

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF SCENIC
STYLES IN THE PRODUCTIONS OF
SUCCESSFUL, SERIOUS AMERICAN DRAMA
ON THE NEW YORK STAGE OF THE 1920'S

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
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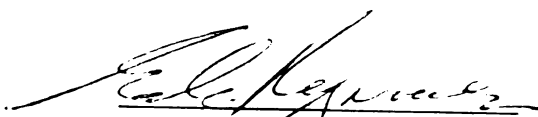
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in Setting on the New York Stage Between
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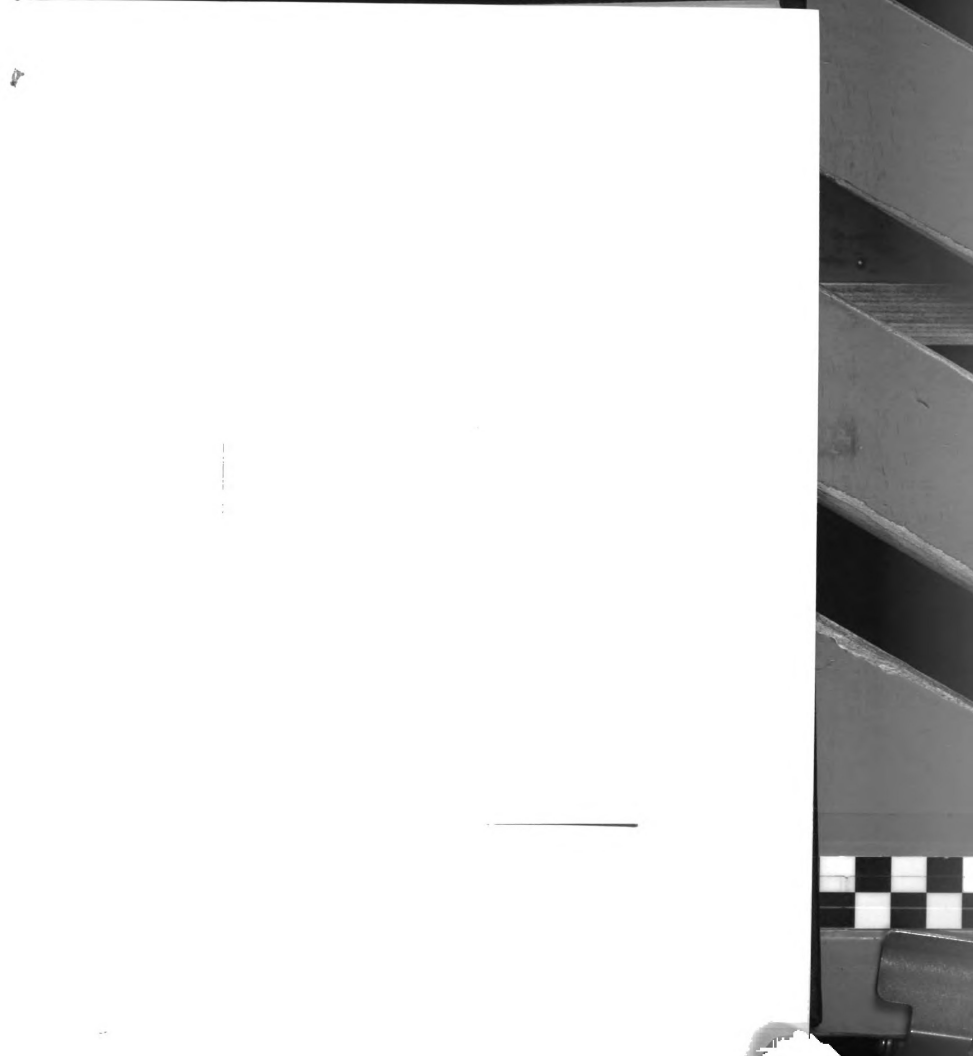
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ABSTRACT

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF SCENIC STYLES IN THE PRODUCTIONS OF SUCCESSFUL, SERIOUS AMERICAN DRAMA ON THE NEW YORK STAGE OF THE 1920'S

By

Anthony L. Kadlec

The purpose of this study was to describe the scenic styles in the productions of successful, serious American dramas produced in New York's commercial theatre during the period from 1919 to 1929. The study attempted to discover the scenic styles which appeared during the period; what trends existed, whether there was a dominant style; whether eclecticism was seen in the styles; and whether any tendencies appeared within the production settings which might suggest historical developments in style.

The study was limited to a consideration of the settings of commercially and critically successful productions, written for the New York stage.

A method for identifying scenic styles was established which examined the form elements of a style, its

composition, and its technique. The method was utilized in formulating the criteria for seven scenic styles. These were Romanticism, Naturalism, Realism, Symbolism, Selective Realism, Constructivism, and Expressionism.

The criteria for identifying scenic styles were applied in an analysis of the setting photographs from the productions of forty-six successful, serious plays from the American theatre of the 1920's.

The productions were selected from every third theatrical season beginning with the season of 1919-1920 and ending with the season of 1928-1929.

The stylistic analyses of the production photographs were compared and conclusions were drawn.

While certain definite conclusions were arrived at, it was felt that the production criteria was limited and that the stylistic criteria should have been applied, as well, to European productions seen on the American stage during the 1920's.

On the basis of the productions analyzed, it was possible to make the following conclusions.

1. The settings from the productions of serious, American plays during the 1920's were in the

styles of Realism, Romanticism, Expressionism,
and Symbolism and Selective Realism.

2. Constructivism did not appear in the selected productions.
3. Realism was the dominant scenic style of the 1920's, appearing in eighty-four percent of the productions examined. Expressionism appeared as a very minor style in accounting for only eleven percent of the productions examined.
4. Nearly half of the productions analyzed utilized an eclectic approach to scenic style. Realism appeared to be in a process of stylistic development during the period while Romanticism was in a state of decline.
5. While the Romantic trait of a full use of color declined during the decade, the processes of "graying out" and pointillist texture were developing. The period was thus seen as a time wherein realistic stage setting reached maturity.

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Anthony L. Kadlec

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PREFACE

The writer wishes to acknowledge the help of Mr. John E. Clifford and Mr. Charles E. Lauterbach who contributed much to the formation and research of this study, which originally was a segment of a joint project to describe stylistic trends in both drama and setting of the 1920's and of drama in the 1930's.

The writer thanks Dr. John A. Waite of the Department of English, Mr. Eldon Vanliere of the Department of Art, and Dr. Sidney Berger of the Department of Theatre for serving on the Guidance Committee of the study. The writer wishes to especially thank Dr. E. C. Reynolds, Chairman of the Department of Theatre, for serving as the writer's major advisor.

Last, the writer thanks his wife and family for their dependability and their faith.

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PART I

CRITERIA FOR THE IDENTIFICATION

OF SCENIC STYLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the second decade of the twentieth century, the American theatre witnessed the advent of the organic theory of production. This theory, evolved in Europe during the latter part of the nineteenth century, had a remarkable influence in shaping the visual styles of the American theatre. The titans of American scene design were Robert Edmond Jones, Norman Bel Geddes, and Lee Simonson. They were followed by artists such as Aline Bernstein, Cleon Throckmorton, Raymond Sovey, Jo Mielziner, Donald Oenslager, and Mordecai Gorelik in making this movement, often referred to as "The New Stagecraft," one of the most critically stimulating movements in the development of the American theatre. Books and periodicals were committed to reporting what their authors felt was occurring in the theatre of the 1920's and in anticipating the theatre of the future.

The involvement of American scene designers in the stylistic experiments of "The New Stagecraft" has been

noted in general terms on numerous occasions. However, no investigation has yet been made to define the characteristics of the styles which constituted "The New Stagecraft" in the American Theatre of the 1920's. This thesis is one contribution toward fulfilling that end.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the scenic styles in the production of successful, serious American dramas that were produced on the professional New York stage between 1919 and 1929.

The results of the study may answer such questions as:

1. What were the general stylistic trends of the period? What scenic styles were exhibited in the productions of the 1920's?
2. Was there a dominant scenic style in the 1920's?
3. Did productions of the 1920's contain eclectic combinations of scenic styles? Did trends in eclecticism appear during the decade?

4. Do any tendencies appear within the productions analyzed that lead to conclusions regarding historical developments in the stylistic criteria?

Specific Terms and Criteria

Certain terms require definition. "Modern scenic styles" are those ways of designing a play's setting which this study labels Romanticism, Naturalism, Realism, Symbolism, Selective Realism, Constructivism, and Expressionism.¹ "Successful" in the context of this study describes the productions of dramas which were either commercial and/or critical successes. A production is considered to be a commercial success when its length of run was over one hundred performances.² A production is considered to be a critical success if, (1) it was judged to be worthwhile by its reviewers at the time of its original production; (2) the play itself was considered to have

¹See Chapter II for a more complete explanation and definition of style.

²In the Burns Mantle Best Play series for the 1920's, a production run of one hundred performances is the standard for determining whether or not a play is a commercial success.

merit in the years following its production in the commentary of drama critics or historians; (3) it (the play) was anthologized; or (4) it received recognition by winning a major drama award. "Serious" includes the dramatic types of tragedy, drama, and melodrama. "American plays" are those which were written originally for the American theatre by either native or foreign authors. "Professional New York stage" is a term used to describe the commercial theatres of New York City which produce plays for profit.³

Limitations

This study does not attempt a complete history of scenic styles of the 1920's, nor does it try to explain either the causes or the effects of style in theatre settings of the time. The study is descriptive.

Second, although there are five areas of theatre which can be discussed in terms of style (direction,

³ The decision as to whether a play was produced professionally is based on the information included in the statistical summaries of Broadway seasons found in the appropriate editions of the Burns Mantle Best Play series.

playscript, costume, setting, and acting), this study is limited to the consideration of setting only.

Third, this study deals only with the settings for productions of plays written originally for the New York Stage. This excludes plays from abroad, translations or adaptations of foreign plays, and revivals from past seasons of American theatre.

Significance of Study

This investigation of the stylistic development in the American theatre of the 1920's is significant for two reasons. First, scenic styles in themselves constitute a major area of importance in the criticism and discussion of theatre. Second, the period under investigation is an important decade in the development of the American theatre.

The concern with scenic style is of particular significance in the modern American theatre for "the chief influence of the 'New Stagecraft' in America was exerted upon the visual aspects of stage production."⁴

⁴ Oscar G. Brockett, The Theatre (New York: Holt, Rienhart and Winston, 1964), p. 286.

As for the importance of the 1920's in the history of American theatre, John Mason Brown describes it in this way:

It was not puberty but maturity that the American theatre achieved . . . , during the years which followed World War I and preceeded the Depression The twenties were good days in the American theatre.⁵

Both Orville K. Larson⁶ and Allardyce Nicoll⁷ agree that the theatre of the twenties was not only provocative but significant. The excitement of what was happening in the twenties is typified in the written works of such men as Sheldon Cheney,⁸ Samuel Hume and Walter Fuerst,⁹ and Kenneth Macgowan and Robert Edmond Jones.¹⁰ Although

⁵ John Mason Brown, Dramatis Personae (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), p. 3.

⁶ Scene Design for Stage and Screen, Orville K. Larson, ed. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1961), pp. ix-xii.

⁷ Allardyce Nicoll, The Development of the Theatre (London: George G. Harrap and Company Ltd., 1958), p. 211.

⁸ Sheldon Cheney, Stage Decoration (New York: The John Day Company, 1928).

⁹ Walter René Fuerst and Samuel J. Hume, Twentieth Century Stage Decoration (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Publishers, 1929).

¹⁰ Kenneth Macgowan and Robert Edmond Jones, Continental Stagecraft (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1922).

their writing often shows disagreement about the traits of the new styles, they were, for the most part, active theatre artists and it is reasonable to assume that they were involved in seeking out new and more exciting means of expression. An emotional quality was invested in the critical writing of the era. Because of this, the stylistic trends of the 1920's are still unclear and a more objective study is called for.

In, hopefully, achieving a more objective approach, this study has three distinctive features. The first, in describing scenic style, utilizes a standard system of visual analysis, adapted from methods commonly used to teach scene design. Such a method is lacking in works previously written, or is not employed to deal with a significant number of styles. Many books deal with the subject of scenic style, usually only as a part of a wider field of investigation. In such books the manner of describing styles consists of selections of a few striking characteristics from those productions considered stylistically definitive. This approach to stylistic description is evidenced in such recognized works as John Gassner's

Form and Idea in Modern Theatre¹¹ and Mordecai Gorelik's New Theatres for Old.¹² Although this approach is helpful in serving to identify individual styles, it does not clearly reveal the interrelationships among the elements which appear in the various styles. In brief, no consistent manner of description is applied throughout such books. One book only, Hiram Moderwell's The Theatre of Today, attempts a consistent stylistic discussion.¹³ Although present day writers of design textbooks utilize standard pictorial methods of form and composition in discussing design as a creative process, they do not apply these elements to their discussion of historical or existing styles.

A second distinctive feature of this study is the examination of general critical opinions concerning the elements and attributes of particular scenic styles. The criteria for identifying styles are compiled from a wide

¹¹ John Gassner, Form and Idea in Modern Theatre (New York: The Dryden Press, 1956).

¹² Mordecai Gorelik, New Theatres for Old (New York: Samuel French, 1940).

¹³ Hiram Kelly Moderwell, The Theatre of Today (New York: John Lane Co., 1914). One of the limitations of this text is that it covers only the early period of the "New Stagecraft."

variety of sources dealing with or related to the theatre. When these sources are in accord, the present writer cites examples of them. When significant contradiction exists, photographic representations of the commonly cited examples of the style have been analyzed to resolve many of these disagreements and to create a more precise description of style in the American theatre of the 1920's.

A third distinctive feature is an objective, systematic manner of selecting representative productions which takes into account both commercially and critically successful productions of dramas. This process avoids personal, subjective selection of productions and presents a more accurate picture of given theatrical seasons in regard to their important productions. This is in contrast to two common practices of selecting productions to represent the development of American theatre in the 1920's. One is the citation of enduring, quality dramas as symptomatic of the growth of theatre, a practice which leads to the distortion of conditions as they actually were. The other is equally distortive and relies on the performance records of productions as an indication of achievement in the growth of theatre. This study unites both approaches

to treat qualitative and quantitative aspects of success in the productions of the United States.

The study consists of two parts. Part one establishes a method for consistent stylistic description and establishes criteria for classifying seven scenic styles. Part two analyzes the production photographs of a selected group of plays from the 1920's in order to determine the styles of their settings and draws conclusions regarding the trends in modern scenic styles in the serious American theatre of the 1920's.

Criteria for establishing descriptions of theatre styles were developed in the following manner. Information from books and articles dealing with the drama and theatre was compared in order to discover commonly accepted traits of particular scenic styles. These views were then presented in a form devised for this study which includes a brief introductory examination of the principles upon which a style is based: the form elements of the style; the composition of these elements; and the techniques of achieving the setting.¹⁴ Additional commentary concerning particular

¹⁴The form elements are mass, line, color texture, light, and ornamentation. A complete explanation of these elements, their composition, and a definition of techniques may be found on page 25, Chapter II.

aspects was supplied by the author of this study whenever major disagreements were found which could not be resolved through the literature.

Productions selected for study were chosen in the following manner. Every third theatrical season, beginning with 1919-1920, was selected for study. This selection was made for two reasons. First, trends "do not make themselves felt in a single season."¹⁵ Second, it was impractical to locate, purchase, and analyze all of the production photographs of the hundreds of serious plays produced in the professional theatre of the 1920's. The theatrical seasons selected for this study were those of 1919-1920, 1922-1923, 1925-1926, and 1928-1929. Each season is treated in a separate chapter.

Next, employing the information included in the Burns Mantle Best Play editions for the seasons selected, forty-six serious American plays which ran over one hundred performances were chosen for stylistic analysis of their settings. Any serious play which ran less than one hundred performances but was afterward successfully revived or

¹⁵ Barret H. Clark, "The United States," A History of Modern Drama, ed. Barrett H. Clark and George Freedly (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1947), p. 654.

later anthologized, or in any other manner singled out as a worthwhile production, was also included.

Photographs of the settings of these forty-six productions were analyzed to determine their characteristics. These analyses were compared to the criteria established in the study for describing the various scenic styles in order to identify the style of the settings. From such a determination, each theatrical season was summarized, indicating the scenic styles appearing in that season. When all four seasons had been treated in this manner, they were compared to one another and conclusions were drawn about stylistic trends in settings on the New York stage during the 1920's.

Sources

Primary sources employed in this study consist of the production photographs of forty-six plays selected from the period of 1919 through 1929.¹⁶ In addition,

¹⁶The photographs for three plays were never located in either published works or in collections. Rather than exclude them entirely, an attempt will be made to recreate their basic stylistic traits from the setting descriptions of the scripts themselves when the scripts exist

some use was made of essays, prefaces, and manifestoes by designers and leaders of stylistic movements.

A number of secondary sources were employed in this study. The Burns Mantle editions of Best Plays from 1919 to 1929 were used for information on productions in a given year, including length of run, type, and other pertinent data. Books, journals, magazines, and theses devoted primarily to the fields of drama and theatre were used in the development of criteria for describing scenic styles. Sections of encyclopedias, dictionaries, literary histories, and art histories were used when the information contained in them had some bearing on the stylistic aspect of setting.

or from secondary sources such as reviews and the material contained in Best Plays editions when the scripts do not exist.

CHAPTER II
SCENIC STYLES: DEFINITION, METHODOLOGY,
AND APPLICATION

The purpose of this chapter is to define "style" as discussed in this study, to explain the method employed for describing scenic styles, and to list those styles to which the method is to be applied.

For purposes of this study, style in theatrical setting is defined as a characteristic or distinctive way, manner, or mode of selecting, arranging, and emphasizing the elements of setting which is peculiar to a production or a group of productions and which at the same time distinguishes it or them from other productions.

The above definition was arrived at by comparing a number of definitions of style found in general references, art histories, books on aesthetics, and works pertaining to theatre. As such it is in fundamental agreement with generally accepted concepts of style in that it coincides with such usage as witnessed in the following definitions.

Webster's Third International Dictionary determines the word "style" as it pertains to aesthetics as

a quality that gives distinctive excellence to something (as artistic expression) and that consists esp. in the appropriateness and choice of elements (as subject, medium, form) combined and the individualism imparted by the method of combining.

Hiram Moderwell in The Theatre of Today describes style in stage setting as a "manner of executing a work of art, as contrasted with the work itself."¹

The art historian, Janson, writes that "style means the particular way in which the forms that make up any given work of art are chosen and fitted together."²

In The Arts and Their Interrelations, Thomas Munro states that "a style is a distinctive or characteristic mode of presentation, construction or expression in art."³

Oscar Brockett contends that style is a quality which results from a characteristic mode of expression or method of presentation and "may be applied to the

¹ Moderwell, p. 118.

² H. W. Janson, History of Art (New York: Harry W. Abrams, Inc., 1962), p. 36.

³ Thomas Munro, The Arts and Their Interrelations (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1949), p. 379.

dramatic expression of a period, a nation, a movement, or an author."⁴

Finally, the Encyclopedia of the Arts says,

starting with . . . [the] figurative sense, style means those characteristics of form which are peculiar to a certain work or a group of works and which at the same time distinguishes it or them from other works.⁵

Common elements found in these definitions of style are: a characteristic manner of executing a work of art, that forms or elements are involved in determining the manner of expression, and that works of art may be grouped according to their styles. Those common elements are used in the following method used to describe scenic styles.

The investigation of style as realized in setting does not materially differ from investigations of style in any other visual art. The basis for all such investigations is in finding

certain characteristics that are more or less stable, in the sense that they appear in other products of the same artist(s), era, or locale, and flexible in the sense that they change

⁴Oscar Brockett, The Theatre: An Introduction (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964), p. 44.

⁵Alois J. Schardt, "Style," in Encyclopedia of the Arts, ed. by Dagobert D. Runes and Harry G. Scrickel (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), p. 974.

according to a definable pattern when observed in instances chosen from sufficiently extensive spans of time or of geographical distance.⁶

Knowledge of the characteristics of a style often enables us to examine an isolated fragment of evidence and extend our examination

into a credible historic account by conclusions based on style; one signed work may be sufficient to construct the whole production of an artist, one dated work to associate a type of art with an epoch.⁷

Furthermore, styles are not usually described in a completely logical or precise manner. Because the artist "cannot reproduce without inventing," style cannot remain static.⁸ Conversely, it is impossible for the artist to "invent without reproducing."⁹ Thus it is that the characteristics of a style must exhibit flexibility or a movement toward change, as well as stability. It is because of such movement that in the study of a style, strong internal variations in form can be observed.

⁶James S. Ackerman, "Style," in Aesthetics and Criticism in Art Education, ed. by Ralph A. Smith (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1966), p. 284.

⁷Ibid., p. 285.

⁸Ibid., p. 286.

⁹Ibid.

Although perfection in the description and classification of styles appears to be impossible, "conventions of form and symbolism yield the richest harvest of traits by which to distinguish style."¹⁰

This study fixes limits by "conventions" for the investigation of scenic styles. Since no formal manner for such investigation exists, it has been necessary to develop and organize a descriptive method which is applicable to scenic styles. As such the method provides a framework for presenting the concepts and ideas as expressed by theatre critics and scholars.

In brief, the framework is divided into three parts; 1. Motivations, the general principles on which a style is based and which determine its development. 2. Form elements, the vocabulary of elements (line, mass, color, texture, light, and ornament) and composition, the arrangement in which the elements are composed. 3. Techniques, the physical methods of presentation.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 287.

Motivations of Style

Styles do not arise arbitrarily. They develop or change according to corresponding developments or changes in the philosophies, attitudes, and conditions of either the culture in which they appear or the art form of which they are a part.

Thomas Munro writes:

. . . Trends in artistic styles are never independent, but parts of still larger cultural trends embracing all forms of thought and behavior: social, political, economic, religious, and scientific.¹¹

A similar view is expressed by Theodore N. Greene when he states:

No culture or society . . . , is static, and no individual artist . . . , is immune to cultural and social influences. Societies and individuals alike are continually undergoing internal change These changes in outlook are reflected in the emergence of new styles.¹²

The present writer agrees with this viewpoint but finds himself even more in agreement with James Ackerman who opposes the theories of both determinism and cyclical

¹¹Munro, p. 339.

¹²Theodore Meyer Greene, The Arts and the Art of Criticism (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 383.

evolution. Ackerman develops a theory of change in style that relates to the manifestation of the artist's creativity and imagination as opposed to the more traditional dependence upon the forces of historical or social occurrences. He feels that there is no specific moment when a style arises. Further, in seeking a solution to the traditional problems of style, Ackerman feels that even the modern aestheticians have compromised with determinism.

He writes:

All of the major theories of style have been determinist in the sense that they define a pre-ordained pattern of "evolution": the earlier phase of a style is destined to move toward the later. This is to say that at any stage in the process some force other than the will of artists must be at work directing invention toward the goal that ultimately is to be achieved. Twentieth century scholars do not grant a priority of value to any phase of the evolution, but a value concept lurks in the shadows; if it is the destiny of styles to evolve as they did, then those works of art that promoted the evolution are destiny-fulfilling and those that did not are destiny-denying. The implication that the former are superior cannot be avoided. So, in our handbooks of the history of styles it appears that the chief function of any work of art is to contribute toward the works that follow it in sequence; and the greater the contribution the more "significant" the work. The history of art has been fashioned into another version of the materialist success story.¹³

¹³ Ackerman, p. 289.

Ackerman refutes the major historical predication of the examination of style. He feels that this predication "introduces a trap into which historians habitually fall, as a result of the benefits of hindsight."¹⁴ Although Ackerman feels that his "primary aim is to explain change in style as the manifestation rather of the imagination of individual artists than of historical forces that guide the actions of men and nations,"¹⁵ he feels too, that the individual innovations that give a style pattern "may be motivated as easily from outside as from within the style itself."¹⁶

In light of these observations, it is deemed reasonable to begin the discussion of particular scenic styles with a brief and introductory consideration of the forces, ideas, and points of view upon which scenic styles are based. The word "motivations" is used as a heading for this portion of style description. This introduction briefly describes the general artistic motivations that created the style in its broad sense and outlines the more specific developments as applied to scenic design.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 290.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 293.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 292.

Characteristics of Style

Although a knowledge of the motivations underlying a visual style is helpful in understanding its development, the actual identification of description of the style depends upon an examination of its characteristics. In this study these characteristics are separated into two groups:

1. form elements and composition, 2. technique.

These divisions are prompted by the remarks of Ackerman, who feels that there are two primary methods of describing style: "a vocabulary of elements . . . and . . . a syntax by which these elements are composed."¹⁷

Ackerman suggests that there are two other methods of determining style. The first he defines as "the work of art as a material object,"¹⁸ and says that its aspects

change so little in the course of history that they might appear almost anywhere at any time. So to say that a painting is done on wood, that a statue weighs three hundred pounds, or that a building is thirty feet high is to make a statement that, for all its precision, conveys little of style.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ackerman, p. 287.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 287.

Because of the transitory nature of the stage setting, the record of its existence being found at best in a photograph, a model, or a colored rendering, "the work of art as a material object" has even less application to scene design than to the other visual arts. Further, the setting is not meant to be examined as to its material nature. With the exception of two styles, Constructivism and Epic Realism, as developed by Piscator and Brecht, settings are meant to deceive the viewer as to the actual materials out of which they have been constructed. Pigment and painting techniques are often used to achieve an effect of materials of an entirely different nature. Even in Constructivism and Epic Realism, the exposure of natural material to the view of the audience is considered more properly as "technique." Because of those facts this study will not consider the setting in its "material nature."

Ackerman considers technique as the third determinant factor in identifying style, and, as such, it "is a more sensitive gauge of style than the strictly material work of art . . . because usually it is not merely a means, but serves important formal or symbolic functions."²⁰

²⁰ Ibid., p. 287.

This study will use "technique" in examining the presentation of the setting and the relationship of the setting to the audience as well as the techniques evidenced in structural usages in the setting itself.

Form Elements

Form elements, as discussed in the standard works on scene design are relatively standard in definition, if not in name. Arnold Gillette, for example, refers to them as "color, line, form, and mass."²¹ In their text on scene design, Parker and Smith speak of them as "line, shape, measure, position, and color."²² Oscar Brockett refers to them as "line, shape, space, color, texture and ornament."²³ This study uses the following criteria as its form elements.

1. Mass (and space) and Line, wherein mass is the bulk which generally strikes the eye in three

²¹ A. S. Gillette, An Introduction to Scene Design (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), p. 37.

²² W. Oren Parker and Harvey K. Smith, Scene Design and Stage Lighting (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 27.

²³ Brockett, p. 420.

planes; space is the atmosphere itself--the negative of the mass; and line is the boundary or outer designation of mass as seen in tone and color areas.

2. Color is hue (red, yellow, blue, green, etc.), value (the variations from light to dark), and intensity (the quality of brilliance from neutral gray to color of full strength).
3. Texture is the dimensionality of the surface of an object as achieved through plasticity or paint.
4. Light is utilized to create mass, line, color, and texture as well as to enhance the qualities of those elements. It includes motivating light (sources that seem to be giving light such as fires, sconces, chandeliers, etc.), motivated light (light which seems to be emanating from a plausible source (such as sunlight through a window) and theatrical light (lighting instruments exposed to the view of the audience, pools of light, and projections).

5. Ornament is the element of design which utilizes the detail of dressing (pictures, decorative motifs, wallpaper, molding, or similar objects which complete the picture.²⁴

Application

The method of describing scenic styles as discussed in preceding paragraphs is applied in this study to seven modern scenic styles--Romanticism, Naturalism, Realism, Symbolism, Selective Realism, Constructivism, and Expressionism.

This selection is based on the fact that these styles are regarded as significant to the modern theatre by critics and commentators.²⁵ They are also selected

²⁴ Although color is not completely applicable in an examination of black and white photographs, it does have two applicable references. The first is that value can be judged in a black and white photograph. The second and more significant reason is that a discussion of color as a stylistic criterion may allow the reader to make assumptions regarding color when other dominant stylistic form elements are discovered.

²⁵ See, for example, John Gassner, Producing the Play (New York: The Dryden Press, Inc., 1953); Gorelik, New Theatres for Old; Brockett, The Theatre: An Introduction; Fred B. Millett and Gerald Eades Bentley, The Art

because it is reasonable to assume that they might appear in the American theatre of the 1920's. While these scenic styles are considered to be of equal importance to this study, there must be some difference in the manner of discussing them in subsequent chapters.

Romanticism, Constructivism, and Expressionism are discussed in three separate chapters while Naturalism and Realism, as well as Symbolism and Selective Realism, are discussed in two chapters.²⁶

of the Drama (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1935); Edward A. Wright, A Primer for Playgoers (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958); Kenneth Thorpe Rowe, A Theatre in Your Head (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1960); H. D. Albright, William F. Halstead, Lee Mitchell, Principles of Theatre Art (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1955); Haskell M. Block, Robert G. Shedd, ed. Masters of the Modern Drama (New York: Random House, Inc., 1962); and Allardyce Nicoll, World Drama (New York: Harcourt, Brass, and Co., 1949).

²⁶The discussion of Naturalism and Realism in a single chapter requires some clarification as does the similar discussion of Symbolism and Selective Realism in a second single chapter. An examination of twentieth century theatrical commentary reveals that there is little distinction between the form elements, their composition, and the techniques of Naturalism and Realism. Typical of this view is Richard Corson's statement that "realism is selective naturalism. The setting gives an impression of being the real thing without including the infinity of unnecessary and confusing detail one might find in real life. The important elements in the setting are selected and used along with enough others to dress the set properly. In general, details are added with a view to artistic rather than

In addition to the seven scenic styles listed above, a number of other styles are mentioned by critics. These styles are excluded from this study for the reasons given in the discussions which follow.

naturalistic effect. Even in realism certain liberties are permitted with reality. But the overall effect is that of a duplication of the real thing." (Richard Corson, "Styles of Scene Design," *Dramatics Magazine*, XIX [October, 1947], p. 5.)

The process of selectivity is utilized primarily in "ornament" when distinctions are attempted between the form elements of the two styles. Because of this, discussions of the two styles are consistently repetitive and the present writer feels that the necessary distinctions between the two styles are more precisely understood when viewed together in a single chapter.

If Realism were to be viewed as a continuum, it would be necessary to consider Naturalism, Realism, Selective Realism, and Symbolism as part of the continuum for many of the theatrical commentators feel it is often impossible to distinguish between the form elements, the composition, and techniques between these styles. An obvious differentiation can be made between the Naturalistic and the Symbolic ends of the continuum. But the continuum is not finite and distinctions are difficult anywhere between these two styles. Friederich and Fraser illustrate the process of selectivity in stating that Symbolism "selects a characteristic element or symbol--to suggest or represent the whole." (Willard J. Friederich and John H. Fraser, Scenery Design for the Amateur Stage [New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950], p. 120.) The more selective the process becomes the closer the style moves along the continuum until eventually all is eliminated but the symbol itself. Sheldon Cheney illustrates this viewpoint of a continuum when he says; "a symbol in its most direct definition, is something that stands for something else, a thing that stands for more than itself. It is clear, then, that as soon as an artist begins to exercise a selective sense, to make the setting suggestive rather than literal,

The Epic Theatre style associated with Bertolt Brecht, Erwin Piscator, and the "living newspaper" productions of the American Federal Theatre Project is not included in this study. While Epic theatre is generally recognized as a theatrical style, it did not appear until 1928, the year of the last theatrical season considered in this study.

Similarly, no production utilizing any aspects of Surrealism is known of until 1937. James Thompson, in his comprehensive study on the evolution of scenic style

he is traveling toward the use of symbolism, if not accomplishing it to some degree." (Sheldon Cheney, Stage Decoration, p. 51).

The same view is expressed in a discussion of Appia, Craig, and Reinhart by Kenneth Macgowan and Robert Edmond Jones who write "that in the first place they simplified the stage picture. They subordinated or eliminated detail. They put as little as possible on the stage that might distract the spectator from the meaning of the general design . . . or from the actions and speeches of the characters. Then by an adroit use of simple materials and forms, they enriched the setting--along the lines of the play--through suggestion. One detail suggested the nature of the whole. The base of a huge column made the audience visualize for itself the size of the building. Half an arch springing off into darkness created the impression of a great valuted structure." (MacGowan and Jones, Continental Stagecraft, p. 43.)

Little then differentiates between the form elements, composition, and techniques of Symbolism and Selective Realism. This study will therefore consider the two styles in a single chapter to minimize the repetitive elements and to clarify the necessary distinctions.

as it related to painting style maintains that it was not until 1936 that Surrealism was used in the American theatre.²⁷

Theatricalism is excluded from this study. John Gassner maintains that "theatricalism states that there is never any sense in pretending that one is not in the theatre."²⁸ Any number of scenic styles adopt this attitude. If, then, theatricalism were to be used as a scenic style, only one other style could be admitted to a lexicon of styles and it would be necessary to call it non-theatricalism.

Continuing with the discussion of styles excluded from this study, so-called "basic" or "generic" styles are recognized in theatre. One is the "representational" style in which a play is presented "in the manner and sequence of actual life, as though people were being watched through a peephole."²⁹ The other is the "presentational" style in which "the object is to project the play's

²⁷James R. Thompson, "Twentieth Century Scene Design--Its History and Stylistic Origins." (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1957), p. 166.

²⁸Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 54.

²⁹Ibid.

content frankly and directly to the audience."³⁰ Since it is not the aim of this study merely to divide theatre into two stylistic groups, these "basic" styles are of little value to it. The words "representational" and "presentational" may appear in subsequent passages which discuss specific styles, but only as descriptive terms to indicate general tendencies. There is no attempt to group theatre under these "basic" style headings.

Although critics have referred to the styles of Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Socialist Realism, and Dadaism, these styles are eliminated from further discussion in this study. Impressionism is a term that holds a twofold meaning. Kenneth Macgowan uses the first of its meanings when he says that with Impressionism the artist "created an atmosphere of reality, not reality itself; the impression of things, not crude, literal representations."³¹ Impressionism is seen in the critical writings as a synonymous term for Selective Realism. Its second meaning is simply a technical term wherein the dotting of color as used by the Impressionist and Pointillist painters

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Larson, p. 5.

was adapted to the stage in a vocabulary of texturing techniques. Macgowan describes the techniques in writing that "flakes of color here and there brought a unity of beauty."³²

Similarly, Cubism and Futurism are movements essentially related to the fine arts. Occasionally they are manifested within the theatrical styles of Expressionism or Constructivism. As such they do not warrant consideration outside of these styles.³³

Socialist Realism as a movement is too narrowly confined to modern Russian Theatre. Although many productions have been done in the style, they differ from Realism only in content, that of a socialist philosophy.³⁴ Dadaism in theatre did not endure long enough to provide a sufficient body of work in which a definite style might be discerned. The productions of e. e. cummings' him and Gertrude Stein's Four Saints in Three Acts, are Dadaism's best known American works. Indeed, they alone constitute

³² Ibid.

³³ See, for example, Gorelik, p. 248 and p. 301. and Thomas H. Dickinson, The Theatre in a Changing Europe (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1937), pp. 34-35.

³⁴ See, for example, Gassner, Form and Idea, p. 12, and Nicoll, World Drama, p. 812.

almost the entire canon of Dadaist theatre. Any other Dadaist theatrical achievements remain obscure since "Dadaist theatrical work was apparently confined mostly to private entertainments."³⁵

Summary

This chapter has stated the definitions of the word "style" operative in this study, outlined a method for describing scenic styles, and listed the styles to which this method is to be applied in subsequent chapters. The operative definition is: Style in theatrical setting is "a characteristic or distinctive way, manner, or mode of selecting, arranging, and emphasizing the elements of setting which is peculiar to a production or a group of productions and which at the same time distinguishes it or them from other productions." The method of describing scenic styles is based on the general stylistic investigation in all arts. For the purpose of introducing and understanding the scenic style, it takes into consideration motivations (the principles on which style is based

³⁵Gorelik, p. 247.

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and which determines its development) and the characteristics of the style. For the actual method of determining the style, it employs the form elements (mass, line, color, texture, light, and ornament), the composition (of the form elements), and the technique (the methods of presentation).

CHAPTER III

ROMANTICISM

Most critics date the beginning of Romanticism as an enduring theatrical style with the production of Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen* in 1773. Long before 1773, however, elements of Romanticism had appeared in theatre as well as in painting. Shakespeare and many of the Jacobean dramatists were, to a degree, "romantics." Similarly, Salvator Rossa and Claude Lorrain, artists of the seventeenth century, illustrated romantic tendencies to the degree in which their works broke away from the rules of classical landscape. Through such men the foundation for the romantic tradition was laid.

Goethe was followed in the Romantic movement by dramatists such as Schiller and von Kleist in Germany; the poets, Byron, Shelley and Browning in England; and by the novelists, Duman pere and Hugo in France.

Romanticism developed at the same time, both in painting and in painting's step-child, theatrical scenery. As early as 1807, Antoine-Jean, Baron Gros, although

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formerly adhering to the rules laid down by David, had painted two pictures. They were entitled, Napoleon and His Plague-Stricken Soldiers at Joffa and The Battle of Eylau. They indicated what would develop in Romantic painting even though Gros had been forced, during much of his life, to defend the classic tradition.

In 1819, a painting by Theodore Gericault, entitled The Raft of the Medusa, broke all the traditions. It was contemporary in subject; it was emotionally horrifying; and it was exciting.¹ Gericault was followed by Delacroix and Goya, whose work in the romantic tradition was considered even greater than that of Delacroix.²

In England, two men, John Constable and J. M. W. Turner advanced the romantic movement in painting with such force that their work dominated the painting of scenery. By the middle of the century, William Telbin, the famed scene designer, would write about Turner's work:

. . . . But the same painter's 'Dido Building Carthage' . . . and 'Bay of Baiae' are magnificent lessons to the scene painter. How many times have not his compositions of 'Tivoli,'

¹ Sheldon Cheney, The Story of Modern Art, (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), p. 17.

² Ibid., p. 39.

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'Ancient Rome,' 'Modern Italy,' 'The Temple of Jupiter,' and a host of others been copied for act drops.³

Gorelik feels that the landscape painters of the romantic school established the rules of design for the theatre and that scenic artists

such as William Capon, J. R. Planche, and Louthembourg in England; Ciceri, Gue, Justin Leys, Dumay, Gosse, Ruggiery in France; Simon Quaglio, Karl Friederch Schinkel, Karl Blechen, Fr. Jaeger, Josef Hoffman, Von Mayer, De Pian in Germany and Austria; Gonzales, Gonzago, Roller, Ivanov and Fiodorov in Russia; John Watson, E. La Moss, Tomkins & Pitt, H. L. Reed, T. C. Bartholomew and George Curtis, looked upon the stage setting as nothing more than an ambitious easel painting--an oversize salon picture in the gilt frame of the proscenium.⁴

Even though these men painted sets for the stage, they, like their easel-painter contemporaries, searched for a journalistic reality in subject matter. Thus Gericault's The Raft of the Medusa was highly significant to the theatrical concept of pictorial reality. Its subject matter was contemporary and as such it foreshadowed what this study refers to as a "secondhand" Romanticism that

³W. Telbin, "Art in the Theatre," Magazine of Art, January, 1889, p. 92.

⁴Gorelik, p. 113.

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evidenced itself in melodrama and in the pictorial reality which dominated melodrama's stage settings.

This pictorial reality had its beginnings with the archeologically authentic costumes in J. R. Planche's King John, produced at Covent Garden in 1824.⁵ Pictorial reality as seen in both early Romanticism and in "second-hand" Romanticism would dominate the stage until Andre Antoine opened the Theatre Libre in 1887, and in so doing, opened the doors to Naturalism. Yet "secondhand" Romanticism did not expire with Naturalism but continued as a significant style into the third decade of this century. Gorelik, writing in the late thirties, states that "even today a sizable amount of Broadway work, dated in technique, continues to be turned out by hack commercial firms."⁶

Motivations of Romanticism

Romantic philosophical theories, developed in the 18th and early 19th centuries, sought "a new system of

⁵A. Nicholas Vardac, Stage to Screen (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. xxi.

⁶Gorelik, p. 113.

explaining the nature of reality and the duties of man."⁷ These theories denied the concept of a universe that meticulously functioned by set rules established by a supreme being who was so immutable that he not only could, but would, establish such a universe. The classic rules of both David's predecessors and contemporaries represented this Western-Hebraic concept of God and an ordered universe. The romanticists denied the concept by insisting that not only was God's universe imperfect, but that God was imperfect. God and his universe were reaching for perfection because both were undergoing a process of perfection seeking evolution. Further, the Romanticists refused the theory of separatism which insisted that God and his universe were diverse. To the contrary, God, man, and nature were all interrelated because man and nature were God's creations. Man was a part of nature and nature was a part of man.

The romanticists also held that in comprehending an absolute God, there is an intuitive process "that the universe is not an unintelligible chaos, nor a well

⁷ Morse Peckham, "Toward a New Theory of Romanticism," Romanticism: Points of View, ed. by Robert F. Gleckner and Gerald E. Enscoe (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 216.

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regulated mechanism, but a living organism, imbued throughout with an idea which endows it with its unity, its life, and its harmony."⁸ This theory stands in complete opposition to the last impulses of the Renaissance tide in Europe, a tide which was "debased . . . from the originally creative tide . . . , classic formality and . . . scientific realism."⁹

The theories of Romanticism lead to six general concepts which were to unshackle the romantic artist. They include the idea that genius is all and is thereby capable of making its own rules; that man is guided by his natural instincts and as such, his intuition and emotion are the primary force in understanding reality; that primitive society is the ideal in its expression of the purity of conscience; that man must have individual freedom; that the artist must seek his own forms to express great truths, thus, completely rejecting the classic

⁸ Albert Gerard, "On the Logic of Romanticism," Romanticism: Points of View, ed. by Robert F. Gleckner and Gerald E. Enscoe (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 230.

⁹ Cheney, The Story of Modern Art, p. 4.

rules of art; and that the artist must express the particular and exotically strange.¹⁰

The concepts of primitive society and the exotically strange are commonly witnessed in romantic scene design. The romantic drama seeks an escape from everyday reality by placing the action of the play in a remote time, place, or culture. Thus it is that exotic settings, the strange and mysterious, were frequently a part of romantic content.

Romanticism created a new scenic style but it also motivated an accelerating search for historical accuracy. In the sense of "historical" Romanticism, this was a significant enough achievement but as the century passed, Romanticism in setting became almost inextricably entwined with "secondhand" Romanticism. As previously discussed, "secondhand" Romanticism is, in its dramatic form, essentially related to melodrama and its settings had to illustrate mundane or domestic locales, rather than the "unusual" or "bizarre." Thus a false reality intruded on Romanticism.

What is not always clearly understood is that this desire for reality--the search for verisimilitude

¹⁰ Brockett, pp. 224-225.

in setting--does not equate with the desire for reality later witnessed in Naturalism and Realism.¹¹ The search for verisimilitude in both "historical" and "secondhand" Romanticism did not manifest concern for "the creation of a plastic unity between the actor and his environment."¹² No longer could a formal exterior serve for any exterior. The banks of the Nile had to be researched if they were to be depicted on the stage. The "Classic" in architecture could not serve as a medieval castle. Such a castle had to be correct in appearance. The banks of the Nile need not have three dimensions nor did the Medieval castle need three dimensionality but they had to be "historically accurate" in a pictorial sense.

Achieving "historical accuracy" was accomplished within the existing framework of production. It was achieved so easily that the romantic movement hardly affected the existing techniques of staging. These techniques were nevertheless a barrier to any major changes Romanticism might have wrought in the physical theatre. Baroque design was formal. The stage setting had balanced

¹¹ See Chapter IV (Naturalism and Realism).

¹² Fuerst and Hume, p. 7.

side wings and a deep forced perspective. As the side wings receded upstage, away from the audience, they closed in, forcing the perspective. At the rear was a small drop. The wings could be changed and the drop could be changed but usage had proved the success of the formula and no new technology had appeared that would cause a major breakthrough in staging techniques. Perspective was still a most important rule. The picture frame that existed for the Baroque, existed for the Romantic and because of this, even with the new style, the fundamental concept of stage design "was that of a large easel painting framed in the proscenium arch."¹³

In this "large easel painting," the second major barrier to change is seen. Painting was the dominant form in the lexicon of Romanticism and the easel painter could easily transfer his work to the Baroque stage house. Joseph Harker, a renowned English scene designer of the nineteenth century amply illustrates this view:

I do not speak of scene painting, but refer merely to painting. This is not in the least accidental. My heart and soul are filled with scorn for the type of artist or critic who seeks to differentiate scene-painting from any other branch of the whole art of painting.

¹³Thompson, p. 5.

Paint is paint the world over, whether it is applied to a large canvas or a small canvas. The man who knows how to apply paint is a painter.¹⁴

Tradition allowed Romanticism no massive changes from Baroque techniques. The desires of romantic theatre artists--primarily easel painters--were to paint within the picture frames of the existing stages. What was important was that the formality of the past in its depiction of reality was condemned. Subjectivity was the new mode and it had to be manifested in "unspoiled nature" and "the exotically strange." The new reality had to be "historically accurate" in its depiction of these "exotic settings." As "secondhand" Romanticism developed, the new reality had to adapt itself to "mundane" and "domestic" locales. Even so, the settings were full of "excitement, sensation, and imagination" in their treatment of a world only superficially real. Romantic painting had created the dominant pictorial motivation in setting.

