

## **Chapter I: Baraka and Racism**

### **1.1. General Introduction: Baraka and Racial Subject**

Race and racism are not new concepts. They have been around us since mankind made its first steps on the planet. It has brought upon violence, submissiveness, cruelty, and sexism. Racism means the unequal power relation between people. It grows out of social, political, ideological and cultural domination of a group of people over others, resulting in well organized discriminatory practices. The adjective 'Racial' during 20<sup>th</sup> century signifies a position that is largely determined by a social behavioral perspective. Among two major perspectives developed during mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, one viewed racism as a primordial given, while the other viewed it as a deliberately constructed. The latter one acknowledges the common black experience constructed historically, culturally and politically which began with the break up of families on the coasts of Africa.

Blacks have always been subjected to subordination, sometimes in terms of the color of their skin and sometimes in the name of inferiority in their cultural patterns. Their voices go unheard in the mainstream politics. Codes of law do not grant them their fundamental rights. Thus they become subject of violence and suppression. In order to be in a position to subdue, one has to be a member of a politically dominant group, which in America means white. This is the reason for the blacks always becoming the victim of discrimination. This compelled the blacks, after concluding that it is impossible to live in the old way any longer, to realize that it is a time for them to revolt. Scholars do not always agree over the fact that change is initiated by those who have found their old ways of life impossible. Instead they try to understand the form and elements of revolutionary forces by drawing a line between revolution and revolt. The former is usually characterized by the use of physical force and material destruction. Whereas revolt is concerned with an individual who raises his voice

against some established authority with an intention that his ideas may change the lives of the many who are forced to live a meager life.

The scholars have also distinguished between many kinds of revolt in accordance to the group of people organized under one umbrella. For example Peasant revolt, Military revolt, Negro revolt is some of its kinds which we often heard. Whatever form they assume they are similar in spirit in a sense that each of them occurs because some felt dissatisfaction with their present condition and hope a better future by changing the established authority. However the revolt of a black is slightly different from all other in a sense that their revolutionary spirit is not directed towards the particular institution of the society but towards the laws and norms which see them as inferior kind of being. The voice the blacks raise is not directed towards the society but towards the societal laws and mores which barred them from equality. They were, in the main, anxious to become Americans, to share in the fruits of the country's economic system and to surrender their history and culture to a universal melting pot. Change lies at the heart of all kind of revolt. A man or community, rebellious in spirit, struggles to bring certain changes in the condition of life they are living. In this sense the literary texts produced by the Afro-American writers always have political dimension in that they have demonstrated a pervasive presence of racial prejudice in the white's canonical writings, have rediscovered marginalized black writings and have sought to confirm black tradition in the writing which is different from that of the white Americans. Such deviated texts which must commit blacks the fact that the earth is their also, is committing to the revolution. Baraka has stressed in his writing that if their art does not contribute to revolutionary change then it should be considered invalid.

Issues of racism have not been so much emphasized until the beginning of the twentieth century. Literary writings in various western languages were the product of the white writers. The change was seen only during the popular movement of 1920s chiefly

known as Harlem Renaissance along which the concept of race makes its entrance in the literary studies. Issues of racial discrimination, one of the most debated issues today, also enters in the literary studies in the same period. The development of racial issues in black writings marks the beginning of revolution in the western representation of Afro-American writings which tries to bring the issues of black suppression to the fore. But the condition of blacks remains same as it has been before.

Centuries have passed, but the blacks in America still feel that the liberation of 1863 could guarantee them security, formal legal freedom and peaceful family life. Baraka's '*Dutchman*' is one among the many voices raised by the blacks against such discriminatory practices prevalent in the American society.

The play, first performed on Off-Broadway in 1964, deals with the evil of contemporary American society. There are two major characters in the play, Clay and Lula. Clay is a young black intellectual of twenty and Lula is a white trampish woman, thirty years of age. The whole action of the play takes place in the New York subway where a young Negro is accosted by a voluptuous white slot Lula. Lula, throughout the play persists in taunting Clay seductively flinging at him the allurements of her sexuality. The action mounts and grows tense when Lula fails to persuade Clay to fall into the trap of her sexuality and continues prodding him in rage. Clay explodes and spews in a long tirade full of anger and hatred towards the whites. The action is carried out by the exchange of dialogue between Clay and Lula. They are engaged in such a fierce conversation that an assumption can be made that even as society has become more aware of the social inequalities imposed on the minorities; much of the society still regarded minorities with utter contempt.

The climax in the final scene portrays Clay preparing to leave the train after finishing his speech. In the meantime Lula plunges the knife into his chest and orders the other passengers in the train to throw the dead body away. The final scene introduces us another

character entering the car and having a seat near Lula whereupon she begins to stare at him in the same way she had begun with Clay. Nathan A. Scott remarks on this aspect:

As the curtain falls it is clear from that the drama is becoming a kind of sinister roundelay that forth the pattern with which Black men are ever and again encountered by the American reality—of seduction and insult and then of destruction, when they dared to offer any resistance. (333)

In this way a black man who dared to resist an American reality of is consumed by racism. Similarly Lula is full of pride being born a swan-skinned. Both of these characters are motivated by their respective social classes. While the one is dominating the other is resisting and opposing. One tries to subdue, the other persists in not to be submissive. However the stronger of the two voices is that of Clay's who fails to understand the white trap set against him. It is through his actions and speeches that the playwright has brought forth the tension charged climate of the early 60s. The remarkable thing about *Dutchman* is that it casts only two characters on the stage. They are from two different races which hint that the conflict between them will be obvious. Lula as a white woman assumes the role of an oppressor, and Clay as a black man is supposed to remain obeyed. He is also flexible in his characteristics that he is easily attracted towards the values of white middle-class. His synthetic and passive role makes him the victim of racism turning him into a revolutionary after he learns that he is not supposed to be a part of the white America. His role as dominated is seen most clearly in his way of adopting himself to situation Lula creates and in the childish simplicity of his manner.

But after Lula refuses to give up her continuous prodding, Clay realizes that he has to tear his naivety apart in order to survive in the hostility of white American society. Now it is Clay who refuses to remain passive and who no longer wants Lula to humiliate him. He expresses his anger against the entire white community by denying giving up himself to the

ideas of Lula. In his opinion only the murder of the white can justify the injuries they have given to the blacks in the name of racial superiority. Whites have proved their superiority over the blacks by putting them into their captivity. They forced the blacks to work for them in the plantations as cheap laborers. White America acclaims that slavery has been already abolished. But the whites are not yet ready to disregard the sense of superiority in terms of the color of their skin. Slavery assumes now form which sees blacks as other and strange. The blacks have to remain, either dominated like their forefathers, or they have to overcome the difficulties which have not allowed them to grow into a man in America. By choosing the latter one Clay proved that at certain time peaceful coexistence becomes simply inappropriate. Too much resistance has festered hatred in him which must be expressed. Thus he expressed all his hatred towards the whites in overt expression filled with rage. By concluding that only murder of whites will secure the black lives in America, he protests against the evil of racism. It is obvious from the conversation between the two that Clay reached this conclusion after tolerating much humiliation and insult.

Although Clay fails to convert Lula into his opinion he is able to sow seeds of rebellion by demonstrating courage to stop a ritual of seduction and destruction game played by white America. Uncle Tom, in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, opposes the white oppression by yielding to the white powers in the name of Christian faith of submission. But Clay in *Dutchman* raises his voice of revolt after passively resisting Lula's abuses. He is not yielding like Uncle Tom. He feels suffocated in white man's America and has no hope of redemption from the Christ, the god of white America. Even the followers of Christ, the passengers, show no interest in what is going on inside the subway car. Lacking any courage to stop Lula or having no interest on the affair between a black man and a white woman, the passengers do not want to find what is going between the two. Instead they dumbly listen to Lula's order to get off the car in the next station. This suggests that, not only Lula, all the whites traveling in

the car are desperately in need of the deepest and most profound values that brotherhood can teach. Clay has hoped that he could come into terms with Lula. That is the reason behind his tolerance of Lula's abuses. But no sooner he learned that he is segregated, tried to be kept apart from the whites and treated as an alien then only he realizes that he has to stand against this oppression even if it threatens his life.

It is the legacy of western rationalism, a legacy of the whites, which has put Lula in a position to subdue a black man. Clay shows his interest towards this legacy in the beginning but when Lula makes remarks regarding the reasons to fear white men, he burst out in rage:

Don't make mistake ... of talking too much about the advantages of Western rationalism, or the great intellectual legacy of the white man, or may be they'll begin to listen. And then ... you'll find they actually do understand exactly what you are talking about, all these fantasy people. (2138)

This critique of Clay over western idea which thinks of white man as superior and black man as his pupil has been a challenge to the ideas he has himself held earlier. He has regarded Lula as his dream with whom he will not hesitate to spend a night together. He knew that she is a Snow White, the fairest among all, who can make him forget his dark history for a few hours. But his mother is not "a social-working mother" (2136). Nor his father is, as told by Lula, "Uncle Tom Big Lip" (2137). If western rationalism has taught a woman to use such expression in the public subway in relation to a man who is as simple and as meek as a cow then the above remarks made by Clay is indeed revolutionary. He no longer thinks that whites are superior to him. Finally he learns that Lula only pretends that she knew everything about the blacks and their blues. In fact she has not even heard about the artists like Bessie Smith. Their own weapons of racism, which they have used in putting themselves in a position to suppress the blacks, are turned against them by Clay because he has understood how whites manipulate them.

## 1.2. Amiri Baraka: His Life and Work

Born Everett Leroi Jones in Newark, New Jersey, Baraka grew up in a family of distinctly middle-class aspirations. His father, a postman and lift operator and his mother, a housewife, encourages him to express himself through art and music. He studied at Rutgers University after winning a scholarship in 1951, but he was transferred to Howard University, a traditionally black college, in 1952 after undergoing severe sense of cultural dislocation. He left it too without a degree. Then he moved to Columbia in New York and earned an M.A in German literature. However he benefited greatly from his years at Howard. He studied philosophy, religion and literature, and was exposed to the ideas of prominent black poets, music critics, and scholars. He was provided a strong background in European classics as well as Black American culture by several of his teachers.

