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THE NEW YORK SCENE IN THE "THEATRICAL TWENTIES"

The 1920s were the «Big Decade» to Kenneth Macgowan, keen observer of the post-WWI New York scene: «the ten years from the end of World War I to the fatal fall of 1929», writes the eminent drama critic in 1959, «seemed to us who watched the stage in New York, the Big Decade»[1]. History proved this contemporary witness right: the 1920s came to be defined as the "Theatrical Twenties" by scholars like Allen Churchill or Samuel L. Leiter who have demonstrated the extraordinary intensity of these years[2]. The vibrancy of the New York stage could be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively as the decade saw a greater number of productions but also a richer variety of offers. The Golden Age came suddenly to a halt in the wake of 1929 because of the economic crash but also because of the development of talking pictures and radio which decimated attendance. These darker pages of the history of the New York scene enhanced, by contrast, the brilliance of the previous prosperous years.

To discover the Theatrical Twenties and feel the electric thrill of the New York experience, a first immersion into the socio-political context of the theatre life is necessary before considering the diversity of the dramatic genres among the many theatre communities on and off Broadway. Our study will end by a short exploration of the acting styles that dominated the stage at a time when acting methods developed[3]. This "Big Decade"

[1] Kenneth Macgowan, *Introduction*, in *Famous American Plays of the 1920s*, Kenneth Macgowan ed., New York, Dell Publishing Co., 1959, p. 7.

[2] Allen Churchill, *The Theatrical 20's*, New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975; Samuel L. Leiter *Introduction*, in *The Encyclopedia of the New York Stage 1920-1930*, Samuel L. Leiter ed., Westport, Greenwood Press, 1985, pp. XVII-XVIII.

[3] This article offers glimpses of different facets of the New York theatrical world and should therefore be read as an overview introducing some of the main features of the decade. Throughout this study, bibliographical references are quoted for the readers to be able to pursue their explorations in more depth.

was essential in the building up of an American theatrical identity based, I would argue, on the interconnections of the on and off Broadway scenes which benefitted from one another, as this paper hopes to show.

THE ROARING TWENTIES: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE NEW YORK SCENE

If WWI plunged Europe in «the age of anxiety», the USA awoke to the «age of miracles» in the aftermath of the conflict, according to F. Scott Fitzgerald[4]. Before the 1929 and the crash of both Wall Street and the American Dream, a wind of optimism blew throughout the USA whose economy was thriving. The boom of the manufacturing sector resulted in the rise of a – seemingly – democratic mass-consumption society. Economic hubs offering not only job opportunities but also modern conveniences and amusements, cities attracted more and more people and by the 1920s, the USA had become an urban nation. In just a decade, New York «rose by 1.3 million»[5]. A time of economic and demographic expansion, the 1920s was also a time of emancipation. After having obtained the political right to vote, young women were now claiming the right to have fun. In the image of the Flapper and her male counterpart, the Sheik, the young generation rejected traditional social roles and customs. These emblematic figures of the emerging youth culture embodied the social and cultural transformations in the face of the «growing conservative counterassault [which] manifested itself in a myriad of ways, including the hysteria of the Red Scare, the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, the ratification of National Prohibition, the passage of stricter immigration quotas, the rise of Fundamentalism, and the furor of the Scopes Monkey Trial, to name only

[4] The phrase «Age of Anxiety» was coined by Paul Tillich who, in the wake of Paul Valery's *The Crisis of the Mind* (1919), wrote: «it has become almost a truism to call our time an age of anxiety... In this the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness is dominant». This anxiety first stroke Europe and then eventually spread throughout America according to the philosopher. In his 1931 *Echoes of the Jazz Age*, F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote that the 1920s was «an age of miracles, […] of art, […] of excess, and […] satire» (Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1952, pp. 35, 56; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Echoes of the Jazz Age*, New York, New Directions Publishing, 1931, p. XVI).

[5] Howard P. Chudacoff, Judith Smith, Peter Baldwin, *The Evolution of American Urban Society*, New York, Routledge, 2016, p. 158.

a handful»[6]. The 1920s was therefore a decade of fascinating contrasts which influenced in many ways the New York scene. The exploration of the political and social context and its impact on the world of theatre will focus on the general themes of labor representation, censorship in relation to sexual emancipation, and prohibition.

«Equity Strikes!»: Labor (Re)organization in the Theatre

For Robert Simonson, the best stage show in New York took place in August, 18th, 1919 when the Actors' Equity Union – founded in 1913 – called for a strike against producers. As one could read on the banners of the union "Equity Strikes!"[7] and it did strike very hard as it gathered about 150 professionals who protested against the abuses of the Broadway business men who imposed their rules at the expense of the actors made to buy their costumes or rehearse for free. The strike resulted in negotiations between the Actors' Equity and the Producing Managers' Association created in 1919. In the following years, new actor-protective rules were set:

> The strike ended in October 1919 with a five-year contract between the union and the Producing Managers' Association. Over the next fifteen years, the union won bonding provisions that guaranteed salaries and transportation for traveling troupes (1924), placed restrictions on actors from other countries who on work on the American stage (1928), though this continues to be a major issues in the twenty-first century), provided for the franchising of agents (1929), and guaranteed a minimum wage (1933)[8].

After the actors, playwrights would eventually organize themselves to defend their rights and in 1926 the Dramatists' Guild was founded to negotiate the first of the Minimum Basic Agreement – which is still in force today. Throughout the 1920s, professionals threatened to stage another major strike like that of 1919 which «closed 37 plays in 8 cities, prevented the opening of 16 other shows, and was estimated to cost the

[6] Kathleen Drowne, Patrick Huber, *The 1920s*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 2004, p. XVI.

[7] Archive photography, Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Labor, Archive Elmer Holmes Bobst Library - 70 Washington Square South10th Floor.

[8] *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Business, Labor, and Economic History*, Melvyn Dubofsky ed., vol. I, New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 291.

industry $3 million»[9]. If this constant threat did not dethrone producers, their all-mighty supremacy was however put into question and a new balance was found among the different professions. These series of laws aimed to protect the labor force in the theatre had a financial impact:

> By the late 1920s, the theatre's internal costs were escalating so rapidly that it was already beginning to reel when the talkies, the radio, and the crash came down like thunder on its shaky foundations. Even in 1929 a critic like John Anderson could write […] that the theatre was being forced «to live by hit – or miss – system in which a play is either an enormous success or an immediate and overwhelming failure»[10].

