“The Provincetown Players and the Federal Theatre: The Essay Susan Glaspell Never Wrote”

Noelia Hernando-Real

Federal Theatre Project (1935-1939)

contexte & enjeux / context & issues

Émeline Jouve & Géraldine Prévot (dir.)

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Le *Federal Theatre Project* (*FTP*) constitue une aventure singulière dans l'histoire du théâtre américain, inédite à l'époque et jamais réitérée sous cette forme. Dirigé pendant ses quatre années d'existence, de 1935 à 1939, par l'autrice, dramaturge et metteure en scène Hallie Flanagan, il s'inscrit dans l'ensemble des mesures mises en place par l'administration Roosevelt dans le cadre du programme du *New Deal*, au sein de la *Work Progress Administration* (*WPA*) dirigée par Harry Hopkins. Federal Theatre Project *(1935-1939) : contexte et enjeux* constitue la première étude française d'envergure sur cette période essentielle de l'histoire du théâtre américain. En mêlant approches transversales et études de cas, ce volume rassemblant les contributions de chercheuses, chercheurs et artistes se propose de mettre en lumière les angles morts et les figures oubliées de cette période de l'histoire théâtrale américaine, faisant le pari que ces oublis eux-mêmes racontent quelque chose de l'historiographie de cette période et, en retour, des regards contemporains que nous pouvons porter sur elle. L'ouvrage s'inscrit dans une perspective résolument transdisciplinaire, à l'image de ce que fut le *FTP*, en proposant des articles sur le théâtre à proprement parler mais aussi la musique et le cinéma.

The Federal Theatre Project (FTP) is a singular adventure in the history of American theater, unprecedented at the time and never repeated at such. Headed during its four years of existence, from 1935 to 1939, by the author, playwright and director Hallie Flanagan, it is part of the program set by the Roosevelt administration as part of the New Deal, within the Work Progress Administration (WPA) directed by Harry Hopkins. Federal Theatre Project *(1935-1939): Context and Issues* is the first French volume on this essential period in the history of American theater. By combining cross-disciplinary approaches and case studies, this volume, which brings together contributions from researchers and artists, aims to shed light on the blind spots and forgotten figures of this period of American theatrical history, considering that these omissions themselves tell us something about the historiography of this period and, in turn, about the contemporary views we can take on it. The book is resolutely transdisciplinary, as was the FTP, with articles on theater itself, but also on music and film.

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SUP
Maison de la Recherche
Sorbonne Université
28, rue Serpente
75006 Paris

tél. : (33) (0)1 53 10 57 60

sup@sorbonne-universite.fr

https://sup.sorbonne-universite.fr

QUATRIÈME PARTIE

Figures féminines et processus de légitimation

"THE PROVINCETOWN PLAYERS AND THE FEDERAL THEATRE: THE ESSAY SUSAN GLASPELL NEVER WROTE"

Noelia Hernando-Real
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Susan Glaspell directed the Federal Theatre Midwestern Play Bureau from September 1936 to April 1938. Joining and leaving the Federal Theatre Project were not easy decisions for this experienced playwright and fiction writer, then in her sixties. In a 1937 interview with A.R. Crews for *The Drama*, Susan Glaspell confided that she hesitated when Hallie Flanagan invited her to take over this work. Her adventure in the theatre, mostly carried out during her time with the Provincetown Players, which she co-founded in 1916, had been dormant ever since she had won the Pulitzer Prize for drama with *Alison's House* in 1931. She had then gone back to fiction, "a private endeavor that certainly pays more than the Federal Theatre does," as she added in the Crews interview.[1] But finance, a ridiculous income of $200 a month,[2] did not deter Glaspell, as it did not deter her back in 1916, when, leaving aside a successful career as a fiction writer, she devoted herself to the Provincetown Players. As Glaspell admitted, "I wanted to be connected with [the Federal Theatre] and work with it. I felt that here was something significant and worthwhile. It offered unlimited opportunities and I wanted to be identified with it."[3] Having been a foundational part of the little theatre that had redirected the route of a new and modern American drama in the 1910s and 1920s, Glaspell somehow knew that if she accepted Flanagan's proposal, she would be part of another milestone in American theatre history. Glaspell biographers—Marcia Noe, Barbara Ozieblo and Linda Ben-Zvi—have suggested that Glaspell possibly saw in the Federal Theatre Project an opportunity to continue the legacy of the Provincetown Players, a suggestion requiring further elaboration. In fact, their aims, ideological background, and organizational patterns, as the present work argues, are strikingly similar. Furthermore, it is my stance that Glaspell's acceptance to chair the Midwestern Play Bureau was also a particular celebration of Jig Cook's

1 A.R. Crews, "Susan Glaspell and the Federal Theatre," *The Drama*, April 15, 1937, vol.5, no.31, p.4.
2 Marcia Noe, *Susan Glaspell*, Macomb, Illinois, Western Illinois UP, 1983, p.67.
3 A.R. Crews, "Susan Glaspell and the Federal Theatre," art. cit., p.4.

legacy, the chance to convince the world that Cook's theatrical vision, initiated with the Provincetown Players, was not only valid, but also that it could live through the Federal Theatre.

The Susan Glaspell Papers at the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library hold unpublished notes Glaspell wrote for articles and speeches on the Federal Theatre Project. One set of notes develops the headline "The P.P. and the Federal Theatre," tracing a story from the Provincetown Players to the Federal Theatre Project. Glaspell never wrote this essay, but the notes suggest she used these ideas for speeches. Glaspell possibly did not write this essay because the disappointment she felt when she resigned from her office in 1938 tasted familiar: that same disillusionment she felt when leaving the Provincetown Players in 1922. When Glaspell and her husband, Jig Cook, "President" of the Provincetown Players, decided to take an interim of one year from the Provincetown Players and left for Greece, their sense of disappointment was widely known. They believed that the Provincetown Players had betrayed their missions, that they had failed miserably and just become another voice of mediocrity, as can be observed in this letter Cook sent from Greece months later in which he sentences the death of the company:

> I am now forced to confess that our attempt to build up, by our own life and death, in this alien sea, a coral island of our own, has failed. The failure seems to be more our own than America's ... As a group we are no more but less than the great chaotic, unhappy community in whose dry heart I have vainly tried to create an oasis of living beauty. Since we have failed spiritually in the elemental things ... and since the result is mediocrity, we keep our promise: We give this theater we love good death; the Provincetown Players ends their story here.[4]

Glaspell seemed to share her husband's feelings, since at that time she went back to fiction and would not write another play for years. In her hagiography, *The Road to the Temple* (1926), Glaspell attempted to relocate her husband as the rightful leader—and visionary—of the Provincetown Players, a role they then felt had been usurped by the triumvirate formed by Eugene O'Neill, Robert Edmond Jones, and Kenneth Macgowan, that took over the Players. Glaspell always felt that not enough had been done to celebrate Jig's legacy. When upon her return from Greece, after Cook's sudden death in February 1924, she realized no one would pay him the lasting homage she had in mind, she severed her relationship with the Players. Therefore, it does not seem a mere coincidence that Cook's words appear again and again in Glaspell's notes on

4 Susan Glaspell, *The Road to the Temple*, Jefferson, McFarland, 2005, p.241.

the Federal Theatre Project. The examination of how Glaspell uses Cook's words, interspersed among data about Hallie Flanagan and the Federal Theatre, suggests that Glaspell was building an imaginary bridge from Cook to Flanagan, to the point that it seems that Glaspell saw in Hallie Flanagan a new version of her beloved Jig. Glaspell wonders in her notes, "The magical thing of how the same feeling is in widely separated people."[5] Cook and Flanagan, and the members of the Provincetown Players and those who worked for the Federal Theatre, shared feelings for the theatre across time and space. Years before the Federal Theatre Project helped to "reimagine the nation's art"[6] the Provincetown Players had envisioned and experimented with such reimagining.

