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"The Sculptural Drama": Tennessee Williams's Plastic Theatre

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In his production notes to *The Glass Menagerie*, Tennessee Williams introduces a concept that describes the theatre for which he was writing:

> Being a "memory play," *The Glass Menagerie* can be presented with unusual freedom of convention. Because of its considerable delicate or tenuous material, atmospheric touches and subtleties of direction play a particularly important part. Expressionism and all other unconventional techniques in drama have only one valid aim, and that is a closer approach to truth. When a play employs unconventional techniques, it is not, or certainly shouldn't be, trying to escape its responsibility of dealing with reality, or interpreting experience, but is actually or should be attempting to find a closer approach, a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are. The straight realistic play with its genuine Frigidaire and authentic ice-cubes, its characters who speak exactly as its audience speaks, corresponds to the academic landscape and has the same virtue of a photographic likeness. Everyone should know nowadays the unimportance of the photographic in art: that truth, life, or reality is an organic thing which the poetic imagination can represent or suggest, in essence, only through transformation, through changing into other forms than those which were merely present in appearance.
>
> These remarks are not meant as a preface only to this particular play. They have to do with a conception of new, plastic theatre which must take the place of the exhausted theatre of realistic conventions if the theatre is to resume vitality as a part of our culture. (xix-xxii)[1]

Williams is referring to a drama that was more than just a picture of reality: he insists that his ideal theatre make use of all the stage arts to generate a theatrical experience greater than mere Realism. Though Williams never publicly discussed plastic theatre again, from *Glass Menagerie* on, his playsare very theatrical: his language is lyrical and poetic; his settings,"painterly" and "sculptural"; and his dramaturgy, cinematic (see Boxill 23-24; Falk 162; Jackson 96-97; Brandt 163-87).[2] His scenic descriptions draw on metaphors from the world of art and painting, and his use of sound and light is symbolic and evocative, not just realisticin its effects. In *Camino Real* and many later plays, for example, Williams consciously exploits non-realistic styles like expressionism, surrealism, and absurdism, which he explicitly calls upon playwrights to use in their search for truth. Indeed, Williams's stage directions in the original script of *Glass Menagerie* called for decidedly plastic elements, including dozens of slide projections, film-like soundtrack music, and dissolving and fading lighting (none of which made it to the stage under Eddie Dowling's direction).

¶2 The scholarship that has focused on Williams's plastic theatre principally examines its practical implications. Roger Boxill simply states, for instance, "The 'new plastic theatre' must make full use of all the resources of the contemporary stage—language, action, scenery, music, costume, sound, lighting—and bind them into an artistic unity conceived by the playwright" and describes the cinematic aspects of Williams's scripts (with referenceto George Brandt's "Cinematic Structure in the Work of Tennessee Williams"). Esther Merle Jackson is even less

detailed: "[T]he plastic theatre of Williams is not confined to visual structures. Its sensuous symbol also embraces sound patterns: words, music, and aural effects" (Boxill 23-34; Jackson 99-100). A more extensive discussion of plastic theatre in the critical literature is from Alice Griffin, but even she does not go beyond explaining,

> To express his universal truths Williams created what he termed plastic theater, a distinctive new style of drama. He insisted that setting, properties, music, sound, and visual effects—all the elements of staging—must combine to reflect and enhance the action, theme, characters, and language. (22)[3]

Others who mention plastic theatre in a similar vein, giving the concept import as the key to the poetic nature of Williams's drama, are Matthew C. Roudané and Allean Hale, both of whom include it in more general discussions (Roudané 10; Hale 24).

