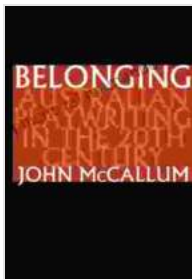


Belonging: Australian Playwriting in the 20th Century

The theme of belonging is central to Australian playwriting of the 20th century. As the nation emerged from its colonial past and sought to define its own identity, playwrights turned to the stage to explore issues of national identity, cultural diversity, and the search for a sense of place in a rapidly changing world.



Belonging: Australian playwriting in the 20th century

by John McCallum

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 511 pages
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Screen Reader : Supported



One of the earliest playwrights to explore the theme of belonging was Louis Esson. In his 1912 play *The Time is Not Yet Ripe*, Esson tells the story of an idealistic young Australian who returns home from England full of hope for the future. However, he soon becomes disillusioned by the complacency and conservatism of his fellow countrymen. In a famous speech, the protagonist declares, "We are a people without a past and without a future. We have no traditions, no ideals, no aspirations. We are just a mob of

sheep." Esson's play was a powerful indictment of Australian society at the time, and it helped to spark a national debate about the country's future.

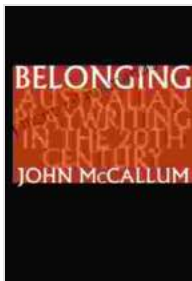
Another playwright who explored the theme of belonging was Katharine Susannah Prichard. In her 1918 play *The Pioneers*, Prichard tells the story of a group of settlers who are struggling to make a new life for themselves in the Australian bush. The play follows the settlers as they face drought, flood, and the constant threat of violence from the Indigenous Australians. Despite the challenges they face, the settlers are determined to build a new home for themselves in Australia. Prichard's play is a powerful tribute to the resilience of the Australian people, and it celebrates the spirit of mateship that has always been a defining characteristic of the nation.

In the second half of the 20th century, Indigenous Australian playwrights began to emerge, and they brought a new perspective to the theme of belonging. One of the most important Indigenous playwrights is Jack Davis. In his 1986 play *No Sugar*, Davis tells the story of an Aboriginal family who is struggling to survive in the modern world. The play follows the family as they face unemployment, racism, and the loss of their traditional culture. Despite the challenges they face, the family is determined to maintain their dignity and their sense of identity. Davis's play is a powerful indictment of the racism that Indigenous Australians have faced, and it is a reminder of the importance of recognizing and celebrating the diversity of Australian society.

The theme of belonging continues to be explored by Australian playwrights today. In her 2001 play *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, Martin McDonagh tells the story of a young Irish terrorist who is struggling to find his place in the world. The play follows the Lieutenant as he travels to London, New York,

and finally back to his home in Ireland. Along the way, he meets a variety of people who challenge his beliefs and force him to confront his own identity. McDonagh's play is a dark comedy that explores the themes of violence, revenge, and the search for a sense of belonging.

Australian playwriting of the 20th century is a rich and diverse body of work that has helped to define the nation's identity. Through their plays, Australian playwrights have explored the complex issues of national identity, cultural diversity, and the search for a sense of place. These plays have helped to shape the way Australians think about themselves and their place in the world, and they continue to inspire and challenge audiences today.



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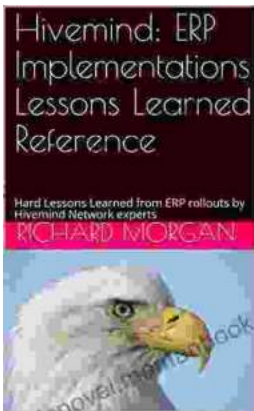
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