When he left Howard in 1954 without completing his Bachelor's degree, he returned to Newark and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. He served in Puerto Rico and Germany as a gunner. It was in his years in the Air Force where he got his real education. He had also a career as a librarian while he was at Puerto Rico, a place which turned into an informal meeting place where Baraka with several others would read and discuss various books from Proust to Hardy to Kafka. At this time he was also engaged in writing poetry for several magazines like *The New Yorker* and *Kenyon Review*. Three years later after being dismissed from the Air Force, accused of having kept too many books, particularly for having '*Communist Manifesto*', he returned to civilian life.

At this time the social and artistic phenomena popularly known as Harlem Renaissance, was stirring the minds of American intelligentsia. The Beats were renowned for their harsh criticism of the established literary tradition and rigid moral code of the country. However Baraka refused to go with them further realizing that they were the fellow outsiders. But both Baraka and Beat Generation writers shared a common ideal, either to cast their hook

beyond, or to look above, the racial barriers. In an interview with David Ossman Baraka explained:

I'm fully conscious all the time that I'm an American Negro, because it's part of my life. But I also know that if I want to say, 'I see a bus full of people, I don't have to say, I'm Negro seeing a bus full of people,' I deal with it when it has to do directly ... and not as a kind of broad generalization that doesn't have much to do with a lot of young writers today who are Negroes. (7)

Baraka, during this period, is struggling to create an identity as a black artist. The basic question which a black artist has to encounter is related with the kind of recognition he wanted of himself and the interest served by that recognition. He has always that consciousness of being a black which affects his description of the things. It also affects the way he perceives the things. Baraka is wrestling to overcome this problem during his stay at Greenwich Village where he married Hettie Cohen, a young Jewish woman with similar tastes in music and literature, after he resided in Greenwich Village. Cohen worked for Partisan Review where Baraka's first work appeared in 1958. His first published piece was a defense of the innovation of Beat writing where he formed an opinion that the young writers should commit themselves to violence. Baraka and Cohen ran a literary magazine 'Yugen' where new poets are given privileges. He used to write to Ginsberg on toilet paper offering poems and keep up running his magazine, and in short span of time, become renowned in Greenwich Village by his association with Ginsberg and by the editorship of 'Yugen'

However he moved away from the Beat's influence because he dislikes their neglect of politics. They only comments on the system and their lack of having any agenda to change it drifted him away from the Beat Generation. He changed himself to a revolutionary playwright in the mid-sixties assuming the new name of Ameer Baraka in 1968. Again in 1974, he dropped the title Immou, which he had assumed in 1968, signaling another change



in his cultural and political complexion. Later his visit to Cuba brought him in close association with the ideas of communism. The leftist artists encouraged him to abandon the Beat preoccupation with soul and opened his eyes to the social problems in more aggressive fashion. This visit aroused in him a new sense of identification towards the struggle of the artists of the Third World Countries. James Miller remarks on this shift:

Abandoning his emphasis on Black cultural nationalism and Pan-Africanism, Baraka proclaimed himself an adherent of Marxist- Leninist-Maoist thought. As in the case of his decision to depart from Greenwich Village, this transformation was neither abrupt nor dramatic; it, the culmination of a series of developments within his own life, shaped by his responses to both national and international struggle. (20)

Baraka entered the Black theatre scene in 1960s with his *Dutchman* (1964), which is hailed as the best play in America. It appeared on the eve of the widespread racial conflict in the United States with its harsh social and political overtones. Miller further writes:

An avowed communist, Baraka who is a member of the Revolutionary Communist League and the Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union, now emphasizes a Marxist analysis of the forces shaping American society and the Black Community. (20)

Commenting on his influence on American literature and politics, Richard Barksdale and Kenneth Kinnaman writes:

Both through his writing and his moral example, Amiri Baraka has exerted on incalculable influence on a white generation of young black writers. From Beat poet to a racial polemicist to cultural spokesman of Black Nationalism, his career has followed logic of development related to internal changes in

American Society ... It is not too much to say that Baraka has established the tone and pointed the direction for the most Black writings of the 1970s. (745)

Baraka's emergence as a revolutionary playwright can be traced to the influence of Maulana Ron Karenga and Malcolm X. According to Charles D. Peavey, Maulana Ron Karenga, America's chief exponent of black cultural nationalism, has consistently stressed the importance of a Cultural Revolution preceding any attempt at revolutionary social change. So the battles the blacks are waging are more of minds the loss of which can take them far away from their freedom. The Black Arts Movement in the early 1960s is such a revolutionary event. The works of Baraka is to be understood in this context. Before any significant social transformation in the condition of the blacks, a change in their consciousness is needed. Baraka clearly realized this and used his plays as a vehicle to achieve such a change. Seeing the widespread racism in America Baraka came to believe that every black person needs to get rid of the obstacles standing against his aspirations for freedom which include Christianity, falling prey to the illusory dreams offered by America, repression of self-identity as a black man and lack of racial unity. The blacks, must understand that black power, through racial solidarity, must be the goal of every black man to achieve the higher objective of liberation of black people. Baraka's first attempt towards this objective was his *The Eighth Ditch*. James Miller remark, on the move about his career, in context to *The Eighth Ditch*, is very pertinent.

An early dramatic experiment is more an exploration of states of consciousness than a full fledged play. Nevertheless in its exploration of the theme of the divided self and its use of the blues as a recurring motif, *The Eighth Ditch* anticipates the direction Jones's dramatic work would take in the future. (11)

His next work *The Baptism*, produced in 1964, deals with the chance encounter of a fifteen-year-old boy is a homosexual with a hypocritical minister in a well-to-do arrogant Proletariat church. Indebted to the works of a French playwright Jean Genet and Artaud's theatre of the absurd, the play excoriates Christianity for its hypocrisy, commercialism and sexual repression.

His next play *The Toilet*, produced in the same year, is more specific and coherent than *The Baptism*. In this play violence of the blacks is pitted against the social codes of the community. Set in a toilet, the play focuses on a gang of black youths and fight between their leaders. Although the play depicts the conflict between the black and the white communities, critics have noted the continuance of the ambivalence in Baraka's mind in *The Toilet*. James Miller thinks: "The central conflict of *The Toilet*, however, rests within the divided consciousness of the protagonist. Torn between his identity as Foots the Black gang leader, and Ray, the sensitive individual, the protagonist of *The Toilet* seemed to mirror the conflict within Jones himself" (15).

At the same time, as Owen E. Brady states that "*The Toilet* is a realistic play which examines the interaction of the Black and White cultures in America ... It shows the difficulty that a Black individual encounters in forging a self-identity while living amidst antithetical cultural forces" (69). Baraka exemplifies the need of the black and the white unity in *The Slave*. In this play the protagonist, Walker Vessels, is not a victim of white forces but a nationalistic hero. "Walker vessels in *The Slave*," Larry Neal observes in *Black Arts Movement*, "is Clay reincarnated as the revolutionary confronting problems inherited from his contact with White culture" (34).

In his next play, *Jello*, Jones gives his protagonist a stronger character to cope with the exigencies of his situation. Jones published *Slave Ship* in 1967. In this play he presents scenes of more immediate confrontation with history by giving exact details of the details of

the middle passage. Lacking any coherence in plot, *Slave Ship* is filled with groans, screams and souls wailing for freedom and relief from the suffering. It successfully captures the whole panorama of slavery. In his *Four Revolutionary Plays* (1969), Baraka expresses his strong revulsion against the whites and white-oriented blacks. The first in the collection, *Experimental Death Unit # 1*, is about the destruction of two white men while copulating with a black woman. In the second play, *A Black Mass*, Baraka picks up Islamic myth where Yacuba, a black scientist, produced a raving white beast who is condemned to the coldest regions of the North. Larry Neal hailed *Black Mass*, in her work *The Black Arts Movement*, as “A deeply weighted play, a colloquy on the nature of man, and the relationship between legitimate spiritual knowledge and scientific knowledge” (36). This play, like the *Slave Ship*, proposes a message of the urgency of shedding off whatever evil influence the whites have on the psyche of the blacks. At this time Baraka, lured by his cultural belongingness, is trying to capture and stress the importance of African cultural roots as the maker of racial solidarity. Influenced by Islamic thoughts of progression he considers nation of Islam as an alternative to the white world. In an interview with Mervin X and Faruk, Baraka says:

I guess, Islam first influenced me through brother Malcolm, Haji Malik, because he was the first black man I associated Islam with progressive social thinking. The idea that Islam was being connected with progressive thought and black nationalistic thinking was about 1964 when I first began reading and thinking about it. The next year I wrote *Black Mass*, based on the nation of Islam’s telling of the story of Yacub, the nation of Islam’s theology that seemed to me to be a vehicle for the expression of truth on many levels about man, spiritual man’s subjugation by anti-spiritual forces. (51)

Baraka’s commitment to his community is strengthened as he looks back into the black history and realizes the significance of black music as a source of strength for the

community. It is around this time that he came to realize the importance of combining music with the oral tradition of performance. His next play *Great Goodness of Life* parodies the nineteenth century American black minstrel show which was created by whites to ridicule the black lifestyle. In the final play, *Madheart*, of the *Four Revolutionary Plays*, he once again uses satire as a means of expressing his antagonism towards the white racists. What is remarkable about Baraka is that he does not merely preach like his Beat contemporaries but he is also a staunch practitioner of what he preaches.

### **1.3. Baraka's Style: Racial Experience**

Baraka employed black idiom and phrases, obscene and black colloquial language as affected by excessive exposure to the technological novelties surrounding his characters. His characters often communicate in a jargon. For example in *Home on the Range* the communication between a father and a mother is supposed to be understood only by the members of the family. In response to the father's inquisitive words, "Red hus beat the trim, doing going," the mother simply answers "Yah, de 89 red garter shooting" (107).

The protagonist of the play is a black criminal who could not understand the language used by the members of the family he enters to theft. In exhaustion he simply screams, "All I did ... (throwing up his hands) ... was go out and look for a job ... like all them cats in the newspaper say niggers ought to ... and what do I run into ... a goddamn funny farm" (107). The members of the family only imitate what is shown in television, "wiggling and shaking, slapping each other and grabbing themselves in a frenzy of wicked merriment" (107). The white family's verbal communication is characterized by an incoherent mixture of familiar words and phrases and technologically motivated, specialized vocabulary. The result is a complete destruction of the traditional pattern, so unique and fresh in its use that it cannot be understood except by the three members of the family.

