

Joanna Rotté

Questions of Life and Art: Recollecting Harold Clurman

When Harold Clurman died in 1980, he was almost as old as the century, but still in harness – perhaps the most venerable as well as the most versatile polymath of the American theatre. His life in the theatre extended from acting with the Theatre Guild in the 'twenties, through his creation and direction of the Group Theatre in the 'thirties, to a distinguished post-war career as free-lance director, highly respected theatre critic – first for the *New Republic*, then since 1953 for *The Nation* – and also theatre historian and university teacher. It was in this last role that, as a student, Joanna Rotté met Harold Clurman in 1969, and in the article which follows she blends personal recollections of an enduring friendship with a wider-ranging assessment of the qualities that distinguished Clurman as a critic and a human being. Joanna Rotté presently chairs the Theatre Department at Villanova University, Pennsylvania.

As a commentator on the theatre Harold has no peer.

ARTHUR MILLER

DURING A VISIT to New York City late last summer, I invited the Old Lady in my life, Florence Kerze, to lunch. Florence had rented me a room in her Queens apartment when I had first migrated to New York as a graduate student in theatre. Now, after more than fifteen years, it was shocking to see her: literally and utterly bent in half, her face set parallel to the ground, she was as if a Japanese *obasan* who all her life had stooped to plant rice with a pack on her back.

But she was hearty of mind and will, and she had made, what I presumed was formidable for her, the trip from Queens to Manhattan by bus – to meet me, because of a certain fondness she retained. Florence had been, in more elastic days, a music teacher in the public school system, an unflagging world traveller in the manner of the Victorian Isabella Bird, and a habitué of the theatre. Withal, dear to her memory remained the afternoon when Harold Clurman had come to her home in Jackson Heights to visit me.

It was in 1969, and I was being courted by Clurman. I say 'courted' because there

was in his style a combination of the unassumingly Shakespearean and the lingeringly Parisian – a hold-over, perhaps, from his student days at the Sorbonne. He and I had met at the Graduate Centre of the City University of New York in a course under his instruction, 'American Theatre between the Wars' – the period of New York theatre history during which Clurman's career had evolved, and which, in terms of the 1930s, he had incipiently inspired.

During one December class recess, he enquired if I would like to accompany him to the theatre sometime. I said, yes, I thought I might enjoy that. From then, on and off through the May of 1975 when I left the city, I rode on a wave of New York City culture with Clurman at the helm. In his role as theatre critic for *The Nation*, he took me to the openings of Tyrone Guthrie's *The House of Atreus*, Dustin Hoffman in *Jimmy Shine*, the American Conservatory Theatre's *A Flea in Her Ear*, the Open Theatre's *The Serpent*, Madeline Kahn in David Rabe's *In the Boom Boom Room*, the Circle in the Square's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Pippin*, Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, James Earl Jones in *Of Mice and Men*, and more.

We saw film premieres including *I Am Curious Yellow*, my first X-rated show; the

Harkness, Joffrey, and New York City ballets; and operas at the Met. Clurman took me to pre-show dinners at the Stage Deli, the Escargot, the Carrousel, Wally's and Joseph's, Joe Allen's, Jimmy Ray's. Clurman took me to post-show dinners at Sardi's – and always, at the night's end, to his table in the Russian Tea Room, where the *bon mot* columnist of the *New York Post*, Leonard Lyons, father of Jeffrey, dropped down to pick up a quote; where musicians, writers, actors, and Clurman's faithful-as-a-wife ex-stage manager Jimmy Gelb gathered.

On one of these outings, Clurman invited me downtown to the Greenwich Mews for the premiere of Elaine May's *Adaptation* with Terence McNally's *Next*. At the intermission my lower back seized up, and by the end of the show I was temporarily (as is Florence permanently) collapsed at the waist. Clurman escorted me by subway to his home in the Osborne Hotel, prepared a bed for me on the sitting room floor, and in the morning sent me to his doctor.

It was during the next week of recuperation that Clurman called on me at Florence's. She received him at the door, and was charmed by the not-so-tall gentleman in black cashmere top coat with velvet collar, fedora hat, white silk scarf, soft leather gloves, and significant silver-headed walking stick – used for hailing taxis. Over the years, Florence has mailed me articles she has clipped on Harold Clurman.