While many of the achievements of the Provincetown Players and the Federal Theatre can be said to be magical, the truth is that parallels in their successes—or also in their failures—respond to similarities in the projects. To start with, they share an unpromising genesis of denial. The Provincetown Players and the Federal Theatre were created to provide a stage for people who had been rejected by other theatre companies and/or were unemployed. Glaspell muses over this in her notes, "Uncle Sam went into the show business because people were hungry. Man does not live by bread alone, but he doesn't live without it. The administration had the unique idea that people were not to starve," to which she adds in some other notes that the "Federal Theatre [was] founded for economic reasons ... In 1935, 15,000 actors and other theater people [were] out of work."[7] Indeed, it is well known that the creation of the Federal Theatre Project was meant to put "Americans back to work in their fields."[8] That is, to diminish the harsh effects that the Great Depression had on the theatre industry: the darkening of 6,000 theatres and the reduction of stock companies to one fourth in five years. It aimed to help those 6,000 actors members of the Actors' Equity Association who were unemployed, together with the unemployed stagehands, carpenters and electricians.[9] Scholars and critics have noted that there was a feeling that the Federal Theatre was created by and for "down-and-out-ers," people who were not "good enough for Broadway."[10] Something conspicuously missing from Glaspell's notes is that 20 years earlier the Provincetown Players also originated because

5 *Ead.*, "Typewritten Notes for Speeches and Articles," Federal Theatre Project Folder, Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library, n.d, n.p.

6 Elizabeth Osborne, *Staging the People*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p.2.

7 S. Glaspell, "Typewritten Notes for Speeches and Articles," art. cit., n.p.

8 E. Osborne, *Staging the People*, *op. cit.*, p.2.

9 John Charles Koch, *The Federal Theatre Project: Region IV. A Structural and Historical Analysis of How it Functioned and What it Accomplished*, PhD Dissertation, UMI Diss. Int. Service, 1981, pp.1-2.

10 Willson Whitman, *Bread and Circuses*, New York, Oxford UP, 1937, p.30.

plays written by its future members were rejected, even by other little theatres. For example, one of the plays that unofficially inaugurated the Players, *Suppressed Desires*, by Glaspell and Cook, had been rejected by another Greenwich Village little theatre, the Washington Square Players, because they had found the play "too special."[11] In a similar way, Eugene O'Neill's plays—later to be widely acclaimed—did not find a stage until the Players decided to give the young O'Neill—with a trunk full of plays—a chance in the summer of 1916. Significantly, in both cases, this preliminary idea of rejection was turned upside down and became a centripetal motion giving way to the fruitful and successful synergies both organizations provided. Regarding the Federal Theatre Project, as Willson Whitman has said, "there gravitated towards the project people who had loved the theatre but hadn't, perhaps, felt at home in the Broadway racket, people with socialized intelligence they hadn't had a chance to use before, and with definite ideas for improving theatrical practice."[12] And in the case of the Provincetown Players, they became, in Brenda Murphy's words, "a cultural crucible in which the disparate and seemingly random ideas, aesthetics, and cultural values swirling around Greenwich Village in the teens and twenties were annealed into a practical aesthetics for the theatre."[13] Writers, intellectuals, journalists, visual artists, and even university graduates as disparate as Sophie Treadwell, Mike Gold, Alfred Kreymborg, Edna St. Vincent Millay or Brör Nordfeldt participated in this productive community. Indeed, it is sensible to wonder if avant-garde artists such as Nordfeldt, or Marguerite and William Zorach, who contributed their crafts to different designs of the Players,[14] would have turned to theatre if it had not been as part of this group. In his autobiography, William Zorach recalls this mutual magnetism:

> That summer we became fascinated by the Provincetown Players. A group of unknown Playwrights were producing their plays on an old wharf. They asked Marguerite and me if we would design and paint scenery for them. It was their first experience with the theatre and ours too, but we had no hesitation. We were full of ideas and were eager to use them.[15]

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11 Quoted in Barbara Ozieblo, *Susan Glaspell*, Chapel Hill/London, U of North Carolina P, 2000, p.67.

12 W. Whitman, *Bread and Circuses*, *op. cit.*, pp.35-36.

13 Brenda Murphy, *The Provincetown Players and the Culture of Modernity*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2005, p. xv.

14 A print by Marguerite Zorach would in fact be used on the Provincetown Players' posters and playbills.

15 William Zorach, *Art is my Life* New York, World Publishing, 1967, p.42.

Zorach admits that their participation gave way to the "first modern and abstract plays ever put on in New York." [16] It is thus unquestionable that the success of both projects relied on enlisting incredibly diverse people, who for different reasons were eager to experiment with theatre but had lacked the opportunity. But these successes were also possible because, as Glaspell adds in her typescript: "Almost at once something else [was] evident—people of this country [were] also hungry for theatre." [17] Glaspell's remark, that there was a potential audience in the 1930s, echoes the same awaiting audience that welcomed the Provincetown Players, as made clear in *The Road to the Temple*: "The spectators were part of the Players, for how could it have been done without the feeling that came from them, without that sense of them there, waiting, ready to share, giving." [18]

1. Wharf Theatre, Provincetown, Massachusetts. Carl Van Vechten, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Carl Van Vechten Collection.

16 *Ibid.*, p.46.
17 S. Glaspell, "Typewritten Notes for Speeches and Articles," art. cit., n.p.
18 *Ead.*, *The Road to the Temple*, *op. cit.*, p.205.

Hungry theatre workers and hungry audiences needed orchestrations by the right kind of provider, and in Glaspell's eyes Jig Cook and Hallie Flanagan were not just the right providers, but also rightful leaders. Cook and Flanagan shared two key traits of leadership that explained why they were able to organize such complex projects. First of all, Cook and Flanagan, as Glaspell's notes suggest, were dreamers in capital letters. In Glaspell's words, the Provincetown Players were Cook's "dream city:"

> [T]he place into which creative life could come. And that is why the P.P. came to have importance beyond the people directly involved, and came to endure beyond its own existence the deep insistence of the dream of one man. It is one of the mysterious and beautiful things of the world—if you are true to the things you feel, across gulfs of experience you find in another the things he feels.[19]

This fragment exemplifies how Glaspell mythologizes Cook and is significant in several ways. To start with, Glaspell highlights that the Provincetown Players came into existence because of Cook's dream, and that his dream was meant to encourage creativity. Second, that although the Provincetown Players terminated their existence, that dream has endured, suggesting that Cook's legacy is still palpable in those who joined the Players. And last but not least, that this dream is one Glaspell feels in another person, "across gulfs of experience," that is, in Hallie Flanagan. The dream Cook and Flanagan shared in Glaspell's view is that they both dreamt of a world where imagination—put onstage—would help reshape a better world. In his circular of the 1918-1919 season, a season which marked the closing down of other little theatres in New York City because of the war, Cook wrote:

> One faculty, we know, is going to be of vast importance to the half-destroyed world—indispensable for its rebuilding—the faculty of creative imagination. That spark of it which has given this group of ours such life and meaning as we have is not so insignificant that we should now let it die. The social justification which we feel to be valid now for the makers and players of plays is that they shall help keep alive in the world the light of imagination. Without it the wreck of the world that was cannot be cleared away and the new world shaped.[20]

In *Arena*, Hallie Flanagan uses imagery similar to Cook's to express her belief that "theatre can oppose against destructive forces [...] against the death forces of ignorance,

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19 *Ibid.*, n.p.