Baraka compensates this communication gap in *Experimental Death Unit # 1* with enough familiar images of black life to make his black audience receptive to the play's ulterior message about black consciousness. Another remarkable feature he uses in *Experimental Death Unit # 1* is violence. But in his autobiographical play *The Slave* (1964), he tried to justify the use of guns. Regarding his use of violence as a symbolic means Helen Johnson, author of *Black Influences in the American Theatre* offers the following explanation of Baraka's employment of graphic scene:

Although Jones speaks of murder with great frequency, it is clearly symbolic murder. He says specifically: we've got to change America as we know it now. He does talk of killing people, and there is symbolic bloodletting to which he returns again and again, as the title *Experimental Death Unit # 1* suggests. (706)

Baraka's works achieved grandeur due to his novelty in the employment of his experience in a completely unique way. The strategy Baraka employed in achieving this is labeled by William J. Harris as "Jazzification":

A process involving the playwright's search for and manipulation of the implicit blackness in whatever white mode he is transforming. His radical techniques are infused with an ethnic world view that takes images, poetic techniques, and avant-garde attitudes that are "pure white" and transforms them into a new and distinctly black vision that simultaneously rejects and accepts some of the most sophisticated and radical of his white predecessors' ideas.(91)

He also rejects the dominant style of writing and creates a unique black style. He simply regards form and content to be a basic a western dualism. As far as the African and African-American traditions go, one does not only have form and content, but also have style.

Sometimes Baraka's choice of words does not assume any relationship with the thought he has in his mind. He seems to understand the lines, the words, but he does not really understand what he was really saying.

Though the irrelevance of the thought and action is prominent in his works they manipulate the meaning that is as lively as spoken lines and as spontaneous as a meaningful chain of spontaneous imagination. He says in an interview with Salaam, Kalamu Ya:

I still believe this-I shouldn't write fiction and I shouldn't write plays, unless they are a form of poetry. That's my view... I mean that's the only way I think of writing. I would not think of writing a play or a piece of fiction unless it was poetic in the sense of investing the same kind of attention to the lines, and the rhythm, and the imagery. (99)

He also uses the rhythms of music, and turns them into a sound as lively and fresh as the language of conversation:

All that stretching and bending of words, and different voice, and emotional kinds of uses of vowels, and songs in the middle of talking-that's got to do with a living kind of life style, not the written text that is referenced in dictionaries. You can't find that in thesauruses and stuff. That has to do with Black thought. Black music. Black lifestyle. (13)

What he is trying to do is that he just tried to make an onomatopoeic representation, an approach of prioritizing of rhythm in his style of writing. For this, he first hears what his characters would sound like and then, as he himself reveals in an interview with Salaam:

I am hearing it as I write it down and hearing that sound leads me to what words to choose. Those are the words. When I hear them they are saying words. I've just got to try to figure out what those words are. The thing is to transfer them to the page, the translation of rhythms. (13)

Such lyrical quality is prominent in his poetry and drama, but it is also the quality that is dominant in his prose also. In the same interview with Salaam he says, “I don’t think you can write prose unless you’ve got a rhythmic understanding of language, a feeling” (107). Baraka urged other writers to free themselves from traditional forms and metrical patterns, which he himself does by enjoying open form. He advised the other writers to rediscover the real rhyme of speech and thought and the capacity for immediate perception of the surrounding world. His own works, as he writes in *How you Sound??*, are constructed with high energy:

My POETRY is whatever I think I am ... There cannot be anything I must fit the poem into. Everything must be made to fit into the poem. There must not be any preconceived notion or design for what the poem ought to be. “Who knows what a poem ought to be. Sound like? Until it’s thar.” Says Charles Olson and I follow with that. (324-35)

In conclusion one can say, without any doubt, that one is likely to discover in his chaotic syntax such a manipulation of words that they are, although printed, becoming a radical political act. The incomplete sentence, broken phrases, pauses in the conversation and the black colloquial rhythm, are devices which aptly reflects everyday life of the blacks.

#### **1.4. Baraka’s themes in his Works**

Baraka’s writings cover such a wide ranges of literary genre that particularizing him would simply turn to be a mere folly. As he is captivating in drama, he is equally artistic in poetry and fiction. As a critic of white American society, and political activist, he advocates for the rights and equality of Afro-Americans. His works range from Realism to the celebration of the cultural aspects of Black Nationalism, from communism to the third world Marxism. However the common theme that recurs in all of his works and binds them together is the aggression towards the whites for their foul treatment of the fellow black men. His



works also advocates change, not only in the attitudes of the white towards the blacks but also for the change in the attitudes and consciousness of the blacks themselves. The chief characteristic of Jone's drama is its total hatred of the White world, and the object of his plays is either to change this world, if possible, or destroy it.

His *Dutchman* is a great achievement of the representation of the relationship of races in America during 60s. It mainly focuses on the black-white relationship where due to the stereotypical representation of the blacks, their assimilation with the whites has become impossible. So the only way out is the rejection of the white values.

This separatist echo sounds more audible in his *Experimental Death Unit # 1*, where a black prostitute, who shares her body with her two white customers, is yet unable to have any intimacy in their relationship. She only urges her intoxicated white intellectuals, Duff and Loco to give her some money and lay her down. This shows the impossibility of confrontation between the blacks and the whites.

Baraka uses satire as a means of illustrating his growing internal conflict as he tries to shed the decadence of Beat lifestyle. Satire, in the tradition of both Juvenal and Horace, is one of the important devices employed by contemporary African-American playwrights. It was used both against the whites as well as the blacks. But it was, for the most of the time, employed against the follies and foibles of the blacks. Many of the artists in the Black Theatre developed by the Black Arts Movements speak directly to the black audiences. As Larry Neal remarks, "In drama, LeRoi Jones represents the most advanced aspects of the movement. He is its prime mover and chief designer" (29). Satire also marks and solidify his own personal philosophical transitions, ridicule, if not completely raze certain targets that are detrimental to the cause of liberation. Walker, in *The Slave* is another ridiculous portrait of himself as a drunken revolutionary. Nilgun Anadolu-Okur posits that, "The Slave is the projection of the conflict in *Dutchman* from an integrationist perspective to what Baraka perceives as its resolution" (114).

Blacks live in isolation and confusion in America, devoid of purpose and existence. This is what Walker realizes bitterly in the prologue that they live their lives seeking nothing but a way to end their agonizing struggle between their attachment to the white past and the emerging black present. But Walker is unable to learn that it is impossible to move forward until history is either recreated or comprehended. His only salvation lies in confronting the physical and psychological forces that have made him and his people powerless. In the period between the writing of poems collected in *Preface* and *The Dead Lecturer* (1964), he was struggling hard to move away from the decadence of Beat lifestyle. Floyd Gaffney comments thus on this painful transition:

The developing consciousness of being Black appears effectively in his works only after he dissociates himself from the strong influence of the beat poets. The slow and penetrating assessment of self by which he achieved a Black identification is strongly expressed in the poetry of *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note ... The dead Lecturer* (1964), and *Black Magic* (1969). (38)

Apart from turning away from the bohemian life of the Greenwich Village, he began experimenting with various literary themes that would suit his objective of cultural nationalism. Later his visit to Cuba centered him on writings that were socially committing. He invented The Black Arts Theatre, a special kind of theatre designed to achieve his purpose. This also served as a medium of cultural expression. Bailey writes, “Plays such as *The Toilet*, *Great Goodness of Life*, *Baptism* and *Madheart*, told off, threatened, condemned, accused and hurled righteous invectives of the System for past and present injustices inflicted on Black people” (19). Such racial injustices and theme of divided self is also clearly included in “An Agony. As Now,” a poem included in *Preface to a Twenty-Volume Suicide Note* (1961).

Regarding the themes of his writing James Miller’s remark on *The Eighth Ditch* is very pertinent, “ Nevertheless, in its use of the blues as a recurring motif, *The Eighth Ditch* anticipates the direction Jones’ dramatic work would take in the future” (11).

Baraka continues the theme of a growing adolescent Black's struggle to come to terms with the world in his next plays, *The Baptism* (1964) and *The Toilet* (1964). John Miller's further comments on *The Toilet* is noteworthy, "to the extent *The Toilet* embodies a social statement, it indicts the brutal society—symbolized by the gang—that will not allow love to exist" (15). The theme of impossibility of love in a society of racial hatred is clearly shown in *The Toilet*. Miller further observes that:

The central conflict of *The Toilet*, however, rests within the divided consciousness of the protagonist. Torn between his identity as Fouts and the Black gang leader, and Ray, the sensitive individual, the protagonist of *The Toilet* seemed to mirror the conflict within Jones himself (15).

Thus the main theme of Baraka, almost in all of his writings, is the difficulty that a black individual encounters in forging a self-identity while living amidst antithetical cultural forces.

## Chapter : The Emergence and Issues of Baraka's Revolutionary Theatre

### 2.1 Racial Issues in *Dutchman*

In postcolonial studies ideas of racism grew from a sense of solidarity against oppression which is found to be deeply rooted in skin color and slavery, poverty and equality. Racism also refers to the belief in racial superiority, inferiority and the concept of purity which, physical characteristics, is purely biological property that determine the characteristics of the people. Although the differentiation, based on the concept of superiority and inferiority, is not included in the term itself, it is also used to designate the inequality in relation to the power which a group of people exercise over the other giving rise to systematic discriminatory practices like segregation, domination and suppression. This systematic practice of racial discrimination occurs when racism has become completely institutionalized or when the policies relating racism are incorporated in the institutions by which society operates. The promotion of racial discrimination by institutionalized racism is often mirrored in a society's racist stereotypes which have forced the people of color to believe in white superiority. It has made victims, which in America means blacks, who generally feel inferior to the whites, less worthwhile, less capable, and less attractive and made them often wish that they were white or looked more like them. We see this phenomena clearly illustrated in Amiri Baraka's play *Dutchman*, where a black youth Clay is attracted towards a white woman Lula, finds her superior to him and regards her his Eve. He believes that her possession of the knowledge of blacks, her cunning attitude, and the color of her skin make her superior to him. Such assumptions are sufficient to make Clay internalize and accept whites' racist belief. He openly consents her superiority over him in the following exchange of dialogue even when Lula is only pretending to be telling the truth:

CLAY: How'd you know all that? Really, I mean about Jersey ... and even the beard. I met you before? You know Warren Enright?

LULA: You tried to make it with your sister when you are ten.

CLAY: What're you talking about? Warren tell you that? You're a friend of Georgias's?

LULA: I told you I lie. I don't know your sister. I don't know Warren Enright.  
(2128)

This is how she manages to keep her superiority over Clay. Although she knew nothing about Georgia and Warren Enright she makes supposition regarding them and which, according to her opinion, must be correct. She only makes random guess:

CLAY: You mean you're just picking these things out of the air?

