

NEW PERSPECTIVES AND FORMS IN  
AFRICAN AMERICAN DRAMA OF 1960's:  
A SPECIAL REFERENCE ON  
AMIRI BARAKA AND ED BULLINS.

BY

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(SUPERVISOR)  
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D E D I C A T I O N

**For Prof. Nana Tagoe, effective teacher and friend.**

Thank my supervisor Prof. Nana Wilson Tagoe for his

**My wife, Marian, for her love and understanding.**

of the course. It was an experience which built my perception  
of the world. Similarly outlook. I would also like to express my  
gratitude to my colleagues in the Literature department  
who always showed interest in my progress.

Special thanks go to Kenyatta University for offering  
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members. It is an experience I will never forget and which  
I will always remember with gratitude. I wish also to  
thank the American Cultural Centre Library for the various  
services they rendered to me which made this study possible.

## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my supervisor Prof. Nana Wilson-Tagoe for her patience, guidance and constructive, evaluative criticism of my work. It was an experience which built my perception and scholarly outlook. I would also like to express my gratitude to my colleagues in the Literature department who always showed interest in my progress.

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## A B S T R A C T

This study attempts to investigate the changing perspectives and forms in the African American drama of the 1960's. In doing this it explores how such perspectives were related to and actually located in the changing social and political thinking of African Americans during this period. Thus it was necessary to have a background of the development of African American drama of the past, especially the drama of the 1950's as a way of delineating the fresh perspectives contained in the emergent black drama of the sixties.

For an effective exploration of such an investigation we have divided the study into six chapters. Chapter one is mainly an introduction to the study, stating the problem of the investigation, justifying the study, giving a theoretical framework for the study and reviewing an extensive literature on the subject.

Chapter two looks at the background of African American drama with special emphasis on its changing perspectives and forms. It also locates such changes in the social and political inclinations of the African Americans in such

periods. Thus the chapter lays the ground for the main differences between the perspectives and forms in the drama of the 1950's against the emerging fresh perspectives and forms in the drama of 1960's.

In chapter three the thesis deals with Amiri Baraka. Baraka is examined as a transitional playwright, straddling between the two decades. The chapter attempts to trace his development through the changing perspectives and forms of his artistic productions using these as evidence of his continuous and broadening vision of the place of drama in the social and political events in these decades.

In chapter four the thesis examines another playwright, Ed Bullins as an artist whose response is specific to the 1960's. It examines Bullins's perspective and form of drama which were also concerned with creating a particular black aesthetic in drama. This chapter also lays the ground for the delineation of the differences between him and Baraka.

Chapter five analyses the two playwrights, assessing them in terms of their different emphases. It also attempts to relate this difference to the underlying theoretical

and ideological assumptions which influenced their responses and ultimately their dramatic perspectives and forms.

The thesis concludes the study in chapter six, by assessing the findings of the study and making critical observations about the general thrust of African American drama of the sixties and the ways in which the two playwrights reflected it in their works.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

As the most social and public of all artistic expressions, drama is the expression most conditioned by and dependent on social conditions and thinking of a society. Because communication in drama is a two way process involving mode of communication and audience response, there is always a close correlation between dramatic communication and social conditions and expectations. Usually the dramatist's perception of conditions and expectations colour his mode of presenting and communicating a dramatic situation.

In the American context this notion is clearly evidenced in the separate movements of mainstream American drama and African American drama. Whereas American drama in general progressed through realistic and complex representation of American life and attitudes, African American drama had a later beginning and had first to contend with stereotypical and perverted images of realities in an environment of racial prejudice and tension. The history of African American drama has therefore been one of perpetual reassessment and redefinition within the social biases of a pluralistic society. Thus growth in African American drama has always

been a process of striving to communicate the real situations and needs of the African American community.

Earlier drama on African American realities had been limited in perspective because it had thrived through the presentations of white playwrights like Eugene O'Neill who operated within the biases and racial prejudices of mainstream American society. It was not until the 1930's and 1940's, with the inspiration and the new perspectives provided by the Harlem Renaissance that black dramatists like Langston Hughes developed dramatic strategies for presenting real and complex situations and at the same time appeal to white audiences through social criticism and protest. This two way process in dramatic communication was expanded and perfected in the 1940's and 1950's when more African American dramatists propagated their plays.

The strategy remained a dominant one in the fifties when the politics of the day and the integrationist perspectives of African American dramatists required them to speak to both black and white audiences. This attempt towards reaching the whites for acceptance and integration was favoured by the mood and social thinking of the post-

war period, and this was evident in the drama of the fifties. The idea mainly propounded was the possibility of equality and a hope in one national aspiration and goal. The particular dilemma of the playwrights of this period was the often conflicting need to communicate with black and white audiences without necessarily alienating the white spectators. The dramatic strategies of African American dramatists of the fifties left the playwrights with this ambivalent perspective.

However, in line with the social and political aspirations of blacks in the 1960's, African American drama responded to certain changes in the social milieu, and the drama of the period shifted in perspectives and strategies that contrasted quite significantly with the drama of the fifties. In the sixties the social and political thinking of African Americans had moved beyond integration towards a self-conscious sense of cultural and historical difference, a stance mostly dictated by American racism and its exclusion of the African American from the the American dream. Naturally, such shifts came to be reflected in the perspectives of dramatists and their method of communicating to an audience. Whereas in the fifties the playwrights had

to work in the ambivalent context of a two way communication that appealed to a mixed audience, the dramatists of the sixties related differently to their audience and evolved new and different strategies which reflected a conscious exclusion of rapport with a white audience.

This study is an attempt to explore the impact and implications of this shifting in terms of the progression and development of African American drama, especially how it has been affected by the social situation and by the relationship between perspective and dramatic form. We choose the drama of the 1960's as our focus due to the decade's significance as the second renaissance representing a culmination of development in black drama. The first Renaissance of 1920's gave the impetus with its growth of black consciousness and marked a distinct development which links this progression to the 1950's and 1960's. For the first Renaissance marked the break from stereotypical depiction to a more rounded portrayal of the black character thus reflecting the social mood of a rebirth and a move towards a keen sense of identity and a conscious move toward redefinition. In many ways therefore the 1960's reflected the same underlying need of change as it became

the culmination of several social and political ideas and development in dramatic strategies. Thus the 1960's will give us the chance to explore how all these ideas link up in the drama and how the 1960's move forward with new ideas. We confine ourselves to Amiri Baraka and Ed Bullins because in their different ways they both represent that progression of perspective and form which the thesis attempts to examine. Amiri Baraka is partly a product of the dramatic tradition of the fifties as well as a product of the new perspectives of the sixties with their distinct shift in dramatic rendering. Bullins, a product of the sixties and heavily influenced by Baraka, provides a good comparison because he reflects that aspect of the mood of the sixties which groped for a distinct black aesthetic in drama. These two playwrights therefore act as an exemplification of the shift and help in determining how the new forms of dramatic communication took shape. Though the thesis concentrates specifically on Baraka and Bullins it takes cognisance of the past dramatic experience of African Americans since the drama of the sixties tested dramatic ideas of the past and explored new dimensions and forms with reference to earlier drama and to the total creative process of African Americans.

In looking at these different dramatic responses to

social and political realities of the fifties and sixties my thesis hopes to reveal aspects of African American culture and thought and thereby add a dimension to African American self-definition. The study would be justified in this respect because as literature created by descendants of Africans in the course of their adjustment to new lives in America is has definite links with African Literature and arts in Africa. In another respect the correlation between the dramatist's perspective and his use of dramatic strategies to communicate it, will theoretically be an illustration and contribution to socio-stylistics as an aspect of dramatic theory. This is because the study attempts to show how change of social perspective and perception in society affects artistic and creative productions in general, and drama in particular.

Since this study intends to explore the relationship between the perspectives of the two dramatists and their forms of communication, it adopts at one level a broad socio-stylistic approach in which there is a correlation between a dramatist's intention and his stylistic strategies. The sociological orientation takes cognisance of drama as emanating from a playwright's response to society while the

stylistic orientation will reveal the type and forms of dramatic communication necessitated by the social orientation. The broad approach of stylistics is important in so far as it directs our attention to the use of language and other linguistic variations in drama. As G.W. Turner has argued

Stylistics is that part of linguistics which concentrates on variation in the use of language, often, but not exclusively, with special attention to the most conscious and complex uses of language in literature.

(Turner 1973: p.7)

Turner's definition emphasizes language as the basis of thought in a work of art and as a theoretical perspective it provides a criteria for identifying aspects of linguistic structure, verbal manipulation and symbolism in a play.

Yet as an art form, drama is more than an expression of thought in language since it is specifically written with performance in mind and needs interaction between the text, the actor and the audience. As such drama calls for a response not only to the text of the play but also to the dramatic situation between the dramatist and the audience.