20 George Cram Cook, "'The Playwrights' Theatre.' Seasons 1916-1922," Beinecke Library, Yale Collection of American Literature, n.d, n.p.

greed, fear, and prejudice [...] theatre is a life force."[21] As did Cook, Flanagan also saw theatre as a way to move people to action: "Drama, through rhythmic speech, dynamic movement and contagious listening, can influence human thought and lead to human action."[22] Cook and Flanagan tirelessly believed in the power of theatre as an educational tool that could improve society.

Within this dream of reshaping the world and stirring up life through theatre, Cook and Flanagan performed a fundamental role, the second trait Glaspell sees as pivotal in theatre leaders: they had the gift to inspire others to do great things. In Glaspell's words, Cook had the ability to "inspire—urge—bully even—until people around him would find in themselves what they had not known was there."[23] Former colleagues from the Players also acknowledged his role as "the guiding spirit."[24] And for Eleanor Fitzgerald, secretary of the Provincetown Players from 1918 till their end, "it was his inspiration that built up the Provincetown Theatre, his shoulders that carried the burden."[25] Karen Malpede, in her portrayal of Flanagan in her groundbreaking *Women in Theatre: Compassion and Hope* (1983), depicts her as "an inspiring theorist, capable of infusing dedication, purpose, and unity of vision in people who had long been on relief as well as in young theater artists at the peak of their creative energy who were drawn to the Federal Theatre because it offered subsidy for a dream they also shared."[26] Similarly, others have defined Flanagan as "a visionary," "eloquent and expansive,"[27] or as "the biggest boss of show business the world has ever known," as the *New York Daily News* put it.[28] Eloquent and persuasive she was, for she convinced Glaspell to leave her Massachusetts farm home, to drop her half-finished novel and to board a train to Chicago to join the Federal Theatre.[29]

21 Hallie Flanagan, *Arena*, New York, Limelight, 1985, p.373.
22 John O'Connor and Lorraine Brown (eds.), *The Federal Theatre Project. "Free, Adult, Uncensored,"* London, Methuen, 1980, p.25.
23 S. Glaspell, "Typewritten Notes for Speeches and Articles", art. cit., n.p.
24 G.T. Tanselle, "George Cram Cook and the Poetry of Living, with a Checklist," *Books at Iowa*, no.24, 1976, pp.3-37.
25 Louis Weizenkorn, "George Cram Cook", *New York World*, January 20, 1924, n.p.
26 Karen Malpede, *Women in Theatre*, New York, Drama Books, 1983, p.179.
27 Pauline Hahn, "Hallie Flanagan: Practical Visionary," in Helen Krich Chinoy and Linda Walsh Jenkins (eds.), *Women in American Theatre*, New York, Theatre Communications Group, 1987, p.206.
28 W. Whitman, *Bread and Circuses*, *op. cit.*, p.25.
29 A.R. Crews, "Susan Glaspell and the Federal Theatre", art. cit., p.3.

2. George Cram Cook in Greenwich Village, *ca.* 1916.
Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library

3. Hallie Flanagan, director of the WPA Federal Theatre Project. Created *ca.* 1939.
Federal Theatre Project Collection, Library of Congress

A third significant memory of Cook that Glaspell could have found in Flanagan is that the passion they put into their projects was only equal to their disregard of pecuniary benefits, as different as their contexts were. The Provincetown Players started with a budget of $320. They had saved $80 through the 1916 summer season at their fragile Wharf Theatre in Provincetown; they asked their newly-constituted members to contribute what they could—8 members provided $30 each—and Cook spent practically this amount in renting, equipping, and embellishing the parlor floor space at 139 MacDougal Street, the first, and pretty Spartan, New York theatre of the Provincetown Players. The Constitution of the group stated that only the president and secretary would receive a salary,[30] but exceptions were made to pay design and technical staff, some directors and, starting in the 1919-1920 season, actors.[31] Flanagan's monetary context was necessarily different. One of the first questions Mr. Hopkins asked Flanagan was "Can you spend money?" warning her that "It's not easy. It takes a lot of nerve to put your signature down on a piece of paper when it means that the government of the United States is going to pay out a million dollars to the unemployed in Chicago," and that there was the risk of being accused of "wasting the taxpayers' money."[32] Although Flanagan had a much more generous budget, over 46 million dollars,[33] one of the premises was that "A small percentage (not to exceed 10%) of labor costs [could be allocated] for production costs, depending on the nature of the project."[34] But as Cook had said, and as Glaspell quotes in her notes, "Money cannot create a thing like this—it is born of the spirit."[35] Financial shortage redirected the experimental nature of the Players and indeed helped determine their success. As indicated in their first circular, they had been created "to afford an opportunity for actors, producers, scenic and costume-designers to experiment with a stage of extremely simple resources—it being the idea of the PLAYERS that elaborate settings are unnecessary to bring out the essential qualities of a good play."[36] Hence, they turned what could seem a handicap into a benefit and exploited the use of single settings, resorted to evocative language and recycled their sceneries. In sum, they favored imagination. In a similar way and given that the Federal Theatre budget was

30 Provincetown Players, "Constitution" (1916), Provincetown Players Scrapbook and Clippings Scrapbook, Billy Rose Theatre Collection for the Performing Arts, New York Public Library, n.p.

31 Edna Kenton, "The Provincetown Players and the Playwrights' Theatre 1915-1922," *Eugene O'Neill Review*, vol.21, no.1-2, 1997, p.65, 106.