«I believe in censorship»: (Immoral) Sexual Emancipation on the Stage

«I believed in censorship», declared Mae West in 1940: «after all, I made a fortune out of it!»[11]. This very ironic declaration from the scandalous actress, playwright and screenwriter who made sex her hallmark underlines the emblematic tension of the 1920s torn apart between emancipation and conservatism. By 1940, censorship had indeed made West's celebrity – or what her detractors would call her "notoriety" – as it first attracted attention to her early starring role on Broadway in her 1926 play, *Sex*. Censorship paradoxically gave her visibility and later launched her Hollywood career.

The 1920s was a decade of sexual liberation both *off* and *on* stage, a phenomenon that "the boobs" – as H. L. Mencken named the conservative middle-class fringe of America – deemed immoral. Sexuality had indeed become a central theme in the theatre and was no longer restricted to its traditional functions of comic relief or lascivious thrill. Sexuality as a serious topic had, by that time, spread out to every section of American theatre and was no more the exclusive realm of Bohemian artists from Greenwich Village – who, in the 1910s, had notably reinterpreted Freudianism as a call for sexual liberation and had written several plays dealing with sex[12].

[9] Ken Bloom, *Broadway: An Encyclopedia*, New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 6.

[10] Samuel L. Leiter, *Introduction*, cit., p. XXIII.

[11] This famous quote from Mae West dates from 1940 when she left Paramount. Mae West qtd. in *Women Screenwriters: An International Guide*, Jill Nelmes and Jule Selbo eds., London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 848.

[12] Among the early Greenwich Village Bohemians' plays dealing with sex, we may

Sexual double-standard, free love, homosexuality, miscegenation, prostitution were now displayed on both commercial and non-commercial stages to the great displeasure of the guardians of traditional morality. As Leiter writes in his *The Encyclopedia of the New York Stage, 1920-1930*, the most «persistent sword of Damocles was the ever-present pressure from citizens' groups who shouted jeremiads against the immorality of the stage»[13]. Before 1927 and the enforcement of the Wales Padlock Law which granted legal authority to padlock playhouses producing plays that «depic[t] or dea[lt] with the subject of sex degeneracy or sex perversion»[14], civilians were indeed the greater threats of censorship in the theatre. In response to the growing dissatisfaction of pressure groups, the Chief Magistrate of New York's magistrate courts, William McAdoo, set in 1922 the principle of the «Play Jury» composed «of several hundred citizens from various professions» – at the exclusion of people from the world of theatre or associated with reform organizations. As John Houchin explains, when complaints from civilians against a production were received, «a jury of twelve, who were unknown to one another, would be asked to attend the production in question and to decide, individually and in private, whether or not the show was decent»[15].

The first show that faced the sanction of the Play Jury was *The God of Vengeance* by Yiddish playwright Sholom Asch. The 1922 Provincetown Players production was sentenced on immoral grounds: even though anti-Semitism may have been a reason to condemn the play, the main argument concerned the sexual depravity displayed on stage[16]. Set in a brothel, *The God of Vengeance* is «known as the play featuring the first lesbian kiss», a first which could not by shock the jury. «In 1924-1925, the uproar grew more virulent», reminds Leiter, «and a body of 300 citizens was selected as a pool of potential play jurors to sit in judgment on works accused of salaciousness»: complaints were then lodged against Eugene

mention Eugene O'Neill's *The Web* (1913), Neith Boyce's *Constancy* (1915), Susan Glaspell and George C. Cook's *Suppressed Desires* (1915), John Reed's *The Eternal Quadrangle* (1916) or Pendleton King's *Cocaine* (1916).

[13] Samuel L. Leiter, *Introduction*, cit.

[14] Wales Padlock Law qtd. in *Historical Dictionary of American Theater: Modernism*, James Fisher and Felicia Hardison Londré eds., London, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017, p. 690.

[15] John Houchin, *Censorship of the American Theatre in the Twentieth Century*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 81.

[16] *Censorship: A World Encyclopedia*, Derek Jones, ed., New York, Routledge, 2015, p. 116.

O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*, Edwin Justus Mayer's *Firebrand*, Maxwell Anderson's *What Price Glory?*, William J. McNally's *A Good Bad Woman*[17].

The peak year of censorship was 1927. On the night of February 9, the police arrested the producers and actors of Edouard Bourdet's *The Captive*, dealing with lesbianism, Mae West's *Sex* and William Francis Dugan's *The Virgin Man*. Mae West epitomizes the limited success of censorship. After West was found guilty of indecent public performance, she spent ten days in prison. From her interactions with her inmates, she sketched the character of what would become her greatest hit movie, *Diamond Lil*. Her next plays, *The Drag* (1927) and *The Pleasure Man* (1928) were also banned in New York so she toured her shows in more accepting places like Connecticut and New Jersey. New York was a crossroads of paradoxical influences: more prudish than other cities as the power of the conservative lobbies shows, it was the capital of provocative productions that displayed the young generation's urge to break away from conventional social norms.

«Prohibition is better than no liquor at all»: the Rise of an Underground Theatre Scene

The 1920s can be viewed as a decade of emancipation under restraint. The Conservatives' attempts to keep society within the bounds of decorum resulted in the development of an underground society on the margins of respectability. Actor Will Rogers's jest, «prohibition is better than no liquor at all»[18], proved the limited effect of the Eighteenth Amendment which legislated against the production, transport and sale of alcohol. Viewed as a source of moral and religious evil, defenders of the Temperance Movement forced the official prohibition of alcohol which did not prevent the consumption of liquor produced and sold undercover. From January 1920 and the enforcement of the law, the New York scene changed for better or worse. As the era of dining and dancing came to a halt since owners closed their businesses, came the time of illegal nightclubs and speakeasies – where alcohol was served in teacups or under the counter. Such establish-

[17] Samuel L. Leiter, *Introduction*, cit.