I knew Clurman first as my professor; then as the director of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, on which I served a research internship; then as the person who counselled me to study acting with either Stella Adler, his first wife, or with Uta Hagen, whom he called 'an actress who should always be before us'; then as my scene-study teacher – and throughout as an enormously perceptive, compassionate, imaginative and even prophetic theatre critic. In his notice on Burton's *Hamlet*, Clurman wrote: 'There is something 'lost', almost tragic, as Burton stands on the stage amid, but distinctly apart from, his fellow actors. He looked altogether uncertain as to whether he wanted to pursue his career as an actor any further.'

Early on in our acquaintance Clurman presented me with a subscription to *The Nation*, the precariously under-funded left-wing journal for which he wrote for twenty-seven years beginning in February 1953. Whenever I was living in the United States, I read his criticism in *The Nation* until he was halted by death.

I last saw Clurman on 6 May 1979. It was, curiously, the day for dedicating the theatre on Forty-Second Street named in his honour. I had known nothing of this in advance, having been out of the States for three years, but had just returned for a stop in New York with my fifteen-month-old son. I phoned Clurman and he invited me to lunch. His second ex-wife, Juleen Comptom, was staying with him, and offered to look after my boy while we lunched – at the Russian Tea Room. Clurman had once told me that the proprietor, Faith Burwell, had asked him to marry her, and though he counted her an admirable woman (not least because she kept up the Tea Room's Christmas decorations year-round), he had declined.

Then I settled in Boston, and the next September, nine days before his seventy-ninth birthday, Harold Clurman died – on nine/nine/nineteen-eighty, twelve years to the day after I had moved into Florence's apartment. Nine, in numerology, is the number of infinity.

I still find it disconcerting to pass by the Osborne Hotel in New York and look up at the window that used to be Clurman's on the sixth-floor corner of Fifty-Ninth Street and Seventh Avenue, knowing he is not there. Though I continue to subscribe to *The Nation* and read the theatre reviews, I am aware that they do not add up to Clurman criticism. Nobody's can, of course, because they do not hold the kind of promise for the playwright or the actor that Clurman's invariably did. It is correct, I believe, to venture that no other American critic loves or has loved the theatre as did Harold Clurman. His third and final collection of theatre reviews and essays was called *The Divine Pastime*.

Clurman's last published piece, which appeared on 14 June 1980, included a men-

tion of the first two parts, *L'Os* and *The Ik*, of a sequence of Peter Brook's work at La Mama, about which he wrote:

It is drama reduced to its most primitive principles and images. . . . But I am not convinced that the means employed to arrive at these results – the long months and years of arduous experiments – were needed to achieve them. . . . What, I ask myself, can this experiment – the totality of the event – bring to the theatre? It is a reduction to the basics, the 'mythic', the rock bottom. This is not a question readily answered at first go.

His intention was not to assess the work entirely until he had seen the third production, *The Conference of the Birds*. So he insisted, in what was to prove his farewell critical observation, 'Let us wait.'

If we did not have to wait forever, it would be sustaining to know what Clurman would have told us about some of the plays of the 'eighties – *Top Girls*, *Hurlyburly*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Fences*, *The Mahabharata*, *Serious Money*, *M. Butterfly*. What uncompromising means would he have employed in his criticism so that the soulfulness of the playwrights and the actors might emerge more fully, if they chose to listen?

He was in his writing possessed of what the Japanese call *haha no kokoro*, or 'mommy's heart-mind' – a profound compliment in Japan to even the fiercest of samurai. Like a good mommy – and like Chekhov, whom with deference he took for his brother – Clurman as theatre critic was tough-minded and tender-hearted. He had the capacity to help, without seeking to dominate.

Clurman once showed me a letter from Edward Albee in which the playwright thanked him for such qualities as insight, kindness, and discernment, and in which he honoured Clurman for having comprehended and articulated what he, Albee, was aiming to write about. The letter was of the late 1960s, after productions of Albee's *Zoo Story*, *American Dream*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *Tiny Alice*. All of these Clurman had reviewed, and with each play had comparatively evaluated Albee's talent and the proportion of his contribution to American theatre.



Written for readers of *The Nation*, Clurman's reviews also offered encouragement and advice to playwrights, directors, and actors. In his notice of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, a play that was besieged by newspaper raves, Clurman's voice could more soberly be heard:

Albee is prodigiously shrewd and skilful. His dialogue is superbly virile and pliant; it also *sounds*. It is not 'realistic' dialogue but a highly literate and full-bodied distillation of common speech. . . .

