

## MODERNISM AND THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE

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In the November 2004 issue of *Theatre Survey*, Toril Moi launched a “brief polemic” about the way Ibsen has been (mis)understood by American scholars, who have, she argues, seen him as “a fuddy-duddy old realist who never truly became modern.”<sup>1</sup> She blames this “widespread blindness to Ibsen’s modernity” on the way we have conceptualised contemporary theatre history, and she calls for no less than a complete reconsideration of the history of European theatre.<sup>2</sup> Along with this new way of thinking about the theatre is a call for a new way of understanding modernism. Both, she implies, have to be dusted off and re-envisioned.

While Moi’s polemic is mainly aimed at theatre historians, the problem is not with the way theatre history is written. Instead, the problem lies with the entrenched tendencies of modernist historiography – a historiography that has barely allowed for the significance of theatrical performances. “Most books on modernism do not mention theatre at all,” writes Moi, and the reason for this silence is that “modernism is profoundly antitheatrical.”<sup>3</sup> The term “modernism” has traditionally been defined through examples from the visual arts (painting, sculpture, architecture), music, dance, fiction, and poetry. While dramatic texts may be included, they are considered as literature and little attention is paid to theatrical performance. “In the various critical studies of the movement published over the last half-century,” notes Christopher Innes, “drama has been conspicuous by its absence; and where mentioned at all, it is generally dismissed as following a different – even anti-modernist – agenda.”<sup>4</sup> This neglect is extraordinary given the rich body of evidence of theatre as a vital site of modernist activity spanning the 1880s to the 1930s. The anti-theatrical strain among prominent modernist writers and critics only compounded the problem; Ezra Pound, for example, openly “hated” that “asinine...gross, coarse form of art.”<sup>5</sup> Such attitudes helped to marginalise the role of theatrical performance in the historiography of modernism, and Innes’s comment shows how little has changed.

In what follows I would like to reassess how the term “modernism” has been employed, and to suggest reasons why we need a radical revision of its literary-critical currency that would more accurately reflect the contributions of the theatre. Theatre scholars have long been aware of how histories of modernism have neglected the stage. In fact, this awareness is linked to a larger problem of neglect of the genre of theatre within literary studies in general. It is the old “anti-theatrical prejudice” again, a particularly adhesive notion, and it prompts frequent protests from theatre scholars.<sup>6</sup> Yet while few theatre historians would find my argument about the neglect of theatrical performance surprising, the continued recycling of the same standard narratives of modernism – with a few important exceptions as outlined below – indicates a lack of interdisciplinary awareness in literary modernism despite the claims of its historians and practitioners.<sup>7</sup>

One problem in histories of modernism is that “modernism” itself is a notoriously slippery term. For example, modernism has been attacked both for emphasising form and for lacking it.<sup>8</sup> It is both mimetic/reflecting (of the chaos of modern society) and a chaotic subversion of the norms of society.<sup>9</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman provides an exhaustive account of such contradictions inherent in current definitions of modernism.<sup>10</sup> In theatre history, Naturalism is a phase of Modernism, and this can seem inconsistent with the modernist challenge to representational modes of art. Innes, for instance, prefers to date modernist drama not from Ibsen but from Dada.<sup>11</sup> Various models of modernism thus emerge that seem to conflict rather than to lead to a coherent definition. Scholars have “appropriated a selective version of Modernism, and within this an internal and self-proving definition of the avant-garde, as a way of ratifying their own much narrower positions and procedures.”<sup>12</sup>

Even a glance at the available histories of modernism reveals this selectivity, which is both geographical and aesthetic in nature. Not only is theatrical performance generally left out, but also entire regions of the world, leading to a narrowly Eurocentric notion of Modernism. This focus is in itself problematic, since the most widely accessible histories of modernism tend to be written in

English and to focus almost entirely on English, American, French and German works and ignore the rich contributions from Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and other areas of the world, solely because of their relative linguistic distance. So a new history of modernism would need to incorporate not only theatrical performance but also neglected examples of modernist work from within and without the Western world. In short, the regional boundaries of canonical modernism need to be radically expanded.