¹⁴ Joseph Harker, Studio and Stage (London: Nisbett and Co., Ltd., 1924), p. 170.

Form Elements and Composition

Discussion of the form elements and composition of "historical" Romanticism is the most limited of all commentary on modern scene design. Brander Matthews, writing in 1916, best explains this phenomenon as he discusses the work of the scene painter:

Probably one reason why the scene painter has not received his due meed of praise is because his work is not preserved. It exists only during the run of the play which it decorates. When the piece disappears from the boards, the scenes which adorned it vanish from sight. They linger only in the memory of those who happened to see this one play--and even then, in fact, only in the memory of such spectators as have trained themselves to pay attention to stage pictures. For the scene painter there is no Luxembourg; still less is there any Louvre.¹⁵

Obviously, this is no longer so. Even as Matthews wrote, more and more production photography was taking place and the renderings of the designers were beginning to have greater value to collectors. The designer was becoming a fully accepted artistic contributor to the theatre in the developing organic conception of production.

Because it was not until the present century that a substantial critical commentary on setting began to

¹⁵ Brander Matthews, A Book About the Theatre (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), p. 151.

appear, "historical" Romanticism is the most neglected style in discussion of form elements and composition. The same does not hold true of technique for a great many critics are involved with describing the apparent contradictions in motivation between the Baroque and romantic as witnessed in staging practices.

Mass (and space) and Line

A strong similarity in the use of mass and line, as well as in the utilization of Gothic forms, is seen in the work of such nineteenth century designers as Joseph Platzer, Antonio de Pian, Giulio Quaglio, and Karl Friedrich Schinkel.¹⁶ Within the picture frame of the Romantic stage two planes of decoration are consistently seen. In the foreground--the first plane--the proscenium arch is reshaped by an immense darkened mass which sweeps downward in an inverted "U." The mass is divided by a line sharpened by light from the second plane wherein a drop

¹⁶See, for example, Joseph Gregor, ed., Monumenta Scenica, Vol. IX (12 vols: Vienna and Munich: National Library and R. Piper, 1925-1930), plates XXXVI-LXI; and Janos Scholz, ed., Baroque and Romantic Scene Design (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1962), plates 104-119.

is found. This drop utilizes strong light and aerial perspective, albeit an exterior or interior representation.

In the darkened mass of the foreground or first plane, huge stone walls are often seen. As the lines of the stonework recede upstage they narrow and become broken. Thus aerial perspective is attempted in the darkened foreground mass as well.

The "X" form of Baroque design is not consistently seen nor is the carefully centered Baroque vanishing point, so often viewed through a receding series of openings. Rather, the majority of Romantic designs seems to employ a diagonally placed vanishing point. When the "X" form does appear it is painted on the second plane drop.

In examples of interior settings that do not utilize Gothic or Medieval motifs, similar approaches to mass and line are seen. Antonio de Pian paints an Egyptian temple with the same darkened foreground masses and second plane lightened perspective treatments as are seen in Gothic treatments.¹⁷ Even the treatment of dissolving stone lines remains the same. Schinkel treats a Greek

¹⁷Scholz, Pl. 107.

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temple in the same manner.¹⁸ Utilizing post and lintel construction with Doric columns as a foreground mass, his second plane drop is a superlative example of aerial perspective. The only digression from the work previously discussed is that he uses a formally arranged picture with a carefully centered vanishing point. Schinkel, however, avoids the infinite depths of perspective seen in Baroque design by painting a large statue of Apollo directly in front of the vanishing point thus holding the line of sight.

Representations of exterior designs in Sholz' book include such settings as Greek, Egyptian, and Inca temples, cemeteries, Roman public squares, burning cities, Montezuma's palace and Jerusalem.¹⁹ These works are all properly exotic, often with an almost ethereal quality in their treatment of deep space.

The two planes are not always seen in renderings of exterior design. Generally, when this occurs, the darkened inverted "U" masses seen in interiors are replaced by vertical masses behind each side of the

¹⁸ Ibid., Pl. 117.

¹⁹ Ibid., Pls. 105-118.

proscenium. It is rare to find an overhead mass similar to the inverted "U" of an interior. Rather, a hazy sky is generally substituted. Occasionally, there is no foreground plane at all, giving the impression that all that is seen is a single drop hung upstage in the second plane area. The use of aerial perspective is even more pronounced in exterior settings. Mountains, a common subject matter, appear exceptionally craggy and foreboding and yet they haze out in a tremendously romantic glow of sky.

Here again, the vanishing point is found in a diagonal line. No representations utilizing either an "X" plan or a formal vanishing point were found.

In "secondhand" Romanticism as witnessed in the melodrama of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of this century, Romanticism became an amalgamation of the old and the new as it sought for greater reality. This reality was achieved in more mundane environments than those of "historical" Romanticism.

If "the banks of the Nile" were seen in "historical" Romanticism, a quay in the Port of Marseilles would be more representative in "secondhand" Romanticism.

Greater reality was achieved by disguising the second plane drop and abandoning the first plane drop. Constructed dimension went into the down left and right areas where the inverted "U" had once existed. Trees hid great areas of the second plane drop. The aerial perspective of this second plane was slashed by the lines of two dimensional trees with fish net supporting cutout leaves.²⁰

Essentially what occurred is that "secondhand" Romanticism eliminated not only the "exotic" from the approach of its historic predecessor but traditional treatment of the first plane as well. It substituted environmental plasticity in the first plane but went no further than the earlier movement in developing full plasticity. It became a style wherein mixed forms existed. No unity of approach existed in mass and line. Space was ill-defined. Romanticism of the "secondhand" phase utilizes an overcrowded stage which has been given over to a spectacle unconcerned with compositional values.²¹

²⁰Harker, pp. 224-225.

²¹Vardac, Pls. 31-36.

Color

Hyatt Mayor feels that it was not until the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century that a full range of color made its way into stage setting.²² He feels that design as seen in Baroque renderings utilized "a colour range as limited as the orchestral colour of the concerto grosso."²³

With the advent of Romantic painting, improvements in pigment changed the colors of the stage productions. Scholz commonly describes typical Baroque renderings and settings as looking like "pen, bistre, gray wash over black crayon."²⁴ However, in describing the color of the nineteenth century designers his descriptions read more commonly as "pen, ink, water-colour on gray paper."²⁵ The word "colour" is the significant part of the description for romantic design relied to an exceptional degree upon color. Harker says that the scene painter worked with

²²Scholz, p. ix.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 8.

²⁵Ibid., p. 17.

distemper, a corruption, I imagine, of the old-time "tempera." The distemper used in the scenic studio, however, is chemically different from its historic predecessor. It is a peculiarly difficult medium to handle.²⁶

The washes and lines of the Baroque were no longer utilized. A full range of color had come into being in the theatre and Harker describes the man who worked with this color range as "a first rate draughtsman, a sensitive colourist, and an all-around enthusiast."²⁷

Color then, like the color of Romantic easel painting, was a predominant element in setting.

Some opinion holds that in "secondhand" Romanticism color became the most important element. Vardac, for example, discusses a production of The Corsican Brothers in which critical opinion held that;

. . . an accumulation of gaudy color-effects does not make good scenery. The vast and glowing ballroom scene in The Corsican Brothers, was when looked at critically, merely ludicrous.²⁸

Motivation for an overuse of color is easily understood.

Color was a new element in the theatre. Lee Simonson

²⁶Harker, p. 173.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Vardac, p. 39.

summarizes both the significance of color and the novelty of painting itself:

Nineteenth century stage settings . . . were designed by virtuoso scene painters who painted every detail of a scene, including cast shadows, moonlight on clouds; sunlight on trees, sticks and stones, cliffs and temples, furniture, and bric-a-brac on the walls of rooms. Painting was still so novel an art for most spectators--most of the modern museums of Europe were not founded or did not become public galleries until the early part of the nineteenth century--that paint could still deceive the eye and successfully stimulate reality.²⁹

Texture

The use of flat color in both "historical and secondhand" Romanticism denied any true textural approach to scenery. Certainly, the romantic theatre did develop a style of "half-practicable, half-painted setting."³⁰ However, even with three dimensional units placed down-stage, there was neither dimensional texture nor painted texture. The spattering techniques which we know today were not used. Harker illustrates the technique of

²⁹ Lee Simonson, The Art of Scenic Design (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1950), p. 17.

³⁰ Cheney, Stage Decoration, Pl. 36.

Romanticism as he refers to "broad masses of colour . . . [and] vast stretches of flat colour."³¹

The use of "flat" color does not imply the solid sweeps of color later seen in Neo-Rational walls but implies, rather, that where depressions or elevated surfaces were called for, or where stains were required, they could be brushed on in a solid treatment. If then, a texture was simulated, it was a conventional painterly texture and as such it denied texture as it is known today.

Light

Light must be considered from a unique viewpoint in romantic scene design. Because Romanticism was a painter's art, lighting instruments such as lanterns, chandeliers, etc., and the effects of light from these instruments, as well as from natural sources, were painted on the setting itself. In the discussion of mass and line illustrations have already been cited regarding sunlight as seen in deep space and aerial perspective. The dark, first plane masses invariably appeared to be illuminated

³¹Harker, p. 172.

from a slightly up left or up right source. In exterior settings the illumination was motivated light from the sun or moon. It caused great downstage shadows which were witnessed in painted shadow masses.

Interior settings utilized the same angle of illumination as did exterior settings. Interior settings, however, often used motivating rather than motivated light. For example, Joseph Platzner paints a large lantern which hangs in the second plane of his melancholy prison scene. The lantern casts light across the shadows of the second plane drop. The light filters under the arch of the first plane creating even greater dimension within the plane.³² Such lighting would seem to be a denial of the first requirement of theatrical lighting in that it is necessary to illuminate the actors' faces. This is conventionally done from downstage.

The romantic theatre continued the traditional lighting techniques wherein acting area illumination was provided from behind the proscenium and the wings. The substitution of gas and electricity in the nineteenth century made little difference in creating new lighting

³²Gregor, Pl. XXXVI.

instrument positions or in eliminating painted light from Romantic settings.

It was not until the beginning of the present century that light was well adapted to theatrical use. The nineteenth century theatre

gripped by the love of spectacle and excited by the overthrow of older conventions, seized upon the newly invented gas-jet and electric bulb as things likely to serve its immediate purposes.³³

Only the gas jet was found to be a satisfactory device in illuminating the stage of the Romantic theatre because it softened the two-dimensionality of romantic scene painting. Electric light did not serve the romantic form as well as the realistic form. Vardac feels that it hastened the end of romantic reality because at the end of the nineteenth century, "the great turn to electricity suddenly threw the obvious frauds of conventional scenic practices into focus."³⁴

Ornament

The fact that Romanticism utilized painted "furniture" and "bric-a-brac" on the walls of its scenery

³³ Nicoll, p. 195.

³⁴ Vardac, p. 9.

adequately describes the historical segment of the style. Representative of this, a prison set by Quaglio, almost completely architectural in nature, shows a large ball and chain painted in the down right area of his first plane.³⁵ Platzer uses the same device in painting his prison set.³⁶ Quaglio, in his setting, paints a bench into a niche in the wall of the first plane.

In discussing "secondhand" Romanticism the critics feel that the century was a continual search for verisimilitude. More and more real ornamentation evolved. Most students know of Tom Robertson's door-knobs and Madame Vestris' use of box sets at the Olympic Theatre in 1841.³⁷ It is often assumed that ornamentation became highly used but this assumption has little basis in fact. On the contrary, as late as 1870, the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen wrote:

There is no more inartistic effect than that of plucking a rose which is the only artificial flower among a lot of painted ones or, in the workshop of the Violin Maker of Cremona, seeing on the rear flat among half a dozen painted violins with their painted shadows, the actual violin that has to be used, casting an actual shadow.³⁸

³⁵Scholz, Pl. 104. ³⁶Gregor, Pl. XXXVI.

³⁷Gassner, Form and Idea, p. 230.

³⁸Lee Simonson, The Stage is Set (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1932), pp. 270-271.

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Saxe-Meiningen began in 1873 to create change in the theatre. He demanded and achieved a more plastic treatment in the elements of his own productions.³⁹ In this context he contributed to the change that was to come. But for the most part, the romantic movement flowed around him and continued the traditionally conventional techniques. Ornament remained a painter's art to the degree that even as late as the third decade of this century, the English actor Arthur Bouchier would write Harker that "the painting and moulding of a cornice of a room were actually more convincing than the real solid-built article."⁴⁰

Composition

There is no disagreement among the critics that Romanticism in both its phases was a painter's art. The style "reflected the movement in art and literature which sought a return to nature and at the same time exulted

³⁹ Ibid., p. 271.

⁴⁰ Harker, p. 208.

the emotions."⁴¹ Seeking subjects "from the picturesque past or from exotic foreign climes,"⁴² Romanticism utilized the ancient world of Europe, the Middle East, and the wilderness of the Americas to an extravagant degree. In "secondhand" Romanticism, more mundane or domestic places were utilized but composition remains similar through all of Romanticism.

First, two-dimensional scenery predominated. It was used as a painter's canvas viewed in two major planes. The settings consisted of "frankly painted theatrical pieces painted as realistically as possible."⁴³ Dimensionality, light, texture, and ornamentation were all painted. Because of this, dimension was unreal except in the latter part of the century when three dimensional forms began to be utilized on the downstage sides of the setting. Light was unreal because even though it appeared to come from motivated or motivating sources, the sources and the light were both painted and so never changed.

⁴¹Albright, Halsted, and Mitchell, p. 160.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Corson, "Styles of Scene Design," p. 10.

Texture was achieved through traditional painting techniques and was thus always seen in flat areas.

Similarly, a full range of color was used in the romantic era. With all the elements of composition, "there was a fair amount of illusion, but still the audience was aware of looking at painted canvas."⁴⁴

The setting was framed just as was a painting. Colored mass and shadow as opposed to the more formal line and "wash" technique of the Baroque were seen in this frame. Through this system of presentation, "scenery soon came to be an element of distraction from the play and from the general unit of effect."⁴⁵

Technique

The romantic stage house was, at best, the lineal descendent of the Baroque stage house. Though modification was made in some theatres throughout the nineteenth century, Moderwell was still able to write early in the

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Harold Helvenston, Scenery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931), p. 80.

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second decade of this century that only ten years before there was

a conventional structure for the stage from which few theatres, large or small, departed. This structure was a division of the stage by lateral lines or grooves into sections which were the basis for all scene-setting. Scenes were made, almost without exception, by dropping painted canvas from above and by projecting painted "slides" upon the stage along the lateral lines. Nine out of ten scenes were thus constructed of flapping canvas dropped from above and flapping canvas poking out from one side or the other--all in set positions and in parallel lines.⁴⁶

Three features were still consistently found in stage architecture. First, the stage itself was raked. As late as 1883, the architect Walter Emden wrote that

the height of the stage from the floor to the pit is usually four feet, and six inches, and as the stage should rise from the footlights at the rate of one-half inch in the foot, everyone on the floor of the pit obtains a good view.⁴⁷

The convention of the raked stage, originally a necessity in the formality of Baroque perspective, persisted through the asymmetricality of romantic design.

Second, because shutter scenery was still the predominant shifting technique, the requisite width of the

⁴⁶ Moderwell, p. 20.

⁴⁷ Vardac, p. 7.

wings remained half that of the proscenium opening.⁴⁸ The need for striking any half-size upstage piece fully out of sight required at least that much wing space.

Third, the Baroque apron still existed although MacGowan and Melnitz suggest that by the middle of the nineteenth century the apron had been considerably reduced.⁴⁹ Vardac takes exception to this view. He feels that at the time of the first motion pictures in America, the apron "still jutted into the auditorium from one-third to one-sixth of the stage itself."⁵⁰

Within this framework of production, the techniques of staging remained almost unchanged. Brockett feels that in the nineteenth century, theatres with level stage floors began to be built, but that they did not become common or typical until the twentieth century.⁵¹ Because of this the box set "in which the usual canvas sides were lashed together to represent three sides of a room"⁵² did not

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁹ Kenneth MacGowan and William Melnitz, The Living Stage (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), pp. 336-337.

⁵⁰ Vardac, p. 8.

⁵¹ Brockett, pp. 248-249.

⁵² Moderwell, pp. 20-21.

become standard until the turn of the century.⁵³ In the nineties

the audience looked into a stage flanked by canvas wings, appearing frankly in rows as such, or with hinged flaps for variety or as "cut-outs" supplementing "leg-drops" and "set pieces" in an effort toward a painty sort of reality.⁵⁴

When theatres in the metropolitan areas had exceptionally high lofts, there were oblique pieces such as "porches" or "fountains" which could be flown into place rather than being slid in grooves into parallel positions with the proscenium.⁵⁵ Even though these "oblique" pieces were used, the predominant wing marking technique was that of the shutter. No matter how many chronological highlights in the "search for verisimilitude" that the historians stress, the scenic system of Romanticism remained basically as it had for over a century. It utilized a two-dimensional, canvas covered frame, set in grooves or flown as unframed pieces. Both types of frames were generally set parallel to the proscenium. When the box set was employed it was seen as flats, lashed together with a

⁵³ Brockett, p. 249.

⁵⁴ Cheney, Stage Decoration, p. 31.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

"canvas roof . . . let down from the flies."⁵⁶ Occasionally, oblique pieces were hung in place of the side shutters.

The techniques of Romanticism continued well into the twentieth century both in the United States and in Europe. As late as 1929 there were theatre houses which on call could "furnish ready-made stocks of scenery, and thereby innundate the world with these worn-out settings of melodrama and the romantic theatre."⁵⁷

While the romantic movement had begun with the traditional use of candles or oil lamps as its primary lighting devices, Brockett states that by 1850, "the gas table," a central panel of gas valves, permitted theatres to achieve instantaneous control over all its lights.⁵⁸ Similarly, Vardac maintains that between 1850 and 1870 gas light was installed in most provincial American theatres.⁵⁹ In 1880, the Madison Square Theatre of New York

⁵⁶ Moderwell, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁷ Fuerst and Hume, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Brockett, p. 250.

⁵⁹ Vardac, pp. 8-9.

boasted gas lights with self-breathing apparatus.⁶⁰ By the 1880's, electricity was found in America's metropolitan theatres.

It would seem that gas and electricity came to the theatre early, but like the dates given for the box set, these dates are also misleading. The small theatres of America and Europe were slow to install either gas or electricity. Not until the last decade of the nineteenth century was gaslight considered standard in the American theatre.

The techniques of gas and electric lighting were basically the same and were continuations of Baroque techniques. "Footlights, overhead borders, and . . . vertical wing-and-tormentor borders" were used.⁶¹ The "gas table" could control individual jets of gas, if necessary, just as salt water or resistance dimmers could control electrical lamps. Stars were achieved by punching holes in a drop painted with a night sky which would be illuminated from behind.⁶² "Calcium lights" were shown through green

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁶² Harker, p. 232.

filters to effect moonlight.⁶³ Devices such as the "lime-light" were devised. "It was an intense, white light produced by heating a piece of limestone and a very hot combination of gases. Used with a mirror it became a spotlight of great brilliance."⁶⁴ By mid-century the carbon-arc spotlight, an electrically fired instrument, had been used.⁶⁵ Once again though, these innovations were extraordinary and the primary function of the standard lighting devices, "footlights, overhead borders, and vertical wing-and-tormentor borders" was to illuminate the acting area and the setting rather than to "point" the action of the play.

In addition to the appreciation of painting and color in setting, the nineteenth century audience took pleasure in special effects of Romanticism. The wind, rain, snow, thunder, and roaring oceans of "nature" were all witnessed on the romantic stage. Harker describes a wind machine as "a cylinder whose wooden cogs, coming into contact with a piece of linen or silk give a continued

⁶³Vardac, p. 9.

⁶⁴MacGowan and Melnitz, p. 349.

⁶⁵Ibid.

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whistling and moaning sound."⁶⁶ Vardac says the cylinder was filled with dried peas which rolled about inside.⁶⁷ Snow was achieved by dusting flour, soapsuds, bone shavings, or ground corn on clothing. Pieces of paper could be made to flutter to the stage from troughs.⁶⁸ Visible rain was achieved by vibrating suspended, polished wires.⁶⁹

The Renaissance techniques of "traditional sea cloths, wave cut-outs and wave cylinders"⁷⁰ were used to effect oceans. Cannonballs rolled through troughs--a technique at least as old as those of the ocean methods--to make thunder effects.⁷¹

Little was achieved in creating new special effects until the advent of sophisticated electrical devices and electronic sound systems. The romantic theatre continued to use its predecessor's special effects techniques.

⁶⁶Harker, p. 230.

⁶⁷Vardac, p. 11.

⁶⁸Harker, p. 229.

⁶⁹Vardac, p. 12.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 11.

⁷¹Harker, p. 231.

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Summary: Criteria for Identification of
the Scenic Style of Romanticism

Form Elements and Their
Composition

Mass (and space) and line

Romantic scene design attempts the creation of two planes of design to achieve pictorial reality. Interior design shows a darkened mass in the foreground or first plane which is commonly seen as an inverted "U" or as post and lintel. Exterior design relies primarily on darkened vertical masses. The second plane is seen in both exterior or interior settings as having great aerial perspective. The formal vanishing point is not often utilized nor is the "X" plan. Rather, the assymetrical is attempted with a diagonal vanishing point. Stone lines recede and "haze out," further developing both aerial perspective and lineal perspective.

In the later designs of "secondhand" Romanticism, three-dimensional objects are used in the foreground or "oblique" pieces are hung in wing positions to take the place of the foreground masses. In "secondhand" Romanticism, the "second plane" drop is obscured by two dimensional forms placed in front of it.

Color

A full range of color is used in "broad" or "flat" areas of paint. Color is used for its ability to simulate "nature," rather than for psychological purposes. Romanticism is the first style to utilize an almost unlimited palette. In its later stages, color is overstressed.

Texture

Texture is achieved by the conventional methods of "broad" washes of color as opposed to the "Pointillist" techniques that the twentieth century theatre developed. No three dimensionality in texture is attempted. Everything from "depressions" and "bumps" on walls to the bark of trees is painted.

Light

Motivating lights are often painted on the interior setting's walls to achieve the effect of light. Similarly, there is painted light on the walls of exterior settings which attempts to achieve the quality of motivated light. As for light itself, it was seen in broad washes of gas light which emanated predominantly from the conventional positions of the Baroque theatre.

Ornament

Ornament is seen in painted moulding, furniture, wall decor, or the structural decor of exteriors. Rarely is a three-dimensional piece mixed with the painted ornament, thus, denying the reality the paint achieved.

Composition

Romanticism pursued a "search for verisimilitude." This was witnessed first in "historical" Romanticism as a desire for "archeological accuracy" in such forms as Gothic architecture, Middle Eastern structures, and "exotic" New World locales. It was witnessed in "secondhand" Romanticism as a search for a journalistic representation of the "domestic" or "mundane."

Utilizing Baroque staging techniques, Romanticism was a painter's style. Mass and line were for the most part painted in two-dimensional planes as were texture, ornament, and light. Color was all important as it was an uncommon material for the nineteenth century public to see inasmuch as representations of the visual arts were privately, rather than publicly, owned.

Technique

The stage house of Romanticism still employed the raked stage, a stage house twice the width of the proscenium opening, and an apron, "one-third to one-sixth" the depth of the stage.

Although the box set was used as well as "oblique" pieces in the metropolitan theatres, "canvas wings" and "drops" set in parallel positions were still the predominant scenery. Scenery was made by "hack commercial firms" as late as the 1930's.

Gaslight and electricity were the major methods of lighting. "The gas table," the "salt water dimmer," or the "resistance dimmer" were developed to control intensity of gas or electricity but their development had little effect on Romanticism. Although "calcium" lights and "lime-lights" could emit great amounts of light, the gas jet and the electric lamp were still predominantly used as "foot-lights," "overhead borders," and "vertical wing-and-tormentor borders" for illuminating the acting area and the setting, rather than to provide motivating light, motivated light, or to "point" the play's action.

Romanticism depended upon Baroque special effects techniques to enhance "nature." Shining stars, wind, rain, snow, thunder, and ocean effects were all attempted in techniques passed down from the Baroque theatre.

CHAPTER IV

NATURALISM AND REALISM

In 1804, a designer for the court theatre in Mannheim, Germany, "joined pairs of wings that contained practicable doors or windows."¹ J. R. Planché utilized historically correct costumes in 1824, for his production of King John. In 1841, Madame Vestris used a box set for her London Assurance production.² By 1850, Kean had provided England with a decade of "pictorial realism."³

Tentative attempts at a new Realism were undertaken by the dramatists of the time. Gogol's The Inspector-General was produced in 1836, Hebbel's Maria Magdalena in 1844, and Turgenev's A Month in the Country in 1849. Emile Augier and Dumas films moved toward Realism in the middle of the century. Dumas films sought for a drama which could treat contemporary social problems but

¹MacGowan and Melnitz, p. 344.

²Gassner, Form and Idea, p. 230.

³Ibid.

it would not be until the twentieth century that a Realistic drama would truly exist.

In 1873, Emile Zola took a great stride toward the creation of a new Realism. In a preface to his play, Thérèse Raquin, Zola produced the first important statement regarding Naturalism.⁴ By 1875, almost completely independent of Zola, the work of Duke Georg of Saxe-Meiningen was witnessed throughout Europe. It was Saxe-Meiningen "who most impressed Antoine and Stanislavsky in his handling of scenic production."⁵

While Saxe-Meiningen led the way toward a new production form, Zola's greatest contribution was a series of essays, published in 1881 as Le Naturalisme au théâtre. Zola's publication accelerated the movement toward Naturalism. Such works as Becque's The Vultures (1882) and La Parisienne (1885) followed.

Scenic Naturalism appeared first in theatrical production with Andre Antoine's "theory of environment" in 1887.⁶ Theatrical reality was seen in America in

⁴Gassner, Form and Idea, p. 231.

⁵Gorelik, p. 140.

⁶Ibid., p. 142.

Steele MacKaye's spectatorios beginning in 1886⁷ and in Belasco's Naturalistic settings of the 1890's.⁸

The dramatic style spread throughout Europe. Tolstoi wrote The Power of Darkness in 1886; Strindberg, Miss Julie in 1888; Hauptmann, The Weavers in 1892; and Gorki's The Lower Depths was produced in Russia in 1902.

Brockett feels that "naturalism as a conscious movement was largely ended by 1900."⁹ After this point, "naturalism itself was gradually absorbed into the larger and more acceptable realistic movement."¹⁰

If one can compress into a phrase the distinction between the realism of the romantic and the objective realism of the age of science, it is that in the later realism the bouquet of tenderness is gone.¹¹

Appropriate as these words are to the theatre, they were written about painting. In 1845, the anti-idealistic phase of painting began in Europe with two paintings.

⁷Thompson, p. 9.

⁸Gorelik, p. 161.

⁹Brockett, p. 277.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Edgar Preston Richardson, The Way of Western Art, 1776-1914 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 106.

In Germany, von Menzel painted Balcony Room, and in France, Courbet, the master of Realism, painted Midday Dream. Courbet, a leader in the new Realistic movement, was explicit in what he meant by the word Realism. His philosophy was

show me a goddess and I will paint you one.
I paint what I see I give you real
nature, crudities, violence, and all.¹²

Courbet was followed by Manet (1832-1883); by Ford Maddox Brown (1821-1893), who introduced Realism to England (although critics consider him a dissenter from the movement);¹³ by James Whistler (1834-1903) who in his early phase was an objective realist; and by Winslow Homer (1836-1810) and Thomas Eakins (1844-1916) who brought the movement to America. Gorelik holds that "it was especially the Barbizon school and the art of such masters as Courbet and Manet whose approach to nature matched Antoine's scenic style."¹⁴

¹²Ibid., p. 124.

¹³Cheney, The Story of Modern Art, p. 122.

¹⁴Gorelik, p. 142. The Barbizon school was named after a village near Paris. Close to the forest of Fontainebleau, it provided a location close to Paris where landscapists could work from nature.

The influence of the Barbizon school can be seen in America in the works of Steele MacKaye. Thompson writes that

MacKaye's closest friend was William Morris Hunt, the Boston artist and advocate of the Barbizon--especially of Millet. Hunt brought many Barbizon paintings to America. It is significant that MacKaye was brought up with, and always was a friend of Winslow Homer--who, like the Barbizon artists, went directly to nature in his paintings.¹⁵

By the 1890's, MacKaye had reached "a limit of uncompromising realism parallel to that of a Courbet or an Eakins."¹⁶

In both Europe and America the reaction against the surface reality of theatrical Romanticism culminated in the new movement of Naturalism. Naturalism disappeared (except in isolated incidents) by the beginning of the new century and was more selectively used in the greater sense of Realism from that point on.

Motivations

Critical opinion is divided as to whether scenic Naturalism and Realism are distinct styles. The present

¹⁵Thompson, p. 9.

¹⁶Ibid.

writer feels that although there are major similarities between the two, the hypothesis of the "continuum," as discussed in Chapter II, illustrates enough difference between the styles so that they may be described as separate and distinct. Further, Naturalism is predominantly a historical style while Realism is a continuing style.

The viewpoint that there was a nineteenth century Realism which culminated in Naturalism is improbable. The "search for verisimilitude"--the desire for "archaeological accuracy"--does not culminate with Naturalism. Rather Naturalism is the culmination of both the Realism in painting of the nineteenth century and the theatrical reaction against "pictorial reality," while theatrical Realism is a more eclectic style in its development and in its present use. Realism is a modern and continuing style. It originated in the motivations of Naturalism, but as Naturalism waned under the influences of Symbolism and Selective Realism in the theatre, the new realistic style developed. In essence, it developed with Selective Realism and the student should be mindful of this fact as he studies the chronology of Selective Realism. Similarly, he should be mindful of the nature of Realism.

The difference between theatrical Naturalism and Realism can be seen in the arguments arising from the statement that theatre should be true to life; a philosophy of both Naturalism and Realism. MacGowan and Jones express the first viewpoint regarding this phrase and through it, delineate Naturalism. They feel that the style of Naturalism evolved in the late 1870's as a Realism that demanded "a literal picture of people and happenings. It insists that human beings upon the stage shall say or do only those things that are reasonably plausible in life."¹⁷ This is the camera viewpoint of the realistic continuum and as such it describes Naturalism. The second viewpoint is that Realism is

true to the deeper motives of human character and to the underlying currents of social development; not in the sense of being photographically reflective of other aspects and irrelevant details. It does not strain to be natural, and yet it is never unnatural. The mirror is not held up to life, but life is subjected to a rigid selective sense, and through that transformed into art.¹⁸

This is the true meaning of the word Realism--the Realism of twentieth century theatre.

¹⁷ MacGowan and Jones, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸ Sheldon Cheney, The Theatre; Three Thousand Years of Drama, Acting, and Stagecraft (rev. ed.; New York: Longmans, Green, 1952), p. 35.

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A number of concepts led to a development of a philosophy of theatrical Naturalism and Realism. These are

the urbanization and mechanization of life the result of democratic reformism, of the new concern with the condition of the people . . . and . . . the rise of the physical sciences which aimed at controlling nature by knowing its processes.¹⁹

The realistic continuum in theatre is a by-product of the developing sciences of the nineteenth century. Man sought solutions to the problems of mechanization and urbanization by applying science and scientific methods to societies' problems.

Auguste Comte's (1798-1857) philosophy of positivism held that observation was the key to human knowledge and that laws could be formulated from such observations. Scientific knowledge could be applied to social phenomena and because of this a positive social science could be encouraged to achieve an ordered society.²⁰

¹⁹Eric Bentley, The Playwright as Thinker (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1946), p. 23.

²⁰Alburey Castell, An Introduction to Modern Philosophy (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1963), pp. 217-20.

Charles Darwin's Origin of the Species advanced two philosophical concepts:

evolution, or the idea that all forms of life have developed gradually from a common ancestry; and . . . the survival of the fittest, as an explanation of the reason for evolution.²¹

Similarly, Karl Marx emphasized the conditioning effect on human behavior of environmental factors but stressed that the circumstances of environment could be changed by man himself.²²

The motivations of the realistic continuum were the products of the theses of Comte, Darwin, Marx, and their contemporaries. It was, however, the "messianic leadership in the 1870's"²³ of Émile Zola that truly formed Naturalism. Engrossed by the concept of meticulous scientific observation as a basis for theatre, Zola wrote:

I am working for someone to put a man of flesh and bones on the stage, taken from reality, scientifically analyzed, and described without one lie I am waiting for environment to determine the characters and the characters to act according to the logic of facts

²¹Brockett, p. 261.

²²Theodore H. Hatlen, Orientation to the Theatre (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), p. 162.

²³Ibid., p. 157.

combined with the logic of their own dispositions . . . until the playwrights return to the study of nature, to the anatomy of man, to the painting of life in an exact reproduction more original and powerful than anyone has so far dared to risk on the boards.²⁴

To achieve this it was mandatory to "produce the reality of environment on the stage."²⁵ What was needed was "a slice of life."²⁶ A slice of life means that "a dramatist should transfer to the stage as faithfully as possible, a segment of real life."²⁷ This called for not only the real man but the air the man breathes.

Brockett writes:

Because of the emphasis upon environment as a determinant of character and action, the stage setting was given greater importance under naturalism than in any previous movement. Every detail was reproduced on the stage so as to make actions occurring there understandable.²⁸

Naturalistic theatre had set a goal for itself that could only be served in life.

²⁴Emile Zola, "Naturalism on the Stage," trans. Samuel Draper, Playwrights on Playwrighting, ed. Toby Cole (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 6.

²⁵Ibid., p. 11.

²⁶Brockett, p. 276.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

Realism as a style desired, as did Naturalism, that "meticulous and precise observation, analysis, and recording of specific details"²⁹ would be the touchstones on the path to a successful theatre style, but Realism was not as deterministic as Naturalism in achieving its ends. The scientific approach is not as significant in Realism. Rather, the realistic artist:

looked hard at life at first hand . . . , and . . . jotted down in his notebook the texture of his response. The realist was devoted to the sanctity of facts and the deduction of truth based on the evidence of collected data.³⁰

Realism also viewed heredity and environment as significant but environment did hold the greater significance. As in Naturalism, the stage was viewed as an environment for the character but it was a selective environment. "Realism is interpretive; naturalism is not. The environment is seen through the human eye rather than the camera's."³¹

²⁹ Hatlen, p. 147.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Richard Corson, "A Garland of Ism's," Theatre Arts, XXIX (December, 1945), p. 729.

Like Naturalism, Realism felt that man could be improved. Darwin's ideas strengthened this theory of improvement.

If man has evolved from an infinitesimal grain of being to the complex creature he now is, greater and greater improvement and inevitable progress seemed to be clearly indicated.³²

One other significant difference exists between the philosophies of the two styles. The "slice of life" of Naturalism, even though it was meant to improve man, dealt with a man "of a callous nature."³³ Realism, on the other hand, dealt with all men and so the theatre regards the two styles as the work of "the optimistic realist and the pessimistic naturalist."³⁴

The four specific motivations of naturalistic setting appear quite similar to those of the naturalistic drama. They are "exact reproductions," "the Darwinian stage setting," "documented environment," and "the fourth wall."³⁵

³² Brockett, p. 261.

³³ Hatlen, p. 144.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Gorelik, pp. 138-148.

The naturalist wanted complete reality and to achieve it, there had to be a three-dimensional and utile environment.

"Exact reproduction" required that the audience must be made to forget that it is looking at decor. The setting must be the very place of the dramatic action itself, as if you walked into it off the street, as if it had grown there.³⁶

In 1913, a production of Edward Shelton's The High Road fulfilled this requirement so perfectly that a critic wrote:

This scene is the most unique that has ever been shown in play production in that every article of furniture, every bit of decoration, each one of the paintings, even the moulding surrounding the room is a counterpart or reproduction of an original which reposes in some famous European art gallery or museum.³⁷

The Darwinian stage setting showed the effects of environment on human behavior. To achieve this, the setting could not simply be a real room in the sense of being archaeologically accurate or in the simplistic sense of "exact reproduction." Rather, the room must be

³⁶ Ibid., p. 138.

³⁷ "Psychological Stage Scenery," The Literary Digest, XLVI (January 25, 1913), p. 183.

as genuinely observed, as significantly real, as the actor. It must loom up before the spectator with the same vividness, solid, palpable, substantial, as if plucked from the stream of life itself.³⁸

It must belong to an individual and particular character in the play.

Documented environment called for complete dimension. The two-dimensionality of romantic design was erased by an encompassing three-dimensionality in Naturalism. Gassner feels that "a setting, in itself, is not an environment, nor is a scene an environment, in any true dramatic sense unless it encloses the characters and the stage actions."³⁹ Naturalism sought such an environment, creating an illusion "complete with depth, atmosphere, earth and sky."⁴⁰

The fourth wall "sealed the opening of a lighted peep-box; and when the curtain rose, the contemplative spectator peered into that lighted box."⁴¹ A barrier of space was erected between the audience and the stage.

³⁸ Gorelik, p. 142.

³⁹ Gassner, Form and Idea, p. 55.

⁴⁰ Gorelik, p. 147.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 148.

This barrier was created by two means; blacking out the auditorium to create the stage as "a lighted peep-box" and placing furnishings and actors in such a way that a fourth wall existed. Bakshy states that "it is the Naturalist's goal to disregard the proscenium opening and . . . place a row of chairs, or a fireplace . . . the so called "fourth wall" . . . along the footlights."⁴²

Of the four scenic motivations, only "documented environment" is as meaningful to Realism as it is to Naturalism. Corson writes that:

Realism . . . is selective in that it is functional. Nothing is used on the stage without some definite purpose, whether for the actor, for atmosphere, or for decoration. No props are used simply because they "would be there" in real life. Either the actors need them or the audience needs them. The realistic set is designed not as the reproduction of a photograph but as the projection of the author's, director's and designer's composite concept of the appropriate environment for the play.⁴³

Further, "the scene is really not complete in its details, although it must be complete enough so that, to the eye of the audience, it appears to be the real thing."⁴⁴

⁴²Alexander Bakshy, "Representational or Presentational Theatre," Larson, p. 264.

⁴³Corson, "A Garland of Isms," p. 729.

⁴⁴Friederich and Fraser, p. 9.

Second, "the illusion of reality is sought, but the objects used are as obviously man-made reproductions as the thickness of a wall is implied by nailing thickness pieces to the door frames."⁴⁵

Third, although "the proscenium opening is considered the invisible fourth wall,"⁴⁶ the proscenium line is never dressed as such.

With "documented environment," spatial environment continues to be achieved as it was in Naturalism through a treatment consisting of a "duplication of the real thing."⁴⁷ Realism creates the full space, the plasticity, and the necessary forms within it to give the illusion of environmental reality to the audience.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 182.

⁴⁶Warren C. Lounsbury, Backstage from A to Z (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1959), p. 48.

⁴⁷Corson, "Styles of Scene Design," p. 5.

Form Elements and Composition

Mass (and space) and Line

Naturalism's ideal in interior setting was "the perfect reproduction of a recognizable room."⁴⁸ It was "perfect" to the point where "a favorite indication of the missing fourth side of a room was the set of andirons placed down toward the footlights."⁴⁹ The interior setting was a five-sided box with right angled walls. Rarely were sight lines improved by the use of sidewalls treated as forced perspective. The box was often

so much larger than an actual room that a naturalistically treated stage kitchen, for example, might contain sufficient supplies and equipment to feed a family of twenty, and, at the same time, suggest a display room.⁵⁰

Of more significance is the fact that there is no point or focus in the setting. The plethora of detail with nothing "left to the imagination"⁵¹ is such that the

⁴⁸Albright, Halstead, and Mitchell, p. 163.

⁴⁹Cheney, Stage Decoration, p. 36.

⁵⁰Herbert Philippi, Stagecraft and Scene Design (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), p. 165.

⁵¹Vern Adix, Theatre Scenecraft (Anchorage, Kentucky: Children's Theatre Press, 1956), p. 273.

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modern theatrician wonders if "focus" was found in the actor. Representative settings such as Stanislavsky's 1890 production of A Doll's House⁵² or Maupassant's Boule de suif produced at the Theatre Antoine in 1902,⁵³ are filled with the decor of the Victorian age.⁵⁴ Even in the seamy room pictured in Gorki's 1902 production of The Lower Depths, a great deal of detail is witnessed.⁵⁵

Because of this use of ornamentation or decor, few modern compositional values are witnessed in "mass and line." Verisimilitude is achieved and in its unselectivity it confuses the eye.

In exterior settings, Naturalism was not as successful in achieving verisimilitude. Gorelik feels that:

⁵²Fuerst and Hume, Vol. II, plate 1.

⁵³George Altman, and others, Theatre Pictorial (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1953), plate 285.

⁵⁴The Victorian was an age of ornament and bric-a-brac. By contemporary standards its rooms were overdressed. The author of this study theorizes that the aesthetic response of twentieth century aestheticians to Naturalism is affected by their dislike of the Victorian. Similarly, the constant stress they place on the "ornament" of Victorian settings as they look at Naturalism is probably the result of over-reaction.

⁵⁵Hatlen, p. 184.

the moment you must simulate sky, ground, trees, and growing plants, you are forced to adopt a style which is conventional to some degree. It is not easy to find a naturalistic way to put a frame around a supposedly natural sky.⁵⁶

In achieving architectonic exteriors, few problems existed. Such exteriors could be built like interior settings without ceilings. On each side of the stage was a building or wall and in the rear, another building or wall. Examples of these architectonic exteriors illustrate the same lack of focus and overdressing as do the interiors.⁵⁷

The exterior setting of a biomorphic nature was a more difficult problem.

In exterior settings, the flat wings were replaced by three-dimensional constructions representing rocks or cliffs The landscape painted on a backdrop was replaced by a built-up groundrow backed by a neutral sky drop or a cyclorama. Sky borders disappeared, but foliage borders still lingered, although sometimes the problem of realistically setting the top of the stage was abandoned and neutral velour borders were used to mask the flies.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ John F. Gassner and Phillip Barber, Producing the Play (New York: The Dryden Press, rev. ed., 1953), p. 320.

⁵⁷ See Pls. 8 and 11, Fuerst and Hume.

⁵⁸ Barnard Hewitt, Theatres of Yesterday and Today (Cincinnati: The National Thespian Society, 1946), p. 11.

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Sometimes the "three-dimensional constructions" were "live trees and vegetation."⁵⁹ A Reinhardt production of Goethe's Faust in 1909, illustrates this.⁶⁰ Real birches serrate the sky in a natural copse. The ground is built up and rocky. The skyline is broken by a three-dimensional rocky line. A great stone castle carries from up center to down left. Because of this castle a tremendous imbalance is created in the setting.

There seems to be no more focus in the examples of biomorphic Naturalism than in interiors or architectonic exteriors. All are busy and distracting, suggesting difficulty in audience focus on the actor.

In Realism, "the setting gives an impression of being the real thing without including the infinity of unnecessary and confusing detail one might find in real life."⁶¹ Through the process of "selecting a few of the most striking, representative features of a scene, we get good design."⁶² There is no question of focus in a

⁵⁹ Friederich and Frazer, p. 181.

⁶⁰ Fuerst and Hume, Pl. 21.

⁶¹ Corson, "Styles of Scene Design," p. 55.

⁶² Victor E. D'Amico, Theatre Art (Peoria, Ill.: The Manual Arts Press, 1931), p. 55.

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realistic setting. The process of selectivity allows the eye to constantly remain with the actor.⁶³ Interior settings and exterior architectonic settings open up, providing better sight lines and focus.

Friederich and Fraser feel that in biomorphic exteriors, the illusion of reality is sought, but the objects used are obviously man-made reproductions.

The artist will depend upon color, general line and mass, plus a few selected details, to give the illusion of reality to his set pieces. It will be observed, therefore, that the outdoor setting is usually not nearly so accurate a representation of reality as the interior setting.⁶⁴

Little stress is laid upon biomorphic exteriors. The architectonic setting is used instead. Lee Simonson's design for Liliom illustrates the approach.⁶⁵ An architectonic setting is placed in front of a cyclorama. Between the setting's rear wall, which masks the cyclorama, and the cyclorama itself are the bare branches of real trees. Cheney describes the setting as

⁶³Early illustrations of this use of selectivity can be seen in Reinhardt's production of Don Carlos, in 1909. (Fuerst and Hume, Pls. 22 and 23.)

⁶⁴Friederich and Fraser, p. 182.

⁶⁵Cheney, Stage Decoration, plate 44.

prettily simplified, made tasteful, composed. There is none of the old painted perspective no elaboration of detail, no scenic display; only a picture made largely with plastic materials . . . , while remaining an illustration of some actual corner of nature somewhere.⁶⁶

The realistic setting is carefully composed with a selective use of line. As such it seems not only more utile in an environmental sense but it has infinitely more point or focus than does the naturalistic setting.

Color

Naturalism sought truth in color as completely as it did in its other elements. It utilized only that which was a "counterpart or reproduction of an original."⁶⁷ Wall treatment as pictured in the history of decoration books was duplicated.⁶⁸ "Dirt floors, live trees and vegetation, water in the pool or orchestra pit" were used whenever possible.⁶⁹ "In Tobacco Road, there is no stage

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Friederich and Fraser, p. 5.

⁶⁸ Adix, p. 273.

⁶⁹ Friederich and Fraser, p. 182.