Strangely enough, though there is no question of his sincerity, it is Albee's skill which . . . most troubles me. It is as if his already practised hand

had learned too soon to make an artful package of venom. . . . The right to pessimism has to be earned within the artistic terms one sets up; the pessimism and rage of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* are immature. Immaturity coupled with a commanding deftness is dangerous. . . .

We do not actually identify with anyone except editorially. . . . The characters in Albee's *The Zoo Story* and *Bessie Smith* are more particularized. If we see Albee, as I do, as an emerging artist, young in the sense of a seriously prolonged career, the play marks an auspicious beginning and, despite its success, not an end. In our depleted theatre it has real importance because Albee desperately wishes to cry out – manifest – his life.

The letter from Edward Albee was one of the few mementoes Clurman kept. His domestic lifestyle was minimalist, near nostalgia-free. His home consisted of a bedroom with a bath and a sitting room with a cupboarded kitchen, where he outfitted some kind of breakfast. Lunch' and dinner were taken in restaurants, for Clurman could no more cook than he could operate a camera.

In the sitting room, bent over a wooden desk set beneath the bookshelves which lined the entire wall, Clurman wrote his observations on theatre in scratchy penmanship. One framed photograph, from the year in Japan when he directed through pantomime and interpreters an all-Japanese cast in O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, hung in the entrance way.

In his first review for *The Nation*, of *Love's Labour's Lost*, Clurman wrote, 'The basis of drama, then, is action.' Rather than collect and display his achievements, Clurman put his past in his pocket and focused his autobiographical writing or storytelling on the eventualities of those he had met. When asked at the dedication party for the Harold Clurman Theatre what he considered his greatest accomplishment, he reportedly replied, 'My birth!'

Like my other professors, Clurman was versed in theatre tradition. But the difference between them and him was that he oftentimes had participated in what he was describing – or if he had not, he behaved as if he had. In a course on criticism I took from him in 1970, he was fond of exuding

such reminiscences as: 'When Aristotle and I were sitting around on the Acropolis, he would say, "Education is not easy! Education is supposed to be difficult!" ' This was not mere whimsy. Clurman held hands with history and walked through our inherited theatrical culture with knowledge.

An erstwhile actor and stage manager, he became a producer and an honoured director. This combination of erudition and experience in the field grounded and authenticated his critical writing. He was not, to appropriate the phrase of Tristan Bernard, 'a virgin who wants to teach a Don Juan how to make love'.

In his essay 'Plays and Politics' (1965), Clurman called up a spectrum of dramatic literature to distinguish between social plays and political plays. While a social play – stemming from 'a particular environment which to a degree is a reflection of a political condition', such as all of Chekhov or Shaw's *Heartbreak House* – could have potential for spiritual impact, a political play, dealing with politics, would rarely lift us 'above the ordinary traffic of existence'.

Since what human beings truly long for, Clurman asserted, is not to escape from reality but to escape into reality – into 'some realm of truth, the purest consciousness' – creating or providing a super-reality for the audience was, in his opinion, the theatre's blessed aspiration. Locating Chekhov's canon in the social realm, Clurman explained:

What makes Chekhov's plays so touching is not their depiction of the unhappy middle class of Russia at a certain period, but the use he makes of this subject matter. From it he wrings the 'music' of idealistic yearning, the aspiration which both torments and elevates the hearts of not particularly bright folk everywhere. . . .

Plays of so-called classic breadth, from Aeschylus to Racine, attain such heights. The better realistic plays of modern times move willy-nilly toward the same goals. Patently social plays, like those of Shaw and Brecht, Büchner's *Danton's Death* or Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, are sustained by a similar afflatus. Political plays, when they are intelligent and honest (e.g., Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy*), are to be welcomed even when they do not qualify as art. How many plays of any sort do? Still, the annals of drama teach us that specifically political plays seldom reach the

loftiest peaks – unless one calls Euripides' *Trojan Women* or Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* 'political'.

Clurman was first taken to the theatre, the Lower East Side Yiddish Theatre, at the age of six by his father. His last published book was an analysis of the plays of Ibsen, with whose political vision he sympathized. Not entirely jokingly, Clurman labelled himself a left-wing royalist, akin to Ibsen's ideal of the democratic aristocrat.

