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When playwright John Howard Lawson died in August 1977, the Los Angeles Times (August 15, 1977, p. 20) stated that after 1951 Lawson "never wrote another play." This statement, although probably generally accepted, is not correct. After 1951, when he finished In Praise of Learning, Lawson wrote at least two plays, Thunder Morning and Parlor Magic. The latter play was produced and published in Europe in 1963 and 1964. Thunder Morning was neither produced nor published. The following summary of Thunder Morning is based on the author's manuscript of 1955 which Lawson kindly permitted me to read. The publication of this summary will enable historians of American drama to bring more up to date the history of John Howard Lawson's career as a playwright.

I

An Introductory Biographical Note

At Williams College, the upper class private liberal arts men's college he graduated from in 1914, John Howard Lawson used to say hello to the only black student in his class, but, like most of the other white students, he never tried to get to know him. In "A Calendar of Commitment," his unfinished unpublished autobiography, Lawson says of this student: "He had an unruffled dignity and he went around the campus as separate and equal as if he had come from Mars." Lawson admits he had very little interest in this black student, admired for his athletic prowess, and says he had "no awareness of /the black student's/ dignity or what it must have cost him."

In the 1920s Lawson's associations with Negroes were limited to conversations with black intellectuals, whom he met for the first
time at Muriel Draper’s salon: “I assumed there were no barriers between us, but they knew better.” In “A Calendar of Commitment” Lawson mentions, too, his “excursions to Harlem...like journeys to a foreign country”: “We found everything picturesque; we admired the entertainment in the small cafes...It never occurred to us to consider the abyss of poverty around the lights of 125th Street.” He had no consciousness of prejudice, “but it was deep in me, and it would take most of a lifetime to burn it out.”

In Processional (1925) Lawson introduced the first Negro character in his dramas—a banjo-playing, eye-rolling, spook-fearing Rastus Jolly, a stage-stereotype of Negroes often found in American plays, novels and movies until after the second world war.

In Loud Speaker (1927) Lawson included among his mainly white characters other Negro stereotypes—black ward politicians, in a song-and-dance routine satirizing the corruption of gubernatorial elections in Harlem.

In The International (1928) Lawson presented a seductive light-skinned Negro prostitute who dances up a sensual storm, but who also voices the protest of black and other colored women in the world whose races make them the focus of patronage and abuse.

In 1934 Lawson made a political journalism trip to Birmingham, Alabama, on behalf of the “Scottsboro Boys,” and he was briefly imprisoned by the Birmingham police, which he writes about in A Southern Welcome (1934). Afterward, he became one of the first white American writers in the 20th century to involve himself directly in the actual struggle of American Negroes for legal and political justice.

In 1937 for the Federal Theater Project’s revival production of Processional Lawson altered the character of Rastus Jolly to one called Joe Green, a man of dignified deportment.

In Marching Song (1937) Lawson included among his leading characters a black worker who develops from ignorant strike breaker to intelligent striker, developing the theme of black-white working class solidarity.
In his war film *Sahara* (1943) Lawson presented a “magnificent Sudanese soldier engendering audience affection as he heroically killed a Nazi and then sacrificed his own life in the name of the free world!”¹

In *Film in the Battle of Ideas* (1953) Lawson proposed the “establishment of film producing companies under the control of Negro artists” to produce films depicting the “national culture of the Negro people, their glorious history, their present efforts to achieve full freedom.”

In 1953 Lawson copyrighted *Thunder Morning*, his first effort, as far as I know, to deal with Negroes as the main characters in a drama.

In 1961 in a lecture on “The Theater of the Thirties” at an American Studies meeting at the State University of California at Northridge, Lawson mentioned in passing his reason for writing *Thunder Morning*. He admitted he had no roots in Negro life, and he asked: “Why did I want to write a play about Negro life?” He answered: “Primarily it is because I feel I must meet some challenge. I have to do this. I have a love and respect for Negro people which must find artistic fruition.”

II

In the 1920s John Howard Lawson crusaded among theater people in the United States for the elimination of the convention of the “fourth wall” and for the extension of playing space into the audience. In the early 1950s he again puts this preaching into practice in *Thunder Morning*. This play is designed so that it can be produced on a low budget, with or without realistic settings, in theater or auditorium, in meeting hall or church. Wherever performed, much of the action takes place in front of stage or platform and in aisles. The setting, whether presented directly or by suggestion, is the ground floor of a small frame apartment building with adjacent streets and alleys in the Negro district of a mid-Western industrial city,² whose Globe Manufacturing Company is “one of the giant
corporations allied with other financial interests in control of the nation's economic life.