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canvas painted to represent the earth, but an actual dirt floor made by dumping tons of soil right on the stage."⁷⁰ Whenever possible, the naturalist designer achieved real color by use of the real object.

Realism's approach to color is the same as its approach to mass and line. It is a more selective process. Friederich and Fraser feel that color is used to give the illusion of reality to the setting.⁷¹ This is achieved by a careful handling of intensity and value. To preserve focus the setting is painted so that it appears to be "lighter and brighter toward the bottom and gray out somewhat toward the top."⁷² In Harry Horner's setting for Me and Molly, an excellent sample of this use of color is seen.⁷³ The darkened upper walls point the action, thus, focusing the eye on the brighter acting area below. The eye does not stray to the upper reaches of the setting.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 187.

⁷² Corson, "Styles of Scene Design," p. 5.

⁷³ Altman, and others, Pl. 485.

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Wallpaper is handled in this careful manner.

Corson feels that wallpaper too often gives "nothing but an overall pattern."⁷⁴ It is necessary not only to be selective in choosing colors for wallpaper, but to gray out the color toward the top.

Texture

One of the constantly cited examples of Naturalistic methodology is David Belasco's utilization of actual parts of a Child's restaurant on the stage. It is significant to a discussion of texture because it implies that the "worst excesses of the traditional scene painter were put aside for all time."⁷⁵ The walls of a Child's restaurant would be plastered and painted. The real object was as germane to texture as to color.

Realism adapted the painterly technique of Pointillism. Adix points out that textured qualities can be achieved through such methods as brush spattering, garden-spray spattering, dry brushing, spatter blending, cross hatching with a dry or wet brush, spongeing or stippling

⁷⁴Corson, "Styles of Scene Design," p. 5.

⁷⁵Cheney, Stage Decoration, pp. 35-36.

paint with the ends of the brush's bristles.⁷⁶ All of these techniques evolved from basic "brush spattering," which in turn was developed from pointillism by men like Joseph Urban who introduced the technique to the United States in 1912.⁷⁷

Light

Similarities in light exist in both Naturalism and Realism although technique is more refined in Realism.⁷⁸ No longer was light painted in the setting nor was "the ancient convention of shadowing."⁷⁹ Light was motivating or motivated. Color media were developed to a high degree by such men as David Belasco and Munroe Beaver who actually operated laboratories which investigated color synthesis for stage lighting.⁸⁰ Light became, for the first time, an organic and natural part of production.

The naturalist setting commonly uses motivating lights. Light had to appear to emanate from these sources.

⁷⁶Adix, pp. 103-106.

⁷⁷Altman, and others, Pls. 450-451.

⁷⁸See the discussion of lighting under "Technique."

⁷⁹Cheney, Stage Decoration, p. 34.

⁸⁰Theodore Fuchs, Stage Lighting (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1929), p. 51.

Obviously, if it did, it could not illuminate the stage sufficiently. The photography of naturalistic settings indicates that they were over-illuminated. They are so completely illuminated that it would appear that illumination is used to expose all the careful detail of the naturalistic setting.⁸¹

Realism, on the other hand, utilizes lighting to enhance the graying-out process of interior walls. The set is less well illuminated at the top, thereby enhancing actor focus. It creates shadows which give the setting a more natural quality but primarily it points the action.⁸²

Ornament

Repeatedly, the critics stress the use of ornament in Naturalism as the major concern of the style.

Adix summarizes the use of ornament as he writes:

⁸¹ See Pl. 44 in Cheney, Stage Decoration.

⁸² The photography of Naturalistic setting may be misleading. It is conceivable that the photographic techniques of the time were not sophisticated enough to always adequately capture naturalistic lighting. For example, an isolated but interesting use of light is reported by Marc Slonim who states that in a play by Ostrovsky, "The director used a special trick in order to create the illusion of the fourth wall: the sun shone from the audience and

Real mouldings are applied to the walls, doors, cabinets and furnishings when needed; expensive pictures are mounted . . . on the walls; furniture and furnishings to suit the exact period are provided; tables are set with the crystal, china and silverware required by the book of etiquette; correctly shaped and patterned rugs are placed on the stage floor.⁸³

Everything is complete whether in the interior or exterior setting. Nothing is left to the imagination.

Realism leaves much to the imagination but the viewer is unaware of this fact. It "deals with needed essentials, whether decorative or atmospheric."⁸⁴ The mind's eye fills in the missing detail. A prime example of this type of design is Stewart Cheney's setting for The Voice of the Turtle (1943).⁸⁵ Cheney designed a multi-interior of three rooms. Seven visible pictures adorn the walls. Moulding is found only in the bedroom. There are drapes on the windows and cabinets in the kitchen but the longer the eye studies the setting the

in its light on the floor one could see the reflections of curtains, flower pots, and the tracing of windows in an imaginary wall. (Marc Slonim, Russian Theatre [Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1961], p. 117.)

⁸³Adix, p. 273.

⁸⁴Philippi, pp. 167-168.

⁸⁵Altman, and others, Pl. 487.

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more incomplete the setting becomes. Yet, when the eye first looks at the setting everything seems to be there. It is complete. This is Realism's use of selectivity in ornament.

Composition

Utilizing the Victorian motif or sordid lower class environments of the nineteenth century for its interior settings, Naturalism:

. . . Implies that every possible effort has been made to load the setting with all the objects and three-dimensional or painted detail that it can stand up to. Most of such decorations, obviously, would serve very little real purpose since they might bewilder rather than define and interpret.⁸⁶

Because of this approach, the detail of ornament denies the concepts of modern interior design as seen in mass and line. Rooms are not only finished or dressed as they would have been at the time but are predominantly right angled, five-sided boxes, adhering to the theory of the fourth wall.

Exterior setting shows no particular environmental primacy. Critical writing specifies no common locales as representative of exterior Naturalism. The

⁸⁶Philippi, p. 165.

biomorphic setting is not as completely convincing as the interior setting. Conventional usage in such things as foliage borders of a two-dimensional nature is seen but the biomorphic setting does utilize "real trees," "foliage," and "dirt" in achieving texture and color. In this sense it is as successful as interior settings which would utilize solid walls with plaster and paint.

Exterior architectonic settings face the same overhead masking problem as biomorphic exteriors. They, like biomorphic exteriors, utilized cycloramas or sky drops. They, like interiors and biomorphic exteriors, exhibited a plethora of detail. They successfully masked the wings and lower part of the sky by using a loose-three-sided "U" shape as a floor plan. This "U" was open to the audience and its three sides were seen as three walls or three buildings framing the sides and rear of the stage.

Light in naturalistic setting was either motivated or motivating. Light always came from a reasonable source or from a visible source and color was achieved, when necessary, through the new color media.

In summary, naturalistic theatre was essentially a style that lacked "point" or "focus." It had become,

"for the first time in its history, emphatically a visual, rather than an auditory art."⁸⁷ It so lacked focus that René Fulop-Miller felt compelled to write:

. . . It would be wiser to forego such elaborate imitation and employ only such surroundings as do not distract the attention of the public from the actor. Naturalism has degraded the stage--it has banished everything that is truly of the theatre, and destroyed the whole scenic scheme on which its existence depends.⁸⁸

Realism is an eclectic style that developed from Naturalism as well as from the movement of Symbolism and Selective Realism.

Although realism in the theatre has its roots in naturalism, realism stresses the element of selectivity and we get not a photographer's view but a clean cut, sharpened version with the unnecessary details removed. Realism does not imply austerity nor severity but rather suggests a tight, well-knit quality which reinforces the stage picture but does not intrude in any manner. As opposed to naturalism, realism deals with needed essentials, whether decorative or atmospheric. While realistic scenery must never look bare, the selectivity that has been employed may be forthright rather than sly and evasive.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Clayton Hamilton, "The Drama of Illusion," The Bookman, XXXIV (December, 1911), p. 360.

⁸⁸ René Fulop-Miller and Joseph Gregor, The Russian Theatre, trans. by Paul England (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1930), p. 53.

⁸⁹ Philippi, pp. 167-168.

A carefully selective use of mass and line is used in Realism to effect a design that can provide focus on the actor. No particular type of locale in interior setting is called for. If Naturalism had to seek the nineteenth century environment, Realism can give the impression of a particular locale in any age. Interior settings and architectonic exteriors are commonly used while biomorphic exteriors seem to be avoided.

As in Naturalism, color and texture are treated with considerable accuracy although color "fades to gray" at the top of the walls, thus, creating greater focus on the playing area. Similarly, light is used to create focus with a selective use of motivated and motivating lights, as well as the use of color media used with motivated lights.

In conclusion, through the utilization of a selective approach to detail, Realism does not distract from the actor. "Nothing is used on stage without some definite purpose."⁹⁰

⁹⁰Corson, "A Garland of Isms," p. 729.

Technique of Naturalism

The naturalistic theatre continued to use the stage house of the Romantic theatre. It would not be until the advent of "the New Stagecraft" that the stage-house would be modified by twentieth century technological advances as well as by such theatrical innovation as "the concrete and plaster cyclorama and sky dome."⁹¹

The forestage shrank to a narrow apron and the rake disappeared from the stage. All that appeared truly new was that in the few theatres that were built for Naturalism, "in order that the illusion might be greater for all, auditoriums were made smaller and more rectangular in shape."⁹² Romanticism was stripped from the stage by Naturalism. The structures and machinery of the romantic theatre were retained, but the stage remained the same.

The narrowed and rectangular auditorium that was occasionally used was highly desirable for the treatment of Naturalism's rooms. An auditorium that was no wider than the proscenium opening could adequately house the right-angled walls of "box" sets and satisfy sight lines.

⁹¹Fuerst and Hume, p. 87. ⁹²Hewitt, p. 11.

Of greater significance was the change in scenic construction. To achieve the plasticity of environment and the reality of detail, ornament, and texture, Naturalism:

. . . Made a solid wall to look like a solid wall, a stairway to seem to be made of hard wood, the furniture believable, and the curtains, doors, and properties tolerable in taste and efficient in the creation of illusion. Indeed, these producers often represented a hard wood stairway by a hardwood stairway, and went to much pain and expense to make their stage settings "like real life."⁹³

The "hardwood" is really a major key to naturalistic technique for whenever the real object could be used, it was. Similarly, if the real object could not be found, a duplicate was made. Vardac supports this view. In describing the shallowness of American Naturalism, he cites Belasco's 1901 production of DuBarry.

The lavish and accurate reproduction of costumes and properties . . . , defies description. Nothing was artificial, everything was reproduced as if from a plaster cast of the original. Embroidered costumes were not simulated with printed or stamped patterns, but showed the depth of genuine needlework with an amazing thoroughness of detail. Mirrors, draperies, statues, all sorts of boudoir accessories were actually re-created.⁹⁴

⁹³ Moderwell, p. 21.

⁹⁴ Vardac, pp. 115-116.

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The dripping carcass of beef that Antoine hung on his stage is well known as are the tales of the Moscow Art Theatre in "buying up genuine period costumes and properties."⁹⁵ What all these examples suggest is that the duplication of nature is the technique of Naturalism and that any technological developments in the theatre were made to assist the style, rather than the style capitalizing on technological developments.

Technique of Realism

The realistic stage came into its full development as "The New Stagecraft" appeared. Its technique was evolved in part by the technological innovations motivated by "The New Stagecraft." Dome cycloramas, high cycloramas, "sliding, sinking or revolving stages" all contributed to its technique.⁹⁶ Basically, however, the theatre remained a proscenium house. It was somewhat more complex with more of the mechanical devices cited and it was dependant on electric power but the real estate on which

⁹⁵Gorelik, p. 144.

⁹⁶Fuerst and Hume, p. 87.

professional theatres were located was expensive. Because of this they provided little more than a bare stage, a rigged loft, and barely adequate wings and storage space. The Broadway theatre in particular illustrates this. The designer has been forced to bring in most of the mechanical equipment he needs in order to achieve his technical goals.

In scenic practice, Realism is an eclectic mixture of the traditional techniques coupled with naturalistic techniques.

Skillfully painted door panels surrounded by three-dimensional trim may, if properly lighted, present quite a realistic effect. Similarly, a painted cornice, at least on the center wall, will decrease the over-all weight of the scenery, and, even though the audience realizes that the cornice is painted, the results can be considered as realistic.⁹⁷

What Realism selects, it selects with care. Nothing which is obviously false is used. What is used is correct.

The major changes in realistic technique have come about since 1902, the year Mariano Fortuny is credited with developing a new lighting system.

The Fortuny system, as it was called, used single powerful lights thrown on bands of silk in boxes. There were three bands each in a

⁹⁷ Philippi, p. 167.

primary color. The light reflected from two of these was of a mixed hue, while three in even balance produced white light.⁹⁸

The Fortuny system exemplifies the theorization and experimentation that has swept the theatre in this century. Cheney writes that prior to World War I, "every progressive theatre wanted a Fortuny system."⁹⁹ By the mid-twenties spotlights and floodlights were in common use. Further there were "color filters of glass or gelatine."¹⁰⁰ "Footlights, disappeared and even borderlights were used sparingly."¹⁰¹ By 1928, Cheney wrote that "the 3000-watt lamp has been developed for exceptional use, and one even hears rumors of a 5000-watt bulb."¹⁰²

By the mid-thirties the auto-transformer dimmer was being used. The first successful electronic system--the thyatron tube--was used in 1947."¹⁰³ Since that date

⁹⁸ MacGowan and Melnitz, p. 440.

⁹⁹ Cheney, Stage Decoration, p. 67.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁰¹ Hewitt, p. 11.

¹⁰² Cheney, Stage Decoration, p. 67.

¹⁰³ Parker and Smith, p. 314.

the so-called solid state devices "such as the silicon-controlled rectifier have been developed and put into use."¹⁰⁴

The implication seen in these technological developments is that the process of lighting became not only more refined in the practice of "The New Stagecraft" but in the practice of Realism. More could be achieved in providing focus, in gaining compositional values, mood, and plausibility, all of which were Realism's lighting goals.

Pointillism in color also became a technique. No matter how it was applied, it could effect color in such a way that

under blue light, only the blue in the surface definitely comes to life, under red light only red, and so on. Beyond the possibility of bringing out or killing certain colors in the surface the method brings . . . freshness of color, an atmospheric liveliness, vibrations of light.¹⁰⁵

Technique was not the all-important factor in Realism that it was in Naturalism. The realistic designer was concerned with providing an environment which would

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Cheney, Stage Decoration, p. 115.

not detract from the actor but which would supplement him.
As such, technique remained nothing more than a means to
this end rather than an end in itself.

Summary: Criteria for Identification
of the Scenic Style of Naturalism

Form Elements and Their
Composition

Mass (and space) and Line

Naturalistic design created the perfect reproduction of the environments of its time in effecting interior settings. Its settings are five-sided box sets and the fourth wall convention is utilized.

Exterior settings are seen as architectonic or biomorphic. The architectonic setting uses a "U" shaped ground plan open to the audience. The three sides of the "U" are seen as three walls or three buildings with much applied detail. The biomorphic setting uses built-up rocks, real trees, vegetation, and real dirt but it also occasionally utilizes painted foliage borders as well. In this respect it appears similar to the pictorial reality of Romanticism.

The commonality seen in the three types of setting is that no perspective or vanishing point is used to achieve focus and all are overcrowded with forms, thereby increasing a denial of focus.

Color

Color as it would be in real life. It utilizes real paint and wallpaper, or actual trees, vegetation, and dirt.

Texture

Texture is actual, whether it is seen as the plaster on walls, the bark of real trees, or dirt.

Light

Light is motivated or motivating. Motivating light in interior settings comes from the standard fixtures of the environment portrayed. Motivating light is used with color media to achieve a reality of color. No light or shadows are painted on the set but little evidence exists that light was utilized to effect composition.

Ornament is the key to Naturalism for it is so dominant that naturalistic settings appear as repositories

for bric-a-brac and decorative items. This holds true in both interior and architectonic settings. Because Naturalism is chronologically associated with Victorianism this use of ornament is apparent. Because of the amount of detail, it denies focus.

Composition

Because Naturalism is coupled with Victorian use of detail, composition in a modern aesthetic sense does not exist. Mass and line are seen as the exact duplication of rooms, architectonic settings, or biomorphic exteriors. All use real objects; the color is real; the texture is real; the light is as naturalistic as the instruments of motivated and motivating light can make it. Ornament carries the major weight of the elements. As such, the syntax of composition in Naturalism appears to be influenced more by technique than by design. Because of this Naturalism denies actor focus.

Technique

The naturalistic stage house was basically that of the Romantic stage house. However, there were some

modifications. The apron was almost eliminated and the raked stage disappeared. Occasionally narrow, rectangular auditoriums were built for the new style.

Real materials and objects, or exact reproductions, were used whenever possible in creating the illusion of real rooms or real exteriors. The painted drop was abandoned for the sky cyclorama or dome cyclorama. Real trees, dirt, and water were used in exteriors. Utilizing the developments in gas and, especially, electricity, as well as the color media of the time, Naturalism appears to have attempted thorough illumination of the stage while placing real motivating lights on the stage.

Summary: Criteria for Identification of the Scenic Style of Realism

Form Elements and Their Composition

Mass (and space) and Line

Mass and line are seen in selectively treated interiors and architectonic exteriors as achieving strong actor focus. Realism avoids biomorphic exteriors.

Interiors utilize floor plans with open angles rather than right angles.

Color

Color is used selectively to create focus. While the color is true in the sense of verisimilitude, as seen in the areas of focus, in interior settings it grays out toward the tops of walls in order to keep the eye on the acting area.

Texture

Texture is used in the three-dimensional sense when real objects are utilized but more often it tends to adopt the textural methods developed from pointillism. This enables it not only to create a simulated texture but to give the alternative of color change when colored light is employed. Further, it derives liveliness from the pointillist approach.

Light

Light is used to create focus. The graying-out process of color is enhanced by high intensity on the playing area and little intensity on the setting itself. Motivated and motivating light is used on the stage and

color becomes extremely significant, for with the technology of "The New Stagecraft," color media reached a high point of development. Further, the spotlight allows mass and space to be enriched by the colored light and shadows that it creates.

Ornament

Ornament deals with essentials. Selectivity allows the designer to let a carefully chosen range of ornament and decor represent completion in the setting. The mind's eye fills in detail. Thereby, ornament enhances focus.

Composition

Selectivity in mass and line provides good focus in realistic treatment of any environment from any age or period. As a style of focus on the actor, this is borne out by the elements of color, texture, light, and ornament as well as by mass and line.

Color grays out at the top of walls, thus, creating focus. Light is dim at the tops of the same walls, thereby enhancing focus. Light also creates focus by illuminating the acting area and creating shadows in less

significant areas. Texture is achieved through pointillist methods to create color vibrancy as well as providing the essentials for light to effect color changes in surfaces. Ornament is carefully selected to create the illusion of proper detail.

Technique

Utilizing techniques developed in "The New Stagecraft," Realism still uses the basic proscenium form of theatre. It also uses the technological advances of mechanical staging, improved lighting equipment, auto-transformers, and electronic dimming. It uses three-dimensional or painted scenery as required--real or simulated objects as required--and it depends upon the new innovations in lighting theory to enhance its settings.

CHAPTER V

SYMBOLISM AND SELECTIVE REALISM

The greatest effect on dramatic Symbolism came about through the work of the symbolist poets, "Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Maeterlinck."¹ Gassner feels that Maeterlinck, influenced by Mallarmé and Verlaine, brought symbolist drama to the point that it was "the fashionable mode of expression in the 1890's."²

Maeterlinck wrote five plays in the symbolist style; The Intruder (1890), The Blind (1891), Pelléas and Mélisande (1893), The Interior (1895), and The Bluebird (1908).

The later plays of Ibsen are considered to be symbolist drama³ as is a play by Gerhardt Hauptmann. In 1896, after an experiment with Symbolism in Hannele (1893) he produced The Sunken Bell.

¹Cheney, The Story of Modern Art, p. 346.

²Gassner, Form and Idea, p. 98.

³John Gassner, Masters of the Drama (3rd ed.; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1954), p. 412.

Contemporary with the poets and playwrights was a symbolist movement in painting. Between the years 1880-1890, men like

Puvis de Chavannes, Gustave Moreau and the more youthful Odilon Redon . . . [practiced] . . . a fastidious withdrawal from naturalism in attempting to uncover imagery adequate for the realm of the soul, and a free use of myth and symbol.⁴

Between 1891 and 1893, members of the Nabis had adopted part of the symbolist aesthetic to theatrical usage and were beginning to utilize it in the design of settings.⁵ Sérusier, Denis, Ibels, Bonnard, Ranson, and Vuillard are all known to have designed scenery for such theatres as the Théâtre d'Art or the Théâtre-Moderne.⁶ In this they predated the work of Adolphe Appia. Appia did not write La Mise en Scène au Drame Wagnerien until 1895.

Although these occurrences seem to outline the beginnings of the symbolist movement, one other thing had occurred. Half a century earlier, Richard Wagner propounded the symbolist esthetic and it was Wagner "who

⁴Cheney, The Story of Modern Art, p. 346.

⁵Thompson, p. 21.

⁶Ibid., pp. 21-23.

surmised that the unified productions of the Meiningen troupe were but a first step toward an almost disembodied musical art of production."⁷

At the same time that Symbolism was developing, another contemporaneous movement was growing in painting. Called Synthetism, it was

a mode of painting not clearly defined by its adherents or advocates, but in general tending toward simplification, subordination of detail, and in the words of Maurice Denis, "the sub-mission of each picture to one dominant rhythm."⁸

Essentially, the movement had begun with Gauguin and was associated with the Pont-Avon group.⁹ The Symbolists absorbed Gauguin's theories.

Paul Serusier, cited above as one of the group introducing Symbolism to scene design, was influenced by Gauguin as early as 1888. In synthetism were seen some of the first elements of what the theatre would call Selective Realism. Selective Realism, however, had another and greater motivating force. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a new architectural concept evolved.

⁷Gorelik, pp. 188-189.

⁸Cheney, The Story of Modern Art, p. 244.

⁹Ibid., p. 245.

Thompson feels that the most original of the architects connected with this movement which is called Rationalism was Charles Nicholas Ledoux. Discussing Ledoux, he states:

Repeatedly the cube, rectangle, cylinder, sphere and even the pyramid comprise the basic forms of his work. Wall surfaces are kept severely clean of ornament to almost the point of mania. Mouldings and frames around openings are absent. Windows appear simply as sharply-cut squares in the unbroken expanse of wall.¹⁰

Examples of the rationalist movement were found in the work of the German architect, Friederich Gilly (1772-1800), as well as in the work of two English architects, John Sloane (1753-1837) and J. M. Gandy (1771-1843). It was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century that the movement had a theatrical impact. It came about through the efforts of the Vienna Secessionists of 1897 who had taken Otto Wagner's book on modern architecture as the textbook for the new movement. At first the group developed the Austrian version of Art Nouveau and later on led the way from linear decoration toward the more architectural though equally graceful style of the Wiener Werkstätte.¹¹

¹⁰Thompson, p. 56.

¹¹Nicholaus Pevsner, Pioneers of Modern Design (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1949), p. 119.

What the Vienna Secessionists attempted in this later phase was the formulation of a Neo-Rational doctrine. Two members of the original group, Alfred Roller and Josef Hoffmann, eventually turned to scene design and helped develop an architectural mode of design which took simplicity as its keynote. In 1898, the Secessionists "came to popular attention with their display at the Jubilee Arts and Crafts Exhibition in Vienna."¹² By 1902, Max Krause designed what is probably the first Neo-rationalist influenced setting for a production of Salome. By 1907, Edward Gordon Craig showed the influence of Neo-Rationalism in his work. Similarly, the work of Adolphe Appia showed the influence of Neo-Rationalism in the early part of the century and by 1915, perhaps the best known scene design in American theatre had been accomplished. Neo-Rationalism had come to American theatre in Robert Edmond Jones' design for Granville Barker's production of The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife. The influence of neo-rational architecture on scene design was now felt throughout the Western World, as was the influence of art and theatrical Symbolism. Synthetism, too, had made its

¹²Ibid., p. 64.

impact on painting and the theatre. The three movements entwined into the theatrical continuum of Symbolism and Selective Realism--a continuum which served as the spine of The New Stagecraft.

Motivations

The philosophies underlying the dramatic style of Symbolism are those of Mallarmé and Maeterlinck. Mallarmé and the other symbolist poets denied the Naturalistic concept of observation and rational thought processes in achieving what is best described as ultimate truth. Truth could be grasped "only through intuition."¹³ Mallarmé felt that the world was divided into a material system which symbolized a spiritual system that was idealogical, permanent, abstract, and "inaccessible to the continual flux of matter."¹⁴

The symbolists wished to express the "soul."
"Soul" was the source of true knowledge and "art was to

¹³ Brockett, p. 287.

¹⁴ Hayes Cooperman, The Aesthetics of Stephene Mallarmé (New York: The Koffern Press, 1933), p. 18.

create its own world of self-containing unity."¹⁵ Mallarmé's definition of Symbolism is enlightening as to his own view of Symbolism.

To name an object means to surpress three parts of the enjoyment of a poem, an enjoyment which consists in gradually guessing its meaning. To suggest it, that is its dream-like function. The perfect unfolding of the mystery constitutes the symbol.¹⁶

It was suggestion that the symbolist writer sought.

The symbol could

not state any realities, subjective or objective . . . , it was founded upon exaggerated memories, registered and expressed by the artists, who did not portray them, but implied them. In this wise, the symbols had a universal aspect, . . .¹⁷

If suggestion and thereby the symbol were the goals of the style in its communication of reality, it was the use of a poetic language which could achieve these goals. Mallarmé felt that "since music was the art that could express everything through suggestion, . . . it was the aim of poetry to reach the realm of music."¹⁸ By using symbols

¹⁵Thompson, p. 13.

¹⁶Joyce Michell, Symbolism in Music and Poetry (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), p. 30.

¹⁷Cooperman, pp. 10-11.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 103.

in lieu of words, the symbolists would hopefully achieve the indefinite quality of music and so suggest separate meanings to separate people.

The Symbolists felt that the arts could be unified in theatrical production.¹⁹ Richard Wagner had originally stated this philosophy.

. . . Drama was to be created by the spontaneous blending of the art-forces. The task of the drama was to depict real actions, render them intelligible to the general public by a supreme emotional motivation; this emotional understanding could best be attained through a perfected union of the arts.²⁰

Wagner envisioned the drama to be "the end of all expression, an inner significance, and an outward spectacle condensed and unified."²¹

Mallarmé, on the other hand, felt that theatre was "the poetry of the masses,"²² and as such it appealed more directly to the audience's senses than could his own poetry which appealed more abstractly.²³

¹⁹ May Daniels, The French Theatre of the Unspoken (Edinburgh: University Press, 1953), p. 23.

²⁰ Cooperman, p. 90.

²¹ Ibid., p. 95.

²² Ibid., p. 105.

²³ Ibid.

Maurice Maeterlinck, perhaps the most significant of the symbolist playwrights, postulates the two theories of a static drama and a dialogue of silence. The concept of static drama centered on the view that the tragedy found in everyday life was of a higher consequence than the tragedy of high adventure in that it was more real. As such it was so internalized that it was "almost completely without external movement."²⁴ He envisioned such lack of action, either physical or psychological, in the static drama, that the audience would turn inward to a contemplative examination of "the atmosphere of the soul."²⁵

The concept of a dialogue of silence held that in moments of silence, souls often whispered "a secret word to each other."²⁶ It occurred in real life and therefore should occur in drama in order to reflect reality. Silence had a proper role to play on stage. Speech could not always convey inner feelings and thoughts. Only silence could.

²⁴Gassner, Masters of the Drama, p. 413.

²⁵Maurice Maeterlinck, "The Tragic in Daily Life," Playwrights on Playwrighting, ed. by Toby Cole (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 34.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 33-34.

In painting, the symbolist aesthetic held that an idea gives rise to a symbol. The significant goal is to express the idea through a symbol capable of extending meaning beyond a surface reality. In an 1891 manifesto, the art critic Albert Aurier wrote that the new art was to be:

1. Ideological, because the sole ideal is the expression of the idea;
2. Symbolistic, because it expresses this idea through forms;
3. Synthetic, because it presents these forms, these symbols, in such a way that they can be generally understood;
4. Subjective, because the object presented is considered merely an object, but as the symbol of an idea suggested by the subject
²⁷

To achieve these goals, painting could not be limited to the small canvas of the easel painting. Art had to expand. It had to cover great masses of walls--as had the arts of other civilizations--with the symbolist's dreams, thoughts, and ideas.²⁸ Maurice Denis, a symbolist painter, expressed the objective of the artist in the following way:

²⁷ John Rewald, Pierre Bonnard (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1948), p. 19.

²⁸ Thompson, p. 16.

. . . We stated that the emotions or states of mind induced by any sight were accompanied in the imagination of the artist by plastic signs or equivalents capable of reproducing these emotions or states of mind without any need to produce a copy of what had originally been seen; that to each state of our sensibility there must correspond an objective harmony capable of translating it.²⁹

The symbolist painter worked against the background of Impressionism with its concern for reflected light, rather than for solid forms, but the symbolist painter shared more views with the literary symbolists than he did with his impressionist contemporaries. If the literary symbolists placed a strong emphasis on "mood and suggestion, rather than elucidation,"³⁰ this was the goal of the symbolist painters as well. In this they opposed the impressionist whose objective was to capture a transitory visual reality.

The philosophy of Neo-Rationalism was best witnessed in the work of the Austrian architect, Otto Wagner. His influence in creating monuments of a new form can be seen in his 1894 design of the Karlsplatz station in Vienna. It appears as plain surfaces which take on a

²⁹ Lionello Venturi, Impressionists and Symbolists (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 175.

³⁰ Thompson, p. 17.

dignity and monumentality that is startling, considering the architecture of the previous century.³¹ Wagner felt that "our starting point for artistic creation is to be found only in modern life."³² "Modern life" meant science, but equally important, it meant that the artist had to break away from the forms of the past and the only way to deny past forms as seen in "classicism" or "reality" was in "a new will to abstraction."³³ To achieve this abstraction, it was necessary for architecture to become a living force. The stylistic endeavors of the 19th century had to be replaced by an architecture which had the new techniques and materials of the oncoming century at its disposal.

Thus it was that Wagner and the Vienna Secessionists led the way in Austria and Germany toward a return to Rationalism in architecture. Wagner's influence was seen in the work of "Richardson and Sullivan in the

³¹ Siegfried Giedion, Space Time, and Architecture (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1949), Pl. 136.

³² Ibid., p. 252.

³³ Herbert A. Read, A Concise History of Modern Painting (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1959), p. 25.

United States, Vorsey and Lutzens in England . . . and . . . Mackintosh in Scotland."³⁴

It is Appia and Craig, however, who most directly effect the theatre with their symbolist and neo-rationalist inspired philosophies. Both men were dedicated to what would develop as the organic theory of production and both men were designers. Gassner stresses the significance of the production influence:

The best and lasting effect of symbolism, and not only on the non-realistic but on the realistic theatre of all gradations, came from the efforts of scene designers and stage directors.³⁵

The philosophy of the intertwined styles of Symbolism and Selective Realism in their maturity is examined in Kenneth MacGowan's 1921 work, The Theatre of Tomorrow. MacGowan credits the work of Appia, Craig, William Poel, Henry Wilson, and Max Reinhardt with initiating and disseminating the philosophy of the styles. He credits the producers Georg Fuchs and Paul Schlenther; the artist-directors Carl Hagemann and Max Martersteig; the designers Ernst Stern, Julius Klein, Alfred Roller, Heinrich Leffler,

³⁴Thompson, p. 60.

³⁵John Gassner, ed., A Treasury of the Theatre: From Henrik Ibsen to Arthur Muller, rev. ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), p. 259.

Willy Wirk, Ludwig von Hofmann, Ludwig Sievert, Ottomar Starke, Karl Walser, Fritz Erler, Carl Czeschka, Emil Orlik, and Adolf Linnebach, in motivating its development in Europe. He includes Rivière, Fort, Lugné-Poë and Jacque Copeau as particularly involved in developing the theory and technique in France.³⁶

The aesthetic that they developed, both in practice and publications, he describes as setting

itself to visualize the atmosphere of a play. Its artists aim to make in the setting called for by the text, an emotional envelope appropriate to the dramatic mood of the author, a visualization in color, line and light of the dominant emotions pictured by the actors.³⁷

In the two decades since the beginning of the century, the related styles of Symbolism in drama and painting, of Neo-Rationalism in architecture, and Synthetism in painting had developed into the new styles of theatrical Symbolism and Selective Realism. Echoes of the original motivations in the related styles were now fused into an artistic means of "simplification, suggestion, and synthesis."³⁸ Macgowan describes simplification as

³⁶ Kenneth MacGowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow (New York: Boni and Liveright, Inc., 1921), pp. 16-19.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 31.

the test of almost all great art. Simplification of effect always; simplification of means generally. On the stage, simplification of both effect and means are essential, because the scenery is not the only thing to be seen. Stage architecture is not architecture alone, or stage picture merely stage picture. The setting is the background of the actor. And it is essential that he shall properly set off by his background and properly fused in it. He must mean more because of the setting, not less On the stage we must have simplification for arts sake. But we must have it even more for the sake of the actor--and therefore of the play.³⁹

Naturalism had an environmental reality but it obscured the actor in visual detail. The new styles demanded that the actor be "fused" in the setting and that he become the sole focus.

If the setting was to heighten "the effect of the whole rather than distracting attention from it, . . ."⁴⁰ then the next logical step was suggestion.

Simplify as much as you please; you only make it the more possible to suggest a wealth of spiritual and aesthetic qualities. A simple Saracenic arch can do more than a half dozen to summon the passionate background of Spanish Don Juan On the basis of simplification, the artist can build up by suggestion a

³⁹Ibid., pp. 21-22.

⁴⁰Shelden Cheney, The New Movement in the Theatre (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1914), p. 282.

host of effects that crude and elaborate reproduction would only thrust between the audience and the actor and the play. The artist can suggest either the naturalistic or the abstract, either reality or an idea and an emotion.⁴¹

The approach is open to either simplification or the symbol--either "reality or an idea and an emotion."

Craig was convinced that photographic reality thrust upon the audience was an "inaccurate representation of the outward and visible life--with the divine essence--the spirit--the beauty of life left out."⁴² Symbolism and Selective Realism could both achieve all that photographic reality could not. If Selective Realism was looked at as a separate style, reality would tend to prevail over the idea and the emotion. If Symbolism was the style in use, the idea and the emotion would have greater value.

Macgowan writes:

. . . The dominant quality in modern stage production is synthesis. For modern stage art, in spite of all the easel artists who may care to practice the painting of backdrops and let it go at that, is a complex and rhythmic fusion of setting, lights, actors and play. There must be consistency in each of these, consistency of a single kind or consistency that has the quality

⁴¹ Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, pp. 22-23.

⁴² Edward Gordon Craig, Towards a New Theatre (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1913), p. 89.

of progression in it. And there must be such consistency among them all.⁴³

With synthesis, the organic theory of production is visualized and its dominant philosophy is fusion. All the arts in theatre are fused into one mood expressive of the play.

These, then, were the general motivations of scenic Symbolism and Selective Realism. It is, however, necessary to separate the individual motivations of the two styles. This can be achieved by examining the opposite ends of their continuum. Gorelik holds that at the far end of the continuum, Symbolism goes so far that

by degrees the use of the symbol becomes even more extreme. In the beginning the symbol was discovered as an historic attribute of a locale. Now it begins to dominate the environment arbitrarily, at the will of the designer. The metaphor becomes an entity in itself. The environment exists for the sake of the metaphor.⁴⁴

The symbol can be so overt that it becomes the dominant feature of a setting. As such, actor focus, inherent in "suggestion," can be destroyed. The focus can change from the actor to the symbol itself. It is Gorelik's contention

⁴³ Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, p. 23.

⁴⁴ Gorelik, p. 200.

that this overuse of the symbol did occur and it occurred because environment was "reduced to a symbol. Environment is no longer brought to the style; it merely furnishes scenery elements, such as arches and levels, for a production."⁴⁵

Although Symbolism, on the far end of the continuum, goes to the extreme where focus can be lost through an intrusive symbol, this does not seem to be the case in Selective Realism for Selective Realism lets nothing intrude on actor focus. Friederich and Fraser write that

Simplified, or suggestive, realism is perhaps the most useful and frequently the most artistic type of setting used in the theatre. The selection is far more strict than in realism, cutting down to the barest possible minimum of realistic details to create the impression of the whole locale. Thus a two-foot thick arch, apparently cut from solid rock with a barred door is enough to make us believe that we are in the prison dungeon of Mary of Scotland and under the Tower of London. All the rest of the stage is murky darkness, undistinguishable and therefore not obtrusive to our eye or important to our consideration of the scene.⁴⁶

This is the ideal of Selective Realism.

Central to the "motivation" of the intertwined styles are "simplification, suggestion, and synthesis."

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Friederich and Fraser, p. 11.

Sometimes the symbol is somewhat more overt. Sometimes, considerable realistic detail may be seen. When the former occurs, the setting is obviously symbolic. When the latter occurs, the setting is that of Selective Realism. But, in the quantitative analysis of practice, the styles are seen as the same.

Form Elements and Composition

Mass (and space and Line)

Corson writes:

. . . light and shade (or mass, if you want to consider it from that point of view) are somewhat more important than line.⁴⁷

This viewpoint is easily understood when the two philosophies of the intertwined styles are considered. Gorelik expresses the first when he writes:

The stage area cannot be a mere collection of shapes in which the actor knocks around. The spatial functions of the setting must be understood and related to his movements. This relationship cannot be fully realized so long as the stage is viewed as a picture. It becomes possible only when the stage is seen in terms

⁴⁷Corson, "Styles of Scene Design," p. 7.

of sculpture or architecture. Hence the symbolists came forward with the new principle of the . . . shaped (sculptural or architectonic) structure.⁴⁸

The "sculptural or architectonic" theory of setting was greatly influenced by Adolphe Appia. Appia stresses, however, the significance of light as the second philosophy:

Sculpture is plastic; living in space, it therefore participates in living light. Like painting, it can suggest the context of chosen movements, it is immobilizing, though it exists and acts as a material reality rather than a fictitious symbol.

Architecture is the art of creating fixed and circumscribed spaces, planned as a background for the presence and the movements of the living body. It expresses this purpose by its height, depth, and weight, and by the effect of its solidity. It is a realistic art; in architecture, the use of fictions is a luxury. By definition, it embraces space; in its practical applications, it embraces time as well. It is consequently the most richly endowed of all the fine arts.⁴⁹

The search for the architectural setting was found in Neo-rational architecture. An example of neo-rationalist design is seen in Carl Czeschka's 1908 setting

⁴⁸Gorelik, p. 191.

⁴⁹Adolphe Appia, The Work of Living Art, trans. by H. D. Albright, ed. by Barnard Hewitt (Coral Gables: The University of Miami Press, 1960), pp. 14-15.

for King Lear at the Deutsches Theatre.⁵⁰ A large flat wall runs across the back of the stage. Four pier supports break the surface of the wall. Four windows are cut into the upper wall and a large door is cut at the bottom of the wall. Below the door are five steps leading down to the stage floor. The setting is well illuminated and its detail or lack of detail is easily seen. In most settings of the intertwined styles, such illumination is not used. The setting exemplifies Selective Realism but at the same time it is atypical because both Selective Realism and Symbolism rely, not on light illuminating their mass, but rather the reverse. The lack of illumination creates void instead. Corson feels that the styles black out the non-essentials "as a simple and effective way of eliminating them."⁵¹ Similarly, that which needs strengthening is "emphasized with light."⁵² The emphasis is placed on what Appia called "the living and plastic body."⁵³

⁵⁰Fuerst and Hume, Pl. 17.

⁵¹Corson, "Styles of Scene Design," p. 7.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Appia, p. 9.

Such emphasis is seen in a number of designs. In the cathedral scene from *Faust*, as designed in 1912 by Ernst Roller for a Reinhardt production, two gigantic columns tower against a black void.⁵⁴ The actors cluster below in a pool of light. In Jessner's production of *Othello*, another column is seen.⁵⁵ It is smaller than Roller's. It looms out of a circular, stepped platform. On it stand actors. They and the lower section of the column are given focus by light.

In Robert Edmond Jones' design for *The Seven Princesses*, ten poles soar upward in a blackend void.⁵⁶ They are attached to a semicircular stair unit. Near the tops of the poles and between them are eight Gothic arches, no thicker than the poles. As the poles climb upward, the light decreases on them. They all but fade into the darkness above. Thus focus is increased in the acting area below.

The representations of great mass in the intertwined styles are numerous. Basically, what is seen is

⁵⁴ Macgowan and Jones, p. 108.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 130.

⁵⁶ Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, p. 24.

that mass is ordinarily dominant in this phase of the styles. Only rarely is the use of line seen as a major factor in design.

Little variation exists between interior settings and exterior settings of either a biomorphic or architectonic nature. This lack of variation is observed in Appia's designs for Parsifal executed in 1896. In the first he shows an exterior of a biomorphic nature. Dark columns of draperies stretched from the floor to points above the top of the picture frame represent trees. A slightly lighter, hill-like mass is seen behind the trees and beyond this mass is a hazy sky.⁵⁷ In an architectonic exterior for the same production he shows two extremely darkened masses well down stage and at each side of the proscenium. A curved stone structure into which stairs have been cut circles behind these foreground masses. Behind the structure is a great rectangular tower with a door cut into it. Beyond this tower is a hazy sky.⁵⁸

In an interior for King Lear, designed in 1926, Appia utilizes the same approach.⁵⁹ In the foreground,

⁵⁷Altman, and others, Pl. 308.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., Pl. 311.

four steps cut in stone are seen. Above them a short flight of steps moves up-left and off-left to a landing. Then broken steps move up from the landing up right to what appears to be an opening from which light emanates. The rear wall and the side walls are made of massive flattened stones. Great piers jut out from these walls. Again foreground and hazed upstage light is used.

These examples illustrate architectonic mass in its most simplified use but simplification has other variations as well. Two excellent examples are seen in Lee Simonson's design for As You Like It.⁶⁰ Simonson designed a permanent portal with a simple emblem repeated on both sides of the portal. Below the emblems are archways with draperies hung within them. Behind the portal is a platform with two steps leading up to it. A great curtain hangs behind the portal across the platform. When the curtain is raised a dark rounded tent is seen against a hazy sky.⁶¹ The tent has a peaked roof with a small flag at its top. The tent speaks of an age and a place but the specific detail in the scene is provided by the

⁶⁰ Cheney, Stage Decoration, Pl. 87.

⁶¹ Ibid.

costumes of the actors and the small pennants carried by supernumeraries. When the curtain is lowered, the emblems on the portal establish time and place.

One more type of simplification needs to be illustrated. It is seen in Jones' design of The Devil's Garden.⁶² A long colorless room is shown. It has no chair rail, no picture moulding, and no cornice. Along the floor is seen only a heavy mopboard. At one end of the long room is a door. At this door are seen three chairs and a desk. Above the desk is a grayed-out picture. At the other end of the long room is a single chair. Cheney says that "an accused postal clerk, in the isolated chair, is to be examined by inspectors grouped at the desk--in a room fairly breathing rigidity and lack of human sympathy."⁶³ All the necessary details are there to suggest the place but through selectivity and a utilization of mass and asymmetrical balance within this mass, suggestion approaches the symbol.

In like manner, Linnebach's design for Everyman expresses the period of the play as well as the religious

⁶² Ibid., Pl. 48.

⁶³ Ibid.

atmosphere.⁶⁴ He simplifies the Gothic in showing a platform with three steps leading up to it. On the platform are six massive columns supporting Gothic arches. The columns form a flattened or partial semi-circle. The background is black. Set within the semi-circle of the columns is an elaborately dressed banquet table. All the details of such a table is there. At first glance the table appears realistic, but the rest of the setting denies this. Great mass and void, simplicity in line, and complete focus on the "living and plastic body" illustrate a slightly more literal Selective Realism but a Selective Realism which is, nevertheless, a part of the intertwined styles.

Thus mass and line in Symbolism and Selective Realism follow the continuum from a stage-filling mass to a highly selective use of mass in which historically recognizable motifs are used. Often platforms and steps are utilized. There is always either a void or a hazy sky in the background. The mass always tends to recede into void as it goes up from the acting area, and focus always is achieved through light in the acting area.

⁶⁴ Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, p. 22.

Color

In an editorial from The Nation in 1911, an attack was made on the new use of color in the theatre. It is most appropriate in describing Symbolism and Selective Realism's approach to color for the author writes that it would never have occurred to Samuel Phelps "to set a blood-red or sea-green chamber for the murder of Desdemona."⁶⁵ Symbolism and Selective Realism had adapted the psychology of color to their own uses. They used color in two particular ways. First they boldly used primaries and secondaries. Second they attempted simplification through color.

In the first approach, color was achieved as much through light as through paint. In Roller's cathedral scene from Faust, crimson light illuminates the actors and the two great pillars.⁶⁶ Similarly, in a production of Richard III, Jessner uses a setting with walls of gray but within the framework of gray walls are a set of high steps which are illuminated in scarlet as are the figures which

⁶⁵ The Nation, XCII (March 3, 1911), p. 30.

⁶⁶ Macgowan and Jones, p. 108.

stand upon them.⁶⁷ Behind the figures and steps is a strip of blood red sky.

