

SOCIAL CRITIQUES IN THREE PROSE PLAYS BY MAXWELL ANDERSON:  
SATURDAY'S CHILDREN, BOTH YOUR HOUSE, AND THE STAR-WAGON

Fonzie D. Geary II

Dr. Cheryl Black, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines three plays by Maxwell Anderson from 1927 to 1937. As Anderson was most noted for aesthetic experiments with verse drama, this study attempts to re-evaluate Anderson's contribution to American theatre by focusing on social issues in prose plays. The purpose centers on the plays' critiques of American ideology and cultural institutions. Ideologies and institutions included are marriage, gender roles, capitalism, government, and sexual mores. The research connects Anderson to a distinctly American brand of philosophy from Jeffersonian agrarianism to American Transcendentalism to the frontierism of Frederick Jackson Turner. The plays offer a range of critiques, at times defending and at other times subverting the status quo. Their lack of clear solutions to social problems represents an extension of the evolution of American ideals, setting both the plays and the playwright apart in an age when many in the intellectual class were seeking out alternatives to Americanism.