The action of Thunder Morning begins in the “sparsely, tastefully furnished” apartment of widow Grace Washington, a Negro night cleaning woman in the building of the city’s Hall of Justice. Grace is a “bustling, energetic” self-educated woman with a “stored up and guarded anger” after a lifetime of “back-breaking toil.” On one wall Grace has a picture of Frederick Douglass. On one table she has a “very worn old Bible.”

In the background is heard the sound of a trumpet “improvising dreamily.”

In the apartment, Gladys Jones, a tall, heavy Negro woman worker at Globe Manufacturing, tells how she just lost her job: a black woman on the production line fainted, and when other black women tried to help her the superintendent of the line fired them all for holding up production, and the management replaced the black women with white teenagers. Gladys says: “Seems us /black/ women is junior to most everybody.”* Gladys says she will now have to go back to work cleaning other people’s houses. She rejects militant advice from Grace Washington’s “sharp-tongued” neighbor, buoyant and humorous, staunch unionist Elinor Phillips, whom at 30 Grace considers too independent for a “young girl.”

Grace’s father, Eben Carter, a self-educated Negro man of “heroic stature,” is heard in another room humming “In that great getting up morning...” Eben is hiding from the police: once a cotton sharecropper, cheated for 30 years by the man who owns the land Eben works, Eben argues back when the landowner tells him to get off the land, and to protect himself Eben dares to take away the white man’s gun. Now he fears extradition to Alabama. His distress is aggravated by worries about his wife and newborn child still in Alabama.

* In If they come in the morning (1971) Black woman-philosopher Angela Davissays: “Black women constitute the most oppressed sector of [U. S.] society.”
Outside the building, J. Raymond Findlay, an elderly Negro businessman, "slight, erect, dignified," Grace's landlord (and would-be suitor) passes by. He jokes with trumpeter Buddy La Rue, the boyfriend of Grace's daughter, Anna Mae. Findlay jokes about the time when the last trumpet is supposed to blow. Buddy says: "I don't claim I can wake the dead." (But on the thunder morning of the third act curtain, Buddy's trumpet wakens people to militant action.)

Findlay hears Eben's humming of Negro spirituals. To find out if Grace Washington has a visitor he does not know about, he remains in the vicinity. Elinor Philips comes outside. She teases her landlord Findlay: she has dreamed of him as an angel with wings and a halo. Findlay smiles. Then Elinor complains about the tenement conditions in the Negro district, the high rent. Findlay takes her protest in stride, reminding her most property in their district is owned by absentee whites. And he teases her back: "Now, Mrs. Philips, no propaganda..."

As Elinor Philips leaves, red-faced, loose-mouthed, sharp-eyed Sam Gray, owner or the supper club Grace's daughter Anna Mae wants to dance in, walks by. ("He walks as if his limbs were not very securely attached to his body.") Gray tells Findlay of rumors: "reds" in the union at Globe Manufacturing are agitating for a strike over the firing of the black women workers. (Gray condescendingly calls Findlay a "credit to his race." Findlay takes that in stride, too.)

Militant, outspoken Negro leader Joe Philips, on his way home, passes Gray and Findlay. Joe reproaches Gray for operating a corrupt nightclub. He accuses Gray of associating with "goons" and, with the aid of ward-heelers and friends of the police, participating in rackets. Gray leaves in anger, but Joe continues his accusations: Gray hires out "punks" to Globe Manufacturing as strike-breakers. Gray is "one of the little sucker-fish riding under the belly of the big fish." The Negro community stands for Gray because of his favors, money, jobs; if need be, Gray "fixes" the law. Gray has
“no more prejudice than a dollar bill,” for, as their “errand boy” to City Hall, Gray takes orders from Negro gangsters.\(^{10}\)

Enter “florid, handsome” 30-year-old Danny Mercer and his brother Jim. Jim is on his way to visit Ruth Carter, Eben Carter’s daughter, Grace Washington’s 22-year-old sister. These white rank-and-file union members are discussing the possibility of a strike. Danny does not like the idea of striking: the white Southerners in the union do not care about the problems of the fired Negro women.\(^{11}\)

