Rex Stout: War-Effort Leader, Proponent of Limited World Government, & Dramatist

THE WOLFE PACK
BLACK ORCHID ASSEMBLY
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Bob Gatten
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Overview

Part 1

Rex Stout, the Writers’ War Board, and a resulting play

Part 2

Rex Stout, the Writers’ Board for World Government, and a resulting play
Part 1

Rex Stout and the Writers’ War Board

Dec. 7, 1941

Henry Morgenthau, Jr.

Dec. 9, 1941

Howard Lindsay
Rex Stout and the Writers’ War Board

- Lindsay called Stout+  
- Board complete by January 1942  
- Board of about 20 authors from NYC
Rex Stout and the Writers’ War Board

Stout at the Writers’ War Board Office

Chanin Building, 122 E 42 St.
Board Members

Clifton Fadiman

Oscar Hammerstein II

Clifton Fadiman
Board Members

Russel Crouse

Margaret Leech
Board Members

Pearl Buck

Paul Gallico
Board Members

William L. Shirer

John Marquand
Purpose

- Initially, stimulate sale of war bonds
- Promote governmental policy for WWII
- Encourage popular support for war effort
- Allow government to avoid being in propaganda business
- Function as “an arm of the government”

Clifton Fadiman to Thomas Howell
Work

- Weekly meetings of Board
- Recruited services of over 4,000 writers
- No government control or censorship
Work

- Received information from government
- Responded to governmental requests for action
- Received government rental and stenographic support (eventually nine employees)
- Followed governmental policies exactly
• Monthly reports (with five projects where publicity was needed) to more than 4,000 professional writers
• Monthly editorials to 1,600 newspapers (published anonymously)
• Monthly articles to newspapers, 2,600 industry newsletters, and 1,100 army bases
Work

- Radio scripts to 825 radio stations
- 50 speakers per month and play scripts to military bases
- Articles for national magazines (e.g., *The Saturday Evening Post, Reader's Digest, & Colliers*)
- Many successful campaigns
- 85% of work done as direct request from government
Independent Goals and Efforts

- Convince citizens of the malignant nature of Germany (not just Nazis) (e.g., book burnings, slaughter of Czech town of Lidice) and the need for a harsh peace for Germany

- Promote racial tolerance and equality

- Encourage postwar international cooperation
Disbanded following official end of war in September 1945.

“the best instance in a violent conflict of the organized use of writing abilities to help the fight”  Rex Stout to Thomas Howell
“Rex was the nicest angry man that I knew in the Hitler period. . . His anger and brilliance contributed in an extraordinary way . . . to alert the country, as a whole, to existing dangers.”

Peter Cusick to John McAleer
Closure

“Much more than any other of us, Rex was the Board.”

Alan Green to John McAleer
WWII & NYC
New-York Historical Society (thru May 27)

Irving Boyer, Prospect Park
Connections

Alexander Woollcott

• Critic
• Commentator for *New Yorker*
• Member of Algonquin Round Table
Radio Broadcast, January 23, 1943
CBS The People’s Platform
Discussion of Is Germany Incurable?

Panelists:
- Marcia Davenport, novelist
- Harry D. Gideonse, president of Brooklyn College
- George N. Shuster, president of Hunter College
- Rex Stout
- Alexander Woollcott
## Connections

### Woollcott Living On

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>And Be A Villain</em> (1948)</td>
<td>Death by poisoning of Cyril Orchard during a live radio show</td>
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<td><em>The Silent Speaker</em> (1946)</td>
<td>Death by beating of Cheney Boone just before addressing the National Industrial Association at the Waldorf-Astoria</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Fourth of July Picnic</em> (1958)</td>
<td>Death by stabbing of James Korby just before addressing the United Restaurant Workers of America picnic; Wolfe delivers a speech</td>
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Connections

Wolfe and Archie in Wartime

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Novella</th>
<th>Published</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 1942</td>
<td><em>Not Quite Dead Enough</em>†</td>
<td>1942</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 1943</td>
<td><em>Booby Trap</em></td>
<td>1944</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1944</td>
<td><em>Help Wanted, Male</em></td>
<td>1949</td>
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†Cramer’s son became a bombardier
In 1944, the WWB commissioned the Columbia University Bureau of Applied Social Research to analyze the treatment of minorities in American fiction. The results, showing widespread racial disparagement, led the WWB to create a play to convince writers to avoid racial stereotyping (e.g., radio shows such as *Amos 'n' Andy*).
Title: *The Myth that Threatens America*

The myth: *America is mostly Anglo-Saxon, white, native-born, and Protestant*
The Myth that Threatens America

Howard Sparber, illustration from The Myth That Threatens America (1945)
Single performance at Barbizon Plaza Hotel in New York on Jan. 11, 1945 for 600 radio & movie scriptwriters, artists, editors, theatrical producers, writers, & publishers

106 Central Park South (Now Trump Parc Apts.)
The Myth that Threatens America

- Opening of show by Rex Stout
- Skit called *Education, Please*, a parody based on Clifton Fadiman’s radio show (*Information, Please*)
  - Panelists Moss Hart, Carl Van Doren, Bennett Cerf, & Gypsy Rose Lee on the need to respect minority groups
- Five speeches from famous personalities
  - Including Margaret Mead & the President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce
The Myth that Threatens America

Ol’ Man Author+
(based on Ol’ Man River, by Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern)

- Hammerstein rewrote his lyrics to address four longstanding stereotypes:
  