Leaving aside for a moment the question of geographical scope, let us focus on the neglect of theatrical performance. There are far too many histories of the movement to allow for a comprehensive survey here, but a few examples may serve to highlight the dominant approaches. Almost thirty years ago, Ian Higgins in *Literature and the Plastic Arts 1880-1930* attempted to redress this problem by asserting the importance of reinscribing theatre and drama into standard definitions of modernism, but few have taken up his initiative. Christopher Butler's *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe* exemplifies the dominant approach of modernist historiography, in which "literature" covers drama but not theatrical performance. Daniel Schwartz's *Reconfiguring Modernism: Explorations in the Relationship between Modern Art and Modern Literature* and Murray Roston's *Modernist Patterns in Literature and the Visual Arts* likewise exclude drama from both "literature" and "visual arts" categories.<sup>13</sup>

Astrður Eysteinnsson (*The Concept of Modernism*) notes that approaches to modernism have been overwhelmingly informed by New Criticism, a theoretical paradigm that unduly privileges the text. "Textuality," writes James Harding in his introduction to *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde*, "at the very least as a critical metaphor, has become perhaps the most pervasive of analytical paradigms."<sup>14</sup> Elin Diamond writes in an acclaimed article in *Modern Drama*: "That modern drama has been excluded from the received canons of modernism and that the New Criticism has contributed to that exclusion is a fact – and, I would argue, an opportunity."<sup>15</sup> For too long, the concept of "literary merit" of a play – which naturally emphasises textuality over performance – has dominated the understanding of theatre.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps historians of modernism cannot move away from a reliance on artifact, whether painting, script, musical notation, or poem, unless they undergo a radical rethinking of what is considered valid "evidence" and embrace the inherently ephemeral performance aspects of drama as well as its textuality.

One study of modernism in recent years that goes a long way toward addressing the problem of evidence in theatrical performance is Daniel Albright's *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and the Other Arts*. Albright seems to offer precisely the kind of revisioning I am suggesting by looking at aesthetic hybrids like the Cubist drama *Parade* which combined the talents of Cocteau, Satie, and Picasso on stage. Another book that helps to question the dominant trends in modernist historiography is Martin Puchner's *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality and Drama*, which scrutinises "the profound anti-theatrical thrust of modernism" and argues that "we owe the most radical reforms and revolutions in the history of the theater to the staunchest anti-theatricalists, from Mallarmé to Brecht and Beckett."<sup>17</sup> Harding's *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde* provides rich evidence of the kinds of performances that helped define modernism and that should therefore figure in any history of the movement. Recent studies like these, which draw on both traditional literary-dramatic texts and performance-related evidence such as set designs, costumes, choreography, film, and musical scores, reflect the possibilities of interdisciplinary studies for redefining the 'literary' in modernism. In addition, the work of Katherine Kelly and others on the often-neglected contributions of women dramatists, directors, and performers to modernism in general has provided a welcome expansion of the field,<sup>18</sup> although it may be a long time before the modernist canon finally includes them, so predominant are the male modernists like Picasso, Matisse, Stravinsky, Joyce, and Eliot.<sup>19</sup>

Albright's methodology – in particular his emphasis on collaboration – offers a highly productive way of re-examining the modernist canon. Performance reconstruction and reception analysis, long the mainstays of theatre history, help to highlight the often uniquely interactive forces that create a theatrical production, and this has been especially true of modernist theatre, which is indeed characterised by its unique collaborations. This goes right back to the origins of modernism with, for example, Wagner's theatrically-based idea of total art, or *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and the *correspondences* of Baudelaire. Both of these inspired the Symbolists in the 1880s and 90s, who used them in experimental synaesthetic stagings. Paul Fort's production of *Song of Songs*

at the Théâtre d'Art in 1891, for example, used perfume which young symbolist poets pumped into the auditorium at key moments to create a synaesthetic correspondence of sound, color, and scent. Hardly any attention has been paid to such remarkable theatrical experiments, perhaps because we lack of a full context in terms of the history of modernism in the theatre.<sup>20</sup>

In this regard, theatre served as a metaphor for the new ideas as well as the material means of realising them, and this persisted well into the turn of the century. Simply understanding this context allows us to recuperate certain theatrical productions that have been dismissed or overlooked as anomalous, making it clearer exactly how and why they were attempted and giving them a background within modernism.