Danny reminds his younger brother how he, Jim, is spoken of in the factory—“Stuff I wouldn’t repeat”—because of Jim’s relationship with Ruth. Jim, displeased with Danny’s own racial chauvinism, concentrates on the immediate problem—helping the fired women workers. Jim admits how hard it is to get the people together. But, recalling the spirit of solidarity among workers in the 1930s, he affirms that workers will get that spirit again.\(^{12}\)

Meanwhile, Ruth Carter, classic-featured,\(^{*}\) physically vital, reports to a group of women workers that their union officials have taken the firing of their fellow women workers lightly, even making crude jokes about women. Ruth says: “We’ve got to do something.” The women around her—black, white, Nisei, French-Canadian—ask: “What are the men going to do?” Ruth answers: “It’s not just up to the men. It’s up to everybody.”

A short time later, Eben Carter describes for his daughter Ruth his encounter with the landowner: “Him and me stood there, the sun red on us. Two great shadows across that land. My shadow stood taller, gun in my hand.” Eben escaped. In retaliation the meeting-house of the Negro community in the small Alabama town was burned. Eben, hiding in the swamp, called out: “‘How long, Oh Lord, how long?’”\(^{13}\) And it seemed to him “like all around me there was voices joined with mine... an army of us calling out to God in heaven...”\(^{14}\) Eben asks: “Where is the army of the living?”

\(\text{* Ruth is in the long line of classic-featured heroines Lawson has based in part on mythical heroines. e. g., Isis, Venus, Astarte.}\)
Ruth says that it shall be.

Eben suggests that violence will achieve social justice for his people. But Ruth says: "That is not the way."\(^{15}\)

As for Ruth's relationship with Jim Mercer, Eben says: "I thought you had more pride!" Eben says: "We are opposed and mocked, we know the faces that mock us, we know the knavish faces of our oppressors—." He asks: "Haven't our women been shamed enough?"

Ruth says she cannot answer every evil tongue prattling about her and Jim. She tells her father her anger is as strong as his, her hate is as strong as his. And she is proud: "I am a woman, a Negro woman, and that is the heart of my pride. No man is going to walk with me unless he respects my pride, no man is going to touch my hand unless he holds out his hand for a friend and equal."

The second act of *Thunder Morning* begins as Joe Philips seeks a safer hiding place for Eben, and Eben gets a letter from his wife reporting that she and their baby, both still in Alabama, are in danger. Grace Washington, Eben’s daughter, is asked to go to Alabama to bring them back up North.

Grace, afraid because F.B.I. agents once questioned her about Joe Philips, consults Findlay. He recommends she consult a famous Negro attorney who is well-connected and above suspicion of associating with radicals and would fight Eben's extradition in court—under certain conditions: "Being a political man, /the attorney/ has to be sure every move he makes is politically sound." Findlay says, do not let the Philips couple "mix up" in Eben’s case because they are called subversive, seditious, disloyal, and scandalous.\(^{16}\) "They’re always messing with white folks." Everything they touch is "smeared red from here to Christmas."

After this piece of advice, Findlay breaks bread with Eben. Eben, nevertheless, rejects any conditions that divide people, in this case the Philips couple from him. Findlay moans: "We live in parlous times...scabrous times...turn us against each other, against ourselves." Eben asks: "What is this poison in our hearts? Where
is hope for us if we do not walk together?” Ruth says: “We must learn to walk together.”

From Lincoln Avenue, raucous fragments of jazz are heard.17 Ruth says of Buddy La Rue, who is playing the jazz on his trumpet, and of Anna Mae: “They’re so crazy-desperate for a chance.”18 Eben says: “Crazy-desperate is no way to live.”

The apartment building has been watched for some time by two men, one white and one black, who, everyone fears, may abduct Eben without due process of law. Joe Philips says Eben can get away, if Joe roughs up the two police agents—one of them an F. B. I. man.* Elinor Philips prevents her husband from committing an act of violence, saying: “People is the only thing to protect you.”19 Ruth agrees that they must keep the law.

They arrange a rather elaborate plan of escape for Eben, requiring the cooperation of Buddy La Rue and three fellow trumpeters, who will blow musical signals at the proper times and places.

As Eben prepares to escape, he asks Ruth to take a pledge. Instead of “turning from her own,” he wants her to tear Jim Mercer out of her heart. Ruth takes an oath: “I swear that I will never give my heart to one who is not of my race. I swear by the suffering of our people.”

