



**Political Theatre and the Politics of Care in
James Baldwin's Blues for Mister Charlie and Lynn Nottage's Sweat:
An Application of Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed**

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the intersection of political theatre and the politics of care through James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* and Lynn Nottage's *Sweat*, analysed within the framework of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It explores how both plays operate as performative expressions of Freirean praxis, staging the conflict between oppressors and the oppressed across racial and class-based hierarchies. Baldwin's drama confronts systemic racism and calls for moral responsibility, while Nottage's work critiques the instability of labour under neoliberalism and the erosion of worker solidarity. Central to both texts is a politics of care that positions theatre as a dialogic medium fostering empathy and critical consciousness. Through close textual analysis informed by Freirean concepts such as praxis and conscientization, this study demonstrates how theatre humanizes social conflict and encourages transformative awareness. By presenting the struggles of marginalized communities, Baldwin and Nottage invite audiences to reflect on their complicity in systems of oppression while envisioning possibilities for resistance and liberation. The analysis addresses three guiding questions: How does Baldwin's play dramatize racialized power struggles through Freirean theory? In what ways are Freire's concepts of praxis and critical consciousness enacted in both plays? How does a politics of care shape theatre as a dialogic space that cultivates empathy, audience participation, and potential social transformation?

Introduction

Political theatre has long served as a powerful cultural form for confronting systems of oppression and provoking social change. In particular, James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964) and Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* (2015) stand as searing critiques of racial and class-based injustice in the United States. These plays go beyond mere representations of suffering; they actively engage audiences in ethical reflection and socio-political inquiry (Almaarof, A. R. A. and I., Z., 2024). At the heart of this engagement lies a "politics of care" an ethic rooted in empathy, justice, and the affirmation of the humanity of the oppressed. When read through Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000), these works can be understood not only as artistic expressions but also as pedagogical interventions that enact a form of political education through dramatic means.

Freire (2000) argued that education must be dialogical and laboratory, empowering the oppressed to recognize and transform the conditions of their marginalization. In this framework, the role of the teacher or, by analogy, the playwright is not to impose knowledge, but to facilitate critical consciousness (*conscientização*) (Freire, 2000, p.18) and collective action. Baldwin and Nottage both make their audiences as participants in a dialogic process, providing dramatic narratives that function as what Freire might call "problem-posing education," rather than "banking education." These plays create spaces where systemic injustice is not only exposed but interrogated, inviting both characters and viewers into acts of reflection and resistance.

This study explores how *Blues for Mister Charlie* and *Sweat* employ theatrical form to dramatize the Freirean dialectic of oppressor and oppressed, and how both texts foster critical awareness through a politics of care. It argues that these plays are not only political in content but also pedagogical in function. By doing so, the analysis contributes to an understanding of political theatre as a form of cultural praxis that aligns with Freire's vision of education as liberation.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000) as a theoretical lens to show how political theatre can serve as a tool for critical consciousness and social transformation. Freire's pedagogy criticizes traditional, hierarchical education systems which he names the "banking model" and instead calls for an emancipatory model of learning grounded in dialogue, praxis, and the agency of the oppressed. His model agrees closely with the function of political theatre, particularly in its aim to provoke reflection and action in the audience, transforming spectators into participants in social change (Freire, 2000, p.19).

Freire's concept of critical consciousness (*conscientização*) is important to both James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* and Lynn Nottage's *Sweat*. In these plays, characters come into view from the shadows of systemic racism, economic oppression, and communal fragmentation into greater awareness of their conditions. In *Blues for Mister Charlie*, Baldwin dramatizes the psychological and political cost of white supremacy and the moral courage needed for black resistance. In *Sweat*, Nottage illustrates how dehumanization and socioeconomic inequality in a Rust Belt town, result in friendships breaking apart due to racial and economic divides. Both playwrights portray characters navigating moments of awakening, reflecting Freire's insistence that liberation emerges from oppressed communities (Solomon, 2018, p.93).