### The Problem of Evidence

The question of what counts as "evidence" in the historiography of modernism may be partly to blame for the neglect of theatre and performance. Many historians of the movement look askance at the project of reconstructing staged events in favor of more solid and artifactual kinds of evidence supplied by painting, music, and poetry. However, R. . Vince warns that "we cannot limit history to the accurate presentation of data" because, first, "historical data can provide only indirect and incomplete information concerning the past; the most logically rigorous analysis of fragmentary evidence can yield results that are wrong"; and second, we all bring to data "assumed patterns of meaning."<sup>21</sup>

It might however be possible to generate a new definition of modernism by the consideration of key theatrical performances in the period roughly spanning 1880-1930, largely by focusing on their collaborative nature. As Albright's study shows, many of the greatest modernist works were collaborative. For instance, Edvard Munch designed sets and posters for avant-garde productions of Ibsen in the 1890s and at the turn of the century for the modernist director Max Reinhardt.<sup>22</sup> Early modernist painters like Sérusier, Vuillard, Bonnard, and Toulouse-Lautrec contributed scenery for avant-garde productions of the 1890s, such as Lugné-Poe's *Ubu Roi* in 1886.<sup>23</sup>

When Yeats famously wrote, on seeing the riotous première of *Ubu Roi*, "After us, the Savage God", he was talking about art *in general* and about Jarry's prophetic impact in ushering in modernism across the arts, not just in the theatre. Yet it is only when Jarry is found to have influenced Joyce that we hear about his impact on modernism.<sup>24</sup> Meyerhold's 1922 constructivist, bio-mechanical production of Crommelynck's proto-absurdist play *The Magnanimous Cuckold* is "still a highlight in the history of modern theatre."<sup>25</sup> Such productions remain landmarks in theatre history, despite their relevance to what we broadly define as modernism.

Typical of histories of modernism, certain works have come to stand for the entire movement: Joyce's *Ulysses*; the poetry of Pound and Eliot; Picasso's Cubist paintings; the music of Stravinsky. The works of these artists and writers are said to mark significant dates in the history of modernism (i.e. to define it through their works); while Jarry, Crommelynck, Meyerhold, Lugné-Poe and the rest of the theatrical modernists mark significant dates in the history of *theatre*. Let us look at possible reasons for the dichotomy, of necessity rehearsing some familiar material from the historiography of modernism and the theory of the stage in order to set forth some conclusions and suggestions for alternative directions.

### Conflicting Definitions of Modernism

The "problematics" of modernism, to use Richard Sheppard's term, have to do with a number of factors, the first of which is dating. There is still no general agreement about the dates of the movement, leading Tony Pinkney to call it "the most frustratingly unspecific, the most recalcitrantly *unperiodizing*, of all the major art-historical 'isms' or concepts."<sup>26</sup> Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane set modernism at 1890-1930; others like Butler place its beginnings at around 1900, while some (taking Virginia Woolf's cue) maintain that it began shortly before World War I. Schwartz provides extremely broad dates for *high* modernism alone: 1890 to 1940. Pinkney concludes that even the broadest set of dates, from about 1850 to 1930,

within which the various tendencies of the modernist movement seem to fall, cannot hold up entirely on scrutiny, because some of these tendencies are already apparent in, say, Romanticism, and extend far into post-modernism.<sup>27</sup>

Nor is there unanimity about the nature of modernism. A rudimentary list of the kinds of techniques most often associated with modernist art and literature might include any of the following: Cubism in painting; anti-mimetic forms in general; abstraction; futurist sympathy with technology and a rejection of the past; anti-bourgeois stance; stream of consciousness and other innovative narrative forms; experiments in poetic form, such as rejection of capitalisation or punctuation; utilitarian art (Duchamp's urinal); found objects as art; atonalism in music. Because few, if any, of these aspects could be said to originate in the theatre, it is easy to assume that theatre hardly contributed to the aesthetic changes we know as modernism.