As Eben waits for Buddy’s trumpet signal, he studies the Constitution of the United States, “trying to get at the root of it.” He says the Constitution is “ours” (the people’s): “We wrote it, wrote it in our blood.”

Gladys Jones enters, frightened. She reports that F. B. I. men have been questioning her. She says: “I just can’t afford to have trouble” — with an injured husband (he fell off a scaffold at work) and four children to take care of. Gladys also mentions seeing

* The presence of the man from the Federal Bureau of Investigation may be Lawson’s allusion to the Federal Interstate Fugitive Act under which it is a federal offense for a person to travel from one state to another in order to evade prosecution by the first state. This law permits the involvement of the F. B. I. in local police cases.
Findlay at F. B. I. headquarters.

Findlay arrives. He is under suspicion. Eben gently reminds Findlay their breaking bread together was a "token of trust." Findlay, a church deacon, says: "I have tried to keep my soul's health." He admits, however, he is "caught in the same net." "They can take everything from me, they can ruin me in a minute."  

Findlay denies he is an informer. The F. B. I. has notified him Eben's wife and child are in jail in Alabama. The F. B. I. has asked him to tell the Carter family that the F. B. I. will help Eben — if Ruth becomes a witness in F. B. I. proceedings against Joe Philips.  

Grace Washington returns from Alabama with Eben's baby and with the news that Eben's wife has been killed in jail. In a "voice of terrible power," Eben says: "Stone City... a black woman in Stone City. House of stone, hearts of stone. Blood on the stones. Tear down the stones. Stone by stone, we will tear down their cities."  

As the third act begins, Elinor Philips is breast-feeding Eben's baby. Eben thanks her for giving his baby the "milk of life." Elinor says: "Life is for giving."

Grace Washington urges her sister Ruth Carter to stay home and comfort their father instead of going to a union meeting. Ruth wants to go to the union meeting to tell the whole of her father's story to the union members. Eben tells Ruth to do what she feels is right.

Outside, a group of working women is organizing a picket line in support of the black women workers who were unfairly fired from their jobs. These women — black, white, Nisei, French-Canadian — sing: "This line, Oh, this line, / This line is a freedom line, / If you walk it, then you walk it with a freedom sign."

Jim Mercer arrives to accompany Ruth to the union meeting. He tells her how much he loves her. Ruth keeps her pledge to her father and rejects Jim's love. She says of her mother's death: "Her tears are in my mouth, angry salt taste of a black woman's
tears."

Eben then frees Ruth from her pledge. He says his wife’s death has made him realize that “love must be free.”

Eben then soliloquizes. He talks to the spirit of his dead wife: “All around this place there’s a stirring and a questing, and a seeking and a searching, like folks up early on a great morning.” He speaks to the spirit of his wife of Ruth: “You’d think Ruth had a bolt of thunder in her hand, ready to shake the world.” He refers to the Book of Revelation with its prophecies about a New Heaven and a New Earth and a New Jerusalem. And to the baby he is tending, Eben says: “Sleep well, for you shall see it” — the City of Light.

In a reprisal, Grace Washington loses her job at the Hall of Justice. There she was every night, she recalls, with a scrubbing brush and a pail, in the Hall of Justice, signs of the Zodiac in brass, whole Heavens laid out there on the floor, and she crawling among the stars... White folks’ Heaven, cold marble and sounding brass. The statue of Justice shows Justice white in black robes. “A black woman on her knees before white Justice.”

Danny Mercer attempts to remove Eben and is exposed as an informer. (He has become an informer to escape the legal penalty for contributing to the delinquency of an under-age girl.) Jim Mercer is furious with his brother. But Eben rises above mere revenge: “He (Danny) is only dung on the feet of his masters.”

Ruth arrives. She has been held and pressured by the F. B. I. to turn against Joe and Elinor Philips on the threat of her father’s being turned over (illegally) to the Alabama police.

The size of the picket line outside is growing, and the picketers are preparing to march on Globe Manufacturing. Ruth says: “It’s most time for the sun to come up.” Eben encourages her to join the picket line. Ruth’s actions have helped Eben to interpret the Biblical legend of Jericho:

It is the Voice of people that is Holy and strong, the trumpets and the shouting are our strength that will not be
denied: to tear down the walls of sorrow and shame.
There is a learning between us. There is a coming to­gether, North, South, East, and West. People shall march
together. Some are white and some are black, and you
are a black woman marching in the front of them. 27

There is the sound of trumpets signalling danger. The two
men watching the house, one an F. B. I. man, one an Alabama
High Sheriff, now enter the house to take Eben away.

