

Original Murder Trial	
1	USA became obsessed with the trial Ruth Snyder and Judd Gray killing Albert Snyder (8 months) and followed everything.
2	Treadwell utilised her connections as a journalist to gain insight about the trial.
3	The trial was a ticketed event – people paid to watch it, 1500 people attended.
4	At her trial Ruth Snyder stated that the motive behind her and her lover’s murderous act was to take “a step toward a larger freedom, a fuller enjoyment of life...” (Wynn 109)

Original Performance Conditions	
1	Premiered on September 7 th 1928 – Plymouth Theatre, New York.
2	New York Times review on 8 th September read ‘Subdued, monotonous, episodic, occasionally eccentric in style . <i>Machinal</i> is fraught with a beauty unfamiliar to the stage.’ (Atkinson, 18)
3	Commercial viewings were not so popular and the show only ran for 91 performances on Broadway.
4	Arthur Hopkins – producer – sought to” liberate the stage from the confinement of box sets and give greater scope for lighting” → lighting is concentrated and intense (light and shadow, bright and darkness) (Machinal, xii)
5	‘Scenically this play is planned to be handled in two basic sets (or in one set with two backs). There is a change of furniture, and props for each episode – only essential things, full of character’. (Machinal, xii)

Sophie Treadwell	
1	American Playwright – Born 03/10/1885 – Died 20/02/1970
2	Father deserted her and her mother, and they moved to San Francisco, where Sophie first learned of the theatre.
3	Grew up around many strong female role models, including her single mother and her maternal grandmother.
4	Tried many trades , including journalism, secretary work, teaching English as a second language, and even working as a vaudeville singer.
5	Married to her husband (a journalist) mostly out of a friendly arrangement. Moved to New York. Maintained separate residences and free to engage in outside relationships. Loved to travel with her husband.
6	Supported women’s suffrage, birth control rights, and increased sexual freedom for women through writing.
7	Feminism in its earliest roots was the driving force behind her lift and work.
8	One of her most famous causes was that of artists’ rights . Advocated both in court and in government for writers to receive fair compensation for their works.
9	Pushed the boundaries by pursuing commercial audience for her shows on Broadway, and producing a few of the productions herself.

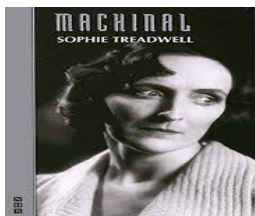
Themes	
1	Society as a machine
2	Hopelessness and Despair
3	Marriage and Gender inequality
4	Women’s role in society
5	Freedom

Characters in Power	
1	Mr Jones
2	Mr Roe
3	Mother
4	Nurse
5	Doctor
6	Judge
7	Lawyer for prosecution
8	Lawyer for Defense
9	Jailer
10	Barbers
11	Guards
12	Priest

Main Characters		
1	Young Women	The action centres around her trying to break out of the claustrophobic world she is born into and the one she dreams of escaping to.
2	Mother	Enforces a sense of duty on her daughter. She thinks she deserves to be taken care of.
3	George H. Jones (Husband)	successful and arrogant businessman that the Young Woman feels obliged to marry and eventually despises. He represents the misogynistic attitude of society.
4	Man	The Young Woman’s lover.
5	Ensemble	Represent the “society / machine”- e.g. the Law / the Press / the Church and other establishments.

Contextual Links:

Ruth Syder: <http://murderpedia.org/female/5/s/snyder-ruth.htm>
 Full production: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8e1q-2H5KtY>
 Almeida Theatre production review: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jun/12/machinal-review-almeida-london-sophie-treadwell>



Expressionism Style Features

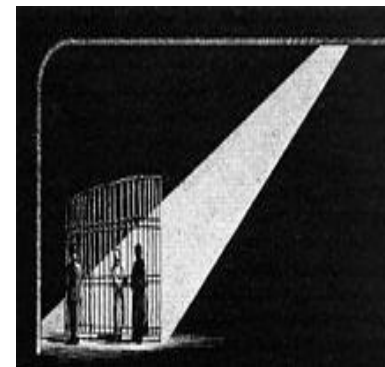
1	Dramatising spiritual awakening of protagonist (Inner thoughts and feeling)
2	Emphasise suffering of protagonist (Pain and struggle of YW)
3	Modeled on the episodic presentation of the suffering and death (Develop this using montage?)
4	Challenging and testifying the failure of social values (Using ensemble to emphasise this theme?)
5	Leaning towards the feeling of ecstasy and despair and hence a tendency towards the inflated and the grotesque (Physical representation of inner disgust/ entrapment?)
6	Dramatising the struggle against bourgeois values and established authority (Guards/ Judge/ Mr J?)
7	Speech is heightened, whether expansive and rhapsodic, or clipped and telegraphic (Representing disjointed thoughts and feelings)

