



Expressionism and Modernism in the American Theatre: Bodies, Voices, Words (Cambridge Studies in American Theatre and Drama)

Julia A. Walker

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Although often dismissed as a minor offshoot of the better-known German movement, expressionism on the American stage represents a critical phase in the development of American dramatic modernism. Situating expressionism within the context of early twentieth-century American culture, Walker demonstrates how playwrights who wrote in this mode were responding both to new communications technologies and to the perceived threat they posed to the embodied act of meaning. At a time when mute bodies gesticulated on the silver screen, ghostly voices emanated from tin horns, and inked words stamped out the personality of the hand that composed them, expressionist playwrights began to represent these new cultural experiences by disarticulating the theatrical languages of bodies, voices and words. In doing so, they not only innovated a new dramatic form, but redefined playwriting from a theatrical craft to a literary art form, heralding the birth of American dramatic modernism.

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