32 H. Flanagan, *Arena*, *op. cit.*, p.26.

33 E. Osborne, *Staging the People*, *op. cit.*, p.4.

34 H. Flanagan, *Arena*, *op. cit.*, p.30.

35 S. Glaspell, "Typewritten Notes for Speeches and Articles," *op. cit.*, n.p.

36 G. C. Cook, "'The Playwrights' Theatre.' Seasons 1916-1922," art. cit., n.p.

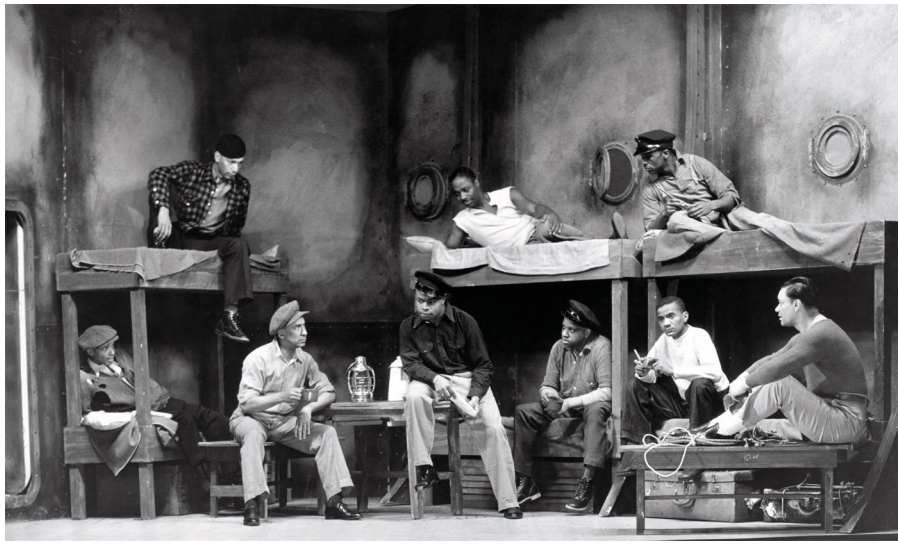
4. Members of the Provincetown Players setting up the stage for O'Neill's *Bound East for Cardiff* at the Playwrights' Theatre (1916). The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

mainly meant to cover salaries, Flanagan found it essential to "try for telegraphic methods of communicating and evoking ideas and emotions."[37] Besides trying to establish a practical exchange system among theatres that would enable the circulation of sceneries and costumes, which did not work out, Flanagan made a call that vividly echoes the Provincetown Players' first circular:

> In January 1938, I wrote a letter to actors designers, and producers of the FTP in which I again urged them to re-think the whole matter of staging, of substituting light and dynamic movements for cumbersome scenery [...] we must have inexpensive and expressive scenery [...] the stage should [... try to develop] the living body of the actor [...] Like architecture, the stage should emphasize its own special materials–three-dimensional movement of three-dimensional bodies; voice, individual and choric: light and its effect on both movement and sound; and an audience with which a connection can and must be made.[38]

37 H. Flanagan, *Arena*, *op. cit.*, p.321.
38 *Ibid.*

The call was heard, and "designers and lighting experts moved away from lavish sets and developed settings that relied on abstract space and symbolic realism,"[39] exactly what the Players had done 20 years earlier.



5. Scene from the Federal Theatre Project production of O'Neill's *One-Act Plays of the Sea* at the Lafayette Theatre (Oct. 1937-Jan. 1938), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library: "Mr. Neil's Barn," The New York Public Library Digital Collections, 1937 (note the simplicity of the scenography and the similarities with the Provincetown Players' production above)

The belief that the job was "immeasurably more important than money,"[40] as Flanagan put it, liberated both Cook and Flanagan from the box office—and neither of them had undertaken the challenge for personal gain. Flanagan confided that her Federal Theatre salary was less than she was earning at Vassar College,[41] and Cook had a salary of $15 a week.[42] Such personal and professional disregard of financial success is hard to find in the theatre world. As O'Connor and Brown have stated, the Federal Theatre Project was not "tied to the box office,"[43] and, regardless of external pressures, as Karen Malpede has noted, Flanagan "never opted for quick or easy commercial

39 J. O'Connor and L. Brown (eds.), *The Federal Theatre Project*, *op. cit.*, p.7.
40 H. Flanagan, *Arena*, *op. cit.*, p.24.
41 *Ibid.*, p.24.
42 Provincetown Players, "Constitution," art. cit., n.p.
43 J. O'Connor and L. Brown (eds.), *The Federal Theatre Project*, *op. cit.*, p.7.

success, never diluted her vision to serve the greed of Mammon."[44] In like manner, Cook never surrendered to the box office. This is clear from the fact that no invitations were given to critics in exchange for reviews that would advertise their plays and that Cook organized the theatre as a club. As he proudly stated in one of his circulars: "Thanks to our subscription audiences, which have so steadily financed our seasons in advance, we have never faced the necessity of choosing plays with an ear to so-called 'popular appeal' or with an eye to box office receipts."[45] Circular after circular, Cook meticulously remembered to add his membership invitation and a reminder to acquire tickets and to bring friends along. Being to some extent freed from the box office, Cook's and Flanagan's task could be much more idealistic, but this meant they needed to work with people who would share and nourish such idealism.

Glaspell found in Flanagan a leader who understood that the only way to sustain her project was by basing it on a sense of community, a principle that brought her back to the early days of the Provincetown Players. In her notes, Glaspell quotes how Cook, helped by Neith Boyce, formulated their modus operandi: "One man cannot produce drama. True drama is born only of one feeling animating all the members of the clan—a feeling shared by all and expressed by the few for all."[46] Moreover, Cook envisioned the Players as a "beloved community of life givers" where individual gifts and talents would seek the perfection of the group.[47] Flanagan also turned to poetry to make her call for individual talents to emerge and unite for the success of her theatre. In her case, she quoted W.H. Auden's lines, uttered by the Chorus in the play he co-wrote with Christopher Isherwood, *The Dog Beneath His Skin, or Where Is Francis* (1935):

> The precision of your instruments and the skill of your designers is unparalleled:
> Unite.
> Your knowledge and your power are capable of infinite extension:
> Act. [...]
> To each his need; from each his power.[48]

44 K. Malpede, *Women in Theatre*, *op. cit.*, p.179.

45 E. Kenton, "The Provincetown Players and the Playwrights' Theatre 1915-1922," art. cit., p.143.

46 S. Glaspell, "Typewritten Notes for Speeches and Articles," art. cit., n.p.

47 Quoted in Robert Károly Sarlós, *Jig Cook and the Provincetown Players. Theatre in Ferment*, Amherst., U of Massachusetts P, 1982, p.131.

48 Quoted in H. Flanagan, *Arena*, *op. cit.*, p.204.

Auden's lines, later attributed to Marx by detractors of the Federal Theatre Project,[49] were indeed meant to encourage playwrights, designers, directors and actors to do their best: a direct appeal to their creative drives to work for a communal project. These romantic notions of communities that would put individual talents for the benefit of the group also translated into non-romantic, but realistic notions, such as the fact that, in both cases, members had to donate their own money to produce their plays. The Provincetown Players' scenery and costumes many times consisted of pieces of furniture the Players had at home and of their own garments. And as Flanagan remembers in *Arena*, many Federal Theatre Project members spent their own money out of the "devotion to the job."[50] This fact denotes that those deeply involved in these projects firmly believed in them and in their leaders, and that being part of a community of life givers that would also feed the hungry was sufficient retribution for devoting their time and money to such projects.