Then there is the nature of theatre itself. There are a number of factors that can help explain why theatre has not played a prominent role in histories of modernism. Theatrical performance rests on successful collaboration, which requires group consensus. Group consensus often signals a tendency toward conservatism rather than radicalism. Theatre often depends on audience support and approval in order to remain financially viable; this only adds to the perception of theatrical performance as capitulating to bourgeois tastes rather than challenging them, or alternatively of the theatrical avant-garde "preaching to the converted." The list goes on. Theatre often looked back to previous ages or traditions in the theatre; Copeau spoke of a "veneration for the ancient" in forging his idea of modern theatre.<sup>28</sup> The performance is often seen as secondary to the text. It is difficult to distinguish "the" work of art and especially who is responsible for it, given its many aspects and contributors – director, playwright, actors, designers. Above all the ephemeral nature of performance, with no artifact to consult, has downgraded its importance: we have to reconstruct it yet even that is often unreliable and subject to the interpretation of available data. The element of speculation, subjectivity, and gap-filling that this enterprise invites and in some cases necessitates can too readily be deemed a spurious methodology by critics and practitioners alike.

Another factor is that of invisibility. So much that was radical and progressive went on behind the scenes (i.e., Copeau's methods for Vieux-Colombier, Meyerhold's biomechanics, Appia's designs and theories of lighting, Gordon Craig's emphasis on masking). Then there is the tradition of "star system" of acting, which was gradually challenged during this period of democratisation of theatre; ensemble acting came to the fore, thus de-emphasising the individual, a move which goes against many of the trends of modernist art, novels, poetry, dance. There was often resistance from actors to experimentation that might treat the actor's role less prominently or place new demands on him/her. The predominance of realism, especially of Stanislavsky's approach to acting, had already taken hold by the time of many of the events we associate with modernism, profoundly influencing and shaping the way audiences and actors approached theatrical performances by firmly entrenching psychological realism in their expectations, a tendency that seems to go against the grain of much modernist literature and art.

Theatrical performances often reached very limited audiences, compared to popular theatre and other art forms. The subject matter of both traditional and avant-garde drama has not been all that different, however radically the stagings may have differed. Even in *Les Mamelles de Tiresius* Apollinaire is playing with conventional theatrical material: the domestic drama. Husband, wife, children is the essential stuff of the play. There is discussion of their respective roles, and questions about institutions of marriage and family; all familiar theatrical material, albeit in radically innovative form. Likewise with *Exiles* and *The Magnanimous Cuckold*; though the latter was far more aesthetically radical, both plays deal with the domestic problem of the husband obsessed with fear of being cuckolded and trying to conquer that fear by pushing his wife into infidelity.

### **Renovation vs. Innovation: A False Dichotomy?**

I want to explore in a bit more depth a couple of the points from this long list of factors and perceptions about the theatre. It has become cliché to privilege as modernist those works which exploded older forms (note the emphasis on formal rather than thematic issues). Yet as Raymond

Williams, Richard Sheppard and others have pointed out, modernism is much indebted to previous movements and ideas, and high modernists like Eliot are invoked as supreme examples of an important strain of modernism that is concerned with a retreat to the past.

This relates to theatre's use of past traditions. Many directors of the early part of this century saw their task as rescuing theatre from a disgraced state; a corrupt and tarnished medium needed to be cleansed. Perhaps we have tended to see theatre as being renewed, rather than itself an agent of renewal/innovation. The sources of much modernist theatre can thus be problematic, in that they seem to point us backward rather than forward. Many modern dramatists and directors have drawn on medieval or renaissance theatrical forms – Meyerhold and many others on commedia dell'arte, Jarry on the tradition of the Grand Guignol, Gordon Craig, O'Neill, Pirandello, and the Dadaists on masks, which certainly go back to the Greek theatre, and Verhaeren and Maeterlinck on medieval drama, to name but a few. But they were using these traditions in new ways, combining them with new forms of dialogue and structural changes in order to forge a dynamic aesthetic for the stage, especially in terms of the relationship between actors and audience. A permanent record of these ideas exists in the vast body of theoretical writings by many of these directors in addition to their theatrical work – writings that make it into the historiography of modernism even less frequently than the performances they help to explain.