J.L. Styan identifies this double-edged impact of drama clearly in The Elements of Drama when he says "We are not judging the text but what the text makes the actor makes the audience do" (Styan 1960: p. 2). Such a perspective on drama criticism adds an additional critical tool to the broad and general stylistic approach. Thus in identifying and responding to forms and perspectives in the plays of the sixties, the study will attempt to examine all those dramatic strategies through which the dramatist communicates intention and finally affects the emotions of his audience. Thus the thesis will examine the ways in which the dramatist moves and manipulates action in a play and how this manipulation is intended to affect the audience in a particular way. It will explore for instance, the impact of dramatic scenery, stage directions, silent movements and above all, the progression of dialogue as a revelation of ideas, thought, character, and emotional rhythm.

In a broad stylistic sense the study will also attempt to identify and respond to the language of the play, to its various registers and symbolic representations and their

intended impact on the audience. In responding to these elements the study will judge their effectiveness not merely as rhetorical devices but also in terms of the intentions of the dramatist and his relationship to his perspective. The study involves two comparative approaches: Comparison of earlier perspectives in African American drama especially the drama of the fifties and comparison between the perspectives and dramatic strategies of the two major dramatists under special focus.

In researching this topic on African-American drama, I have consulted and reviewed a number of responses to African American drama. Several of these deal with its development and progression within the American literary tradition. Some books respond to its contribution towards the larger American culture while others see it as troublesome in the sense that it challenges and calls into question American social values and assumptions. A selective review of such literature would put them in perspective and demonstrate how the present study fits into the scholarship on African American drama.

Hill (1980) deals generally with black theatre and how it relates to mainstream American theatre. The book examines

critically the development of black drama and theatre showing how this development has always come up against situations and obstacles which have affected black drama positively or negatively. Several essays in the book examine various aspects of black drama and theatre in general, and estimate their contribution to the larger creative endeavours in American life. Although the book gives us a good number of useful critical essays, it is still only a general overview of black drama and its position in American mainstream life and drama.

Bigsby (1982) deals with drama as a cultural tool and explores its capacity to reinforce cultural values or challenge those very values. In the chapter on Black Drama especially, he examines the dilemma of black drama in this light and takes issue especially with the language problem. In his view the black dramatist, by his very use of language, portrays his ambivalence and contradiction as an artist in American society. Bigsby argues that the very act of cultural definition becomes a problem for blacks because they are marginalised both in the society and in their relation to mainstream culture and artistic endeavour. He shows the ambivalent role of black drama in attempting to

strike a balance between its public function and the private truth of the blacks, against a background of a tradition of "racial simplification of experience" by white authors. This particular point is relevant to my thesis especially in the context of the change of perspectives and forms in the sixties since this change was motivated by the need of black dramatists to communicate the authentic reality of blacks in a language and dramatic form which could reflect this reality truthfully.

With a similar perspective but a slightly different emphasis, Abramson (1965) looks at the origin of black drama prior to 1960, identifying its beginnings and progress through the thirties, forties and fifties. Within this context she assesses the negative aspects which had been incorporated in the earlier drama. She does this by giving a background to the negative conception and definition of the Negro character propagated by white writers, dramatists and entertainers. Although the book's scope is limited to the plays of the fifties it throws some light on the drama scene in the sixties and offers a useful background to my study.

Almost as a follow up and extension of Abramson's work, Keyssar (1981) presents a brilliant and intelligent examination of black drama as it developed right up to the sixties. The author explains her framework as an approach which examines black drama from the point of view of its strategies of communication. As such she is mostly interested in the dramatist's relation to his audience and the strategies through which he affects this relation. Such an identification of strategy provides a dimension on dramatic communication which has helped in identifying strategies in the plays under discussion.

Sanders (1988) concentrates more on the history of black theatre, seeing it as a process of creating a "black stage reality" while at the same time transforming conventions borrowed from white European culture into forms appropriate to the black cultural experience. Because of her rather restricted focus Sanders's work deals mainly with attempts by black playwrights to transform the theatre to reflect this African American cultural experience.

Fabre (1983) traces the beginnings of black drama from its minstrel origins, showing the effect of commercial white America on black drama and theatre. She examines quite

a number of playwrights and their plays, emphasizing theme and style and looking at the ideological and economic conflicts which obscured authentic black drama. In examining the cultural politics perpetuated by whites and internalised by blacks, she shows how this affected the whole experience of dramatic communication. The book in its particular perspective provides useful insights into the subject of black drama as a whole.

Of more specific relevance to the study of Baraka as an artist is Benston (1976) and Sollors (1978). The former discusses Baraka's poetry and drama generally and broadly in terms of the author's ideas and political image. The book gives a good background to the changes that take place within the writer and in his artistic relation to the American world. Sollors examines Baraka's works specifically, dealing with his evolution as an artist. As such, he traces Baraka's progress from the beat generation through the Black Arts Movement to Maoist outlook, assessing the changes in his career and drama. These two books are significant in the study as they have helped in shaping our framework and approach to Baraka as a dramatist. They offer useful background in determining Baraka's conception of drama and how he has responded to the changes in mood and political

thinking in the sixties. However my study takes Benston's dimension further by determining how the change affected the forms and strategies of Baraka's drama, how it connected it to the social context, and how these strategies affected the audience.

All in all, the present exploration is intended to give a new dimension to this fertile area of literary exploration. Thus, although it is, in so many ways, inspired by various critical approaches, it attempts a new and exacting exercise of examining dramatic forms and strategies. This approach, we believe, sheds more light on aspects of African American drama which were hitherto not clearly discerned. In addition it forms the basis for future research into the relationship between perspective and dramatic form in African American drama.

C H A P T E R     T W O

CHANGE IN SOCIAL CONTEXT : IMPLICATIONS FOR  
DRAMATIC CONCEPTION AND STRATEGY

As drama is the most social and overt of all artistic expressions, it is most dependent on the social conditions and thinking of a society. At every point in history, circumstances and social realities have shaped perspectives and mode of communication in art. Thus the angle from which a playwright perceives his society inevitably affects both his perspective and dramatic form.

The representation of African Americans in drama at every point in history has been linked inevitably with conditions in the American society and with how these have impinged on the consciousness of African Americans and defined their thinking and aspirations. Black drama has had to contend all along with the mixed racial and cultural complexion of American society. The cultural landscape of American society has tended to reflect the predominantly white society and this has often led to the dominance of one racial attitude in the definition of thought and history. In such a social context artistic creations may not always

reflect a form and perspective which emanates from solid experience. Rather, they may be sacrificed for the sake of conforming to the dominant culture's way of seeing reality. Thus the dominant race influences the nature of all artistic creations and goes to great lengths to portray its way of seeing as superior and therefore best suited for the general American life.

In the theater, then the stage reality, the conscious and unconscious assumptions mutually accepted by the theater and its audience, is white, unless white assumptions have been replaced by black assumptions giving a black stage reality.

(Sanders 1988:2).

Within this context the black playwright has to relate to the larger often hostile society while at the same time attempting to communicate and depict his own true and honest experience. Such an operation calls for a subtle strategy of communication between playwright and audience.

Over the periods, dramatic perspective and form in African American drama have changed in relation to the social and political context it finds itself in. These shifts in emphasis and style in African American drama

reveal the changing nature of the black socio-political orientation and its concern for what art should express and represent. This is the way in which drama has developed over these periods, and as a result, changes in perspective and form have been irrevocably connected to the social orientation and type of drama produced in the previous period.

The concern of this chapter, therefore, would be to chart out the changes in two historical periods; the fifties and sixties and determine how the social and political contexts manifested themselves in drama and impacted on perspective and dramatic strategy.

In its form and strategy the fifties mode of drama subscribed to the perspective which saw integration and assimilation as possibilities for the African American. The playwrights major concerns were thus to represent and emphasize the similarities between the two races and thereby minimise conflict and aggression between the white world and the black world. The very forms of drama created evidenced this trend as there was no endeavour to change or challenge the form of drama in mainstream America. Keyssar testifies

to this state of affairs in American drama:

American drama has few traditions and even fewer attempts to break with custom. We can trace the history of American drama from the eighteenth century to the present without ever discovering a mythos or form we could distinguish as distinctly American. Contrary to appearance, the realism to which American theater has until recently tenaciously clung is not an assertion but an escape from a signifying identity.

(Keyssar 1981:1)

This apparent absence of a unifying form and identity seems to have had its effects on black drama, for although, the playwrights questioned the white world, they did so in order to press for equality and in so doing utilizing the larger society's frame of reference. The social orientation of African Americans at this time made the possibility of equality and integration seem real. Indeed after the second World War a new social situation was ushered in American racial relations. America had participated in the war under the banner of freedom and the rights of men to live as humans. By extension, it was also fighting to defend the basic principles of its own democracy. As such, the reality of the war revealed

contradictions between America's rhetoric elsewhere and its domestic practice. The issue of racial discrimination and segregation according to the colour of the skin was rife. The black people both at home and in the war front perceived the inherent contradiction in their nation's expressed ideals.

The war also had the effect of revealing the various achievements of African Americans both at home and abroad, and this naturally gave them a keen sense of their own worth, strength and contribution to America. They had become aware of their own contribution to the professed American dream and had hence acquired a sense of their right to belong to the community which had set such attractive ideals. Thus, certain issues which had been evaded came to the fore and had to be faced, and among these was the question of fundamental human rights.

