I saw the grief and the terror of their being stoned in.<sup>64</sup>

Sebree recalled the events in very similar terms: "some of the men tried to climb over the fence, but they fell back with their hands bleeding like stigmata. To see them in corners weeping, and to see how little the officers cared! It was one of those times I felt a real fear in the camp. I felt the officers and the commander were as bad as the Nazis."<sup>65</sup> These two incidents during Sebree's time at Camp Smalls – the questioning of his loyalty to the U.S. on grounds of assumed Communist sympathies, on the one hand, and anger at ongoing racial inequality in the U.S. comparable (in his view) to that of Nazi Germany, on the other – are especially suggestive in the context of his subsequent direction of *Juno and the Paycock*. Perhaps this play, which dealt with working class Irish men and women during the Irish Civil War, including tormented veteran Johnny Boyle, could capture – albeit obliquely – what *Opportunity* several times called the "paradox" of African American service during World War II. In its Summer 1944 issue, *Opportunity* published a poem by Frenise A. Logan entitled

“Paradox.” In the first stanza, the speaker outlines everything he fights for: democracy; justice and equality; the four freedoms; to keep men free. In the second stanza, however, the speaker recounts how he “look[s] away”:

‘Cause they wouldn’t understand  
The question in my eyes;  
Nor the conflict in my mind.<sup>66</sup>

As an editorial put it in 1945, “The Negro soldier does not love America because he is forced to fight in a segregated army, but rather in spite of this paradox.”<sup>67</sup>

While it is concerned with an entirely different conflict, *Juno*, too, is preoccupied with “the conflict in [the] mind” of Johnny Boyle. The play is ghosted – literally and metaphorically – by the absent presence of Robbie Tancred. The first words uttered in the play are those of Mary, reading from a newspaper: “On a little bye-road, out beyant Finglas, he was found” (1). Mary’s graphic description of the victim’s injuries elicits an emotional response from Johnny: “It’ll soon be that none of you’ll read anythin’ that’s not about butcherin’!” (2). Like many traumatised soldiers, Johnny has trouble sleeping: he can “rest nowhere, nowhere, nowhere” (25). As the play proceeds, we learn that Johnny is haunted by the spectre of Robbie. At one point, he reports having seen Robbie kneeling before a statue, the Sacred Heart light “shinin’ on him...an’ I seen the woun’s bleedin’ in his breast...Oh, why did he look at me like that...it wasn’t my fault that he was done in” (29). Subsequently, the extinguishing of a candle beneath a picture of the Blessed Virgin produces a phantom pain in Johnny, “a pain in [his] breast, like the tearin’ by of a bullet” (53) that anticipates his subsequent death at the hands of his fellow soldiers. Johnny’s hallucinations and pain, both physical and psychological, are attributable neither simply to the loss of a fellow soldier who was known to him since childhood nor survivor’s guilt. Johnny feels guilt

and shame for having betrayed Robbie to the Free Staters, leading to his former comrade's death. Thus, Johnny's post-traumatic state relates not only to his own physical injuries and the death of a fellow combatant; it is intimately bound up with the fact that Johnny is a veteran of a civil war, which places a very specific kind of burden on combatants. For in a civil war, what is loyalty if not betrayal of a fellow countryman? What is betrayal if not loyalty to a fellow countryman? Johnny's predicament spoke eloquently to the divided loyalties felt by African American soldiers in particular: patriotism for the U.S. and committed opposition to Fascism, combined with a profound awareness of and anger regarding the persistence of white supremacy in their own country.

The A.N.T. production of *Juno and the Paycock* acquires greater significance when we consider downtown productions dealing with the returning veteran. In Laurents's *Home of the Brave*, a Jewish American soldier, Peter Coen, suffers from amnesia and psychosomatic paralysis after witnessing his gentile friend, Finch, get shot and wounded during a mapmaking mission to a Pacific island. Subsequently captured and tortured by the Japanese, Finch dies in Coen's arms, after which Coen loses the ability to walk. The army psychiatrist, Captain Bitterger, helps Coen to unravel his conflicted feelings for Finch, especially given that before he was shot, in a fit of anger, Finch just stopped short of calling Coen a "lousy yellow Jew."<sup>68</sup> Bitterger eventually persuades his patient that Coen's momentary feeling of relief that Finch was shot owes itself not to Coen's *difference* from his comrades-in-arms based on his Jewishness, but on his *similarity* to them, for all of whom it would be natural in this situation to feel glad that they are still alive. In other words, for Coen to be cured, he must be persuaded that his feelings are "universal" rather than determined by his ethnicity. As the doctor tells him, "You're the same as everybody else. You're no different, son, no different at all" (182). Four months after *Home of the Brave*