[18] Will Rogers qtd. in Edward Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years that Changed America*, New York, Arcade Publishing, 1996, p. 216.

ments opened the stage to shows that were as intoxicating as the alcoholic beverages they sold: from jazz music to sexy variety shows, the nights were electric. The fun was however checked by the growing influence of the mafia. In *The Theatrical 20's*, Churchill writes:

> Soon gangsters controlled nearly every Broadway night spot, bringing a sinister note to the Great White Way. The best people drank their liquor, and the prettiest showgirls feared to reject their advances. New York's tough guys never became as celebrated as those of Chicago, but as always its night life vastly outshone that of the Windy City or anywhere else. During the Twenties, Gotham's hectic gaiety played a strident obbligato to the theatre and other artistic endeavors[19].

A structural phenomenon which conditioned the artistic economy, prohibition also became a dramatic material for playwrights. Plays on the ban of alcohol and its consequences abounded. According to Rhona Justice-Malloy, the first play that made reference to Prohibition was George Middleton and Guy Bolton's *The Cave Girl* which opened in August 1920[20]. Playwrights of acclaim quickly explored the theme: Rachel Crothers wrote her 1921 hit *Nice People* and January 1922 saw the opening of J. Hartley Manners's *The National Anthem*. One of the great successes of 1926 – but also of the history of theatre as it brought recognition to «Broadway Giant»[21], George Abbott – was the play *Broadway*, the Broadhurst Theatre's greatest hits as it ran for 603 performances[22]. The play set at the Paradise Night Club, a New York underground cabaret, staged a naïve winsome young dancer involved in backstage bootlegging and murder. The dramatic treatment of Prohibition proved, in theatre historian Tice Miller's words, the ability of artists «to digest the news and make history comes alive»[23]: a mirror hold up to society, the New York stage represented the burning topical issues of its time.

[19] Allen Churchill, *The Theatrical 20's*, cit., p. 11.

[20] Rhona Justice-Malloy, *«Can't Someone Find Him a Stimulant?». The Treatment of Prohibition on the American Stage, 1920-1933*, «Theatre History», n. 29, 2009, p. 123.

[21] Marilyn Berger, *George Abbott, Broadway Giant With Hit After Hit, Dead at 107*, «New York Times», Feb 1, 1995.

[22] *The Oxford Companion to American Theatre*, Gerald Martin Bordman and Thomas S. Hischak eds., New York, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 94.

[23] Tice Miller, *Entertaining the Nation: American Drama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, p. XV.

ON AND OFF BROADWAY: AN OVERVIEW OF NEW YORK'S DRAMATIC GENRES

The term "Off-Broadway" was coined in the 1950s «for both New York productions or theatres outside the so-called "Broadway" area surrounding Time Square and an Actors' Equity Association contract for theatres with 100-299 seats»[24]. The label "Off-Off Broadway" was then coined in the 1960s to distinguish commercial from non-commercial theatres[25]. In the 1920s, the distinction "on" and "off" Broadway did however exist but it did not have any official status. What was initially a geographical characteristic took on economic undertones as "Broadway" came to refer to shows that not only were located in the "Theatre District" but also attracted large audiences and grew benefits. If by the 1920s, Broadway appeared as *the* theatrical industry, the dazzling lights of the Great White Way should not overshadow the theatrical activities outside its boundaries. Indeed, New York presented a vibrant scene on the margins of the Theatre District which contributed to Broadway itself as it challenged its standards and favoured the renewal of dramatic forms in the USA. The "on" and "off" Broadway stages offered two main trends of shows from a dramatic point of view: realist and anti-realist performances. In the introduction to his anthology *Famous American Plays of the 1920s*, Macgowan noted that the «theatre of the twenties was the scene of a curious conflict»:

> It was the battleground of opposing forces, yet these forces were united in a common end. Playwrights and producers sought more intensity of expression, but they sought it in conflicting ways. Most of them tried to achieve it through more realism; some through an escape from realism by way of splendid theatricalism on the one hand or symbolic distortion of the other hand. The result was a wide variety of plays and of production styles[26].

[24] *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, Martin Banham ed., New York, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 731.

[25] «The term [was] coined in the 1960s to distinguish professional, commercial theatre (Broadway and Off-Broadway) from non-commercial theatre presented in coffee houses, churches, lofts, and storefronts in New York's Greenwich Village and Lower East Side. Technically, the term also refers to productions that fall under the American Actors' Equity Basic Showcase Code for Performances which limited runs that feature unsalaried union actors in non-contractual theatres of no more than 100 seats» (*The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, Martin Banham ed., cit., p. 732).

[26] Kenneth Macgowan, *Introduction*, cit., p. 21.

A myriad of dramatic genres along the realist/anti-realist spectrum were indeed programmed throughout the succeeding seasons of the decade: spectators were spoiled for choice and could attend tragedies, satires, light comedies, high comedies, melodramas, etc. The shows catered for the tastes and expectations of a great variety of communities from economic, artistic but also ethnic viewpoints. In order to get a more detailed vision of the dramatic genres produced in the Big Apple, a brief overview of the most successful dramatic works "on" and then "off" Broadway will be given. The introduction to the dramatic styles of the off Broadway scene will be divided into what is called the "Institutional Theatre" and the "Community Theatre".

«New Lights for Broadway»[27]*: Commercial Hits on the Great White Way*

The dazzling success of Broadway could be measured in the 1920s by the myriads of lights that fostered the expression the "Great White Way": the number of bulbs grew with the number of shows that broke records over the decade. The peak of this Golden Age came during the 1927-1928 season when about 270 shows were opened. The busiest night of Broadway history was December 26, 1927 when 10 new shows were produced[28]. If musicals and revues topped the charts of attendance, drama also became a main source of entertainment as comedies developed.

The triumph of musicals was based mostly on big musical ensembles, energetic dance routines, flamboyant costumes and spectacular sets rather than on plotline. *No, No, Nanette* (1925), a musical hit of the decade, was one of those «playful, irresponsible and blissfully irrelevant»[29] shows that did not have a strong storyline but delighted the audiences with unforgettable catchy songs and glamorous numbers. «Occasionally», though, as Kathleen Drowne and Patrick Huber stress, «big-budget musicals did take more sophisticated, complicated plots»[30] like *Show Boat* (1927), another musical sensation which dealt with racism and miscegenation.