LULA: Is Warren Enright ...

CLAY: I figured you knew him.

LULA: but I don't. I just figured you would know somebody like that. (2128)

In this way Clay is made to feel that Lula possesses every kind of knowledge concerning not only about him but she also knew everything about his friends and family. Clay does not know in the beginning that one can make a general remark about his grandfather being a slave in the plantation. But he is surprised on Lula's knowing about the history of his grandfather too. His beard, his suit, his grandfather, mother and his sister, his way of life are the few things which Lula comments with bitter contempt. She does this only because she belongs to a politically dominant group. Although blacks can boast of their long impressive history dating back to the time of Industrial Revolution, white Americans do not consider them as a part and parcel of American history simply because of their color of skin. A black man like Clay, experiencing double consciousness, is always aware of his belonging to a black culture which grows from his African roots and of the European culture imposed by the white America. For a black this means having one cultural self at home and another in

white dominated public sphere. Either he has to be one of the members of a group which has oppressed the blacks for centuries or he has to remain one of the suppressed.

The protagonist of *Dutchman* finds himself in such a situation where any easy decision seems impossible. He naturally gets attracted towards Lula because she is white and beautiful. But he cannot hope of reconciliation with her because of her exhibition of hatred towards the blacks. She is one of the knots in the long chain of the history of racial discrimination which cannot be undone easily. So tools and techniques provided by racism would be more appropriate to examine the text like *Dutchman*, a play written by a black artist in order to raise the consciousness of his black folks towards the evil of racism. Racism allows us to question the appropriateness of white critical theories for the interpretation of the texts written by the blacks. It brings into fore the issues responsible in marginalizing the blacks as an inferior race of people. Racism charges every black writer with an obligation to raise the consciousness of the blacks by depicting the evils of racism. Racism does this, as stated by Lois Tyson in his *Critical Theory Today*, “by providing positive images of African-Americans, and offering possible solutions to social problems confronting the black community” (356).

Taken such circumstances into focus it is appropriate to analyze the text with the tools and techniques provided by racism where a group or individual assume a dominant position with certain characteristics found to be lacking in his opponents. Racism does not regard whites as superior and fair as beautiful. It does not also regard whites as intelligent by birth and refuses to consider blacks as an inferior class of people.

Lula in the play tries to show herself superior to her black opponent Clay. She uses every possible means and uses expressions in order to prove that as a fair complexioned woman she has every right to make Clay whatever she wants. Thus she is preoccupied with a false pride because she has inherited certain qualities which, in her opinion, are superior in

comparison to the characteristics inherited and acquired by Clay. When Clay comes to believe that his identity has been feigned by his readiness to give himself up to the tastes of Lula and hence is damaging the entire black race, Lula plunges a knife into his chest to maintain her superiority. First she tries to prove her superiority by putting him into a situation where he would consent his inferiority as right. When she fails to do this she tries to prove it by violence. If violence is justifiable on her part then there is not any doubt of its being valid on the part of Clay. Lula pretends her superiority by using it while Clay expresses it in order to secure the back existence in white American society. Lula simply takes it as a means of proving her superiority over the blacks whereas racism, of any kind, is a threat to the existence of Clay. So Clay is determined not to surrender before any form of racism. Although he seems to be violent in his opinion, his cry for liberation from century's long discrimination is, no doubt, revolting.

## **2.2. *Dutchman* as a revolutionary Play**

It is not only violence and murder, particularly the murder of Clay, which makes *Dutchman* a revolutionary play. The play's appeal for change in the situation of Negroes, its exposure of the black people's condition in the American society, its attack to the society which has institutionalized racism, its turning up of dreams into reality and its deceitful and furious language put into the mouth of the characters, all contribute to make *Dutchman* a revolutionary play.

Negroes in America were first brought as slaves. But their condition is still worse although America claims itself to be a leading democratic nation of the world. Emancipation from slavery alone could not guarantee Negroes their peaceful existence in America. Negroes are not safe anywhere in America. How worst the condition of Negroes in America is clear from the actions we witness inside the subway car where Clay, a black youth is abused and murdered by a white woman. Some critics say that Lula's actions represent actions of white

America. But Baraka denies this. For him Lula does not represent white people as thought by some of the critics. Instead she is the American Manhood-black or white-is not wanted in Amerifa. If it is difficult for whites to become a man in America then Baraka's *Dutchman* highlights the impossibility for blacks to grow into a man in American society, with radical solution of the problem. The play's ulterior message does not end here. The play forces the Negroes to think over and evaluate their situation and encourages them to search a remedy to end the discrimination. The play is radical also in a sense that it draws on mythical elements such as ironic inversions of biblical imagery and archetypal white seductress recurrent in African-American literature. At various point Clay, a black Negro, is identified with Adam eating apples from a white woman Lula. While Lula is associated with Eve whose offering an apple to Clay symbolizes destruction and misery evoked on the blacks by the whites. Clay's eating of an apple offered by Lula is suggestive of the disaster that would likely to befall on every black man.

Baraka sets the play aside from the mainstream literature produced by the whites. The objective of such inversion is to shock and stun the white audience and satirize relentlessly the blacks who no longer work towards creating society free of discrimination. Because Baraka thinks Christianity allows black people to be slaves by emasculating them, he wants to recover the lost power of the blacks. In Austen Clarke's *An Interview with LeRoi Jones*, Baraka says:

Christianity allows the Black man to have certain amount of liberation. You can get happy in the church. They let you sceram in the church. They think all these niggers are going to be sitting up and screaming Hallelujah and what not and then they are going to head back and start eating that pig and drinking that wine and working for the man.(39)



American society, on the one hand, promises equality to everyone. But on the other hand it remains silent on the discrimination practices exercised by the whites. In such a situation black playwrights like Baraka can not remain silent and let their fellow crushed by the evil of racism. Their work must teach their audience that this must be put to an end.

Bailey, in his *A Look at the Contemporary Black Theatre Movement*, says:

Like other playwrights of the period, Baraka in *Dutchman* strives to tell the whole truth about people of whom he writes, dealing with their strengths as well as their weaknesses...to help people better understand both the world around them and the world of the past. (21)

What Baraka attempts to expose in *Dutchman* is the problem the African-Americans are facing in white American society which has institutionalized racism. Racism has caused much sorrow in the lives of many African Americans. Blacks like Clay are made to feel that there is no places of serenity. White men, represented by Lula, make them feel uncomfortable and insecure in America. And the white American society, represented by the passengers in the subway, makes them feel the same way. White individual like Lula treats a black man like Clay with utter affectations, upon which the passengers ought to feel ashamed. But they show on interest to stop Lula. They remain a patient observer of the murder. Clay's outburst against the white American society can be seen as an attack against the society that has institutionalized racism. Clay uttered in rage, "Now shut up and let me talk," with a hard slap across the mouth of Lula in response to her command to "Get up and scream over these people like scream meaningless shit it these hopeless faces" (2137). Never a black man has dared to slap in the face of a white girl in his full consciousness as Clay did. His order given to Lula can be taken as symbolic of the order given to all white America. The whites have done much to suppress the blacks whenever they tried to raise their voice. They have been arrested, tried and executed mercilessly. But Clay demands that now it is the time for the

blacks to speak and whites have to remain silent and listen attentively. The only solution to end this veil of racism, according to Clay, is “Murder. Just murder!” Which “would make us all sane”(2138).

As a play of Revolutionary Theater *Dutchman* also shattered representations of spoken language and carefully orchestrated theatrical action. Baraka directed his fury against the society which was in a state of enjoying by doing just the opposite of what was promised never to be done. His use of dialogue where nothing is what it seems unless spoken by Clay is an example of his protest that resonates elsewhere in the speeches uttered by Clay in response to Lula’s abusive words. This also shows his rage against the society that suppresses the voice of the minority. This furious speeches put in the mouth of Clay expresses more truth about the minds of black America in a nutshell than countless books on interracial relations have portrayed.

The plays featured in the theater of white America are escapist, refusing to confront concrete reality about the problems they have to confront. They present Negroes acting out the hang-ups of middle-class white America. The plays from black America, unlike the plays by white playwrights, refuse to see the world as it is. In *Dutchman*, by ignoring to give up himself to Lula, Clay digs out truth of himself, the truth of being a black man in America. His misfortune lies in telling the truth about the things as he really sees them, but only to be murdered by Lula. Clay remarks in a bold voice:

I mean if I murdered you, then other white people would understand me. You understand? No. I guess not. If Bessie Smith had killed some white people she wouldn’t needed that music. She could have talked very straight and plain about the world. Just straight two and two makes four. Money. Power. Luxury. Like that. All of them. Crazy niggers turning their back on sanity. (2138)

But Clay is late in learning what he has spoken in words than Lula, who is clever enough to be the first to strike. Baraka also attempts to show in *Dutchman* that blacks were first approached by the white Americans as an object of love. Their objectives get accomplished; the same man is looked upon by hatred. In the beginning, Clay has no knowledge about the hardships of being a black man in America. It was only after he realizes that he is a Nigger and threatens the existence of Lula by making a courageous remark that the whites ought to be murdered to secure the existence of the blacks. A docile negro who does not recognize himself in the beginning, refuses to be a part of the white man's idea of the world, turns into a rebel and then silenced before taking a breathe in the world free of racial discrimination.

Baraka sets his play in contemporary time and in contemporary place-the subway where such encounters are prominent. He sets the scene with a man sitting near the window of a subway car, holding a magazine, where dim and flickering lights dance and darkness whistle by against the glass window to his right. The portrayal of a simple black youth murdered by the white woman evokes hatred towards the whites in one's mind. *Dutchman* is revolutionary also in a sense that for the first time somebody has focused on the need of communal bonding between the blacks as a way of creating a defense against white oppression.