As Raymond Williams argues, renovation is an established technique of modernism. Even those works often taken as examples of the modernist explosion of older, mimetic forms are not complete breaks with the past. Picasso's painting "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon", for example, contains elements of realism and conventions of light and space showing that it is not a complete rupture with the representational tradition in art. It all comes down to how we define "innovation", because many of the most striking design innovations were made with productions of older, often classic texts. So the work itself – the text – is not new, only the presentation of it, as for example with Cocteau's staging of *Antigone* in Paris in 1922 with sets by Picasso or the many stagings of Shakespeare by modernist directors. Should such examples be excluded from the realm of modernism? Only if we privilege the text as the main medium of theatre. Dismissing modernist productions of classic works because the texts themselves are not new ignores the fact that the performance itself is a text, one that exists by itself yet also provides a new reading of another work.

Another point has to do with the "reflecting" model of modernism, by which art responds to, or mirrors, the chaos of society in its own forms and subjects. Thus modern art is reactive in relation to society; in that sense, it does imitate life by reflecting the human condition in the throes of modernity. A similar paradigm emerges if we assume that theatre reacted to other artistic developments, rather than (literally) setting the stage for them. One reason theatre (but not dramatic texts) has been neglected in histories of modernism is this assumption that it was reactive – that far from being innovative, the theatre trailed after other arts which have come to define modernism, only (if at all) following their lead. A few examples might be the staging of Cubist and Constructivist productions well after those forms had been established in painting and architecture (*Salome* and *The Magnanimous Cuckold* in Russia, for instance) and putting Simultaneism and other poetic innovations on the stage after these had been set forth in print (*Les Mamelles de Tiresias*). Within this reflecting model, any production, text, set design, or directorial method that can be called "modernist" is "secondary" – i.e., took its innovative cue from some aesthetic development in another art form.

It is no wonder, then, that theatre has been left out; let us now consider some arguments to include it.

### **The "Modernism" of Modernist Theatre**

Three aspects in particular of the theatre of the period 1890-1930 lay strong claim to the inclusion of theatrical performance within the historiography of modernism. Many modernist productions demonstrate, and perhaps initiate, the reaction against realism/naturalism – they are characterised by fragmentation, abstraction, alienation (*Ubu Roi*, *Les Mamelles de Tiresias*, Dada performances). Theatre is immediate, communal, visceral, and above all highly visible – in

bringing modernist ideas to the stage, it literally enacts them. Finally, the tendency to provoke riots in the theatre, scandals and protests, encapsulates modernist confrontation between art and spectator.

This seems to me to relate to Adorno's argument that modernist works communicate through non-communication, which is how they manifest their fragmentation.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps there is an inherent tension, then, between theatre and modernism at the most basic level of communication: for theatre, even in its most non-communicative forms like Dada, is in some way always *about* communication, which occurs by definition of the genre on a communal rather than individual level. But if a community of audience members receives the work of art collectively, does not the nature of theatre chafe aesthetically with the isolationist/individualist aims of many of the modernists' gestures – those of Joyce, Picasso, Duchamp?

Many of the art works (and their media) that have come to define modernism are characterised by their isolating or anti-communal nature: the work itself and the experience of viewing or reading it undercuts any sense of community and reinforces the solitary existence traditionally associated with the modern, alienated subject. Theatre by its communality does not seem to fit this paradigm. However, during this period the communal aspect of theatre was being radically questioned in the theatre – the relationship between viewer and actors drastically altered through works that are now known for provoking riots and scandals as much as for their textual content. Within this framework, too, things are complicated, because the riots were sometimes caused by divisiveness within the audience but also often by unanimous denunciation of the work. So generalisations are difficult in these cases. We have amassed a great deal of information on the premières of plays like *Ubu Roi*, Hauptmann's naturalist dramas, Ibsen's social plays, Dada performances, Yeats and Synge at the Abbey Theatre, and so forth – characterised by their scandalous reception, causing riots in theatres where they were performed, eliciting audience outrage and the like.<sup>30</sup> Yet we have not fully harnessed this fascinating material to the larger argument about art at the time these all occurred.