Freire's insistence on dialogue as a process of mutual humanization is mirrored in the dramaturgy of these works. Rather than treating characters as passive recipients of ideology, both Baldwin and Nottage create dramatic encounters that foreground voice, conflict, and testimony. These theatrical moments enact what Freire describes as *dialogical action* a co-constructed process in which people name the world and resist its deformations. The structure and narrative arcs of these plays echo Freirean pedagogy by resisting closure, emphasizing collective agency, and inviting spectators to interrogate their social realities (Freire, 2000, p.88–94).

Furthermore, this framework encompasses the political dimension of care as an extension of Freirean principles. Although Freire does not directly mention the term, his focus on love, empathy, and solidarity as essential for liberation resonates with contemporary academic discourses regarding care as a political act. In both plays, care is portrayed not only as individual compassion but also as a profound solidarity among the oppressed. Baldwin illustrates care as a form of spiritual resistance, while Nottage portrays care as a survival mechanism in economically devastated communities. These representations show how cares, rooted in collective struggle, can be an agent of resistance to systemic violence (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 79).

Hence, the convergence of Freire's pedagogy and the political theatre of Baldwin and Nottage illuminate how drama can function as both an aesthetic and ethical intervention. These theatrical works enact a form of laboratory practice by subverting dominant ideologies, amplifying marginalized voices, and encouraging critical, dialogic engagement. In this context, Political theatre emerges not merely as a mirror of social oppression, but as a praxis-oriented vehicle for emancipation (Boal, 2000, p.47).

Methodology

This study employs close textual analysis as its primary methodology approach. By closely examining pivotal scenes from *Blues for Mister Charlie* and *Sweat*, the research investigates how themes of race, class, and systemic oppression are conveyed through dialogue, character development, and dramatic structure. Regarding how characters' interactions and moral quandaries mirror Freire's dialectical paradigm of the oppressor-oppressed relationship. For example, *Blues for Mister Charlie's* depiction of the courtroom drama by Baldwin provides the ideal setting for examining the idea of "oppression" and the moral agency of the oppressed. Comparably, Nottage's depiction of the deindustrialized village in *Sweat* offers a critical perspective for examining how race and class intertwine under the influence of neoliberal economic policies.

Paulo Freire's theories of dialogical education, praxis and critical consciousness serve as the theoretical foundation for this study. These principles analyse how the plays function as pedagogical texts that promote moral and political awakening. The investigation examines how the extent to which Baldwin and Nottage construct dialogic theatrical spaces that enable both characters and audiences to engage in a reflective interrogation of injustice to become aware of their complicity in an oppressive system and to envision the possibility of collective liberation. The plays are thus approached not merely as artistic expressions but as acts of pedagogical resistance and vehicles of political engagement. Key scenes are analysed to reveal how characters challenge dominant ideologies, for example, Reverend Meridian Henry's moral awakening in *Blues for Mister Charlie* or the collapse of solidarity in *Sweat*.

This study adopts a comparative analytical approach to examine the thematic and formal convergences and divergences between Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* and Nottage's *Sweat*. Both plays are situated within distinct historical and socio-political contexts. *Blues for Mister Charlie* is a dramatic response to the racial injustice of the Civil Rights era, and Nottage's *Sweat* is a criticism of economic and social disintegration resulting from deindustrialization. This comparison not only reveals the evolution of political theatre across time but also emphasizes the continued relevance of Freirean pedagogy. Both texts affirm Freire's vision of education as a laboratory process using stages as a dialogic space where the audience is prompted to reflect and question dominant ideology and imagine pathways to resistance.

Though the primary focus is on the texts themselves, this study also incorporates a discussion of audience reception, as the plays are designed to provoke self-reflection and moral engagement. Given Freire's belief that education should lead to action, the analysis explores how these plays push audiences to critically engage with contemporary issues. This is achieved through the emotional and intellectual involvement of the audience with the characters' struggles and moral dilemmas. While the study cannot conduct original audience research, secondary sources such as critical reviews, scholarly articles, and audience reactions are used to assess how these works function as "problem-posing" vehicles for social transformation.

