

## Moveless the Mountain Burns

The road lifts toward the sun  
And we who ride  
Have more light than we ask.

The road goes up, the sun  
Is more than halfway  
Down the day, the year.

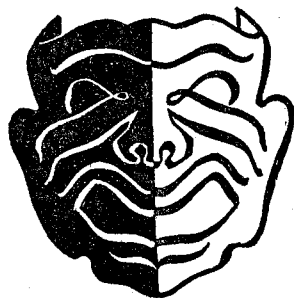
Moveless the mountain burns  
With twofold fire:  
Fall and the falling sun.

## Any Wind Now

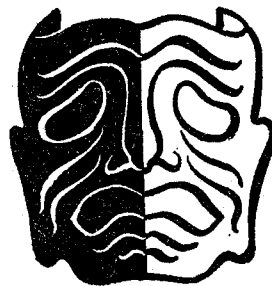
Any wind now is a wind toward winter,  
A wind at the back to hurry a walker  
On where he has to a little faster,  
Or if he goes the other way,  
If he tries to go the other way,  
A wind in the face a little colder  
Maybe than he remembers October.

Any wind now is away from summer  
Though leaves and fruit of summer linger  
A day or couple of short days longer.  
A wind to put an end to harvest,  
To dry the cornshocks and the rowen,  
To puff the sailboat from the harbor  
Or into harbor home from sailing.

ROBERT FRANCIS



# The THEATRE ARTS



by John Gassner

The theatrical season of 1948-49 opened officially with Bessie Breuer's semi-clinical drama, *Sundown Beach*, and few seasons within recent memory opened with so honorable a play. On the surface, at least, Bessie Breuer's play was an honest exhibit and a sympathetic approach to an important and touching situation. That its picture of the plight of the mental casualties of the Air Force proved unsatisfactory was not the result of bad exposition, want of interest, or sensational vulgarization, but simply of poor playwriting. It is only just, however, to concede that no dramatist short of genius could have improved upon Miss Breuer's treatment of her subject to such a degree that the play would have been satisfactory. *Sundown Beach* is one of those stage pieces that seem boring and even inept because they should never have been conceived as plays at all, whereas they might have made very respectable novels. In the theatre, a series of parallel stories, one for each psychoneurotic veteran in the case of *Sundown Beach*, simply cannot fail to make a play diffuse and repetitive as drama. After the first act, which stated the clinical case histories of the characters, virtually everything that happened in the next two acts was predictable. What was not predictable was the cure of one aviator and his reconciliation with his wife; and if this came as a surprise, it is precisely because it was psychologically dubious.

In the last analysis, it was even doubtful whether the manifest sincerity of the author should be accepted at face value. Miss Breuer's writing would have been more convincing if it had been less addicted to the

slick magazine formulae of "Love" as the great panacea and of promiscuity as the inevitable salve for a state of desperation. A more convincing seriousness on the writer's part would have given us less sentimentality, for it is always the signature of second-rate writing that it wallows in pity instead of abounding in insight. It is always easier to be sorry for people than to understand them. It is also always less exacting to deplore a situation than to analyze it. Arthur Laurents' *Home of the Brave* gave the theme of psychoneurosis among soldiers a vastly more challenging treatment because its author was not content to rest his argument on the pathetic nature of his character's illness. The young actors who struggled with *Sundown Beach*, after rehearsing it for many months in an acting class, found themselves frequently floundering in a morass of suffering from which it was almost impossible to extricate themselves even with the help of so brilliant a stage director as Elia Kazan.

As new productions multiplied, only to be cut down by the New York critics, the present reviewer became convinced that the unexciting nature of the early plays was largely attributable to the absence of an enzyme—that elusive but indispensable thing we can variously call a "conviction," an "inspiration," or a "hope." Without this, the bread of drama fails to rise. If one playwright did make an effort to employ the little enzyme, as Marc Connelly did in his *Story for Strangers*, it was such a tired and ineffectual germ that the play would have been no worse without it. Mr. Connelly, who evidently intended to dispense sweetness and light to a