The social and political situation had therefore taken a different turn but with great social implications for the black populace. The demand was for change of racial relations and African Americans wanted to belong to American society instead of being confined to the margin only. This feeling was further enhanced by the relative economic prosperity

brought about by the war which meant a corresponding prosperity in a small section of the black community. There was therefore the rise of what could be termed as a black middle class who aspired and called for social integration as an outlet for social mobility. The period ultimately saw agitation and pressure from blacks who wanted full integration, and consequently this social pressure coloured and marked the thinking and drama of blacks in the fifties.

Before the 1950's there had been some black drama, but it was mostly drama that protested and depicted social injustices. As far back as the 1920's black drama still thrived aesthetically as there was tremendous encouragement for writing plays from the establishment of black community theaters such as W.E.B. DuBois' theatre group, Krigwa Players which attempted to present a black sense of valid realism. Krigwa Players especially gave an evaluation of drama as it located this drama in its source, the blacks themselves, and emphasized dramatic context and plots on this basis. The group insisted on plays written by black authors who understood their black reality and were capable of revealing such a reality in their compositions as well as enjoying the support of their Negro neighbourhood. However, it is

not until the fifties that we see evidence of the development of a new strategy and mode of representing blacks and their social climate. This could be attributed to the nature of protest in the earlier plays, as Arthur P. Davis has argued in the essay "Integration and Race Literature". Davis argues that the nature of protest writing capitalizes on oppression and segregation and therefore offers a common bond, in a literary sense, between black writers. Hence:

As long as there was this common enemy, we had a common purpose and a strong urge to transform into artistic terms our deep-rooted feelings of bitterness and scorn. When the enemy capitulated he shattered our most fruitful literary tradition. The possibility of imminent integration has tended to destroy the protest element in Negro writing.

(Chapman, Ed., 1968:607).

Thus, as the demands and calls for integration became more insistent over the years, the forms and strategies of African American drama began to reflect and dramatize such pressures and challenges. The social and political events of the period reflected this movement in social thinking as the larger society gave in to some concessions, thus creating a new social context and a potentially

different and socially-aware audience for black drama.

This new social context inspired a new dramatic approach to the subject of racial relations, and dramatists of the fifties began to write and produce plays that reflected the ideals and spirit of integration. Therefore, although black drama still had black characters and background on stage, the emphasis shifted from downright protest to a dramatization of the conditions and quality of life in the black world. For integration as a theme demands a dramatic strategy that unveils problems and conflicts within the African American racial group while at the same time minimizing its racial substance and cultural distinction. Social events had forced some change of attitude towards African Americans and this meant they could form part of the audience even in Broadway productions. As a result the black playwright of the period conceived his audience as a mixed one, and such a perception always influenced the form and strategy of his dramatic communication. The playwright had to devise and fashion his communication bearing in mind the varied nature of the audience's sensibilities.

In spite of this new dimension the problems of the black

playwright were far from being over despite the fact that more plays were written and produced during the 1950's. Ironically, the problems emanated from the very fact that the audience was now a racially mixed one, not a distinctly African American one. Composed of two distinct races, the audience held divergent perceptions of issues in the contemporary social climate. The African American playwright therefore had to somehow overcome this fluid situation and present his play bearing in mind the different values and sensibilities in the society. Such differences in racial identity and perspective among the audience necessitated certain sensibilities in their relation to the action on stage. The needs and reactions of the two groups in the audience could not be similar since in spite of the hoped for possibilities of integration, there was still the fact of their different traditions and history which prevented common values and common perceptions. In view of such discrepancies, the aims of both racial groups were definitely dissimilar even if they both accepted the desirability of integration. Within such a context the black playwright even when personally committed to the ideas of integration, had in reality to work and cope with audiences with different sensibilities and perceptions.

This situation influenced the nature of dramatic communication in most African American drama. For instance, white audiences were inhibited in their appraisal of black perceptions and responses because of their limited and peripheral experience of the black community and its ethos. Here, indeed, was a factor which could lead to misconceptions and misinterpretations giving rise to stereotyping and unreal representations. As reality is mainly a subjective encounter at the individual level, the white audience could affirm certain notions by falsely inferring from the plays certain preconceived ideas influenced by their own cultural reality. Thus, in spite of the edifying ideals of equality and integration which inspired the dramatic perspectives and strategies of African American playwrights in the fifties, a conflict did exist between the ideal of integration and the reality of white American apprehension of Black experience.

Although in general, African American dramatists of the fifties worked within the ambivalent perceptions and interpretations of theatre audiences, the conflict mentioned created problems of communication for African American dramatists. Alice Childress, in her play Trouble In Mind, handles the conflict of interpretation of the

black experience. In this play Childress addresses herself to the very real problems of communication and interpretation in the black drama of the fifties. By creating a play within a play she reveals how these conflicts surface in the theatre world of America and what problems and dilemmas African Americans face in presenting a true picture of themselves either as playwrights or actors.

In the realm of language the black playwright had a predicament especially in relation to the use of the black dialect in stage dialogue since the dialogue could create complications for the white section of the spectators who would construe the black characters as incapable of talking in the proper English language, despite the fact that the playwright's intention might have been very well a depiction of a true picture of the blacks within their own cultural environment.

Thus, the interpretations of white audiences could be denigrating and by extension reinforce certain negative and popularly held assumptions about the black community while disregarding the fact of the playwrights honest attempt to present an authentic and unique experience

through dialogue. On the other hand, in an attempt to communicate to the whites and to prevent alienating them, playwrights may tend to infuse a certain "sophistication" by getting their characters to talk straight English thereby removing that element of "blackness" created by peculiar environment and experience. Needless to say the black audience would be perplexed and confused in relating to such a language since they would fail to relate their lives and understanding to the experience in the theatrical production. Such conflicts of interpretation are indeed highlighted in Alice Childress's play mentioned above.

Yet, in spite of the dilemmas that plagued them in presenting drama to a racially mixed audience, the African American playwrights did their best under the circumstances to present themselves and their experiences, and some sections of the audience acknowledged and responded truthfully to their portrayal. This in a sense was an achievement on their part. For they managed to raise the participation of the black audience in greater numbers, the spectators in turn became responsible for the success of the playwrights financially. Black theatre thrived and developed into a more honest representation of black experience, one that was responsive to black sensibility

while at the same time popularising the theme of integration and acceptance. The drama developed thus reflected different kinds of strategies which made manifest the mood of the decade and also shaped the awareness of blacks and whites, opening their eyes to the realities of their relationships in the larger society.

African American plays of the fifties reflected these perspectives. Rather than portraying themselves as disadvantaged people in relation to white Americans, most of the plays dealt with the experiences of black people as human beings and as people experiencing their own reality in American society. Louis Peterson's Take a Giant Step deals not just with the problems encountered by a black family in its upward mobility but also the problems of adolescence in black family as well as the nuances of relationships between the generations in a black family. The play's protagonist is an adolescent boy, Spencer, who undergoes a double identity crisis. He gropes for a definition of himself in an adult world as well as attempting to chart out a definition for himself in a world submerged in whiteness. The parents are insensitive to the boy's inner needs as they strive for a middle class status and attempt to suppress such a surge of searching for

oneself as it poses a danger to the middle class, white-orientated value system. The play hence reveals the aspirations of the boy and his singular attempts to overcome many odds and be true to himself, and how this affects his relationships both at home and in the larger world. The play therefore raises pertinent questions and fully belongs to the tradition in the fifties both in perspective and form since it utilises the strategy of appeal and instruction to a mixed audience.

The playwright uses this double-edged strategy in presenting the character of Spencer as an ordinary, likable and sensitive boy who undergoes the various problems and emotional rhythms of growing up, problems associated with adolescents of all races and intended to appeal generally to the audience as a whole. However within this drama of life there is also embedded Spencer's peculiarly "black" struggle to maintain a black identity in spite of his upward social mobility. This is the final giant step that Spencer and all black people must take in protecting their humanity and their unique history and experience as they move up on the social ladder and integrate with the wider white society and culture.

Another play within the fifties tradition was A Raisin In The Sun by Lorraine Hansberry. The play dramatizes another family situation where the members of the family have certain dreams and aspirations. The movement of action in the play therefore centres on their attempts in various ways to realise these dreams in the American world. In terms of perspective and form, the drama is largely influenced by the mood of the period in the sense that it depicts and insinuates to the possibility of integration. This is mainly because the characters are floated as having similar dreams to any other white American. This strategy is meant to show the audience the kinds of possibilities inherent in the American system even though they appear to be stifled by unnecessary racial animosity. Hansberry depicts black people not necessarily in opposition to white people but in their own worlds dealing with conflicting dreams and aspirations. Here too, Hansberry is much more interested in how the Younger family deals with and reconciles its personal and generational conflicts. Thus the wider conflict of how to deal with an unwelcoming middle-class neighbourhood will also depend on how strong they are as a family and how strengthened they are in their unique values as a family and as a racial group. In this manner A Raisin In The Sun also speaks on another level and

in a special way to a black audience in the way it dramatizes the issue of racial identity and pride in the unique characterization of the resilient Mama, a strong symbol both of African American history and American social aspirations and mobility.