In the second approach, the traditional art of the scene painter is used, but with a new freedom. Macgowan maintains that the painter still paints perspectives on the backdrops:

. . . But he does not try to use them to deceive. He exaggerates to the point where they are at least frank and honest conventions, not pretenses of something else. He flings out walls, rafters, columns and stairs with such sweep and verve that they take on a spiritual life which triumphs over technical limitations.⁶⁸

Gorelik speaks of a production of Romeo and Juliet where there is

the glowing color of blossoms The Franciscan peace of the frescoes of Giotto broods over Lorenzo's cell and garden The hostile families wear strongly contrasting colors: black and gray for the Montague family, yellow for the Capulets; the Prince and his retainers are in red.⁶⁹

Color is used to obtain simplification as well as for psychological effect. Roerich illustrates these tendencies with an unusual drop and wing technique in his design for

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 140.

⁶⁸ Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, p. 70.

⁶⁹ Gorelik, pp. 197-198.

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Prince Igor.⁷⁰ He paints a backdrop with smouldering rusty browns and oranges for his hills, sky, and tents.

Then he places several two-dimensional tents in the same colors as masking devices on each side of the stage. Simplification and an emotional effect are achieved. Friederich and Fraser describe this color method as painting a wall red to represent a brick wall "with an occasional faint suggestion of a brick showing through here and there."⁷¹

Color was achieved by both pigment and light. It was used to achieve simplification but it used the lexicon of the psychology of color to create a spirit of suggestion as well.

Texture

Because Symbolism and Selective Realism were little concerned with representation, little concern was accorded texture. The natural textural qualities of neo-rational buildings are for the most part ignored in the

⁷⁰ Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, p. 72.

⁷¹ Friederich and Fraser, p. 114.

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stage settings of the intertwined styles. It is true, of course, that the pointillist techniques, when used with colored light, could effect "scarlets" or "crimsons" or "sea-greens" but texture appears to have more significance in the intertwined styles when it can be used as part of the design itself. For example, in Jones' design for The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife, he uses an extremely coarse textural effect on his walls.⁷² This textural effect is not that of a natural stone or plaster texture. It is used within a rectangular neo-rational mass, broken only by three internal rectangles. Because of this the design requires more interest and the textural quality provides it.

Light

Of all the elements, light is the key to the intertwined styles for it serves as the unifying factor as well as the means for effecting change in time, in place, and most important--in mood.

It was Appia who foresaw that lighting should be used for a more important purpose than more

⁷² Cheney, Stage Decoration, pl. 54.

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illumination, that it should serve as the element which links together the decoration and the figure of the actor.⁷³

Appia's theories

parallel in theatrical terms the discoveries of the impressionist and neo-impressionist painters as to the importance of vibrating light in establishing the tactile values of forms and projecting them in space.⁷⁴

It is this "vibrating" or ambient light which is found in reality and it can be portrayed on the stage as easily as in life, thus, denying the painted light of the past.

These, then, were the two basic theories and approaches to light. It was living and it was ambient. It unified because it was living yet it had inherent flexibility.

Because little concern is shown for motivated or motivating light, a theatrical use of light is employed. This theatrical use manifests itself in the following ways; "actors are picked out of a void by means of light;"⁷⁵ "the rest of the stage is murky darkness, undistinguishable

⁷³Carl Van Vechten, "Adolphe Appia and Gordon Craig," The Forum, LIV (October, 1915), p. 484.

⁷⁴Lee Simonson, ed., International Exhibit of Theatre Art (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1934), p. 18.

⁷⁵Corson, "A Garland of Isms," p. 730.

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and therefore not obtrusive to our eye or important to our consideration of the scene";⁷⁶ "important elements are emphasized with light";⁷⁷ "light introduced the element of constant change for emphasis--or, more accurately, the possibility for such change";⁷⁸ and mood can be created through "shadowy impressions of light and dark splotches . . . when softly lighted."⁷⁹

Ornament

Ornament in Symbolism is often limited to the individual symbol itself. Simplification has reached a degree where "one candlestick can carry the whole spirit of the baroque La Tosca; one Gothic pillar builds the physical reality and the spiritual force of the church that looks above Marguerite."⁸⁰

In like manner,

⁷⁶ Friederich and Fraser, p. 182.

⁷⁷ Corson, "Styles of Scene Design," p. 5.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.7.

⁷⁹ Friederich and Fraser, p. 182.

⁸⁰ Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, p. 23.

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Macbeth is seen not in scenery suggestive of Medieval Scotland but under three great brooding masks which evoke the supernatural powers the producer feels dominant in the play.⁸¹

Selective Realism can and does use a greater amount of ornamentation. The Linnebach design for Everyman exemplifies this.⁸² The banquet table is completely set with a magnificent cloth, place settings, flowers, and candleabra. Gothic stools are placed carefully about the table. If the Gothic arches speak only of a time, the table speaks of a place and a social and economic class. The mind is not tempted to stray to further contemplation of the setting, once it absorbs the table.

A setting designed for Mme. Sand by Rollo Peters further illustrates this principle.⁸³ An interior setting suggesting a panelled room is completed by a fireplace with two vases on it, and two andirons within it. Beyond this, only three chairs, a chaise, a footstool, and two tables are seen. On one table is a lamp and a telephone.

⁸¹Hewitt, p. 13.

⁸²Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, Pl. opp. p. 22.

⁸³Cheney, Stage Decoration, Pl. 45.

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On the other a candelabra and a box are seen. It is simplicity personified.

These four settings are representative of the difference between Symbolism and Selective Realism but they are not a completely accurate method of distinguishing between the two styles for the symbolist designer can use more ornament if he desires and it is only he that knows when one specific ornament among many represents a specific symbol.

Composition

The compositional goal of the intertwined styles is readily seen in Cheney's definition of the designer's role. He feels that:

The scenery will be simple and unobtrusive. The artist of the theatre will not necessarily paint or construct it himself, but he will design it; and design it in such a way that it will be not a show in itself but merely a background for the action, heightening the effect of the whole rather than distracting attention from it. It will be symbolic and decorative rather than historically accurate, attempting to reproduce "an atmosphere, not a reality."⁸⁴

⁸⁴Cheney, The New Movement . . . , p. 282.

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In this sense, the designer imposes his own personal choice of emphasis on his design "in order to facilitate the audience's interpretation."⁸⁵

In effecting this compositional approach the designer "relates various scenes of a play by his creations of light, color and atmosphere that are in keeping with the psychological states of his characters."⁸⁶

"Light and color," mood or "atmosphere," are used as the means to "fusion" or unification. Mass, rather than line, predominates. Color and light, although they can be seen as separate elements, are ordinarily used together to effect not only mass and the lack of mass as seen in void, but mood, locale and time, as well. Texture is not used in the sense of reality but as a means of decor and in aid to color change. Ornament is used to represent the symbol or to suggest a locale and time. The key phrase in achieving composition is found in the words "simplification, suggestion, and synthesis."

⁸⁵Friederich and Fraser, p. 14.

⁸⁶"Impressionist of the Theatre," The Independent, CXVI (May 8, 1926), p. 545.

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Technique

Chapter IV discussed the technological developments of Realism, Symbolism, and Selective Realism. Developments such as improved spotlights, new mounting positions, color media, sky cloths and cycloramas, and electric and electronic dimming devices were covered. There were, however, certain techniques that seem to be almost the sole property of Symbolism and Selective Realism in their developmental stages. This does not imply that Realism, the eclectic style in technique, does not employ these devices. It is, rather, that these technical innovations were initially those of the intertwined styles.

The new techniques related to the intertwined styles developed because "the scene-painter was replaced by the stage-architect, who in collaboration with stage-mechanicians was enabled to produce a magic world."⁸⁷ Although there was some development of an open, platform stage with its multi-levels, Symbolism and Selective Realism continued the use of the picture frame stage. There

⁸⁷ Richard Samuel and Thomas R. Hinton, Expressionism in German Life, Literature and the Theatre (Cambridge, England: W. Heffner and Sons, Ltd., 1939), p. 66.

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was modification, however. Four different techniques utilizing portals came into being. Each of these portal techniques dealt with the shape and size of the picture frame.

Macgowan feels that in the first of these techniques the goal was to expedite the shifting of settings by dividing the stage opening into three sections. Only one section would be shown at a time. While a scene was being played within one opening, two other settings could be changed behind the curtained sections.⁸⁸

In the second technique, a similar arched portal system allowed changes of full settings behind it. These of course were achieved behind an act curtain. Because this portal visually dominated the stage, a new version of the old perspective setting could be reintroduced to the theatre. The perspective would be little more than a dimly lit groundrow, seen against a cyclorama.⁸⁹

Moderwell discusses the third method of proscenium change. He feels that one of the most effective devices was to change the proscenium shape

⁸⁸ Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, p. 33.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 106.

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either by means of sliding sides . . . , or by a special frame designed for each scene and let down from above. Many scenes on the German stage are played with a stage width of no more than twelve or fifteen feet.⁹⁰

The full stage was hardly necessary for an intimate scene containing only two or three characters. Further, setting expenses could be curtailed by a small setting placed within such a false proscenium.

The fourth technique is seen as a show or production portal which takes as its primary function, the establishment of mood and atmosphere through its design. Thus an inverted "U" form, reminiscent of Romanticism, but frankly treated as an addendum to the proscenium not only alters the picture frame but creates mood.⁹¹

Behind these modified proscenium treatments was the need for the quickly shifted setting. Settings had become much more massive. With the exception of flying systems, the old shifting methods were abandoned and three techniques were developed to handle the three-dimensional platforms, steps and units of the intertwined styles.

⁹⁰ Moderwell, p. 79.

⁹¹ Altman, and others, Pls. 476-477.

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Cheney says that one of these new shifting devices was "a revolving turntable,"⁹² which was first used in Japan. The "turntable" or revolving stage was set flush with the floor, electrically operated, and "was some forty feet or more in diameter."⁹³ The Duetches Theatre turntable could set five complete scenes, thereby providing strong potential for scene changes.⁹⁴

A second type of shifting device was the elevator stage. First attributed to the American producer-director, Steele Mackaye, in 1884,⁹⁵ it was developed in Germany to a degree where:

The main stage, after the end of the scene, is sunk to a distance of ten metres, then the scene, in one or two sections, is slid off to one side, while the new scene, which has been prepared in the meantime at the other side, is slid into place.⁹⁶

Few of these stages were built. They were too expensive.

Similarly, the revolving stage, although more commonly used, was most often employed as a temporary

⁹²Cheney, Stage Direction, p. 56.

⁹³Moderwell, p. 40.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, p. 31.

⁹⁶Moderwell, p. 49.

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revolving unit (commonly called a revolve) built on top of the stage and rotated by hand. Thus it was that the third type of shifting mechanism became the most popular for moving the weight-bearing structures of the styles. This device was the wagon stage.

Moderwell describes the wagon stage as a platform "two metres (a little more than two yards) in width by four in length, placed on noiseless rubber wheels."⁹⁷ Cheney says that these small wagons grew into a "sliding stage as wide as the proscenium."⁹⁸ The wagons were used singly but could be clamped together to form large wagons. Occasionally, an extremely large wagon was constructed which would fill the whole stage and was "capable of being slid either to left or right."⁹⁹ Half of it could be used for performing and half of it for setting the next scene.

These then were the three major devices that were used in shifting. Two other devices were employed as well, although not to the same extent. The periaktoi was reintroduced. Macgowan writes that this ancient Greek

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

⁹⁸ Cheney, Stage Decoration, p. 65.

⁹⁹ Moderwell, p. 103.

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innovation was reused as "a mechanism peculiarly appropriate to an artistic solution of one of the biggest of scenic problems--quick changes of scene."¹⁰⁰ The other device was the jackknife or swinging stage. He says that in 1916, Arthur Hopkins and Joseph Wickes developed one for a production of On Trial.¹⁰¹ Two castored platforms, slightly wider than the proscenium opening, were pegged to the floor on each downstage side of the proscenium opening. Thus either could work like a jackknife blade. The handle of the jackknife is the offstage right or left area of the stage. Opening the blade resembles the unit swinging down into the proscenium opening.

One other technique effected staging of the intertwined styles. Drapery was introduced as scenery rather than as masking. The darkened voids discussed under mass and line were often achieved by the use of black draperies. Similarly, the trees seen in Appia's designs are achieved by draperies.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, p. 28.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁰² Kenneth Macgowan, "The New Path of the Theatre," Theatre Arts, III (January, 1919), p. 86.

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If lighting was the key factor in composition, the same is true in technique for the special technological developments in lighting contributed the most significant changes in the intertwined styles. Cheney says that "on the long trail to simplification there was no other medium so responsive as light."¹⁰³

In addition to the focality that light could achieve with the new developments in spotlights and the color changes brought about through the developments in color media, equipment was introduced or improved to "let the mood of the lights vary with the mood of the music or action."¹⁰⁴ Moderwell describes one of the new innovations as "clouds, or even flying beasts and humans can be figured upon the backdrop by means of a sort of moving picture machine."¹⁰⁵ He describes the early projection devices that were to affect not only the intertwined styles but the styles that followed.

A second technique was reintroduced from the old scrim or semi-transparent drop technique. Atmosphere was

¹⁰³ Cheney, Stage Decoration, p. 65.

¹⁰⁴ Moderwell, p. 72.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

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attained by regisseurs like Ottomar Starke who used "net curtains" with lights.

On the net curtains, from above and behind, are thrown lights of various subdued hues. The nets absorb and diffuse the light, mingling with each other into an atmospheric whole. Under this practice they lose the definiteness which has always spoiled their effect with the footlight system.¹⁰⁶

The semi-transparent drop was illuminated from behind. Often this provided the entire light of the scene.¹⁰⁷ The technique became even more successful with the development of analine dyes and is still commonly used.

A particular technique of the American theatre in effective changes of scene was that of "lighting up one part of the stage while keeping another in darkness."¹⁰⁸ This technique was used to create focus in either the acting area or the playing space of the multi-setting.

Through all the advances in technology, the intertwined styles remained predominantly illusory. They took only half-steps in exploiting their technological knowledge. Gorelik, writing in 1939, summarized:

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow, p. 34.

The Symbolist designers invented the plastic stage, a highly important invention. They emphasized the actor, an indispensable emphasis. But the way was left open for plastic stages that were merely plastic stages; for unified lighting that was merely unified lighting. In the search for perfect technique, the reason for the technique was forgotten.

The Symbolists perfected their form with the help of new stage technologies such as electric lighting. But the symbolist artistic form, which shaped their materials, was never in turn shaped by its materials. It never really acquired that craft wisdom which comes from insight into the structure of the materials used by the craftsman. The Symbolist form (following the example of the Naturalistic one) chose to deny that it employed any technology at all. The stage picture was supposed to be a shining, disembodied thought, "the baseless fabric of a vision" which had reached the stage without benefit of any such agency as a counterweight system.¹⁰⁹

Summary: Criteria for Identification
of the Scenic Styles of Symbolism
and Selective Realism

Form Elements and Their
Composition

Mass (and space) and Line

Mass is a more dominant element than line in the intertwined styles. It is seen in three principle ways.

¹⁰⁹Gorelik, p. 269.

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There is the mass of neo-rational architecture filling the entire picture frame; a large area of mass coupled with void or the mass of a more common architectural order coupled with a hazy sky; and a highly selective use of mass in easily recognizable architectural orders.

Focus is always achieved through a graying out process which leads into void. Steps and platforms are common to the majority of the designs.

Color

Color is achieved through both light and pigment. It seeks simplification and a psychological effect. Primary and secondary colors are commonly used in effecting emotional qualities. Great expanses of color with little painted detail serve the requirements of simplification.

Texture

Texture is primarily a decorative device. Natural texture is not required. The pointillist painting techniques are used primarily for effecting color changes.

Light

Because light is living or ambient, it is capable of achieving three major goals of the intertwined styles.

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Light is "color" and can be used like the living actor himself to create the dimension of time.

Light can create focus. The actor and the acting area can be pointed. The irrelevant can recede into void.

Light is the unifying factor. It can be used to create change in time, in place, in locale, but most significantly--in mood. As such it is highly associated with color in pigment and the pointillist textural methods as it is used to effect color change.

Ornament

It is primarily in ornament that the differences between the selectively realistic and symbolist setting can be seen. When several objects are seen in the playing area or areas of focus, it is probable that these objects are not symbols and that the setting is at the Selective Realism end of the continuum. However, when a single object is seen in a position of strong focus, the setting is much more likely to be symbolist. It is, however, not always possible to analyze the designer's intent. The designer may employ one object among several as a symbol. This private symbol is then obfuscated by the objects it is seen with.

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Composition

The designer wishes to create a setting which will be unobtrusive, yet which will heighten "the effect of the whole." In achieving this, mass dominates line, creating focus in predominantly neo-rational influenced settings, although other architectural orders are used in a simplified way. Similarly, void is commonly used. Texture is a tool of design rather than a representational device. Ornament is the designer's delineator between Symbolism and Selective Realism.

His chief tool is light and thereby, color. He uses light to create focus, mood, and atmosphere. Most important, he uses light as the unifying factor in his design.

Technique

Symbolism and Selective Realism use the proscenium stage primarily, although they are responsible for the vogue of the open, platform stage.

The styles modified the proscenium opening through portal devices which expedited the shifting of scenery. These modifications are seen in the three-sectional

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opening; the arched portal which enabled small perspective scenes to be reintroduced; the extremely small false proscenium for intimate scenes; and the modified proscenium opening, so designed as to effect the mood of the setting.

The intertwined styles developed wagons, elevator stages, and revolving stages or revolves to shift the three-dimensional and weight-bearing structures that they used. They reintroduced periaktoi, developed the jackknife stage, and used draperies as scenery rather than as masking.

Lighting is the major technique of the intertwined styles. Spotlights, color media, and dimming devices were used. Scrim techniques, semi-transparent drop techniques, and projection devices and screens were developed and used. Theatrical lighting came into its own. Motivated and Motivating light was no longer significant. Concealed theatrical effects were primary techniques.

CHAPTER VI

CONSTRUCTIVISM

Of all the major scenic styles developed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, only Constructivism has no literary counterpart.

It began with, had its theory developed by, and in the majority of its early productions, was almost the sole property of one man, Vsevolod Emilievich Meyerhold (1874-?).¹ Born Karl Theodore Kazimir Meyergold into a Lutheran family of German-Jewish extraction, he became a Greek Orthodox convert in 1895 and took the name Meyerhold.²

Meyerhold joined the Moscow Art Theatre at its inception in 1898. Between 1898 and 1902 he played major roles for the theatre before leaving in 1902 to form his

¹Meyerhold disappeared in 1939. After many years, the Soviet government reported his death but when and where he died, as well as the circumstances of his death are still unanswered questions.

²Nikoloi A. Gorchakov, The Theatre in Soviet Russia, Trans.: Ernest J. Simmons (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 53.

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own company. In 1905, at the request of Stanislavsky, he rejoined the organization as a Director of the Moscow Art Theatre Studio. Slonim feels that "this may be considered the first important phase of Meyerhold's directorial work."³

Desirous of producing La Morte de Tintagiles and Schluck und Jau in a manner that would "awaken his own creative fantasy,"⁴ Meyerhold soon came into artistic conflict with Stanislavsky. As a result, neither production was presented to the public and Meyerhold left the Moscow Art Theatre for good. Within the year he produced Ghosts in a provincial town where he removed the act curtain and the proscenium.⁵

In 1907, after a number of experimental productions, he went to Berlin to study the work of Max Reinhardt. He returned to Moscow as a confirmed theatrical conventionalist. Joining with Madame Kommissarzhevski, "he produced Materlinck's Sister Beatrice, Dshubushevski's The Eternal Story, Antonia, and Balagnachik."⁶ Huntly

³Slonim, Russian Theatre, p. 51.

⁴Gorchakov, p. 54.

⁵Huntly Carter, The New Spirit in the Russian Theatre (London: Brentano's Ltd., 1929), p. 56.

⁶Ibid., p. 60.

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Carter feels that at this time he also seems "to have been smitten by the idea of different stage levels."⁷

In 1908 he broke with Kommissarzhevski. "The cause of the break was Kommissarzhevski's complaint that he was trying to turn the theatre into a laboratory. He simply passed from one experiment to another."⁸ Between the years 1908 and 1914 Meyerhold traveled about Russia producing plays. Similarly, he went east again during these years, returning with a greater knowledge of the staging techniques of classical theatre as well as a knowledge of, and a desire to implement, techniques from the *commedia dell' Arte*.⁹ In 1914 he produced Blok's The Unknown, "using a 'construction' for the first time instead of 'decoration.'"¹⁰

In 1918-1919 he became a convert to "bolshevism and the new industrial civilization."¹¹ The production of The Unknown had exploited to a considerable degree the

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p. 61.

⁹ Gorchakov, pp. 64-71.

¹⁰ Carter, p. 65.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 67.

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principles of Constructivism. What remained was to adapt Constructivism to the purposes of the Revolution. The style would fluctuate as time went on but what Meyerhold had achieved by the beginning of the Revolution was a new scenic style and an associated acting style which he called bio-mechanics.

Although theatrical Constructivism did not have a literary counterpart, it did have counterparts in both painting and sculpture. In 1910 Wassily Kandinsky felt that he had the confidence to deliberately "create a non-objective painting."¹² It was Kandinsky's theory that "the artist begins with the realization of his inner needs and he seeks to express these needs in visual symbols."¹³ In a sense, this was part of the theoretical basis of Expressionism, but it effected Constructivism as well. By 1915, Kandinsky had returned to Russia where he served as a major influence until being called to the Bauhaus in 1922.

Two years before Kandinsky's return to Moscow, Kasimir Malevich had founded a movement which he called Suprematism.¹⁴ By 1915 Malevich "started a series of

¹²Read, p. 190.

¹³Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁴Thompson, p. 137.

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perspective drawings of three dimensional shapes. Eventually, these drawings . . . were presented in three dimensional form."¹⁵ Similarly, by 1915, Malevich had acquired two recruits to his movement, Vladimir Tatlin and Alexander Rodchenko. They were later joined by two brothers Antoine Pevsner and Naum Gabo.¹⁶ "The compositions of metal, celluloid and glass were like purist paintings brought alive in three dimensions, precise, smooth, machine-clean."¹⁷ The Suprematist movement is considered to have influenced Constructivism but Herbert Read feels that the developments that "took place in Moscow between 1913 and 1917 remain somewhat obscure--they represented but one other aspect of the general European ferment."¹⁸ Alfred Barr feels that the history of Russian Constructivism is "complex and controversial."¹⁹

What is certain, however, is that from these men came the constructivist movement. Read feels that from the beginning there were

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁷ Cheney, The Story of Modern Art, p. 476.

¹⁸ Read, p. 204.

¹⁹ Alfred H. Barr, Cubism and Abstract Art (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1926), p. 132.

in existence at least three incompatible points of view: the purist point of view represented by Malevich, a constructivist or functional point of view represented by Tatlin and Rodchenko, and Kandinsky's more individualistic point of view.²⁰

It appears then that Constructivism as a fine arts movement had its beginnings in 1913. Barr feels that 1922 saw its "death as a fine art."²¹

Because the Russian artists were gripped in both the ferment of an artistic revolution as well as a socio-political revolution, the discussion of new artistic philosophies was inevitable. It came about in clubs and artistic gatherings. Slonim describes this interchange:

. . . The most popular was The Stray Dog Later, there was the famous Comedians Inn, called the Russian Montmartre, . . . Artists from leading theatres came to these clubs for supper after performances and often improvised entertainment for themselves and their friends. Writers, poets, painters, and stage directors formed the main clientel of the Story Dog [Sic] or Comedians Inn, or other dens, and many original ideas and projects were born in these cellars.²²

After the revolution, Constructivism was used to show the common people that they were face to face with new surroundings of social life and a "new philosophy of

²⁰Read, p. 205.

²¹Barr, p. 133.

²²Slonim, p. 223.

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living, a new law to determine and dominate the functional form of the many and varied machines of which these surroundings should consist."²³

Motivations

The development of Constructivism is to some degree the result of the development of the myriad visual styles in painting and sculpture. It is not, however, the goal of this study to examine the relationship between art and wcenic styles. The significant fact is that between 1915 and 1921 "in Moscow a new and independent movement of art was born."²⁴

In essence, Constructivism is concerned "with Construction and not one-sided perceptions of a natural object."²⁵ The object could be visually penetrated from all sides. An examination of Tatlin's work leads to the conclusion that the eye "x-rays" the form and simultaneously shows both its inside and outside.

²³Carter, p. 68.

²⁴Read, p. 204.

²⁵Thompson, p. 139.

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In this sense, the work of Tatlin and his followers sounds like that of the Constructivism which originated from the doctrines of Kandinsky and Maelvich and which spread throughout Europe through variations developed by Pevsner and Gabo.

There were, however, two divergent theories of Constructivism. The first, that of Tatlin and his followers, saw Constructivism as a form which

insisted on stressing the utilitarian character of artistic order, both in practice and purpose, and declared that the artist, like the engineer, must know his materials and use his skills for society rather than for himself.²⁶

This is a completely ideological viewpoint and as such it was attuned to the Revolution. Tatlin's group went so far as to call for "the abolition of art as an outlived aestheticism, belonging to the culture of capitalistic society."²⁷ With Tatlin's Constructivism, "the stress fell on structuring, on building new forms in new materials appropriate for new social organization."²⁸ To achieve this, the "dividing

²⁶George H. Hamilton, Painting and Sculpture in Europe, 1880-1940 (Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1967), p. 202.

²⁷Read, p. 208.

²⁸Hamilton, Painting and Sculpture, p. 201.

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line between creative works of art and inventive machine design should be broken down."²⁹

As Constructivism broke down the "dividing line," it borrowed from the principles of engineering as well as such materials as "gears, levers, and wheels, trusses and cantilevers, sheet metal, wood, glass, and wire."³⁰

Tatlin's approach to Constructivism was rejected by the second group. Gabo and Pevsner issued a manifesto in 1920 which said that "art has its absolute, independent value and a function to perform in society, whether capitalistic, socialistic, or communistic."³¹ As such Pevsner and Gabo adhered to the viewpoint of Kandinsky and Malevich that

art is primarily a personal rather than a public experience, however universal its eventual application may be, and that the highest results are independent of political or social considerations.³²

Because they moved toward a more purely creative impulse their art survived.³³ Hamilton feels that the

²⁹Cheney, The Story of Modern Art, p. 475.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Read, p. 209.

³²Hamilton, Painting and Sculpture, p. 201.

³³Ibid.

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philosophy of Gabo and Pevsner with their "moral and spiritual overtones . . . , remains after more than forty years a vital factor in contemporary abstract art."³⁴

The form of Constructivism developed by Tatlin and his followers was ideally suited to the theatre of the Revolution because it provided the sort of strength applicable not only to the industrial desires of the Revolution, but a weight-bearing strength suitable to the actor.

The work of Pevsner and Gabo, on the other hand, has an airy quality. It is seen in fine wires and strips of plastic used in delicate compositions.

With Meyerhold's acceptance of the doctrine of socialism, it seems natural that as a theatrical revolutionist he would be chosen to provide a theatre which could educate the people in the principles of socialism. His "October Theatre," was found "not to show a completed art product but much more to make the audience participants in the action. The fluid should not flow only from stage to public, but should also flow in the other direction."³⁵

He felt that the theatre was not only functional and propagandistic, but that it had entertainment values

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Dickinson, p. 6.

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as well. Joseph Macleod suggests that Meyerhold thought that proletarian rule meant proletarian life. This in turn meant that there must be proletarian entertainment in the theatre.³⁶ Therefore, elements from the circus and the music hall could be part of acting. Similarly, the actor had to become an expression of the "mass man." Hallie Flanagan expressed this viewpoint when she wrote:

To spend day after day in Meierhold's [sic] theatre watching rehearsals and productions is to come closer to the truth about communism than one can come through reading many books. For here is a group living, working, thinking together, not individualistically, but for the good of the state.³⁷

Meyerhold felt that in the glorification of the machine, a new technology and a renaissance in science were to be the salvation of his country. Hence it was natural that

erections of wood, and iron, and steel express the spirit of the mechanical age upon which the world has definitely entered. Machines, technology, and action are the outward manifestations of the spirit. He realized that the common fold could be assisted by machines to become healthful, vigorous, and to understand

³⁶ Joseph Macleod, The New Soviet Theatre (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1943), p. 98.

³⁷ Hallie Flanagan, Shifting Scenes of the Modern European Theatre (New York: Conrad-McCann, Inc., 1928), p. 114.

and enjoy much of the liberation that had come to them. And he concluded that these new objects arising out of the new conception of social life were the very things to influence human beings. Hence his pre-occupation with machines and industrial like structures which should serve to intensify and complete the dynamic intention of each production.³⁸

The creation of these new structures had to be approached in a new way. Meyerhold felt the laws of economics or mathematical calculation could be applied in achieving unity or harmony.³⁹ He would glorify the functional and the practical. To do this it was necessary to use the wood, the steel, the glass, the plastics, and the brick of the new age, and every part of the structures which consisted of these materials "was to be tested by the rigid question of its functional use."⁴⁰ Not only did the setting structure have to be playable but it had to be a part of the play. In order to appreciate the functionality of his settings it is necessary to understand his total goal. Huntly Carter states it:

³⁸Carter, p. 52.

³⁹Macleod, p. 69.

⁴⁰Sheldon Cheney, "Constructivism," Theatre Arts, XI (Nov., 1927), p. 857.

All his life he had a vision of an antecedent principle of unity in the theatre. He was aware of an agency by means of which a perfect union between all the visible objects and agents of interpretation and representation and the audience could be attained. He made it the business of his life to attain this unity.⁴¹

If the machine and the construction were sharp, hard, and linear, this could be achieved in physical action on the stage as well.

Gestures are not curved and gentle; they are sudden and angular. Here, again, the sharp angularity--the squareness and straightness of machinery--which Meyerhold believes to be the geometric key-note of modern life, is reproduced, harmonizing with the vertical and rectilinear patterns of the settings. The old gracefulness, the slow and rounded movement, and harmonious groupings of yielding, curved poses, are abhorred. There are the rigid lines of the outstretched arms, of straight, horizontal, vertical or diagonal poses forming an organic relationship with the settings.⁴²

Beyond the influence of the Revolution, of constructivist sculpture and painting, and of the machine itself, another influence came from the economic principles of the American industrial engineer, Frederick Winslow Taylor. "Taylorism" is the application of the principle of the maximum effect or effort attained by the minimum of means.

⁴¹Carter, p. 48.

⁴²"The Queerest Theatre in the World," Current Opinion, LXXVII (August, 1924), p. 203 [202-203].

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Thus if a man were to be trained as a bricklayer, he must be so conditioned that he regulates his movements to within an eighth of an inch.⁴³ Through Taylorism came a major motivation for Bio-mechanics. The concept of the machine, or the precision tool, was extended to the actor and "he was regarded as a machine composed of many efficient parts. Physical vigor, rather than individuality and inner sensitivity is stressed in his performance."⁴⁴

A second factor having an impact on the acting technique came from the work of Pavlov. Adapting the principle of the conditioned reflex to acting, Meyerhold trained the biomechanical actor to respond to external stimuli. His actors "presented movement and acted like athletes, exhibiting all sorts of physical exercises with the exactitude and inventiveness of professionals."⁴⁵

Thus the motivations of Bio-mechanics and Constructivism were the products of science and industry, as well as of the artistic and theatrical ferment which swept

⁴³Huntly Carter, The New Theatre and Cinema of Soviet Russia (New York: International Publishers, 1925), pp. 277-278.

⁴⁴Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 86.

⁴⁵Slonim, p. 247.

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Western Europe. Taylorism and Pavlovian psychology, coupled with construction and materials of and from the machine, had motivated the style.

Yet with all these forces operating in the creation of the most non-representational style the theatre had ever seen, Meyerhold began to drift away from his creation. By 1929 and 1930, with his productions of The Bedbug and The Bathhouse, he began to deny the principles he had evolved. In 1934, he produced La Dame aux Camelias. It was his undoing as far as Soviet artistic authorities were concerned. Nikolai Gorchakov, a most thorough modern Soviet theatre historian, writes that in this production,

he transferred the entire atmosphere of French impressionism, with all its sensuality, to the stage.

The main stairway curved upwards. The white semicircle of the walls was almost transparent. The cream-colored curtains fell in folds on the ropes The Russian theatre had never before seen such plenty of luxury. Meyerhold filled the stage with glowing crystal goblets of Venetian glass, which he spotlighted. There was also the warm gold of the glittering candelabra. The furniture of the period was beautiful and authentic.⁴⁶

Meyerhold had ended his constructivist career.

It is the dilution of his Constructivism as the twenties ended and the abrupt change of style in this final

⁴⁶Gorchakov, pp. 344-345.

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production which speaks clearly in providing a clue to the short-lived nature of linear Constructivism. Cheney describes this "linear" Constructivism as anti-decorative and says that its settings now seem "self-consciously nude, stiff and self-proclaimingly stripped of all softening human influences."⁴⁷ There is no question that they were anti-decorative and as such they had no lasting appeal to the designer. Thus an eclectic Constructivism as well as a decorative Constructivism, more closely related to the theories of Kandinsky, Malevich, Pevsner, and Gabo developed.

Form Elements and Composition

Mass (and space and Line)

The critics commonly infer that "linear" Constructivism is a style wherein line dominates. Corson refers to "anti-decorative platforms, steps and ramps,"⁴⁸ Gorelik describes structures that look like "bricklayers' catwalks

⁴⁷Cheney, Stage Decoration, pp. 135-136.

⁴⁸Corson, "A Garland of Isms," p. 730.

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or Coney Island scenic railways."⁴⁹ Gassner assesses the scenery as consisting of "ramps, steps and slides."⁵⁰ Dickinson refers to "platforms and frameworks and stairs."⁵¹ John Dolman, in seeming condescension, writes:

The constructivist setting ranges from a fairly substantial but inconsequential grouping of platforms and steps that lead nowhere to the most amazing collection of torn and twisted junk, suggestive of home-built scaffoldings or bomb-damaged factories.⁵²

With the exception of Dolman these critics are basically correct, but they are correct only in that they describe the most commonly published photographs of the style. It is Cheney's description of the settings that most carefully describes the use of line and explains the lack of decorative quality or balance in the use of line.⁵³ Further, it is Cheney who denies the commonly held opinion that Constructivism is totally a style of line. He states:

⁴⁹Gorelik, p. 50.

⁵⁰Gassner, *Form and Idea*, p. 150.

⁵¹Dickinson, Theatre in a Changing Europe, pp. 60-61.

⁵²John Dolman, The Art of Play Production (rev. ed., New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 318.

⁵³Cheney, Stage Decoration, pp. 131-132.

The typical constructivist setting may be described as a skeleton structure made up of the physically necessary means for acting a play: an agglomeration of stairs, platforms, runways, etc., called for by the dramatist, stripped to their basic and structural forms, held together by plain scaffolding, and arranged to permit the running off of the play at its fullest theatrical intensity One example may look like a mere scaffolding holding up three or four runways between and from the stage floor. Another may be far more involved with platforms railed, wheels added, cages, awnings, benches, bridges, lattices, window frames, mere "shapes." Where one is delicate and intricate, almost lace-like in effect, another will be composed of heavy masses, broad ramps instead of ladders, blocks instead of posts.⁵⁴

There are basically three types of Constructivism witnessed in mass and line. The common approach is seen in anti-decorative line but Constructivism uses a second approach which places dependence on mass as well as line and occasionally substitutes mass for line. The third form tends toward a more decorative Constructivism.

The setting for Meyerhold's production of Le Cocu Magnifique as designed by L. F. Popova is representative of the linear approach.⁵⁵ Two platforms of different heights are placed parallel to the non-existent curtain line. On each side of the stage, stringers holding steps run up to

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 131.

⁵⁵ Gorchakov, Pl. 20.

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these platforms. A ramp connects the two platforms and a second ramp runs up to the lower platform from center stage. Behind the platforms' ramps and steps are several scaffolds supporting the mass of a solid circle, a wheel, and a windmill which turns. On the solid circle (which revolves) are seen large letters. In another photograph of the setting, a number of actors are seen in performance.⁵⁶ Neither of the photographs gives any indication of actor focus.

In a third photograph, in this instance, a photograph of Popova's rendering, the setting is clean and balanced.⁵⁷ The eye travels across the setting, back to the windmill, and then comes to rest on the large circle. Popova apparently achieved focus while adhering to the linear precepts of Constructivism.

Another setting that relies predominantly on line is Alexander Vesnine's setting for The Man Who Was Thursday (1923),⁵⁸ Here a setting, consisting almost solely of scaffolding, disappears out of sight behind a proscenium at least twenty-four feet high. It appears to have seven

⁵⁶Altman, and others, Pl. 409.

⁵⁷Cheney, Stage Decoration, Pl. 118.

⁵⁸Fuerst and Hume, Pl. 175.

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major playing levels, one of which is a slightly raked ramp. At the bottom of the structure in center stage is a wide three-step stair unit. Near the top of the setting are what appear to be some letters hung haphazardly by wires. Below these letters is a sign which reads "cafe-box." On the stage left side of the stage, halfway up the scaffolding, is a large dark screen which is removable. The setting is so dominated by the lines of rectangles, squares, rhomboids, and trapezoids, that the eye can find no point of rest. Focus is denied.

These settings, then, are representative of "linear" Constructivism. Line dominates and is usually angled rather than curved. Occasionally mass is seen as well.

Two settings from Meyerhold's productions illustrate the phase of greater mass. The first is his setting for Mandate (1925).⁵⁹ The entire backstage area is seen but a large light-colored cloth covers the rear wall. Well downstage, a large white screen hangs from the flies. Standing on the stage floor are four walls made of boards. One wall runs from down right to up left. A smaller wall masks the down right wings behind it. A third wall masks

⁵⁹Ibid., pl. 185.

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the up left wing area and a fourth wall--by far the highest of the four--masks the down left wing. Slightly down center, in front of the diagonal wall, is a kiosk. The setting is completely dominating mass. Line only outlines mass in this setting in as much as no structural line is seen.

The second setting is for Meyerhold's production of The Commander of the Second Army (1929).⁶⁰ A great curved wall sweeps upstage entirely masking the downstage wing areas and the rear of the stage. Parts of the backstage area can, however, be seen over the top of the curved wall. The wall is seen in individual planes consisting of large sheets of construction material. At the left of the wall in the rear, two openings are cut into its top which appear to serve as playing areas accessible only from the rear. Downstage left, a segment of the wall of planes is repeated in front of a high platform. From this platform, following the curve of the main wall, a stepped ramp moves to the floor down right. The ramp is supported by the walls. No structural elements are exposed. Beneath the ramp on the stage left wall is a huge, dark opening which

⁶⁰Gorchakov, Pl. 48.

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appears to be some twelve feet high. Once again, a setting is seen which is predominantly mass. The examples of this phase of constructivism show only a limited amount of mechanical objects in the settings.

In the third phase, that of the more decorative approach, two designers seem particularly associated with the style. They are Isaac Rabinovitch and Alexandra Ekster. Rabinovitch's design for the Moscow Art Theatre Musical Studio production of Lysistrata is well known.⁶¹ It is, in all probability, the best example of decorative constructivism. It utilizes stylized Doric columns which support three tall semi-circular architraves. Similarly, two smaller repetitions of the same forms are used as playing areas.

Madame Ekster was strongly influenced by Cubism.⁶² Because of this, her constructivist design often indicated cubist tendencies. A design for the early Kamerny Theatre illustrates these tendencies.⁶³ Madame Ekster uses a linear design consisting of a series of occasionally stepped

⁶¹Cheney, Stage Decoration, Pl. 119.

⁶²Fulop-Miller and Gregor, The Russian Theatre, pp. 57-58.

⁶³Gorchakov, Pl. 37.

ramps running up and off stage in "X" forms. The ramps, supported by single square posts, pass through a series of other square posts. These latter posts, however, are quite high and are connected from top to top. In her rendering, the eye has difficulty in determining where to move as well as in actually penetrating the construction. Yet the construction is not cluttered. Thus the eye always returns down center to the largest ramp area. This ramp area is most suitable for a dominant playing area and it would seem that Madame Ekster's intent was to utilize this area as a point of focus. Like the Rabinovitch setting, it is representative of "decorative" Constructivism.

Color

All the illusionary effects of the past were banished from Constructivism. "The old painted scenes and flats were replaced by 'constructions' of wood or iron, which in their bald simplicity were meant to indicate the technical environment in which the new humanity would grow up."⁶⁴ The very essence of Constructivism was to eliminate

⁶⁴Fulop-Miller and Gregor, p. 67.

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not only the facade of traditional forms in achieving the new style but to strip the color away, leaving the structure of the form in its natural state. Thus it is that Meyerhold's production of The Death of Tarelkin was described:

Not only are the forms of furniture to which the eye of the beholder is accustomed, conspicuous by their absence, but all objects on the stage are undecorated and uncolored. In this form of naked constructivism, all objects retain their natural color of the material from which they are formed.⁶⁵

Huntly Carter wrote as late as 1929 that "except in the Moscow Art Academic Theatre which has not changed in the matter of settings, there is no painted scenery."⁶⁶

This theory is denied by many of Carter's contemporaries. They all seem to agree that Constructivism was colorless but they write of productions in which there was color. For example, Slonim states that in The Dawns, Meyerhold used "red circles, golden circles, and triangles of shiny metal."⁶⁷ Meyerhold's setting for The Inspector

⁶⁵I. Korolev, "Contemporary Stage Decoration in the U.S.S.R.," The Drama, XV (January, 1930), p. 102.

⁶⁶Carter, The New Spirit, p. 331.

⁶⁷Slonim, p. 245.

General is described as having fifteen doors of "red, glossy lacquer."⁶⁸

Further, the productions of the early Kamerny Theatre--particularly those of Madame Ekster--were renowned for their use of color, although much of this color was witnessed in costume.⁶⁹

Thus it is that color in pigment is both denied and accepted by the critics. The present writer leans toward the theory that there was little applied color in "linear" Constructivism, while in the Kamerny Theatre productions, which were never consistently constructivistic, and in the Constructivism of stressed mass, as well as in decorative Constructivism, considerably more applied color was used.

Texture

The texture of "linear" Constructivism, like the color of all Constructivism, was the natural texture of

⁶⁸Louis Lozowick, "Theatre Chronicle: V. E. Meyer--hold and His Theatre," Hound and Horn, IV (October-December, 1930), p. 103 [Pp. 95-105].

⁶⁹Slonim, p. 261.

the materials used. No mention is made in any of the works on Constructivism of any textural qualities other than those of the materials themselves. The pointillist techniques of texture are never mentioned and were apparently not used. Wood looked like wood. Its grain showed. Metal looked like metal and brick like brick. All the materials of construction were exposed in their natural state. When paint was applied, it was seen as paint with no textural dimensionality.

Light

In the great majority of constructivist production, light was used merely to illuminate. The equipment was as exposed as the setting and the backstage area. "Machines, lighting equipment, and theatre walls beyond are . . . frankly revealed."⁷⁰

Again, only in the early Kamerny Theatre productions did there seem to be attempts at more than illumination. Gorchakov feels that the supreme use of lighting ever achieved in this period of Soviet theatre was the

⁷⁰Albright, Halstead and Mitchell, pp. 208-209.

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Kamerny production of Giroflé-Girofla (1922) as designed by Yakulov.

He used all the lighting effects he could. During the scene in which Giroflé gets drunk, punch burned on the table. Both the characters and their surroundings were bathed in pink, violet, and sparkling gold. Everything was turned into a drunken cascade of light beams. This was the finest lighting achievement of the Soviet theatre.⁷¹

The setting belongs to the "mass" phase of "linear" Constructivism and is formally composed.

Light, then, like the other elements of composition, was generally a technique rather than design. It was used to illuminate and the focus it could achieve seems to have been ignored.

Ornament

All representational decor was stripped from the constructivist stage. The ornamentation that remained had to be found in "a tractor, a motor-cycle, typewriters and telephones--all the symbols and instruments of mechanized industry."⁷² This sort of decor was not a part of the

⁷¹Gorchakov, p. 228.

⁷²Babette Deutsch, "The Russian Theatre of Today," Theatre Arts Monthly, IX (July, 1923), pp. 538-539.

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setting. The wheels, the cogs, the windmills seen in constructivist line were in essence as much a part of the setting as were the scaffolds. They were not ornamentation. The tractors and telephones were brought on by the actors. Often they were symbols. Thus in Le Cocu Magnifique, "one spotlighted flower in Stella's hands furnished the sole stage property for the entire production."⁷³

Like the other elements, ornamentation became more representational as Constructivism began to fade. Gorchakov writes that in the 1924 production of The Forest, Meyerhold "rejected the constructivist asceticism of his early productions . . . , and the stage was filled with furnishings and stage properties."⁷⁴ As would be expected, the Kamerny Theatre utilized a greater detail of representational ornament. In a 1929 production of O'Neill's All God's Chillun Got Wings,

The combinations of high screens, latticed shutters, angles, and staircases covered by a thin coating of rough stone hinted at a contemporary American city. But the urban decor was completely contradicted by the naturalistic costumes, the props were borrowed from life, the street lamps and so on.⁷⁵

⁷³Gorchakov, p. 200.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 207.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 232.

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Ornamentation then may be considered as almost eliminated in Constructivism. When it appears, the object is often a symbol and it is handled by the actor. The object is, in essence, a hand property. In the Kamerny Theatre, ornament is considerably more in evidence as it is in the later work of Meyerhold. Yet at the Kamerny, too, the ornament is not always the ornament of dressing but instead a part of the actor.