closed on Broadway, the staging of *Juno* by the A.N.T. posed a different question to its audience, one that challenged the conclusion reached by Captain Bitterger in that play. Coen's tortured state of mind, owing to both grief and relief at the death in combat of his friend, reflect the mixed feelings of black and ethnic minority soldiers charged with defending a country that refused to extend to them the rights it championed elsewhere. In the context of *Home of the Brave* and other contemporaneous stagings of the returning veteran, it does not seem too much of a stretch to suggest that an African American audience would have understood Johnny Boyle's wartime perfidy in far more complex terms than a simple case of betrayal or treachery.

*Juno* was by far the most successful of the A.N.T.'s summer series of 1946, at least according to John Hudson Jones. Reviewing the plays for the *Sunday Worker*, Jones found that the selection of *Juno* was "a wise one" and "adhered to the statement of policy made the ANT director Abram Hill before the 1945 Conference of the Arts, Sciences and Professions": "to project men and women on the stage as men and women rather than as exotic distortions."<sup>69</sup> It also brought to a close the A.N.T.'s efforts to address "one of the most pressing questions facing the world today: What is the reaction of the returning Negro GI to his land of democracy?"<sup>70</sup> *Juno* was certainly the most oblique of those endeavours: it was concerned not with a soldier returning from World War II (as were the three other productions discussed here) but with a veteran of a conflict that was (relatively) remote in time and space. It is no doubt for this reason that the connection between *Juno* and the works that preceded it on stage and on the radio has not been identified – either in reviews of the play or in recent scholarship. "Trading places" stories relied on the "surrogate" being recognised as such: Johnny Boyle as a stand-in for African American returning veterans.

While the analogies suggested in trading places stories were often crude and problematic, the alternative – subtlety – risked being entirely illegible to audiences and reviewers alike.<sup>71</sup>

However, the effectiveness of the A.N.T.'s "trading places" strategies becomes clearer when we consider a slightly later veteran play staged by the Committee for the Negro in the Arts (CNA) in 1951. William Branch's *A Medal for Willie* was an obvious retort to plays such as *Deep are the Roots*, *Jeb*, *This, Too, Shall Pass* and *On Whitman Avenue* because it centralises the absent presence of an African American soldier who *doesn't* return to his Southern home town from war (because he dies heroically in combat) and whose posthumous lionisation by local and army officials alike exposes the hypocrisy of a community and country that "jim-crowded him and shunned him and [. . .] shoved him off in a corner."<sup>72</sup> *A Medal for Willie* was obviously indebted to the A.N.T. in terms of personnel: it boasted *Home is the Hunter* alumni Clarice Taylor playing Willie's mother, Elwood Smith as director and Maxwell Glanville as producer. Moreover, it made explicit what the A.N.T.'s "trading places" dramas only suggested: that, as Willie's mother puts it, her son "died fightin' in the wrong place": "*Willie shoulda had that machine gun over here*" (471, italics in original). S.W. Garlington of the *Amsterdam News* (New York) objected strenuously to this language, claiming that it "became so strong until it almost sounded anti-American." If the CNA wished to avoid being smeared as a Communist outfit, Garlington claimed, it should "cut such lines out of the plays they produce."<sup>73</sup>

By contrast, the A.N.T. tread a much finer line between an explicit and implicit critique of the U.S., between patriotism and "anti-Americanism," between protesting against "American homespun fascists" and asserting the ordinariness of African American soldiers. (As Sebree's experience at Camp Smalls suggests, such circumspection was prudent). Its "trading places" scenarios kept in play both the minority and national identities

of African American returning soldiers, enabling the A.N.T. to move between the general and the specific, the universal and the particular. While this strategy sometimes risked opacity, it invited astute audiences to make connections that were inferred rather than asserted and thus circumvented accusations of anti-Americanism. It was also consistent with the work of other minority writers and cultural practitioners of the 1940s, who “test[ed] the limits of ‘universals’ with particulars while maintaining universality as an aspiration.”<sup>74</sup> Ultimately, *Juno*’s brief run in the A.N.T. repertory less than a year after the end of World War II, immediately after the “trading places” radio and stage plays “The Face,” *Home is the Hunter* and “The Story They’ll Never Print,” both invites scholars to group these four returning veteran dramas together and demands a consideration of how “trading places” scenarios were retooled by African American cultural practitioners.