It must be noted that if Glaspell could find these parallels between Cook and Flanagan it is because they shared a common theatrical background that informed the way they envisioned their projects. Both were deeply inspired by ancient Greek drama. Once his adventure with the Players was over, Cook, who called himself a "Greek Thoreau," tried to pursue his ideal theatre in Delphi.[51] Only his death put an end to his Delphi Players and a grand pageant that would involve shepherds and villagers in staging Greek history, a performance that would inspire the Delphic Festivals years later. Furthermore, Cook wrote *The Athenian Women*, an anti-war play similar to Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* produced by the Players in April 1918. Cook's belief in the transcendental power of *Lysistrata* became more vivid in the Greco-Turkish post-war context, leading him to muse over the idea that if people had been moved to the quick by *Lysistrata*, the world order today would be different: "If two thousand three hundred and forty years ago that play of Aristophanes which was a prayer, had been answered, if women had been equal to that poet's vision—then Europe-America-today would be built, not on Roman law and order and immoral imperialism, but on Greek philosophy and poetry and art and freedom."[52] During his time in Greece, Cook started translating his play into modern Greek. Upon his sudden death in 1924, Glaspell arranged with Leandrus Palamas for the publication of Cook's play in a bilingual (English-Greek) edition. A young poet called C. Carthaios completed Jig's unfinished translation.[53]

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49 *Ibid.*, p.204.
50 *Ibid.*, p.34.
51 Linda Ben-Zvi, *Susan Glaspell*, Oxford/New York, Oxford UP, 2005, p.279-280.
52 S. Glaspell, *The Road to the Temple*, *op. cit.*, p.317.
53 B. Ozieblo, *Susan Glaspell*, *op. cit.*, p.225.

Ten years after Cook's death Hallie Flanagan visited Delphi. She also felt astounded by the magnitude of its theatre, its capacity to move people from all the country to come and see plays marked by their timely essence. In her own words, these plays "were of their own time and country."[54] Flanagan's recollection of how she would go to the theatre of Delphi with her husband, Greek Professor Philip Haldane Davis, just sit there, reading inscriptions in the theatre, and then going to town to drink *ouzo* and talk to villagers, captivated by the immensity of Greek drama and Greek culture,[55] echo the later chapters of Glaspell's *The Road to the Temple*. Glaspell's words also talk of the luring mystery provoked by the ruins and their inscriptions, and of the noisy, cheerful and at the same time inspiring drinking sprees Cook shared with the villagers.

6. Ruins of the theatre, Delphi (Greece). Noelia Hernando-Real, 2008

Besides this Greek connection that surely Glaspell found romantically appealing, Cook and Flanagan were transformed by the influence of another theatre well-known for encouraging plays of their time and country: the Irish Abbey Players. The Abbey Players "were deeply rooted in the realism of Irish life," and their plays showed their "effort to create a national theatre that had both artistic and social aims."[56] Sponsored

54 H. Flanagan, *Arena*, *op. cit.*, p.4.

55 *Ibid.*, p.4.

56 Adele Heller, "The New Theatre," in Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick (eds.), *1915. The Cultural Moment*, New Brunswick (NJ), Rutgers UP, 1991, p.221.

by financial lawyer and art-lover John Quinn, Lady Gregory's Abbey Players toured the United States in 1911-1912, producing plays and also giving lectures.[57] Cook attended one of the Abbey Players' performances in Chicago, and their impact was direct: "Quite possibly there would have been no Provincetown Players had there not been Irish Players. What [Cook] saw done for Irish life he wanted for American life."[58] Provincetown Players scholar Brenda Murphy has elaborated on this influence:

> The Irish Players, with their amateur origins, their dedication to drama as a literary art form, their cultural nationalism, their refusal to embrace theatrical convention, and their determination to break new ground in a broad spectrum of drama [...] provided a strong precursor and direct model for the Provincetown Players. [... T]he Provincetown Players were carrying out an American version of the Abbey Players' mission.[59]

In turn, Flanagan was drawn to the Abbey Players under the auspices of a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 1926-1927, she started a comparative analysis of the tendencies in European drama and theatre as regards traditional staging and new developments in writing, acting, designing, lighting and directing. The study of the Abbey Players, together with other theatres, schools and methods, convinced Flanagan that "rigid adherence to any one school of cult hampered theatre, and that every play dictated its own terms as to form of acting and as to design."[60] What she does not add, but seems pretty obvious, is that the Abbey Players, as had happened to the Provincetown Players, also animated Flanagan's drive to inspire the writing of American plays and the creation of a national theatre.

This transposition of the Abbey Players' ideal to American soil makes the Provincetown Players pioneers in US theatre history in their zeal to create what they called "native" drama. As Edna Kenton muses in her history of the Provincetown Players, "we lamentably lacked a native drama—'native' meaning always that which is spontaneous, free, liberated and liberating, flowing through and from and again into the people and nation concerned."[61] This is how, also among other little theatres, "the Provincetown aim was different; it was unique. To found a native stage for native playwrights, to maintain in the heart of New York a little laboratory for dramatic

57 Steven Watson, *Strange Bedfellows*, New York, Abbeville Press, 1991, p.174.
58 S. Glaspell, *The Road to the Temple*, *op. cit.*, p.180.
59 B. Murphy, *The Provincetown Players and the Culture of Modernity*, *op. cit.*, p.4.
60 H. Flanagan, *Arena*, *op. cit.*, p.4.
61 E. Kenton, "The Provincetown Players and the Playwrights' Theatre 1915-1922", art. cit., p.18.

experiments—could it be done or couldn't it?"[62] Their "Resolutions" open with: "[I]t is the primary object of the Provincetown Players to encourage the writing of American plays of real artistic, literary and dramatic—as opposed to Broadway—merit."[63] And this search, to "cause better American plays to be written,"[64] as Glaspell puts it in her notes, never ended. Their first circular insisted that "During the summer of 1916, eleven original one-act plays by American authors had their first production," the second that there ought to "be one little theatre for American writers to play with" and even in their farewell circular, Cook underlined that: "During our eight seasons we have produced ninety-three plays by forty-seven American playwrights."[65] The Federal Theatre Project numbers were also remarkable: over 1,400 plays by 100 hitherto unknown American playwrights. On their own scales, both projects fostered new American plays; or in Flanagan's words, "a theatre which should reflect our country, its history, its present problems, its diverse regions and populations."[66]

Although the Abbey Players animated the Players' and the Federal Theatre's creation of American theatre, the nationalism behind projects derives from George Pierce Baker, who first promoted the radical transformation of American drama. After studying German theatre and drama—especially Reinhardt's innovative use of scenery and lighting—and meeting Oscar Wilde, Edward Gordon Craig, W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, Baker had the firm determination to help transform theatre in his country. He succeeded in disseminating his ideas through his lectures across the United States and his course English 47 at Harvard. For example, in his well-known lectures "The Development of Drama in the Nineteenth Century," "The American Drama of To-Day," and "The Modern Drama," Baker emphasized the necessary link between theatre and life, the role of drama as "a reflex of the thought and conduct of the time," and the specific need to "remodel" and "readjust" American drama "to the conditions of this and the next century." Such remodeling, Baker wrote, implied a careful study of America to write about it.[67] Far from the escapist fashion of Broadway plays, Baker advised his students: "Write what you know to be true about your characters, and write nothing that you do not know to be true," "Get your material from what you see

62 *Ibid.*, p.27.

63 Provincetown Players, "Resolutions" (1916), Provincetown Players Scrapbook and Clippings Scrapbook, Billy Rose Theatre Collection for the Performing Arts, New York Public Library, n.p.