### **2.3. Purpose of the Revolutionary Theatre**

The theatre developed by Baraka is considered a radical alternative to the sterility of the American theatre. Through his theatre he fights against many forces, which stemmed from both the psychological complexes of the black people, from agents acting from outside and from divisive internal forces. The first and foremost purpose of his theatre is to raise the consciousness of the black people about their history steeped in suffering and deprivation. As an appropriate medium for articulating the Black Revolutionary temper he turned from poetry

to drama, by which warn the black audiences who were either slipped into amnesia or were too weak to fight more appropriately. His theatre is a means of expression of his strong revulsion against the whites and white-oriented blacks. As a way of creating racial solidarity his theatre also proposes a message of the urgency of shedding off whatever evil influences the whites have on black psyche. In his essay *The Black Revolutionary Theatre* Baraka outlines the kinds of changes to which a Revolutionary Theatre is committed:

It should be change (All the faces turned into the lights and you work on them black nigger magic, and cleanse them at having seen the ugliness. And if the beautiful see themselves, they will love themselves.) We are preaching virtue again, but by that to mean NOW, toward what seems the most constructive use of the word. (1965)

The theatre of Baraka is primarily the theatre of the spirit, confronting the black man in his interaction with his brothers and the white thing. Larry Neal writes in her *Black Arts Movement*:

Our theatre will show victims so that their brothers in the audience will be better able to understand that they are the brothers of victims, and what we show must cause the blood to rush, so that prerevolutionary temperaments will be bathed in this blood. We will scream and cry, murder, run, through the streets in agony, if it means some soul will be moved, moved to actual life understanding of what the world is, and what it ought to be. We are preaching virtue and feeling, through our drama, and natural sense of the self on the world. All men live in the world, and the world ought to be a place for them to live. (1965)

This is how Neal has outlined the purpose of the theatre of the blacks. And the Baraka's dramas are no exception. His plays are directed at the problems the black America

has suffered. His plays are meant to shed light on the consciousness of his black audience about the injustice they are facing with. Eugene Nesmith, professor of theatre and English at the City College of New York, clearly articulates in his essay *What's Race Got to Do With it?*, the nature of Baraka's efforts:

I am suggesting that, on the one, African Americans need to consider sacrificing their sometimes pursuit and exclusion on any notion of an Afrocentric theatre. On the other hand, whites need to consider giving up the conviction that American theatre should be exclusively or even predominantly white, Eurocentric and male. (14)

With a task of revealing the black man's presence in America his plays proposed the idea that blacks, though in minority, constitutes a nation within the belly of white America. Black art has always been functional, collective and committing. With these three ideas are tied the advocacy for change, comprises the idea of unison and has purposive quality. If change is at the heart of revolutionary theatre then, "the real function of art is to make revolution," (1974) says Maulana Karenga in his essay *Black Art: Mute Matter Given Force and Function*. The collective purpose assumes that whatever is produced by the writer must be about and for the people in a form more real than the real one itself. The third purpose assumes that there is no deliverance from the suffering unless the blood is spilled. It requires spirit which is prepared "*rather to die freeman than live to be the slaves*" (Garnet 283).

Baraka himself outlines the purpose of his theatre in his essay *The Revolutionary Theatre*:

The Revolutionary Theatre should force change ... The Revolutionary Theatre must EXPOSE! Show up the insides of these humans, look into black skulls ... The Revolutionary Theatre must teach them their deaths. It must crack their faces open to the mad cries of the poor. It must teach them about silence and the truths lodged there. It must kill any God anyone names except

Common Sense ... It should stagger through our universe correcting, insulting, preaching, spitting craziness ... The Revolutionary Theatre must Accuse and Attack anything that can be attacked. It must Accuse and Attack because it is a theatre of victims ... The Revolutionary Theatre must take dreams and give them a reality. It must isolate a ritual and historical cycles of reality ... This should be a theatre of World Spirit. Where the spirit can be shown to be the most competent force in the world ... The Revolutionary Theatre must function like an incendiary pencil ... will show victims so that their brothers in audience will be better able to understand that they are the brothers of victims, and that they themselves are victims of they are blood brothers. (1899-1901)

Revolutionary Theatre exposes the fundamental contradiction on American society rooted in biological and ontological differences. It brings into light the horrible condition of the blacks in America and tries to redefine the black identity in terms of racial and national attributes. It is primarily focused on bringing an end to the age-old conflict of race relations by making blacks conscious of their position in America. The Revolutionary Theatre transforms its audiences into a conscious being who no longer want to remain a mute spectators of the actions performed on the stage without any reflection over it after the play is performed. It demands an immediate action from its audiences and forces them to identify their own condition to the one performed on the stage. It prepares its audiences to stand against any kind of oppression.

It also aims at showing that any kind of indifference exhibited on the part of an individual black life proves to be threatening to the entire black community. The Revolutionary Theatre also proves to be an arena of satire where blacks who show temptation towards white man's luxury and inclination towards comforts are ridiculed. Clay, in *Dutchman*, shows this willingness in the beginning by being sexually attracted towards Lula,

a white woman. His acceptance of an apple offered by Lula suggests that he is ready to be a part of the world where whites would take the position of the masters. Delighted with the thought of spending a night together with her, he moved away from the tradition of his African roots which see any kind of relationship with whites with suspicion. Thus he diverts himself away from his African origin which cannot be severed. It is only he learns from Lula that white America thinks of him as a born slave, and that he is only pretending not to be a black. He also learns that it is simply impossible to shed the color of one's skin and be a part of the society which has condemned his existence as inferior and paltry. This change in the consciousness of Clay is the very purpose the Revolutionary Theatre aimed.

Baraka's Revolutionary Theatre gives expression to the temper of the period by exerting a tremendous influence on his audiences who were not supposed to be the blacks alone. The racial tenor of America during the time does not suggest that the black and white will ever unite with a purpose of accomplishing anything. But as a political activist and social critic, Baraka has tried his best to raise the consciousness of the blacks about their self-respect through his plays. Theatre for him is a space from where he could shed light in the age old conflict between the two races marked by suspicion, hatred, violence and murder. On the other hand it is an appropriate platform for the articulation of his thoughts; on the other hand it is a place from where his audiences return with a new insight of racism.

#### **2.4. Baraka's Revolutionary Theatre and the use of Violence**

Beginning in the late fifties as a Beat/Black Mountain poet, Baraka makes his entrance in the black theatre scene in the 1960s with his *Dutchman*. James Miller comments on its political and social overtones in his *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, when the racial conflict in America is widespread:

An avowed communist, Baraka who is a member of the Revolutionary communist league and the Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union, now emphasizes a

Marxist analysis of the forces shaping American society and the Black community. (20)

Baraka's works cannot be understood isolated from the context of the Black Arts Movement of the early 1960s. He is of the opinion that unless blacks are ready to change their way of thinking they cannot expect any signifying change in their social condition. He realizes this and uses his plays as a vehicle to advocate such change. Upon seeing the widespread racism in America Baraka came to believe that every black person needs to get rid of the obstacles standing against their aspiration for freedom which include Christianity, repression of self-identity as a black man and lack of racial solidarity among the blacks themselves. Since the theatre of the whites have no such purpose, the need for an alternate theatre is inevitable. Baraka has admitted in his interviews and lectures that African-Americans must be taught the evil designs of Christianity and they should be led to believe in another religious faith, which is conducive to their unity. In an interview with Austin Clarke he says:

Religion is the most admirable attempt man makes to shape his life because of what we may call "priest-craft," religious ideals can often be twisted by the people who are supposedly keeping those ideals alive. A lot of time these ideals are distorted to further the worldly, non-religious ambitions of priests. This is especially true of Christianity, where it is all "priest-craft" and no religion. (36)

Baraka thinks Christianity allows black people to be slaves; it has emasculated them. He wants to recover the lost power of the blacks. He believes that the self-identity and self-knowledge of the blacks lie on the choice of a religion. In the same interviews Baraka says:

Christianity allows the Black man to have certain amount of liberation. You can get happy in the church. They let you scream in the church. They think all



these niggers are going to be sitting up and screaming Hallelujah and what not, and then they are going to head back and start eating that pig and drinking that wine and working for the man. (39)

This for, of emotional release provided by the theatre of the white man, according to Baraka, is not a type of catharsis, but a way of making them bankrupt of physical energy and rage needed for social revolution. But for him alternative to Christianity is Islam, a religion, according to him, of the highest moral principle. The other factor that led to the emergence of the Black Revolutionary Theatre is repression of self-identity by the lacks in their aspiration for freedom. This means that the blacks do not like to associate themselves with the notion of vestigial blackness connected with Africa. He accuses the blacks for their inferior thinking which has lowered their status in the society. This act of thinking also represents a part of their consciousness. And as long as that part of their consciousness is debased, they all remain debased. The third factor responsible for the emergence of Black Revolutionary theatre of Baraka is concerned with lack of racial solidarity on the part of the blacks. The Revolutionary Theatre combines art with political rhetoric in order to change the black psyche, a change that would precede change in the outside world. Baraka planned an agenda for his plays to experiment his theory of theatre resulting from his political vision. So his work comprises string commitment to his community, a commitment that would revolutionize the consciousness of the blacks. His revolutionary agenda was at the top of his violence advocated by the militant faction of the Blacks panther party. Floyd Gaffney in his biographical essay, *Amiri Baraks (LeRoi Jones)*, supports this view:

During the Black movement of the turbulent 1960s, the more militant faction of the Black Panther party as being chauvinistic and bourgeois attacked Jones's cultural nationalism. His religious, metaphysical brand of nationalism was in conflict with their more utilitarian notions. (28)

Baraka's exhortation to the blacks to act and to take up arms against their oppressors inherent in his poetic message has to be understood in symbolic terms, not literally. This violence of black life is the violence which the blacks have lived with. It is different to the violence on painting. When talking about the violence of the paint, it has nothing to do with the violence of war. It has to do with an attempt to remake the violence of reality but the violence of war is also concerned with the whole emanation of the individual and the society he lives in.

Similarly when Baraka put what he experience in his work it certainly becomes violent. For a painter there is a distinct difference between the material violence of the world or of one's life and violence in art. Art does simply "reflect" or "describe" the reality, art clears away the illusions by which we usually live our lives, and this clearing away or destruction of the illusion is felt as, and is, a kind of horrific violence. In this sense, art operates like a revolution, in that it destroys the status quo in order to remake reality in its fact. Baraka agrees to the fact that art is not the destruction of symbols, but is rather the destruction of illusion on the act of recreating reality. And this is what Baraka's Revolutionary Theatre really is.

Baraka's use of violence in theatre is a way of bringing about the solidarity among the blacks against the injustices heaped on them by their oppressors. In this respect his theory of violence is close to Franz Fanon's. Fanon, like Baraka, approves of this expedient use of violence. In *The Wretched of the Earth* he makes following comments:

For the native, life can only spring up again out of the rotting corpse of the settlers but for the colonized people this violence invests their characters with positive and creative qualities. The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain of, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the

settler's violence in the beginning. At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restore his respect. (73-74)

In the light of Fanon's thesis that violence is "creative", "unifying", and "cleansing force" for the oppressed people, we can be sure that whatever the *modus operandi*, the goal of violence in Baraka's Revolutionary Theatre was consistent: liberation of his people from the outrages and the subtleties of American racism. Whether it will release them from the evil of racism or not is less important than their effort which should be conducive to achieve this end.