Literature Review

Theatre, from time immemorial, has remained a form in which ideas about truth, social justice, and political institutions are challenged. In the late 20th and early 21st century, this has escalated, especially through various forms of verbatim theatre, postmodern dramaturgy and experimental political performance. These forms disobey traditional narrative authority and aesthetics by featuring splintered realities, marginal voices, and bodily documentation. While scholars and practitioners have explored how modern theatre has become a site for truth-making, resistance, and ethical confrontation, the concrete junction between epistemology, form, and spectatorship merits further investigation.

Verbatim Theatre: Taking a Stand through the Staging of the Speech, the Play, and One Singular Night

Verbatim theatre, which consists of working with the verbatim excerpts of words spoken by real people from interviews and transcripts, has provoked critique over questions of authenticity and ethical responsibility. Abdullah and Khalaf (2016) counter that verbatim theatre disrupts the "collectivist cultural logic around objectivity" and that we are shown how even "truthful" re-enactments are steered by curation, selection and performance politics. They stress the necessity of ethical dramaturgy and warn against making human agony into a theatrical plague. Along the same line, Almaarof and Atew (2024) investigate how Anna Deavere Smith's *Fires in the Mirror* echoes racial tension and collective memory through multifocal monologue. They point out that Smith's tactic of verbatim provides for a "riveting performative archive" that produces not a single truth, but polyphonic truth-telling, through the corporality of the body and numbers. The article adds to this debate on the role of theatre not just as a record, but as a site of knowledge contestation.

Despite these contributions, however, relatively few scholars make an explicit connection between verbatim aesthetics and post-truth conditions, a lacuna the present article aims to fill

by examining the way documentary theatre operates at a time when truth itself is a site of ideological instability.

Postmodernism and Theatre Form

More recent scholarship, likewise, has called attention to the ways in which postmodern aesthetics (fragmentation, self-reflexivity and narrative dislocation) reconfigure audience expectations in the area of meaning, coherence and truth. Badie and Abdullah (2023) read Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* as a postmodern effort, suggesting the play's nonlinear narrative and polyphonic texture dismantle essentialising patterns of race, labour and justice. They argue that postmodern dramaturgy disrupts the audience's ideological beliefs, a technique especially effective in an age of polarizing truths.

Likewise, Almaarof (2024) discusses the ways Brecht and Sarah Kane have playfully used the experimental theatre form to disrupt bourgeois formalism and emotional catharsis. In *Mother Courage*, Brecht's alienation effect shoves empathy away in default of critical distance, while the *Blasted* of Kane brings to play aesthetic extremity to "derail the comfort of spectatorship". This comparative approach suggests a wide range of aesthetic procedures deployed by both modernist and postmodernist playwrights in their attempt to shock 'habit', the passive consumption of 'truth', by disrupting the form of the theatre. But while these studies of the inherent power of form to shape ethical engagement are crucial, there is a need to more explicitly join postmodern experimentation to the contemporary modes of political communication and misrepresentation, particularly in the context of the recent growth of populism and post-truth rhetoric globally.

Street Theatre and the Politics of Embodiment

In another important contribution, Almaarof (2023) studies street theatre as a "plea for change," and how it refuses the "agonic reality" of oppression as an institution. He demonstrates how this theatre, with its public sphere and open accessibility, becomes a medium of instant resistance and group mobilization. Street performance, as we've seen, is a disruption of the boundary between artist and audience in the making of a protest in person. Yet, although the former approach effectively confronts spatial politics and performative resistance, it does not venture far in the direction of how such embodied protest might be considered about issues of epistemic authority or truth construction, matters salient in the context of media manipulation and public misinformation.