In essence, and in spite of their social perspectives, what has been referred to as integrationist plays did not offer a cut and dried answer to the problems explored. What they gave was a hope for the possibility of change in attitudes and consequently in the achievement of respect and acceptance. More than this, the very conflicts generated by these plays challenged new strategies in double communication which were tenacious but nevertheless achieved the intentions of the dramatists. To many playwrights the decade of the fifties held the hope for a better future for the oppressed African Americans and their optimism was manifested in the very themes they presented and in the way in which they stated and depicted the possibility of a humane society in America. At the end of the decade this mood of optimism was captured beautifully by the dramatic statement contained in A Raisin In the Sun.

Whereas integrationist perspective and mild protest gave the fifties its particular mode of drama, African American drama saw change in the turbulent years of the 1960's. This could be understood in terms of the past decade and its mode of integrationist drama. Although some of the values of the last decade were still upheld in the new decade by some playwrights, there was among many playwrights a definite shift towards a generally new approach in perspective, form and strategy of representation. Some social and political factors facilitated this kind of development. The promises of the larger society concerning emancipation and reconstruction had not been upheld and in such a situation the message and calls of the civil rights movement increasingly rung hollow and false even to the most inclined and to those who had believed in an American solution all along. The disillusion and despair of the African Americans emanating from such developments had its own implications in the world of drama and theatre, and this was particularly contained in the abrupt change in the mode of drama and the demise of the last decade's mild and conciliatory protest. The thinking of the time had changed as the sixties became a period of agitation and pressure from movements like the Black Power which had

a more political agenda, while the artistic branch was contained in the Black Arts Movement.

Blacks pressed ahead in order to attain certain goals for they wanted to be personally involved in history; they wanted a chance to shape their destinies rather than leaning on white liberals who only paid lip-service to the initiative of changing history. Thus the riots and the general tension of the sixties were a reflection of changed times and moods. The events in this decade underlined a significant historical change in the thinking of black people in America as they confronted both themselves and the white world. For the black Panther Movement meaningful existence and liberation for black people could only come in a cultural as well as a political context.

Such circumstances and developments created an internal change in the very structure and emphasis of drama, making it more a form of black expression. The white world stood condemned and accused by black drama which became increasingly tinged with overt political acts and tone. This could be seen in the change and the general shift of

the playwrights' perspectives and their relationship towards their audiences. The playwrights' emphasis now lay more on language, situations and forms separate from mainstream white American drama, as they sought to express authentic formations and genuine self-discovery for blacks. The nature of the shift in social orientation was more towards a social context which moved away from the social and general imperatives of the dominant culture and its standards to a more racial and cultural distinctiveness. And with the social upheavals and black disillusion with the larger society, the dramatic mode was bound to change to express this new wave of social thinking. One positive thing was that the new ideas and forms of drama which emerged showed the tendency of more creativity which came from the need to communicate separate positions and distinctive ideals.

The change of focus meant a direct communication to the black audience and a conscious exclusion of the white audience. The function of drama in the African American world moved from the integrationist-oriented perspective which assumed common American aspirations and ideals to a more militant assertion of a separate black experience

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and aspiration. Thus rather than call for change of attitudes in the American mainstream, African American dramatists of the sixties called upon black audiences to reject the larger society's essentially Euro-American worldview and ideals and aspire to a separate definition within the context of their own historical experience in America. In this way, the easy assumptions of the late fifties that African Americans were poised to be assimilated both socially and artistically into mainstream America, was in effect rejected. The black playwrights who were more revolutionary set different priorities for their theatre and strove for a reorientation of values and perspectives. Their emphasis as dramatists lay now on a distinct cultural, social and political orientation imbued with black consciousness and a sense of separate identity.

This new orientation naturally led to the development of fresh perspectives and new forms of dramatic communication. African American dramatists made conscious decisions to write according to a perspective which expressed a private truth too clear to be explicated in rigid and imitated forms of expression. This was the motivation of the black drama in the sixties, a motivation

which impelled dramatists to seek freedom from established conventions of the theatre, liberating themselves from those rigid definitions of the larger society by carving and fashioning a mode of drama which responded to their unique cultural level and plane of awareness and understanding.

Such a conception and mode of drama implied a different relationship to the audience. It meant a conscious effort to address the black audience exclusively, using language that was loaded with symbol and cultural implications meaningful only to African American audiences. This mode of dramatic communication which subscribes to such radical perspectives of seeking black existential meanings by going back to black audiences as the only source of meaningful interaction poses certain problems. This is precisely because the theatre needed spectators who in American theatre circles were mixed, but predominantly white. Yet the playwright and the theatre also needed such audiences for their own survival in the commercial setting for financial support. Thus this need, legitimate as it is, is the same reason which could inhibit an authentic and freedom-seeking black drama. So the very

dictates within theatre circles might not be the requirements the African American needs in an honest and true portrayal of their experiences, and their understanding of those experiences contained in such gallant perspectives and forms of dramatic communication.

Therefore for the artists, especially the playwrights, this decade amidst all these activities became a logical period of significant output. This can be partially explained by the very nature of drama as the most public and social of all artistic expressions. Thus naturally the drama of the period responded to all the social and political thoughts and playwrights had to thrash out most of these issues on stage. The drama also reflected various shades of suggestions and emphases as a reflection of the actual mood of the time. Amiri Baraka's imprecations and accusations of white America urged blacks to be aware of the dangers that white America poses to their souls. Ed Bullins plays depicted both the beautiful and the ugly in the African American experience in order to give the blacks a fair perception of their lives and aid in their assessment of themselves as a prerequisite to a change in their lives. In giving this exclusively black viewpoint,

the dramatists portrayed how within this context they could carve for themselves the destiny they had always desired rather than rely on external solutions.

In a way this perspective became a more active struggle for change in sharp contrast to the passive endearments of the fifties with their dependency syndrome. Perhaps the positive streak in this separatist endeavour and method of effecting change was the realization that change can only be effected from the downtrodden and not from the privileged group. This view contradicted such powerful perspectives like James Baldwin's in The Fire Next Time which called for more understanding from the blacks and represented whites as victims of their history and culture, while presenting blacks as capable of helping America overcome its own racial crisis. In this inclusive perspective lay a very good exposition of the general thinking of the blacks in the fifties as they still held a lot of hope and hence judged American mainstream society by its potential and not its accomplishments. It is this hopeful and edifying perspective, contained in Baldwin's book, with its emphasis on the indomitable human spirit, that was shattered and rejected in the mid-sixties by the

radical and fresh perspectives of Amiri Baraka, Ed Bullins and others who felt the times needed a different response to the never listening ear of the white power structure.

Naturally, this shift in perspective was bound to affect the dramatic strategies and mode of communication which African American playwrights developed to reflect social attitudes of the fifties. The double-edged communication in which playwrights attempted to speak to both blacks and whites had succeeded superficially but had generated conflict in apprehension and interpretation. Now, the radical black artists of the sixties felt that there was need to recreate and redefine black lives in terms which are also black, and the Black Arts Movement worked solely towards this by artistically reconstructing such a world to the black people.

C H A P T E R     T H R E E

RESHAPING RACIAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

IN DRAMA: PERSPECTIVE AND FORM IN BARAKA'S DRAMA

As a black playwright who grew up in the 1940's, started writing in the 1950's and matured as a playwright in the turbulent 1960's, Amiri Baraka is a good example of a playwright who straddles the mood and the dramatic perspectives of the fifties and sixties. He is thus a good illustration of the transition from the fifties to the sixties in the drama world of African America. His own work as a playwright was directly shaped by the social and political events of America during the 1960's and 1970's and by his own personal response to those events.

Formerly known as Le Roi Jones, Amiri Baraka was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1934 and later attended Howard University where he graduated from in 1953. He did service for the U.S. Air Force from 1954 to 1957. After this stint, he moved to New York City and lived in the liberal bohemian neighbourhood of Greenwich Village, and later moved to the black heartland of Harlem. In the period between the late

1950's and early 1960's he was already establishing himself in the literary world as a poet, editor and teacher (Keyssar 1981). As a beat poet, (a form of poetry whose focus was a self-oriented and a despairing perception of the cultural and political landscape) he edited beat poetry magazines like "floating Bear" and "Yugen" in Greewich Village where he primarily worked with white writers. During the same time he worked for his master's degree in Literature at Columbia University. In addition to the recognition he had gained in the literary world he also started writing the plays which established him as a noteworthy writer later on. It is ironic, as Sanders has noted, that the palywright who was generally perceived as more vehement and radical than any of his contemporaries in his rejection of white mainstream culture actually derived many of his insights from his association with the avant-garde white poets of the 1950's and early 1960's (Sanders 1988:123). The critic also notes that Baraka's anthology of the avant-garde, "The Moderns", which was published in 1963 is still highly acclaimed. Baraka's involvement in avant-garde writing in addition to his own black experience explains a lot in his nature and his artistic endeavours. As Benston has noted:

Euro-American and Afro-American societies have a common problem: alienation. Modern man's goal is to come home, to be at home in the world. The growth of nationalism in the past century-and-a-half attests to a broad concern with the collective, archetypal desire for wholeness and security. On the other hand, the concurrent intensity of self-scrutiny indicates that the organic unity of individual and a community has been lost. Baraka's career encompasses both these aspects of modern experience.

