

Abstract

This work is interdisciplinary in orientation and brings together American theatre (and culture) and contemporary ethical philosophy. I am introducing the French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas and his theory of Self and Other to an analysis of contemporary American drama—a mode of approach that is new to the discipline of theatre studies. Lévinas's insights are particularly relevant to the concerns of the 21st century and how we might rethink relationships and values. My work looks at contemporary American plays in terms of nationalism, gender politics, racial dynamics and ecological issues. I contend that these playwrights are attempting to go beyond conventional views on such matters and are modeling a sort of Lévinasian ethic in their works, one informed by an honoring of difference and a responsibility for the Other.