### **2.5. Necessity of Violence as Outlined by Baraka**

White American society dislikes the violence because it destroys whatever they think is real. Acceptance of violence by the whites means, in some respect, the victory of the blacks. But the paradox of black experience in America is that it is a separate experience, yet an inseparable one from the complete fabric of American life. For blacks, the history of western culture begins with importation of the slaves. The cultural memory of Africa informs the black's life in America, but it is simply impossible to be separate it from its American transformation. What happens if one is treated nowhere as a human being? What happens when many are treated as outsiders within one's state? The result is hatred followed by protests. And what happens if their voice is still unheard? The violence is inevitable, to make the authorities open their eyes to the problems of the blacks, to reinstate the system, and to create a condition where all could live in peace, fraternity and brotherhood. Whites think that blacks could never become a white. Therefore violence is necessary to change a white man's perception about the blacks. It is necessary in the writings of the blacks to destroy and recreate the dominant issue of suppression. Violence also reinstates the power of the minority. The chief purpose of violence is to make the blacks believe that they are incapable of independent life without eliminating everything that promotes whites to discriminate them.

Violences are festivals of the oppressed and the exploited. Violence, when the promises made to the blacks- the freedom of life, the freedom of liberty and the freedom to pursue the happiness they desired, is never fulfilled and the blacks came to realize it, occurred. And the social role assumed by the black writers is to illustrate how their claim for justice is denied and to make the ordinary black realize writers like Baraka in the following words:

The black writers have an obligation to help the race through such literary means as depicting the evils of racism, providing positive images of African Americans, and offering possible solutions to social problems confronting the black community. (386)

Therefore if the black writers advocate for violence it will be only for the purpose of opening the eyes of the blacks and make them able to see the problems they have to overcome. The blacks are neither adequately educated nor mobilized to sustain their struggle for the rights. The intellectual also do not succeed in providing the energy to affect the condition of their mind. As Franz Fanon believes, "Liberation means the right to self-determination... the freedom to this right is not part of some inevitable necessity built into history seen as a dialectical process, it is a goal to be achieved by focused revolutionary action" (166). If the blacks show violence in their behavior to have their right secured, then, it cannot be called an unjust and inborn one. It only results from the treatment the blacks receive from the whites and it is the behavior of the whites that need severe criticism. Put simply, the violence practiced by the whites breed violence in the blacks. Violence, necessary to create change, is a just one. Even though white violence against blacks may be unjust, and even though a corresponding black violence against whites may be unjust, yet certain violence is necessary to enact justice. This would be the violence that would enact a black world. Not a black world set up by force counter to the white world, but rather a black world, a black world that would simply be, in its blackness. That would be black without being non-

white. Such a black world could not be spoken without a certain violence being enacted, in its very speaking destruction of that world which has enforced the denial and exclusion of blacks from its world and from its justice. What Baraka speaks at the end of *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* is relevant here:

And even hating whites, being the white bating Black Nationalist is, might seem, justifiable but it is still a supremacy game. The solution is revolution. We thought that then, but didn' t understand what it meant, really. We thought it meant killing white folks. But its system that's got to be killed and it's even twisted some blacks. It's hurt all of us. (323)

Here Baraka makes clear that, first, change is necessary. Second, the change must be revolutionary. And third, the revolution must affect systematic social change: changing individual lives either by killing them, or by educating them, or by educating them. In his 1963 essay, *What Does Nonviolence Mean?* , Baraka asks why violence is necessary to affect systematic change in contemporary white America:

The only genuine way, it seems to me, for the Negro to achieve a personal autonomy, this equally of means, would be as a truly active moralizing force within or against American Society as it now stands. In this sense I advocate violence, a literal murdering of the American socio-political stance, not only as it directly concerns American Negroes, but in terms of its stronghold on most of the modern world. The Negro must take an extreme stance, must attack the white man's system, using his own chains to help beat that system into submission and actual change. The black man is the only revolutionary force in American society today, if only by default. (Home 150-51)

Baraka is clear that action must be necessarily proceed against the socio-political foundations of American society for real individual freedom to be possible for African American.

In Baraka's oeuvre violence is a symbolic means of distancing both himself and his viewers from the effect of assimilation, this is true of *Experimental Death Unit #1*, where the play features two murders and three decapitations. In *The Slave* Baraka searches for the proper motive to justify the use of guns and explosives. In the prefatory admonition to the readers of his collection *Four Black Revolutionary Plays*, he makes it as plain and as clear as the mirror the necessity of being violent by "prophesying the triumph of black life in this land, and all over the world we are building publishing houses, and newspapers, and armies, and factories we will change the world before your eyes" (Vii-viii).

Thus the purpose of violence as outlined by Baraka is to change the consciousness of the blacks, the way of their living, and to change the white man's perception of the blacks.

## Chapter III: Textual Analysis

### 3.1 *Dutchman*: General Introduction

*Dutchman* was written in one night in 1964, and the first official performance was at the Cherry Lane Theater on March 24, *Dutchman* was first published in December 1964, together with another play, *The Slave*. *Dutchman* was translated into several languages, and after its off-Broadway success it was performed on Berlin, Paris and Spoleto. Although the play won the *Village Voice* Obie award as Best New American play, when it was performed in downtown Manhattan in the Cherry Lane Theater, and ran there well into 1965, when it was afterwards performed uptown in Harlem it was criticized as a racist play. In 1967 *Dutchman* was filmed in England. It was too difficult to film it in the U.S., because, according to Werner Sollors, “the attempts to film *Dutchman* were boycotted by the subway authorities” (284).

*Dutchman* consists of an opening scene, and two main scenes. The action takes place in a subway in summertime. In the opening scene, Lula, a white woman, who is standing on a platform, looks inside a subway car. She smiles at a black man, Clay, who sits close to the window. Lula and Clay are the only people visible. In the first scene, Lula, who has now entered the train, is looking for the black man. She takes a seat at his side, and starts a conversation with him. Clay does not mind. Lula dominates the speech. She accuses Clay of having stared at her, and she even insults him, “God, You’re dull” (2128). But Clay does not object to her since he is amused by her recent remark. Lula goes on stereotyping Clay, while at the same time aggressively flirting with him wanting him to take her to a party. Clay accepts everything she does and is willing to spend a night with her. At the end of the scene one, Lula accuses Clay of being a murderer.

In the second scene, there are also other people visible. Lula continues talking. She now unfolds the story of how the entire evening and night should go for her and Clay spending

time together, “I know it’ll be with something good. You can come in with me, looking casual and significant. I’ll be strange, haughty, and silent, and walk with long slow strides” (213). Yet, at the same time, Lula goes on insulting Clay, “Son of a bitch, get out of the way,” “Uhh! Uhh! Uhh! Clay! Clay! Clay! You middle-class black bastard” (2136). As life on the plantation is mentioned, Lula starts to sing a song, gets up and dances in the car. While she is dancing, she gets more and more insulting-also towards the other passengers. Lula encourages Clay to dance with her, but he refuses. He feels embarrassed by Lula’s behavior, grabs her, and pushes her back on to her seat. Clay slaps her twice. Then he gets up and starts a monologue. He states that there would not have been any black artists like Charlie Parker or Bessie Smith, if they had not suppressed their feelings, but had murdered their white oppressors. Finally, as Clay sits down again and gathers his books together, Lula kills him with a thrust of her knife. Clay falls on the floor, and following Lula’s command, the other passengers in the subway kick the corpse out of the car. All of them get off at the next stop. Lula remains inside the car; another young African American enters and takes a seat near her. A black conductor goes through the car and greets the young man as he passes him.

The play can be divided into four parts, the introduction and rising action which lead to the turning point, the climax, and finally the ending which hints at a repetition of the whole event. In the first part, the characters are introduced, and the specific roles are allocated to Clay and Lula. Lula is presented as a woman with aggression and full of pride. She regards a black like Clay as an inferior to her. Whereas Clay, although he becomes a victim and is passive most of the time, turns into a rebel in the final scene by declaring that he no longer wishes to be a slave of the white racism.

### **3.2. *Dutchman*: Oppression of the Black Man**

*Dutchman* is not an easy stuff because there is no optimism, no hope of better future and certainly no heroism in the action of the characters. It did, however, point out several



flaws in society, namely the white man's oppression of the black men. The entire exchange of dialogue between Clay and Lula suggests that, even the society does not much regard the inequalities imposed on the minorities, much of the society still conceive the minorities with utter contempt for reasons like color, class and the role they are supposed to perform in the society. The stereotypes that both black and white individuals present in the play despite heightened public awareness at the time did not come as a surprise. Such stereotypes are evidenced by Lula's saying, "... you're a well known type ... I know the type very well," and Clay responding, "Without knowing us specifically?"(2129) Stereotypes as such are the first barrier to overcome when associating with a member of another race or culture. This stereotypical representation of one another by the characters also results from the ignorance of each other's background. For example Lula simply possesses no authentic information about Clay. She wrongly generalizes Clay's conduct, "You tried to make it with your sister when you were ten" (2128).

Similarly her continual concentration on Clay's "Uncle Tom" stereotype seems to be not simply her own ignorance, but it also symbolizes the entire white people's ignorance of black people before and during the early 1960s. At the end of the play, the root cause of oppression, lack of social equality at the time the play was written, is pointed out. Tyranny of the whites, which form the majority, and the lack of sympathy for the oppressed are other causes that promote oppression of the people belonging to a particular type of race. When Lula orders the people, "Get this man off me! Hurry, now! [*The others come and drag CLAY's body down the aisle*] Open the door and throw his body out. [*The throw him off*] And all of you get off at the next stop."(2139), the crowd of people obeyed her without any hesitation. The people in the subway, the majority or the whites, allow one man to be murdered and do not even give it a second thought, "The train apparently stops and all the others get off, leaving her alone in the coach."(2139). This can again be related as metaphor

for the behavior of the entire white population of the 60s who tend to turn a blind eye to the suffering of an individual who inherits a color different from them. This can also be related to the minds of the whites characterized of being unsympathetic towards the suffering of a black. Every passengers of the subway gets off acting as if nothing has happened. Clay is brutally murdered but that does not bother the white passengers' day. Nobody, not a single passenger, objects Lula's conduct. They only appear as men by their form but lack of sympathy turned them into mere puppetry. They are all white men in bodies, but mean in mind. They only "... *come closer to the couple (Lula and Clay), some of them not sitting, but swinging drearily on the straps, staring at the two with uncertain interest]*" (2135).