Composition

The key to an analysis of composition in Constructivism is found in Cheney's statement:

What "design" that is expended on working these naked structural things into one whole theoretically has the sole purpose of capitalizing movement as a revealing theatrical element.⁷⁶

Cheney suggests that in "linear" Constructivism design exists only to create movement. Many of the settings lack focus, but there is no question that they achieve motion. The motion is achieved primarily through line which is unquestionably the dominant element of composition. The motion is enhanced, however, by the actor. The denial of

⁷⁶Cheney, Stage Decoration, p. 131.

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color, texture, and ornament only increases the utilitarian-mechanical concept of motion.

Similarly, light used only to illuminate cannot detract. It would seem then that "linear" Constructivism as seen in line and occasionally in mass is a style more concerned with and dependent on technique than with actor focus. The technique is not essentially theatrical, but instead the overall technique of a mechanized-industrialized world.

"Decorative" Constructivism utilizes color, texture, ornament and light to create the effect of the whole. It thereby appears to skeletonize or abstract easily recognizable forms into compositions with explicit focus. Unlike "linear" Constructivism, focus is the ultimate goal and technique is relegated to the technician.

Technique

Cheney states that:

Meyerhold not only abandoned the curtain but eliminated the proscenium arch. His stage became literally and nakedly a platform for acting; or rather a series of platforms, because he

found diversified movements such as an effective medium.⁷⁷

Gorelik feels that not only did he eliminate the proscenium and act curtain but that "the stage lights were exposed, the 'skydrops' or cycloramas were torn aside, revealing the bare walls of the stage."⁷⁸ The photographs of constructivist settings enhance these statements but Komisarjevsky and Simonson were of the opinion that "sometimes front drops or tabs between the acts were used."⁷⁹

Gorchakov feels that Meyerhold's technique made the stage even more naked. In Le Cocu Magnifique,

The enormous portal of the Zon Theatre stage was laid bare. The curtain, the coulisses, the cornices in front of the soffits, the soffits themselves, and even the fly galleries themselves were stripped completely. There was a gloomy haze on the enormous stage, beyond which rose unplastered brick walls. Radiators for central heating hung in the heights of the fly galleries.⁸⁰

The stage was stripped to the floor and walls in "linear" Constructivism. Then the construction which

⁷⁷Cheney, Stage Decoration, p. 107.

⁷⁸Gorelik, p. 342.

⁷⁹Theodore Komisarjevsky and Lee Simonson, Settings and Costumes of the Modern Stage (London: The Studio Ltd., 1933), p. 14.

⁸⁰Gorchakov, p. 199.

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embodied technique itself was placed upon it. It expressed motion but it could have parts that moved as integral parts of the design itself.⁸¹ Only one more thing remained. It was necessary to create a system for rapid scene changes which would be visible to the audience and part of the production.

To attain this, Meyerhold and Llya Shlepanov--the set designer--invented something that was as simple as it was effective. They used a system of wooden panels that moved on rollers. These panels were heaped up in rapid combinations. They permitted the place of action to be shifted rapidly.⁸²

Similarly, "Meyerhold used a revolving stage, a system of concentric circles that rotated in opposite directions."⁸³

Through these means, the stage was stripped and mechanized. The lights were exposed. One other technique became commonly used. The spotlights were removed and bridges from the stage to the boxes or orchestra were constructed.⁸⁴ The theatre of Constructivism had developed an extremely presentational stage.

⁸¹Barr, pp. 141-142.

⁸²Gorchakov, p. 209.

⁸³Ibid., p. 211.

⁸⁴Slonim, p. 267.

Summary: Criteria for Identification
of the Scenic Style of Constructivism

Form Elements and
Their Composition

Mass (and space) and Line

Three forms of Constructivism are evident in mass and line. In the first form--that of "linear" Constructivism--line is seen as the dominant element in a complex use of structures such as platforms, ramps and stairs, supported by structural elements such as posts, beams, and bracing materials. The lines take the shapes of squares, rectangles, parallels, rhomboids, triangles, and trapezoids. These structures are set against bare walls or, occasionally, plain drops. Sometimes larger blocks of mass are combined with them but line is always dominant.

Machines, such as wheels, windmills, gears and cogs are often a part of the structures. Although the structures can be so designed as to create focus, typically they deny it.

In the second form which is a variation of "linear" Constructivism, block-like mass predominates. Structural element are not as evident. These block-like masses may

include machine parts but more often do not. There is somewhat more focus and this focus is more easily achieved because little distracts the eye from the actor.

In the third form which is associated with the rather synthetic Constructivism of The Kamerny Theatre, mass and line are seen in a "decorative" usage. The line is sometimes curvilinear and it is commonly dominant over mass. It often abstracts known forms. There is no concern evidenced for the mechanical objects of "linear" Constructivism. Focus is stressed.

Color

In "linear" Constructivism, applied color seems to be avoided. The natural colors of wood, stone, brick, and metal are seen instead. There are some instances, however, when flat coats of color are applied to parts of the construction.

In "decorative" Constructivism, color is considerably more a part of the setting and always a significant factor in costume.

Texture

Texture in constructivist design is seen as the natural texture of the object. When paint is applied, no attempt is made at creating a theatrical texture.

Light

In "linear" Constructivism the primary function of light is illumination. Only in the synthetic Constructivism of The Kamerny Theatre was light used to create mood and focus. Light in Constructivism is primarily a technique.

Ornament

Ornament was in the early phase of Constructivism, removed from the setting. Ornament became a hand property of the actor and commonly served as a symbol. As the style progressed into the late nineteen-twenties, more and more representational ornamentation was used but it never became an integral part of the setting, remaining predominantly the property of the actor.

Composition

One element of "linear" Constructivism is dominant. This element is the line witnessed in "stripped"

constructions and mechanizations. The lack of color, the use of natural texture, general illumination, and ornament which is not a part of the setting, but of the actor, all enhance the construction as well as the motion that the construction creates. Constructivism shows a conscious lack of focus in these constructions. Although the second phase, wherein greater mass is witnessed, attempt the same goals it does not have the visual impact nor the unfocused quality seen in the "linear" construction.

The "synthetic" constructivism of the Kamerny Theatre is seen as a style of focus (albeit mass or line) with a greater use of color, ornament, and light. Texture is as insignificant an element as in the "linear" form.

In all forms of Constructivism, the setting seemed to have a goal of technique rather than focus.

Technique

The stage was stripped of the traditional equipment such as act curtains, curtains, drops and rigging. When possible the proscenium was removed. Footlights were torn out and bridges built to the orchestra or boxes. Lighting equipment was exposed to the audience. Wagons, rolling

scenery devices, and revolves were used to expedite scene changes in full view of the audience. The stage became presentational.

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CHAPTER VII

EXPRESSIONISM

Between the years 1900 and 1910 an artistic rebellion occurred in Germany. Secession followed secession as German youth,

too long repressed and forced to practice in the moulds of German nineteenth-century classicism and romanticism, went over in great numbers to the marchers who carried banners variously inscribed Neue Kunst or Junge Kunst or (a little later) Expressionismus. Long before the end of a social era was signalled at Sarajevo, in 1914, German expressionism was firmly established and attested in the works of the masters of the stature of Nolde, Marc, and Kokoschka.¹

Although Expressionism was primarily a German development, it had adherents and expositors in other countries as well. H. F. Garten feels that Expressionism reached its high point between 1910 and 1925 and that it reflected the social and spiritual upheaval "brought about by World War I and the revolution that followed it."²

¹Cheney, The Story of Modern Art, p. 386.

²H. F. Garten, Modern German Drama (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 102.

It was in 1904-1905 when the first group of German painters gathered together under a name and with a program of action. The name selected was Die Brücke--The Bridge.³

The influences that motivated German Expressionism had come from a group of artists who comprised what is referred to as the Northern tradition. It included such men as Dohlfs, Hodler, Ensor, Munch, von Jawlensky, Kandinsky, Nolde, and Barlach. All were, "for the most decisive years of their lives struggling in individual isolation, in hostile provincial environments."⁴

The artists associated with Die Brücke were Kirchner, Bleyl, Keckel and Schmidt-Rottluf. Other artists joined them--sometimes only briefly--and in 1913 the Bridge was abandoned, but by this time Expressionism in painting was firmly established.

In 1909, a group of artists formed an organization called the New Artists Association. They were highly influenced, if not necessarily led, by Kandinsky. The rejection of his famous painting The Blue Rider, by the

³Read, p. 51.

⁴Ibid., p. 56.

association in 1911 led to a still further split which opened the door to Abstract Expressionism.⁵

The specific literary influences on dramatic Expressionism came from Dostoevski, Nietzsche, Whitman, and Rimbaud, as well as from the philosophy of Bergson.⁶ The style was also influenced by the Freudian and Jungian concepts of the subconscious as was the later development of Surrealism. Similarly, Expressionism came from the playwright, August Strindberg. After 1895 Strindberg's "dream plays" were among the most frequently performed on the German and Austrian stage.⁷

It was the painter Oskar Kokoschka who followed Strindberg. In 1907 he wrote, Murderer, Hope of Women. "It is a nightmarish vision of the eternal battle between the sexes, written in an ecstatic and sometimes incomprehensible language."⁸

⁵Ibid., p. 224.

⁶Calvin S. Brown, The Readers Companion to World Literature (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), p. 158.

⁷Walter Sokel, ed. Anthology of German Expressionism in Twentieth Century Literature (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. x.

⁸Henry Schnitzler, "Austria," A History of Modern Drama, eds. Barrett H. Clark and George Freedly (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1947), p. 149.

Edith Hoffman in her authoritative monograph on

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The dramatic expressionists divided into two camps. These were the mystics and the activists.⁹ The mystic expressionists were primarily pre-war expressionists who were content to express their views of man and their feelings.¹⁰ In this they paralleled the more independent precursors of expressionist painting and the early Die Brücke group. As the war and the resultant revolution in life and literature came, the more activist group "sought to transform man and society through a program of action."¹¹

Activism became the more dominant area of drama although Garten feels that it did not completely replace the mystic. Rather:

. . . Between these two poles, expressionist drama vacillated, now accentuating the lone individual in his quest for self-fulfillment, now the problems of social transformation.¹²

Following Kokoschka in mystic Expressionism were
Barlach (1870-1938), Werfel (1890-1945), Sorge (1892-1916),

Kokoschka says that his first performed play was Sphinx and Straw Man, followed by The Hope of Women. (Edith Hoffmann, Kokoschka, Life and Work [London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1947], p. 54.)

⁹ Brockett, p. 298

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Garten, p. 108.

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Kornfel (1889-1942), and Hasenclever (1890-1940).¹³ The activists were such men as Hauptmann (1858-1921], Zweig (1881-1942), von Unrich (1885-), Toller (1893-1939), and the most famous playwright of Expressionism, Georg Kaiser (1878-1945).¹⁴

In 1910, Herwerth Walden, leader of the Sturm group in Berlin, formed the "Sturmbuhne," or Storm Stage Society to present expressionist dram in expressionist style. The society produced plays by Autust Stramm, Lothar Schreizer, and Oskar Kokoschka.¹⁵

Expressionism had become an integral part of modern theatre even though by 1925 it was in a rapid stage of decline.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., pp. 108-120.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 121-147.

¹⁵ Huntly Carter, The New Spirit in the European Theatre 1914-1924 (London: Ernest Becn, Ltd., 1925), pp. 220-221.

¹⁶ Walter Sokel, The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Literature (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. 1.

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Motivations

August Strindberg is considered the father of dramatic Expressionism. His spiritual counterpart in painting is the Norwegian, Edvard Munch. The influence of the two men caused the young Germans to respond to "mysticism, the striving for a non-earthly quality, the mingling of real and unreal, . . . which they transmuted into a more active and overt program."¹⁷ In a sense both the painters and the theatre moved backward in time, adopting not only the symbolist's aesthetic but the romantic's as well.¹⁸ The theatrical expressionist rejected, as did the symbolist, the ideal of the well made play, as well as

the canons of plausibility and "good taste" in art. They openly defied the ideal of objective recording of everyday life, on which "realistic" theatre since Scribe and Ibsen had been based.¹⁹

To achieve true reality it is necessary for the Expressionist to turn inward and to thus "gaze within the

¹⁷ Bernard S. Meyers, The German Expressionists (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), p. 36.

¹⁸ Peter Selz, German Expressionist Painting (Berkeley, California: The University of California Press, 1957), p. 53.

¹⁹ Sokel, Anthology of German Expressionism, p. ix.

ego."²⁰ This inward striving seeks a subjective expression of reality. It moves

toward a realism animated by powerful emotion, even ecstasy, toward an intuitive response that stresses the essence of things over their mere existence. Thus in addition to explosive enthusiasm, the measure of their heightened reaction to life, the Expressionists deliberately avoided the objective form of things.²¹

Dahlstrom feels that the Expressionist saw the entire universe as a manifestation of this inward gaze and intuition. As such only the ego could "intuitively comprehend the all, and the essential reality that lies behind its material face."²²

Further, the expressionist feels that it is necessary to view nature as anthropomorphic. The theatre expresses everything in human terms.²³ In essence, this is true of the painters as well.

They attempt to cut through temporary naturalistic appearances in pursuit of the inner truth, by means of intensified color and twisted form that reduce the reality of objects to form and color symbols.²⁴

²⁰ Carl Enoch William Leonard Dahlstrom, Strindberg's Dramatic Expressionism (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), p. 50.

²¹ Myers, p. 37.

²² Dahlstrom, p. 50.

²³ Brockett, p. 298.

²⁴ Myers, p. 37.

Another motivation in the development of the inner search was, in all probability, the result of the developing science of psychology. Hatlen states that the expressionists made "bold efforts to deal with psychological reality, the subconscious, the man beneath the skin."²⁵ This unraveling of man's inner being could help all mankind. Myers cites the lectures of Kasimir Edschmid in 1917 and 1918 supporting this view. Edschmid stated:

. . . The appearance of man is far less important than his humanity. The problems of individuals . . . are only important inasmuch as they reflect world problems or ills.²⁶

The Expressionist also wished to achieve an understanding or realization of God, "to find oneself in God, and God in self."²⁷ Edschmid felt that there was a strong difference between the naturalists and the expressionists; "the latter have a world outlook, an attitude based on the principles of 'love, God, and Justice.'"²⁸ The scientific principles so relied upon by the naturalists were thus eliminated. A science of man was replaced by a man trying to respond to God.

²⁵Hatlen, p. 167.

²⁶Myers, p. 36.

²⁷Dahlstrom, p. 57.

²⁸Myers, p. 36.

Even so, Naturalism did contribute to Expressionism as did Romanticism. Myers summarizes the contribution:

The literature and art of Expressionism have their roots from neo-Romanticism in the immediate past . . . they derive an antipathy for materialism and a longing for God, while from Naturalism they derive the ability to face up to the most unpleasant situations. The Expressionists, however, transform the detailed statements of unpalatable fact into generalized rebellious reactions against the circumstances described. Put somewhat differently we may say that where Naturalism . . . was critical of the world and neo-Romanticism dealt with problems of the soul and the reflection of beauty . . . , Expressionist culture is the exposition of a cause.²⁹

The scenic progenitors of Expressionism remain, to this day, critically confused. A viewpoint that Expressionism comprised all the styles of painting came into vogue in the 1920's. It appears to have first been voiced by Macgowan. Gorelik, thoroughly aware of this confusion, attempted in 1940 to sort the styles out:

In Germany, at any rate, it was not Dadaism but Expressionism which took center stage after the War. Just what Expressionism meant was rather puzzling to its reviewers at the time, and in fact is not entirely clear to this day. For some writers, like Macgowan, it represented almost any new trend except the attenuated Naturalism of the more conservative Symbolists. Macgowan's definition, for instance, included Cubism, Vorticism, and even Futurism and Post-Impressionism in some instances.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 37.

It may be doubted whether Expressionism ever had anything to do with genuine Cubism. The scenery for the Expressionist-Theatricalist film The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari used the geometric patterns familiar in Cubist work; no doubt it also derived a certain strangeness from the Cubist method of breaking familiar space into unfamiliar planes and prisms. But its insane distortions really have little to do with Cubist painting, which is a painstaking study of the function of space. Stage Expressionism owes less to the painting of Cezanne, Braque, Leger or Picasso (in his Cubist period) than it does to the fantastic painters like Klee, Ernst, Chirico, Ghagall, Groz, or the primitives and the insane.³⁰

If the progenitors of scenic Expressionism were in question, its motivations were not. Strong relationships exist between the motivations of all the expressionistic arts.

Three essential motivations are witnessed in scenic Expressionism. These are the reliance on emotion and intuition; the replacement of language by scenic elements or symbols of a visual nature; and the characters' view of reality or inner vision manifesting itself in setting.

Dolman writes that in dealing with emotion, the expressionist seeks

something that will transcend nature, free the spirit, enable the artist to reveal his emotions and reach those of his public directly, as the lyric poet does--something greater, not less, than reality.³¹

³⁰ Gorelik, p. 248.

³¹ Dolman, p. 314.

Macgowan feels that "emotion is the important thing, and the artist's ability to summon that emotion in the spectator."³² To achieve emotion, the designers

twisted and distorted the appearance of places and things to accord with the rather violent convulsive mood of the expressionist plays. The idea was to show how environment looks to someone who is under the stress of emotion.³³

The replacement of language through setting develops a motivation wherein "the stage is stripped of its inessentials, and significant symbols are employed to express the meaning of the play rather than the intrinsic scenic background."³⁴ The stage thus "represented an effort to establish a stage which no longer sought to give a major illusion of reality but to provide a consciously unreal presentation of a certain intellectual trend."³⁵ The symbol could go beyond the "consciously unreal," becoming instead

³²Kenneth Macgowan, "The Living Scene," Theatre Arts, XI (June, 1927), pp. 444-445.

³³Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 349.

³⁴Helvenston, Scenery, p. 84.

³⁵Julius Bab, "The Theatre in the German Language Area Since the World War," Dickinson, p. 161.

a motivation wherein a symbolism existed that was "notable for the vehemence of its symbols."³⁶

Corson views the third motivation as

a physical distortion in the set projecting some mental or emotional distortion on the part of one or more of the characters. In other words, the set expressed what a character is thinking or feeling.³⁷

For this reason "the stage can be a fitting frame for dreams as well as a mirror of the surface world."³⁸ The designer achieves the characters' inner vision of reality as he follows

the characters' lead and shows the characters' intellectual turmoil by visually perverting details of physical setting just as the character mentally perverts ideas and concepts in his own thinking.³⁹

These then were the three motivations: emotion and intuition; the replacement of language with the scenic symbol; and the inner view of the character reflected in his physical world. All three were focused toward one major goal

³⁶Gorelik, p. 248.

³⁷Corson, "Styles of Scene Design," p. 9.

³⁸George Sheringham and James Laver, Design in the Theatre (London: The Studio, Ltd., 1927), p. 25.

³⁹Friederich and Fraser, p. 17.

--"to make the audience think as the character thinks because it sees the world from his point of view."⁴⁰

Form Elements and Composition

Mass (and space) and Line

Fuerst and Hume, in a discussion of the work of Ludwig Sievert as seen in his designs for Strindberg's Grosse Landstrasse, and Kokoschka's Morder, Höffnung der Frauen, stress the use of "great masses with oblique lines."⁴¹ Friederich and Fraser believe that the author of an expressionist play reflects the attitude of his character toward the world around him and the designer follows suit. Thus, the character envisions a forest where "trees have branches like arms . . . to hurt and threaten him."⁴² Discussing Unruh's Ein Geschlecht, Samuel and Thomas describe a setting which resembles "serried ranks of grave-stones."⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Fuerst and Hume, p. 69.

⁴² Friederich and Fraser, p. 183.

⁴³ Samuel and Thomas, p. 50.

Because of settings like these, Expressionism is "purely a problem in mass, line, and color."⁴⁴ The line of Expressionistic setting is like that of the intertwined styles in their great vertical constructions, but the simple vertical did not suffice for the expressionist.

The feelings of this disturbed and super-excited period no longer responded to it, and, as a consequence, we see these once pure lines become oblique and concentric, sometimes throwing themselves towards the bottom of the scene, sometimes spreading themselves on high as if to implore heaven, or coming together above as if to shut out the light and hold the play in an atmosphere of death and despair.⁴⁵

Sievert's set for Tromeln in der Nacht has a room, recognizable as an interior, for its setting, but the mass and line of the walls flair out and back as they move upward.⁴⁶ In his setting for Morder, Hoffnung der Frauen, Sievert uses great triangular masses which distort what appears to have been an archetectonic exterior.⁴⁷

Fuerst uses two great darkened masses to frame his stage for L'Homme et ses Fantomes, but these masses work

⁴⁴D'Amico, p. 58.

⁴⁵Fuerst and Hume, p. 69.

⁴⁶Ibid., Pl. 206.

⁴⁷Ibid., Pl. 207.

as a great parallelogram tilting from stage right on the floor to stage left as they disappear behind the top of the proscenium arch.⁴⁸ Behind these masses are the curved wall of a building with a distorted window cut into it; a low triangular wall which is apparently used as a ground-row; and a leafless tree with limbs like arms, hands, and fingers.

Moiesi Levine's 1932 setting for Joy Street at the State Dramatic Theatre, Leningrad, utilizes the same approach.⁴⁹ Brick walls flare out from bottom to top as did the walls in Sievert's setting for Tromeln in der Nacht. Attached to the walls are eight fire escape balconies with connected stairs. The stairs, the balconies, and the walls are all highly realistic in detail but line and mass are so distorted that they exemplify a terrifying kalediscope which threatens to crush the actor who must stand below these threatening forms.

In Hans Strobach's setting for Masse-Mensch (1922), a similar use mass and line is witnessed.⁵⁰ Here, great

⁴⁸ Ibid., pl. 208.

⁴⁹ Simonson, International Exhibit, Pl. 691.

⁵⁰ Macgowan and Jones, p. 148.

forms loom up and in, towering over the single figure of the actor. As they precariously tilt inward, they suggest giant blades that could slice downward through the triangle of light which frames the actor.

Although these are the dominant uses of mass and line, a "concentric" use is occasionally seen. Svend Gade's settings for Strindberg's The Dream Play utilize circular mass and line in construction to create focus as well as to effect the symbol.⁵¹ Similarly, Robert Edmond Jones uses a predominantly expressionist setting for Pelléas and Melisande.⁵² Seven, immense--but fine lined--forms arc up and down behind the actor. The lines of these forms create an almost gossamer mass as they dwarf the actor. Jones has created a symbolic, penetrable maze--a spider web which is at the same time a giant insect that threatens to devour the actor.

These are the primary uses of mass and line in Expressionism. Oblique distortion of both line and mass are commonly used in what is still recognizable as reality. Occasionally, concentric mass and line are witnessed.

⁵¹Fuerst and Hume, Pls. 210-211.

⁵²Ibid., Pl. 204.

There are, however, two other uses of mass and line. The first is that the steps and platforms so common to the intertwined styles of Symbolism and Selective Realism continue to be utilized. Expressionist setting of this form

is absolutely free of Realism and representation --as all expressionist production must be. It reduces setting to less than a symbol, to what is hardly more than a convenient platform for the actor.⁵³

Much of the development in the step and platform form took its clue from Jessner's "Stage Staircase."⁵⁴ When this use of Jessner-steps occurs a greater dominance on color and light is used to achieve emotion and symbol.⁵⁵

Similarly, the second form of expressionist development in mass and line is seen in the painterly device of highly interpretive, two-dimensional painting. The painting is seen as extremely stylized Realism.⁵⁶ Realistic forms are loosely painted but the distortion is not so great that the spectator ever loses what they represent.

⁵³ Macgowan and Jones, p. 147.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 144-156.

⁵⁵ Samuel and Thomas, p. 62.

⁵⁶ Altman and others, pls. 421-422.

The true distortion in this form of Expressionism is achieved through color instead.

Color

Color is achieved by two methods in expressionist staging. The first and primary method is through light and is discussed under that heading. The second is the color that is realized in the two-dimensional painted setting.

The symbol is commonly used in the latter phase. Just as trees have threatening, arm-like branches, "jungle foliage is painted to suggest weird, primitive animal life."⁵⁷ This use of color and its symbolic and psychological effect is illustrated by a description of Reinhard Sorge's Der Bettler, first produced in 1911:

. . . The use of the color red is given an intellectual significance and is intended to express the idea of madness. Thus we find in the stage directions: "In front of a red curtain in the middle background are a table and chairs. In the left center is a stool. In the left foreground a deer. The carpet is red, the curtains are red, the cushions are red, the tablecloth is red; "The Son takes a red cloth from the end of the sofa."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Friederich and Fraser, p. 183.

⁵⁸ Samuel and Thomas, pp. 24-25.

Thus the distortion which is evident in mass and line is achieved through the use of color as well. As in mass and line, Realism provides the framework but "exaggeration is as likely to be from the point of view of color as of line."⁵⁹

This approach, then, is the dominant one in the use of pigment. There are two other variations which seem to have some credibility. It is known that Kaiser's Hölle, Weg, Erde, as designed by Cesar Klein in 1919, utilized phosphorescent color.⁶⁰ This provided "eerie effects" but it is certainly little more than an extension of the vivid use of color that was utilized in both expressionist scene design and painting.

The second variation is described by Kokoschka. He writes that in a production of Hiob, he "used for the first time the trick of painting minor parts and props not essential for acting on the backdrop."⁶¹ Some of the photographs of expressionist settings give this revitalized romantic approach credibility. Klein's setting for Hölle, Weg, Erde

⁵⁹Philippi, p. 171.

⁶⁰Altman and others, Pl. 421.

⁶¹Hoffman, p. 150.

illustrates this with books and bookcases painted on the setting. Herman Krehan apparently attempted the same approach with his setting for Der Revolutionar in 1919.⁶²

Even with examples such as these, it is unlikely that Expressionism relied too heavily on painted color. It is primarily a style of architectonic mass and line in three-dimensional constructions. Thus the color achieved through light is of considerably greater significance.

Texture

Although no mention is made of textural requirements in the critical writing on Expressionism, the photographic evidence of the settings leads to the conclusion that texture was used on the architectonic masses. This texture appears to have been derived from the pointillist texturing methods. Certainly when the necessities for light changes are considered, the textural qualities witnessed in Stanislas Slivinski's setting for a production of La Malediction (1926),⁶³ or Lee Simonson's setting for

⁶²Altmann and others, Pl. 422.

⁶³Fuerst and Hume, Vol. II, Pl. 209.

a production of The Adding Machine, are easily understood.⁶⁴

In all probability, the expressionist used the pointillist textural methods as a technique to aid his lighting rather than as an integral part of his design.

Light

Theatrical light is the chief device in effecting the second most expressive element of Expressionism. In a discussion of Adlophe Linnebach, a writer for the 1922 The Literary Digest stated: "I have seen some thirty productions in German theatre, and I wish to say more about that void as background in actual operation."⁶⁵ What the writer implies is that a beam of light from a specific illumination instrument was utilized to create focus in front of black draperies. Macgowan wrote that in Masse-Mensch:

The "real" episodes are set in black curtains and with steps of one sort or another. They are lit by obvious beams of light, and they are given no more color than shows in the woman's severe blue dress and one glimpse of the yellow dome.⁶⁶

⁶⁴Altman, Freud, Macgowan and Melnitz, Pl. 463.

⁶⁵"The Passing of Stage Scenery," The Literary Digest, LXXV (October 14, 1922), p. 37.

⁶⁶Macgowan, Continental Stagecraft, p. 148.

It was Macgowan who also wrote, in discussing another scene in the production, that "the sky lights up . . . in crimson, then pulses in and out; colors flood down on the moving figures in waves that throb with the music."⁶⁷ The void of blackness could be seen as an ill-defined, hazy void which could be formed into a colored space as well as a void of blackness.

The use of the beam of light came about through the practice of Sorge. It was Sorge who first developed the practice of picking out the actor's face in front of the black curtains.⁶⁸ Thus two primary uses of light are seen in Expressionism. These are the use of specific light or the spotlight, and the use of color. The void is pierced by the colored beam of light but the beam of light is itself, a symbol, "a line of colour traced in the void."⁶⁹

The psychology of color moved away from the Jesnerian concepts of the intertwined styles. Brilliant colors are used to effect symbolism or the symbol as "the spotlight participates in the action."⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

⁶⁸ Samuel and Thomas, p. 62.

⁶⁹ Fuerst and Hume, p. 68.

⁷⁰ Samuel and Thomas, p. 62.

The basic criticism of the expressionist use of color was clearly stated by Fuerst and Hume in 1928. It is still applicable. They write:

To one person "A" calls forth an impression of sky-blue, while the same sound to another evokes green; "C" presents itself to one as deep violet and to the next as citron-yellow, and these associations vary in the same person, depending on his physical state at the time the experiment is made. If such simple abstractions as these are in no sense general and in no sense common property, how can we hope to find, in the case of a situation so psychologically complex as that presented by the stage, a purely abstract association which will have value for a whole audience? These symbols thus do not correspond to any intrinsic need that must be satisfied through them. On the contrary, they are proposed and put forward in a manner which is absolutely arbitrary. It is all very well to say: "That is the way!" but it must always be remembered that "That" could very easily be something quite different.⁷¹

Ornament

The use of ornament in Expressionism is extremely limited. Komisarjevsky and Simonson state that the settings use "fragments of architecture or a simple object

⁷¹Fuerst and Hume, p. 70.

(a large bed for instance). These do not occupy the whole stage, but are set in space and picked out by lights."⁷²

An excellent example of this use of the single object can be seen in Lee Simonson's setting for Rice's The Adding Machine. The high judicial bench is given focus by the light of an oblique, vertical window. Seated behind the bench is the mechanical-humanoid figure of the judge. Fuerst's setting for L'Homme et ses Fantômes illustrates the same tendency. Between the oblique, foreground masses, the light picks out a tree with arm-like limbs. In Throckmorton and Jones' 1922 setting for The Hairy Ape, a simplified bar arrangement serves for the cage.⁷³ The actor and a simple selection of bars are picked out of the void of blackness by a beam of light.

Thus the approach to ornament is simply to utilize the single object, and to employ this object as a symbol. Occasionally, the object, like the judicial bench in The Adding Machine, is distorted in the oblique or flaring manner seen in the mass and line of the setting.

⁷²Komisarjevsky and Simonson, p. 13.

⁷³Altman, and others, Pl. 436.

Composition

The critical opinion that Expressionism is a style of mass, line, and color is correct but the element of colored light is, without doubt, the most dominant compositional element. It is for this reason that Dolman wrote that "color has been used decoratively and symbolically but its potentialities in connection with light have only been recently recognized."⁷⁴ The development of colored light was continued from--as well as developed simultaneously with--the intertwined styles. The great distorted masses and the lines of the setting were picked out of void, framed and accentuated by colored light. Pointillist texture was utilized to enhance the color changing facility of Expressionism. Ornament and the actor were picked out of void and emphasized by light. The single object of ornament could be, therefore, a more pointed symbol. The same thing could be achieved in making the mass and line of the setting structure a more dominant symbol as the audience of expressionist theatre watched one color change into another. Dolman summarizes the totality of compositional goals when he writes:

⁷⁴Dolman, p. 317.

Expressionism in the theatre can hardly be illustrated without the use of color; the style can be shown, but not the emotional effect. The true Expressionist uses not only the setting but all the elements of the production, including the acting and lighting; and by fluid manipulation of light he makes the light itself an actor. His purpose is to make all the sensory elements of the production a single unified instrument for expressing the inner experience and attitude of the protagonist, and perhaps, through him, of the author.⁷⁵

Technique

Little essential difference exists between the technical means of the theatre of the intertwined styles and the theatre of Expressionism. Inasmuch as a great deal of the theatre technology that developed in the intertwined styles was German in its development, it had a co-existent development in Expressionism.

The wagon, the elevator, and the revolving stage were as much a necessity to the expressionist designer as to the designer working in the intertwined styles. Expressionism relied to an exceptional degree on multiscenes and, hence, multi-settings. Die Wandlung, produced in 1918,

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 315.

exemplifies this practice. It used "a prologue and six stations divided into several tableaux. Seven of these are unreal and play on a back-stage."⁷⁶ Obviously, mechanical shifting devices were needed. Similarly, the Jessnerian "Stage Staircase" which often was utilized in expressionist production needed devices to shift its massive structure quickly.⁷⁷

The availability of such technology was both a blessing and a curse to Expressionism. Samuel feels that the closeness that had developed between stage and drama contributed a great deal toward making Expressionism dynamic. He cites developments such as the sky dome, the cyclorama, the revolving stage, and the spotlight as significant contributions to the style.⁷⁸ When Expressionism sought a clear-cut technical goal, the new technology was available, but Samuel feels that all too often, lesser talents used the new technology "for the expression of their personal ecstasies on stage mechanism."⁷⁹

⁷⁶Samuel and Thomas, p. 45.

⁷⁷See, for example, Macgowan, Continental Theatre, p. 52.

⁷⁸Samuel and Thomas, pp. 65-66.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 57.

Although the stage--auditorium relationship remained primarily the same during expressionist development as it had in the past, an attempt at a new stage-audience relationship manifested itself in Expressionism. "The theatre Die Tribüne, founded in Berlin in 1919, abolished the barriers between the stage and auditorium and created a unity of actors and public."⁸⁰ It is apparent, however, that as the intertwined styles were little able to effect a major architectural change in theatre, Expressionism too, had little effect on the existing structures.

Two of the lighting techniques developed in the early phases of Symbolism and Selective Realism reached a point of infinitely better development in Expressionism. The first was the use of the single spotlight. The second was the use of projection devices.⁸¹ The use of these techniques became so much more refined that emotion and symbol in form and color were achieved with increasing sensitivity. Jones illustrates the capabilities of projection with a rendering of a scene from Masse-Mensche. In the foreground a dark Jessnerian step unit is seen. On it five

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 66-67.

⁸¹ See Chapter V, "Technique."

motionless dark figures are seen in silhouette. Spot-lighted in center stage is a small, red cage. Inside the cage sits a woman dressed in blue. Behind this scene "gigantic spectral shadow-shapes march across a faintly luminous void."⁸²

The high quality in lighting technique spread wherever expressionist drama was produced. Thus:

In Kaiser's expressionist play From Morn to Midnight, produced by the Theatre Guild, Simonson used Linnebach's lantern to make the tree in the snow scene change into a skeleton, an effect that Kaiser was able to foresee only as a shifting of snowflakes upon naked boughs.⁸³

The lasting quality of this technique is best exemplified by the constant development that continues through the present day.⁸⁴ Projection continues as an integral part of design but it is utilized today as it was during the twenties--as an extension of the element of light, rather than a substitute for plot or three dimensional scenery.

⁸²Macgowan and Jones, p. 156.

⁸³Ibid., p. 78.

⁸⁴See, for example, Jo Mielziner, Designing for the Theatre (New York: Atheneum, 1965).

Summary: Criteria for Identification
of the Scenic Style of Expressionism

Form Elements and
Their Composition

Mass (and space) and Line

Using what was originally recognizable forms, mass and line are distorted in oblique or flaring vertical structures. A secondary use is seen in concentric forms. The mass and line of Jessnerian steps and platforms are often witnessed as playing platforms.

Occasionally, painted, two-dimensional mass and line are seen. This approach does not necessarily utilize the oblique or flaring use of mass and line nor does it necessarily utilize concentric mass and line. The painted line is somewhat distorted but it gains its effect through color. Almost always, these uses of mass and line suggest something other than what they are. In effect they serve as a symbol.

Color

Color is primarily seen in light. However, when paint is used, color is seen in extravagant uses of primary and secondary colors which come from a psychology of color,

keyed to expressing a symbol or an emotion. Occasionally a phosphorescent color is used. Similarly, decor is sometimes painted on two-dimensional scenery. It, too, shows some distortion of line, as well as of color.

Texture

Texture is used in the pointillist manner to create the opportunity for achieving color change through light.

Light

Light is the unifying factor in expressionist design. Spotlights are used to create focus. The black void or the colorless void is employed. When the colorless void is used, it is subject to constant color change.

The psychology of color is used in expressionist light as it is in paint. Light attempts emotion and symbol as well as creating focus on the symbols evident in mass, line, and ornament.

Ornament

Ornament is usually highly specific and as such it serves as a symbol. Biomorphic forms are distorted to achieve human qualities. Geometric forms--ordinarily such simple things as furniture--are given the same flairing and oblique treatments as the mass and line of setting.

Composition

Mass, line, and color are the dominant elements but colored light is the unifying element of composition. Colored light picks the actor and the ornament out of the void and thus creates focus. It emphasizes the mass and line of the setting itself. In doing this, colored light evokes emotion and points the symbol, but it serves as an emotional factor and a symbol itself.

Technique

The technical devices of Expressionism are such things as the elevator stage, the wagon, the revolving stage, and the spotlight. These are necessary to shift the scenery for a tremendous number of "stations" or settings are used. Jessnerian "Stage Staircases" are often used and their weight calls for devices capable of moving great weights.

The auditorium-stage relationship does not perceptibly change although the Expressionists desire for a closer physical relationship with the audience causes occasional structural change.

Lighting techniques are highly refined. Using the developments in spotlights and projection devices, the Expressionists improved technique and joined in the production of improved equipment. Their chief contribution in lighting techniques were, however, primarily seen in their refinements of existing practices utilizing both the spotlight and the projection devices.

PART II

SCENIC STYLES DURING THE 1920'S

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW YORK THEATRICAL SEASON OF 1919-1920

During this first season of analysis, ten productions met the standards of selection described in Chapter II. Of the ten, only Elmer Rice's For the Defense, had less than a one hundred performance run. It played seventy-seven performances and is included because of favorable reviews.

The following plays are analyzed:

The Acquittal by Rita Weiman

At 9:45 by Owen Davis

Beyond the Horizon by Eugene O'Neill

Déclassée by Zoe Akins

The Famous Mrs. Fair by James Forbes

For the Defense by Elmer Rice

The Sign on the Door by Channing Pollock

The Son-Daughter by George Scarborough and David Belasco

The Storm by Langdon McCormick and George Broadhurst

A Voice in the Dark by Ralph E. Dyar and Willard Mack

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS

Plates I-XIV

PLATE I. The Acquittal by Rita Weiman.



PLATE II. At 9:45 by Owen Davis, White photo.



III. Beyond the Horizon by Eugene O'Neill, Vandamn photo.



IV. Beyond the Horizon by Eugene O'Neill, Vandamn photo.



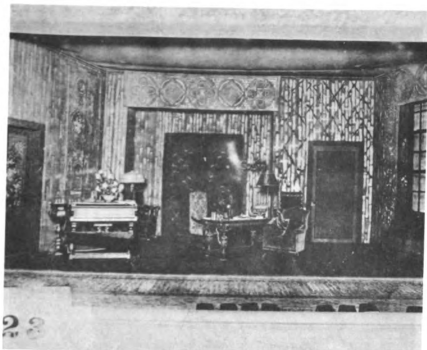
PLATE V. Déclassée by Zoe Akins.



PLATE VI. The Famous Mrs. Fair by James Forbes,
Apeda photo.



VII. For the Defense by Elmer Rice.



VIII. The Sign on the Door by Channing Pollock,
White photo.



PLATE IX. The Son-Daughter by George Scarborough and David Belasco.

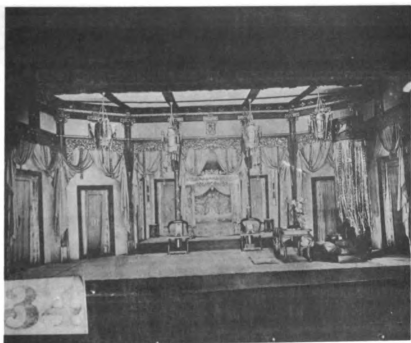


PLATE X. The Son-Daughter by George Scarborough and David Belasco.



PLATE XI. The Son-Daughter by George Scarborough and David Belasco.

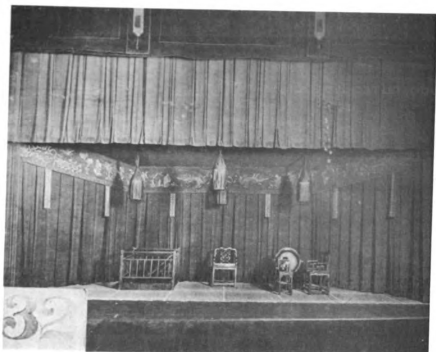


PLATE XII. The Son-Daughter by George Scarborough and David Belasco.

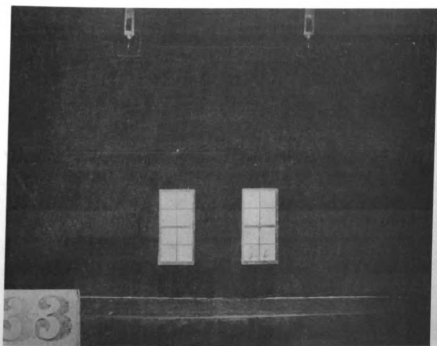


PLATE XIII. The Storm by Langdon McCormick and George Broadhurst, White photo.

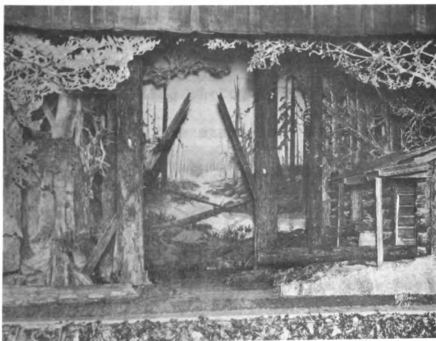


PLATE XIV. A Voice in the Dark by Ralph E. Dyer and Willard Mack.



Stylistic AnalysisThe Acquittal by Rita Weiman (Plate I)

Mass (and space) and Line

Only one setting photograph was located.¹ It shows an interior setting. The stage left and stage right walls join walls which return off stage. The rear wall has a post and lintel opening. Through this opening a second wall with another arch is seen. A third wall is seen beyond this arch. All of the joined walls show open angles, thus forcing the perspective in a realistic manner.

A groundcloth covers the floor and a sagging canvas ceiling utilizes an inaccurately painted, forced-perspective ceiling of half timbering.

Color

The use of "real" furniture provides "real" color but the setting does not gray out in the upper walls. The stencilled wallpaper shows the same value below the cornice as it does above the wainscoting. The second upstage wall shows painted color more appropriate to "secondhand"

¹Plate I.

Romanticism as do the painted, half timbers of the ceiling. Thus one trait of Realism and one of "secondhand" Romanticism are seen.

Texture

Natural texture is seen in "real" furniture but what certifies texture as predominantly realistic is a pointillage treatment of the wallpaper.

Light

Limited comment can be made regarding light. The photograph reveals little more than the use of motivating lights. The graying out process is not seen because of a high intensity light, apparently used for photographic purposes. Thus only one realistic trait is evident.

Ornament

Ornamentation is not highly selective. Although the "bric-a-brac" of Victorian is not apparent, a great deal of decorative detail exists and ornament tends to be closer to the naturalistic end of the continuum because of this.

Composition

Although the setting uses open angled walls, pointillage painting, stencilled wallpaper, and a mixture of "real" and painted dimension--all elements of Realism--it does not achieve the focus of Realism. Instead it utilizes a high degree of ornamentation which denies focus. Inasmuch as the graying out process of light is not used, actor focus is further denied.

Technique

The proscenium form is used. Three-dimensional and painted units are eclectically mixed. The walls are flat scenery walls and are poorly joined together. These techniques are realistic. Similarly, natural shadows seen on the lower side of such objects as the cornice, indicate a use of realistic spotlighting technique.

Production Style

The elements of the setting are basically realistic although ornament illustrates a trait of Naturalism as well. Color also shows a trait of "secondhand" Romanticism. Technique is realistic and the setting is assessed as Realism approaching the naturalistic end of the continuum.

At 9:45 by Owen Davis (Plate II)

Mass (and space) and Line

The one photograph located shows the study or library of a richly appointed home.² Although only a limited portion of the setting is visible, the open angled walls of Realism are seen in the relationship of the upstage and stage right walls. Through the upstage wall opening, a hallway is seen.

Color

As the upper part of the setting is not visible, no conclusion can be reached regarding the graying out process. The walls indicate a romantic trait in the completely painted paneling while "real" color is seen in "real" furniture.

Texture

Although texture of the "real" is seen in the furniture, no pointillage appears in wall treatment.

²Plate II.

Light

The graying out process of light is not discernible. There is, however, reasonably strong focus on the actors. Motivating lights are seen on the desk, the wall, and in the hallway. The two traits define light as realistic.

Ornament

A high degree of selectivity is utilized in dressing the room. Although it appears to be lavishly furnished, this quality of decoration is achieved through selectivity. The total ornamentation is seen in the following: an ornate table is seen on stage right with books, a lamp, flowers, and writing equipment dressing it; an elaborately framed picture is seen on the wall and a wall contains inset bookcases which appear to contain real books. Ornament is realistic.

Composition

The setting uses a realistic floorplan. Completely painted paneling appears to be almost an intrusive use of "secondhand" Romanticism. The natural texture of the real object is seen. Neither the color nor the light create

actor focus through the graying out process. Motivating light is used, however, as is selectivity of ornamentation.

Technique

Both "real" and simulated objects are used although the simulated paneling is more that of "secondhand" Romanticism than of Realism. The motivated light of Realism is achieved. This is seen in high-angled shadows which are the result of realistic spot-lighting technique.

