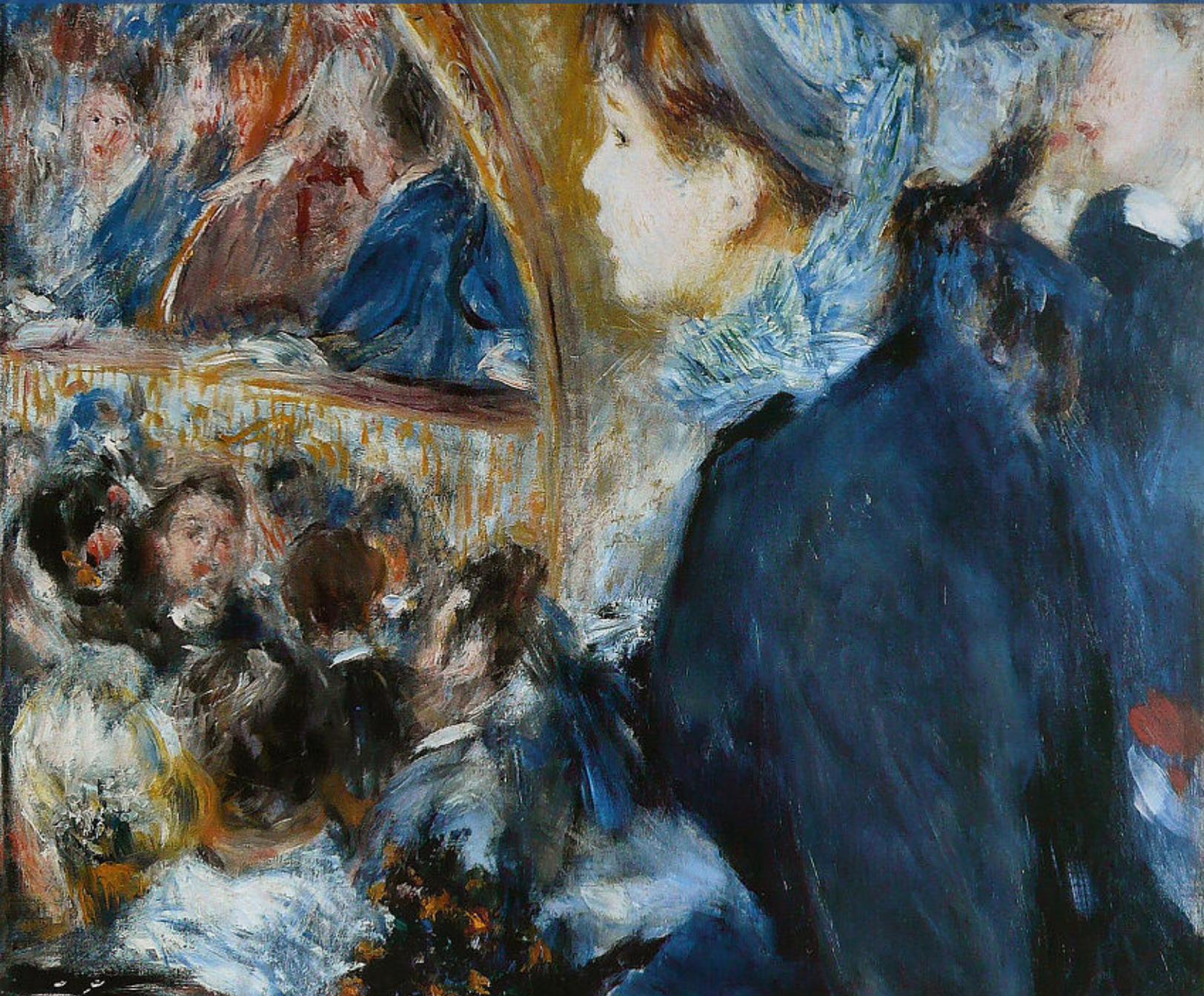


SPARROW TREE SQUARE



The Theater

“All the world’s a *stage*,
And all the *men* and
women merely *players* . . .”

– from *As You Like It* by
William Shakespeare (1564-1616),
English playwright and poet

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They All Want to Play Hamlet

Carl Sandburg

They all want to play Hamlet. 1
They have not exactly seen their fathers killed 2
Nor their mothers in a frame-up to kill, 3
Nor an Ophelia dying with a dust gagging the heart, 4
Not exactly the spinning circles of singing golden spiders, 5
Not exactly this have they got at nor the meaning of flowers—O flowers,
 flowers slung by a dancing girl—in the saddest play the inkfish,
 Shakespeare, ever wrote; 6
Yet they all want to play Hamlet because it is sad like all actors are sad
 and to stand by an open grave with a joker’s skull in the hand and
 then to say over slow and say over slow wise, keen, beautiful
 words masking a heart that’s breaking, breaking, 7
This is something that calls and calls to their blood. 8
They are acting when they talk about it and they know it is acting to be
 particular about it and yet: They all want to play Hamlet. 9

CARL SANDBURG (1878—1967) was an American writer. He won the Pulitzer Prize, a prestigious literary award, three times, and was known by young readers as the author of the *Rootabaga Stories* books.



Hamlet and the Gravediggers
by Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-Bouveret