[27] Harold C. Lewis, *New Lights for Broadway*, «New York Times», Nov. 26, 1926.

[28] Depending on commentators, the number of shows over the season oscillates between 265 and 275 and that of shows that premiered on Dec, 26 spans from 9 to 11.

[29] Walter Keer, *Musicals That Were Playful, Irresponsible and Blissfully Irrelevant*, «New York Times», April 11, 1971.

[30] Kathleen Drowne, Patrick Huber, *The 1920s*, cit., p. 224.

In spite of the great success of musicals, the dominant Broadway genre of the 1920s were revues which flourished throughout the decade. The most acclaimed revue in town was the *Ziegfeld Follies* – named after Paris's *Folies Bergère.* Spectators could enjoy the numbers of major popular American artists from the illustrated songs of Eddie Cantor and Fannie Brice, to Gallagher and Shean's vaudevilles or Gilda Gray's Shimmy dance number. Other well-known revues were the Shubert's *Passing Show* and *Artists and Models*, George White's *Scandals*, Irving Berlin's *Music Box Revues*, Earl Caroll's *Vanities*. Another set of «revues appeared and disappeared from season to season with titles like: *Bad Habits of 1926*, *Bunk of 1926*, *Nic Nax of 1926*, *Bare facts of 1927*, *Padlocks of 1927*»[31]. Revues were wonderful testing grounds for artists and helped launched many careers like that of the Marx Brothers. Like musical, revues should be glamorous to be successful and the stress was, as a contemporary critic reported, on the «allure of the female flesh… embellished with music and dancing and presented in lavish and exotic settings»[32].To the glam, humour was added to ensure spectators a perfect evening.

The audience's attraction to comedy shows grew to the extent that, according to Churchill, the decade «stand as the Golden Age of comedy»[33]. Aside from Ed Wynn's or Will Rogers's funny sketches at the *Follies*, comedy as a dramatic genre made itself at home on Broadway. The native American comic entertainment, the minstrel show, was still very much in vogue in the 1920s and blackface characters starred Broadway musicals like in the 1921 hit *Bombo.* The Marx Brothers, mentioned earlier, opened in 1925 *The Coconuts* which was so well received that it became a movie in 1929. Reflecting the mechanic evolution of the time, Broadway comedies like *Six Cylinder Love* (1921) or *Nervous Wreck* (1923) «featured plots that revolved around the automobile»[34]. Some comedies were more "philosophical" like Sidney C. Howard's comedy in three acts, *They Knew What They Wanted*, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1925: «In our opinion, this play stands head on shoulders above all the other American plays of the season; *They Knew What They Wanted* treats a difficult and delicate theme with rare human insight

[31] Nathan Hurwitz, *A History of the American Musical Theatre: No Business Like It*, New York, Routledge, 2014, p. 102.

[32] Qtd. in Julian Mates, *America's Musical Stage: Two Hundred Years of Musical Theatre*, Westport, Praeger, 1987, p. 149.

[33] Allen Churchill, *The Theatre 20's*, cit., p. 90.

[34] Kathleen Drowne, Patrick Huber, *The 1920s*, cit., p. 250.

and even rarer philosophical profundity»[35] declared the Pulitzer jury who nominated the play.

The Broadway champion of the Pulitzer Prize was playwright Eugene O'Neill who earned the award three times throughout the 1920s for his Broadway productions of *Beyond the Horizon* (1920), *Anna Christie* (1922) and *Strange Interlude* (1928). His plays did not have the light streak of comedies as they were dark domestic tragedies which did find a very enthusiastic audience on Broadway. Before being a child of the Theatre District, O'Neill was a member of the Provincetown Player, an off Broadway amateur company. The turning point for O'Neill was the production of *The Emperor Jones* at the Provincetown Playhouse: Provincetown Players member Edna Kenton remembered that «offers came in from half a dozen Broadway managers to take *The Emperor Jones* uptown»[36]. Broadway's producers had their eyes on the off-Broadway scene from which commercial theatre greatly benefited: the Great White Way was now opening up to more experimental works that would challenge the spectators and not only entertain them. Hence, playwrights like Sophie Treadwell, Rachel Crothers or Maxwell Anderson found both producers and audiences on Broadway.

«Real artistic, literary and dramatic merit»: Institutional Theatres in Bohemia

The Provincetown Players were founded in 1915 by George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell to «encourage the writing of American plays of real artistic, literary and dramatic – as opposed to Broadway – merit» as the company penned down in their «Resolutions»[37]. As part of the Little Theatre Movement that emerged in Chicago and New York in the 1910s as a reaction against commercial productions, The Provincetown Players were very influential in the development of a native dramatic culture. Prior to the beginning of the century, performances in the USA were of European texts: the 1910s were marked by an explosion of American plays produced by small companies before making a grand entrance on

[35] Qtd. in *Chronicle of the Pulitzer Prizes for Drama: Discussions, Decisions and Documents*, München, G. K. Sauer Verlag, 2008, p. 64.

[36] Edna Kenton, *The Provincetown Players and the Playwrights' Theatre*, Travis Bogard and Jackson R. Bryer eds., Jefferson, McFarland, 2004, p. 127.

[37] Qtd. in Edna Kenton, *The Provincetown Players*, cit., p. 27.

Broadway in the 1920s, notably in the wake of Eugene O'Neill who paved the way in as we saw. For Kenton, the Players' decision to take O'Neill's play uptown signed the death warrant of Cook and Glaspell's dream of an amateur theatre on the fringe of Broadway[38]. The theatrical adventure that started in Provincetown and developed in Greenwich Village ended in 1922 but the company left behind a vibrant institutional theatre scene and "the Father" and "Mother" of American drama in the persons of Eugene O'Neill and Susan Glaspell[39]. What Isaac Goldberg called in 1922 "the drama of transition" of the 1910s gave the impetus to a new breed of institutional theatres that offered high quality works spanning from comedies to tragedies in genres and from realism to expressionism in styles. The main location of these theatrical institutions was the West side of Lower Manhattan, Greenwich Village – the heart of Bohemian culture.