¶3 The only critical work which specifically uses plastic theatre as an analytical tool, Claus-Peter Neumann's "Tennessee Williams's Plastic Theatre: *Camino Real*," ultimately says no more about the concept than, "The purpose of this 'plastic theatre,' of which lighting, music, set, and props are essential elements, is to provide 'a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are' than mere realism can accomplish"—little more than a restatement of Williams's own declaration in the *Glass Menagerie* note (Neumann 94). In fact, the most extensive discussion of the concept appears in Robert Bray's "Introduction" to the edition of *Glass Menagerie*, which he edited. Bray cites Williams's own journal, in which the writer had described minimalist balletic movement for the actors (Bray ix; see also Leverich 446). In its simplest terms, then, a plastic theatre is a *theatrical* theatre as opposed to a *literary* (or literal) one.[4]

¶4 There is nothing amiss with any of these descriptions of what Williams meant by plastic theatre as he laid it out in his *Menagerie* note. Boxill, Jackson, Griffin, Roudané, Hale, Neumann, and Bray are all precisely correct—and in absolute agreement, as we can plainly see—in all their interpretations and the illustrations they invoke to show Williams's application of his own notion. Although Williams never again discussed plastic theatre in a public forum, he did reinforce his ideas, and essentially reify the analysts' understanding, in private communications. In a letter to Eric Bentley, for instance, Williams chastises the critic for

> a lack of respect for the extra-verbal or non-literary elements of the theatre, the various plastic elements, the purely visual things such as light and movement and color and design, which play, for example, such a tremendously important part in theatre . . . and which are as much a native part of drama as words and ideas are.[5]

He further admonishes,

> I have read criticism in which the use of transparencies and music and subtle lighting effects, which are often as meaningful as pages of dialogue, were dismissed as "cheap tricks and devices." Actually all of these plastic things are as valid instruments of expression in the theatre as words . . . .

Earlier, as Robert Bray noted, Williams expounds at some length on what he calls the "sculptural drama" in an entry in his journal.[6] Although he never uses the word "plastic" in the entry, he spells out quite explicitly the same basic notion that he expresses in the *Glass Menagerie* note.

¶5 The Bentley letter was written in 1948, three years after the publication of *Menagerie*, and thus can be seen as a kind of restatement of an idea about which Williams has already written. The journal entry, however, dates from between January and April 1942 (which we shall see is just after he was a student in Erwin Piscator's

Dramatic Workshop and while he was assisting Piscator on a production), so we may regard it as a step in Williams's development of the idea—presumably before he conceived the term "plastic theatre." Even without the name, itself, however, it is clear that "sculptural drama" invokes the same theatricality that "plastic theatre" does in the *Menagerie* note. Williams speaks in the journal entry of the lack of realism in the innovative form and asserts that it would not serve the traditional Broadway play. He describes stylized, dance-like movement and stresses simplicity and restraint in acting and design and all the elements of the staging. In fact, though he does not use the word, he describes a theatre that is, by definition, expressionistic—where the emotions of the play are rendered visually or aurally on the stage—an artistic style he specifically names in the *Glass Menagerie* note.

¶6 In all the analyses, however, there has been little speculation about where Williams got the ideas that coalesced into the concept or how he came to coin the term itself. There seems, however, to be a connection between the dramatist's plastic theatre and the notion of "plasticity" as defined by painter Hans Hofmann. Williams had a pervasive interest in painting, even turning his hand to it himself,[7] and he knew Hofmann from Provincetown, Massachusetts, in the early 1940s when Hofmann ran a summer art school there and Williams vacationed there with his circle of friends and lovers; they had many acquaintances in common, and later Williams even wrote an appreciation of the artist.[8] Hofmann wrote extensively about plasticity, already publishing in English as early as 1930, and defined space in terms identical to what Williams calls "plastic space" in Act 2, scene 2 of *Will Mr. Merriwether Return from Memphis?*:

> LOUISE: Did you set something on the table?
>
> NORA: I just set down the upside-down cake on a vacant spot on the table.
>
> LOUISE: There is no such thing as a vacant spot on the table.
>
> NORA: —Ow, but there was a space with nothing on it, I didn't move anything, not a thing, not an inch!
>
> LOUISE: The spaces on the table are just as important as the articles on the table. Is that over your head?
>
> NORA: I've seen your pitcher of ice tea on the table and glasses for it.
>
> LOUISE: The pitcher of ice tea and the glasses for it are part of the composition.
>
> NORA: —The what of the what did you say?
>
> LOUISE: In painting there's such a things as plastic space.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> LOUISE: If you've ever looked at a painting in your life you must have observed some spaces in the painting that seem to be vacant.
>
> NORA: I've looked at paintings in the museum, dear, and I've seen vacant spaces between the objects painted.
>
> LOUISE: The vacant spaces are called plastic space.
>
> NORA: Ow.
>
> LOUISE: The spaces between the objects, as you call them, are important parts of the total composition.
>
> NORA: —OW ?
>
> LOUISE: What would a painting be without spaces between the objects being painted?
> . . . . Nothing. And so the spaces are what a painter calls plastic.
>
> NORA: Plastic, y'mean, like a plastic bottle or—
>
> LOUISE: No. Plastic like the spaces between the objects in a painting. They give to the painting its composition like the vacant spaces on my table give to the articles on the table its arrangement. . . . .

. . . . . .

LOUISE: The articles on the table, including the spaces between them, make up a composition . . . . ("Found Text" 121-22)

In the novella *Moise and the World of Reason*, Williams specifically credits Hofmann with the idea of plastic space, though the painter never actually used the phrase (136).[9] What both men said was that space is not inert but alive, and that unoccupied space is not just empty but as significant to the work as the occupied space: "Space must be vital and active . . . with a life of its own" (Hofmann, *Search for the Real* 49). Note how nearly identical their language is. In his early essay "Plastic Creation," Hofmann writes: "[S]pace is not only a static, inert thing, space is alive; space is dynamic" (21). In *Moise*, Williams's painter character explains: "Space is alive, not empty and dead, not at all just a background" (136).

¶7 Hofmann defines plasticity as the communication of a three-dimensional experience in the two-dimensional medium of a painting (*Search for the Real* 78). His contention is that plasticity derives from the tension between the forces and counter-forces—which he calls "push-pull"—created by the separate elements of the painting (*Search for the Real* 49). (The juxtaposition of empty space and filled space, for instance, creates this kind of tension.) The tension creates the sensation in the viewer that the painting breathes, even seems to move (*Search for the Real* 73). Hofmann also believed that an artist must not simply copy nature, but must create an artistically imagined reality that requires the careful and deliberate manipulation and juxtaposition of the elements of the artwork (*Search for the Real* 25, 40). We may posit, then, that Williams married ideas he was already formulating with the language of Hofmann to create the term "plastic theatre," perhaps on the model of the term "plastic stage" of the 1920s.

¶8 This may be how Williams conceived the term "plastic theatre," but it is not an assertion that the playwright took the *idea* of plastic theatre from Hofmann—he surely put the concept together from several sources over his early years, including the University of Iowa, Erwin Piscator's Dramatic Workshop at the New School for Social Research, and other influences. At Iowa, where Williams studied in 1937-38, the Department of Speech and Dramatic Arts required every student to gain practical experience in all aspects of production from acting to stagecraft. While the 26-year-old playwright was a poor scenic art student—he failed the stagecraft course, delaying his graduation until he made up the F—he dutifully fulfilled the requirements (Calmer 17). Piscator had the same policy at the New School, where Williams took the Playwrights' Seminar in the Spring 1940 term. The Seminar was chaired by Theresa Helburn, a producer at the Theatre Guild, and John Gassner, a teacher, critic, drama anthologist, and writer who was a playreader at the Guild.[10] Gassner was a champion of disquieting, new theatre writers and introduced innovative dramaturgical ideas in the Seminar. While Williams took only the Playwrights' Seminar and was therefore not obligated to take courses in the other stage arts, all students of the Dramatic Workshop, whether enrolled in one course or more, were required to attend the "informal talks" of Barrett H. Clark's "The American Drama in Our Times," which included presentations on "various aspects of [. . .] theatre as an art, a profession and a social phenomenon" by artists and professionals in fields as varied as playwriting (Maxwell Anderson, George S. Kaufman, Sidney Kingsley, Lillian Hellman, Howard Lindsay), design (Robert Edmond Jones), directing (Harold Clurman, Eddie Dowling), music (Hanns Eisler, Erich Leinsdorf), producing (Lawrence Langner), dance (Maria Ley), acting (Monty Woolley), and theatre education (E. C. Mabie) (New School 31-32).[11] Another required course was "The March of the Drama," a survey of world theatre history taught by Gassner and Italian scholar Paolo Milano. In this course, the students read plays