Context (USA)

1	Henry ford production line in 1914, used machinery to aid mass production
2	Economic Boom after WWI – Influenced the leisure element of roaring 20s
3	Economic growth – consumers were buying telephones, automobiles, radios – changed lifestyle culture
4	Media started to focus on celebrities (gossip)
5	UK women’s suffrage 1918 – USA women’s suffrage 1920 – women begin to enter workplace in large numbers
6	Music – Jazz and blues (Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey)
7	Dances – most popular were foxtrot, waltz, American Tango, Breakaway and Charleston
8	Flapper girls – Known for being promiscuous and taking risks – “Anything goes” slogan
9	Gibson girls – 1900-1910 – conservative, corsets with long length sleeves and skirt
10	1929 – “Black Tuesday” – Stock market crash – beginning of Great Depression
11	Male patriarchal society – reflective of Bourgeois and power opportunities and control of women

Expressionism in technical theatre:

1	Layered sounds with dissonant clashes
2	Distortion of sound/ image
3	Sounds of machinery
4	Electric shock sound effect
5	Set designs featuring treadmills, cages, chains, clear boxes (Trapped), heights, levels, cogs, machinery
6	Erratic lighting effects (Strobes) – electric chair/ angled gobos/ machinery gobo
7	Extremities of lighting – using brightness and diminishing darkness
8	Extreme items of clothing – long sleeves/ straight jacket/ use of ropes and chains/ handcuffs
9	Using fabric over a face
10	20s clothing – fringe dresses/ bow ties/ suits



Plot Summary - Machinal

EPISODE 1	The central character of <i>Machinal</i> , Helen Jones or the young woman, is a sensitive person who struggles to fit into the mechanized or automatic roles laid out for her by 1920s society. The first four episodes of the play provide brief scenes showing how deeply she struggles in each of her roles. Episode 1 reveals the young woman to be an inefficient office worker. She can barely endure the subway ride to work or the noise and chatter of the office environment. During the first episode the young woman receives a marriage proposal from her boss, whom she finds revolting. She and her coworkers speculate on how much easier life might be for the wife of a wealthy man
EPISODE 2	Episode 2 shows the young woman at home with her overbearing mother, who insists physical and financial security are more important than love. The young woman decides to accept the marriage proposal despite her misgivings.
EPISODE 3	In Episode 3 she is on her honeymoon, clearly terrified of her husband's sexual advances. By the end of the episode she is weeping and calling out for help while her new husband tells her "there's nothing to cry about."
EPISODE 4	Episode 4 finds the young woman in a hospital bed, weak and traumatized after giving birth to a little girl. She wishes desperately for a little peace as people tell her what to do and even how to feel about her new daughter
EPISODE 5	A shift comes in Episode 5, when Helen goes out for drinks at a speakeasy with an old friend from her days as an office worker. There they meet two men, one of whom is clearly sexually interested in Helen. The speakeasy is filled with people who are contemplating making choices considered taboo or illegal in the 1920s. A man and a boy at a nearby table seem to be easing toward a homosexual encounter. An unmarried heterosexual couple at another table are arguing about an unplanned pregnancy, and the man is pressuring the woman to have an abortion. The young woman is fascinated by the man she meets, who tells her a story about being captured by bandits in Mexico. He claims he killed two men with an improvised bludgeon to win his freedom. He is full of compliments for the young woman, who eventually agrees to go back to his apartment with him.
EPISODE 6	This leads to an intimate scene in Episode 6 in which the young woman and her lover banter contentedly. The young woman says she has a feeling of "purity" for the first time ever. Their conversation includes hints the young woman wants to run away with the man when he leaves town. Yet, there are also hints the man intends to leave alone
EPISODE 7	Episode 7 takes place some months later. Helen and her husband are at home. The young woman endures her husband's bragging about a business deal he has recently made. When he talks about his new property, he suggests that she, too, belongs to him. He mentions she sometimes flinches when he touches her, which he likes because he regards it as a sign of her "purity." The young woman grows distraught and remembers her lover talking about bludgeoning people to death to gain his freedom.
EPISODE 8	In Episode 8 the young woman is on trial, accused of murdering her husband. She initially denies involvement in the crime. However, when the prosecution lawyer reads a signed affidavit by her lover—betraying her from afar—she confesses to the crime
EPISODE 9	Episode 9 shows the young woman in a prison cell, awaiting execution. As two barbers hold her down and forcibly shave a patch on her head, she begs to know if she will ever find peace, even in death. Her question remains unresolved when the lights dim, and the young woman is executed in front of a fascinated crowd.

Contextual Links:

About the show: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojdhZ4j7mQM>

Machinal Set design: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TooIUMPLvWI>