Production Style

Although the paneling treatment is seen as a trait of "secondhand" Romanticism, the other elements and techniques show, for the most part, the traits of selectivity and focus common to Realism and the setting is assessed as realistic.

Beyond the Horizon by Eugene O'Neill
(Plates III and IV)

Mass (and space) and Line

The production photographs of two settings were located. They are examined together because of their

stylistic similarities. The first shows the real wall of an interior setting.³ The second is that of a biomorphic exterior.⁴ Neither photograph exposes the entire setting. Mass and line in the interior setting are seen in a jogged, rear wall which contains a window and two doors. Six pieces of furniture are seen downstage of the wall. The floor is covered with a groundcloth. The wall and downstage edge of the groundcloth are parallel. This implies that the setting is the open-angled realistic interior setting which creates actor focus.

The biomorphic exterior utilizes the planes of scenery common to naturalistic exteriors. Downstage is a broken line of three-dimensional rocks, capable of supporting the actors' weight. These rocks are backed by a real, split-rail fence. Directly behind the fence is a drop painted to give the illusion of trees. It utilizes line in the manner of Selective Realism. Although the planes of the floorplan are naturalistic, strong actor focus is achieved through the simplicity of the drop.

³Plate III.

⁴Plate IV.

Color

The graying out process of color is not visible in either setting. However, in the exterior setting, double shadows are cast by the actor. This indicates Realism's use of two spotlighting instruments with different color media in each. These spotlights, focused on the same area, create this sort of shadow.

Texture

Texture shows realistic traits in both settings. The interior utilizes real objects as furnishings, as well as walls with visible pointillage. The exterior uses rocks of "built" dimension which have applied dimensional texture, as well as pointillage. The fence, although real, is enhanced with the highlights and shadows of paint, thus increasing the natural texture.

Light

The graying out process of Realism is evident in the interior setting. A greater intensity of light is seen on the actors and on the lower walls behind them, than is seen on the upper walls. The colored light, cited above,

is visible. The exterior setting is brightly illuminated and the photographic quality denies a conclusion.

Ornament

Very little ornament is used in either setting. Both are extremely selective and as such are realistic.

Composition

Mass and line in the interior setting show a box-setting with considerable actor focus. The exterior setting, though of a biomorphic nature, utilizes naturalistic planes in a simple manner. The upstage plane is backed by a selectively realistic drop which creates actor focus. Color in both settings is achieved through applied color, light, and the real object. Texture is achieved in the exterior through built textural dimension, the "real," and pointillage. In the interior pointillage and "real" furniture are used. Light enhances focus in the interior. Ornament too, provides actor focus in the exterior. No conclusion could be drawn regarding the exterior's light.

Technique

Both settings use the eclectic painting techniques of Realism. The interior uses painted shadows and highlights on, and surrounding, the doors and windows. Painted shadows and highlights are seen, as well, in the rocks and fence of the exterior. In the interior, the two-directional shadows illustrate realistic spotlighting methodology while double shadows falling in the same direction indicate this technique in the exterior.

Production Style

Even though the exterior setting has the naturalistic trait of the "planes" in its floorplan, as well as a drop which approaches Selective Realism, the other elements and techniques of the setting are those of Realism. The interior setting uses realistic elements and techniques. Both settings are realistic.

Déclassée by Zoe Akins (Plate V)

Mass (and space) and Line

One photograph was located for this production.⁵

It shows little of the setting. Sections of two adjoining walls are all that is visible. There is an upstage wall containing a door which joins a side wall on stage left. Their relationship indicates the open floorplan of Realism.

Color

Considerable use of the "real" object is seen in the setting. No judgment can be made regarding the graying out process because of the quality of the photograph. However, because of the reality of the furniture, it is reasonable to assume a realistic approach in color.

Texture

Due to the quality of the photograph, it is impossible to ascertain the use, or lack of use, of pointillage. The natural texture of three-dimensional objects used in the setting do, however, indicate a basically realistic approach.

⁵Plate V.

Light

A high intensity in light is seen in the setting but it is more strongly focused and intense on the actors. Strong downward shadows can be seen. This downward shadowing is easily observed behind the vase placed against the upstage wall. A scone on the same wall indicates in its shadow, this use of motivating light. Light, therefore, is realistic.

Ornament

The room appears richly furnished. In addition to several pieces of furniture, two ornately framed pictures are seen, as is a floral arrangement and a vase. The room seems complete without being overdressed. As such it is realistic.

Composition

Open-angled walls with realistic color are seen. Carefully selected decor dresses the walls and motivating lights are seen. Light appears to be focused on the playing area. The set provides actor focus through a selective use of ornament.

Technique

The eclectic painting techniques of Realism are seen. The door on stage right appears to cast few internal shadows in the area of its mouldings while the piers to its left have hard, shadow lines. The picture on the upstage wall has no shadow below it, while the sconce and vase do have shadows beneath them. Both the painted and real shadows used in Realism's built dimension are seen. Similarly, the cross angled spotlighting technique of Realism is seen. The sconce and vase--no more than six feet apart--cast shadows in opposite directions.

Production Style

Although color and texture do not provide strong evidence toward assessing the setting as realistic, neither do they suggest any other style. The other elements contribute enough weight to define the setting as realistic.

The Famous Mrs. Fair by James Forbes
(Plate VI)

Mass (and space) and Line

One photograph was located for this production.⁶
It shows only a portion of the upstage wall and the stage left wall. The wall sections are joined in the open-angled realistic manner. A fully draped, dimensional window is seen in the upstage wall. Built dimension is seen in the wainscotting as well. Thus realistic traits are employed to effect mass and line.

Color

Little assessment can be made regarding color because of the quality of the photograph. It is apparent, however, that the furnishings seen in the room are "real," indicating one realistic trait.

Texture

The use of the "real" object establishes texture as natural. No pointillage can be seen on the walls. Whether it exists or not cannot be determined because of the quality of the photograph.

⁶Plate VI.

Light

Motivating lights are seen in matched wall sconces. Because of the intensity of the photographic light, the setting cannot be judged as graying out. Thus only one realistic trait is evidenced.

Ornament

There is no apparent overdressing. The setting is simplified but correct in its detail. It appears to be completely furnished. Rich draperies frame the window below a valance of the same fabric. A wall switch is seen, as is proper door hardware. The furniture is rich but carefully selected to complete the setting. It is realistic in treatment.

Composition

An open-angled setting is used. It is apparently fully finished as a duplicate of reality, but in actuality, it is selective in both ornament and color. The existence or lack of existence of the graying out process in color and light cannot be ascertained due to poor photographic quality.

Technique

Although dimension is constructed in the wainscot, what appears to be a dutchman is seen stage left of the window. It would appear, then, that flat walls were utilized. The shadows cast on the walls by sconces, window, as well as by the furniture, indicate the strong down angles of spotlights. Technique is fully realistic.

Production Style

Although it is difficult to ascertain all of the traits of the setting, due to its photographic quality, the elements and technique are all realistic. The setting is realistic.

For the Defense by Elmer Rice
(Plate VII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Only one production photograph was located.⁷ It is of an open-angled, interior setting which apparently is intended to serve as a modern apartment. The rear wall

⁷Plate VII.

has an opening which reveals another wall containing double doors. The floor is covered with a groundcloth and the ceiling is canvas. A shallow forestage is visible. Mass and line illustrate predominantly realistic traits.

Color

"Real" furniture is used. However, the walls and the cornice are painted. Both are essentially realistic traits but the proliferation of color patterns on the walls denies focus. Color appears, therefore, to suggest one realistic trait and one trait of "secondhand" Romanticism.

Texture

No indication of either the use or lack of pointillage can be discerned due to the quality of the photograph. The textural qualities of "real" furniture are seen however.

Light

Several motivating lights are seen in the setting but photographic requirements appear to have created high intensity light. Thus one trait of Realism is observed, while no conclusion can be reached regarding any other.

Ornament

A reasonably select number of furnishings dress the setting. There is no discernable wall decor. However, due to the ornate quality of the painted walls, actor focus is questionable. It is probable that under the normal lighting conditions of production, the ornate walls would be grayed out, thus exhibiting a strong tendency toward achieving actor focus.

Composition

An open-angled setting uses built dimension in its doors and windows, combining this dimension with a painted cornice. Real furniture is used. The graying out process in both color and light cannot be completely ascertained. A selective use of ornament is seen but selectivity is denied by the ornately painted walls.

Technique

The setting is seen in a proscenium theatre. It combines the three dimensional scenic techniques of Realism in combination with "secondhand" romantic painting techniques. A high angle of lighting, common to realistic spotlighting technique is witnessed through the shadows

cast on the walls, as well as in the shadows cast beneath built dimension.

Production Style

Although "secondhand" romantic traits are seen in the element of color, the elements are predominantly realistic. Technique is also strongly realistic and the setting is assessed as realistic.

The Sign on the Door by Channing Pollock (Plate VIII)

Mass (and space) and Line

One setting photograph was located.⁸ It shows an interior's upstage wall and a portion of an adjoining wall on stage right. They are open-angled. The rear wall has a door and a draped alcove. Inside the alcove is a Buddhist shrine. The open angle witnessed indicates a trait of Realism.

⁸Plate VIII.

Color

Some indication is seen in the setting of a realistic use of color to create focus. The upper sections of the walls are wallpapered and on the offstage sides the wallpaper appears to gray out. "Real" furniture also suggests the realistic approach in color.

Texture

No pointillage is observed. However, the use of "real" furniture suggests that texture is realistic.

Light

A large lamp, suspended center stage over a table, provides the motivating light of Realism. Similarly, because the upper stage right corner appears to have little illumination, the graying out process used by light to enhance the color process is achieved.

Ornament

The setting appears to be elaborately dressed but this is an illusion created by an ornate chest seen in the upstage center area. The Buddha is apparently an actual cast and is backed by what appears to be an oval, brass

frame. Other than these objects, nothing else is visible on the walls. Ornamentation, then, illustrates predominantly realistic traits.

Composition

Mass and line use the open-angled walls of the realistic interior, combined with an actor focus achieved through color and light. Textural reality is visible only in dressing, and ornamentation is selective.

Technique

Built dimension is seen in the doors and the frame surrounding the alcove. The paneled walls, however, have been painted on flats. This is particularly evident up-stage right where a wrinkle is seen in the flat. This, coupled with painted highlights and shadows on the paneled walls, indicates a thoroughly realistic approach. Spotlights cause stage right to left shadows, with strong downward angles, further identifying technique as realistic.

Production Style

All of the elements and technique used are realistic. The production is that of Realism.

The Son-Daughter by George Scarborough
and David Belasco (Plates IX, X,
XI, and XII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Four setting photographs are available. The settings are examined together. Because strong stylistic similarities exist between the first two settings, they are grouped. The same approach is used with the second two settings where similar tendencies are seen. The first setting shows an opulent, Chinese room with the open angles of Realism.⁹ In the upstage wall of the room is an arched opening with a shallow room behind it. In the downstage room, four side walls are seen. There are two to each side of the stage. They have formally balanced doors. The furthest upstage wall is balanced in the same manner. An elaborate bed is flanked by two matched doors. The floor is covered with a groundcloth. A canvas ceiling completes the setting. The open angled floorplan indicates the realistic approach.

The second setting, a Chinese-American apartment, is a three walled interior with a canvas ceiling and a groundcloth.¹⁰ Two windows balance the stage right wall.

⁹ Plate IX.

¹⁰ Plate X.

A door is seen on the stage left wall and two doors are seen in the upstage wall. One door is open, revealing a second room. The setting indicates the realistic trait of the open-angled floorplan.

In the third setting, a solid wall with two matched windows is seen.¹¹ The setting appears to have no side walls and is placed along the downstage edge of the ground-cloth. The simplicity of the wall suggests a trait of Selective Realism but it undoubtedly serves as the wall of a building which is seen at night.

The fourth setting is an open-angled Chinese room with carefully pleated draperies serving as walls.¹² In light of its open angles, it is indicative of the realistic trait.

Color

The first settings suggest the almost unlimited palette of Romanticism. The profusion of color denies actor focus. The night setting is seen as black fabric with windows piercing the blackness. The draped room has

¹¹Plate XI.

¹²Plate XII.

a border, painted with Chinese figures which runs along the entire top of the draperies. Both settings are selective in color in the sense that they do not deny actor focus. No evidence is witnessed of the graying out process in the draped room. Both settings are realistic.

Texture

A considerable amount of built dimension is witnessed in the first two settings. However, extremely flat walls show no pointillage. Both settings exhibit instead, the romantic trait of flat washes of color. The natural texture of "real" furniture is seen in the draped room. No furniture is used in the night scene. The draperies of both settings appear to be velour. In the night scene, the rich highlights of black velour can be seen below and to the left of the stage left window. In the draped room, it is presumed that the quality of texture seen in velour, was desired in achieving a realistic effect. The black velour of the night scene is used to effect the darkness of night. Realism is seen then as dominating the element in the second two settings.

Light

In the first two settings, an extremely high intensity is seen on the upper walls and ceilings. This is caused by footlights. It can be assumed that if the illumination seen in the photograph was the illumination of production, no attempt was made at achieving actor focus through light. Rather the exposure of setting relates the element more to that of Naturalism. Similarly, motivating lights are used but their use is denied by the over illumination of both settings.

In the draped setting, high shadows are cast from hanging objects. The setting does not seem to require the graying out process to achieve focus. Strong focus is achieved by light in the night scene. The light seems to emanate from the two windows. A pool of light is cast in front of them. Light is both motivated and motivating and as such exhibits two strong realistic traits.

Ornament

The detailed approach of Naturalism is seen in the Chinese-American apartment. It utilizes so many objects, both representationally and in sheer volume, that it even suggests the archeological accuracy attributed to

Romanticism. This is true as well in the Chinese setting where ornate hangings cover all the walls. It is difficult to conceive that actor focus could be achieved in either of these settings.

Four large decorative objects are hung from the ceiling of the draped setting. On the stage right side, a railing surrounds a stairway which disappears beneath the stage floor. The border, two chairs, a small table, and what appears to be a large gong, complete the setting. It is a setting of high actor focus and as such the element is realistic. No ornamentation is seen in the night setting other than the built windows. It too, is realistic in its use of ornament.

Composition

The basic floorplans of the first two settings are realistic. Color appears as "secondhand" Romanticism. Similarly, texture exhibits the romantic trait of flat planes of color, while light uses the high illumination of Naturalism. Ornament, in its plethora of detail, appears naturalistic.

The latter two settings achieve the focus of Realism in mass and line as do color and texture. Light in

the draped setting does not create focus while the opposite is true in the night scene. "Real" texture is evident in both settings. The draped setting uses a few, select pieces of furniture, while the night scene uses no ornamentation. Strong actor focus is thus achieved in both settings.

Technique

A considerable amount of built dimension, as well as painted dimension is eclectically mixed in the first two settings. The construction technique can be witnessed in the wrinkled flat seen in the second, upstage right wall of the Chinese setting.¹³ Even though footlights are used, two directional shadows cast by the furniture indicate the refinements developed in realistic spotlighting. Technique in the first two settings is predominantly realistic.

The pleated fabric draperies of the draped setting are a technique uncommon to Realism. It is presumed that they are necessary to the production as draperies. The

¹³Flats bearing too much attached weight tend to bend. When this occurs, the covering material wrinkles or puckers.

black velours of the night scene are the theatre's most common technique in achieving a night effect. As such they are a technique of Realism. The windows in the night scene show the built dimension of Realism. Vertical lines, seen stage right of the windows, further define technique as realistic. These lines are the joints between flats. Spotlights cause the furniture to cast shadows in the draped setting and it is probable that they also enhance the motivated light from the windows seen in the night scene. The form is proscenium. Technique is realistic.

Production Style

In the first two settings, mass and line exhibit realistic traits. Color and texture suggest "secondhand" Romanticism. Light appears to be naturalistic. Ornament is naturalistic while technique is predominantly realistic. These two settings are considered to be realistic although strongly associated with Naturalism.

In the second two settings, mass and line exhibit predominantly realistic traits. A secondary trait, belonging to Selective Realism is seen in the night setting. Realism is seen in color, texture, light, and ornament. Technique, too, exhibits the methodology of Realism. These

two settings utilize the strong selectivity of Realism. The entire production is assessed as Realism with strong naturalistic tendencies.

The Storm by Langdon McCormick and George Broadhurst (Plate XIII)

Mass (and space) and Line

One setting photograph was located. It is a biomorphic exterior showing a cabin in a heavily timbered wilderness.¹⁴ The photograph shows the apron of the stage to be covered with leaves which appear to be growing out of the orchestra pit. In the first plane a cabin and trees are seen. In the second plane is a drop which shows a river flowing through a heavily forested area. The cabin is seen as three dimensional. The trees are two dimensional. The setting utilizes the traits of "secondhand" Romanticism.

Color

Color is used to simulate reality with the palette of "secondhand" Romanticism. Only the leaves on the apron and a small strip of what appears to be an artificial grass

¹⁴Plate XIII.

give the illusion of reality. Although Realism is seen in these objects, color is predominantly that of "secondhand" Romanticism.

Texture

There is no visible pointillage. Color is achieved through flat washes. The roof of the cabin as well as the grass and leaves cited above appear to be real. Similarly, there is built texture on the downstage trees, but the roof and the trees have been painted as well. "Secondhand" Romanticism dominates in the element.

Light

No definitive conclusion can be reached regarding light. The setting is completely illuminated and it is surmised that extremely high intensity lighting was used to photograph the setting.

Ornament

With the exception of the realistic grass and leaves, as well as a barrel which can be seen on the porch, all detail is painted. Ornament is that of "secondhand" Romanticism.

Composition

Mass and line are seen as the planes of an exterior setting which is biomorphic in nature. Actor focus is not apparent. Color is completely that of "secondhand" Romanticism in its use of the broad palette of color. Although texture and ornament, as viewed in the real boards of the cabin roof, the trees, the apron with its leaves, and the strip of grass, suggest Realism, the painterly traits of "secondhand" Romanticism are dominant. No viable conclusion can be made regarding light.

Technique

The stage is part of a proscenium theatre. The forestage is shortened. Shadows suggest multi-angled, spotlighting techniques. The downstage porch post casts a shadow in an upstage right direction while the trees on stage left appear to cast shadows directly upstage. The latter effect is undoubtedly caused by photographic lighting but the shadow from the post can be attributed to a spotlight. Similarly, shadows under the porch roof suggest that the overhead angles of spotlights caused them. Technique, then, is basically realistic.

Production Style

Two elements exist as "secondhand" Romanticism. Two others show realistic traits but are basically those of "secondhand" Romanticism. Technique is predominantly realistic. The setting is that of "secondhand" Romanticism but is tempered by realistic technique.

A Voice in the Dark by Ralph E. Dyar
and Willard Mack (Plate XIV)

Mass (and space) and Line

Only one setting was located for this production. It is an interior setting and appears to be a legal office.¹⁵ The back wall of the setting is visible, as well as a portion of the stage left wall. These two walls form the open angle common to Realism. A groundcloth covers the floor.

Color

Color treatment appears to utilize the "real" object. Much of the back wall is covered with paneling.

¹⁵plate XIV.

The paneling has a glossy finish. However, the indented sections of the upstage left panel and the door appear as if they had been painted with scene paint and then varnished. The color of the higher section of the back wall--above the paneling--appears to be a broadly washed color. It is darkened to a degree where it will not distract. Actor focus is achieved. Color is, thereby, realistic.

Texture

Pointillage does not appear to have been used. Realism does show in the natural textures of such "real" objects as furniture.

Light

Motivating lights are not visible in the setting. However, the realistic trait of actor focus is achieved in the down center playing area.

Ornament

The setting appears to be simply dressed. A desk and chair are visible. The desk holds a book, a wire basket, and some papers. A large bookcase, filled with bound volumes, is recessed in the stage right side of the

upstage wall. A coat rack is visible. The simplicity of the decor defines the element as realistic.

Composition

Mass and line show the open-angled setting of Realism. Realism is seen in color, as well, where the gray-ing out process appears to exist toward the top of the setting. The "real" object is evident. Light provides actor focus. Ornament is selective.

Technique

The groundcloth and upstage wall are parallel, suggesting a proscenium theatre. Painted scenery is observed in the paneling, in the door, and above the paneling. At the same time, sections of the paneling appear as built dimension. Thus the eclectic, realistic technique is utilized. Double shadows are cast by the actors, illustrating the cross-angled, spotlighting techniques used in Realism.

Production Style

Although no evidence of pointillage is seen, all the traits and techniques are those of Realism and the setting is assessed as realistic.

Summary of the Season

Nine of the ten productions selected for this season were realistic. The remaining production, The Storm, was found to exhibit a preponderance of the traits of "second-hand" Romanticism. Although it showed realistic technique, it was assessed as "secondhand" Romanticism. One production, The Son-Daughter, showed an interesting mixture of Naturalism and Realism. Two of its settings were so close to the naturalistic end of the continuum as to make it almost impossible to differentiate. The other two settings were strongly realistic. One setting even contained a secondary trait commonly associated with Selective Realism and Symbolism.

The Acquittal, Beyond the Horizon, and For the Defense, were found elements or techniques of Naturalism, "secondhand" Romanticism, or in one instance, Selective Realism. The Acquittal illustrated enough strong naturalistic traits to place it close to Naturalism on the continuum. For the Defense illustrated one trait of "second-hand" Romanticism. In Beyond the Horizon, the biomorphic exterior illustrated an eclectic use of traits. Although color, texture, ornament, and technique were associated

with Realism, the floor plan was naturalistic and the drop was related to Selective Realism.

Two recurring tendencies in the season require particular comment. Although it is conceivable that because of photographic necessities, greater light was needed for production photographs, it would seem that the use of footlights was still a widespread technique. Conversely, it would appear that pointillism was not, as yet, in widespread use.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW YORK THEATRICAL SEASON OF 1922-1923

During this season ten productions met the standards of selection. Eight of the productions met the standard of one hundred performance runs. Two, The Adding Machine and Roger Bloomer, ran less than one hundred performances but fulfilled two other criteria. Both received favorable critical comment at the time of their openings and both were anthologized. One production, Icebound, is treated in a different manner because a photograph of its setting could not be located.¹ The settings of the following plays are analyzed:

The Adding Machine by Elmer Rice

The Fool by Channing Pollock

It is the Law by Elmer Rice

The Last Warning by Thomas Fallon

Rain by John Colton and Clemence Randolph

¹A tentative assessment of its setting is made on the basis of the script. It is examined last because its setting can only be surmised.

Roger Bloomer by John Howard Lawson

Sun Up by Lula Vollmer

Uptown West by Lincoln Osborn

Whispering Wires by Kate McLaurin

Icebound by Owen Davis

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS

Plates XV-XXVI



PLATE XV. The Adding Machine by Elmer Rice, Vandamn photo.

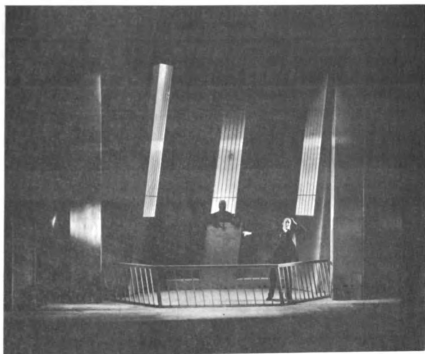


PLATE XVI. The Adding Machine by Elmer Rice, Vandamn photo.



PLATE XVII. The Fool by Channing Pollock, White photo.



PLATE XVIII. It is the Law by Elmer Rice, White photo.



PLATE XIX. The Last Warning by Thomas Fallon, White photo.



PLATE XX. Rain by John Colton and Clemence Randolph, White photo.



PLATE XXI. Rodger Bloomer by John Howard Lawson.

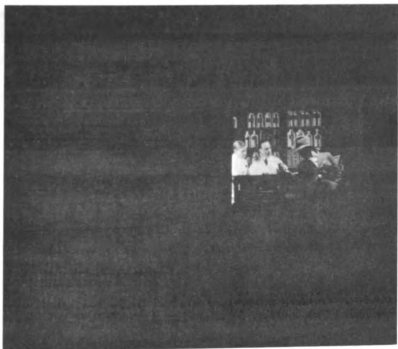


PLATE XXII. Rodger Bloomer by John Howard Lawson



PLATE XXIII. Rodger Bloomer by John Howard Lawson.

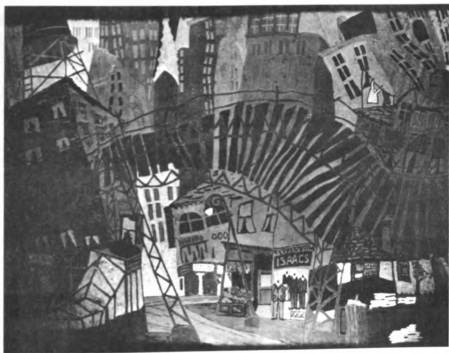


PLATE XXIV. Sun Up by Lula Vollmer.



PLATE XXV. Uptown West by Lincoln Osborn.



PLATE XXVI. Whispering Wires by Kate McLaurin,
Apeda photo.



Stylistic Analysis

The Adding Machine by Elmer Rice (Plates XV and XVI)

Mass (and space) and Line

Six photographs were located. Of these, two are selected for analysis. They are examined separately because they represent the two stylistic tendencies of the production.

In the first setting, a distorted courtroom is seen.² Three, oblique, barred windows are seen upstage. In front of the central windows is a judicial bench which cants at the same angle. Downstage a railing parallel to the bench crosses the stage. Its vertical supports cant in the opposite direction of the window and bench. This distortion is an expressionistic trait. The judge's platform is placed at the downstage edge of three high steps. These steps suggest the Jessnerian trait of Expressionism.

Color

Color in the setting is of "the color of light" and is discussed under that element.

²Plate XV.

Texture

Pointillage is heavily applied to the setting. This is particularly obvious on the judicial bench. More than one color seems to have been applied, suggesting that the expressionist requirement of changeable color has been met.

Light

Focus is created through light in the playing area downstage of the judicial bench. The three canted windows pierce the darkness of a void. Behind the judicial bench is a mannequin which symbolizes a judge. The intense light of the canted, up center window creates focus on this symbol-figure. The multi-valued shadows cast by the actor indicate the use of colored light. All of these are expressionistic traits.

Ornament

The mannequin-symbol is the "specific" ornament of setting. As such and because of the focus it is given by the window, it illustrates a trait of Expressionism.

Composition

The mass and lines of the canted setting are enhanced by light. The light enhances focus and stresses, even more, the oblique lines. Colored light points the symbol, and creates an emotionally charged setting.

Technique

Inside the proscenium opening, two portals frame the stage. They suggest a desire to cut down stage space. Similarly, the "Jessnerian" steps indicate a shifting problem as well as a storage problem. Both techniques suggest the multi-settings or "stations" of Expressionism.

In the second setting, mass is seen as dominant in a two-walled interior setting.³ The two walls are joined at a ninety-degree angle.. The angle is not that of Naturalism but a highly selective Realism. No attempt is made in the floor plan to suggest any more than a portion of a room. The setting relates to the fourth trait of Selective Realism wherein a portion of an architectural order is used.

³Plate XVI.

Color

No painted detail is seen. Color is simplified as a flat mass. Both traits are those of Selective Realism.

Texture

Natural textures are not apparent in the door and window seen in the walls. The bed, chair and dresser appear to be real and thus have real texture. Pointillage is observed in the walls. Two traits of Selective Realism are used, but the texture of the furniture, although realistic, does not deny the element as in the style of Selective Realism.

Light

Light is used to "point" the acting areas. Strong focus is seen on the actress in front of the dresser and on the bed. The void is enhanced by this trait. Last, a dismal quality is achieved by the light, thus achieving the "mood" of Expressionism. All three traits, then, are expressionistic.

Ornament

An extremely selective use of ornament is seen. The dresser shows little decor. Above the bed is seen a motivating light which is the only other object in the room. These traits place the setting near the symbolist end of the continuum.

Composition

The setting has dominant mass rather than line in the two-walled setting. Void is used. Texture is of little importance to the designer, and ornament suggests intensive selectivity. Light creates mood and focus.

Technique

The portal common to both Symbolism and Selective Realism, as well as to Expressionism, is used, suggesting that multi-scenes are seen. The spotlighting techniques developed with Symbolism and Selective Realism, and enhanced by Expressionism, are responsible for the tightly focused lighting seen in the photographs.

Production Style

The elements of the first setting are entirely expressionistic, as is technique. The second setting suggests that the elements are extremely selective, approaching, thereby, the symbolistic end of the continuum. The techniques are both selective realist and expressionist. The production style tends to be expressionistic although it is eclectic in its stylistic combinations.⁴

The Fool by Channing Pollock (Plate XVII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Three photographs were located. One was chosen for analysis as being completely representative of the settings.⁵ It shows an open angled box set, with a ground cloth. A ceiling appears to have been used as well. It is realistic in floor plan.

⁴The settings seen in the other photographs bear this out. Four are completely Expressionistic, one is Selective Realism which tends toward Symbolism and one has equal tendencies of Selective Realism and "painted" Expressionism.

⁵Plate XVII.

Color

Real color is seen in such objects as a chandelier, a picture, draperies, a map, a calendar, and furniture. The graying out process of Realism cannot be assessed because of low angled light. This light intensely illuminates the upper walls and, in all likelihood, comes from a photographer's lighting equipment. Thus one trait of Realism is seen while the second cannot be ascertained.

Texture

The real objects cited above illustrate the realistic trait of natural texture in the "real" object. A second is seen in a heavy pointillage which covers the walls.

Light

Little assessment can be made regarding focus because of the photographic light. It does appear, however, that the actors down right and down left center appear to be in more highly focused light than do any of the others. Thus one realistic trait is suggested. The sconces seen on the stage left wall are a trait of Realism, as in the chandelier.

Ornament

Very little ornament is seen in the setting. The objects cited under color are illustrative of this selectivity. The element is that of Realism.

Composition

An open angled setting is used to create focus. Color illustrates a dependence on the real object as does texture. Texture however uses pointillage. Motivating lights are seen and ornament is selective, thus creating focus.

Technique

The downstage edge of the ground-cloth is parallel with the upstage wall, suggesting a proscenium stage. Painted flat scenery is used. Several dutchmen visible in the upstage wall indicate this. The door on stage right is of "built" dimension but it has been given painted highlights and shadows. The fireplace on stage left has been painted to look like marble. Thus the setting uses both real and painted scenery. The cross angled spotlighting techniques of Realism are visible in shadows cast by the

actors and is particularly evident in the shadow cast by the door on stage right and by the sconces on stage left.

Production Style

The production is realistic. This is evidenced by all the elements and the technique.

It is the Law by Elmer Rice
(Plate XVIII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Only one setting photograph was located. It is an interior setting showing only a portion of its upstage wall.⁶ Because this wall is parallel to the downstage edge of the ground cloth, it is presumed that the setting is the open angled interior commonly found in Realism. Two windows and an open entryway are seen in the wall.

Color

Color creates the focus of Realism, as it grays out toward the top of the setting. This is achieved through pointillage. It is heavily textured at the bottom

⁶Plate XVIII.

of the wall and fades out on a line above the windows and entryway.

Texture

Both of the textural traits of Realism are evident. The natural texture of "real" objects and furniture is seen along with pointillage.

Light

The graying out process of color is enhanced by light. Shadows in the photograph suggest strong down angles of lighting. Motivating lights are not evident but the angles of light suggest the realistic trait of motivated light.

Ornament

One picture is seen on the wall. The furniture suggests that the totality of realistic decor is achieved in its use. Thus the few items of ornament that are used, are seen below a line level with the actors' heads. Realistic focus is effectively achieved.

Composition

Although the trait of the open angled setting is not certain, the elements of color, texture, light, and ornament all have the strong and definite realistic traits that enhance focus.

Technique

The three dimensional and painted scenery of Realism is utilized. A dutchman seen above the window up center illustrates the use of flats. The entryway, like the windows, uses three-dimensional pieces. However much of the decor over this entryway is painted. The parallel wall and ground cloth suggest a proscenium theatre. The double shadows cast by the actors suggest not only the cross angles of spotlights, but the softened second shadows of more than one color media. Technique, then, is realistic.

Production Style

Although a completely viable conclusion cannot be drawn regarding the element of mass and line, the other elements and the techniques are all realistic. The production style is Realism.

The Last Warning by Thomas Fallon
(Plate XIX)

Mass (and space) and Line

Two production photographs were located. The one chosen for analysis thoroughly represented the elements and techniques of both. An interior shows a partial upstage wall which utilizes two jogged sections in creating an open angle with the stage left wall. In so doing, it illustrates a realistic trait.⁷ The upstage wall contains a recessed window. The downstage jog backs a short flight of stairs leading to a doorway.

Color

Color appears to gray out to a limited degree in the walls, thus indicating a trait of Realism. It suggests, however, that the broad washes of color related to "secondhand" Romanticism were used to effect this "greying out." Color appears to have a strong tendency toward the "real." Cracks are painted in the walls. "Real" furniture is used and furniture that was constructed for the production is colored to appear as real as possible.

⁷Plate XIX.

Texture

Although pointillage is not evident, the "real" furnishings illustrate natural texture. Such objects as chairs, plates, and a tablecloth indicate this realistic trait.

Light

One motivating light is seen in the setting. Placed on the table, it appears to achieve dominant focus. Strong light is focused on the actors around the table. Two traits of realistic light are, thereby, utilized.

Ornament

The setting appears to be selective in its use of decor. A grandfather clock is seen, as is a trestle table. No pictures are visible on the walls although a mirror is seen above the stairs. Although wainscotting is used, it is not distracting. Strong focus is achieved.

Composition

The open angled walls of the setting gray out through color. Pointillage is not seen in texture. Texture is, instead, seen in the use of "real" furniture and

decor. Light is both motivating and highly focused while ornament achieves focus through selectivity.

Technique

A small indentation in the fabric, seen downstage of the bannister, indicates the realistic trait of flat construction. Some of the dimension seen in the setting is built. This is particularly obvious in framework surrounding the recessed window, in the door and in the wainscot of the upstage wall. Highlights and shadows have been added with paint and the wainscot on the stairwall is entirely painted. This eclectic approach is a realistic trait. The actors and the furniture cast crossed shadows, indicating the realistic technique of spotlighting. The seams of the drop parallel the upstage wall, suggesting a proscenium theatre.

Production Style

All the elements and techniques show a preponderance of realistic traits. Only in the "broad washes of color" does the trait of "secondhand" Romanticism appear. The production is realistic.

Rain by John Colton and
Clemence Randolph (Plate XX)

Mass (and space) and Line

Only one photograph was located. It is most inadequate in what it reveals of the setting and no judgment can be made regarding the first element.⁸ The setting appears to be an interior.

Color

Although the graying out process is not observed, several traits can be seen. The color of "real" objects are seen in a lamp, a chair, and in the draperies hung in the door opening. Similarly, the groundcloth appears to be painted boards. These traits indicate Realism while "broad washes of color" on the wall indicates a trait of "secondhand" Romanticism.

Texture

The "real" objects cited under color attest to "natural" texture. Pointillage however does not appear to have been used.

⁸Plate XX.

Light

The gas light hanging in the setting illustrates the use of motivating light. Similarly, considerably more intensity is seen on the actors than on the wall above them. Thus the realistic trait of focus is employed.

Ornament

In what little can be ascertained from the photograph, selectivity of decor seems to exist. The objects cited under color and the one picture used suggest that the process of selectivity has been utilized in creating actor focus.

Composition

Although no assessment can be made regarding mass and line, color utilizes the "real" object and the broad color washes of "secondhand" Romanticism. "Real" objects are used to achieve natural texture. Motivating light and focused light are seen while focus appears to be achieved through a selective use of ornament.

Technique

The puckering quality of flat scenery that has been painted with dry-pigment paints is seen on the wall. Built dimension is seen in the door frame but the door frame has been painted as well, thus illustrating the eclectic mixture of techniques found in Realism. Similarly highlights and shadows have been painted on the picture frame.

The cross angles and colors of realistic spotlighting are seen in the shadows cast on the wall by the gas lamp.

All the techniques appear as realistic.

Production Style

With the exception of mass and line, which cannot be assessed, all of the elements exhibit at least one realistic trait. Color exhibits a secondary trait which is related to "secondhand" Romanticism. Technique is solidly realistic and the production is assessed as realistic.

Roger Bloomer by John Howard Lawson
(Plates XXI, XXII, and XXIII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Fourteen setting photographs were located. Of these, three are selected for analysis. Each is representative of the stylistic trends seen in the production and they are examined separately for this reason.

The first setting examined is a small interior setting. It is seen in the lower stage left area of a large, black void.⁹ The setting exhibits a high degree of focus and has the traits of recognizable architecture and void common to the intertwined styles of Symbolism and Selective Realism, as well as Expressionism. The small playing area is seen with only two walls. It appears to be a pharmacy.

Color

Focus is achieved through stylized bottles and containers painted on the rear wall and illuminated by what appears to be colored light. The painted bottles and containers suggest a trait of Expressionism. The

⁹Plate XXI.

light piercing the void appears to be colored and the void is that of the intertwined styles as well as of Expressionism.

Texture

The objects painted on the wall suggest the trait used in the intertwined styles wherein real texture is not required in painted details.

Light

Light creates the focus called for by both the intertwined styles and Expressionism. The actors and the setting are pointed. The irrelevant becomes part of the void as the exceptionally small playing area is spotlighted.

Ornament

The bottles and containers painted on the back wall apparently are used as a symbol thus suggesting a trait of Symbolism as well as of Expressionism.

Composition

Extremely strong focus is witnessed in the small setting which is seen in a void of blackness. Focus is

seen in a painted symbol and in colored light. Ornament is painted without pointillage.

Technique

A proscenium stage is seen in the photograph. The multi-scene setting common to both the "intertwined styles" and Expressionism is used but as the "intertwined styles" use balanced, sectioned openings, the setting appears to relate more to Expressionism. Spotlighting technique is extremely refined, achieving its tight focus both in front light as well as side lighting. The technique is common to both the "intertwined styles" and Expressionism.

Mass (and space) and Line

In the second setting five offices are seen in a black void.¹⁰ Two distinct features are apparent. The offices are suspended in the void at a second story level. Four of the five offices are almost exactly alike. The fifth office is a manager's office and is larger. Each of the offices uses the right angled floor plan of Naturalism. However, the similarity of each office, combined with the fact that each office is entered from another

¹⁰ Plate XXII.

instead of through a corridor raises doubts about the trait being naturalistic. This is further enhanced by the void, a trait of both Symbolism and Selective Realism, as well as of Expressionism. No conclusion can be ascertained.

Color

Symbol, common to both the Symbolism and Expressionism, is seen in the repetitive quality of color in each of the offices.

Texture

No pointillage is observed but the photograph shows the setting at such a distance from the camera that either its use or lack of use cannot be ascertained.

Light

Light creates focus in each of the similar settings. The light not only picks the repetitive settings out of the void but each setting is illuminated from the same angle. Although focused light in a black void is also a trait of Symbolism and Selective Realism, it is commonly used in this setting to point exact repetition in each office. In this way it appears as a symbol more akin to Expressionism than Symbolism.

Ornament

With the exception of a bulletin board seen in the office with the first door--the door that each character must enter--decor is duplicated exactly in each of the four offices. Even the window shades are at the same height. It would appear that again, the element suggests the symbol of Expressionism.

Composition

A second story of in-line offices is viewed in a void. Each of the offices shows the same color. Texture cannot be ascertained. Light creates focus. Symbol seems to be achieved with a repetitive lighting plan.

Technique

The photograph shows the stage form to be proscenium. The angles of lighting discussed under "light" illustrate the refined lighting technique common to both Expressionism and the "intertwined styles."

Mass (and space) and Line

The third setting analyzed is a large painted drop which represents a city scene.¹¹ Mass and line show oblique structures or vertical structures which flare outward as they rise as well as buildings which illustrate the curved qualities seen in Expressionist forms. The drop is completely Expressionistic.

Color

Significant value changes are witnessed in the drop. These suggest a wide range of color which is probably expressionistic.

Texture

The drop appears to have pointillist texture, thus fulfilling the expressionist trait whereby color change can be effected.

Light

As the drop is evenly illuminated, focus appears in the drop itself.¹² However, the downstage center of

¹¹Plate XXIII.

¹²Even illumination of a drop is a technique common to all styles.

the drop appears to have slightly more light on it, thus suggesting actor focus.

Light, then, neither truly denies nor suggests expressionist traits.

Ornament

Ornament is not seen in the conventional sense. No decor is utilized in front of the drop.

Composition

Mass and line are the dominant element of the style. Canted forms coupled with flaring forms, and distorted curves are seen. Color appears to have been used to create considerable contrast. Texture appears to be pointillist. Light shows some actor focus although the drop is fully illuminated. Ornament has no application in analysis.

Technique

The technique of the drop, a device common to almost all styles indicates several points that are evident in a total examination of the setting. The first setting viewed in relationship to the second indicates that these

settings were part of a large unit, covered with black draperies.¹³ Each small setting could be exposed by the removal of black draperies. The same device exposed the upper setting. It is conceivable that the drop may have been used to cover scene changes behind it. These multi-scenes were common to Expressionism and it is reasonable to assume that the technique is that of Expressionism.

Production Style

The first setting illustrates an equal number of the traits of Selective Realism and Symbolism and Expressionism. The second setting exhibits two traits of Selective Realism and Symbolism and four traits of Expressionism. The third setting is completely expressionistic. Overall technique responds to a requirement of dramatic Expressionism and thus appears to be expressionistic.

Thus the production style is Expressionistic although the traits of Symbolism and Selective Realism do appear.¹⁴

¹³The other photographs located bear this out completely. Small settings are exposed all along the bottom of the void.

¹⁴In the fourteen settings, ten appear to utilize elements and techniques of both styles while four are dominantly expressionistic.

Sun Up by Lulu Vollmer
(Plate XXIV)

Mass (and space) and Line

One setting was located. It shows the back wall and an open angled side wall of a cabin interior.¹⁵ The open angled walls indicate a trait of Realism. Over the playing area is seen the inclined underside of the roof. Through a door in the back wall is seen a further extension of the roof and a wall. Both the roof and the wall suggest the setting to be realistic.

Color

Color appears to have been boldly used. All the walls have applied paint suggesting a trait of "second-hand" Romanticism. This seems to be in essential conflict with a realistic use of colored light for the double shadows caused by color media can be seen behind "real" objects hanging on the wall. Thus a realistic trait is suggested as well.

¹⁵Plate XXIV.

Texture

Pointillage does not appear to have been used in the walls. It does appear, however, in the two tables and one stool. Similarly, the natural texture of other furniture and ornament is witnessed. The fireplace, which is painted with the planes of color common to "secondhand" Romanticism has built dimension beneath this painting. Although "secondhand" Romanticism does appear, the element is more that of a "Theatrical" Realism.

Light

As cited under color, color media are used, illustrating the realistic trait of spotlighting. The sky seen through the door and a window is illuminated as well, and spotlights have been used outside the openings to create the realistic effect of daylight entering the room.

Ornament

The decor seen in the room is carefully chosen to represent the place and the mood. Deer antlers support a basket, a coat and a bat. A rifle is seen over the mantle. Three small objects dress the mantle. A cauldron is seen in the fireplace and one is seen below it. The small table

holds a pitcher and basin. A woodbox is seen. There are only five pieces of furniture. The interior part of the setting uses the selectivity of Realism to dress the room. Through the window is seen a small leafed branch. Masking the bottom of the wall outside is seen what appears to be a small strip of grass. The selective approach of Realism is seen outside the cabin as well.

Composition

Mass and line illustrate the open angles of realistic interiors.

Color although suggesting one trait of "secondhand" Romanticism is predominantly realistic. Texture uses a limited amount of pointillage and the real light creates natural shadow. Ornament is selective.

Technique

The setting suggests the proscenium form through the parallel upstage wall, exterior wall, and sky cyclorama. The spotlighting of Realism cited under color and light is predominantly realistic. The setting walls are constructed of flats. A dutchman can be seen above the window illustrating this technique of Realism. There appears to be

little built thickness in the window or door, suggesting a technique of "secondhand" Romanticism. The majority of traits, however, are realistic, and technique is realistic.

Production Style

Although color and the lack of built thickness suggests "secondhand" Romanticism, the elements and technique are predominantly realistic. The setting is realistic.

Uptown West by Lincoln Osborn
(Plate XXV)

Mass (and space) and Line

The setting shows the upstage wall and a stage right wall which form the open angle of Realism.¹⁶ The setting is an interior. In the upstage wall are seen two openings. One reveals another doorway. The other appears to open onto a hallway.

¹⁶Plate XXV.

Color

Although this photographic quality is poor there seems to be some graying out beyond that which can be attributed to light. This suggests a realistic trait. Similarly, Realism is seen in the decor which utilizes "real" furniture and dressing.

Texture

Although the photographic quality is very poor, the center section of the upstage wall suggests the realistic trait of pointillage. Similarly the natural texture of the "real" object is seen in the "real" furniture and the decorative objects.

Light

Intense actor focus is seen. The corners of the room are darkened as are the two alcoves. Motivating lights are not seen but the cross-angles of spotlights using color media are seen in the shadows cast by the large vase.