(Benston 1976:3).

This underlying problem explains Baraka's movement from the "fifties" posture of facile integrationism to an antithetical perspective of black consciousness in the arts. He must have seen and deeply sensed the illusory nature of the wholesale acceptance of such a perspective, and increasingly political and social events of the sixties were to prove him right and lead him to a satiric self examination and assessment of his liberal bohemian perspectives in his introspective play The Slave.

Thus, in our assessment of the relationship between Baraka's life, political development and growth as a playwright, the plays he wrote in 1964 represent the early stage of his development when he was still living in Greenwich Village and still exploring the implications of

the integrationist ideals of the fifties. Of the three plays he produced in 1964 (The Eight Ditch, Baptism and Dutchman). Dutchman was the most successful winning an Obie award in May the same year as the best off-broadway production in the 1963-64 season as well as a cash prize of \$500 from Edward Albee. It opened at Cherry Lane Theatre on March 24, 1964, and in so many ways marked the beginning of a new dramatic experience that signified Baraka's re-ordering of the context of the African American's total experience and a major break with the theatre tradition of African Americans of an earlier period. This is so because the play reveals a different new outlook that does not appeal to compassion and understanding but rather chastises and accuses the white group while at the same time seeking to awaken the black group from its comfortable and complacent position within the social arrangements of the fifties and sixties.

Although the play still maintained an aspect of the fifties perspective in its dual communication to black and white audiences, it was a radically different strategy from the fifties tradition which sought to emphasize racial similarities in a bid to create a common point of convergence.

In contrast, however, Dutchman adopts a dramatic form that creates a different strategy towards its audience by setting up a world of opposites and opposition. Its dramatic development reveals the opposition both at the personal and societal levels where conflicts emanate from historical, racial and cultural differences. The two characters who populate this world of drama and schism also reveal this opposition in their differences in colour, sex and worldview. The issue of colour in America is in this way charged with significance at both the cultural and social level, while the sexual difference depicts the male character as black and the female character as white, suggesting that within such a division are various other suggestions and implications of racial and sexual conflict.

In creating these oppositions in character and worldview the drama of Dutchman also creates oppositions in dramatic form, overshadowing the cozy domestic scenes and forms of the fifties that projected the sameness of dream and aspiration among Americans of all races. Baraka's dramatic art relies on the creation of opposition because the playwright feels that the black persons's salvation does not lie in his adoption of a mainstream tradition that

rejects or alienates him but in the recreation of his own inner sensibility and distinctive cultural strengths.

Accordingly, the very beginning of Dutchman dwells and thrives on suggestions and nuances, both mythical and modern that set up oppositions between its two principal characters. This is evident in the setting where the dramatic world is in an underground subway train and the two characters who are different in every sense operate on two levels of existence. The mythical suggestion goes back to the very beginning of mankind suggesting the opposition between Adam and Eve in their Edenic world. The modern myth practical and steeped in the present, extends the opposition removing it from the pastoral context of Adam and Eve and putting it into the metallic world of modern America with its racial, sexual and other conflicts.

First, it is the young black person who appears on stage in the subway train, an allusion to the first appearance of Adam in the garden of Eden. The newspaper he scans is almost like a shield to protect him from the harsh and cruel world of the modern age. This defensive posture is juxtaposed with the smile of the white lady, a premeditated

smile that contrasts with Clay's instinctive smile and immediately suggests his innocence and naivete in a hard and calculating white world. Thus, as early as the opening scene two worlds are built around the dramatic action: one that is a natural, almost innocent, world and another that is a cunning, calculating and perilous world. In addition, this encounter reveals certain aspects of the awkward relationship between the man and the woman. The underlying current in this meeting surfaces through the eye contacts and the two smiles (one innocent, the other calculated) which reflect a polarity of intentions as well as an uneasy relationship to the white world on the part of the young man. However, in spite of his unease, the young man still looks for pleasure in the brief encounter and even hopes to extend it further.

The opening mime enacts all these suggestions, creating a background of opposing worlds even before the two characters openly confront each other. Thus the dramatic world that is suggested is not the familiar, black cozy and domestic world we see in plays like Take A Giant Step and A Raisin In The Sun but the symbolic differences and assumptions between the world inhabited by black and white

in mainstream America. Thus in this first scene, the white woman with all the suggestions created around her in the opening scene, immediately becomes an agent of seduction. She further proves this assertion by taking initiative in speaking familiarly to Clay, an assumption which is later proved by her contention that she knows his type. Clay's response in this initial onslaught is significant by its implicit hopelessness as he uses the magazine "in a hopeless effort to fan himself". He is, in a sense, surrounded by the presence of Lula and therefore confronted by a cunning world of calculation from which he finds escape impossible. In this dramatic explication the imagery is that of Clay being slowly enclosed in the other's world, and by mere naive responses succumbing and conceding to this lurking danger. This capitulation is proved when Lula's calculating accusations get him to admit he had been looking, and therefore falls clearly in her trap, becoming gradually more defensive and vulnerable.

Lula's tone and mood from her utterance "searching you out" becomes her way of assuming control over Clay and the conversation that ensues. She sets the cues for the content and direction of their conversation, defining the part which

Clay must play. Clay is intrigued and ensnared as the talk insinuates and alludes to sex. His acceptance of Lula's definition is significantly proved by his defensive question "Is that the way I look?" This defensiveness paves way not only for Lula's continued definition of him but also for her decided psychological control over him in this early part of their meeting. The dramatic situation becomes singularly Lula's conception of Clay in her own world of ideas about the world and about the black man's place in it. She offers Clay this picture and expects him to accept it. In this way she assumes complete command over the identity of the black person, enacting the popular assumptions of the larger society in its all embracing definition of black people.

At this point of their encounter there is a marked and deliberate allusion to Lula's past exploits with other black victims, extending her symbolic nature as a character and enlarging her perspective into a generalized white assumption. Her tone is quite different at this point and there is a tinge of a clear warning of how the other relationships had ended in violence. In this way Lula reveals something of Baraka's perspective that the middle

class values, traditions and history in which the black assimilate normally feels a part of, has really no place for him and is an oppressive tradition that constrains and suppresses the black man's true feelings and real history. Baraka indicates that Clay's behavior and mode of dress reveal the discomfort and constraints entailed in living the middle class life, and the entire fantasy world of love play and seduction between Clay and Lula is an enactment of how the white world woos, seduces and lures the willing black into its world. In his skillful interplay between fantasy and reality Baraka reveals that the seduction entails gross personal and historical violation and has dire consequences for the black man. This suggestion is for instance, reflected in Lula's comments:

May the people accept you as a ghost of the future. And love you, that you might not kill them when you can.... You're a murderer, Clay, and you know it. You know goddamn well what I mean.

But the reality is that they are not free of this history. Lula still sees Clay as an escaped nigger crawling through the wires to be with his forbidden fruit and Clay lies about the plantations in order to shake off his

prohibition. Lula has all along initiated the action and taken control of Clay's thinking, ensuring that it is not possible for him to step out of that rigid and confined definition she has of him. Her adept directions and diffusions of situations work as she smoothly glides from one pretense to another. In this skillful interplay between fantasy and reality the subtle understatements and suggestions in the dialogue as well as other dramatic expositions, reveal the true nature of their relationship though the actuality is covered by Lula's words of pretence. Thus between Lula's words and the playwright's suggestions, we learn that their historical nurturing is acutely different for an actual and meaningful conversation or relationship between them; that in so many ways it is the source of conflict and separation, since in reality Lula's interpretation excludes Clay whom she regards as having no right to a middle class status.

There are visible changes in the second scene. More seats and people are visible unlike in the opening scene. Thus the very setting here uncovers the superficiality of Lula's judgement and perception. Her own world of fantasy, controlled only by her, seems poised now for a collision

with the world at large. With these changes in scenery, the second scene sets the action for a final confrontation between the two characters. As the talk turns to the concept of manhood, there is a noticeable change in Clay, as he notices and realizes the people who have come into the train. This significant change is invoked in his answers which are hesitant unlike the earlier automatic agreements Lula has been used to, and she is now forced to concede that her earlier fabricated conceptualization of Clay might have been superficial:

Except I do go on as I do. Apples and long walks with deathless intelligent lovers. But you mix it up. Look out the window, all the time. Turning pages. Change change change. Till, shit, I don't know you....