64 S. Glaspell, "Typewritten Notes for Speeches and Articles", *op. cit.*, n.p.

65 G.C. Cook, "'The Playwrights' Theatre.' Seasons 1916-1922", *op. cit.*, n.p.

66 H. Flanagan, *Arena*, *op. cit.*, p.45.

67 Quoted in Wisner Payne Kinne, *George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard UP,1954, pp.67-69.

about you."[68] Among his students, future leading playwrights in US history are found, students who would also be members of the Provincetown Players and the Federal Theatre Project. Eugene O'Neill, Hutchins Hapgood, Robert Edmond Jones, Kenneth Macgowan and John Reed were among Baker's students. Hallie Flanagan herself acknowledged the effect that working as "student and production assistant of Professor George Pierce Baker at Harvard in 1923-24" had on her and on her later experimental theatres at Grinnell College and at Vassar College,[69] an effect also noticeable in her work for the Federal Theatre Project.

Another intersection between the Provincetown Players and the Federal Theatre Project is Broadway, which acted as the antagonist determining their creations and developments. In claiming that they wanted a theatre "opposed to Broadway," the Provincetown Players opted for non-commercialism and experimentation, a conceptualization that resonates as the motor behind the Federal Theatre plays. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that both projects eventually integrated Broadway into their own schemes. For the Provincetown Players, Broadway meant their end. The decision whether to move successful plays—starting with O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*—to Broadway constituted an insurmountable breach in the Provincetown Players. The Federal Theatre Project, however, managed to cope with Broadway by both allying with and staying apart from it. Hallie Flanagan understood that the aim of the Federal Theatre Project was two-fold: to put people to work—and the more people, the better—and to foster US drama, and both were equally important. Thus, in *Arena* she confides: "I felt that however reluctant we might be to sacrifice a hit show, since we were set up to return people to private enterprise, this was not only permissible but to be encouraged."[70] In their 1920-1921 season circular, Cook affirmed that: "The Provincetown Players are beginning to take their long plays to Broadway—some to succeed there, some to fail – but some of these writers have it in them to write plays that cannot be given there—plays too good for that movie-invaded stage."[71] These words suggest a suspicion that Broadway could be detrimental to their mission. And indeed for Cook, Glaspell, and other members of the Provincetown Players, sacrificing hit shows to Broadway should not have been permitted as this prompted, they thought, a commercialization of their theatre and an end to their experimental nature. In Edna Kenton's words:

68 Quoted in Arthur Gelb and Barbara Gelb, *O'Neill*, New York/London, Applause, 2000, p.431.

69 H. Flanagan, *Arena*, *op. cit.*, p.7.

70 *Ibid.*, p.146.

71 G.C. Cook, "'The Playwrights' Theatre.' Seasons 1916-1922," art. cit., n.p.

> [P]roblems began [...] when offers came in from half a dozen Broadway managers to take *The Emperor Jones* uptown. No wonder we fell, with *The Emperor Jones*, into the trap that seemed a garden of flowers but whose steel teeth never unclosed on us once we had fallen. Again it was a many-edged problem, whether or not to put the play on Broadway. For the first time we had a chance to make some money—perhaps a great deal. [...] As the matter turned out, what we gave away, with our decision to go in for uptown producing, was nothing less than the Provincetown Players, the Playwrights' Theatre and the experimental, native stage unique in America. [72]

Years later, the Federal Theatre Project proved Cook, Glaspell and Kenton were mistaken, that transferring plays to Brodway was compatible with being independent from it. As Osborne has noted: "Though the Federal Theatre Project repeatedly demonstrated that it could succeed on Broadway's terms, it instead sought to provide an alternative to Broadway." [73] That is, it was possible to use commercial theatres as a stage for economic reasons while maintaining experimental units.

Their self-conceptualization as laboratories is indeed another foundational principle shared by the Provincetown Players and the Federal Theatre Project. In her opening address at the Federal Theatre Production Conference in Poughkeepsie in July 1936, Flanagan insisted on the idea of "experiment." She straightforwardly claimed that: "The greatest danger from which the American theater had always suffered" was "imitativeness." [74] Consequently, another goal of the Federal Theatre Project was, as Glaspell affirms in her notes, "to expand, as greatly as our imagination and talents will permit, the boundaries of theatre," [75] adding that if the American plays they are looking for do not exist yet, "We shall have to work more closely with our dramatists." [76] Similarly, Francis Bosworth, director of the New York Play Bureau, explicitly defined the Federal Theatre Project as a "laboratory theatre." He summarized the Federal Theatre Project objectives in bullet points: plays by young and new playwrights, no taboos on subject matter, form, or theme, plays had to be written for the audience, and they had to be timely. [77] This declaration of intentions, written in 1936, echoes

72 E. Kenton, "The Provincetown Players and the Playwrights' Theatre 1915-1922", *op. cit.*, p.129.

73 E. Osborne, *Staging the People*, *op. cit.*, p.183.

74 Quoted in K. Malpede, *Women in Theatre*, *op. cit.*, p.183.

75 Susan Glaspell, "Typewritten Notes for Speeches and Articles," art. cit., n.p.

76 Quoted in K. Malpede, *Women in Theatre*, *op. cit.*, p.184.

77 Francis Bosworth, "The Playreading Department," and "What Type of New Plays Does the Play Bureau Want?," Federal Theatre Project Collection, Library of Congress, respectively p.6 and pp.4-5.

the Resolutions the Provincetown Players had signed in Provincetown at the end of the summer of 1916. That summer, the Provincetown Players resolved that "it shall be the duty of active members to discover and encourage new plays and playwrights."[78] Furthermore, the very name of their New York Theatre, the Playwrights' Theatre—suggested by O'Neill—embodied their experimental nature: theirs was to be a theatre where playwrights could experiment with form and subject matter as they aimed at creating new American plays.

In their search for plays by American playwrights, the Provincetown Players and the Federal Theatre Project shared their call but differed in their methods. On the one hand, the *modus operandi* of the Players predates that of the Federal Theatre: authors had absolute freedom as far as subject matter and form were concerned, and cooperation was sought. Their Resolutions highlighted that the author was to conceive not only the play, but also the production as they wanted, being assisted, as long as they desired so, by the President. All the resources would be at the authors' disposal, and there would be no interference whatsoever. In this way, for example, the Provincetown Players' 1917-1918 circular states: "We mean to go on giving artists of the theatre—playwrights, actors, coaches, designers of set and costume—a chance to work out their ideas in freedom."[79] Also predating the Federal Theatre's reading committees, the Provincetown Players understood their usefulness in working with potential authors. Plays were selected for production by vote. Quite amateurishly, at the beginning all plays were read aloud and all active members voted upon their reading.[80] Just a month later, they decided that not all members had to read all the plays and that voting would be left for a later meeting. Susan Glaspell was one of those members of the reading committee who tirelessly met the group's Resolutions, carefully reading submitted plays till the dissolution of the group, a job that trained her well for the work of the Federal Theatre Project.[81] The Federal Theatre Project, counting on a larger staff, worked this system out much more efficiently. For example, as Francis Bosworth put forward the functioning of the New York Playreading Department, a submitted play was given to one first reader who would write a report and assign it to a more suitable reader. The positive report of these two readers would enable the passage of the script to

78 Provincetown Players, "Resolutions" (1916), art. cit., n.p.

79 G. C. Cook, "'The Playwrights' Theatre.' Seasons 1916-1922,", art. cit., n.p.

80 Provincetown Players, "Minutes,",Provincetown Players Scrapbook and Clippings Scrapbook, Billy Rose Theatre Collection for the Performing Arts, New York Public Library, n.p.