  “Drunken, pugnacious Irishman
  Lazy, ignorant, crap-shooting Negro
  Gangster Italian
  Avaricious Jew”

Amy Asch, editor, The Complete Lyrics of Oscar Hammerstein II
The Myth that Threatens America

Ol’ Man Author

Partial Rendition by

- Amy Asch
- The Wolfe Pack’s Wolferines:
  - Maggie Goodman
  - Bonnie Hiller
  - Emily Mikulewicz
“Diverse intellectuals use showmanship to break down race prejudice.” A “sock performance” (Variety, Jan. 17, 1945)

One of the Board’s “best examples of the group’s ability to enlist talented people from all fields.” Alan Green to Thomas Howell

The Board’s “absolute high point of massed impact upon opinion makers.” Robert Landry to Thomas Howell
Work Remains

Stuck on Stereotypes
Hispanic Viewers Are Still Waiting for Networks to Get It Right

Ed O’Neill and Sofia Vergara in ABC’s highly rated “Modern Family.” Ms. Vergara plays Gloria Delgado-Pritchett, a sexy Latina trophy wife.

BY TANZINA VEGA
and BILL CARR

Sofía Vergara is probably the most recognizable Hispanic actress working in English-language television. She is one of the stars of “Modern Family,” the highest-rated scripted show on network television, and she has parlayed her celebrity into commercials for brands like Pepsi and CoverGirl. Despite her popularity, “Modern Family” is not a hit with Hispanic viewers. Out of its overall viewership of 13.2 million, “Modern Family” drew an average of only about 78,000 Hispanic viewers in the season, or about 0.6 percent of the show’s viewers — less than half of what you might expect given the 48 million Hispanic television viewers that Nielsen measures.

The same pattern can be seen on other top network shows. “Desperate Housewives” on ABC averaged 815,000 Hispanic viewers out of an average total of 14.4 million viewers. “Grey’s Anatomy” on ABC averaged 543,000 out of 13.9 million. “Glee” on Fox averaged 513,000 out of 6.7 million. And “NCIS” on CBS averaged 504,000 out of 18.4 million.

The numbers encapsulate the problems facing English-language television executives and advertisers. They desperately want to appeal to the more than 50 million Latinos in the United States, especially those who are young, bilingual and biethnic, but Hispanic viewers seem to want very little to do with American English-language television. The same can be said for Spanish-language networks in huge numbers. In May, on the final night of the most recent season of “Modern Family,” the show that is broadcast in Spanish, the audience size was 5.2 million viewers.

“We’re part of the fastest-growing demographic in the country,” said Randy Falco, the president and chief executive of Univision. The network recently entered into a partnership with AMC News, which is owned by the Walt Disney Company, to create a 24-hour news channel to serve Hispanic viewers.

At this spring’s upfronts, the networks hosted by network executives to sell advertising time, there were nine presentations to advertisers by Hispanic networks. But there were only nine presentations to advertisers by Hispanic networks. Then, at the New York Times, Aug. 6, 2012
Pause for Questions
Part 2

Rex Stout & the Writers’ Board for World Government

• Board created on July 3, 1949+

• Stout as chair; 20 members; over half were members of or worked closely with Writers’ War Board

• Goal: transform the U.N. into a limited world government to ensure world peace and avoid WW III
Work

- Stout proposed creating a play to increase public acceptance of a limited world government

- Title: *The Myth that Threatens the World*

- The myth: *Nations can stay sovereign and stay at peace*
The Myth that Threatens the World

Script by
- Oscar Hammerstein II
- Russel Crouse
- Carl Van Doren
- Clifton Fadiman
- Phyllis Merrill

Direction by Oscar Hammerstein II
The Myth that Threatens the World

Opening Night+
December 4, 1949
Coronet Theatre
W 49 St.
New York

“one of the most distinguished first nights in the history of the New York Stage”  John McAleer
Opening Night Cast

Rex Stout

Marian Anderson

Eddie Albert

Brock Chisholm
Opening Night Cast

Russel Crouse

Alfred E. Driscoll

Clifton Fadiman

Henry Fonda
Opening Night Cast

Oscar Hammerstein II
Annalee Jacoby (in WW II)

Cord Meyer, Jr.
George Olmsted
Opening Night Cast

Robert E. Sherwood

Cast members from *South Pacific*
The Myth that Threatens the World

- Stout gave prologue, expanding on the meaning of *The Myth*

- Fadiman served as M.C. and explained the need for a limited world government

- Microphone fails, Fadiman calls on skeptical electrician (Albert), and a series of dialogues with rest of cast follows
The Myth that Threatens the World

- Warmly received, with much subsequent television, radio, and magazine coverage of topic
- Second performance on March 19, 1950 for 1,200 at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel
Other performances through 1953

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<th>Baltimore</th>
<th>Minneapolis</th>
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<td>Boston</td>
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<td>San Francisco</td>
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<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>Washington</td>
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Prominent local citizens and *South Pacific* cast members in each performance

Richard Eastham

Myron McCormick

Ray Walston
Actors, journalists, and politicians in cast

Ralph Bellamy
Cornelia Otis Skinner
Walter Cronkite
Chet Huntley
Adlai Stevenson
The Myth that Threatens the World

- Many attacks on Board and writers
- Many converts to cause, and money raised
Rex Stout

A fearless, skilled, and fierce proponent for

• U.S. victory in WW II
• Ending racial prejudice
• Limited world government and world peace