As Clay starts to reveal himself by tearing down the surface front he has all along presented to her and the audience, her shallow presumptions are shattered and flayed, and her supposed knowledge is consequently demolished, after being questioned and shown as her own parochial version and conception of reality which is not in any way the black reality of Clay. Her attitude becomes a reflection of the larger society's attitude which is a

deluded knowledge and understanding of the black world. Thus in this second scene it is Clay who has the point of view and the control. Baraka presents us with the psychological motivation which has worked this transformation on him. Clay is particularly stung because after wooing him and luring him into a world which is mere fantasy, the white world, represented by Lula now ridicules and rejects him. At this point then, all the genuine feelings and perceptions that the 'middle class' Clay has suppressed emerge, and Clay reveals his angry feelings as well as his hatred and natural instinctive desire to murder the oppressor.

Now, Clay assumes command and reveals a clear discriminating knowledge not only of himself but also of Lula and all white people, accusing them of being too stupid and superficial to see beyond the black man's mask:

You don't know anything except what is there  
for you to see. An act. Lies. Device.  
Not the pure heart, the pumping black heart.  
You don't ever know that.

The process of tearing down his mask is also a means knowing himself. So Clay accepts now that to keep appearances in his "new" world the aspiring middle class

black must continually keep his "pumping black heart" submerged. Now he reveals that behind his own mask there is a "pumping black heart" that no white man will ever know and which really hates the white world. Clay begins, in essence, to present and re-interpret the black cultural world from the inside. He does this by linking black music and dance to the pain of black experience "Belly rub is dark places, with big hats and overcoats held up with one arm". He reinterprets the real meaning of the blues and song sang in the blues operates therefore on a dual level, the level which teases and lies to white people and the level which speaks genuinely to black people. Clay also explains the blues as a mode of sublimation, a neurosis which acts as a metaphor to absorb real feeling and transform it into music and song. It is therefore something that blacks have adopted to stop seeing, and to stop thinking logically enough to see oppression and react with murder. This revelation is acutely different from Lula's own interpretation of the birth of the blues in earlier part and her later attempt at belly dance. As she is excluded from Clay's re-interpretation she only looks at this system as having only one level, that of sexual meaning, derived from the dominant culture's perception of

blacks as sexually charged. Therefore the final speech in which Clay tears down the mask and reveals the black experience as it really is, becomes an acceptance of this world. For he sees that world as meaningful and whole unlike his divided self expressed in the ambivalent relationship to Lula earlier in the drama. He sees his earlier position as the real source of pain and frustration. And through the speech he makes a spontaneous decision to move from the white world. For in acknowledging black world as meaningful and self-contained it is inevitable that he separates from the former world which he sought because he felt it would create meaning in his life. By embracing a black point of view, Clay also expresses himself through the language which can contain such a world of values. Clay now uses the code language of the blues as he talks, not bothering to establish a rapport with Lula or with a white audience, appearing to be communicating only to the blacks in the audience who understand him:

Clarlie Parker. All the hip white boys  
scream for Bird. And Bird saying "Up your  
ass, feeble-minded ofay! Up your ass".  
And they sit there talking about the  
tortured genius of Charlie Parker.

He calls Parker his black pet name and uses the black words of abuse which the white boys see as expressions of genius. Clay, therefore, shows that they really do not understand the singer for they do not share his worldview; they are separate from it. It is the same with Bessie Smith. White people think she sings of love, suffering and desire, but Smith is saying in black language "Kiss my black ass". Obviously this movement in the scene speaks only in black language and its the black audience who will really penetrate it fully. Clay now links this mode of communication in code which is used by blues singers to his own attempts to write poetry. Earlier, talking to Lula he had called himself a black Baudelaire, hinting presumably at Baudelaire's sense of division between the call of the common life of his society. Now he sees himself as any blues singer using poetry as a mask, a communication in code to stop him from confronting his true feelings which were to murder his oppressors.

Thus this final speech in which Clay tears down the black mask reveals the black experience as it really is. It becomes as well a confrontation with his own divided and ambivalent self. It becomes an act of descent into

himself as well as a final and uncompromising acceptance of himself. Although the speech is the truth as subjectively experienced, the particular world Clay inhabits does not constitute and thrive on truth and he is therefore thwarted. This thwarting subtly implies that words and language in such a rigid oppressive context may be futile and action on the part of the oppressed may be relevant. Clay's speech becomes then the catastrophe of the drama's action and acts as a negation of the mainstream conception and interpretation of the African-American. It presents and expresses his inner reality and his invisible quality as a black person, thus revealing the outer appearance for what it is; a device to contain the real self in order to avoid violence and destruction.

The very perspective of the playwright is accentuated by the speech as shown in the central strategy of the play whereby the drama relates in a different way to its audience and does not strive to reach a consensus through a dual communication to all sections of the audience as was the case for instance, in Hansberry's A Raisin In The Sun. In this way the play questions the validity of integration and through the dramatic motion shows it as one of the various

entrapments of the larger society and a means of incapacitating the black populace. The integrationist perspective is depicted as a dangerous and oppressive strategy which takes its toll on the black man's ability to be his true self. It is shown as surviving only on deception and neurosis and the code language only violence will ensue, since blacks would have become as cold-blooded, rational and logical as their counterparts.

The final act in which Lula murders Clay and notes the action in her diary symbolizes her final attitude to Clay. Clay only becomes a statistic in her life. It shows in her relationship with Clay, she overlooks the human complexity and the range of experiences that can be shared in relationships. She ignores Clay's need to communicate his version of reality. By her horrid act the audience is treated to the impatience and rigid frame of mind of the larger society, and at the same time given a clear warning that despite their struggle to communicate and persuade they can neither be understood nor be given an audience.

On the other hand though Clay's anger and frustration is belated, it is not entirely useless, for he achieves

knowledge before death, and it is up to the black audience to synthesize this knowledge and act on it. This warning is consistent with the end of the play since the play's ending is open-ended enough to show that though the circle may continue the situation will continue to be explored by the black dramatist. When the young African American appears the other passengers are off the train having dumped Clay's body and he is like Clay before him; in a secluded world. It is as if Baraka is leaving the possibilities of the situation open, wondering if his own message has gone down.

#### 1. DUTCHMAN: PERSPECTIVE AND FORM

The main thrust of Dutchman's perspective is antithetical to the main point of views represented in the drama of the fifties precisely because of its eloquent denunciation of the dual dramatist-audience communication so forcefully contained in Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin In the Sun. It therefore seeks to reorder and reinterpret certain fundamental and normative values as a basis of change towards a different cultural and social

outlook. In this way it carries a sense of two traditions, the first one delineated in the first scene is to be denounced and the second one still in its anticipatory stage and contained in Clay's speech becomes an alternative vision of a different landscape of possibilities.

The former perspective is negated and a different redefinition ushered in because the fifties social perspectives does not capture and comprehend effectively a historical and cultural reality which is so different from the mainstream canons and systems of references. Contained in Dutchman's perspective is the beginning of such a radical move out of this socio-cultural definition into a positive sense of cultural identity in undistorted terms. With such an attempt, a different set of assumptions are created as the basis for communication and internal form in the drama.

The dramatic confrontation between Clay and Lula reveals the above observations. Since with development of the drama there are also insistent steps towards the transformation of Clay from a person who accepts the various definitions imposed on him to one who questions

and actually flays such fake assumptions and surmises. The development of Lula is in a sense a reversal of Clay's development since she moves away from her confident easy assumptions and offensive posture to a defensive position as she is made to realize that her world is built on falsehood. Thus in this play the oppositions that were set up in the first scene are continued, and each character's way of seeing and apprehension dictated and controlled by its distinct and separate experiences. Clay's experiences include the attempts towards middle class values in order to gain acceptance to the larger world. Some blacks in America felt that the only solution to the race problem was to conform to the cultural dictates of the dominant culture and Clay's posture in the first scene reflects this feeling. This view is however portrayed as a superficial way of achieving equality and respect. It is shown as an elation based upon illusion, since as Clay's experiences and his ultimate speech reveals, it is not a concrete and sufficient ideological position especially in view of the fact that Clay actually has to negate his personal truth and cultural identity to achieve it.

Lula's opposite assumptions and her eventual final step of murdering Clay become the dramatic testimony of

her attitude and conception of reality. By extension it reveals her world as basically against any attempt at self-realization on the part of the black person; it reveals this world as built around the suppression of any black self-consciousness since such an assertion threatens white people's idea of themselves and their domination over blacks. The emerging perspective as contained in Clay's speech, questions the foundations of the latter society's cultural pretense and reveals it as actually against the interest of black people and their values it questions the intentions and real interests of white liberals and shows their hypocrisy, since they like Lula, would want to control and define blacks rather than let them control their own lives and destiny.

As would be expected, the play's dramatic form reflects the confrontations and polarities set up between the two symbolic characters. The first scene dramatizes the assumptions of the world which Clay is attempting to enter. It shows it as a fantasy world and as a world opposed to his wholeness and manhood. The world revealed by the dialogue is kept on a fantasy level because it is a false world that cannot stand the weight of the real world. As a

result the dialogue here is fraught with suggestions and inferences that are open to various interpretations.