For Leiter, the Theatre Guild was «the most influential company of its time». This theatrical society was created in 1918 from the Washington Square Players:

> [The Theatre Guild] aimed from the start to compete with Broadway on its own turf by doing the best and most farseeing new scripts available in the finest staging possible. The majority of its early plays were European, for which it was criticized, but it did an enormous service to the theatre in its production of the works of authors such as Franz Werfel, A. A. Milne, George Kaiser, Ferenc Molnár, Leonid Andreyev, and others; they specialized in George Bernard Shaw, offering eleven works, new and old, by the aged Irishman during the decade. The Guild did produce one of America's most important work during the early 1920s, Elmer Rice's *Adding Machine*, and in the decade's latter half sponsored a vigorous series of preeminent native plays by writers such as Sidney Howaed, S. N. Berhman, Eugene O'Neill and DuBose and Dorothy Heyward[40].

Another much applauded off-Broadway institution was the Neighborhood Playhouse which went professional in 1920. This theatre founded by the young, German-Jewish activist philanthropist sisters Alice and Irene Lewisohn exceeded its early community based objectives as it was opened to serve the cultural needs of the immigrants but at the turn of the second

[38] Edna Kenton, *The Provincetown Players*, cit., p. 127

[39] *The Longman Anthology of Drama and Theater*, Michael L. Greenwald, Roger Schultz, Roberto Dario Pomo, eds., New York, Pearson, 2002, p. 21.

[40] Samuel L. Leiter, *Introduction*, cit., p. XIX.

decade of the century, it then catered for a larger audience in search of high quality scripts and innovative staging.

Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre opened in 1926. A year before she started her theatre, the director-actress confided to George Pierce Barker's students at Yale that «America represent[ed] the world hope of attainment of lofty ideals in dramatic arts». She then added: «the myth of European supremacy in the arts is fast fading… Let us make the theatre of America stand free and high up, with no world peers»[41]. In spite of Le Gallienne's call for an American supremacy that would supplant the European myth, she did program European plays and spread the words of Ibsen, Chekhov of Shakespeare but she also did indeed encourage American playwrights like Walter Ferris (*The New Stones*), Eleanor Holmes Hinkley (*Dear Jane*) or Susan Glaspell (*Alison's House* for which she was awarded a Pulitzer Prize). Although her theatre could not afford the extravagance of a commercial stage, Le Gallienne was the first Peter Pan to fly over the audience. «The nation's first sustained, professional, low-cost repertory company», the Civic Repertory Theatre was very influential in elaborating a model for non-profit theatres[42].

Other institutional theatres were the National Theatre, the Equity Players, the Garrick Players, the New York Theatre Assembly or The New Playwright Theatre, etc. If institutional theatres had all their specificities, they all shared the common goal to encourage new dramatic and theatrical experimentations: art came therefore before money, an equation which distinguished them from commercial managements.

«How the Other Half Laughs»: New York's Community Theatres

In 1898, John Corbin entitled his report for the «Harper's New Monthly Magazine» on the Italian and Yiddish theatres «How the Other Half Laughs». Playing on the title of Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1980), Corbin tried to define the various forms of humour practiced by the immigrant communities in New York's East Side. «You may pity the people of the East Side, if you must, ten hours a day», wrote the dramatic critic, «but when the arc-lights gleam beneath the tracks of the elevated, if you are

[41] Qtd. in *An Ideal Theater: Founding Visions for a New American Art*, Todd London ed., New York, Theatre Communication Groups, 2013, p. 271.

[42] *Ibidem*.

honest you will envy them»[43]. For Sabine Haenni, Corbin was «fascinated by the conviviality of the audiences at the Yiddish and Italian theaters and the spectators' emotional investment in the plays»[44]. Communities theatres were very important in the 1920s: they reflected the various cultural identities that grew stronger as the number of immigrants grew in the City. «By the late 1920s New York City was absorbing almost one out of every four immigrants from abroad»; the data indicate a «rise in the concentration of foreign born» and a sharp increase in the proportion of German, Italian and Jewish immigrants[45]. These three communities as we are going to see, fostered very specific dramatic traditions. Contrary to what Corbin's title seems to imply, comedies were not the only genres that appealed to the different groups even though, comic shows were enthusiastically applauded.

German immigrant theatre developed in New York City from 1840 to WWI, then declined during the war to eventually make a comeback in the 1920s. Bi-lingual and bi-cultural, professional German-American theatre in Klein Deutschland around Tompkins Square on the Lower East Side offered a large variety of shows to their audience. If musical pieces were a strong characteristic of the German-American artistic production for the stage – operas, operettas –, plays were also very popular and audiences attended musical plays, dramas, comedies and farces. If, as John Koegel recalls, most «Klein Deutschland's theatrical producers primarily emphasized the centrality of the imported Continental German theatrical tradition», «a few German American producers such as Adolf Neuendorff and Adolf Philipp recognized the vitality of staging musical plays based on the local German American immigrant experience»[46].

In spirit and form, German theatre in New York overlapped with Jewish theatre because of the immigration of German Jews. By 1920, the Jewish population expanded «twenty-fold, to more than 1.6 million» and represented «29% of the city's population»[47]. Yiddish playhouses were

[43] John Corbin, *How the Other Half Laughs*, «Harper's New Monthly Magazine», Dec. 1898, p. 46.

[44] Sabine Haenni, *The Immigrant Scene. Ethnic Amusements in New York, 1880-1920*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 1.

[45] Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1972, pp. 92-93.

[46] John Koegel, *Adolph Philipp and the German American Musical Comedy*, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Musical Theatre Producers*, Laura MacDonald and William A. Everett, eds., New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p. 29.

