

Character Consciousness in Modernist and Postmodernist Plays: An Exploration Through Playwriting

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Abstract

In the following practical study the question of specific authorial conventions employed to achieve the effect of theatricalised character consciousness is examined in the specific recognised dramatic forms of modernism and postmodernism of the latter half of the 20th century.

Through analysis of pre-existing works of drama of playwrights including, but not limited to, Samuel Beckett, Tom Stoppard, Richard Foreman, Peter Handke, and Robert Wilson – and scholarship related thereto from such academics as Elinor Fuchs, June Schlueter, Lionel Abel, and Philip Auslander – the aim of the textual investigations lies in identifying specific writerly methods used to produce characters of drama that might be perceived as having a consciousness that transcends the circumstances of the plays in which they appear.

In extracting the textual basis from which these effects are derived, an examination of the literary and social context in which these works emerged is likewise offered as a means of gleaning a sense of why such characters emerged as they did in this period of theatre's evolution. Resulting from this dissection, a taxonomy of these specific traits have then been compiled as a sort of template upon which to build characters or a similar effect and affect through the practice of playwriting.

Ultimately, these components then serve as the foundation for two original dramatic works meant to represent these abstractions made through analysis in the practiced form of playwriting. Each dramatic work is accompanied by a reflective analysis of the process of creative writing and an assessment of discoveries made about the construction of character consciousness.

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