All are mute spectators of the cruelty. They show no interest to stop Lula from mocking and murdering Clay, "... [*some of the other riders are laughing...*]" (2136). The fact suggested by the entrance of the other black man in the subway, towards the end of the play, hints that this process include of the cyclic pattern having neither any edge nor any end. This also suggests that such action will not going to stop anywhere, particularly never in America because blacks in America have always been conceived "just a dirty white man" (2136).

### **3.3. Lula's stereotypical concept of Clay**

In the play *Dutchman* Baraka depicts a subway encounter between Lula, a white, Bohemian woman, and Clay, a young, middle-class black man. The play is about racism. Both of these characters express their murderous hatred towards the class they do not belong. However, it is Lula's arrogance as a white that fires Clay's anger and raise in him the defensive and protesting instinct against Lula's misbehavior. She bore a kind of which will not let her feel that Clay, in one way or other, is equal to her. This superiority complex of Lula ultimately leads her to make several attempts to victimize Clay. The first attempt she made was the game of seduction.

While Clay was, in the beginning, inside the car, she immediately engages herself in conversation with Clay. She charges Clay of looking "... down the vicinity of my ass and legs," then she guessed that he is "just taking the idle potshots" because, according to Lula he has "Nothing else to do" and so he "Run your mind over people's flesh" (2127).

Lula's accusations hint that she conceives black's life as inactive, dull and idle. She thinks that blacks have no work to do and they just roam idle looking for opportunities to spy women's private parts. She also thinks that she can do anything with Clay. She can play with him the game of seduction, make him do anything for her sake, humiliate him using abusive language and if he still denies giving him to her then she would not allow him to live. However, it is not Lula who is to be blamed alone. Clay himself is responsible, somehow, to give her the warm welcome to use him in the way she prefers. In the very beginning of scene I, Clay has himself remarked:

LULA ... What makes you prepared for? [*Wrapping the apple core on a Kleenex and dropping it on the floor*]

CLAY [*Takes her conversation as pure sex talk. He turns to confront her squarely with this idea*] I'm prepared for anything. How about you? (2128)

This conversation also reveals that the flexibility in the character of Clay is also responsible for promoting Lula to play any kind of game with him in the way she desires.

Lula's ability to seduce is also reinforced by giving her the attribute of an apple. In the beginning of the play, Lula enters the stage "eating an apple, very daintily"(2127). While she is talking to Clay, reaching for two more apples in her bag, "... and offers one to Clay, You want this??" which he gladly accepts (2129). This connotes to the incident that happens in the biblical Garden of Eden. Lula, allocated to the role of Eve and the snake, offers an apple of temptation to clay. This can also be interpreted as an offer representing the promise of equality white society holds out to the black population, but does not keep, whereas Clay's

acceptance of the apple leads to his fall. Lula offering an apple to Clay also hints the fact that it is white, who is always the giver and the blacks, always a recipient. It also indicates that white America, represented by Lula, conceives blacks as being made to fall. Lula, for example, assumes that by

*Putting her hand on CLAY's closest knee, drawing it from the knee up to the thigh's hinge, then removing it, watching his face very closely, and continuing to laugh, perhaps more gently than ever before (2128).*

Clay himself ascribes this air of superiority to Lula by consenting with the fact that he does not possess the intellect to involve in argument with Lula,

LULA: Oh boy. [*Looking quickly at Clay*] what a face. You know, you could be handsome man.

CLAY: I can't argue with you. (2129)

Clay is a black and he does possess any confidence in the air. The twice repetition of the line he speaks proves this fact. Moreover, he subjected by consenting to Lula that she possesses more knowledge about him than himself. The fact is also revealed in the following exchange of dialogue:

LULA: ... I don't even know you.

CLAY: You said you know my type.

LULA: [*strangely irritated*] Don't get smart with me, Buster. I know you like the palm of my hand. (2131)

The more these two characters move forward in their conversation, the more deeper and sinister grows Lula's stereotypical images of blacks, including that of Clay. When the conversation turns abruptly from one topic to another, Clay, towards the end of the scene I, thinks that he annoyed Lula, which he had not wanted,

LULA: And who do you want think you were? Who do you think you are now?

CLAY: [*Laughs as if to make light of the whole trend of the conversation*]

Well, in college I thought I was Baudelaire. But I've slowed down since.

LULA: I bet you never once thought you were a black nigger. (2131)

To Lula, Clay is more a black figure in human form than a person, thus in no way equal to her. Being a white Lula, on the other hand, sees Clay's position in the American society as deplored and degraded. She is not even ready to accept the fact that a black can improve his condition by labor and education, "And you went to a colored college where everybody thought they were Averell Harriman" (2131). Her Lula is referring to a successful black American cabinet member, ambassador and governor of New York, with wealthy family background. Lula thinks that by receiving education alone blacks can not improve their condition. They cannot compete with whites in any field of knowledge. Knowledge, for whites, only means power. By going to universities, in Lula's opinion, blacks are only imitating the white man's standard of living.

The overall conception of Lula about Clay only suggests that white society, to which Lula belongs, is preoccupied with a belief that blacks are leading a fake life, imitating a white man's mode of behavior.

At one time during the conversation Lula calls Clay, what most of the white Americans who lived in the time the play was written also think of the blacks, her "...tender big-eyed prey" (2133). This also shows that Clay is not only the victim of discrimination, he is not only the prey of the whites which satisfies the white man's appetite of subjugation, but he is also the puppet whose strings are controlled by the delicate white hands of white American woman. Lula's stereotypical conception of Clay hints that in American society

blacks are meant to be discriminated. The following exchange of dialogue between Lula and Clay exemplifies this fact more clearly:

LULA: 'Cause you're an escaped nigger.

CLAY: Yeah?

LULA: 'Cause you crawled through the wire and made tracks to my side.

CLAY: Wire? (2125)

Lula's speech suggests that during the time the blacks are freed from the Southern plantations, many blacks escaped to the North, in search of freedom and security. But the whites there also turned their back to the newly freed blacks. With nobody to help and nowhere to go, the condition of the blacks in the slavery-free part of the North also grew worst. How blacks were conceived by the whites of the North is shown clearly by Lula's behavior towards Clay.

Lula shows no pity towards Clay. With no sympathy in her eyes for the dark-colored skin hinted by her ruthless murdering, blacks like Clay are made to pay the price of being born in the society where people shared ideas about the color of the skin.

### **3.4. *Dutchman*: Conflict and its Causes**

The main problem with Lula is that she is unable to shed the feeling of superiority aided her by her color of skin which does not let her to come into terms in any respect with a black man like Clay. She abhors him because, she thinks, his "grandfather was a slave, he didn't go to Harvard" (2131). This is what Lula conceives of Clay and continues charging him with her arrows of sexuality. She also mocks his interest in poetry and Baudelaire, "The Black Baudelaire! Yes ... My Christ! My Christ!" (2132). As Clay skips the trap of her sexuality she becomes more arrogant and abuses him using disgusting and morally offensive words showing disregard towards the entire race he belongs, "Clay, you liver-lipped white man. You would-be Christian" (2136).

Throughout the play Lula is portrayed as a white temptress who destroys black men for reasons because the latter are regarded as inferior by the people with white complexion. Her appetite for sex which must be quenched as a woman belonging to the class which seldom faces any defeat deems in Clay that it will not be ridiculous for him to enjoy white woman's company. But Clay reverses her dreams by not negotiating with her. This also provokes Lula to look other possible means to subdue Clay which, nevertheless, accelerates and heightened the conflict in the play.

If we look at the speeches used by Lula to allure Clay, we find that she uses highly emotive words and fabricates it so delicately that it is enough to tranquilize anyone who resembles Clay in his social and racial background. For example Lula's description of the party is relevant here. She describes the elegance of the would-be party in the following words:

You'll go around talking to young men about your mind, and to old men about your plans. If you meet a very close friend who is also with someone like me, we can stand together, sipping our drinks and exchanging codes of lust. The atmosphere will be slithering in love and half-love and very open moral decision. (2133)

But this is not all that Lula wants from Clay. She also wants his identity concealed from the public, and hope that "everyone will pretend they don't know your name ..."  
(2133). By slowly breaking the patience in Clay Lula is only contributing in making the conflict of the play more violent. We are not given the slightest hint, as does Clay himself, about how far he can go on tolerating the abuses Lula pours over him. But at the moment he is delighted by the thought of having Lula as his night companion. He shows his ignorance about what the white woman can turn into:

CLAY: Then what happens?

LULA: After the dancing and games, after the long drinks and long walks, the real fun begins.

CLAY: Ah, the real fun...which is...?

LULA: ...Real fun in the dark house...I lead you in, holding your wet hand gently in my hand. (2133-34)

But then Lula changes her tone suddenly, raised to her temper and yelled at Clay, “Don’t think you’ll get out of your responsibility that way. It’s not cold at all. You Fascist! Into my dark living room. Where we’ll sit and talk endlessly, endlessly” (2134). Lula deliberately puts Clay into confusion. She seems to open her heart before Clay but she never gives Clay the clue by which he can judge her character. Her thoughts are difficult to be scrutinized by following the trends of her speeches. Lula’s own remark, followed by her conspicuous laughing, is pertinent in this context, “Don’t understand? Well, don’t look at me. It’s the path I take, that’s all. Where both feet take me when I set them down. One in front of the other” (2134). Such abrupt shift of Lula from seemingly mild tone to the harsh criticism of blacks and their way of life is one of the features that contribute in furthering and heightening the level of tension in the play. She calls Clay her “prey”, “a murderer”, “ghost of the future”, “a fool”, “and son of a bitch”, “bastard”, and uses stereotypical words like “Uncle Thomas Woolly Head.”

