

Venice as a City of Death: the Laguna Morta and a Gondola as a Coffin

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Key words: Venice; representations; a City of Death; the laguna morta; a gondola as a coffin

ABSTRACT

I have focused on a representation of Venice as a city of death and attempted to show the reasons why this remarkable image emerged.

The lagoon extending from the northern edge of Venice is called “laguna morta” (=dead lagoon), in which there is a cemetery island called San Michele, and there can also be found a haunted house named “Casa degli Spiriti” on the northern edge of the city. The zone formed by the “dead” lagoon, the cemetery island, and the northern edge of the city presents an image of a death zone. Interestingly, however, the same zone had been regarded not as a deathly place but rather one of cheerfulness until the end of the eighteenth century.

The direct cause for engendering this association of death was the fact that the island of San Michele was changed from a monastic island into a cemetery island at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There were, however, other important causes. The Republic of Venice collapsed in 1797, followed by a long period of political and economic decline. Metaphorically speaking, Venice itself died. The city, lying on the lagoon, also seemed to be soon engulfed by water. Thus it seemed to be in danger of physical death, too.

A similar sudden change is noticeable regarding the image of coffins in association with Venetian gondolas. Gondolas were likened to coffins probably for the first time by Goethe just before the extinction of the Republic of Venice, which was already in a state of decline both politically and economically. After Goethe, Venetian gondolas were represented repeatedly as coffins. Interestingly, however, gondolas had been regarded as either beautiful grand vehicles or joyous boats before Goethe. Therefore, the association of gondolas with coffins came not from their physical appearance but from the political, economic, and physical decline of the city.

Choukou Ikuta's "*Enko*" ("Halo"): Representations of "Light"

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Keywords: Choukou Ikuta, "*Enko*" ("Halo"), Representation, Semiotics of the Drama and Theater, New Woman

Abstract

This paper's analysis of different aspects of "*Enko*" ("Halo"), Choukou Ikuta's play of 1917, demonstrates the play's indebtedness to the art, literature, philosophy, dramas and theaters of the period. This paper also places great emphasis upon the representation of "light" in the drama, with reference to Shoji Sekine's onstage picture "*Korin no Onna*" ("Woman with a Halo"), the 1914 short story "*Enko*" ("Halo") by Haruo Sato, as well as the "New Woman" essays of Raicho Hiratsuka, and Masao Kume's 1917 drama "*Jizoukyou—yurai*" ("Assistant Origin Jizo").