Perhaps another aspect of the problem under discussion here is the tendency to view theatrical performances separately, instead of as part of a process. R. W. Vince writes of moving from a concern with the theatrical event itself to a concern with “the process underlying a sequence of theatrical events,” a methodology which may be particularly productive for the kind of reassessment here under consideration.<sup>31</sup> Such a methodology is already well integrated into other disciplines such as music and art history, both of which have been highly influential in shaping definitions of modernism.

On the other hand, one might argue for a radical departure from any chronology-based history of the movement and consider, for example, a synchronic approach. One could take a particular year as a starting point, such as 1922, the quintessentially “high modernist” year when Eliot published *The Waste Land* and Joyce published *Ulysses*. One might look at what was happening in the theatre across Europe, Russia and America, in terms of both performances and the publication of plays.<sup>32</sup> A synchronic approach avoids retreading the usual routes of theatre history, let alone modernist historiography. It allows for a completely fresh way of seeing theatre in a given moment rather than as the result of a series of tendencies (all allegedly derivative anyway). Finally, it emphasises the cross-cultural interactions that characterise theatrical modernism, and is thus more accurate in rendering the true picture of theatrical activity of the time – as opposed to the geographical approach usually taken which artificially divides theatrical practice into national groupings which in reality theatrical modernism defied.

## Coda

One might want to ask *why* it is necessary to reconsider how we have historicised modernism. Why should theatre even be included in that history? Does theatre *need* such restoration, help, rescuing? It has to be said that there are a couple of strong arguments against a project that aims to recuperate the role of theatrical performance with respect to modernism. First, it might risk conveying the notion of theatre as subservient, as handmaiden to the master Modernism that represents more centrally important art forms and genres. For this reason theatre studies scholars

and historians might have reservations about the implications of linking theatrical performance to modernist historiography in this way, and this problem would need to be addressed.<sup>33</sup> Second, redefining modernism with a view to recognising theatrical performance more fully runs the risk of affirming the single-definition, master-narrative idea of the movement which, as Susan Stanford Friedman so powerfully shows, is now deeply suspect.<sup>34</sup> In his paper in this journal, Michael Coyle persuasively advocates that we recognise a multiplicity of modernisms, not one monolithic entity.<sup>35</sup> This would seem to go against the project I am proposing here, since my argument for a reconsideration of how we use the term "modernism" implies coming up with a single new overarching definition. My main focus, however, is on the way in which different genres have been isolated – by which, for example, theatrical modernism is recognized by theatre scholars but not widely assimilated into the historiography of modernism.

Now for some reasons in support of the project. The first has to do with terminology: it seems necessary simply to reclaim the term "modernism" from its narrow literary-critical usage. Generations of students are receiving a definition of modernism that takes hardly any account of seminal theatre performances, and the larger implication of course is that theatrical performance hardly matters, or that it is possible to conceive of drama in textual terms only. The staggering quantity and variety of avant-garde performances during the modernist period, well-known to theatre historians and practitioners for generations, has been demonstrated in recent books like *Untwisting the Serpent* and *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde*, and make it clear that these were much more than merely peripheral to the movement. In recent years a great deal of work has been done by theatre historians on initial productions and their reception, opening up a wealth of new possibilities to explore the relationship between theatre and modernism. In addition, cross-fertilisation from literary theory and semiotics has broadened the scope of our inquiry into theatre history. In short, much more is now available in the way of both "evidence" of seminal performances and an understanding of them in theoretical terms employed in other areas of modernist scholarship.