With all these meaningless charges on Clay she assumes an air of superiority over him. She acts as if she is the master and he is the slave, who must not only object her opinions but who must also agree and consent to her by gratitude and humbleness. The conflict in the play arouses also because of Lula’s wrong judgment about Clay. Clay would not have protested and yelled in rebellion towards the ending of the play if Lula has considered his standards, if she has not humiliated and insulted him, if she has judged him fairly giving less importance to the color of his skin. White man’s judgment of blacks has



always been laden with prejudice. What seems to conclude all the debates relating Lula's perception of black man Clay is his remark that the whites "don't understand anything but luxury" (2137). Thus the conflict between Clay and Lula grows because she, in Clay's opinion:

"... don't know anything except what's there for you to see. An act. Lies. Device. Not the pure heart, the pumping black heart. You don't ever know that...you fuck some black man, and right away you're an expert on black people." (2137)

The whites see blacks wearing the spectacle which filters their vision. They can only see the color which they have interpreted as a sign of evil. But their obstructed vision restricts them from penetrating inside the heart of black people. American society, white in particular, is supposed to preserve equal rights to everyone. But it is, instead, weakened when blacks like Clay feel that they are judged solely on a day to day basis by the color of their skin. Some might argue that blacks and whites are equal, but it is obvious from the behavior of Lula that it is not so. Majority of the whites still look black with utter contempt and disgrace. Among many whites the preoccupied notion that blacks have to remain at the bottom of the social scale still exists. Such opinions of the majority obviously generate turmoil and put an individual black and white who come closer to each other into conflict.

#### **Chapter IV: Conclusion: Revolt against Racism in *Dutchman***

*Dutchman* is about the struggle of an oppressed black man who has not been treated justly by the white American society. The brief meeting between the two characters, a black man, Clay, and a white woman, Lula, suddenly turns into a hostile encounter when the latter treats Clay with hatred and humiliation. She regards Clay's power to determine his destiny as a black man as mere cry of aggression since the blacks are jealous of the progress made by the whites. Lula is not only afraid of Clay when she realizes that if she does not take a decisive move then Clay will avenge her humiliations, she also realizes that she has not got enough strength to face Clay's wrath when he says that the only solution, he sees, to end the problem of color discrimination is the murder of the whites. So Lula stabs him when he is preparing to leave the subway car.

The blacks have to face the same problem not only in the subway but everywhere. They are not welcomed by the whites because the whites do not see them as human being but as garbage. The history of Lula is white America's history which sees the African descendants as slaves forcibly transported into America. As a part of the same history, which refused to treat blacks as human, she could not tolerate Clay for his awareness that if the blacks do not cease to live in the society of which the whites form a majority, their suffering will not going to end. Clay does not know earlier about the kind of American reality he has encountered. American society has predicted his survival upon his ability to dissemble his thoughts and feelings of being a man so that he can be manipulated vulnerably in a way the whites have designed. Clay's thoughts are manipulated in such a way that he himself consents his supposed inferiority rather than by making him forcibly acknowledge it. Later he learns that his feigned identity is also insufficient to improve the way of white man's perception of him. Solidarity with whites, either as a man belonging to a separate race of people or as a part of white American society, is simply impossible. By being cooperative

and learning to adopt in according to the values created by the whites he can only be in a place where the elements used to represent black stereotype change but his basic position remains the same. His forefathers had spent their entire life within the boundaries of plantation without any hope of freedom. At least Clay has his at the stake of life. Liberation, for those who were forced to labor in the plantation, meant death. He also knows that the situation of the blacks is same even after the official declaration of the abolition of slavery. He finally reaches to his own conclusion that if he attempts to live according to Lula's standards this time then he would fail to be a man. This realizes in him arouses all positive instincts which prevents him from surrendering before the ideas of Lula. He has been an object of mockery for Lula. She has asked his opinion for spending a night with her. The next moment she boasts on possessing more knowledge about Clay than Clay himself. Then she tells him that she is prone to tell a lie which, according to her, is her habit. She also tells him that his history is as dark as the color of his skin. His existence is possible only because he is not bounded by any fence but still he is treated as if he is being alien to the world of the whites. He also knows that any terms of solidarity would prove strange and unsuccessful as long as whites go on believing that they are the superior in comparison to the blacks. His explosive temper and hatred towards the whites can be justified in this ground of thought. That is why he demands the elimination of the whole white people to ensure the existence of the blacks.

Clay has tolerated Lula's abuses because he was complacent with white world where girls like Lula offered him the sweetest pleasure of life. When he comes to know that white society can easily destroy him because of his willingness to play the role of the submissive it is his duty radically to confront such system of tradition. It is also his duty to provide power and self-determination for their present relief and future security, when such long train of abuses and violence design to reduce the blacks under absolute racist domination of injustice

still continue to see blacks as inferior. Clay has been the patient sufferer of injustice inflicted by the white America until he realizes that the only alternative to get out of this problem is to stop being a patient sufferer of the institutionalized violence and racism of white America. His weakness lies in his consciousness of being a black. But his consciousness, which constrains him from being a revolutionary, suddenly sinks beneath what he has suffered at the hands of despotic white power Lula, is raised with a new determination to refuse to be any longer silenced by fear, flattery of temptation by revealing that the ideas she has inherited from her white predecessors about the blacks possess no facts. They are mere hypothesis which has no chance of being valid. His disagreement towards the ideas and opinions of the whites who hold more power and authority is the first sign of rebellion.

Clay, as a black man, might be aware of the consequences of his involvement in a long tirade with a white woman Lula. Yet he dares to resist Lula with a hope that she will improve her perception about blacks. But she will only maintain her racist tyranny and holds opinions of blacks being inferior to whites more firmly than before. But she has mistaken Clay by thinking that she can make him do whatever she wanted him to. But Clay does not remain as same as the one we have encountered in the beginning. Earlier it was him who was corrected, but now it is him who is correcting Lula. This shows how ignorant Lula is about blacks and their culture. And the ignorance on her part also teaches Clay that he is living in a society which claims all the falsities as true knowledge. Moreover he learns the hardships of being a Negro in America, a knowledge of which he was unknown when he first met Lula. He also realizes that the white passengers in the subway, in no way, are different from Lula because they also do not regard him as a human being. They are not troubled by the suffering of an individual black man so they prefer to remain silent and aloof and do not take any initiation to stop Lula. This also promotes Lula, first, to abuse and then to stab Clay. Clay does not find a single white man to object Lula. She possesses complete control of a black

man. With no one to speak for him, Clay prepares to stand alone against the white oppressor Lula and defends his actions as a black man in violent speech which he directs against the entire white race. To get relief from the inhumanity of racism he refuses all kind of cooperation with Lula, who still thinks Clay as a problem of America. She does not want him to be a part of the society she belongs. Clay learns this fact only after being intolerably abused and humiliated. Lula holds so dehumanized views of the blacks that Clay cannot change them by mere preaching alone. His submission to the ideas of Lula will lock him inside the room from where he can make his escape only at the stake of his life. It is not his color that torments Clay but the cause of his misery lies in the treatment that he receives as a black man. Although a man is alone he should be firm and strong in his position in order to change the age-old views of discrimination. That is why he makes clear to Lula that when blacks are tortured too much then all the preaching and rationalism the whites use to calm down the fury of blacks will not be sufficient to silence them from raising their voice against racism. He also warns Lula not to teach the black man the way of the white man, not to talk too much about the advantages of western rationalism or the great intellectual legacy of the white men, because if the black man does learn the lesson of the white man, he will adopt his weapon. To have knowledge of something means to have power over something and power lets a man to have control over things. Lula has successfully manipulated Clay by claiming that she knows everything about the blacks until he recognizes and accepts himself as a black man. This knowledge turns him into a stern and a hard man who does not hesitate to question the white man's conception of the world. Change can be initiated either by using arms or by introducing ideas which are radically opposing to the ideas that see blacks as inferior. If Clay has picked any weapon against racism then he would have terrorized the world of the whites. But his radical expressions clearly show that he does not regard the old views, of the whites as masters, as truth. He is not born to serve a race of people whose color of skin is fair. By

choosing not to stay in his insanity any longer, not to deny his blackness and by accepting that only the murder of the whites would liberate him, he raises his voice in revolt against racism. Instead he holds the opinion that only the ruthless murder of the whites will make his existence secure among the barbarity of the white men.

Whites, like Lula, only regard blacks as poser. More than a poser Lula sees Clay as a black man whose suit will not hide the blackness within it. But the mood of the play changes taunt by the middle of the initial scene. The victim, from now on, will not stay victimized peacefully. Clay knows that it is insane to conceal his blackness. Finally he has two alternatives left. Either he can continue the insanity by living half-hidden life in white man's world; or he can relieve his insanity by asserting his blackness through murder. By choosing the latter one, he becomes a revolutionary who wages a war against racism. Living in harmony with whites only prolongs the suffering of the blacks because the tradition of the whites will not let white woman like Lula to consider blacks as their fellowmen. And life ignoring the existence of white population in America is simply impossible. That is why Clay has no alternative left than claim his existence with as much ferocity as he can exhibit. In the beginning he has hoped that coping with Lula will be one of the solutions. But she regarded his submission only as a pretense. According to Lula Clay cannot be free from his history, the heritage of oppressor. Trapped in such a conflicting situation, Clay remains a misguided individual who does wrong things at wrong times until he realizes that there is no escape. He continually struggles with his own identity and the power struggle between him and Lula. Clay, despite his knowledge of the limits of his power, takes the forbidden fruit from more powerful Lula and fantasizes about his own life. But he is ignorant of the fact that the stirring of his fantasies are powered by the hands of Lula which is illustrated by her constant switching of the topics of conversation, keeping Clay off guard, and making sure that she keeps her domination over the conversation maintained. To some extent Clay has to let her

manipulate him because he is helpless before her power. This is also one of the reasons behind the threatening of an individual black life when it encounters a white one. The culture inherited by the blacks will not let them close their eyes and escape the situation. It has always taught them to stand firm against the evil of racism. So Clay can neither stand the atrocity of Lula, nor can he go on tolerating the suffering inflicted upon him for no reason at all. Tolerance, for Clay, simply means disrespect towards his culture. So the only alternative left is to make a relentless effort to make Lula realize that blacks are not as docile as she has conceived them to be. He decided to teach her that too much suppression of an individual bears no good harvest but hatred and ferocity. Whites, as Clay conceives, are the only cause behind the meager life of the blacks. So he comes with an intention to eliminate the entire white race, if not by force then by fire. This fact is illustrated by the radical transformation in his character. Clay at first seems to be merely sexual. In reality, Lula is determined to destroy Clay by making him feel, with repetitive efforts that his is an inferior existence. But soon Clay learns that the world regards a man strongest who makes his stand at the most remote. In this way he is turned into a revolutionary by eschewing murder because it has been the weapon of the white society for centuries.

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