

North Carolina Drama: From the Page to the Stage and Back to the Page

Margaret D. Bauer, Editor

In November 2008, William Howard Rough donated to the Paul Green Foundation his 1961 Princeton University Senior Thesis on “The Contribution of Paul Green to American Drama.” Coincidentally, in that same month, during a lecture I delivered on Paul Green at the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association’s annual meeting, I expressed my concern that *NCLR* had not yet received any submissions related to Green for this issue’s special feature section on drama. I knew, given my own recent work on Green, that I could find provocative “new” Green material written by the playwright himself in the Paul Green Papers, but I was distressed by the silence about Green from others.

As I remarked during my lecture, although Paul Green’s talents were widely recognized while he lived, since his death he has been largely overlooked by Southern literary scholars. Though Laurence G. Avery, who has been an invaluable reference as we worked on this issue, and John Herbert Roper, author of a 2003 Paul Green biography, have certainly recognized Green’s contribution to Southern letters, there is still relatively little scholarship on Green’s individual works (including the Pulitzer Prize play); and the biennial meeting of the Society for the Study of Southern Literature (SSSL) rarely includes a single paper on this major Southern playwright. Green is still well known here in North Carolina, but largely thanks to the continued performance of *The Lost Colony*. And besides Avery’s recent edition of *The Lost Colony*, the material collected in Avery’s *A Paul Green Reader*, and a reprint of the novel *This Body the Earth* published by the Paul Green Foundation, Green’s works are all out of print.

And so, with the permission of the Paul Green Foundation, we reprint in this issue one of Green’s plays, *White Dresses*. We have also edited for publication William Howard Rough’s 1960 interview with Paul Green. Rough and Green talked about the playwright’s focus on race relations in plays like *White Dresses*, as well as about outdoor drama. It was interesting to notice as we edited the interview that Green began his conversation with his visitor from Princeton somewhat interviewing his interviewer and continued to do so to some extent throughout their conversation, reflecting the good professor he was to take the opportunity to learn from the student even as he generously gave of his time to share his own expertise. I thank H.G. Jones and Laurence Avery for their role in bringing this interview to my attention, and of course we thank

Bill Rough for allowing us to edit his interview for publication in *NCLR*.

The original interview transcription/narrative and Rough’s thesis will be part of the Paul Green Papers in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Green collection holds many riches that literary and film scholars, historians, folklorists, and sociologists would find of value in scholarly studies of the period, the region, and the various genres in which Paul Green wrote. *NCLR* invites you to take a look and let us know what you find that you might bring to our attention for content of future issues.

It is certainly appropriate to begin a special feature section on North Carolina Drama with Paul Green, and we do hope that the Green content reminds our readers of “Paul Green’s Legacy,” which, as Laurence Avery suggests in his address on the subject, extends beyond the dramatist’s writings. Indeed, the rest of the drama section reflects Green’s influence: from the short piece on one of Kermit Hunter’s outdoor dramas, still popular today, to the Currituck County-set play of Kat Meads, reminiscent of works by the Carolina Playmakers of Green’s generation, and Bland Simpson’s article on “Musicians’ Theater,” another North Carolina-based development reminiscent of Green’s symphonic dramas.

More expressions of appreciation are extended to others who answered our call for content for this special feature section, beginning with the numerous playwrights who submitted their original work for our consideration – so many that we could only include a few short plays – by Richard Krawiec and Sam Post as well as Meads – and an excerpt of a longer play by June Guralnick, which, as Walter Squire notes in the afterword he contributed for background into the subject of Guralnick’s play, is a significant addition to the large body of literature inspired by the 1929 Gastonia mill strikes:



NORTH CAROLINA DRAMA

- 8 "[What] the American Public Needs": A "Theater of the People," an interview with Paul Green by William Howard Rough
- 22 *White Dresses*, a play by Paul Green introduced by Margaret D. Bauer
- 34 *Paul Green's Legacy*, an essay by Laurence G. Avery
- 39 *Kermit Hunter's Treasure in the High Country*, by Nancy Spann
- 40 *Finding Clara*, excerpts from a play by June Guralnick
- 51 *Dramatic Renderings of the 1929 Loray Mill Strike*, an afterword by Walter Squire
- 53 *Recovering "moral and sexual chaos" in Tennessee Williams's Clothes for a Summer Hotel*, by Annette J. Saddik
- 64 *An Inimitable Icon: The Inspiration of Zelda Fitzgerald*, by Olivia Everett
- 66 *North Carolina Literary and Historical Association Announces Newly Established Hardee-Rives Drama Award*, by Lorraine Hale Robinson
- 67 *Muscle Men, Tennessee Williams, and the State of Southern Drama: An Interview with Jim Grimsley*, by Gary Richards
- 79 *Mr. Williams and Mr. Universe: Jim Grimsley's Queer Intertextuality*, by Gary Richards
- 84 *20th Southern Writers Symposium Celebrates North Carolina Writers*, by Rebecca L. Godwin
- 85 *Waiting for Edward: Elizabeth Spencer's For Lease or Sale*, by Terry Roberts
- 86 *A Shining Light in the Piazza*, by Gary Richards
- 93 *An Elizabethan Drama*, an afterword by Elizabeth Spencer
- 94 *Lovers*, a play by Richard Krawiec
photography by Jacquelyn Tait Leebrick
- 104 *Husbands Found Dead*, a play by Kat Meads
photography by Jacquelyn Tait Leebrick
- 110 *Love Poem, Ignition Switch, and Responsibility*, three plays by Sam Post
photography by Mary Shannon Johnstone
- 124 *Child of Paradise: A Tribute to Linwood Taylor*, by Bland Simpson
- 124 *Drama Dean Gerald Freedman Receives a North Carolina Award for Fine Arts*, by Maggie Rogers
- 125 *Adventures in Musicians' Theater: 35 Years of Roots-Music Shows*, by Bland Simpson
- 128 "Oh, but she speaks her mind": *Good Ol' Girls from Stage to Screen*, by Olivia Everett
- 130 *Bo Knows Theater and Dancing (and . . .)*, a tribute by Sue Laslie Kimball

Guralnick's *Finding Clara* is one of only a few dramatic works among many novels and songs, Squire tells us. Also, Annette Saddik, expert on Tennessee Williams's later plays, responded enthusiastically to our invitation to write an article on Williams's North Carolina play, *Clothes for a Summer Hotel*. Elizabeth Spencer scholar and aficionado Terry Roberts proposed an article on Spencer's little known play *For Lease or Sale*, about which Roberts also invited the author herself to write a short afterword for our readers. Gary Richards agreed readily to interview eastern North Carolina writer Jim Grimsley about Grimsley's dramatic work and then to present a paper on Grimsley's drama for NCLR's panel at the twentieth Southern Writers Symposium at Methodist University in Fayetteville.

Special thanks go to East Carolina University playwright Robert (Bob) Siegel for all his help with this special feature section. We also thank the numerous theaters, among others, who responded so generously to our calls for photographs of the various plays referenced throughout the drama section of this issue. And finally, we are very grateful to the Paul Green Foundation, who, after already generously providing photographs and permission to publish Green material – at no fee – responded quickly and enthusiastically to our request for help with additional funds for this issue of NCLR, featuring North Carolina Drama. ■

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 134 ■ **Flashbacks: Echoes of Past Issues**
poetry and nonfiction that hearkens back to previous issues' special feature sections
- 148 ■ **North Carolina Miscellany**
poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, interviews, literary criticism, reviews, and literary news