The people gathering outside become restless.

Eben refuses to leave with the two men unless they show him
legal extradition papers: “That’s the law.” The F. B. I. agent
says: “We are the law.”

Joe Philips prevents the two men from taking Eben away. Joe
rallies the picketers: “Stand up an’ be counted for what’s right.” 28

Eben speak:

The law belongs to us, and this is our law — the flesh and
spirit of man is holy, and the flesh and spirit of woman,
and the child of their love is holy... and the earth is a holy
place for it is the garden of our love...

The people join in song:

This line goes back to the beginning, When Adam plowed
while Eve was spinning — Hunger made him almost dead,
Stopped to eat an apple red, Lost the joo and lost the land.
Looking back at Eden fair, “No help wanted” written there,
Walked the land in search of bread; “We need a union,”
Adam said. *

As the people sing, the “first rays of the rising sun strike them
at left.” The last verse of their song is:

* “The first labor organization mentioned in history, either profane or
divine, was the one founded just outside of the historic Garden of
Eden... the charter members being Adam and Eve.” J. A. Crawford,
United Mine Workers' Journal, September 30, 1897.
Everybody, come along, Join in singing freedom's song, Freedom's day is surely dawning, Sing your joy on thunder morning...

The people prepare to march together.

The final dialogue of the play is:

Elinor Philips. You going along, Mr. Findlay?
Findlay. Not just now.
Elinor Philips. Maybe you will.
Findlay. Could be!

Elinor and the other working people march off. The lower middle class businessman is alone on stage to think about whether he will join the workers in the future.

NOTES

1. Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks* 1974, p. 196. The part of the Sudanese soldier in *Sahara* was played by Rex Ingram, who usually played black men who seemed "essentially free, slightly heroic and removed from typical American life."

2. For the name of this city, Brimmerton, Lawson goes back to the same fictitious city in which he set *Marching Song*. To show the changes that have taken place there since the second world war, when the Brimmer Company (now Globe Manufacturing Company, in keeping with its overseas expansion) recruited Southern black workers and crowded them into a high-rent slum-housing district that "funnels" them directly into the gates of the factory, Lawson supplies a new map of Brimmerton to be included in the theater program. Although they do not figure in the simple setting of the play, buildings shown on the map include the Brimmer Building, the city's tallest skyscraper; the Brimmer Plaza, its largest hotel; and the Brimmer Foundation, its biggest charity.

3. The audience is asked to assume that this apartment is in a building with an alley in front of it (the front of the auditorium or hall), a Maple Street to the left of it (the right aisle), and another alley to the right of it (the left aisle). Lawson adds an irony: one of the streets bounding the Negro district is named Lincoln Avenue.
4. The stage directions further say that the trumpet background is a "sort of mocking commentary." (In a college poem, "The Elves" (Williams Literary Monthly, December 1910), Lawson has "phantom visions" say that they "blow the trumpets of the dawn". In another college poem, "The Trumpet Call of Dawn" (Williams Literary Monthly, February 1911), Lawson has the "fiery angels of the dawn/... blowing their trumpets loud and long.")

5. Eben's book knowledge is derived from the Bible, as is his inspiration to get up and live every day, and as is his hope that on some "great getting up morning" his people will be free. When he is aroused, Eben is capable of "torrents of speech" which is "poetic in its intensity" in a King James-flavored way.

6. Lawson's conception of Eben Carter is manifested in his wish that the role be enacted by Paul Robeson, a friend of his.

7. Buddy, 20 years old, is a composer who wants to compose "stuff" that is "different" and "original." He is a "sensitive serious artist" who is "embittered" by his "inability to use his talent creatively." In Nirvana (1926) novelist Bill Weed, and in Parlor Magic (1963) novelist Jed Merton, are also embittered by inability to use talent creatively.

8. Anna Mae, 18 years old, is "half-way to maturity" with "troublesome emotions," a description fitting Lawson's teenagers, Cinders in Servant-Master-Lover (1916), Sadie in Processional, and Annabel in The Pure in Heart (1934).

