



Revision as Resistance in Twentieth-Century American Drama (American Literature Readings in the Twenty-First Century)

Meredith M. Malburne-Wade

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American dramas consciously rewrite the past as a means of determined criticism and intentional resistance. While modern criticism often sees the act of revision or 'borrowing' as derivative, Malburne-Wade uses Victor Turner's concept of the social drama (breach, crisis, redressive means, and resolution), and the concept of the liminal to argue for a more complicated view of revision. Examining works by Arthur Miller, William Carlos Williams, James Baldwin, Herman Melville, Richard Wright, Robert Lowell, and Lorraine Hansberry, she demonstrates the ways in which American playwrights engage the past to create a theoretical space for challenging racism, colonialism, abuses of power, and other destructive forces. The rewriting of the past over the present generates a threshold through which readers can purposefully examine assumptions, prejudices, and historical precedents. It is via this liminal moment that these playwrights hope to begin to construct an original future.

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