[47] *American Jewish Year Book 2013: The Annual Record of the North American Jewish Communities*, Arnold Dashefsky, Ira Sheskin eds, New York, Springer, 2014, p. 63.

mainly located in what was then known as the Jewish or Yiddish Realto on the Lower East Side and East Village along Second Avenue. Yiddish venues where also to be found in the Bowery. The Golden Age of Broadway musicals, of comedies, the 1920s is also considered as the Golden Age of Yiddish Theatre. Maurice Schwartz's Yiddish Art Theatre may be considered as the leading Jewish company. Influenced by the theories of Reinhardt, Antoine, Dublin's Abbey Theatre and the Moscow Art Theatre, it «aligned with its American cousins, the Washington Square and Provincetown Players». «Opposed to the star system, shoddy productions of cheap plays and the primacy of the box office», Ellen Schiff explains, «it set high standards for ensemble acting and established a repertory system and a studio to train young talent». Incorporating «the innovations of Craig and Meyerhold», they sought «to counteract the "tawdry primitiveness" of the early Yiddish stage»[48]. The Yiddish Theatre was a fantastic talent incubators and had an important influence on American theatre at large as many major artists of the English stage started their careers in the Yiddish community like actress and acting teacher Stella Adler, actor Paul Muni, actress Molly Picon, actor and singer Boris Thomashefsky and many others. Jacob Adler and Bertha Kalich were the two most eminent Yiddish actors. Their fame transcended the borders of the community. Kalich «earned the notice of Broadway managers» and «found acceptance on the English stage»[49]. The actress was known as the "Jewish Bernhardt" or as "the Yiddish Duse".

When in October 1923, Eleonora Duse, the grand Italian tragedienne – and Sarah Bernhardt's great rival – arrived in the City after an absence of twenty years on the American stage, New Yorkers packed at the pier to welcome her. «When a group of Italians cheered her», biographer Helen Sheehy reports, the actress answered «"Viva America"» and «"Viva Italia"», an all-inclusive address much representative of the hyphenated American-Italian effervescence that reigned in the New York of the 1920s. For her first performance of Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*, The Metropolitan Opera House was «packed to the gills with people standing three to four rows deep behind the orchestra seats»[50]. The presence of stars who

[48] Ellen Schiff, *From Stereotype to Metaphor: The Jew in Contemporary Drama*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2012, p. 117.

[49] Benjamin McArthur, *Actors and American Culture, 1880-1920*, Iowa, University of Iowa Press, 2000, p. 50.

[50] Leta E. Miller, *Music and Politics in San Francisco: From the 1906 Quake to the Second World War*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2012, p. 113.

travelled from the old continent to the new gave great visibility to the Italian scene. Aside from Duse, actors such as Giovanni Grasso, Ermete Zacconi or Angelo Musco were applauded by both their «own countrymen and a generous sprinkling of Broadway playgoers» as journalist from the «Christian Science Monitors» wrote in a September 1921 report on Grasso who was then playing at the Royal Theatre[51]. Italian guest-actors played in both community theatres and on the English stage "hyphenating" therefore the two cultures.

New York City was the birthplace of Italian-American theatre which grew throughout the last decades of the 19th century in the Bowery where Yiddish theatres thrived, and in Little Italy which offered a «sparkling theatre life along Mulberry and Spring streets»[52]. The professionalization phase started at the outbreak of the new century and was booming in the 1920s. Italian-American theatre became so popular that native actors migrated to the United-States in the wake of Sicilian Antonio Maiori who dominated the community stage up to WWI with his «*Italianized adaptations* of *Shakespeare's plays*»[53]. Italian community theatres scheduled a great variety of shows from tragedies to comedies to Italian-American Vaudevilles. Impersonations were a great specificity of the American-Italian stage and concerned the various genres of the spectrum from tragic drag performances to *macchietta*. Maiori's part as a mother in the melodramatic *La Jena del cimitero* had marked the generations of tragic performers that followed him and Eduard Migliaccio regenerated the traditional *macchietta* by forging its American type named "Farfariello", the «"archetype of the poor southern Italian immigrant" represented [as] "the street vendor, the rag picker, the organ grinder, the pick-and-shovel man, the uneducated greenhorn who murdered the English language as well as the Italian"»[54]. By the end of the 1920s, on account of the Depression, of the development of the movie industry but also due to the restriction of new arrivals in the USA in 1924 – which «meant that only one generation of Italian-speaking immigrant audiences remained» –, the vivacity of the

[51] *Giovanni Grasso Acts in New York*, «Christian Science Monitors», Sept, 27, 1921. My thanks to Gabriele Sofia for sharing this article.

[52] Mario Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land: Ethnic Cultures on New York's Lower East Side*, New York, New York University Press, 1995, p. 91.

[53] Humbert S. Nelli, *From Immigrants to Ethnics: The Italian Americans*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 120.

[54] *Italian-American Folklore*, Frances M. Malpezzi and William M. Clements, eds., August House Publisher, Little Rock, 1992, p. 204.

Italian scene dwindled down. It however quickly rekindled thanks to radio plays sponsored by Italian goods companies which «in the 1930s and 1940s gave the theatre a boost» as Emelise Aleandri writes:

> Italian food companies determined that Italian language programs were excellent advertising vehicles. Sponsors included Paramount Spaghetti, Mama Mia Oil, Oxydol […]. Every day had numerous hours of programming on an alphabet soup of radio stations: WOV, WFAB, WHOM […]. Italian-American actors were employed on a regular basis, and theatre audience increased, since hearing the plays on the radio in serial or soap opera form made listeners want to see the show live. Whichever story played on the radio during the week would be performed live in the theatre on the weekend. [Actor] Mario Badolati used another trick; he would end the radio week with a cliffhanger and provide the ending in the theatre[55].

PLAYING THE PART: ACTING STYLES ON THE NEW YORK SCENE

The Roaring Years appear as a pivotal moment in the history of American acting. Training was transitioning from apprenticeship – when actresses and actors learned the craft directly from their heirs – to coaching – when they would take classes by theatre masters teaching their techniques before the boom of university acting programs in later years. New York was the home of the first American acting school, The Lyceum Theatre School which was opened in 1884 by Steele MacKaye who centred on the Delsarte system based on body motions and gestures. «Although the Lyceum School failed to establish a lasting legacy of physical acting», Arthur Bartow writes, «it played a significant role in the beginnings of actor training»[56]. Indeed, this first attempt broadened the horizon of American acting as it offered an alternative to the traditional style which no longer appeared as the only option. On and off Broadway, the new challenges to provide better shows for both commercial or non-commercial reasons called for refinements in acting and as, Daniel J. Watermeier asserts, «actors would be at the center of what would become on ongoing struggle be-

[55] Emelise Aleandri, *The Italian-American Immigrant Theatre of NY City*, Charleston, Arcadia, 1999, p. 101.