The intersection of political theatre and critical pedagogy has been explored by numerous scholars who see the stage as a platform for challenging oppression and fostering social consciousness. Rooted in Brecht's epic theatre and Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, political drama seeks to provoke critical reflection rather than passive emotional identification. James Baldwin and Lynn Nottage stand within this tradition, though their approaches to race, class, and care differ based on historical and sociocultural contexts (Gallagher, 2007, p.23).

Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* has received substantial critical attention for its engagement with the Civil Rights Movement and its dramatization of systemic racism in America. As noted by Koritha Mitchell, Baldwin reclaims the stage as a site for black agency and resistance, using theatrical space to confront the white liberal conscience. The play's basis in the murder of Emmett Till provides historical specificity while inviting broader moral introspection. Scholars like Elam argue that Baldwin's theatrical work expands his broader

intellectual project of holding America accountable for its racial transgressions, a project that aligns with Freire's focus on conscientization and transformation through dialogue.

Nottage's play *Sweat*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, examines the effects of economic decline and racialized labour tensions in post-industrial America. Scholars like Savran and Bigsby have situated Nottage's work within a lineage of socially engaged American theatre, highlighting her focus on invisible communities and intersectional injustice. Nottage's portrayal of working-class characters trapped in cycles of precarity reflects Freire's insights into structural oppression and internalized fatalism. Furthermore, as Johnson notes, *Sweat* demonstrates how collective care, memory, and trauma operate within these communities as burdens and potential sources of resistance.

Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed offers a foundational framework for understanding the transformative potential of theatre. His critique of the "banking model" of education and his promotion of dialogical and participatory learning have influenced both theatre practitioners, and theorists. Augusto Boal, directly influenced by Freire, applied these principles to create participatory forms of drama that invite audience members to become "spectators" in their liberation. Scholars like Thompson (2009) have expanded this connection between pedagogy and performance, arguing that political theatre can function as a rehearsal for social justice (Thompson, 2009, p.47).

The politics of care has increasingly become a focal point in literary and performance studies, particularly in analysing how marginalized communities maintain solidarity in the face of structural violence. Tronto (1993) and Fisher and Tronto (1990) outline care as a political and ethical practice rather than a private, feminized concern. Applied to drama, care becomes an act of resistance and survival, especially in plays like *Blues for Mister Charlie* and *Sweat*, where characters forge bonds of care that sustain them against racism, economic loss, and historical trauma. Recent work by Hooks (2000) and Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) emphasizes that care is not apolitical or passive but inherently bound to justice, aligning with Freire's humanizing pedagogy (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 80).

While substantial scholarship exists on Baldwin's racial politics and Nottage's labour critique, few studies have explicitly linked their dramatic works to Freirean pedagogy or the politics of care. This study fills that gap by placing *Blues for Mister Charlie* and *Sweat* in dialogue with Freire's educational philosophy and feminist ethics of care (Canning, 1996, p.189). In doing so, it repositions both plays as participatory pedagogical interventions that challenge oppression not just through critique, but through models of communal responsibility and transformative empathy (Puig, 2000, p.47). Contributing significantly to our understanding of truth, ethics, race, resistance and form in contemporary theatre, these studies do, however, leave much to be done:

Much of the existing literature treats truth as a matter of ethics or politics but fails to connect it with recent philosophical discussions of the instability of truth in the age of the digital and political.

Although several forms have been studied, room remains for that analysis to assess how these forms collectively challenge such truth claims, or potentially reinforce them, in the age of the video-prompted lie and ideological polarization.

Playing truth and watching truth as appear on the aesthetic and epistemic impact of truth claims in theatre at the time of epistemic division Few studies investigate the ways the audience interprets emotionally and critically in the context of a performance the truth claims.