Ornament

Focus is created through selectivity. A piano and bench are seen as is the previously cited vase. A small writing table is seen on stage left. One picture is seen on the wall. The piano and table have objects on them but they do not distract. Focus is enhanced and the element is realistic.

Composition

Focus is achieved through the open-angled walls. This appears to be true in color as well. "Real" texture is seen in decor and pointillage is suggested. Light creates focus and ornament is used selectively.

Technique

The open-angled walls suggest a proscenium stage. Three dimensional scenery is seen in built door molding with painted highlights and shadows. The modern spotlight techniques illustrated under "color" are used. All the techniques are realistic.

Production Style

All the elements and the technique illustrate one or more traits of Realism. No other traits are observed. The setting is realistic.

Whispering Wires by Kate McLaurin (Plate XXVI)

Mass (and space) and Line

One setting photograph was located.¹⁷ It shows a room at night. One wall with an open door is seen. As no other wall is visible, the focus and the open angle of Realism cannot be assessed, although the other elements suggest that mass and line are Realistic.

Color

A "real" chair and table are seen in the room. The highly varnished quality of both is indicative of "real" color.

Texture

Wallpaper seen in the upper right corner of the photograph appears to have pointillist qualities. "Real"

¹⁷Plate XXVI.

furniture is used. In addition to the furniture cited above, a secretary is seen to the left of the door. Texture is realistic.

Light

The setting is darkened by a lack of illumination while intense light is seen in the playing area. It is particularly strong from one side, highlighting the actors faces. The other sides of their faces are well illuminated, however, thus suggesting the multi-angled spotlights of Realism. Motivating light is not seen.

Ornament

The use of the real objects as decor suggests a trait of Realism. A wall switch is seen by the door and what appears to be a mirror is partially obscured by the door. A book is seen on the table. Nothing else is visible and the selective nature of the decor indicates Realism.

Composition

Mass and line are judged to be realistic in focus because of the compositional pattern of the other elements.

Color uses "real" objects. Texture appears to be pointillist although the setting is darkened by a highly focused light. Similarly ornament is extremely selective and indicates strong focus as well.

Technique

Theatre form is not visible. The composition of elements suggest it is a proscenium stage. The realistic and extremely effective use of spotlights used in the acting area and the three-dimensional quality evident in cast shadows from the door and door frame indicate the built dimension of Realism.

Production Style

Although mass and line can only be surmised as realistic, all of the elements and technique illustrate at least one strong realistic trait. No other stylistic elements appear. The setting is assessed as realistic.

Icebound by Owen Davis

Davis describes the first setting, the parlor of a Maine farmhouse, to be "as dull and drab as the lives

of those who have lived within its walls."¹⁸ He writes that in the third act, "the white slip covers used to cover the chairs in the first act, have been removed."¹⁹

. . . At back center folding doors, now partly open, lead to dining room. In this room may be seen the dining room table, back of the table is a window looking out on the farm yard, now deep in Midwinter snow. At right is an open fireplace with a log fire. Below fireplace a door to hall. Up left door to a small vestibule in which is the outside door. Down left a window overlooking snowbound countryside. The clock above the fireplace is set for quarter past four. Several straight-backed chairs and a woodbox by fireplace. A sewing table and lamp at center. A sewing machine near window at left, a wall cupboard on the wall right of the doors to the dining room. An old sofa down left, two chairs at right.²⁰

Davis appears to be describing either a naturalistic or realistic setting. Real rooms, real ornamentation, the color of the real are all described in detail. It would appear then that the author desired a setting within the realistic continuum. No further stylistic analysis than this one is possible with the limited evidence available.

¹⁸Owen Davis, Icebound (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1923), p. 4.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 93.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 42-43.

Summary of the Season

Of the ten productions selected for this season, eight were realistic. Two productions were found to be expressionistic. The Adding Machine, although exhibiting settings using elements and techniques of both Expressionism and Selective Realism and Symbolism, is predominantly expressionistic. Roger Bloomer expresses the same eclectic use of elements and techniques and is also expressionistic.

One production, Sun Up, was realistic although two traits of "secondhand" Romanticism were witnessed. Two other realistic productions, The Last Warning and Rain, each exhibited one secondary trait of "secondhand" Romanticism.

Several occurrences require comment regarding the season. In this season, Expressionism is first witnessed. Similarly, a more substantial use of Selective Realism and Symbolism is seen.

Three tendencies are observed in technique as well. Footlighting does not appear to be as significant in this season. Lighting technique is also advanced in spotlighting methodology. Focused light is for the most

part, highly effective. Last, pointillage appears to be more commonly used.

CHAPTER X

THE NEW YORK THEATRICAL SEASON 1925-1926

During this season, twelve productions met the standards of selection. Eight productions played in excess of one hundred performances. Three, The Bride of the Lamb, Kongo, and The Mud Turtle, played in excess of fifty performances and received favorable critical notice. One production, Lucky Sam McCarver, although running only twenty-nine performances, is recognized as representative though its inclusion in an anthology.¹ Three of the productions are treated in a different manner.² The Enemy, and The Mud Turtle, are so treated because photographs of their settings could not be located. For a third production, The Great God Brown, one inadequate photograph was located, showing only a bookcase and a table and necessitating a different treatment of the production.

¹Montrose J. Moses, ed., Representative American Dramas (revised.; Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1941), pp. 673-720.

²The Enemy, The Mud Turtle, and The Great God Brown are examined last because their setting can only be surmised.

The Bride of the Lamb by William Hurlbut

Craig's Wife by George Kelley

The Great Gatsby by Owen Davis

The Green Hat by Michael Arlen

Kongo by Chester deVonde and Kilbourn Gordon

Lucky Sam McCarver by Sidney Howard

Lulu Belle by Edward Sheldon and Charles MacArthur

Shanghai Gesture by John Colton

Twelve Miles Out by William A. McGuire

The Enemy by Channing Pollock

The Mud Turtle by Elliot Lester

The Great God Brown by Eugene O'Neill

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS

Plates XXVII-XXXV

PLATE XXVII. The Bride of the Lamb by William Hurlbut,
Vandamn photo.



PLATE XXVIII. Craig's Wife by George Kelley.

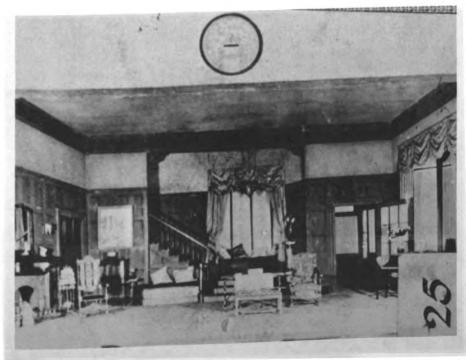


PLATE XXIX. The Great Gatsby by Owen Davis, White photo.



PLATE XXX. The Green Hat by Michael Arlen, White photo.



PLATE XXXI. Kongo by Chester deVonde and Kilbourn Gordon.



PLATE XXXII. Lucky Sam McCarver by Sidney Howard.



PLATE XXXIII. Lulu Belle by Edward Sheldon and Charles MacArther, White photo.



PLATE XXXIV. Shanghai Gesture by John Colton, White photo.

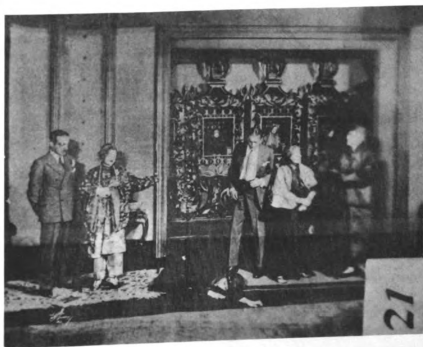


PLATE XXXV. Twelve Miles Out by William A. McGuire.



Stylistic Analysis

The Bride of the Lamb by
William Hurlbut (Plate XXVII)

Mass (and space) and Line

One setting photograph was located. It shows an interior setting with a jogged back wall and jogged side walls.³ A ceiling cannot be seen. In the upstage wall are French doors which open into a garden area. A wall and trellis are seen through these doors. A window is seen in the upstage right jog and a door is seen downstage right. The upstage left wall shows a door opening which reveals another room. A door is seen downstage left.

Although the walls appear to be joined at right angles, the trait does not imply Naturalism for the jogs are architecturally illogical. Houses are not normally constructed with varying wall planes. Focus does exist and the trait is more closely related to Realism than to Naturalism.

Color

Focus is achieved through the graying out process. The tops of walls darken as they go up. The color of the

³Plate XXVII.

"real" object is seen as a realistic trait. The element is realistic.

Texture

The setting is wallpapered with a stenciled wallpaper which has been treated with pointillage. Texture, as seen in the furniture and dressings, is natural. The traits illustrate two realistic traits.

Light

Two motivating lights are seen. A table lamp is seen stage right on the piano. Two sconces are seen on the upstage wall. The motivated light of the sun is seen through the windows and French doors. Light creates focus center stage and is used to enhance the graying out process of color through this focus. Three realistic traits are utilized.

Ornament

A considerable amount of decor is seen in the room. There is a bookcase, a piano and bench, a secretary, a fireplace covered with many objects, a coat rack, and a decorative corner stand. On each wall, exclusive of the

downstage door walls, at least one object or picture is seen. The piano is covered with a scarf and holds two vases of flowers. What this suggests is that nothing is left to the imagination. The setting is completely dressed. This dressing is even seen in the reflected light of the upstage right picture glass. The trait seems closer to Naturalism than to Realism in its denial of focus.

Composition

Although right angles are used, focus exists in the use of mass and line. Color creates focus through the graying out process. Real objects are used. Texture utilizes both pointillage and the natural texture of the "real" objects. Ornament leaves little to the imagination.

Technique

The proscenium stage is seen in the photograph. Both built and painted dimension are seen in the mouldings of the French doors. The spotlighting techniques cited under light suggest Realism. The technique is that of Realism.

Production Style

Although mass and line suggests one trait of Naturalism, the element is essentially realistic. Ornament, however, is naturalistic. The other elements and the technique are realistic and the style is realistic.

Craig's Wife by George Kelley (Plate XXVIII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Two setting photographs were located. Neither is of good quality. The better of the two was chosen for analysis. It shows an open-angled interior setting with a ceiling.⁴ The upstage wall has an alcove with a stairway leading off right and a double doored opening off left. The back wall also has the open angled walls. It is realistic in its floor plan.

Color

A considerable use of "real" furniture and ornament is seen. Realism in color is seen in the upper walls. They are painted and there appears to be some graying out

⁴Plate XXVIII.

in the upstage alcove. This is also evident in the wall corners. The graying out of color is particularly significant in view of the fact that the setting is intensely illuminated in the photograph. It is assumed that this illumination was effected for photographic purposes.

Texture

The realistic trait of pointillage is seen in the wall areas above the wainscotting. Natural texture is seen in the "real" furniture as well.

Light

Little assessment can be made regarding light because of the photographic quality. A wall sconce is seen downstage right, indicating the motivating light of Realism. Shadows are cast in the alcove from two directions. The furniture also casts two directional shadows, thus indicating the trait of realistic cross-angled spotlighting.

Ornament

The room uses what appears to be a considerable number of decorative objects. A fireplace down right is

fully dressed with fireplace accoutrements, mantle ornaments, and a large mirror. A large picture is seen up right. Five pieces of furniture are seen, as is a piano with a scarf and vase of flowers. A pedestal is seen in the alcove. On it rests a vase of flowers. The windows are heavily draped.

However the setting is exceptionally large and is, in reality, not highly ornamented. In this sense it indicates the focus of Realism.

Composition

Mass and line create focus through open angles. Color is seen in "real" objects and focus is created through the graying out process. Natural texture is seen in the "real" objects. Pointillage is used. Light uses motivating lights as well as cross-angled spotlights. Ornament creates focus through selectivity.

Technique

The painted dimension of Realism is combined with real dimension in the wainscotting. Shadows under the stairway are the reverse of the shadows seen stage right in the wainscotting. The cross-angled spotlights cast two

directional shadows. The realistic proscenium form is evidenced by the apron. Technique is realistic.

Production Style

All the elements of the style and the techniques illustrate realistic traits. The style is realistic.

The Great Gatsby by Owen Davis (Plate XXIX)

Mass (and space) and Line

One setting photograph was located. It shows an upstage wall and a segment of the stage left wall.⁵ The walls illustrate the open angled trait of Realism. There are three French doors in the upstage wall. The center doors are open, revealing a painted drop. The drop thus indicates a trait of "Secondhand" Romanticism.

Color

Two inset bookcases, draperies on the windows, a couch and two chairs indicate the trait of "real" color. Although pointillage is seen in the walls, a graying out process does not seem to exist.

⁵Plate XXIX.

Texture

The realistic trait of pointillage texture is seen. The furniture and draperies illustrate the natural texture of "real" objects.

Light

A chandelier is seen as a motivating light. Cross angled shadows cast by the actors suggest focus. The actors center stage are more intensely illuminated than those stage right or stage left. Although footlights cast high shadows as well, the traits indicate realistic light.

Ornament

The treatment of the room is selective and considerable focus is achieved. No small objects of ornament are witnessed in the room. There are bookcases and a few pieces of furniture which affect a rich setting. The element is realistic.

Composition

Mass and line utilize both open angled walls and a painted drop which serves as an exterior backing. Focus, nevertheless, is achieved. Color is seen in "real"

objects. Natural texture is seen in the "real" object and pointillage is employed. Light creates focus and uses motivating lights. Ornament is highly selective and creates focus.

Technique

The footlight trough is visible in the setting, thereby, identifying the proscenium stage of Realism. Built dimension is seen in mouldings. At the same time painted mouldings are used above the bookcases. Thus, the mixture of built and painted detail common to Realism is seen. The cross angles of cast shadows indicate the use of both realistic spotlighting and its color media. Technique is realistic.

Production Style

Although one trait of Realism and one of "Second-hand" Romanticism are seen in mass and line, the other elements and the technique are realistic. The setting is evaluated as Realistic.

The Green Hat by Michael Arlen
(Plate XXX)

Mass (and space) and Line

The photographs of two interior settings were located. One was selected for analysis as being completely representative of both. The photograph shows a back wall with an open angled jog on stage right.⁶ The jogged section is joined to the stage right wall by another open angle. The trait is realistic. A double door is seen upstage and a draped opening is seen in the stage right wall.

Color

"Real" color is seen in the draperies, the furniture and a carpet. The walls do not gray out toward the top. Thus one realistic trait is witnessed.

Texture

Pointillage appears to have been used in the wall panels. Similarly, the natural texture of "real" objects is seen in the room.

⁶Plate XXX.

Light

The room is brightly illuminated. No motivating lights are seen. The graying out process of light is not witnessed. The total illumination of the setting suggests a trait of Naturalism. However, the soft secondary shadows cast by actors standing in front of colored light suggests the use of realistic spotlighting with color media.

Ornament

Above the doors in the upstage wall an inset panel with a painting is seen. A small picture is seen in the upstage right jog. A larger picture is seen on the stage right wall. A small settee, a bench, and a chair are seen as well as an end table and a vase of flowers. This appears to be the only dressing in the room. It is highly selective and creates strong actor focus. As such it is realistic.

Composition

The setting shows two open angled walls separated by an open angled jog. Real color is seen in decor but no graying out process is evident. Pointillage texture is not seen although the natural texture of the "real" object

is. The room is brightly illuminated. No motivating lights or graying out through light is seen but colored light is evident. Ornament is highly selective and creates strong focus.

Technique

Built dimension is seen in a mop board but shadows and highlights in the paneling appear to be painted, illustrating the eclectic technique of Realism. What appears to be an undutchmaned joint is seen between two flats above the upstage center doors. This suggests that the flat wall technique common to Realism is used. The spotlighting cited under color also indicates a technique of Realism.

Production Style

Although the complete illumination of the setting indicates a naturalistic trait, all the other elements are completely realistic, as is technique. The style is realistic.

Kongo by Chester deVonde and
Kilbourn Gordon (Plate XXXI)

Mass (and space) and Line

Two photographs of the setting were located. Although both are of poor quality, one is too poor to analyze. The other one, which is selected for analysis, appears to be an exterior setting which is backed by a deep, roughly constructed shed or hut.⁷ Its roof is covered by what appear to be reeds. It reveals a cyclorama through the cracks between the reeds. What appears to be a real tree trunk is seen stage right of a rough hewn door. The floor of the hut is covered with a platform.

Essentially the floor plan suggests the open angled floor plan of a realistic interior. The interior disguises a biomorphic background.

Color

The platformed floor of the hut appears to be simulated stone slabs. The tree trunk is either natural or carefully treated to effect "real" color. The door suggests the same quality and the downstage floor of the

⁷Plate XXXI.

setting has been given the colors of dirt. Reality is enhanced by the use of "real" boards in the door.

Texture

The downstage floor appears to have been treated with pointillage. The platform within the hut gives the effect of stone through a built texture. The "real" boards complete this approach. Realism appears to be thoroughly achieved.

Light

No motivating lights are seen. However, considerable focus is achieved. The downstage area wherein the actors are found is well illuminated while the upstage areas of the shed fade into darkness. The cross angles of cast shadows suggest the use of realistic color media. Light is realistic.

Ornament

A coiled rope is hung from the center of the hut. A second rope dangles near the tree trunk on stage left. Crossed boards are nailed to this trunk. On the door itself is seen a heavy metal framework. A conscious attempt

to create reality in dressing appears to have been made. Focus appears strong, however. The element is realistic.

Composition

In a partially biomorphic exterior, a hut with the open angles of Realism has been created to achieve focus. Color is real as is texture. Ornament seems correct but selective. Light creates strong focus inasmuch as little light is used on anything but the playing area.

Technique

Built dimension is coupled with paint in the realistic approach. This is witnessed in the door where built dimension and paint are seen. The cross angled shadows cast by the actors indicate the use of spotlights. The techniques are realistic.

Production Style

The elements and technique correspond to those of Realism. A conscious attempt appears to have been made to effect a natural quality in an exterior setting without relying on naturalistic traits.

Lucky Sam McCarver by Sidney Howard
(Plate XXXII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Four setting photographs were located. The one selected for analysis illustrates substantially more of the setting than the others.⁸ It shows a portion of the open angled upstage and stage right walls of an interior. The open angle indicates a realistic floor plan.

In the stage right wall a door is seen leading to a platform with a step in front of it. The platform and step appear as a stage which supports a massive piano. The upstage wall shows two shuttered doors which appear to be extremely high.

Color

Color is seen as graying out in the upper wall sectors. Natural color is seen in the floor of the stage, the platform's tread, and the piano where naturally stained and varnished woods appear to have been used.

⁸Plate XXXII.

Texture

Pointillage has been used in the wall and in the risers of the stage steps to effect both color change and to enhance the graying out process. Natural texture is seen only in the piano and the upholstery of chairs.

Light

No motivating lights are seen but the acting area shows a considerably higher degree of illumination than the wall above it. Similarly, Realism is seen in the cast double shadows which indicate Realism's use of different color media.

Ornament

While the piano is most ornate, only four chairs are seen in the setting's use of dimensional decor. Two small garlands of flowers are painted on the walls. These details provide the entire ornamentation of the setting and a high degree of focus is thus achieved.

Composition

Focus is achieved in an open angled setting through a use of "real" color, natural and pointillist texture, focused light and highly selective ornament.

Technique

The parallel lines created by the upstage wall and ground cloth seams indicate a proscenium stage. A dutchman seen in the center of the upstage wall indicates realistic flat use. Painted and real dimension in the shutters indicates another realistic trait as does painted lines on the chairs. Cast shadows indicate the techniques of realistic spotlighting methodology.

Production Style

All the elements and techniques of the setting illustrate realistic traits. The setting is realistic.

Lulu Belle by Edward Shelton
and Charles McArthur
(Plate XXXIII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Four setting photographs of three settings were located. Their quality is very poor. Inasmuch as they all illustrate the same stylistic tendencies, the best print has been chosen for examination. It shows an interior setting with open angled walls.⁹ It is completed

⁹Plate XXXIII.

by a ceiling and ground cloth. The upstage wall has a large jog which joins the stage right wall. The upstage wall contains a window. Doors are seen in the stage right wall and stage right jog. It is a bedroom.

Color

The use of "real" objects in the room attests to "real" color in the room. Similarly the doors and their moulding indicate the natural color of stained and varnished wood. Although the one realistic trait exists, graying out cannot be seen. High cast shadows indicate that the visible footlighting washes out any graying effect that might have been achieved in color.

Texture

The varied and "real" objects in the room indicates a use of natural texture. Stenciled wallpaper similarly suggests the use of pointillism in affecting texture as realistic.

Light

The high angle of footlights denies an assessment regarding focused lighting. However, two motivating lights,

a floorlamp, and a chandelier illustrate one realistic trait of light.

Ornament

An ornate and crowded bureau are seen with a picture and clothesline. These objects provide naturalistic detail in the upstage center wall area. However, there are only three chairs, a wardrobe, and a bed in the rest of the room and only two more objects are seen in a room which is quite spacious. Thus the key to the trait is found in the clothesline. Without the several items of clothing hanging on the clothesline, the set would appear to be actor focused. The naturalistic trait cannot truly be ascertained. Ornament is realistic in its approach.

Composition

Focus is achieved in an open angled floor plan. Color uses the natural object and applied color. Texture uses the natural texture of the "real" object as well as pointillage. Motivating light is seen and although ornament tends toward the naturalistic, it is realistic.

Technique

The proscenium stage is used. Built dimension is seen in the cornice and doors along with painted wallpaper. Light cannot be ascertained but the technique, nonetheless, appears to be predominantly realistic.

Production Style

Although only one trait of Realism is seen in light, and ornament shows a naturalistic tendency, the other elements are strongly realistic as is technique. The style is realistic.

Shanghai Gesture by John Colton
(Plate XXXIV)

Mass (and space) and Line

Three photographs of the setting were located. None of the three are of good photographic quality. The one selected for examination is representative of the stylistic traits of the others and exposes the most detail. It shows the back wall of the setting which represents a Chinese brothel.¹⁰ Through a large opening in the

¹⁰ Plate XXXIV.

wall are seen three ornately carved stands, each of which frames a portrait. The wall rests on a platform which extends through the opening and runs across the downstage edge of the wall. No conclusion can be ascertained as to the style of the element other than that it is within the realistic continuum.

Color

Real color is apparent in the carving, in a table stage right of the opening, and in a carpet seen on the stage right platform. The graying out process of color does not appear. Thus the element appears as naturalistic.

Texture

The texture of pointillism is seen on the upstage center wall in both a wallpaper effect and on the broad expanse of surrounding wall as well. Although natural texture is seen in decor as well, the pointillage defines the element as Realism.

Light

No motivating lights are seen and footlights cast high shadows. However the two directional shadows caused

by realistic spotlights are apparent both behind and below the actors. The trait indicates light to be realistic.

Ornament

Although little ornamentation is used below the upstage wall, the elaborate nature of the carving seen through the arch indicates the naturalistic tendency. Focus is not actor oriented but oriented to the carvings. The element appears to be more naturalistic.

Composition

Mass and line do not provide enough suitable evidence to effect a conclusion. Color appears to lack focus and is naturalistic. Texture utilizes pointillism in suggesting the focus of Realism. Light is realistic in its angles and color use. Ornament appears naturalistic with lack of actor focus.

Technique

The platform is seen at right angles to the board lines of the stage floor, thus suggesting a proscenium stage. The dimensional, wooden mouldings framing the upstage wall moulding indicates Realism in its use of both

built and painted dimension. Similarly, shadows cast by the actors and the moulding strongly define lighting technique as realistic.

Production Style

No conclusion could be reached regarding mass and line. Color and ornament illustrated naturalistic traits. Texture and light illustrate realistic traits. Technique appeared to be realistic. The setting is assessed as Realism which is seen as very close to the naturalistic end of the continuum.

Twelve Miles Out by
William A. McGuire
(Plate XXXV)

One photograph was located. It is extremely limited in what it portrays. A part of a deck cabin on a sailing ship is seen.¹¹ The effect of an upstage wall is created by the cabin and a sail which is turned parallel with the cabin, thus obscuring what appears to be a cyclorama. No judgment can be made regarding the floor plan or focus.

¹¹plate XXXV.

Color

The graying out process cannot be observed because of the photograph. "Real" color exists in the use of "real" canvas and rope. All other color is applied. The softened second colors seen in cast shadows indicates realistic color in lighting.

Texture

A considerable use of graining is seen in the wood of the deck cabin. This is seen as well on the three dimensional spar and the bench. The canvas sail appears to utilize pointillage. The element appears realistic.

Light

No motivating lights are seen. Shadows cast in two directions by the actors indicate the cross angles of realistic spotlighting technique. This is further evidenced by the stage right side of the actress' face. It is clearly illuminated but darker than the stage left side.

Ornament

Ornament is selectively treated. The sail lashed to the spar is treated with grommets and rope to appear

"real." Similarly a rope is coiled in front of the deck cabin to further enhance realism. Nothing appears in the setting that could not, in reality, appear. Thus the strong focus of Realism is apparent.

Composition

The photograph denies a conclusion regarding mass and line. Color creates reality and focus. Texture uses pointillism and wood graining to achieve a natural quality. Light and ornament effect strong focus.

Technique

The mixture of Realism's painted and built dimension is seen in the spar, deck cabin wall and hatchway door. The lighting cited under "light" illustrates a realistic technique as well.

Production Style

Although mass and line do not indicate enough evidence to effect a conclusion, the other elements and technique indicate one or more traits of Realism. The style is realistic.

The Enemy by Channing Pollock

Pollock provides an extremely detailed setting description. It is quoted in its entirety:

THE SCENE: Two rooms--the living and dining rooms--in the Arndt flat in Vienna. It is important that both seem warm and comfortable. The walls are red denim above a dark wood wainscoting, broken by bookcases, also of dark wood . . . mahogany, or cherry, or walnut in the dark, old-fashioned coloring. The denim is of a shade not too light--such as used to be employed by artists for backgrounds upon which to hang pictures. Of these there are any number--fifty, or more--of all shapes and sizes; chiefly oil-paintings, good, but not too good; in many cases the work of friends of the owner. The essential two are a fairly large "Judas," hanging on the back wall, and a small nude on the wall down L. Also, there are three or four canvases conspicuously Spanish, and, in the dining-room, engravings and dark-toned reproductions of the Parthenon, the Coliseum, and the Arch of Trajan.

The outline of the two rooms is as follows:

Down R. is a window looking into a courtyard. The backing of this window shows the wall outside the main hall, to which there is an entrance on the stage just above the window. Perhaps another window in this backing permits a vague view of the hall. Up-stage of the window R., the interior wall obliquely sharply, so that the audience practically faces the door in the center of this wing. It is a solid, old-fashioned door, with a big, old-fashioned lock, and a slot for letters, covered--inside--by a wire basket into which they are meant to fall. The bell outside this door rings off stage L., but very sharply.

In the middle of the flat is a large opening, with heavy double sliding doors, which,

when open, give a generous and detailed view of the dining-room, which is quite as important to the action as the living-room. On either side of this opening, and facing us, are the book-cases already mentioned. There is a door, which we do not see, inside the dining-room, L., giving entrance to the interior hall, and the rest of the flat. There are two large windows, which we do see, and, as far as possible back of them, a drop showing upper floors of houses across the street. Up-stage L., is a door leading into the interior hall. Down-stage is a tiled stove, of the kind common in Germany.

The old-fashioned chandelier hangs pretty well upstage, and too high to be of much practical value, but a wire has been dropped from it to a reading lamp upon a small, circular table underneath. There are brackets in the dining room, and a bracket between the window and the door R. From this, a wire to another reading lamp, which sets upon a solid, old-fashioned, roll-top desk. Upon this desk a litter of papers, a book, a sewing basket and a telephone. Also a newspaper. On top of it a small geographical globe, and--VERY IMPORTANT--a rather large standing frame, which now contains a photograph of BRUCE GORDON, above which is draped a small silk English flag. Beside the desk, a dictionary stand, and, in front of it, an exceedingly inviting and comfortable chair.

In the dining-room, between the windows, is a sideboard--a small one--with dishes, and several pieces of cut glass, arranged upon doilies of linen or coarse lace. Also, a set of beer-mugs. An oblong dining table--if possible, with a little shelf at either end--decked with a blue-and-white checked table cloth, and partially set for a festal meal. On top of the bookcase, on stage, L., is a good-sized and rather fine marble reproduction of the Winged Victory. Also, conspicuously, a tobacco jar and several pipes.

Such furniture as is not strictly necessary to the action is of the period when "sets" were

popular. A sofa, perhaps, and a couple of arm chairs upholstered in tapestry or dark velvet that shows signs of having been used for years. Double curtains at windows. Outside curtains of figured ecru ground with red figure, or mixture of these two tones. These curtains work by a pulley arrangement, so that they can be open during the day and closed at night. A light cotton damask in red, the same color as the walls, might serve instead of the scrim. The dining-room curtains have blue figures. The floor is covered by a rug or "drugget" of plain red wool carpet, or inexpensive brussels with red ground and a small pattern. The center table is covered by one of those non-committal pieces of material that can not be described, but that are seen in so many middle-class households.

Three things are conspicuously true of this flat. It is middle-class; it is inexpensively but most cheerfully, tastefully, and comfortably furnished, and it is European. There is nothing costly or luxurious, and nothing new or very modern. There is everything to suggest a busy, devoted, highly-cultured family, including men who read and smoke, and women who know how to make a home of a house. Also, there are evidences of literacy, taste, and a sense of beauty--magazines, bowls of flowers, books, plaster casts, small wood-carvings, household accounts and account books . . . enough to suggest a place that is much lived in, but not enough to suggest a museum.¹²

Pollock appears to be describing a naturalistic setting except for his description of the wall which "obliques sharply" so that the audience may see a door.

¹²Channing Pollock, The Enemy (New York: Brentano's, 1925), pp. 19-22.

Essentially, he seems to desire a realistic setting, with much of the detail of Naturalism.

The Mud Turtle by Elliot Lester

The Mud Turtle is an unpublished play. No reviews were located which discussed its setting. Burns Mantle does describe the play as taking place on "a large farm in the Wheat belt of Northern Minnesota."¹³

The Great God Brown by
Eugene O'Neill

O'Neill segments his play in a prologue and epilogue with four acts, consisting of eleven scenes. The play spans four years and utilizes seven settings.

The first setting is described as

. . . a cross section of the pier of the Casino. In the rear, built out beyond the edge, is a rectangular space with benches on the three sides. A rail encloses the entire wharf at back.¹⁴

¹³Burns Mantle, ed., The Best Plays of 1922-1923 (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1923), p. 429.

¹⁴Eugene O'Neill, Nine Plays (New York: Liveright, Ind., 1932), p. 307.

The setting appears to be realistic although the setting description is brief. Realism is somewhat denied in the next setting. O'Neill writes:

The setting room of Mrs. Dion Anthony's half of a two-family house in the Lowes section of the town--one of the one-design districts that daze the eye with multiplied ugliness. The four pieces of furniture and in keeping--an armchair at left, a table with a chair in back of it at center, a sofa at right. The same court-room effect of the arrangement of benches in Act One is used here. The background is a backdrop on which the rear wall is painted with the intolerable lifeless realistic detail of the stereotyped painting which usually adorn the setting rooms of such houses.¹⁵

It is this backdrop which indicates a departure from Realism. In the next setting, an office wall is "treated similarly to that of Scene One in its over-meticulous representation of detail."¹⁶

Similarly, scene three calls for a backdrop. It is a "cheap wall-paper of a dull yellow brown, resembling a blurred impression of a fallow field in early spring."¹⁷

The realistic quality witnessed at the beginning of the play appears to deteriorate. In Act two, scene one O'Neill describes the backdrop as

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 320.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 325.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 329.

. . . brilliant stunning wall-paper, on which crimson and purple flowers and fruits tumble over one another in a riotously profane lack of any apparent detail.¹⁸

Thus a distortion of reality suggestive of Expressionism appears to develop.

However the next setting calls for realistic furniture coupled with a black drop which "has windows painted on it with a dim, street-lighted view of black houses across the way."¹⁹ This setting suggests Selective Realism or Symbolism inasmuch as no expressionist distortion of form is evidenced.

The next set is described as having "a backdrop of carefully painted, prosperous, bourgeois culture, bookcases filled with sets, etc."²⁰

In this approach to painting he suggests "Second-hand" Romanticism. In Act three, scene one, the backdrop of both Brown's office and the drafting room are to be a "plain well with a few tacked-up designs and blue prints painted on it."²¹

¹⁸Ibid., p. 335.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 341.

²⁰Ibid., p. 345.

²¹Ibid., p. 354.

Thus three styles appear. The techniques of the painted drop itself appears expressionistic and at times the line and mass and color indicate Expressionism. Selective Realism and "secondhand" Romanticism are indicated as well. It is certainly conceivable that the very number of scenes called for illustrate O'Neill's inclination toward an inherently expressionistic production.

Summary of the Season

Twelve productions were selected for examination. Three were not located and were examined in a different manner. Of the nine with photographs, all were realistic. Two of the others, The Enemy, and The Mud Turtle, appear to call for production within the realistic continuum. Similarly there is indication that the third play, The Great God Brown, requires expressionist production.

Of the nine realistic productions, Shanghai Gesture showed two elements which were naturalistic and the production was assessed as being close to the naturalistic end of the continuum. Similarly, both Bride of the Lamb and Lulu Belle each exhibited one naturalistic element. One

production, The Great Gatsby, utilized a backdrop, which though seen through French doors, evidenced traits of "secondhand" Romanticism. Two tendencies call for further comment. The nine realistic settings examined indicate a complete acceptance of the trait of pointillism and the season shows a further decrease in the use of footlights as a common technique.

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW YORK THEATRICAL SEASON OF 1928-1929

During this season fourteen productions met the standards of selection. Five productions ran in excess of one hundred performances and eight ran fifty performances and received favorable reviews. Two of the eight received other recognition. Gypsy was chosen by Burns Mantle as a "best play."¹ Machinal was anthologized by Gassner as one of the outstanding plays of the 1920's.² The remaining play, Gods of the Lightning, although running only twenty-nine performances, was also anthologized by Gassner.³ The settings of the following plays are analyzed:

¹Burns Mantle, ed., The Best Plays of 1928-1929 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1929), pp. 352-512.

²John Gassner, ed., Twenty-five Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre: Early Series (New York: Crown Publishers, 1949), pp. 495-529.

³Ibid., pp. 531-565.

The Age of Innocence by Margaret Ayer Barnes

Brothers by Herbert Ashton, Jr.

Congai by Harry Hervey and Carlton Hildreth

Exceeding Small by Caroline Francke

Gods of the Lightning by Maxwell Anderson and Harold
Hickerson

Goin' Home by Ranson Rideout

The Grey Fox by Lemist Esler

Gypsy by Maxwell Anderson

Harlem by W. J. Rapp and Wallace Thurman

Jarnegan by Charles Beahan and Garret Fort

Machinal by Sophie Treadwell

Mr. Moneypenny by Channing Pollock

Singing Jailbirds by Upton Sinclair

Street Scene by Elmer Rice

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS

Plates XXXVI-LIV

PLATE XXXVI. The Age of Innocence by Margaret Ayer Barnes, Vandamn photo.



PLATE XXXVII. Brothers by Herbert Ashton, Jr., White photo.



PLATE XXXVIII. Congai by Harry Harvey and Carlton Hildreth, Vandamn photo.



PLATE XXXIX. Exceeding Small by Caroline Francke, White photo.



PLATE XL. Gods of the Lightning by Maxwell Anderson and Harold Hickerson, Vandamm photo.



PLATE XLI. Goin' Home by Ranson Rideout, White photo.



PLATE XLII. The Grey Fox by Lemist Esler, White photo.

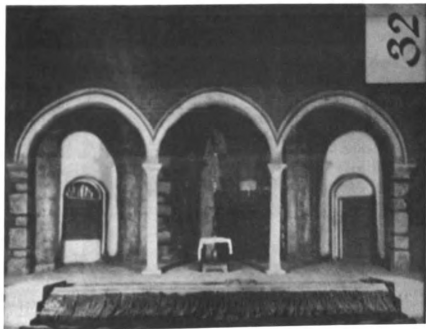


PLATE XLIII. The Grey Fox by Lemist Esler, White photo.



PLATE XLIV. Gypsy by Maxwell Anderson, White photo.



PLATE XLV. Harlem by W. J. Rapp and Wallace Thurman.



PLATE XLVI. Jarnegan by Charles Beahan and Garret Fort.

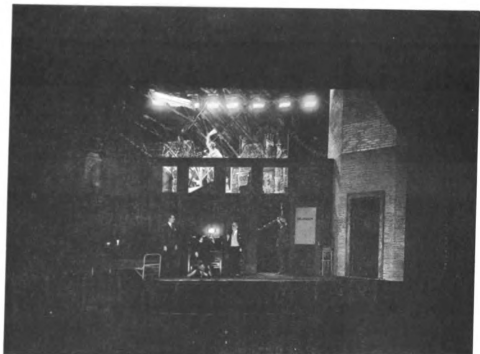


PLATE XLVII. Jarnegan by Charles Beahan and Garret Fort.

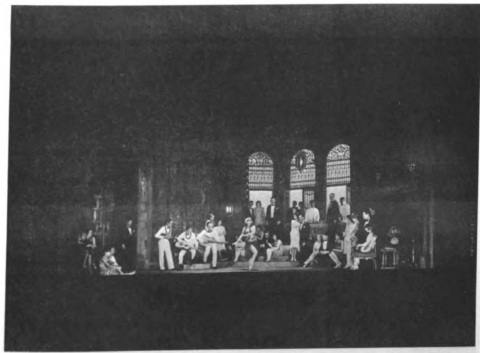


PLATE XLVIII. Machinal by Sophie Treadwell.



PLATE XLIX. Machinal by Sophie Treadwell.

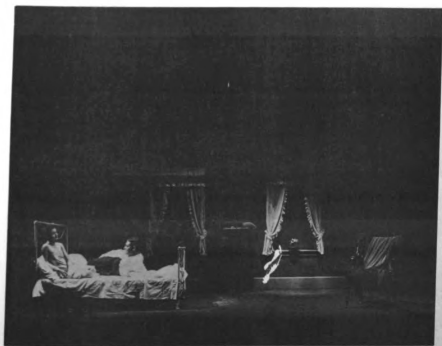


PLATE LI. Machinal by Sophie Treadwell.



PLATE LI. Mr. Money Penny by Channing Pollock,
White photo.



PLATE LII. Mr. Money Penny by Channing Pollock,
White photo.



PLATE LIII. Singing Jailbirds by Upton Sinclair.

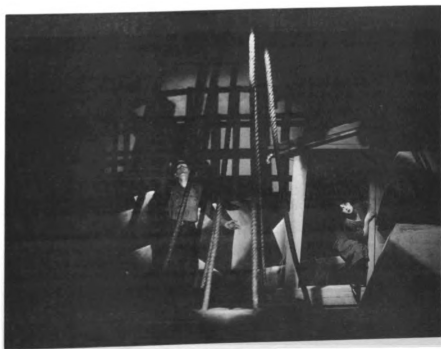
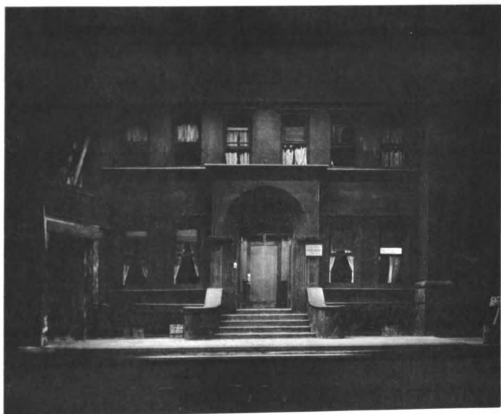


PLATE LIV. Street Scene by Elmer Rice.



Stylistic Analysis

The Age of Innocence by
Margaret Ayer Barnes
(Plate XXXVI)

Although five photographs were located, four of them illustrated only small portions of two settings. The fifth photograph shows an entire interior setting.⁴ It is chosen for analysis because of this and because it is totally representative of the stylistic traits of the other settings. The setting is revealed as an open angled box setting without a ceiling. The ceiling area appears as a void. A long back wall is broken by a recessed opening with a huge window. The stage right wall has two heavily draped windows while the stage left wall has a jogged section which serves as a fireplace pier. Strong focus is achieved, not only in the open angles of Realism but in the use of the window which is apparently covered by scrim.⁵ Because of the scrim, even more focus can be achieved.

⁴Plate XXXVI.

⁵A theatrical gauze. When a scrim is illuminated solely from the front it is opaque. When illumination comes from behind the scrim as well, it is transparent.

Color

A great deal of "real" color is witnessed in furniture and draperies. In addition, the floor is fully covered with a "real" carpet. The graying out process is seen on the walls. A painted wallpaper darkens in the upper portion of the walls.

Texture

Although the natural texture of "real" objects is seen, pointillage is not evident in anything but the effects of marble created in the fireplace.

Light

Three motivating lights are seen in a floor lamp and two table lamps. The graying out process of color is enhanced by light. Corners gray out through high angled spotlights. Cast shadows tend to fall beneath the object in a completely realistic manner.

Ornament

The room is tastefully furnished. In addition to the draped windows, a sofa, a chaise, three chairs, three tables, and a piano are seen. On the mantle are two

candelabra and a clock. Two floral arrangements are seen. Through the window is seen foliage. The only object on the walls is an elaborate mirror which is hung above the fireplace. The room is very large and the lack of wall decor gives the playing area a completely furnished appearance, thus exemplifying the focus called for in Realism.

Composition

Strong focus is achieved in an unceilinged, open angled interior. Color is seen in the "real" object and in the graying out process of treated walls. Natural textures are seen in the "real" object and marblized fireplace. Light creates focus through spotlights and the graying out process. Ornament creates focus through selectivity.

Technique

The proscenium stage is used. Flat scenery construction is seen in the downstage left corner of the setting. Built dimension is seen in such objects as the fireplace and cornice. This dimension is combined with painted marble and wallpaper. The sharp downward angles

of spotlights cast small shadows under furniture. All are techniques of Realism.

Production Style

All the elements and techniques are realistic.

The production is totally realistic.

Brothers by Herbert Ashton, Jr.
(Plate XXXVII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Three setting photographs were located. One was selected as representative of the stylistic tendencies of the production. It shows an open angled interior setting with a recessed upstage wall containing a door and a window.⁶ Balanced openings are seen on the stage left and stage right walls. The set is ceilinged. The open angled floorplan indicates the realistic trait.

Color

Natural color is evident in "real" furniture and bunting. The walls have been treated to create darkened upper areas as has the ceiling.

⁶Plate XXXVII.

Texture

The walls appear to have been treated with a heavy, broken pointillism. The natural textures of the "real" object are seen in the bunting and furniture.

Light

Two motivating lights are hung from the ceiling. Cast shadows indicate the two directional spotlighting of Realism and the graying out process is enhanced by light.

Ornament

Very little decor is used in the setting. It is obviously a tavern. Ten pictures and clippings are attached to the lower walls. A jukebox is seen, as are saloon tables and chairs. In essence the selectivity of dressing is realistic but focus is not strong because of the bunting draped high on the upstage wall.

Composition

Focus is achieved by an open angled floor plan. Color is seen in the "real" object and the graying out process is used to achieve focus. Pointillism is seen as is the natural texture of the "real" object. Light creates

focus through the enhancement of the graying out process and ornament is selective although the bunting somewhat denies focus.

Technique

The stage is a proscenium. Two dutchmen on the stage right wall attest to flat construction and painted walls while built dimension is seen in the door, window, and openings. Shadow angles indicate realistic spotlighting technique. Technique is realistic.

Production Style

The elements are entirely those of Realism, as is technique. The setting is realistic.

Congai by Harry Hervey and
Carlton Hildreth
(Plate XXXVIII)

Mass (and space) and Line

One photograph was located. It shows a portion of a wall with a curved stairway in front of it.⁷ Because of the extremely small area of the setting seen in the

⁷Plate XXXVIII.

photograph, no assessment can be made regarding mass and line.

Color

The color of the "real" object can be seen in a chair and in the bannister which sweeps out of sight. The darkened area on the wall behind the actors suggests the realistic process of graying out.

Texture

Again the chair and bannister suggest natural texture in the utilization of the "real" object. Pointillage, too, is seen on the stair facing as well as on the wall behind it.

Light

No motivating lights are seen, nor is the process of graying out through light witnessed. However, the cross angled shadows which indicate multi-angled spotlights are seen in the shadows of the chair and the actors. One realistic trait is seen while the other evidence is not indicative of any other style.

Ornament

Only the chair and the bannister are seen as decor in the photograph. The lack of dressing strongly indicates the selectivity of Realism.

Composition

Mass and line indicate so little as to make a judgment questionable. Color is seen in the "real" object and the graying out process is indicated. Natural texture and pointillage are used. Light illustrates only the cross angles of spotlights while ornament appears to be very selective.

Technique

The painted and built dimension of Realism are seen together in mouldings on the stairs and in the bannister. Of the moulding only the mopboard is real and it disguises the realistic technique of the wagon unit. The shadow between the stair unit's bottom and the floor indicates that it was built on a wagon for easy shifting, thus illustrating a technique of Realism. Similarly the cross angled shadows cited under light are achieved through realistic technique.

Production Style

Although no determination can be made regarding mass and line, each of the remaining elements and the technique illustrate one or more traits of Realism. The setting is realistic.

