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WALTER DABAN

DRAMA CRITIC KALEM

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS was originally scheduled to be on TIME's cover a week earlier. But, as TIME's Theater Critic Ted Kalem wired him: GLENN AND WILLIAMS WERE ON SAME LAUNCHING PAD. GLENN MADE IT. WILLIAMS ORBITING FOLLOWING WEEK. Back from his Key West pad came Williams' reply: ROGER, ALL SYSTEMS GO. COLONEL WILLIAMS.

This week's cover story is a good opportunity to introduce our theater man, who last fall replaced Louis Kronenberger, TIME's distinguished first-nighter for 23 years. Kalem, 42, spent the preceding eleven years as a book reviewer for us, and will be remembered for his cover stories on Shakespeare, Boris Pasternak and James Gould Cozzens, as well as a memorable piece on Bertolt Brecht.

He wanted to be a drama critic for as long as he can remember: "I was aisle-struck, not stagestruck." Born in Malden, Mass., of Greek parents of Anatolian origin, Kalem spoke Greek before English. At Harvard, he remembers being thrilled by the late Ted Spencer reading Shakespeare aloud, and *Hamlet* remains his favorite play. One month after emerging from Harvard (A.B. '42, cum laude), Kalem was in the Army. With the 24th Division in the Philippines, he won the Bronze Star under gunfire "for staying on the telephone for 17 hours when the Japs

seemed to be about to stage a landing on Mindoro," giving him a dislike of phones ever since. After the Army, Kalem wrote a weekly stock-market letter, then joined the *Christian Science Monitor* as a book critic, where he caught TIME's eye.

He prefers the theater: "A play is never as uneventfully monotonous as a bad book. There may be a wonderful performance, or some hilarious scenes." At the height of the season, seeing plays four nights a week can be exhausting, but Kalem still has the tingle of expectancy before the curtain goes up. "We go to the theater for an intensification of life," he believes, with "the play serving as a magnifying glass." Realistic theater, which tries to duplicate life, he thinks is dying, its vitality siphoned off by photography and journalism. "A playwright needs to have an individual vision of life. It was only after Shakespeare saw his Hamlet that the rest of us could begin to see Hamlets in and around us."

Broadway today "suffers from shoddy aims, low aspirations. Producers seem to be listening to an inner voice that says, 'Don't dare, don't try, don't risk, don't reach.' Among leading producers, the peak of audacity is to find a hit that has been running for two years in London and cart it back to the U.S."

It is because Tennessee Williams does have the audacity of his own peculiar and tormented vision that Kalem finds him stimulating as a playwright and sympathetic as a man. They talked together for about ten hours, often in Kalem's Greenwich Village duplex, along with Researcher Anne Hollister and Mrs. Kalem (who used to be a TIME books researcher until she married Kalem and became the mother of two children). Their sessions went so well that the resulting cover story may not provide the best illustration of one of Kalem's favorite definitions (by the late Critic Percy Hammond): "Dramatic criticism is the venom from contented rattlesnakes."

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