As such, the theatre continues to be a rich site for exploring issues of truth, memory and resistance. The work of academics like Almaarof, Abdullah and their colleagues has greatly enriched our understanding of the processes through which dramatic forms negotiate with political and social actualities. But at a time when the world is struggling with post-truth epistemology, media manipulation, and ideological balkanization, new work will need to explore how theatre not simply purveys truth but is also an active agent in determining the terms under which truth is seen to be, or not be, true. This gap can only be filled if a dramaturgical analysis is combined with an epistemological theory, which this paper will attempt to do.

Analysis and Discussion

James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie*'s central event is the murder of Richard Henry, a Black man, by Lyle Britten, a white store owner, serves as the backdrop for a broader discussion on racism and injustice. The play's structure a courtroom drama reveals the deep divide between the oppressor and the oppressed, a dynamic Baldwin illustrates with profound moral urgency. For instance, Baldwin writes:

"Ain't no such thing as justice in this world... 'cause if there was, your white boy would be hanging from a tree, and my son would be sittin' down at that table." (Baldwin, 1964, act II, Scene 1).

These lines, said by Reverend Meridian Henry, capture the core of Baldwin's criticism of racial injustice. Meridian, who is deeply conflicted about confronting his feelings of powerlessness in the face of systemic oppression, articulates the stark reality of racial inequality in America. The struggle between the yearning for justice and its glaring absence infuses the play, as Baldwin utilizes Meridian's voice to express the anguish of the oppressed and the challenges of finding a moral response to such deep-rooted injustice. Additionally, Baldwin's criticism of white liberalism is portrayed through the character of Parnell James, who shows a defence of his silence and inaction. At one moment, Parnell says: "I don't know what I can do, but I do know that something terrible is happening, and I am not going to be part of it anymore." (Baldwin, 1964, Act II, Scene 1). Parnell's internal struggle illustrates Baldwin's larger theme of complicity and the ethical obligations individuals hold within an oppressive system. Baldwin compels his audience to confront the issue of accountability amid racial violence, urging them to embrace moral responsibility in the quest for justice.

Conversely, Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* is set in the working-class community of Reading, Pennsylvania, the play tells the story of a group of factory workers whose lives disintegrate and fall apart following the shutdown of their factory. The main figures Tracey, Cynthia, and their co-workers are caught in a cycle of economic hardship, identity crisis, and racial tensions. In the opening scene, Nottage introduces the character of Tracey, who is at a bar with her friends. She says:

What we did, what we had, was everything. I had my own job, I had my friends, I had my family. And now? What have we got? Nothing (Nottage, 2015, act II, Scene 3).

This line shows the loss and disconnection experienced by the characters in the wake of their economic downfall. Tracey's expression of grief highlights not only speaks to the loss of source of income but also to the collapse of community and unity. Nottage employs Tracey's experience to criticize the broader social forces, particularly how capitalism fractures working-class communities and manipulates their racial divisions. A significant conflict in *Sweat* centres on Cynthia's promotion to management, which creates a distance between her and her long-time friend Tracey, Tracey faces Cynthia:

You think you're better than me now? You think you got it all figured out? You're just as screwed as the rest of us, just with a bigger paycheck. (Nottage, 2015, Act II, Scene 3).

This confrontation illustrates the fractures in solidarity that can occur when economic hardship forces individuals to make difficult choices. Nottage deftly explores how race and class intersect to complicate personal relationships and social identity, making it clear that systemic oppression is not merely a racial issue, but also a class issue. The conflict between Cynthia and Tracey underscores Nottage's broader critique of how economic systems perpetuate inequality and disrupt personal connections.

In both plays, the characters' struggles are framed by larger socio-political forces. Baldwin's characters are bound by the oppressive structures of racial violence, while Nottage's characters are shaped by the economic forces that dehumanize the working class. Both playwrights use their works for political reflection and moral questioning, challenging the audience to engage with the realities of racial and economic oppression.

Both Baldwin and Nottage construct dramatic worlds where systemic oppression is not only exposed but challenged through the characters' growing awareness and agency. In doing so, their works reflect Freire's belief that the oppressed must first recognize the structures that dehumanize them before they can act to transform those structures (Freire, 2000, p.52).