from not only the standard periods of Western theatre, but from the classical Asian cannon, the Soviet drama, and the European avant-garde (New School 32-33).

¶9 The German director also emphatically promulgated his own innovative theories and his "Epic Theatre" philosophy, with which Williams got first-hand experience when he assisted Piscator in the production of *War and Peace* in 1942.[12] This production contained several aspects which may have foreshadowed some of Williams's later practices, but most provocatively, it used the character of Pierre Besuchov as a commentator, much the way Williams used Tom Wingfield in *Glass Menagerie*. Techniques Piscator used in *War and Peace*, whose script, as adapted by Piscator and Alfred Neumann, was kaleidoscopic and panoramic, included a set designed so that scene changes did not interrupt the action, providing the production a cinematic sweep as one scene flowed into the next—not unlike Williams's triptych setting for *Summer and Smoke* and *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*. Enhanced by Impressionistic lighting effects and the film and projections Piscator employed on stage, the performance unfolded on a two-level Constructivist set with screens and panels, and with action that took place in the wings as well as on the stage. Williams would surely have called this "plastic theatre."

¶10 Furthermore, following the 1941 commercial failure of *Battle of Angels*, Piscator considered presenting it at the Dramatic Workshop's Studio Theatre and in 1942 he had several meetings with Williams to discuss adapting the script for the director's Epic Theatre. The German director did not have much regard for playwrights, treating them as just one of the many theatre artists who contributed their talents to a production, and Williams rejected Piscator's way of working, but he admired the director's staging techniques (Leverich 346). Ultimately, Williams's play did not meet Piscator's requirements, but it is certain that during the process, the young dramatist got a private course in Epic Theatre techniques (Leverich 435, 439, 440; Devlin and Tischler 371). There was further contact, too: although Williams had vainly approached Piscator for a job reading plays for the Studio Theatre, he did end up working in close proximity to the director when he took a job for the New School in 1942 doing publicity for the theatre (Devlin and Tischler 281-82).

¶11 Piscator's theatrical approach and Williams's own experience working at the MGM film studio in 1943 certainly affected his own work, which has often been described as "cinematic" and shaped by film techniques.[13] Another source for Williams's non-Realistic ideas, however, was Eugene O'Neill, with whose writing and techniques the younger playwright was very conversant, having immersed himself in the reading of, attendance at, and study of O'Neill's plays from as early as 1928. In that year, a touring production of *Strange Interlude* came to St. Louis, and the 16-year-old Williams wrote his grandfather, describing some of the unusual aspects of the play—which, ironically, he had not seen (Devlin and Tischler 25-26). Later, at both the University of Missouri (1929-32) and Washington University (1936-37), Williams was surrounded by O'Neill. Course readings at Missouri included heavy doses of O'Neill's one-acts and the student theatre, the Missouri Workshop, presented O'Neill's decidedly expressionistic play *The Hairy Ape* in 1930. When *Mourning Becomes Electra* opened in New York in October 1931, the Columbia, Missouri, campus buzzed with discussion of the startling new work, spurred by unprecedented press attention, including a *Time* cover (Leverich 113, 122). During Williams's time at Washington University, he wrote a term paper, "Some Representative Plays of O'Neill and a Discussion of His Art," which focused on some of the unconventional elements of the plays. It is also certain that Williams was among the many in his class who were rapt when O'Neill's Nobel Prize, the first for an American dramatist, was announced in 1936 (Leverich 183, 188). Exposed as he was to O'Neill's works and techniques at this early stage in his theatrical education, it is unimaginable that Williams would not absorb many

of the older writer's ideas about non-realistic theatre.