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 Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sean O'Casey, *Autobiographies II: Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well; Rose and Crown; Sunset and Evening Star* (London: Macmillan, 1963) 449.

<sup>2</sup> Abe Hill, "'Decision' Viewed As Being Play Harlemites Should See, Says Hill," *Amsterdam News* (New York) 12 Feb 1944: 11a.

<sup>3</sup> Abe Hill, "Hill Raves About 'Deep Are The Roots,'" *Amsterdam News* (New York) 22 Sept. 1945: 12.

<sup>4</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, ed. Shawn Leigh Alexander (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2018) 3.

<sup>5</sup> Judith E. Smith, *Visions of Belonging: Family Stories, Popular Culture, and Postwar Democracy, 1940-1960* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006) 4.

<sup>6</sup> Smith 5.

<sup>7</sup> Smith 198-99.

<sup>8</sup> Smith 138-39.

<sup>9</sup> "Aims and Purposes," *Home is the Hunter* Programme (New York: American Negro Theatre, 1945) n.p., emphasis added. Kootz Gallery scrapbook #2, 1931-1945. Kootz Gallery records, 1923-1966. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>10</sup> Alphonse Heningburg, "Editorial: The Negro Veteran Comes Home," *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 23.1 (1945): 3, emphasis added.

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Shandell, *The American Negro Theatre and the Long Civil Rights Era* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2018) 11.

<sup>12</sup> Julie Burrell, *The Civil Rights Theatre Movement in New York City, 1939-1966: Staging Freedom* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) 14.

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<sup>13</sup> Burrell 70-72.

<sup>14</sup> Max Shulman, "Tuning the Black Voice: Colour-Deafness and the American Negro Theatre's Radio Dramas," *Modern Drama* 59.4 (2016): 457.

<sup>15</sup> *Constitution and By-Laws of the American Negro Theatre* 3, American Negro Theatre Records, Box 1, Folder 1, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division.

<sup>16</sup> *Constitution and By-Laws* 4.

<sup>17</sup> David Platt, "American Negro Theatre Has a 20-Year Plan," *Daily Worker* 25 Apr. 1946: 12.

<sup>18</sup> Shandell 29.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard L. Peterson, *The African American Theatre Directory, 1816-1960: A Comprehensive Guide to Early Black Theatre Organizations, Companies, Theatres, and Performing Groups* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1997) xiv. In an obituary for Hill, who died in 1986, Loften Mitchell notes that *Anna Lucasta* led to the group being "seen as a springboard to theatrical success" and that the group struggled thereafter, "constantly losing its veterans to the commercial theatre." Loften Mitchell, "Farewell to Abe Hill: Part 2," *Amsterdam News* (New York) 27 Dec. 1986: 13.

<sup>20</sup> Ethel Pitts Walker, "The American Negro Theatre," *The Theatre of Black Americans*, ed. Errol G. Hill (New York: Applause, 1987) 256.

<sup>21</sup> Claire Leonard, "The American Negro Theatre," *Theatre Arts* 28.7 (1944): 423. Leonard's article was condensed for publication in *Negro Digest* in August 1944: 81-82.

<sup>22</sup> Shandell 29. See also 60-61.

<sup>23</sup> James V. Hatch, *Sorrow Is the Only Faithful One: The Life of Owen Dodson* (Champaign: U of Illinois P, 1995) 94.

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<sup>24</sup> Jay Thomas, "Dashing Elwood Smith Deserved Better Treatment Than ANT's New Play Offered," *New York Amsterdam News* 29 Dec. 1945: 21.

<sup>25</sup> "GI Read of 'Anna Lucasta' on Stilwell Highway; Now He's Full-Fledged Actor," *The Afro-American* (Baltimore) 2 Feb. 1946: 10.