Exceeding Small by
Caroline Francke
(Plate XXXIX)

Mass (and space) and Line

Two photographs were located. One was selected for examination as being representative of the style of both. It shows an open angled interior setting utilizing the floor plan of Realism.⁸ The back wall is jogged. Each of the side walls is jogged. A window is seen in the upper stage left wall and a door is seen down left. A second door is seen up right. No ceiling is visible.

Color

The color of the "real" object is seen in the furnishings. A high degree of focus is achieved through the graying out process of color in painted wallpaper.

⁸Plate XXXIX.

Texture

The furnishings show the natural texture of the "real" object and pointillage is applied to the walls, enhancing the graying out process.

Light

Two motivating lights are seen in sconces. Highly focused light adds to the graying out process of light. The cross angled illumination of Realism is seen as well.

Ornament

The setting is simply treated. A dressed bureau, a bed, three small tables, three chairs, a radiator, a screen and a shelf unit are seen. The shelves hold cooking utensils and dishes. A shopping bag is hung on a doorknob. Only two pictures are seen on the wall and the stripped setting creates not only a somber mood but the strong focus of Realism.

Composition

Mass and line utilize the open angles to create focus. Color and texture use the "real" object and the graying out process to further enhance actor focus. Light

is seen as motivating and aids the graying out process.
Ornament is extremely selective.

Technique

The setting is seen in a proscenium stage. Built dimension can be seen in the down left door which shows painted highlights as well. Two dutchman can be seen in the up-center walls indicating flat construction. The cross angled lighting technique of Realism is seen in shadows cast by the furniture. All the techniques indicate Realism.

Production Style

Each element stresses the focus of Realism. The technique illustrates the same traits. The production is realistic.

Gods of the Lightning by
Maxwell Anderson and Harold
Hickerson (Plate XL)

Mass (and space) and Line

Two setting photographs were located. One was selected for examination as being thoroughly representative

of the stylistic tendencies seen in both. It shows an open angled interior setting of a restaurant.⁹ Its open angles indicate the realistic floorplan. In the upstage wall are seen two arches which frame recessed walls. In the stage left recess are double doors. In the stage right wall is an opening where food is passed through from the kitchen. A door to the kitchen is seen stage left of the opening. The upstage wall has a jog leading upstage which is joined to a showroom window and a door which opens onto a street. Similarly the stage left wall has a door.

Color

Color is seen in a detailed use of the "real" object. The stage right and stage left walls gray out realistically. It is difficult to ascertain whether this is effected by light or color, as a floodlight is mounted on stage left to illuminate the setting for photographic purposes.

Texture

The "real" decor shows natural textures. The wall is treated in the pointillist manner. The lower sections

⁹plate XL.

of the walls seem to have been marbelized and varnished to give a marble finish. Realism is achieved.

Light

A hanging lamp, two sconces and a lamp mounted behind the restaurant's bar provide motivating lights. Although the floodlight placed on stage washes out lighting effects. However, low shadows cast by furniture and the arches suggests realistic spotlighting's cross angles.

Ornament

Ornamentation tends to be naturalistic. In addition to three restaurant tables and their bentwood chairs, what appears as complete counter equipment is seen on and behind the counter. Dishes, a pie case, coffee urns, a cash register, a fan, a sign advertising meal tickets, and salt, pepper, and sugar containers are seen. Similar detail is seen on a bulletin board and bookcase on stage left. Pictures, newspapers, and books are placed in this area. On the upstage center wall is a large clock. Above it is a menu board. The menu board pulls the eye up and in so doing denies Realism's focus. Were it not for the menu board, focus would remain in the playing area. Thus

ornament has a tendency toward the naturalistic end of the continuum.

Composition

An open angled floor plan creates focus. Color appears to gray out and texture enhances this through pointillage while the color and texture of "real" objects can be seen as well. Light uses motivating lights and appears to create focus. Ornament is apparently complete in detail and denies actor focus.

Technique

The setting is seen in a proscenium stage. Flat construction is evidenced through the badly wrinkled flat below the down left door.

Built dimension is seen in the doors and picture rail which use painted highlights and shadows. The discussion of light revealed modern spotlighting techniques. Technique illustrates completely realistic traits.

Production Style

With the exception of ornament, all elements appear as realistic as does technique. Ornament utilizes

considerable detail and loses the focus of Realism. In so doing it appears to have a naturalistic tendency. The style is that of Realism.

Goin Home by Ransom Rideout
(Plate XLI)

One setting photograph was located. It shows the interior of a French tavern with the open angled walls of Realism.¹⁰ The rear wall is recessed and a stairway on stage right leads up to a landing. A second stairway is seen in the stage right recess which leads to a balcony. Two doors are seen in the upstage wall of the balcony. The stage right wall has an arched doorway opening and a window. The stage left wall has a shelved recess in its wall as well as an arched doorway.

Color

The color of the "real" object is seen in the chairs and in posters and bottles. The setting illustrates Realism as it grays out at the top of the walls and in the area under the balcony.

¹⁰Plate XLI.

Texture

Dry brushing is seen in the bar and in the bannister as well as the timbering. Pointillage is seen in painted bricks and in the graying out process. The natural texture of the "real" object is seen in the chairs.

Light

Three motivating lights are used. Two oil lamps are seen on the stage right and upstage walls, while two electric lights are suspended from above the setting. The graying out process of light is not apparent as low angled photographer's lights appear to be used for the picture. Thus one trait of Realism is seen while focus has been, at least temporarily, eliminated.

Ornament

Five tables, three chairs, and six benches are used as the room's furniture. A number of bottles are seen on and behind the bar. Two posters decorate the wall and what appears to be a citation is hung on a stage left post. The strong focus of Realism is created by this selective use of ornament.

Composition

The open angled interior creates actor focus. This is enhanced by grayed out color in upper walls. Natural texture is seen in the "real" object and in pointillage. Motivating lights are used and ornament is highly selective.

Technique

The setting is seen in a proscenium stage. Dutchmen are conspicuous on the walls, indicating flat construction. Dimension is constructed and then painted with highlighted shadows on the bar, furniture, and the beams. Cross angled shadows cast by the furniture indicate modern spotlighting. Technique utilizes realistic traits.

Production Style

All of the elements show one or more traits related to Realism. Technique appears realistic as well. The setting is realistic.

The Grey Fox by Lemist Esler
(Plates XLII and XLIII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Six setting photographs of extremely poor quality were located. Two have been selected for analysis as illustrative of the two unit settings used in the production. They are examined together.

Mass (and space) and Line

The first setting shows a great castle-like interior with the open angled walls of Realism. Two great stone arches are seen in each of the side walls and a huge opening is seen in the upstage wall.¹¹

In the second setting the three openings remain with the scenery behind and in each opening changed. However, a large wall has been lowered in front of these three openings and this wall has three similar openings in it. Because the open angles of the walls upstage still exist, this setting is realistic in its floorplan.¹²

¹¹Plate XLII.

¹²Plate XLIII.

Color

The graying out process is evident in both settings. The first setting gets progressively darker as its walls climb and the three arched, second setting is almost black at the top. The "real" object as seen in furniture is used in both settings. Thus two traits of Realism are seen. However, there is a denial of Realism witnessed in both settings as well. Great theatrical stones are painted in the arches indicating a trait of Romanticism.

Texture

The natural texture of the "real" object is seen but the photographic quality is too poor to distinguish whether broad washes of color are applied or whether pointillage has been utilized.

Light

The graying out process seems evident in both settings. Cross angled lighting is apparent as well, thus indicating two realistic traits. No motivating lights are seen in either setting.

Ornament

Other than the "real" furniture used in the two settings, decor appears to be painted. This is particularly evident in the large crest painted on the wall of the second opening and as such it indicates a trait of Romanticism.

Composition

Mass and line use the open angles of interiors in both settings. Color creates focus through the graying out process and the color of the "real" object is seen in furniture. Painted stones, however, illustrate a romantic tendency. Texture cannot be evaluated. No motivating lights appear but the graying out process creates some focus of light. Ornament is both "real" and painted.

Technique

The proscenium stage is seen with a flat rather than raked floor. Doors inset in the first setting's archways show built dimension while painted paneling is seen in the center opening. Similarly built thickness is seen in all the openings. These all suggest realistic technique. The utilization of the flown downstage arch

unit indicates a technique of Selective Realism. Cross angled spotlights cause two directional shadows indicating another realistic technique.

Production Styles

Four of the elements suggest at least one realistic trait. Similarly, mass and line suggest traits of Romanticism as do color and ornament. Technique is basically realistic but it adopts a technique evolved from Selective Realism to expedite scene changes. The production is assessed as Realism with strong romantic tendencies.

Gypsy by Maxwell Anderson
(Plate XLIV)

Mass (and space) and Line

One setting photograph was located. It shows a portion of two interior walls.¹³ An upstage wall is joined to the stage right wall in the open angled realistic manner. A small jog is seen on stage left of the upstage wall. A door opening onto a landing is seen in the upstage wall with a second door beyond.

¹³Plate XLIV.

Color

The color of the "real" object is seen in the furniture and dressing of the room. The stage right wall appears to gray out. However, the photograph reveals too little to truly ascertain the existence of this trait.

Texture

The natural texture of the "real" object is evident. Pointillage can not be ascertained because the walls are blurred in the photograph.

Light

Motivating lights are seen in a sconce and floor lamp. The actors cast cross angled shadows indicative of the cross angled spotlighting of Realism.

Ornament

In the corner of the room, a fireplace with vase are seen as are a chair and table, a screen, two pictures, and part of another chair. The selectivity associated with Realism appears to be evident.

Composition

Two open angled walls are seen. The color of the "real" object is seen and focus seems to exist through the graying out process. The natural texture of the "real" object is seen as are motivating lights and cross angled shadows. Ornament is selective.

Technique

The ground cloth's seams are parallel with the up-stage wall indicating a proscenium stage. Built dimension is seen in the door as are painted highlights and shadows. The realistic spotlight techniques cited under light are apparent. The technique is realistic.

Production Style

Although the photograph is not of good quality and is not too revealing, each of the elements and the technique evidences one or more traits of Realism. The setting is realistic.

Harlem by W. J. Rapp and
Wallace Thurman (Plate XLV)

Mass (and space) and Line

Two setting photographs were located. The one selected for examination is extremely revealing in its detail because of photographic purposes. Two technicians are seen downstage right and left holding floodlights.¹⁴ The interior setting shows three walls forming the open angles of Realism. In the upstage wall a double window and a door are seen and an opening is seen in the stage right and stage left walls.

Color

The graying out process is not evident. Because of the high intensity of photographic illumination, such an effect could be washed out. However, the color of the "real" object is seen in the furniture and dressing of the room.

Texture

Only in areas unaffected by the photographer's light does pointillage seem to appear. Similarly the graining

¹⁴Plate XLV.

of the upstage door appears to have been achieved through the "dry-brushing" of pointillist methodology, further suggesting the realistic trait. The natural textures of "real" furniture and dressing are seen as well.

Light

No motivating lights are seen in the setting. The photographer's light denies any conclusion regarding spotlighting.

Ornament

An extremely selective process appears to have been used. The windows are carefully dressed to effect reality. Three chairs, two tables, and a piano and stool are seen. Two pictures and a mirror are seen on the walls. The setting is stark in its realistic approach.

Composition

The open angles of Realism create focus. Color is seen in the "real" object as is texture. Texture also indicates pointillage. Light cannot be assessed and ornament achieves focus through selectivity.

Technique

The setting is seen on a proscenium stage. Flat scenery is revealed through the dutchmen observed on the upstage and stage left walls. The doors and mouldings are built dimension which has been enhanced by paint in the eclectic manner of Realism. Technique is realistic.

Production Style

All the elements except light illustrate one or more realistic traits. The high intensity of photographic light denies an assessment of light. Technique is realistic as well. The setting is that of Realism.

Jarnegan by Charles Beahan and
Garret Fort (Plates XLVI and
XLVII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Two setting photographs were located. Both were selected for analysis because of complex traits evident in their elements. They are examined separately. The first setting utilizes a unique multi-setting approach.¹⁵ The

¹⁵plate XLVI.

downstage section of the setting utilizes the open angled walls of Realism in creating an interior setting. However, upstage of this setting is seen a second story setting which represents a motion picture "sound" stage. This setting employs flat scenery with its rear sides facing downstage. Beyond this scenery is a drop which is painted to represent the studio's ceiling. It appears almost expressionistic, not only in the flaring angles of beams painted on it but in the luminous quality of the painted line. Thus, the setting utilizes not only a realistic floor plan, the multi-setting which is more common to Symbolism and Selective Realism, and a studio ceiling which appears expressionistic in its use of line.

Color

In the lower section of the setting, color is seen in the "real" objects of furnishing. However, the graying out process is not evident in color in the office. Thus a realistic trait is witnessed in this section of the setting. In the upper section, the theatrical flats are backed by a drop which seems expressionistic in its colors.

Texture

Pointillage is witnessed in the brick wall downstage and in the lower section of the upstage office wall. The natural texture of the "real" object is seen in the furniture. Similarly, pointillage appears to be used in the drop. Texture is realistic.

Light

In the lower section of setting, the highly focused light of Realism is seen, as is a motivating light. The playing area is spotlighted. In the upper section of the setting, eight theatrical floodlighting instruments are intentionally hung so that the audience may see them. They represent the studio lights and as such are motivating lights. Thus light appears to be totally realistic.

Ornament

In the lower section of the setting, a cot and table are seen as are two chairs, an office desk and chair, and a phonograph on a stand. A high degree of focus is created through the selective process of Realism. Other than the painted detail seen in the upper section, only a motion picture camera is evident. The detail of the

upper section's ceiling tends to deny focus, however, and the exposed lighting instruments exaggerate this lack of focus.

Composition

Although focus is achieved in the lower section of the setting through the open angled walls, it is denied in the painted lines of the upper section. Color in the lower section uses the "real" object while a luminous color is seen in the upper section. Texture employs the natural texture of "real" objects and pointillage. Light achieves focus and utilizes motivating lights. Ornament is selective as it utilizes few details in dressing.

Technique

The proscenium stage is seen. Flat scenery is used. Painted and built dimension are used together. Modern spotlights are used to make technique realistic.

Mass (and space) and Line

The second setting is a towering interior which utilizes the open angles of Realism.¹⁶ The upstage wall

¹⁶plate XLVII.

has a tall arched section revealing an alcove with three grilled openings in it. The stage left has a fireplace so large that a man can walk into it. The stage right wall shows an arched opening with high double doors filling it. Upstage of those doors is a large drapery. Across the area downstage of the central arch is a wide step unit.

Color

The colors of "real" dressing are seen in the setting. Similarly the graying out process is seen in the upper walls. Two realistic traits are suggested.

Texture

The natural texture of "real" dressings is seen. Pointillage is used as well. The steps show this as does the fireplace and downstage right wall. Thus two realistic traits are indicated.

Light

Although several motivating lights are indicative of realism, a high degree of focus is created through down angled spotlighting. This focus tends to enhance the graying out process of color, defining the element even more strongly as realistic.

Ornament

Only a few pieces of furniture are used in the setting and only three objects are seen on the gigantic mantle. No pictures seem to adorn the walls but a drapery hangs over the down right door. The very size of the doors and windows, as well as the elaborate quality of the grill suggests that a romantic quality is achieved within a realistic element.

Composition

A gigantic setting indicates an open angled floor plan. "Real" objects provide the colors and textures of the "real" object and the graying out process is seen in color. Pointillage is used. Light enhances the graying out process and motivating light is seen. Ornament in dressing is selective but the great size of objects suggests a romantic quality.

Technique

The proscenium stage is used. Built dimension is seen adjacent to painted detail. The doors right are adjoined by painted stonework. Similarly the fireplace has built dimension which is painted with highlights and

shadows. Modern spotlights cause the cross angled shadows of realistic lighting technique within the playing area. The step unit is slightly raised off the floor suggesting that it is a castored wagon unit which utilized a realistic technique to effect quick scene changes. Technique is realistic.

Production Style

The first setting utilizes predominantly realistic elements and realistic techniques in attempting to create a difficult setting. Mass and line show an expressionistic trait as does color. Mass and line also illustrates a trait of Selective Realism and Symbolism. The setting is, nevertheless, realistic. The confusion exists because the setting tries to achieve the theatrical quality of a movie studio and in achieving this, denies some of Realism's focus.

The second setting utilizes realistic elements and technique but the very scale of the setting suggests that it wishes to create a romantic quality. Nevertheless, this setting, too, is realistic, and the production is assessed as Realism with romantic traits.

Machinal by Sophie Treadwell
(Plates XLVIII, XLIX, and L)

Mass (and space) and Line

Five setting photographs were located. Three have been selected for analysis. They are examined together because of their stylistic similarity. The first shows the basic unit setting used throughout the production.¹⁷ It suggests the architectural "mass" of Selective Realism and Symbolism. The setting has three wall units. The center unit has a removable center section which creates the portal of Selective Realism and Symbolism. The setting is a courtroom. It is seen in front of draperies. The door is seen on both stage right and stage left. The setting is formally balanced.

The second photograph uses the same framework, replacing the center portal with a new wall section which is barely discernable in the "intertwined styles" void of blackness.¹⁸ It is a bedroom.

The third setting uses the void of blackness as well. The bars of a jail cell are picked out of the void by light.¹⁹

¹⁷ Plate XLVIII.

¹⁸ Plate XLIX.

¹⁹ Plate L.

Color

In the court setting two tables and a number of straightbacked chairs creates some reality with the "real" object but the large expanses of color with no painted detail indicate Selective Realism and Symbolism.

The bedroom setting also uses "real" objects. A bed, chair, bureau, and mirror are seen as well as window curtains and a flower pot. The flower pot seems to have colored light focused on it as if to point it as a symbol.

The third setting uses paint to create the color of real bars in the cell.

Texture

The court setting is lightly textured through pointillage as are the other two settings. There seems to be no requirement for the texture to achieve the natural quality seen in Realism's use of pointillage, although the texture of the "real" is seen in the first two settings.

Light

No motivating lights are seen in any of the settings. The court setting is fully illuminated. Both actors and setting are pointed. The second setting uses

light to create the void of blackness and create focus on the actors and the flowerpot. In the third setting, a single spotlight picks the actors out of the void. The first and second settings show cross angled shadows with significant value differences in the shadows. These shadows indicate considerable color media variation. Thus light strongly suggests the approach of Selective Realism and Symbolism.

Ornament

Other than the courtroom furniture, no ornament is seen in the first setting. This is true in the bedroom setting as well where two small objects are seen on the bureau. Nothing is seen in the cell. Thus all three of the settings indicate Selective Realism while the flower pot pointed by light in the bedroom suggests that it might be symbolic.

Composition

Mass predominates the first setting while void is seen in the second and third setting. Color is seen in "real" objects in the first two settings. Colored light is indicated in all three settings. Pointillage is used

although apparently not to create natural texture. Light illuminates mass and actor in the first setting and creates actor focus in a void in the second and third settings. The second setting also uses lights to create focus on what appears to be a symbol while no ornament is seen in the third setting.

Technique

The proscenium form is used. The modified portal cited under mass and line is utilized. High focus is achieved through modern spotlighting techniques. Technique indicates the traits of Selective Realism and Symbolism.

Production Style

All of the elements indicate the traits of Selective Realism and Symbolism. Technique is that of the "intertwined styles" as well. The use of the spotlighted flower pot is suggestive of Symbolism. The style is assessed as Selective Realism, with a symbolic tendency.

Mr. Moneybags by Channing
Pollock (Plates LI and LII)

Mass (and space) and Line

Two settings were located. Although both are of the same style they were both selected for examination because they illustrate two tendencies within the same style. They are examined together because of their stylistic similarities. The first setting suggests a lavish bedroom.²⁰ Although it is basically a wing and border setting, painted line creates the distortion of the curved line common to Expressionism. The second setting uses an open angled interior setting which is formally balanced in its walls.²¹ However realistic this trait may seem, it is completely denied by the ornamentation and by a stage right wall which has two giant eyes which are painted on it. Below the eyes is a square black object which serves as a nose. Beneath the nose are double doors which serve as the mouth. The human quality of Expressionism is thus used in distorting an architectural element.

²⁰Plate LI.

²¹Plate LII.

Color

In the first setting a seemingly phosphorescent color is painted on two dimensional scenery. This is coupled with what appear to be rich metallic gold draperies and a few pieces of "real" furniture.

In the second setting the walls appear to be flat. Non-realistic elements are constructed in the room to enhance the expressionist quality of the eyes and these seem to be painted with bright colors, again indicating Expressionism.

Texture

The natural texture of the "real" object is witnessed in both settings in several pieces of furniture. Similarly, pointillage is seen in the second setting, but it appears to have no compositional use.

Light

Light cannot be assessed in either setting. Both settings are intensely illuminated from an extremely low angle. This appears to be solely for photographic purposes. This is borne out by the exposed spotlights seen in the first electric position of the ballroom setting.

They indicate that the scenery was changed very quickly for the photographs and little care was exercised in duplicating production conditions.

Ornament

Strong expressionistic traits are apparent in both settings. The distorted line and color of the first setting is enhanced by a great plaque upstage center which shows a strange animal head, garlanded with flowers, and surmounted with a halo. Around the edge of the plaque is printed, "In Gold We Trust." This type of distortion is even more apparent in the second setting. A strange clock with a wheel surrounding it is seen on stage right. On stage left there is a hole in the wall with a trough running out of it. Upstage center is a triangular form surmounted by a clock. Beneath the clock and extending up from the triangular form is an inverted pendulum. Behind this object is a gigantic stock market board, which would appear relatively realistic were it not for its printing. Instead of stocks it lists "governors," "juries," "mayors," "revenue officers," "traffic officers," "judges," "senators," and "aldermen." Ornament thus distorts in the

flairing lines of Expressionism as well as creating the symbols of Expressionism.

Composition

The first setting uses painted line to effect a distortion of reality. Color seems phosphorescent. The natural textures of "real" objects are seen. Light cannot be assessed. Ornament uses "real" furniture as well as distorted reality in the strange plaque seen on the wall.

In the second setting, what appears as a recognizable room is distorted as one of its walls turns into a face. Color has strong value contrasts as seen in distorted objects which dress the room. Light cannot be assessed.

Technique

Nothing indicates any particularly definite expressionistic techniques in either setting. Certainly the highly developed lighting equipment is visible in the first setting. The photographs show the stage to be a proscenium. The flats used in the second setting are indicative of nothing more than the techniques of the time, and the wings and borders of the first setting have been used for

centuries. Technique then illustrates very little to either confirm or deny the setting as Expressionism.

Production Style

With the exception of light and technique where nothing significant is revealed in making an assessment, the other elements in both settings are strongly expressionistic and the production is, therefore, expressionistic.

Singing Jailbirds by Upton Sinclair (Plate LIII)

Mass (and space) and Line

One setting photograph was located. It shows the expressionist void wherein a conglomeration of oblique lines and masses are seen.²² The lines are created in three ways. Down stage six large ropes soar upward forming a cone. Behind them is seen a large wooden grill which casts its shadow on a wall behind it. In a tilted shed a door shaped like a parallelogram is seen and at its top a pipe follows the roof line which leads into the center of

²²Plate LIII.

the setting. Other objects are seen in the periphery of light. On stage left, two masses appear to be rather circular. On stage right and to the rear, amorphous objects appear. The element is completely expressionistic.

Color

The contrast of values in mass and line suggest Expressionism. Cross angled shadows enhance this viewpoint in suggesting strong color in light. Similarly, the rope has been covered to make it easier to paint.

Texture

Pointillism does not appear to be used. The natural texture of the "real" object does not appear except, in the pipe.

Light

A strong light source picks the playing area, and the setting within it, out of the void, thus indicating the expressionistic trait.

Ornament

No ornament related to natural objects is seen other than the pipe. The pipe, however, creates the

unreality of Expressionism through the angle in which it is fixed. The rope seen does not have a logical and functional use. The element is expressionistic.

Composition

Line is seen as "oblique" and "flaring," and mass is seen in distorted geometric and amorphous shapes, as well as a tilted shed. Color appears flat and with great contrasts in value. Texture is apparent only in a pipe. Light picks the setting out of the void and appears to be colored. The ornament of the "real" object is not seen in anything but the pipe which is distorted in its angle.

Technique

The "spotlight" is the key to technique for the single light area, which is basically unrealistic, is a trait of Expressionism.

Production Style

The elements and techniques indicate thoroughly expressionistic traits. The production is expressionistic.

Street Scene by Elmer Rice
(Plate LIV)

Mass (and space) and Line

One setting photograph was located. It shows an architectonic exterior with a large building in the upstage area.²³ On stage right another use of architectonic mass is seen. These two walls create what would appear to be the naturalistic floorplan but to be completely naturalistic, a similar structure would be found on stage left. The stage left is seen as another building which is attached to the center structure and which runs off stage and thus out of sight lines. Thus the element is seen as realistic with a strong naturalistic tendency.

Color

A great deal of the color evident in the "real" object is evident in the setting. Real boards are used on stage right and left but paint achieves a color which represents reality. Similarly, the setting grays out above the second story windows suggesting Realism rather than Naturalism.

²³Plate LIV.

Texture

Texture utilizes natural textures in "real" wood and metal while pointillage is used to effect the quality of stones and bricks.

Light

Light is used to enhance the graying out process of Realism. The downstage center area is seen in strong realistic light as is the second story area directly above it. Focus is thus created.

Ornament

Ornament is the element closest to Naturalism. Built dimension is everywhere in the center structure. Real window frames and glass appear to have been used. Curtains and window shades hang in the windows. Rooms are seen through the windows and decor can be seen within the rooms. Traps have been pulled to create a street level series of windows. In front of these windows are elaborate grills with gates so that egress is provided from these apartments. Essentially no detail seems to have been omitted and the element would appear to be naturalistic were it not for the

fact that there is strong focus on the stage floor in front of the building.

Composition

Mass and line are seen in an architectonic exterior with an upstage section which disappears on stage left and returns downstage on stage right. Color uses the real object and simulated color. Focus is achieved through the graying out process. Texture utilizes the natural texture of the "real" object and pointillage. Light creates focus through the graying out process. Ornament seems complete in detail yet the design still allows focus.

Technique

The proscenium stage is used. Flat construction is evident in a dutchman seen between the two stage left windows. Painted and built dimension are used together and the high focus indicates modern spotlighting techniques. All these traits indicate technique as realistic.

Production Style

Although naturalistic traits are seen in both mass and line and ornament, these elements are realistic as are

the other elements. Technique is realistic as well and the production is assessed as Realism near the naturalistic end of the continuum.

Summary of the Season

Eleven of the fourteen productions selected for this season were realistic. Two of the three remaining productions, Mr. Moneybags and Singing Jailbirds were expressionistic. The third, Machinal, was in the style of Selective Realism and Symbolism.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has three purposes. It will answer the questions suggested in the Introduction. It will present secondary conclusions. Last, it will present an evaluation of the study.

Conclusions

Four questions were suggested in the introduction to this study. The answers to these questions not only summarize the four preceeding chapters but isolate specific trends and tendencies. Not all trends in the setting styles of the productions of successful, serious dramas of the 1920's appear in this study; however, certain definite conclusions can be made regarding the four seasons analyzed.

1. What were the general stylistic trends of the period? What scenic styles were exhibited in the productions of the decades?

The results of this study show that the settings of serious American plays produced during the 1920's utilized the styles of Realism, Romanticism, Expressionism, and Symbolism and Selective Realism.

In the theatrical season of 1919-1920, nine of the selected productions utilized Realism as its scenic style. One production utilized the style of "secondhand" Romanticism. In the theatrical season of 1922-1923, eight of the productions selected corresponded to Realism, two productions were in the style of Expressionism. In the theatrical season of 1925-1926, eleven of the productions indicated sufficient evidence to classify them as in the style of Realism. The Great God Brown, for which only one photograph was located, is included because of its significance and relatively long run. It is examined in a different manner. The textural references to setting indicated that the author desired a production in the style of Expressionism. In the theatrical season of 1928-1929, eleven of the productions selected were in the style of Realism. Two productions were in the style of

Expressionism and one production was within the stylistic continuum of Symbolism and Selective Realism.

In short, Romanticism in its "secondhand" phase did not appear after the first season. Expressionism appeared at least once in each of the succeeding seasons, and Symbolism and Selective Realism appeared in the final season. The final season, with three settings of a non-realistic nature showed the greatest diversity of style. The evidence does no more than suggest that there may have been a slight trend toward a diversity of style at the end of the decade.

Of the styles covered in Part I of this study, only Constructivism did not appear in the settings of the forty-six productions selected for analysis in Part II. It may be concluded from this fact that the style appeared in seasons not covered by the study, that it was employed in other areas of the American theatre, or that it may have been employed in productions not meeting the standards of selection utilized in this study.¹

¹O'Neill's Dynamo, which did not meet the standards of selection employed in the study, illustrates a use of constructivist setting traits during the season of 1928-1929.

2. Was there a dominant scenic style in the 1920's?

There is no doubt that Realism was the dominant style of production during the 1920's. Of the forty-six productions selected for examination, thirty-nine were in the style of Realism.² Of the remaining seven productions, five were in the style of Expressionism, while one production was in the style of "secondhand" Romanticism and one production was in the stylistic continuum of Symbolism and Selective Realism.

A mathematical comparison shows Realism accounting for ninety percent of the productions of the first season, eighty percent of the productions of the second season, ninety-two percent of the productions of the third season, and seventy-nine percent of the productions of the fourth season. Eighty-four percent of all the productions examined for the decade were in the style of Realism.

Of the three other styles appearing in the study, only Expressionism appeared more than once. Five productions in the style of Expressionism account for only eleven percent of the productions examined for the decade.

² Although no production photographs were located for The Enemy, Icebound, and The Mud Turtle, an examination of the existing evidence showed that all indicated their author's desires for realistic productions.

3. Did the productions of the 1920's contain eclectic combinations of scenic styles? Did trends in eclecticism appear during the decade?

Of the thirty-six realistic productions for which photographs were located and analyzed, seventeen illustrated one or more of the traits associated with other styles. Nine of these seventeen productions illustrated traits closely allied to Romanticism while one production, through the magnitude of one of its settings, created a romantic mood.

Of the thirty-six realistic productions, four utilized traits common to Symbolism and Selective Realism. Only one of the thirty-six realistic productions utilized a trait of Expressionism.

Of the six non-realistic productions for which photographs were located and analyzed, three illustrated traits associated with other styles. The one romantic play illustrated realistic traits and two of the productions assessed as expressionistic illustrated traits closely related to Symbolism and Selective Realism.

Statistically, forty-seven percent of the productions analyzed through their photographs and defined as Realism, illustrated eclectic combinations of styles,

while fifty percent of the non-realistic productions analyzed in the same manner illustrated eclectic combinations of styles.

It appears from this information that nearly half of the productions examined contained eclectic combinations of scenic styles. However, other information may also be derived from these figures which suggests conclusions regarding the relationship of Romanticism to Realism.

The fact that nine of the thirty-six realistic productions illustrated Romantic traits, implies that the realistic setting was still strongly influenced by Romanticism. Yet this romantic influence is seen as declining throughout the decade. In the season of 1919-1920, four of the realistic productions show romantic traits. In the season of 1922-1923, three of the realistic productions show romantic traits. In each of the last two seasons, romantic traits are seen in only one production.

This decline in Romanticism seems to indicate that Realism was in a process of stylistic development during the decade and that in the latter years of the decade, it may have achieved a development wherein it neared maturity as a scenic style.

Conversely, even though the number of expressionistic productions was limited, it appears that because half of them did utilize traits related to other styles of the new movement in the theatre, a tendency appears toward eclecticism in their settings. However, the writer does not feel that sufficient evidence exists to assess this theory as completely valid and suggests that only future studies could provide a sure conclusion.

4. Do any tendencies appear within the productions analyzed that would lead to conclusions regarding historical developments in the stylistic criteria?

Two tendencies develop throughout the decade. In the first two seasons, the trait of actor focus through the graying out process was rarely witnessed. Instead, during the seasons of 1919-1920 and 1922-1923, seven realistic productions displayed the trait of full color that is associated with the "secondhand" variant of Romanticism. In the season of 1922-1923, this use of full color was seen in three productions. Only once in the season of 1925-1926, does the trait of full color appear. It does not appear in the last season of the study.

Concurrently, the graying out of color shows a comparable growth. In the first two seasons, the graying out process is evident in only five of the sixteen productions in the style of Realism. In the latter two seasons, it is seen in nineteen of the twenty productions in the style of Realism. Only one production does not illustrate the graying out process.

The second tendency is seen in the growth of pointillism. Among the productions in the style of Realism, a marked seasonal growth is witnessed. In the season of 1919-1920, two of the nine productions in the style of Realism utilized the trait of pointillism. In the second season, that of 1922-1923, four productions out of seven utilized the trait of pointillism. In the third and fourth seasons, all of the productions in the style of Realism utilized the trait of pointillism.

A great deal of similarity is seen in the two tendencies. In the seasons of 1919-1920 and 1922-1923, the graying out process is seen in thirty-one percent of the productions while pointillism is seen in thirty-seven percent. In the seasons of 1925-1926 and 1928-1929, the graying out process is seen in ninety-five percent of the

productions while pointillism is seen in at least ninety percent.³

As the full color process declined, graying out and pointillism proportionally increased and the significance of the decline and growth of these antithetic traits strengthens the viewpoint that Realism was in a developmental period during the 1920's. It also suggests that there was, during the latter years of the decade, a decline of Romantic influence on Realism in scenic style. Last, in the fact that the full color process had disappeared by the fourth season analyzed in the study, and that the graying out process and pointillism were seen in its place, significant evidence is provided in establishing the validity of the observation that Realism reached maturity as a scenic style in the latter part of the 1920's.

Evaluation of the Study

Originally, this study was a portion of a three-part study designed to examine the scenic and dramatic

³ Neither The Gray Fox nor Gypsy are of sufficient photographic quality to determine the use or lack of use of pointillism.

styles in the productions of the successful, serious American productions of the 1920's, as well as the dramatic styles in the productions of successful, serious American productions of the 1930's.⁴

Because of the unified approach to the establishment of criteria in the original study, the author relied completely on the writing of scholars and designers in the formation of his stylistic criteria. In light of the fact that the study became three separate studies, such an approach now appears to have been a definite limitation, not only in establishing stylistic criteria, but in the application of the criteria to the photographs in Part II of the study. The commentary of scholars and designers lacked the critical "immediacy" that might well have been revealed in assessments of production criticism. Similarly, the study now seems limited by the fact that the scripts of the productions cited by the scholars and designers were

⁴See Charles E. Lauterbach, "A Descriptive Study of Trends in Dramatic Styles in the Successful, Serious American Drama of the Broadway Stage in the 1920's." (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1966), and John E. Clifford, "A Descriptive Study of Style in Serious American Drama on The New York Stage from 1931 through 1941." (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1966).

not employed in enhancing the author's development of his criteria. It appears now that an analysis of the material regarding setting, which is so inherent to published scripts, might have been of considerable value in improving the stylistic criteria.

Similarly, analyses of the setting descriptions of these productions analyzed in Part II, might have improved the study. There is no question that the photographs examined in Part II were of poor quality. This lack of quality was apparent in two ways. First, the photography itself was, by present standards, often primitive. The over-illumination of many of the settings illustrates this point of view, but the second reason seems even more significant. Rather than photographs taken during the performance of a production, a majority of the other photographs appeared to be posed and as such, designed to record the actors appearing in a production. Some of the settings were photographed without actors, but even when their photographic quality was good, they tended to be so over illuminated as to indicate that production lighting was not employed for the photographs.

How then, could other criteria be established which might lead to a more satisfactory analysis? The answer

may well be found in an approach which combines the above suggestions regarding criticism and setting descriptions with the criteria used in this study. In essence, the stylistic criticism, the textual setting descriptions and the stylistic criteria of this study would be combined into extended stylistic criteria. These criteria would then be used to analyze the "immediate" criticism of a setting, the production's text, setting description, and the production photographs themselves. The author feels that a much more thorough analysis of the setting style of American productions might thus be achieved.

Such an approach to the 1920's might not be possible, however. Although there were indications in the fourth season of the study that some productions were being photographed with considerably higher degrees of fidelity to the settings, as well as with more technical skill, this photographic quality was not really apparent prior to the 1928-1929 season. Thus it might well be that a photographic analysis of the 1920's has little value in studies that might be made of this decade. If the first assumption is valid, then the photographs of the study would have little more value than as indications of the

producers', directors', and designers' fidelity to the dictates of their playwrights.

As to the common conception that the 1920's was a period of stylistic experimentation, it cannot be concluded from the evidence of the study that the American theatre of the 1920's was stylistically experimental. Rather, the observation might be made that the mainstream of professional theatre, as seen in the four seasons analyzed, indicates that it was in the process of solidifying and consolidating a realistic approach to setting. This seems apparent, not only through the development of the processes of "graying out" and "pointillage," but in the scenic traits related to Selective Realism which began to appear during the 1920's.

At the same time, the six non-realistic settings are not necessarily significant in themselves. They must be viewed in the total context of the decade. There were, in the seasons analyzed, other productions which to a slightly larger, but still limited, degree, imply the beginnings of a period of stylistic experimentation. For example, in the season of 1919-1920, the influence of Symbolism and Selective Realism was seen in the setting

for Drinkwater's Abraham Lincoln and in Robert Edmond Jones' setting for Richard III.

The 1922-1923 season was even more varied. During this season Broadway witnessed productions of Claudel's The Tidings Brought to Mary, Ibsen's Peer Gynt, Hauptmann's Rose Bernd, Kaiser's From Morn to Midnight, Pirondelle's Six Characters in Search of an Author, and Capek's R.U.R.

In the season of 1925-1926, Ansky's The Dybbuk was performed on Broadway as were Strindberg's The Dream Play, Capek's Makropoulous Secret, and Werfel's The Goat Song.

In the season of 1928-1929, in addition to such stylistically varied productions as Machinal, Mr. Money-penny, Singing Jailbirds, and Street Scene, Sherriff's Journey's End was seen as were Rice's The Subway and O'Neill's Dynamo.

Although other productions with stylistic variation were produced on the New York stage during these seasons, they were comparatively few in number. The productions listed above, along with the six cited in Part II of the study appear to comprise the majority of those productions utilizing stylistic experimentation on the New York stage during the four seasons. And yet, during these four seasons, the total number of dramas produced is

staggering. In the season of 1919-1920, there were forty-nine productions of serious dramas. In the season of 1922-1923, there were seventy-five productions of dramas. In the season of 1925-1926, a peak of one hundred and twenty-five productions was reached. In the last season, one hundred and fifteen productions were seen.

If one includes not only American dramas, but foreign dramas and revivals, the fact remains that the six settings of the analysis which deviated from Realism, combined with the possible stylistic deviations of the productions listed above, do not comprise a very substantial list of stylistically experimental settings when compared to the three hundred and sixty-four productions of the four seasons.

The same evidence of a stylistically limited theatre is apparent in Lauterbach's study. He finds that there were twenty-four dramas in the style of Romanticism--a Romanticism which predominantly called for the fourth wall convention of Realism and Naturalism in its productions. There were thirteen realistic dramas, three naturalistic dramas, and six expressionistic dramas.⁵

⁵Lauterbach, p. 417.

If then, the 1920's were years of stylistic experimentation, the evidence of such experimentation does not appear on the New York stage. In all probability, the experimentation was more a part of the Off-Broadway stage. Such theatres as the Provincetown Playhouse, the Neighborhood Playhouse, and the Washington Square Players did experiment with new styles as did theatres throughout the United States. The Boston Toy Theatre, The Dallas Little Theatre, the Cleveland Playhouse, and the Pasadena Community Playhouse are illustrative of the more experimental theatres throughout the country.

Similarly, a degree of influence probably came from the theatrical periodicals of the time. Theatre Arts is the best example of this influence. During the 1920's, much of this publication was devoted to reporting the stylistic experimentation, not only in the European theatre, but in the theatres mentioned above.

The encouragement given an American experimental theatre comes not only from the Little Theatres of America and from periodicals like Theatre Arts, but from the writing of such men as Carter, Cheney, Fuerst and Hume, and MacGowan. All of these men published books that dealt primarily with the experiments in European theatre but to

a lesser degree, they did concern themselves with the American theatre. More important, much of their work is seen as the writing of men who felt themselves to be visionaries and as such, they called for a new American theatre.

It was this combination which truly indicates the beginnings of a period of stylistic experimentation. The fact that there were stylistic deviations on Broadway from the "norm" of a basically realistic theatre, is a remarkable achievement. It is particularly remarkable in light of the fact that Robert Edmond Jones' setting for The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife preceeded the 1920's by only five years. The decade, however, cannot be assessed in any other way than that it was a time of consolidation of realistic developments in setting style, and a time of tentative attempts toward eclectic styles in setting.

As pointed out above, a substantial number of European productions were seen on the American stage during the seasons analyzed. Little question exists regarding the influence of these productions on the American theatre. In all probability, a method of selection should have been devised which would have permitted their inclusion within the study. It is similarly significant that many of the

settings cited in Part I of the study were from European productions. Thus the implication regarding the European influence is strengthened by the nature of the visual, primary source materials. Because of these influences, the productions analyzed in Part I might well have included the stylistically significant European productions performed on the American stage during the 1920's.

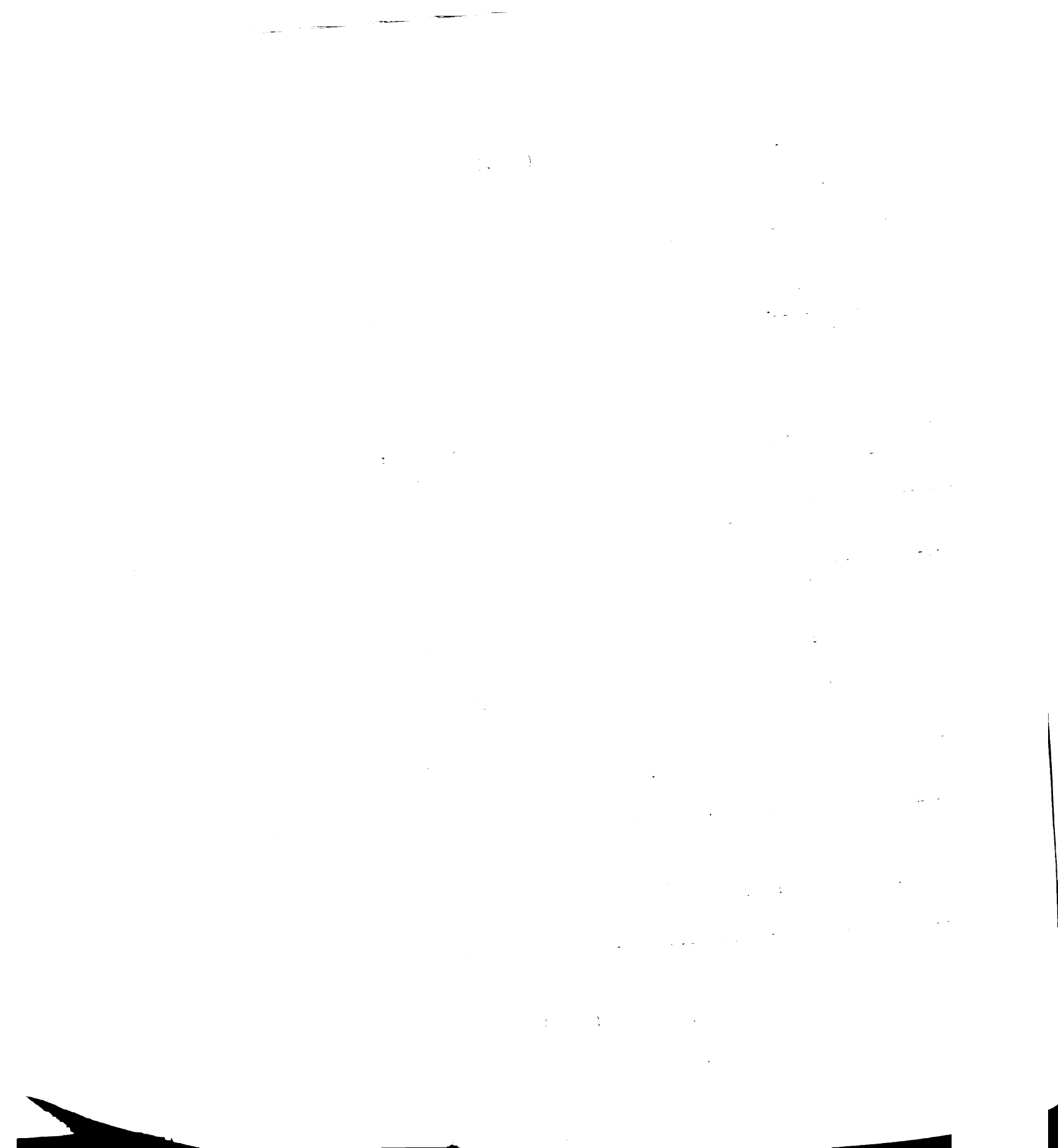
Such a study might have provided conclusive evidence in ending the speculation about the "stylistic" nature of the 1920's.

The value of this study is in the compilation of the writing of scholars and designers into the criteria developed in Part I. These criteria, if employed in conjunction with the criticism and the textural setting descriptions of the plays, could lead the way to more inclusive criteria, which conceivably, would make studies of the 1920's, and especially later years, extremely valuable.

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