¶12 These multifarious experiences, surely enhanced by Williams's private contacts with artists, performers, and writers of many different disciplines and styles—among his friends in New York and Provincetown were painters, sculptors, composers, dancers, and actors, as well as writers in forms other than drama—impressed on him how integral to theatre all the arts were and how effective the non-realistic forms of theatre and art could be. While painters like Hofmann, who was an abstract expressionist (as was his friend and Williams's, Jackson Pollock), were restricted to space, color, form, line, and the other elements of two-dimensional art, dramatists and theatre artists had, in addition to the painters' techniques, a broader palette from which to draw: sound, light, language, movement, and so on. The New Stagecraft's "plastic stage," as described in Kenneth Macgowan's *The Theatre of Tomorrow* and practiced by designers Adolphe Appia, Gordon Craig, Lee Simonson, and Robert Edmond Jones, among others, focused on a self-consciously three-dimensional stage: constructed scenery instead of painted flats (Macgowan 102-09).[14] This movement, of course, added the elements of sculpture and architecture to those of painting as techniques available to stage artists—and we have already noted that Williams had explored the notion of "sculptural drama" before, perhaps, he settled on the term "plastic theatre." On this analogy, Williams, already working with a three-dimensional stage, wanted a truly multi-dimensional theatre, integrating all the arts of the stage to create its effects. He did not want language to be the principal medium of his theatre, merely supported by a picture-frame set and enhanced by music and lighting effects. While there seems to be a connection here with Richard Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* [total work of art] concept, Wagner was talking about the director and production, but Williams pushes the idea back to the playwright and the creation of the text. Williams wanted all the so-called production elements traditionally added by the director and designers to be co-equal aspects of the play and part of the playwright's creative process. Instead of merely composing the text of a play and then turning it over to a director and his team of theatre artists who will add the non-verbal elements that turn a play into a theatrical experience, Williams envisioned a theatre which begins with the playwrights who create the theatrical experience *in* the script because they are not just composing words, but theatrical images.

¶13 In a sense, Williams was harking back to the original etymological meaning of *playwright*. The word, we note, is not *playwrite*—it is more than a mere writer of plays. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides one definition of *wright* as "a constructive workman" and we still have the obsolete noun in words like *wheelwright*, *shipwright*, *millwright*, and *cartwright*—craftsmen who *construct* wheels, ships, mills, or carts. The obsolete verb *wright*, in fact, means "to build" or "to construct" as we can deduce from the past participle, the only form of the verb that we still use. *Wrought*, according to the *OED*, means "that is made or constructed by means of labour or art; fashioned, formed"; before that, it meant simply "created; shaped, moulded." (Interestingly, the word *dramaturg*—or *dramaturge*, if you are Francophile—which was another word for playwright before it designated a separate theatrical professional, has a similar etymology from a Greek, as opposed to Old English, origin.)[15] In other words, Williams was envisioning dramatists who, rather than just *writing* scripts, *wrought* them from all the materials that were available in the theatrical lumberyard. Then the tension-the "push-pull"—among these disparate arts would create the plasticity of the theatrical experience and, just as the viewer of a plastic painting has a three-dimensional experience from a two-dimensional work of art, the audience of a plastic theatre work has a theatrical experience beyond the mere image of actual life.

