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# The Missing Link: Gertrude Stein between American and European Theater

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## Abstract

Gertrude Stein's post-dramatic approach to playwriting has influenced not only American avant-garde theater from the 1960s to the present, but also contemporary European theater today. Stein's famous notion of the play as landscape has changed the way we think about plot, character, time and space on stage, as has her deconstruction of almost every other aspect of written drama and performance: from character and dialogue, sound and setting, to fundamental questions about presence and representation in the theater. This paper follows the lines of exchange between European and American theater Stein's work has given rise to, and reconsiders Stein's position in the history of European avant-garde theater. I argue that Stein aimed at a post-dramatic integration of text and performance in an open-ended aesthetics where Artaud's famous doubleness of the theater between presence and representation is regarded a field of possibilities rather than restrictions. Through her exceptional position not only as an expatriate American writer in Europe, but also as an art collector, whose writings were informed by her interdisciplinary knowledge of art and philosophy, Stein was able to radically rethink drama in ways that have kept inspiring theater and performance artists until this day, from American directors like John Cage and Robert Wilson, to German playwright Heiner Müller, and younger European artists like Heiner Goebbels, Sarah Kane, and René Pollesch.

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