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THE BUSINESS OF DEALING WITH THE BUSINESS

In the time I have, I'd like to talk about the playwright's relationship with the marketplace, most often referred to as 'the business': some of the problems involved, the opportunities now available for a playwright, at least in New York, and some of the pitfalls to be avoided when it comes to the production of a play. I'd also like to refer, just for a moment, to a recent play of mine, *Modigliani*, somewhat based on the life of the Italian painter Amedeo Modigliani and produced last year in New York at the Astor Place Theatre.

There is a scene in the play in which Modigliani, speaking to Chaim Soutine, another painter, states: "I do three paintings a day now." Soutine, impressed, responds: "That many—huh?" To which Modigliani replies: "Sure. But all in my head. Why waste canvas? Who's going to buy? Who's even going to look?" And in Modigliani's case, nobody ever did, not until a year after his death at age 36, when paintings, drawings, and sculptures he couldn't even give away during his lifetime began to sell at enormous prices. And they still do. Modigliani didn't beat the marketplace—he didn't even dent it—but his work did survive it. And if you're serious about your work, whether it's plays, paintings, poems, or novels, the chances are that you're not going to beat the marketplace either. At best, like Modigliani and a lot of others, you might manage to survive it.

My experience is theatre, and if you want to do serious work in the theatre, not many people are going to look. You have to accept that before you begin. You might be luckier than most, but, in general, it's a constant battle to get produced: between what you consider to be "excellence," or an attempt at it, and what the marketplace considers to be saleable.

We seem to be entering into a time when a writer, any writer, is not judged by what he does or what he attempts to do, but