¶14 Today, plastic theatre is not a particularly rare application. It is what Meyerhold, Eisenstein, and Brecht were

after, and directors like Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman, Peter Brook, and Yuri Lyubimov, and groups such as Théâtre du Soleil, Théâtre de Complicité, Ex Machina, Wooster Group, Mabou Mines, and Théâtre de la Jeune Lune do it all the time. Now, these artists are not strictly playwrights, though they function as auteurs, and the companies work as collaborative ensembles in creating their works, but that may be closer to what Williams had in mind than a conventional dramatist-director symbiosis. Certainly the plastic playwright would have to have more control over the production than Williams managed to get in 1944 with Dowling. Even on Broadway today, however, there could not have been *M Butterfly*, say, or *The Invention of Love* without plastic theatre. What makes Williams's 1945 expression remarkable is that, first, he is often not regarded in such terms even though he wanted to be and, second, he was writing at a time when straightforward realism was the dominant style on American stages, and the Actors Studio—the creation, in part, of Elia Kazan and the nurturer of Marlon Brando, both part of Williams's early, defining success—was the paradigm for American acting and production.[16]

Notes

[1] The same note appears in every published edition of the play, including the first: *The Glass Menagerie: A Play* (New York: Random, 1945) ix-xii.

The present essay is based on research conducted for an article the author has contributed to the *Tennessee Williams Encyclopedia*, edited by Philip C. Kolin, forthcoming from Greenwood Press.

[2] To be precise, Williams did, in fact, refer to plastic theatre again in a published essay, but it was a reference to the preface of *Glass Menagerie*. He quotes himself in "People-to-People," *New York Times* 20 Mar. 1955, sec. 2 ("Arts & Leisure"): 3.

[3] See also pages 16, 18, and 36 for similar statements.

[4] There is one other study the author discovered that employs plastic theatre as an analytic device; it is an English-language dissertation for a German university: Michael Grawe, "Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*: Contrasting the Play with the 1951 Movie Production," MA thesis, Universität Gesamthochschule Paderborn, 1999. (The paper is available at http://hausarbeiten.de/.) Grawe devotes chapter two to "Williams' 'Plastic Theater'" but he does not add anything to the scholarship concerning the concept or the term itself—though he does cite Roudané 1997 and Jackson 1965, as well as Felicia Hardison Londré, in Tennessee Williams, Literature and Life Series, ed. Philip Winsor (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1979).

[5] This letter, written while Williams was in Brighton, England, is in the Williams archives of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin. It is expected to appear in volume two of *The Selected Letters of Tennessee Williams*, which is currently being edited. Permission to quote from the letter has been graciously granted by the Williams estate, Tom Erhardt of the theatrical department of Casarotto Ramsay & Associates Limited, agent; and Albert J. Devlin and Nancy M. Tischler, editors of *The Selected Letters*.

[6] Aside from the passage quoted by Leverich and the lines Bray cites, the remainder of this entry is currently available only in manuscript at the Harry Ransom Center. An edition of Williams's journals is due to be published soon by Yale University Press.

[7] See Allean Hale, "Of Prostitutes, Artists and Ears," *Southern Quarterly* 29.1 (Fall 1990): 33-45; William Plumley, "Tennessee Williams: an interview," *Sunday Gazette-Mail* [Charleston, WV] 14 Sept. 1980, sec. M (*Show Time & Magazine*): 14-15; William Plumley, "Tennessee Williams's Graphic Art: 'Two On A Party,'" *Mississippi Quarterly* 48.4 (Fall 1995): 789-805.

[8] See Tennessee Williams, "An Appreciation: Hans Hofmann," *Women: A Collaboration of Artists and Writers* (New York: Samuel M. Kootz, 1948) n.p., and Tennessee Williams, "An Appreciation," *Derrière le Miroir* [Paris] 16 (Jan. 1949): [5]. Among the mutual acquaintances Williams and Hofmann had were artist Fritz Bultman, who helped bring Hofmann to the United States and who may have introduced the writer and the painter; Jackson Pollock, whom Williams met on Cape Cod and who had attended some of Hofmann's early lectures at the Art Students' League in New York; and Lee Krasner, Pollock's wife and a painter herself who was a student at Hofmann's school in Provincetown. Other friends of Williams with connections to Hofmann were his dancer friends Kip Kiernan and Joe Hazan who both worked as models at Hofmann's Provincetown school.

