In contrast to such clear-cut certainty, let me postulate a few less provable fantasies.

As the American theatre moves into the 21st century—if we're all lucky enough to make it that far—the institution of "Broadway" will become, increasingly, the appendix of the body theatric. That body in the meantime will continue to spread far, wide and—hopefully, in some cases—handsomely. Whatever its artistic virtues, theatregoing outside Manhattan, in such places as Minneapolis and Washington and Denver and Louisville, will be more pleasant, more convenient, more possible, safer and perhaps even less expensive. The structures, the mechanisms and the talent will exist and persist in a growing number of locations remote from Shubert Alley. That process of dispersal will be irreversible in spite of what the National Endowment or the foundations do or don't do. And the network of regional theatres will finally get that name for which they have always been searching: the American National Theatre.

In that same period, our plays will continue their gradual shift from trying to portray the surfaces of life—"human interest stories," as critic Mary McCarthy so aptly characterized them back in the '40s and '50s—to suggesting in varied styles and degrees "the essence of being human." We will finally realize that with electronic closeups of "reality" available as well as disposable at the touch of a fingertip, only some sort of magnification, intensification, penetration and rearrangement of that "reality" will succeed in holding us in our 12th-row seats.

The theatre of the future, if it is to hold us, will have to shake off a belief it has held only a relatively short time—the belief that it is showing us "a real room with real people." For the theatre's role is to present life not in its literal exactness but rather through some kind of poetic vision, metaphor, image—the mirror held up as *'twere* to nature. Only such a mirror can present us with the "grand crash and glitter of life," in Robert Edmond Jones' classic phrase.

Once our stages and our plays shake off the proscenium's delusion about illusion, and return to the more familiar ritual of theatricality, our manner of performing and the nature of our performers will also change—as it is already changing. The actors in our future theatre will be not only truthful but interestingly expressive, physically and vocally. They will seek to present life as it might be as well as to represent it as it is. The American actor and actress, no less than his or her British or Continental counterpart, has the equipment to do that. All that he or she must do is replace the concept of acting as "just playing oneself in imaginary circumstances" with the larger concept that acting is actually transforming oneself, utilizing both truth and craft, into someone else.

The American actor has, in addition, an emotional aliveness and a physicality not always inherently present in other societies or cultures. That's why our musicals remain so popular worldwide. The demands made on the actor by the musical theatre, where our national rhythms and tones have long been dominant, will be more and more matched by the technical demands of our non-musical theatre of the future. From all this will come a larger and more powerful theatre of images and truth, a theatre concerned with the pulsations of life, not just its breathing.

"I'd like to live long enough to see the demise of words like 'hit' and 'flop,' 'revival,' 'show business.' Do we 'revive' Mozart or Modigliani? Is Isaac Stern in the 'music business'?"

The specifics of that future theatre will be, as always, unpredictible. Who will be the next new playwright, post-Beckett, post-Shepard, post-Durang? What new forms will replace the old ones? What shape will the new avant-garde take? The theatre must always be "new," always "experimental," always seeking to renew itself—from within and under the influence of outside non-theatrical forces—and always coming back to its older self. A great portion of what we hailed in the '60s and '70s, the work of a vast array of real and ersatz artists, individual gurus and group gurus, was blown up out of all proportion to its worth. Many of the works we once called masterpieces have turned out to be doodles.

The '80s and '90s of our turbulent end-of-the-century will be equally full of theatrical sound and fury, signifying not very much. And our problem will be, as before, to fasten onto the few genuine forces and talents, and to separate them from the fool's gold, whose glitter will always attract and distract our attention. Who will be our Peter Brook of 1999? Peter Sellars...? Who will follow where J. Grotowski left off? J. Chaikin...? Who will go beyond Sam Beckett? Sam Shepard...?

No one can predict the exact nature and locus of the future theatre. We *do* know that it will continue to stress the performer's image and three-dimensionality. It will return more and more to a dependence on and a respect for the text, for language itself, for the power and beauty of the human voice. Music and dance, from both primitive and contemporary sources, will more and more share the performer's freer vocal and physical expressiveness. Finally, and perhaps more vitally, the theatre of the future will depend more and more on accepting the living presence of the spectator-auditor—not in the superficial sense of the actors running up and down the aisles and touching the audience physically, but in the sense of the entire theatrical event happening only because the audience is there, because the audience and the event truly touch each other at the moment of performance.

The theatre, in whatever form or manifestation, can never be more than a minority preoccupation. But as there has already been a transition from a

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