Among his coterie, Clurman was renowned and sometimes teased for admiring women, especially young ones. Actually, Clurman was interested in young people in general. He said they kept his ideas fresh. 'Up to the age of forty', he wrote, 'I was chiefly interested in people older than myself. I supposed that the experience of knowing my elders would be enriching. But after forty I became more concerned with the experience of knowing the "inexperienced" young . . . [the] forecasts of history.'

So I would argue that Clurman's attention to, and appreciation of, women helped make him an exemplary critic and also rendered him capable of respecting humanity as a whole. His philosophy, as outlined in his *All People Are Famous: Instead of an Autobiography*, was: 'We are all great, i.e., wonderful, "famous", because we are products of and partners in the world's grandeur.'

Even when the maid at the American Academy in Rome, where he stayed on a Rockefeller grant in the summer of 1971, inadvertently threw out three chapters of his *On Directing*, then in progress, he ascribed to her no demeaning epithet. Rather, in telling the story in Rome when I was visiting him there, he was philosophic about the incident, and in the meantime sedulously rewriting.

I do not know whether Clurman's exuberance with the world seeded his devotion to talent or vice-versa, but as a theatre critic he believed 'talent of every kind, even small talent, must always be credited' – an ethic identical to that practised by Stella Adler and inherited from her family, who, as she related during an acting class, would quieten to anticipatory observance if one of the children sounded something approach-

ing a chord on the piano: Mozart might have arrived, and if not Mozart then a talent.

In terms of his own colleagues, the circle of New York theatre critics, Clurman was less embracing, more dismissive. He cared not for inhospitable wit in review writing, nor for commentary void of what he considered a fundamental critical obligation – to appreciate. In his 'A Critic's Credo' from 1964 Clurman wrote:

While some absolute standard must be latent in the critic's mind, if he is to give any play its proper place, it is not at all necessary or desirable to judge every new play on the basis of that ideal. . . . The critic who implies that nothing less than the absolutely first-rate will do is usually more pedant than artist.

Clurman's own reviews were not of the money-notice variety. He neither manufactured catchy come-ons to keep the box office open nor stinging parries to close it. In 1963 both Harold Clurman and Robert Brustein, the critic for the *New Republic*, were denied tickets by David Merrick to the openings of his productions. *The Nation* responded by assuring its readers:

We shall go to the box office for tickets to any Merrick offering Mr. Clurman wishes to see, and neither the playwrights nor the casts will suffer from association with a man who appears to believe that he can control critical discussion by manipulating the traditional courtesies of his profession.

Mr. Merrick's objection, assuredly, was to Clurman's and Brustein's refusals to spew superlatives that could be quoted in newspaper ads, a kind of reviewing Clurman discarded as promiscuity. He wished rather to make distinctions, and to demonstrate that the critical faculty consists not only in recognizing talent but also in judiciously weighing it. 'What counts in talent', he wrote, 'is its specific gravity, its meaning, how and in what way it affects us, the human nourishment it offers us.'

In fact, Clurman cared utterly that the box office should remain open – for Neil Simon or William Shakespeare or Irene Fornes or Ed Bullins or David Merrick. He

cared that people should go to the theatre and have a theatre to go to, lest we become even more 'culturally maimed'. In this sense, his writing was designed above all else to bring people into the theatre – in a spirit of enquiry. That was his task: to arouse interest in the theatre.

It was thus inconsequential to Clurman whether a production was likeable or not. He did not evaluate theatre in terms of appetite, nor did he grade productions, as Arthur Miler has noted, like sides of beef. 'The critic's main job', he wrote, 'is not to speak of his likes as pleasures or distaste alone but to define as exactly as possible the nature of what he examines.'

If someone approached him during an intermission to ask, 'What do you think?' or cornered him after a play to ask, 'Did you like it?', he would register annoyance with the person, even swing his cane in the vicinity of their shins. The source of his vexation was twofold. First of all, he did not know and did not require himself to know when in the middle of, or immediately after, seeing a production what he thought of it, because he had not yet absorbed and tested it against his aesthetic principles and prejudices, and against his attitude towards and philosophy of theatre and life: rather, as he said, 'Momentary satisfactions and immediate irritations frequently warp my judgement. My thoughts and feelings became clear to me only when I read what I have written!' Secondly, regardless of whether he could condone the various elements of a production or not, he liked being there. While Clurman 'disapproved of much [he] enjoyed almost everything'.