In *Blues for Mister Charlie*, Baldwin portrays the psychological and spiritual transformation of Richard's father, Meridian Henry, whose journey from pacifism to political clarity aligns with Freire's notion of critical consciousness. Meridian's sermons, once steeped in Christian forgiveness, gradually adopt a language of resistance, suggesting that he has begun to see oppression as structural rather than personal. This transformation mirrors Freire's idea that liberation involves naming the world a process by which individuals reinterpret their social realities and begin to act upon them. The play becomes a form of "laboratory education" for the audience, confronting them with the uncomfortable realities of racial injustice and moral complacency.

In *Sweat*, Nottage similarly uses character arcs to model conscientization. Initially, characters like Tracey and Cynthia are unaware of how global economic forces are shaping their local realities. As the play unfolds, job loss, union breakdown, and racial resentment force characters into moments of confrontation both with each other and the socioeconomic systems that manipulate them. Chris and Jason's eventual incarceration serves as a metaphor for a society that criminalizes the poor while erasing their labour histories. Through these layered conflicts, the play enacts Freirean pedagogy by showing how suffering can catalyse awareness, even if that awareness comes at a great cost.

Both plays utilize theatre's capacity for dialogue not only in the literal sense of characters speaking but in the deeper Freirean sense of engaging in humanizing encounters that reveal the

truth. In *Blues for Mister Charlie*, the courtroom serves as a symbolic and literal site of dialogue. The act of testimony becomes a form of knowledge production, where black voices disrupt the myth of white innocence. Baldwin does not resolve the play with a cathartic justice; instead, he implicates the audience in the continuing cycle of violence and silence, thus transforming spectators into ethical participants in the discourse.

Nottage employs a similar strategy by embedding testimony within working-class banter and barroom conversations. The bar itself functions as a space of memory and storytelling, where characters voice their grievances and histories. This theatrical device transforms the audience into witnesses, positioning them within a pedagogical process described as co-intentional the audience learns with the characters, rather than merely observing them (Freire, 2000, p.52).

This study has explored how James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* and Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* utilize the form of political theatre to not only critique systems of racial and class-based oppression but also to engage their audiences in a process of critical consciousness and reflection, as conceptualized by Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Through an analysis of both plays, this research has demonstrated that they function as both dramatic works and pedagogical tools that invite the audience into a dialogic process of confronting and challenging social injustices.

Baldwin and Nottage use theatre not only to depict the suffering of the oppressed but also to position the audience as participants in the critical examination of power structures. Their plays offer what Freire would describe as "problem-posing education": rather than providing answers, they provoke questions about the moral, economic, and racial inequalities that continue to shape contemporary society. In their works, both playwrights encourage characters and viewers to think carefully about how they either support or fight against unfair systems. Baldwin's honest depiction of racial violence in *Blues for Mister Charlie* and Nottage's detailed look at class and racial divides in *Sweat* examines the complicated nature of oppression. They also stress the important need for unity in the quest for justice.

Both plays' narratives and themes are intricately woven within Freire's dialectic of the oppressor and the oppressed. The murder of Richard Henry and the ensuing judicial drama in Baldwin's play highlights how institutional racism and the systematic devaluing of Black life in the US are widespread. In a similar vein, Nottage's *Sweat* explores how racial and class tensions within working-class communities are made worse by economic loss and deindustrialization. Characters that turn against one another are introduced by both authors, demonstrating how neoliberal systems take advantage of diversity to preserve power. Freire's observation that oppressive institutions depend on internalized beliefs to endure is dramatized by this plunge into divisions. Both playwrights create characters that have their guilt, dread and complicity.