Finally, the recent rise of performance studies in universities particularly in the West has radically reshaped the study of theatre and drama, but this has failed to register in histories of modernism. Or rather, "performance" has mutated into something divorced from the theatrical: studies of the "performative" aspects of modernist poetry or prose abound. And what is true of modernist historiography is also turning out to be true of narratives of postmodernism. Are historians of postmodernism replicating the pattern of neglect of theatrical performance that has dogged histories of modernism? Are we finding separate histories – separate and not equal – of, on the one hand, "postmodern performance" and, on the other, the monolithic notion of the "postmodern"? If so, then redressing the modernist historiography problem outlined here seems doubly warranted.

Ultimately, the exclusion of theatre impoverishes current definitions of modernism. In a movement so pointedly concerned with the experience of the self, the alienated subject, the disintegration and fragmentation of accepted forms, theatre by its very public nature surely plays a vital role; as discussed above, it is *about* the direct connection between the audience and the work of art. A new history of modernism that gives Munch's collaborations with Max Reinhardt on productions of Ibsen the same weight as a Picasso or a Pound would give a fuller picture of the developments of modernism across the arts. It would also provide valuable illustrations of the intense cross-cultural theatrical activity during this period – during which the theatre was extraordinarily "cosmopolitan" as the site of heavy traffic across national borders and languages. Finally, throwing new light on the richly interdisciplinary nature of modernist theatrical performances would validate the claims to interdisciplinarity that have characterized so much of the modernist movement and its historiography.

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<sup>1</sup> Toril Moi, "Ibsen, Theatre, and Ideology of Modernism," *Theatre Survey* 45.2 (November 2004), 247.

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<sup>2</sup> Moi, 247.

<sup>3</sup> Moi, 249.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Innes, "Modernism in Drama," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 130.

<sup>5</sup> Forrest Read, ed., *Pound/Joyce* (New York: New Directions, 1967), 46. See Martin Puchner's exploration of anti-theatricality and modernism, *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality, and Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> See for example C.W.E. Bigsby's penetrating introductory essay, "The Absent Voice: American Drama and the Critic," in his book *Modern American Drama, 1945-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1-13.

<sup>7</sup> I am grateful to Deborah Parsons for suggesting this point.

<sup>8</sup> Astradur Eysteinnsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Eysteinnsson, 24.

<sup>10</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 8.3 (September 2001), 493-513.

<sup>11</sup> C.D. Innes, *Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1, quoted in Natalie Crohn Schmitt, *Actors and Onlookers: Theater and Twentieth-Century Scientific Views of Nature* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 45. Innes writes: "[While] it is normal to date modern drama from Ibsen...naturalism was actually the final phase of traditional theater," hence "it is more accurate to take the Dada movement as the starting-point of these attempts to find theatrical correlatives for the new consciousness."

<sup>12</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, ed. Tony Pinkney (London: Verso, 1989), 65.

<sup>13</sup> Other studies of modernism that either exclude theatrical performance or give it scant attention include Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987) and Peter Nicholls, *Modernism: A Literary Guide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Theatrical performances figure hardly at all in the many readers or anthologies of modernism such as Peter Faulkner, ed., *A Modernist Reader* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1986) and Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman, and Olga Taxidou, eds., *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). The Modernist Studies Association and its journal, *Modernism/Modernity*, only rarely address theatre as an integral part of modernist historiography. Sylvio Gaggi, *Modern/Postmodern: A Study in Twentieth-Century Arts and Ideas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989) does consider the impact of Brecht and Pirandello in shaping modernism, but primarily in literary and theoretical terms with little attention to performance.

<sup>14</sup> James M. Harding, ed., *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Elin Diamond, "Modernity's Drama," *Modern Drama* 44.1 (Spring 2001), 4-5. This article is part of a double issue of *Modern Drama* on redefining the field of modern drama (Winter 2000 and Spring 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Schmitt, *Actors and Onlookers*, 77.

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<sup>17</sup> Klaus Mladek, review of Martin Puchner, *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality and Drama* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), in *Modernism/Modernity* 11.1 (January 2004), 195-6.