[56] Arthur Bartow, *Introduction*, in *Training of the American Actor*, Arthur Bartow ed., New York, RHYW, 2006, p. XIV.

tween commercial and artistic interests»[57]. If the classical style remained dominant, the American revolution of realist acting based on Konstantin Stanislavski's theories was on its way. Interestingly, as we will see, the impact of the New Stagecraft on acting was rather limited in the USA.

Sirs and Ladies of the New York Stage: Classical Acting and the American Dynasty

The queens and kings of the 1920s had started their careers at the outbreak of the new century, made a name for themselves in the 1910s and were now reigning over the Great White Way. Known as "the first lady of the American theatre", "the first lady of the theatre", or the "American Hamlet", Helen Hayes, Katharine Cornell and John Barrymore were critically acclaimed as the finest actresses and actors of the period – along with Ethel Barrymore, Tallulah Bankhead, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. Heirs of the stars of the Gilded Age, these instinctive actors did not have a formal training but learned through observation, trials and errors in stock companies or Broadway productions in which they held minor parts before climbing the ladder to stardom.

Charismatic on and off stage, they compelled the admiration of the audiences who were attracted by their theatrical talents but also their glam as public figures. Their acting style was emphatic, emotional, suffused with the fire of passion. If melodramas, romances and comedies were the realms of the Broadway stars, they also were applauded in classic or modern serious plays. John Barrymore, for example, earned his title as the "American Hamlet" in 1922 on the stage of New York's Sam H. Harris *Theatre*. That very year, Star Young wrote, «Mr. John Barrymore seemed to gather together in himself all the Hamlets of this generation, to simplify and direct everyone's theory of the part»[58]. The great Hamlet of his generation, according to Young but also to Ludwig Lewisohn or Brother Lionel, Barrymore drove the audience to the part by adopting an intellectual rather than active approach. He based his interpretation on the fashionable

[57] Daniel J. Watermeier, *Actors and Acting*, in *The Cambridge History of American Theatre*, vol. II, Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby eds., New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 467.

[58] Stark Young, *John Barrymore's Hamlet* (1922), in *Shakespeare in America: An Anthology from the Revolution to Now*, James Shapiro ed., New York, Library of America, 2016, p. 97.

Freudian concepts of the time and developed an Oedipus relationship between the Prince of Denmark and his mother. Member of the "The Royal Family" of Broadway, he was the son of actor Maurice Barrymore and actress George Drew Barrymore, brother of actress and actor Ethel and Lionel Barrymore.

As Nicholas Dromgoole reminds his readers, Barrimore was «a leading figure in the famous four-week Actors' Strike of 1919 which forced Equity contracts on unwilling managers»[59]. This detail is worth remembering in the context of the development of acting styles as the improvement of the actors and actresses' working conditions in the wake of the strike was obviously beneficial to the stage: professionals could now really focus on their arts and developed their performance skills. Broadway actors and actresses perfected their classical acting by working with coaches like voice teachers such as Margaret Carrington, who worked with John Barrymore. Slowly acting became less and less instinctive on the Great White Way and more and more technical, an evolution which was also brought about by the experimentation beyond the commercial kingdom.

«Reveal[ing] the truth»: Realist Acting and the American Tradition

When in 1934 actress and acting teacher, Stella Adler, met Konstantin Stanislavski in Paris, she was struggling against the realist techniques on which Cheryl Crawford, Harold Cluman and Lee Strasberg had based their work at the Group Theater founded in 1931. After the great Russian master had warmly welcomed her, she heard herself say: «Mr. Stanislavski, I loved the theatre until you came along, and now I hate it!». Stanislavski invited her to meet the next day and from their conversation, Adler eventually concluded that realism was first and foremost «a technique, a craft», «an art form that asks the actor to reach and reveal the truth»[60]. The Stanislavski's System gave birth in the USA to what could be called "American acting techniques" as they were so much incorporated into the nation's acting culture which became predominantly realistic. These very specific, theorized methods developed in New York from various practitioners' interpretations and reinterpretations of The System, from Lee

[59] Nicholas Dromgoole, *Performance, Style and Gesture in Western Theatre*, London, Oberon Books, 2016, p. 63.

[60] Stella Adler, *The Art of Acting*, Howard Kissel ed., New York, Applause, 2000, p. 236, 238.

Strasberg's much influential Method, to Adler's Art of Acting, Robert Lewis's interpretations, and Sanford Meisner's Technique.

If realism spread out from the 1930s to become *the* American traditional acting style, its American roots are to be found before the 1920s and Stanislavski's visit in the USA. Realist drama had migrated from Europe to the New Continent afore the Roaring Years. Realist scripts depicting the lives of the lower to middle classes through subtle details rather than hyperbolic declamations called for new acting approaches away from the emphatic old-style. The development of modern psychology raised interest in the complexities of the mind and created frustrations with what some saw as classic wooden archetypal performances which did not translate the nuances of the characters' inner lives. Exaggerated classical acting was even questioned by some Broadway stars like Minnie Maddern Fiske or William H. Gillette who urged Broadway actors and actresses to give attention to those psychological nuances in building characterization. Foreign stars in Community Theatres also gave visibility to this new realist approach to acting. Among the Italian community, the «realist acting» of The Duse commented by Sanford Meisner[61] or «the uncompromising realism» of Giovanni Grasso in the words of journalist Alice Rohe[62], were much applauded in the USA. Years before he developed his "Method", Lee Strasberg discovered Grasso in the production of *Othello* on Grand Street. In *A Dream of Passion*, Strasberg remembers that «Grasso created reality with such physical and emotional conviction that it almost transcended what [he] thought of as acting»[63].

The greatest foreign influence which gave the impulse to the development of realist acting came from the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) which arrived in New York in 1923. Founded by Stanislavski and playwright and director Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko in 1898, the MAT produced shows based on realist acting which was much appreciated by the American audience. The four plays that toured in the USA – Alexei Tolstoy's *Tsar Fiodor*, Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths*, and Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* and *Three Sisters* – were not the most experimental works by the company – like Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolist plays –

[61] Sanford Meisner, Dennis Longwell, *Sanford Meisner on Acting*, New York, Vintage Books, 1987, p. 12.