The stage becomes the arena of two parallel suggestions; suggestions from the real world and suggestions from the mythical and fantasy world.

The second scene which dramatizes Clay's emergence and control of his life and world strengthens the oppositions because it presents the black reality as it really is: culturally separate and distinct from the white world. Clay is much more in command of this world. His dialogue resurrects a hidden black world which hates the white world. His language speaks only from this world, appearing to communicate to the people of this world and to be affirming and accepting it. By setting up such oppositions between the two worlds Baraka infers that redemption would only be possible through an acceptance of self and an achievement of wholeness since these will ensure relationships based on genuine respect of different values and world views.

The general intention of the drama towards the audience can be deduced from this perspective. In setting a

different mood from previous drama, Dutchman also reveals a different strategy towards the audience. As the play form reveals the internal formulation of opposition so also does its strategy reveal a different set of intentions in relation to the spectator. For the black audience, the character of Clay is both an education and a warning. It is bound to initially hate and reject the absurdity of his conforming behavior since it touches on the sensibilities of black people and awakens familiar memories.

Furthermore the overt sexual gestures of Lula suggest stereotypical perceptions of blacks which might be familiar and serve as a warning. The initial scene especially will make them uncomfortable since they will perceive Clay as being weak and dominated. But these messages are intentional aspects of the dramatist's strategy of communication and are meant to make them hate certain aspects of their lives as they are reflected on the stage.

As with the oppositions established in characters and their perceptions, the second scene is meant to move them out of such a negative position towards consciousness. It is supposed to warn them of the forms of oppression and the consequences of their acquiescence in a bigoted society.

The anger in Clay's speech is bound to make any white spectator also realize the magnitude of the racial conflict as well as their limited knowledge of the real black life. Clay's "black" language and its inferences will warn them of the dangers of the black's two faced presentations but will still exclude them from the inferences and connotations of that language.

So Dutchman in its dramatic perspective and form is clearly the beginning of a break with the perspectives of a dramatic tradition which only questioned the society but remained helplessly within its confines and values. The play's strength lies in its forceful exploration of the inadequacies and imminent failure of this perspective and its suggestion of an alternative perspective in which the affirmation of a meaningful black world would form the basis of a liberating drama culture. Thus the play becomes a dramatic testimony and a statement as well as the beginning of redefinition on the artistic level through its mode of drama and on the social level through its insights into the dilemma of the black person.

II. THE SLAVE: THE DRAMA OF INNER CONFLICT AND  
OUTER REACTION

As was argued in the first section of the chapter, the ending of Dutchman is open-ended enough to be liable to at least two interpretations. On one hand the description of the young black man suggest that the cycle will continue; that the white world would continue to woo and lure black people into its world, deny them genuine self-definition and kill them when they rebel. On the other hand the protagonist's level of perception, self understanding and self-acceptance suggest that the playwright will continue to explore these racial confrontations farther and that perhaps the black protagonist will not always be destroyed as he is at the end of Dutchman.

Thus, in terms of perspective, the transition from Dutchman to The Slave is a period of revaluation which assesses all the previous political, intellectual and emotional positions of the protagonist. Thus, even though he is on the offensive and the one carrying the gun this time, in The Slave the protagonist must still come to terms

with and exorcise all the liberal positions he had earlier held. The Slave which was first presented at the St. Mark's playhouse in December, 1964, carries Baraka's perspective further by analyzing and evaluating all the playwright's earlier intellectual and liberal positions.

The action of the play is in a large living room furnished with the taste of "an intelligent university professor and his wife". The description, exposition and prologue present two worlds; the seen world of the room and the heard world of explosions outside the room. These two become complementary to the action of the play since they comment on each other and give meaning to the action. More comment on the action is provided by the prologue where the protagonist, described as "an old slave haggardly dressed" gives a philosophical speech within which the two worlds acquire a double dimension. The prologue's main arguments dwell on the protagonist's experience as a larger world around him. From this angle he questions the parameters used for judging and for deciding ideas about colour, language and morality and concludes that they are dependent on the perspective of the person passing the judgement. From this understanding he concludes that

he needs a different language from the mainstream language to express himself. As the old slave continues to assess himself as a black man in America he recognizes that all his previous positions have involved some measure of self-deception.

... Sometimes the place and twist of what we are will push and sting, and what the crust of our stance has become will ring in our ears and shatter that piece of our eyes that is never closed.

He therefore admits that the learned black people like him have been involved in such deceptions through a stupid refusal to know the fundamental truths about their existence. It is this ignorance that makes them "foot-dragging celebrities at the core of any filth" in the world around them. It is this which makes them fail to question or examine all the feelings and ideas they have imbibed. His conclusion is that the learned Negro has imbibed too many ideas that have come between him and his true self.

The prologue begins the scene because within its critical revaluation it explains why the protagonist must revisit and reassess his past life. It therefore presents itself as the "raison d'etre" for Walker's confrontation with Easley and his wife in the ensuing drama. It is also related to the other dramatic world outside, the arena of the revolution, because it is the assessment of Walker's past life that will make his revolution really meaningful. In this manner, the prologue establishes the relationship of the two dramatic worlds to the protagonist.

The setting and description of the action before Grace and Easley come in is significant both to the perspective and the dramatic unfolding of the action of The Slave. Walker's language and the idea of carrying a gun is a reversal of the situation in Dutchman. The setting also presents the liberal intellectual world in which Walker had existed prior to the revaluation, and the ensuing dialogue between the three characters reveal Walker's inner conflict with the world represented by Easley and Grace. The dialogue reveals both an intellectual and emotional conflict with this world.

Walker's ironic comment on his own previous attitude to poetry and knowledge in the western world appears to be a struggle with a tradition which he now recognizes does not express his history or the sensibilities that have been created from them. This comes through in the argument where Grace and Easley insist on the idea of writing, wanting to know if Walker still writes poetry. But Walker has changed and therefore the significance of poetry as a social commentary to him is no longer important. Poetry held such a fascination for him earlier because he still lived and deluded himself that he fully belonged to such a tradition and therefore he could relate to its meaning and forms of expression. But with his change of attitude to that world he looks at its aesthetics as impotent and meaningless to a black person that is why he has changed his tone and meaning to Yeats, the Anglo-Irish poet, as a situational irony, for he does not have to write poetry which does not express his sense of aesthetics but that of an alien culture. He sees such an activity as acting as a safety valve as it substitutes meaningful action, hence it is an act of self-delusion to the black person. He believes now that poetry cannot be divorced from action; that it must in fact inspire and eventually lead to action.

Walker's former position comes out with the dialogue between him and Easley. The latter says:

I thought you meant yourself to be a fantastic idealist? All those speeches and essays and poems... the rebirth of idealism. That the Western white man had forfeited the most impressive characteristic of his culture... the idealism of rational liberalism... and that only the black man in the West could restore that quality to Western culture, because he still understood the necessity for it.

(Jones 1964: p. 62).

But Walker has now changed from this idealistic position and therefore rejects the liberal posture of Easley. He reveals Easley as the professor who cannot go beyond the face-value of Western liberalism hence his threat of calling the police. Therefore when Easley's history and conception of reality is in any way threatened he actually thinks of a reactionary alternative, he does not have the courage to face any other possibility. Walker has moved beyond that point of idealism, and to him it is action which is the central value, which holds the possibility of creating a different world and not the concept of appeal which is a logical extension of liberal rationalism of Western thought.

He argues:

And the act itself has some place in the world... it makes some place for itself. Right? But you all accuse me, not understanding that what you represent, you, my wife, all our old intellectual cut-throats, was something that was going to die anyway.

(Jones 1964: p. 75).

To him such a position was unrealistic as it is tantamount to moving too far away from the actual meanings of life, hence they cannot see the world the way it is. Easley, to him, is therefore a symbol of such a world and what it has done to him. For it is a result of his association with such a world that he suffers an anguish of being conditioned to talk a language which does not express him or even reflect his own ambivalence. It follows, therefore, that in his action of negating this system of values and substituting it with a concrete action, he begins to create a different context of existence which might be more meaningful to him.

In spite of Walker's negating action, he still talks about the children, an ever present testimony of his

involvement in the world of his present wrath. Such an involvement is a dent and an impediment to his revolutionary posture since it demonstrates an irrevocable connection to the world he hates. Walker finds it hard to completely purge himself as is clearly seen in his insistence on wanting the children. This betrays his emotional attachment and a psychic make-up not completely detached and liberated from the world of his rejection. By being involved in that world intellectually through his acceptance of its liberal traditions, he had used the same assumptions in his personal life by getting involved emotionally in the same world. Experience, though, has taught him more about this world and he is in many ways disenchanted. This mood comes out well in his response: "I don't hate you at all, Grace, I hated you when I wanted you. I haven't wanted you for a long time. But I do want those children".

In a way this utterance portrays a movement of consciousness from a former self which was immersed in the white world. For Walker realises that the former feelings he had have no place in an unequal and prejudiced society, and only acted as a betrayal to his own race. It was such an inner contradiction which made his hatred for the source

of his weakness, Grace, inevitable.