9. In Nirvana a Catholic nurse worries about what the people who in life are mangled will do on the day of the last trumpet and the assembling of bones.

10. Joe's indictment of Gray, who has only a minor role in the play, is very strong, but it tells a lot about Joe's values and increases an audience's understanding of the social milieu in which the action takes place.

11. In Michael Wilson's film Salt of the Earth (1953) there is a similar theme, involving "Anglo" and Mexican miners. Wilson and Lawson were associates in Hollywood and may have exchanged ideas.

12. In Theory and Technique of Playwriting (1960) Lawson says in regard to the culture of the thirties: "My beliefs have not changed, nor has my fervor abated."

13. The theme of the 94th Psalm is "Lord, how long shall the wicked
14. In the 1950s Lawson writes sympathetically about a character's belief in a deity, long after he himself, raised as a Christian Scientist, presumably rejected the concept. One reason is that many Negroes in the current struggle for equal justice are religiously oriented, and in the mimetic element of Thunder Morning Lawson takes that fact into consideration. Another reason is that the Biblical tradition of Christians, Jews and occultists, provides a word-hord of images Lawson has consistently used and which he uses here to symbolize the social action he is concerned with, in a language common to all in American society.

15. On this issue Lawson's attitude here, in the early 1950s, is liberal, not radical. (At the Writer's Guild of America's memorial services for John Howard Lawson, September 8, 1977, Lawson's son Jeffrey spoke about an "interesting contradiction" in Lawson: "known as a man in opposition to the status quo, he was yet probably the single most law-abiding human I ever saw.")

16. The anti-climax here is Lawson's intentional irony.

17. Lawson introduces "raucous jazz" in Standards (1916) and uses it for similar emotional effects in Processional, Loud Speaker, The International, and The Pute in Heart.

18. The theme of "a chance" appears consistently in Lawson's plays since Standards, as does the theme of "crazy desperate" since Roger Bloomer (1923).

19. Over 20 years later, in An Autobiography (1974, p. 339), "political prisoner" Angela Davis refers to her being freed from prison: "What had just unfolded was incontrovertible proof of the power of the people."

20. Findlay is in the same net that catches the small businessman in Marching Song who wants to be kind to the workers but whose own economic survival as a member of the middle-class depends on the goodwill of his economic superiors at Brimmerton Company. In Parlor Magic businessman Mat Merton also realizes he is caught in a "web of lies."

21. Lawson's criticism of the F. B. I. here, unusual in American drama, was made in 1953, almost 20 years before the post-Watergate revelations of the illegal activities of the F. B. I.
22. Stone City is the (symbolic) name of the Alabamal town where Eben Carter’s wife is killed in circumstances the play does not make clear. (Eben’s speech, though motivated by a more terrible personal situation than the one in Roger Bloomer, is similar to Louise Chamberlain’s speech in that play about the “stone city” of New York.)

23. The image of the newborn babe (the next generation) appears in Processional as offspring of the rape of a lower middle class Jewish girl by an anarchistic coal miner of native American mountaineer stock; re-appears in Gentlewoman (1934) as the result of a bohemian affair between an upper class woman of old New England stock and a middle class radical journalist of Irish descent. In Thunder Morning the child of Negro share-croppers is breast-fed by a radical unionist and is the baby brother of a young Negro woman activist in love with a white rank-and-file union man. (Lawson had early read Nietzsche’s Zarathustra: “The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning... a sacred ‘Yes!’.”)

24. In Nirvana the Reverend Dr. Gulick is said to shout the Book of Revelation at his congregation in a booming voice.


26. In Parlor Magic Owen Merton is angry that his older brother Jed cooperates with the House of Representatives Un-American Activities Committee. (In 1947 Lawson refused to cooperate with the Un-American Activities Committee; and he was imprisoned in 1950-1951 for ten months for his contempt of the Committee.)

27. In 1953, when Lawson copyrighted Thunder Morning, the theme of Negro liberation had not yet entered the consciousness of non-black Americans at large.

28. The final line of Parlor Magic is: “It’s not easy to stand up for what’s right. Yet, it’s the only way to live.” Thus in two of his last plays John Howard Lawson returns, it seems, to the morality of Socrates in Apology 28B: “A man worth anything at all should take no account of whether he is to live or die, or give consideration to anything but this: whether his conduct will be just or unjust...”