Before the curtain rose at the theatre, Clurman dwelled in what Zen terms 'beginner's mind', or the disposition of having no expectations. As a result, he was largely released from being disappointed. Each opening night was for Clurman as if for the first time. In spite of seven decades of theatregoing, of which three were as a critic, he did not need to rise to the occasion: he was *in* the occasion, in an adventure – 'the adventure of a soul', as he described it, 'among presumed works of art'. Accord-

ingly, as the playwright-novelist Irwin Shaw, in his eulogy for Clurman in *The Nation*, remembered:

Although Harold was always the most congenial of companions, going to the theatre with him could sometimes be trying. There are some plays that lie dead in the water from the opening lines and are so boring to sit through that one squirms during what seems to be an eternity of torture. But when you went with Harold you could not wrench him away from his seat. While the curtain was up he always felt there might be one second, at least, when an actor might read a line in an original and touching way, one movement that would show that the director had a brief spark of genius. When I would grumble and implore him to leave with me, Harold would invariably say, 'Just one more act. . . .'

What Clurman looked for was whether or not a play and its production had the capacity to 'speak to us, stir us in ways which most intimately and powerfully stir our senses and our soul, penetrate to the core what is most truly alive in us'. He was entirely taken with the here and now. The best epoch in which to have lived, he would say, is the present.

Theatre that reflects today was therefore his prime interest, even if the play he was seeing were Shakespeare's. In reviewing John Gielgud's production of *Hamlet* in New York in 1964, with Richard Burton in the title role, Clurman observed:

It is not a 'bad' *Hamlet*, but rather no *Hamlet* at all. I was not disturbed or mystified to find the play set in a simulacrum of a New York backstage during rehearsal time, with actors in their work clothes. . . . All this may have been intended to show that the play could do without theatrical 'trappings', that it is universal. But as the play progressed . . . I could not discern, apart from its plot, what the play was about. In what way did it show, as Shakespeare tells us the theatre must, 'the very age and body of the time' – except perhaps by its exposure of Broadway opportunism?

While Clurman amused himself by provoking his students with the assertion that the purpose of theatre is to entertain, his actual idea of the theatre was to expose, or give a hearing to, the issues and considerations of

our time. Among the criticism of his contemporaries, he most admired that of the Polish immigrant Jan Kott, whose theatre seat, by Kott's own declaration, was located not in the orchestra section but in the public square. Among his predecessors, Clurman recommended George Bernard Shaw as a model critic – though not always a right one, since being right, to Clurman, was not a critical necessity. A critic, he argued, deserves the liberty to re-evaluate his or her opinions since they are, after all, simply opinions, and art is not a static thing.

As theatre critic for *The Nation* Clurman enjoyed the luxury of selecting what he would see and, from among those pieces, what he would review. Free from the pressure on a daily newspaper reviewer to write overnight, he enjoyed adequate time to reflect on what he had witnessed. In retrospect, he thought that if he had ever written for a daily he would have been 'even more careful to be kind'. Also he noted that, although he was unsure if he agreed with 'an admirable literary critic' he had heard say in Paris years before that, 'the artist has every right, a critic only obligations', he always bore it in mind. Actually, Clurman believed that a critic could and should become 'an artist whose point of departure is another artist's work'.

That artist-critic surfaced early on in Harold Clurman. His 1948 review for the *New Republic* of the premiere of *A Streetcar Named Desire* is as evocative a rendering of theatre nature as is a Chekhov play of human nature. While other critics were led by the production to misunderstand the author's intention, the play's theme, and its central character Blanche DuBois, Clurman saw through the production's distortions to the spine, soul, and sense of the play beneath. Without having read the text, he realized in seeing it that if *Streetcar* were to be made manifest as written, the audience must be drawn to Blanche – whereas in Elia Kazan's production, as he wrote,

Jessica Tandy's Blanche suffers from the actress's narrow emotional range. One of the greatest parts ever written for a woman in the American

theatre, it demands the fullness and variety of an orchestra. Miss Tandy's register is that of a violin's A string. The part represents the essence of womanly feeling and wounded human sensibility. Blanche lies and pretends, but through it all the actress must make us perceive her truth. She is an aristocrat . . . in the subtlety and depth of her feeling. She is a poet, even if we are dubious about her understanding of the writers she names; she is superior by the sheer intensity and realization of her experience, even if much of what she does is abject.