<sup>26</sup> Chrystyna Dail, *Stage for Action: U.S. Social Activist Theatre in the 1940s* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2016) 4, emphasis in original.

<sup>27</sup> Dail 38.

<sup>28</sup> Dail 81.

<sup>29</sup> Dail 90.

<sup>30</sup> "Arnold Perl Play Listed," *New York Times* 25 Mar. 1946: 28.

<sup>31</sup> Barbara Dianne Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1999) 149-51.

<sup>32</sup> Abner W. Berry, "Army Kills Radio Play on Jobs for Negro Vets," *Daily Worker* 23 Aug. 1945: 3.

<sup>33</sup> Smith 35.

<sup>34</sup> Arthur Laurents, "The Face," *Radio's Best Plays*, ed. Joseph Liss (New York: Greenberg, 1947) 100.

<sup>35</sup> George Hutchinson, *Facing the Abyss: American Literature and Culture in the 1940s* (New York: Columbia UP, 2018) 129.

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<sup>36</sup> Gayle Wald, *Crossing the Line: Racial Passing in Twentieth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture* (Durham: Duke UP, 2000) 3. A variation on the scenario presented in “The Face” was dramatised in Baynard Kendrick’s novel *Lights Out* (1945), adapted as the film *Bright Victory* (dir. Mark Robson, 1951), in which the veteran’s actual blindness eventually leads him to developing true “color blindness” in respect of an African American veteran who is also blind. See Martin Halliwell, *Therapeutic Revolutions: Medicine, Psychiatry, and American Culture, 1945-1970* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2013) 43-46.

<sup>37</sup> Shulman 465.

<sup>38</sup> Erik Barnouw, “The Story They’ll Never Print,” *Radio’s Best Plays*, ed. Joseph Liss (New York: Greenberg, 1947) 213.

<sup>39</sup> Savage 188.

<sup>40</sup> David Culbert, “Education Unit in World War II: An Interview with Erik Barnouw,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 12.2 (1978): 280.

<sup>41</sup> Samuel M. Kootz, qtd. in Seymour Peck, “Broadway Report: ‘Home is the Hunter,’” *PM* 19 Dec. 1945: n.p.

<sup>42</sup> Samuel Sillen, “American Negro Theatre Opens New Home, But Play Disappoints,” *The Daily Worker* 24 Dec 1945: 11.

<sup>43</sup> L.B.F., “The Play: A ‘Cold’ Housewarming,” *New York Times* 21 Dec. 1945: 25.

<sup>44</sup> George Jean Nathan, “*Home is the Hunter*. December 20, 1945,” *The Theatre Book of the Year, 1945-1946: A Record and an Interpretation* (New York: Knopf, 1946) 236.

<sup>45</sup> Burton Rascoe, “Theater: ‘Home is the Hunter’ is Repugnant Claptrap,” *New York World-Telegram* 21 Dec. 1945: n.p.

<sup>46</sup> Louis Kronenberger, “PM Reviews: A Soldier Who Turns Fascist,” *PM* 21 Dec. 1945: n.p.; Sillen 11.

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas 21.

<sup>48</sup> F.W. "American Negro Theatre Opens Season: 'Home is the Hunter' Misses the Mark," *The People's Voice* 29 Dec. 1945: n.p.

<sup>49</sup> Burrell 74.

<sup>50</sup> Ellwood Smith, qtd. in Seymour Peck, "Broadway Report: 'Home is the Hunter,'" *PM* 19 Dec. 1945: n.p. The articles and reviews in *The People's Voice*, *PM*, *New York World-Telegram* quoted here and above are drawn from Kootz Gallery scrapbook #2, 1931-1945. Kootz Gallery records, 1923-1966. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>51</sup> "Notes on Cast," *Home is the Hunter* Programme, Kootz Gallery scrapbook #2, 1931-1945, Kootz Gallery records, 1923-1966, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>52</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, "My Day," 24 Dec. 1945. Accessed online at The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Digital Edition, George Washington University.

<sup>53</sup> Harry Belafonte with Michael Schnayerson, *My Song: A Memoir of Art, Race & Defiance* (2011; New York: Vintage, 2012) 57.