81 E. Kenton, "The Provincetown Players and the Playwrights' Theatre 1915-1922," art. cit., p.46.

a playreading committee of six. If approved, the play would enter a list of recommended scripts to be sent to directors, and if rejected, it would be given a fourth reading to provide suggestions for the author.[82] As seen, and though on a different scale, both the Provincetown Players and the Federal Theatre Project understood that the kind of new American drama they were looking for would not emanate naturally, but that it had to be facilitated by their organizations. At the time of announcing the one-year interim that would be their factual end, Cook complained:

> TO OUR PLAYWRIGHTS. We have a frank word to say. Founded for you, committed to the production of your plays only and with a steady flood of manuscripts almost submerging us, we have faced notwithstanding, season after season, a discouraging lack of plays worth doing. [...] We have given two playwrights to America, Eugene O'Neill and Susan Glaspell: we could have given a dozen by now if the other ten had appeared. We have looked for them eagerly and we have not found those among you offering us a sustained stream of freely experimental work in new dramatic forms.[83]

Distance allows us to realize that perhaps one shortcoming of the Provincetown Players was precisely that they should have worked with playwrights more closely. Though some networks existed, as for example, Glaspell and O'Neill read each other's works, which might partially explain their status as the leading voices in modern American drama, a more systematized form of collaboration could have given the Provincetown Players a longer and better life. For "to cause better American plays to be written," as Glaspell summarizes the Provincetown Players' main aim in her notes, is a goal too great to leave in the hands of fate. Providing the space for these plays to be produced was an important step the Players genuinely took, but earnestly working with playwrights to make these plays happen is the unique success of the Federal Theatre Project. With the Federal Theatre Project, Glapell had the chance to develop her mentoring abilities.

Glaspell is always extremely succinct when referring to her own merits and achievements. In her notes for speeches on the Provincetown Players and the Federal Theatre, the very last page starts with a brief: "What brought me here,"[84] followed by "the belief that now is a time for plays to be written from the middle west."[85] Humble as she always was, her other notes on this topic avoid referring to herself as "I," using always

82 F. Bosworth, "The Playreading Department," art. cit., p.6.

83 G. C. Cook, "'The Playwrights' Theatre.' Seasons 1916-1922", art. cit., n.p.

84 The analysis of the Midwest is indeed a key theme in Glaspell's oeuvre (see Marcia Noe, "Susan Glaspell's Analysis of the Midwestern Character," *Books at Iowa*, vol.27, no.1, 1977, pp.3-20).

85 S. Glaspell, "Typewritten Notes for Speeches and Articles," art. cit., n.p.

"we," perhaps also a reminiscence of the beloved community of life-givers she was reviving in Chicago. What she did for the Federal Theatre Project and how she did it was an extension of her work for the Provincetown Players. To start with, she tirelessly kept looking for good plays, sending numerous letters to writer and editor Barrett H. Clark, to R.W. Cowden—director of the Hopwood Awards for drama at the University of Michigan—, and to E.C. Mabie, professor and director of the theatre at the University of Iowa. Next, faithful to her work for the Provincetown Players, Glaspell went on fostering innovative, experimental work, and, very specifically, according to Arnold Sundgaard, she tried "to encourage writers whose plays were rejected."[86] Likewise, she revitalized and improved the play reading system used with the Players. She gathered a group of readers, including Sundgaard, playwright and actress Alice Gerstenberg, University of Iowa graduate Fanny McConnell, who later became executive director of the Negro People's Theater, and writer Sidney Blackstone, assigning to each two plays to read a day. Her instructions were that they had to read the plays carefully and write a commentary that would be returned to the author.[87] Reviving the times of the First Red Scare she had lived through with the Players, as the chair of the Midwestern Play Bureau, one of her greatest challenges was to deal with censorship. Her defense of Theodore Ward's *Big White Fog* (1938), a play on the polemical figure of Marcus Garvey, was notable. Equally fierce was her unsuccessful defense of Edwin S. Self's *The Great Spirit*, a play about the betrayal of Native American leader James Logan by land-hungry whites—indeed a theme she had used in her three-act *Inheritors* back in 1921. And finally, her time with the Provincetown Players surely had taught her how to sail across dangerous financial streams. One first significant lesson, and because her work for the Provincetown Players as a playwright, actress, playreader and counselor was always for free, was that anyone working for the theatre deserved fair wages; only then could those plays for the people and about the people be justly written by the people. A second vital lesson she had also learnt was how to survive when money is short. In spite of the generous budget assigned to the Chicago division, Glaspell noted that a significant difficulty she encountered was "the small sum that can go for advertising," putting it in a humorous way: "Running a theatre without advertising is like winking at your girl in the dark. You know what you're doing but she doesn't."[88] Glaspell's solution echoes Cook's circulars. Her notes include a paragraph she would

86 George Kazakoff, *Dangerous Theatre*, New York, Peter Lang, 1989, p.233.

87 B. Ozieblo, *Susan Glaspell*, *op. cit.*, p.255.

88 "Typewritten Notes for Speeches and Articles," Federal Theatre Project Folder, Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library, n.d, n.p.

include in her speeches and press releases which reads: "We offer you a season of rich entertainment in the theatre. It is your theatre and we want your support. Come and see our plays and tell your friends about them. Let us make this a season we can all be proud of and then, with the audience we're building up, go on to bigger things."[89]

The time Glaspell worked for the Federal Theatre is indeed a time to be proud of. According to Marcia Noe, by June 1937, 600 plays had been submitted in answer to Glaspell's insistent call for manuscripts,[90] and the Chicago division produced some of the most exciting plays seen during the existence of the Federal Theatre Project: all black *Swing Mikado*, the afore-mentioned *Big White Fog*, or Arnold Sundgaard's *Spirochete*. Inspired by the revival of O'Neill's *The Straw*, which indeed had premiered at the Provincetown Players' Playwrights' Theatre in 1918, Glaspell prompted Sundgaard to write *Spirochete*, a milestone in the history of the Federal Theatre Project, that for many justified its very existence: "*Spirochete* demonstrated that a federally funded, national theatre could create socially vital, locally relevant theatre."[91] Hopefully, further research on the direct impact that Glaspell's direction had in the achievements of the Chicago division in those years will show that her influence is greater than has been suggested by scholars so far.