[9] Hofmann, whose name Williams misspells in *Moise* as "Hans Hoffman," wrote of plasticity in terms of many aspects of painting and art, but the author has not found an example of his use of the specific term "plastic space." His definition of space, as we shall see,

precisely parallels Williams's definition of "plastic space," however. (The 1969 play *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*, about a painter much like Jackson Pollock, also makes direct reference to Hofmann's color theory. But, then, Pollock, as noted, was a friend of Hofmann's and attended some of Hofmann's lectures. Pollock's wife, Lee Krasner, who, also as noted, had been a student of Hofmann's, brought the two painters together.)

[10] This association with Helburn and Gassner resulted in the Guild's producing Williams's first commercial play, *Battle of Angels*. However abortive the endeavor, it did launch the young playwright's professional career. Helburn, by the way, was no stranger to cutting-edge theatre, herself. Before she and Lawrence Langner started the Theatre Guild, they were both among the founders of the groundbreaking Washington Square Players, a rival of the more-famous Provincetown Players. In the second decade of the twentieth century, the Washington Square Players were devoted to the New Stagecraft of the European theatre.

[11] Eddie Dowling was, of course, far more than a mere director; he was a producer, actor, playwright, and songwriter. In 1944, he became co-director (with Margo Jones), co-producer (with Louis J. Singer), and star of Williams's *Glass Menagerie*. German Composer Hanns Eisler was, among other collaborations, known for his work with Bertolt Brecht; his atonal music recalls that of his teacher, Arnold Schönberg. Robert Edmond Jones, having studied and worked with Max Reinhardt in Europe, was a strong proponent of the New Stagecraft for the American theatre. Maria Ley, a dancer who choreographed for Reinhardt, was Piscator's wife. Readers will recognize the name E. C. [Edward Charles] Mabie as that of the formidable head of the speech and drama department at Iowa when Williams was a student there.

[12] This production by the Dramatic Workshop ran from 20 to 31 May 1942 at the New School's Studio Theatre, 66 W. 12th Street.

[13] Brandt contains is a thorough discussion of this aspect of Williams's dramaturgy, which does not need repeating here.

[14] The author has found an essay from 1919 that speaks of plastic theatre in the same sense that Williams uses the term, stating: "The Plastic Theater offers us the right to project onto one plane a multiplicity of means of artistic expression and to enclose them in a unity. It enlarges the visual horizon of the real world and leads things and objects of different species and origin towards a single center of irradiation." The essay, however was originally written in Italian and, as far as the author has determined, was not translated and published in English until 1968: Gilberto Clavel, "Gilberto Clavel: Depero's Plastic Theater," *Art and the Stage in the 20th Century: Painters and Sculptors Work for the Theater*, trans. Michael Bullock, ed. Henning Rischbieter (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1968) 75. It is unlikely that Williams ever saw this parallel use of his term. (The essay refers to a series of dances, Balli Plastici [plastic dances], designed in 1918 by Fortunato Depero, a Futurist painter, sculptor, and designer. The essay originally appeared in *Il Mondo*, a Milan monthly, in April 1919.)

[15] Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, the association representing these professionals, prefers the Germanic form of the word to the French (because the inventor of the field, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, was German). Nonetheless, the etymology is the same: "a worker of plays."

[16] Ironically, in recent years there have been some productions of Williams's first plastic play, *Glass Menagerie*, with an eye to his original staging directions. Two such productions were in California: one at the Pasadena Playhouse (5 May-18 June 2000; directed by Andrew J. Robinson) and the other by the American Conservatory Theater at the Geary Theater in San Francisco (29 March-28 April 2002; directed by Laird Williamson).

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