[62] Alice Rohe, *Giovanni Grasso Captures New York. Great Sicilian Actor Considers American Prosperity a Detriment to Art*, «Theatre Magazine», n. 35, 1922, p. 14.

[63] Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion. The Development of the Method*, Evangeline Morphos ed., Boston, A Plume Book, 1988, p. 24.

but they introduced Stanislavski's early principles. It should be said that the appeal towards communism – which ironically eventually drove Stanislavski into exile under Stalinist policies that turned the stage into an indoctrination platform – had also been an incentive for some New Yorkers of the Bohemian fringe: Bohemians turned to Russia as a source of artistic inspiration, since this part of the world which had been striving with innovations since the mid-19th century, but also because of their political leanings. Interestingly, therefore, the development of acting approaches based on Stanislavski's technique took place at a time when the U.S.-Russian political relations were very tense.

From 1923, and only eight days after the MAT opened in the Big Apple, Richard Boleslavsky, who had trained under Stanislavski at the First Studio of the MAT before eventually settling in New York, started delivering lectures on the acting principles he had learned at the First Studio. In *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski*, Phillip B. Zarrilli reminds us that Boleslavsky spread a version of his master's teaching which was somehow distorted as no longer up-to-date: «At precisely the time when Stanislavski's was "placing greater emphasis on physical tasks and physical actions" in the development of his own process, "Boleslavsky stressed the importance of emotion memory, developing the technique beyond Stanislavski's original practice"»[64]. An approximate vision of Stanislavski's theories further expanded after the 1924 release of his autobiography, *My Life in Art*, which had been ambiguously translated into English. If some would condemn these approximations, it can be said that these misinterpretations and reinterpretations generated the development an American realist acting culture. As early as June 1923, Boleslavsky established a New York theatre and school, the American Laboratory Theatre: «There until 1930, Boleslavsky and his compatriot Maria Ouspenskaya taught Stanislavski's ideals to a generation of artists who would in turn shape the future of US theatre: Lee Strasberg, Harold Clurman, Stella Adler, and Francis Fergusson, among them»[65]. From there started the great adventure of the American schools of realist acting.

[64] Phillip B. Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski*, New York, Routledge, 2012, p. 16.

[65] Sharon Marie Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus: An Acting Master for the Twenty-first Century*, New York, Routledge Theatre Classics, 2009², p. 42.

«Acting and the New Stagecraft»: The Emergence of an American Modernist Acting Approach?

In his November 1916 contribution to the newly founded «Theatre Arts Magazine», *Acting and the New Stagecraft*, dramatic critic Walter Prichard Eaton called for new acting approaches to accompany the theatrical innovations inspired by the works of Adolph Appia and Edward Gordon Craig but also Max Reinhardt and others:

> While the experimenters were eager to produce fresher and more vital drama, to create more illusive and effective lighting effects, to paint more suggestive and beautiful scenery, to get away from the dull rut of conventional "realism", at the same time they were, almost without exception, apparently quite neglectful of showing us fresher, more vital, more illusive *acting*, or at any rate ignorant of how to do it[66].

As he praised the experimenters' endeavours to go towards abstraction and suggestion and beyond Belasco-style realism[67] which he viewed as «conventional»[68], Eaton deplores, in turn, the very conventionality of the performances. Both Appia and Craig reconsidered the role of the actors and the hierarchy among the different staging elements: the actors and actresses were no longer central figures but ingredients of the theatre fabric of equal importance with the set or the lighting. Appia looked to achieve a synthesis between time and space by synchronizing «the rhythms of the living body and dynamic lights effect to the surrounding scenic atmosphere», when Craig «had aimed to do away with actors altogether by allowing costumes if not marionettes to serve, enabling the composer complete control over the entire theatrical event»[69].

The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife produced in 1915 with its monochromic Japanese-like set designed by Provincetown Players mem-

[66] Walter Prichard Eaton, *Acting and the New Stagecraft* (Nov. 1916), in Deanna M. Totten Beard, *Sheldon Cheney's Theatre Arts Magazine: Promoting a Modern American Theatre*, Plymouth, Scarecrow, 2010, p. 160.

[67] Producer, director, playwright, David Belasco was notable renowned for his creations of stage lighting and special effects to create realist atmosphere.

[68] The use of the adjective «conventional» by Eaton is interesting to define this relatively new genre whose resonance proved to be already very vivid on the American stage as regards set design at least.

[69] Stephen J. Phillips, *Elastic Architecture: Frederick Kiesler and Design Research in the First Age*, London, MIT Press, 2017, p. 67.

ber Robert Edmond Jones is considered as the first American instance of the New Stagecraft. In the1920s, the movement gained momentum when Jones and Kenneth Macgowan published *Continental Stagecraft* (1922), after their European trip. «*Continental Stagecraft* plus Jones's designs in the early 1920s», Amy S. Green argues, «advanced the New Stagecraft movement that elevated American designers from scene painters to scenic artists»[70]. This scenic movement opened the New York stage – both off-Broadway and Broadway with plays like that of O'Neill that bridged the two spheres – to modernism and its various branches like expressionism or the modern version of symbolism. In spite of the blossoming theories on lighting techniques and sets, the American New Stagecraft leaders seemed not able to answer Eaton's call for modernist acting approaches. «Great roles require great natures to interpret them for acting is a process of incarnation», explains Jones[71]. The artist wrote those words in his *The Dramatic Imagination* published in 1941 that is after more than twenty years of experimentation. After twenty years therefore, the great American modernist designer still viewed acting through the prism of instinct – "great nature" – like in classical acting or of psychological identification – "incarnation" – which echoes Lee Strasberg's conception of realist acting. American "new stagecrafters", contrary to their European pairs, did not revolutionize acting as they did with scenic design. Consequently, as modernist acting did not take up in the USA, American modern acting developed in the form of realist acting which thrived on the New York stage.

[70] Amy S. Green, *The Revisionist Stage: American Directors Reinvent the Classics*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 20.

[71] Robert Edmond Jones, *The Dramatic Imagination* (1941), New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 29.