<sup>54</sup> Letter from James Jackson to Frederick O'Neal, 17 May 1946, American Negro Theatre Records, Box 1, Folder 12, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from James Jackson to Frederick O'Neal.

<sup>56</sup> "Welles' Musical Arriving Tonight," *New York Times* 31 May 1946: 27. The A.N.T. did go on to perform a Synge play, but not *The Playboy of the Western World*. In 1949, the company staged a double-bill of *Riders to the Sea* (1904) and Kenneth White's *Freight*, a new one-act play.



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We might also conjecture as to why the A.N.T. chose *Juno and the Paycock* rather than the World War I-themed *The Silver Tassie* (first performed in 1929), featuring soldier Harry Heegan who, during the conflict, becomes paralysed from the waist down. This is likely due to the fact that *The Silver Tassie* was not as familiar to New York audiences as *Juno*, which had enjoyed several Broadway revivals (1927, 1934, 1937, 1940) after its initial staging at the Mayfair Theatre from March to May 1926. *The Silver Tassie* was produced by the Irish Theatre in October 1929 and not again until July 1949 when the Interplayers staged it at Carnegie Hall.

<sup>57</sup> M. Vicker, "Negro Theatre Does Well by Sean O'Casey Play," *Daily Worker* 10 Jul. 1946: 11.

<sup>58</sup> Sean O'Casey, *Juno and the Paycock* (1925; London: Samuel French, n.d.) 3. Subsequent references to the play will appear in parentheses in the main body of the essay.

<sup>59</sup> Melvin Marshall and Blake Kimbrough, "Above and Beyond Category: The Life and Art of Charles Sebree," *International Review of African American Art* 18.3 (2002): 2-17.

<sup>60</sup> Marshall and Kimbrough 8.

<sup>61</sup> Shandell 66.

<sup>62</sup> Hatch 101.

<sup>63</sup> Sebree qtd. in Hatch 106.

<sup>64</sup> Charles H. Rowell and Owen Dodson, "An Interview with Owen Dodson," *Callaloo* 20.3 (1997): 629.

<sup>65</sup> Sebree qtd. in Hatch 103.

<sup>66</sup> Frenise A. Logan, "Paradox," *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 22.3 (1944): 121.

<sup>67</sup> Heningburg 3. See also Vaughn Rasberry's discussion of representations of African American returning veterans in Gwendolyn Brooks's "Gay Chaps at the Bar" sonnet

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sequence from *A Street in Bronzeville* (1945) and Ann Petry's short story "In Darkness and Confusion" (1947). *Race and the Totalitarian Century: Geopolitics in the Black Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2016).

<sup>68</sup> Arthur Laurents, *Home of the Brave in Famous American Plays of the 1940s*, selected and introd. Henry Hewes (New York: Dell, 1983) 147. Subsequent references to this play will appear in parentheses in the main body of the essay. In the Hollywood adaptation of Laurents's play (dir. Mark Robson, 1949), Coen became Peter Moss, an African American G.I.

<sup>69</sup> John Hudson Jones, "An Evaluation of the American Negro Theatre," *Sunday Worker* 25 Aug. 1946: 14.

<sup>70</sup> Hill, "Hill Raves" 12.

<sup>71</sup> It is probably for this reason that *Juno* is more readily associated with the "Everyman" narratives that became prevalent after 1949. Smith notes that the play inspired Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and "provided [Lorraine] Hansberry with the model for [*A Raisin in the Sun*,] a drama that revealed familial ties and conflicts, swinging between humor and tragedy, as emblematic of national loyalties and divisions" (Smith 281).

<sup>72</sup> William Branch, *A Medal for Willie*, *Black Drama Anthology*, ed. Woodie King and Ron Milner (New York: Meridian, 1986) 470. Subsequent references to the play will appear in parentheses in the main body of the essay. See Burrell's Chapter 4 for a discussion of how Off-Broadway plays of the 1950s by African American playwrights such as Branch, Alice Childress and Ossie Davis "refused the heroic narrative of the returning Negro soldier play and satirized white, liberal playwrights' attempts at depicting black resistance" (114).

<sup>73</sup> S. W. Garlington, "Young Bill Branch's New Play Thrills and Excites Audiences," *Amsterdam News* (New York) 20 Oct. 1951: 26.

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<sup>74</sup> Hutchinson 3.