In conclusion, Glaspell's unpublished notes on the Federal Theatre Project evidence the lasting legacy of the Provincetown Players. Despite being a local experiment, first in Provincetown and later in New York City, the scope, geography, and accomplishments of the Provincetown Players were far more wide-ranging than has been previously acknowledged. Glaspell's notes, and the present discussion add up to the previous personal stories of Provincetown Players that worked for the Federal Theatre Project, such as those by Jasper Deeter, James Light, Eleanor Fitzgerald, Mike Gold, Alfred Kreymborg or Cleon Throckmorton,[92] helping to provide a more complete history. As evidenced here, a new understanding of the depth and richness of the Federal Theatre Project is, at the same time, a celebration of the legacy of the Provincetown Players. The proved parallels regarding the aims of the Players and the Federal Theatre Project and the means to do so, involving organizational decisions and the use of financial resources, allows one to regard the Provincetown Players as an early experiment later continued by the Federal Theatre Project. The dissection of Glaspell's notes, together with Flanagan's and Cook's own writings, suggests that the many similarities

89 S. Glaspell, "Typewritten Notes for Speeches and Articles," art. cit., n.p.
90 M. Noe, *Susan Glaspell*, *op. cit.*, p.68.
91 E. Osborne, *Staging the People*, *op. cit.*, p.48.
92 Robert Károly Sarlós, *Jig Cook and the Provincetown Players*, *op. cit.*, pp.165-166, p.131.

found in both organizations dwell in the intrinsic similarities found in their leaders. Furthermore, the notes also encapsulate Glaspell, Cook and Flanagan's dream-like vision of theatrical communities where individuals offer the best they have to reshape not only better artistic forms, but also better worlds; an encouraging vision that still sounds today as firm foundations for lasting theatrical adventures.

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NOTICE

Noelia Hernando-Real is Associate Professor of English and American Literature at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain). She has authored *Self and Space in the Theater of Susan Glaspell* (2011) and *Voces contra la mediocridad: la vanguardia teatral de los Provincetown Players, 1915-1922* (2014). She has coedited several volumes: *Performing Gender Violence. Plays by Contemporary American Women Dramatists*, with Barbara Ozieblo (2012), and *Topografías domésticas/Negotiating Gendered Spaces* (2013) and *Estudios de Género: Visiones Transatlánticas /Gender Studies: Transatlantic Visions* (2016), together with Isabel Durán et al. Her journal articles have appeared on *New England Theatre Journal, The Eugene O'Neill Review, REN* and *Critical Stages*, among others. Noelia Hernando Real as been the President of the International Susan Glaspell Society.

ABSTRACT

Susan Glaspell directed the Midwestern Play Bureau from September 1936 to April 1938. Glaspell, an experienced playwright and fiction writer, confided that she hesitated when Hallie Flanagan invited her to take over this work, but eventually accepted. Having been a foundational part of the Provincetown Players, the little theatre that had redirected the route of modern American drama in the 1910s and 1920s, Glaspell recognized in the FTP another milestone in American theatre history. This essay takes up Glaspell biographers' suggestion that Glaspell possibly saw in the FTP an opportunity to continue the legacy of the Provincetown Players. Now based on unpublished notes Glaspell wrote, this paper examines the many parallels between the Provincetown Players and the FTP, with a special emphasis on the similarities Glaspell found between Jig Cook and Hallie Flanagan, which prompted her to accept Flanagan's proposal, as well as on Glaspell's role within both organizations.

Keywords

Susan Glaspell, George Cram (Jig) Cook, Provincetown Players, Hallie Flanagan, Midwestern Play Bureau.

RÉSUMÉ

Susan Glaspell a dirigé l'antenne du Midwest du FTP de septembre 1936 à avril 1938. Autrice de théâtre et écrivaine reconnue, Glaspell a confié avoir hésité lorsque Hallie Flanagan lui a proposé ce travail, mais elle a fini par accepter. Ayant contribué à la création des Provicetown Players, petit groupe qui a influencé la destinée du théâtre américain moderne dans les années 1910 et 1920, Glaspell a vu dans le FTP un nouveau jalon de l'histoire théâtrale américaine. Cet article se base sur les hypotheses des biographes de Glaspell, selon lesquelles l'autrice aurait vu dans le FTP une opportunité de poursuivre l'héritage des Provincetown Players. En se fondant sur des notes inédites de Glaspell, cet article analyse les nombreux parallèles entre les Provincetown Players et le FTP, en se focalisant plus particulièrement sur les ressemblances identifiées par Glaspell entre Jig Cook et Hallie Flanagan, ressemblances qui l'ont poussée à accepter la proposition de Flanagan. L'article revient également sur le rôle central de Glaspell dans ces deux expériences.

Mots-clés

Susan Glaspell, George Cram (Jig) Cook, *Provincetown Players*, Hallie Flanagan, Midwestern Play Bureau

CRÉDITS PHOTO

VISUELS DE COUVERTURE (TOUS DANS LE DOMAINE PUBLIC)

1. Hallie Flanagan, director of the WPA Federal Theatre Project. Created *ca* 1939. Federal Theatre Project Collection, Library of Congress.
2. Windrip adresses the crowd in a rally in the San Francisco Federal Theatre Project production of *It Can't Happen Here*, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
3. Photograph of the New York production of *One-Third of a Nation*, a Living Newspaper play by the Federal Theatre Project, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
4. « Continue WPA ! », Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library. « Federal Theatre Project » The New York Public Library Digital Collections.
5. Crowd outside Lafayette Theatre on opening night, Classical Theatre, « *Voodoo* » *Macbeth*, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
6. Scene from the Federal Theatre Project production of O'Neill's *One-Act Plays of the Sea* at the Lafayette Theatre (Oct. 1937-Jan. 1938), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, New York Public Library, «Mr. Neil's Barn»The New York Public Library Digital Collections.

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

QUATRIÈME PARTIE

FIGURES FÉMININES ET PROCESSUS DE LÉGITIMATION

E-THEATRUM MUNDI

Collection dirigée par Julie Vatain-Corfdir & Sophie Marchand

La collection « e-Theatrum Mundi » considère le théâtre sous tous ses angles et dans tous ses états. Dans la continuité de la collection papier à laquelle elle est adossée, elle se veut un lieu de réflexion sur les diverses manifestations d'expression théâtrale à travers le monde, et rassemble des travaux de recherche sur l'écriture, le jeu, les pratiques et les formes scéniques, la mise en scène et le spectateur. Sa particularité est de proposer uniquement des volumes interdisciplinaires, en lien avec le Programme de recherches interdisciplinaires sur le théâtre et les pratiques scéniques de Sorbonne Université (PRITEPS), dont elle reflète les activités. En croisant les angles d'approche, la collection vise à provoquer des confrontations fructueuses entre les scènes, les langues et les méthodologies, dans le domaine des études théâtrales.

DÉJÀ PARUS

L'apothéose d'Arlequin. La Comédie-Italienne de Paris : un théâtre de l'expérimentation dramatique au xviiie siècle
Émeline Jouve & Géraldine Prévot (dir.)

American Dramaturgies for the 21st Century
Julie Vatain-Corfdir (ed.)

Une œuvre en dialogue. Le théâtre de Michel-Jean Sedaine
Judith le Blanc, Raphaëlle Legrand & Marie-Cécile Schang-Norbelly (dir.)

American Musicals
Stage and screen/L'écran et la scène
Anne Martina & Julie Vatain-Corfdir (dir.)

La Haine de Shakespeare
Élisabeth Angel-Perez & François Lecercle (dir.)

La Scène en version originale
Julie Vatain-Crofdir (dir.)