<sup>18</sup> In this paper I deliberately use only male examples to emphasise the limitations of the traditional approaches to modernism, and to suggest how much richer the modernist canon would be if we expanded it to include more women theatre practitioners and playwrights. See for example Katherine E. Kelly, ed., *Modern Drama by Women 1880s-1930s* (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Although both Eliot and Joyce wrote plays, they are known primarily for their influence on modernism through other forms such as poetry, the novel, and the critical essay. For an in-depth examination of Joyce as playwright, see Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, "Reconsidering Joyce's *Exiles* in Its Theatrical Context," *Theatre Research International* 28.2 (Summer 2003), 169-80.

<sup>20</sup> Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, "'Mise-en-Scent': The Théâtre d'Art's *Cantique des cantiques* and the Use of Smell as a Theatrical Device," *Theatre Research International* 24.2 (Summer 1999), 152-9.

<sup>21</sup> R.W. Vince, "Theatre History as an Academic Discipline," in Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie, eds., *Interpreting the Theatrical Past* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, "Ibsen, Munch, and the Relationship between Modernist Theatre and Art," *Nordic Theatre Studies* 12 (2000), 43-53.

<sup>23</sup> See especially Patricia Eckert Boyer, *Artists and the Avant-Garde Theatre in Paris 1887-1900* (Washington D.C., 1998, exhibition catalogue).

<sup>24</sup> See for example William Anastasi, "Jarry in Joyce: A Conversation," *Joyce Studies Annual* 6 (Summer 1995), 39-58, and Marlena G. Corcoran, "Drawing Our Attention to Jarry, Duchamp, and Joyce: The Manuscript/Art of William Anastasi," *James Joyce Quarterly*, 32.3-4 (Spring and Summer 1995), 659-71.

<sup>25</sup> Martin Banham, ed., *The Cambridge Guide to the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 91.

<sup>26</sup> Pinkney, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Pinkney, 4.

<sup>28</sup> John Rudlin, *Jacques Copeau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 26.

<sup>29</sup> Eysteinnsson, 41.

<sup>30</sup> For a full consideration of such riots see Neil Blackadder, *Performing Opposition: Modern Theater and the Scandalized Audience* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Vince, "Theatre History as an Academic Discipline," 14.

<sup>32</sup> Some key theatrical events of 1922: Artaud sees a group of Cambodian dancers at the Colonial Exhibition in Marseilles; Crommelynck's *The Magnanimous Cuckold* is produced by Meyerhold in Russia in constructivist and biomechanical style (this year also Meyerhold coins the term 'biomechanics'); Cocteau's *Antigone* is performed in Paris in December with sets by Picasso; Pirandello writes *Henry IV*; O'Neill writes *The Hairy Ape*; Arnolt Bronnen's *Vatermord* is

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performed (written 1915) and causes a sensation in expressionist theatre; Vakhtangov directs *Turandot* by Carlo Gozzi (orig. 1762) at Third Studio of MAT, with Cubist sets designed by I. Nivinsky. The design was “a Meyerhold-like composition of platforms, gangways and galleries, and the action was made ‘contemporary’ by such devices as that of having the King carry a tennis racquet in lieu of a sceptre. Characters from the world of the *commedia dell’arte* like Pantalone and Truffaldino and Tartaglia were woven into the performance, and the actors appeared to improvise their costumes and props—one wrapped a towel about his head for a turban, another tied a scarf round his chin for a beard” (J.L. Styan, *Modern Drama*, volume 3, 94). “The total quality of this production...was gay and light-hearted. The actors put on their costumes, and the stagehands set the scene, in full view of the audience. The music was played on combs and tissue-paper” (Styan, 95). It ran for more than 1,000 performances.

<sup>33</sup> Such reservations were raised and discussed in response to a version of this paper that I shared with the Historiography working group of the International Federation for Theatre Research in Worcester, England (July 2003). I am grateful to my colleagues in this working group for their feedback and suggestions, in particular Thomas Postlewait, Bruce McConachie, and David Mayer.

<sup>34</sup> Friedman, “Definitional Excursions,” 493-513.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Coyle, “With a Plural Vengeance: Modernism as (Flaming) Brand,” *Modernist Cultures* 1 (Spring 2005), 15-21.