If she is not these things, she is too much of a fraud to be worthy of the author's concern with her. If the latter is true, then the play would be saying something rather surprising – namely, that frank brutality and naked power are more admirable than the yearning for tenderness and the desire to reach beyond one's personal appetite.

Playing opposite Jessica Tandy was Marlon Brando in the role of Stanley Kowalski. While Clurman was familiar with Brando as a former student of Stella Adler, no-one including Clurman was much acquainted with Brando on stage. Yet he wrote:

Marlon Brando . . . is an actor of genuine power. He has what someone once called 'high visibility' on the stage. His silences, even more than his speech, are completely arresting. Through his own intense concentration on what he is thinking or doing at each moment . . . all our attention focuses on him. Brando's quality is one of acute sensitivity. None of the brutishness of [Stanley Kowalski] is native to him: it is a characteristic he has to 'invent'. The combination of an intense, introspective, and almost lyric personality under the mask of a bully endows the character with something almost touchingly painful. . . . The actor's very considerable talent makes us wonder whether he is not actually suffering deeply in a way that relates him to what is represented by Blanche in the play rather than to what his own character represents. . . . [His actions] take on an almost Dostoevskian aspect.

The result of the face value of Jessica Tandy up against the face value of Marlon Brando was that 'for almost more than two-thirds of the play the audience identifies itself with Stanley Kowalski'. Clurman instanced the scene in which Stanley orders his wife Stella to get rid of her sister Blanche so their home life can be as it was before her arrival, and

reprised Tennessee Williams's intention for the scene: 'The author is suggesting that the untoward presence of a new consciousness in Kowalski's life – the appeal to forbearance and fineness – is a cruel disturbance and that he longs for a life without any spiritual qualms.' But throughout the scene, the audience was 'all on Kowalski's side'.

In other words, the production toppled the balance of the play. Due to Brando's power and Tandy's limitations, the audience was not liberated to experience the drama between Stanley Kowalski's world of the emergent, upwardly mobile, Huey Long America, and Blanche DuBois's 'It's a Barnum and Bailey world, Just as phoney as it can be – But it wouldn't be make-believe if you believed in me!' Clurman ended his review of *Streetcar* with an *apologia*:

If I have chosen to examine the production with what might seem undue minuteness, it is because I believe that questions of the theatre (and of art) are not simply questions of taste and professional quibbles, but life questions. I can think of no higher compliment to the director and actors of such a production than to take their work with utmost seriousness – even to the point of neglecting to make allowance for the difficulties attendant on the realization of so original a play on Broadway.

While Harold Clurman mastered the art of theatre criticism – giving himself, it seems to me, one hundred per cent to arousing interest in the theatre work of others – he neglected to champion his own. In this he was like Chekhov the doctor who took care of others but thought 'doctoring oneself is one form of the most repulsive egoism'. As Arthur

Miller has said, 'Harold's greatest failure has been not to publicize himself.' Although he did produce stage plays and a few Hollywood movies, Clurman was not by nature a businessman – although at the end of a taxi ride he could instantaneously calculate in his mind a fifteen per cent tip and tell the driver exactly how much change to give him back.

Clurman wrote that all his life he would 'turn chiefly to people who are artists by nature'. The artist he most trusted was Chekhov, and perhaps it was due to his affection for Chekhov that he rather blindly trusted doctors. Because his doctor told him it was all right, he ate steak and sugary desserts and drank coffee with plenty of saccharine. His own father had been a doctor. But his own father, when in despair over the apparent triumph of Nazism and in danger of going blind, had committed suicide. Even as he withheld judgement, Clurman did write that his heroes were 'people who overcome life's "slings and arrows"'

He himself became seriously sick in April 1980, filed what was to be his final review in June, and died of cancer in September. This September I received a letter from Florence in which she told me of a woman who had escorted her across Fifth Avenue, who works for a film company and 'knew of the existence of H. Clurman'. And then she added: 'Please don't suggest a wheelchair, even a mechanized one. But hereafter I'll proceed with the greatest caution so I don't slip with my canes because of puddles.' The last published line Harold Clurman ever wrote was: 'Life is somehow irrepressible'.