Furthermore, in both plays the politics of care function as a means of resistance and recovery. Care appears as an ethical position in Baldwin's play opposes the dehumanization of Black people, as a moral reaction to systemic racism. Care becomes an emotional and ethical survival in Nottage's *Sweat*, allowing working-class characters to preserve their self-respect in the face of economic catastrophe. In both situations, the politics of caring is an active transformational force that drives characters and audiences to work together for justice and liberation rather than being a passive sentiment.

In the end, the two plays show how audiences may be transformed from passive observers to active participants in social change when political theatre is developed using Freirean pedagogy. Baldwin and Nottage's dialogic setting enables audiences to analyze social structures and recognize how they either support or challenge them. Both plays promote a deeper comprehension of injustice and call for group activities by posing moral questions and showcasing complex characters, establishing political theatre as an essential tool for freedom and education.

This study broadens our knowledge of political theatre as an important cultural practice that not only mirrors social conditions but also enlightens and empowers people to take part in significant change. Baldwin and Nottage's distinct styles serve as excellent examples of how artistic expression may be used to challenge the status quo and encourage critical thinking, ultimately inspiring audiences to join the continuous struggle for equality and social justice.

Conclusion

Through the lenses of political theatre and the politics of care, this study has examined how James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* and Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* exemplify the ideas presented in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Both works use performance as a tool to affect political change in addition to conveying stories. Whether it has to do with race, economics or social structure, they effectively depict the harsh realities of oppression by showing characters going through a process of consciousness that Freire refers to as conscientization. Baldwin and Nottage use their theatrical techniques to create a performance space that encourages participation as an active participant rather than a passive one.

Freire's criticism of "Banking education" and his encouragement of dialogical change are consistent with this. The audiences are invited to watch, question and imagine various scenarios as the stage is transformed into a space for introspection. With this method, political theatre becomes an instructional activity. Crucially, both playwrights incorporate the idea of care into their stories, showing that freedom is not only achieved via conflict but also with solidarity, empathy and moral responsibility.

Importantly, both playwrights weave the theme of care into their narrative, demonstrating that freedom is not merely won through strife, but also through unity, compassion and moral accountability. The obstacles faced by characters represent not only isolated struggles but shared efforts towards empowerment, not individual battles but collective movements toward empowerment, even if the outcomes are unresolved or painful.

In conclusion, *Blues for Mister Charlie* and *Sweat* extend beyond mere artistic representation of pain and inequality; they function as forms of opposition and reclamation of humanity. They mobilize political theatre to encourage critical consciousness, resist dehumanization, and model the possibilities of liberation through care, dialogue, and shared struggle. Within the Freirean framework, these dramas remind us that theatre, when harnessed for justice, can help oppressed communities "name the world" and act to transform it.

Through Richard's character and the diverse responses from the community to his killing, Baldwin creates a Freirean battle in which suffer seek to reclaim their sense of humanity through confrontation, conversation, and moral clarity.

In *Sweat*, Nottage illustrates struggles between social classes and the instability of jobs framed by empathy and human fragility. The individuals caught in the decline of industrial work are not merely powerless victims but people fighting for dignity and self-respect in the face of neoliberal neglect. The play underscores shattered unity, economic displacement, and the scars of trauma passed down through generations, highlighting a caring political stance that emphasizes the necessity of compassion in politics.

Both dramatic pieces explain Freirean concepts of *praxis*, combining thought with actions by encouraging audiences to critically examine systemic inequality and imagine different possibilities. The characters' journeys serve not mere narrative arcs but also pedagogical movements that reveal how consciousness is formed and transformed by oppression and resistance.

Care's political aspects significantly influence both productions by creating interactive environments where audience members are encouraged to not only watch but to reflect, feel, and question. These performances exemplify Freire's notion of education as a liberating journey rooted in empathy and mutual recognition.

Baldwin and Nottage link art with political discourse, transforming theatre into a medium for social engagement. Through engaging narrative with Freirean pedagogy, their works highlight the lived effects of systemic injustice while providing audiences with the means and the emotional language for critical reflection and social transformation.

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