Thus the arguments between the trio: Walker, Grace and Easley reveal their grasp of reality at basically personal levels. This is clearly evident as Grace cannot understand Walker's need for the children, and how their own death could serve the revolution, for she does not see the radical change in Walker which desires their death "as some kind of psychological unit". What the couple fail to see is that Walker's revolutionary movement bases its premise and philosophy on action, whatever its nature and results. But the white world is more comfortable with words as they control language and can define reality strictly on their own terms and from their own worldview. Thus, when presented with another way of seeing, they become disoriented and therefore eager to defend their particular conception of reality even if it means murder. In such a state of oppression they control the process of history and how it affects the individual and the society and can therefore manipulate such to favour their position and station in life. Walker is therefore rebelling against this basis of existence and his argument in defending the raging war is that history is initiated and controlled by

individuals who make up the society and since the white liberals are themselves makers of history they did nothing to change the existing basis of definition. Thus, by taking up the war blacks were justified in their action to change and shape a history which has neglected and persecuted them for centuries. And just like white individuals it is the turn of blacks either to succeed or fail. Walker has therefore no illusions about a prospective future and acts merely on a concrete present which is unfair. In the context of this reasoning, Easley's liberal rationalism and Grace's lithe reasoning are too irrelevant as a justification of right and wrong. Walker himself argues thus:

Perhaps you're right. But I have always found it hard to be neutral when faced with ugliness. Especially an ugliness that has worked all my life to twist me.

Easley's and Grace's action towards the end of the first Act becomes a comment on their "supposed" reasoning and value for words. This is because of the juxtaposition between their talk and their action which do not express unity of intention. For when Walker is slightly overcome

by the drink their gestures become a preparation for an attack while they talk to keep him in the same state as they plot. So words become only an expression of experience. By showing such a disconnection between language and intention Baraka is revealing the function of language in the liberal world, showing how easy it is to manipulate it for expediency. By extension he is also inferring to the ways in which language acts as a pacifying mechanism in the plural society. All through the drama the audience is steered to see this technique as a revelation of how language operates in the mainstream American society. The dramatic action then urges the black audience to redefine their relationship to the language in the larger society and to understand the danger of certain manifestations of values and worldview. As happens with the language of Lula in Dutchman, the white mode of expression becomes an aberration of reality and a medium of control of the black world. The suspense at the end of this act is thus a dramatic statement on the hazards a black person faces in such a manipulative society. As Easley's motion of bracing himself to attack ends the section, the audience is left to ponder over the possibility of Walker's defeat and capture. For implicit in the action is the clear warning of such a possibility while the explosions outside

bring to the audience the awareness of an alternative situation to the world represented by the living room situation.

In the second act Baraka's argument manifests itself more in dramatic action than in dialogue. With the subtle oppositions established between Walker and the other two characters, the playwright suggests the tussle between them through dramatic action. There is therefore the active physical action of Easley as he attempts to deprive Walker of his pistol while the passive and slightly drunk Walker is unaware of his designs. At this point Baraka implies that it is significant that Easley sees the value of action as the only method of changing the equation in the living room as opposed to mere talk, conversation and argument. Thus to some extent, such a dramatic evolution underscores and points at the larger society's equation and position vis-a-vis the black people. By implication it accentuates the justification of Walker's thinking and initiative as probably the only opening available to the man of colour if he has to attain some form of respite and eventual salvation. This perception is further enhanced by Walker's situation when he slips into danger as he engages in mere talk and insobriety in complete violation of his postulated

belief in pure action. Walker recovers just in time to shoot the attacking Easley, and it is here that he eventually comes into his element. His comments are thus in line with his proposition in the earlier stages and are in effect, a reversal of the fate of Clay in Dutchman. Walker actually likens Easley's fate to the fate of blacks in American society, and his comment summarises the similarity of their responses:

... being out of your mind is the only thing that qualifies you to stay alive. The only thing Easley was in his right mind. Pitiful as he was. That's the reason he's dead.

As drama The Slave is therefore not based on overt conflicts between characters but on an inner and inherent conflict that exists within the protagonist himself. The inner turmoil he feels is a dramatic conflict within him, because as the play unfolds more of Walker is revealed beneath the posture he has assumed to represent his convictions. Because he does not believe in the given type of communication, the drama lacks that necessary pressure of purpose, that progression of purposeful conversation that lead naturally to climax resolution in

drama. But again, because of the nature of the subject and argument this does not constitute a weakness but rather makes a statement about the inadequacy of language and words to express his particular dilemmas.

### III. THE SLAVE: PERSPECTIVE AND FORM

We can therefore infer that The Slave which was produced the same year as Dutchman follows and elaborates on the main argument of the latter play. Whereas Clay by the end of the play had reached only a certain kind of consciousness, the protagonist of The Slave has matured to a far greater degree to become essentially a reversal of Dutchman's protagonist. Thus unlike Clay, the protagonist of The Slave confronts and initiates the action of the play by going on the offensive and controlling the dramatic world and its tempo. The main thrust of the stage perspective conveys the position that the existing system of values which is based on and validated by the idealism of Western Liberalism has to be destroyed and replaced by an alternative set of values emanating from the inner recesses of the oppressed people. Therefore the play

dramatizes a phase of black revolution and its bid to change the process of history which so far has been dominated by the larger world's cultural racism. In this sense it is out to annihilate the order as the beginning of the creation of a new and different social and political context whose morality and sense of aesthetics would be opposed to the obsolete and decadent one in existence.

The drama thus revolves around this conflict of visions of reality as Walker's whole perception, thinking and action emanate from a completely different dimension of necessity. For Grace and Easley his action is an uncomfortable intrusion on their plane of reality, while for Walker it is a critical confrontation with aspects of his own past thinking and perspective. His revolutionary offensive has therefore to destroy this way of thinking since it is the source of an enslaving reality. Because of this Walker negates the very medium of communication since it is not malleable enough to embrace and define his community's reality, using as it does, a method and language alien to it. The method and language so far used cannot be the source of meaningful liberation and therefore the black world seeks alternative forms of expression by negating

their actual source of pain and suffering. The Walker led revolution therefore aims to go beyond the confines and narrow definitions of such a language. That is why Walker insists that theirs is a pure action of deliberate rejection of white attitudes and expectations. Thus the revolution works with a new philosophy of action which would justify whatever means he uses to justify his goal. Walker does not allow himself to indulge in any cheap moralizing. For he does not bask in any illusory glory of the future controlled by blacks since he is realistic enough to think that the revolution might well be only a change in the "complexion of tyranny".

However, in his wholesale rejection of the world of Grace and Easley, Walker inevitably encounters himself. For in order to meaningfully reject the society as it is and destroy it, he has also to reassess his whole personality which had been so much influenced and affected by the target of his condemnation. Therefore by confronting the other world he encounters its manifestations in him and consequently has to struggle within sucha duplex of identities in his attempt to reconcile and come to terms with the inner conflicts. Thus the movement towards

conscious awareness reveals his ambiguity for he was too involved in the history of the other world to escape unscathed. This is clearly evidenced in his attempts at purging himself and the difficulty he has in escaping the conflicting impulses within himself. Such an ambivalence throws light to the gulf between pure revolutionary idealism and what Benston has suggested as evolutionary realism:

Certainly the division between outer and inner, public and private deceit and core, must be healed. To do so requires a painful balance between the idealism inherent in a revolutionary action and the pragmatic sense of public reality needed to complete such action successfully. This balance and unity of self requires a decisive understanding of just what and who this slave will become for those who wish to reveal the core of life.

(Benston 1976: p. 165).

Probably this is the reason Walker reverts towards the end of the drama to the old slave image, showing his acceptance of the fact that in so many ways he has failed to transcend his situation completely and his personal liberation belongs to another formulation which probably would answer the contradictions in life.

The violence in his revolutionary action is thus an attempt to remake the image of the social and cultural ambience he finds himself in. In such an action he and his revolutionary forces assert their separate identities from the larger frame of reference and therefore assert black consciousness which is nourished from the cultural identity of the black world. In the dramatic process Walker's position is that of aligning himself to this world of blackness as a form of finding meaning in it. But his vehement and violent repudiation ironically also confirm his unease for he realises how deeply the world he rejects is entrenched within his whole psychical make up through his emotional attachment to his children who belong to both worlds. Perhaps it is to escape from the logical decision of a complete destruction of any ties that he indulges in drink since its intoxicating effects would postpone the imperative logic of this ruthless negation. As Grace and Easley die and as the shelling and explosions continue amidst Walker's declaration that the children are dead, a child is heard crying and screaming loudly. This symbolic happening could be surmised as the irrevocable tie between walker and the other world haunting him to the very end and even beyond the dramatic action on stage. Thus

the black world could well emerge triumphant but Walker has still not found the meaning he sought in the violence and has not attained his goal. Eventually he leaves the living room, and the child's scream almost becomes a comment on his lack of vision since he has victoriously destroyed but has not created something out of the ash of revolutionary action.

The form of the play reveals the formulation and influence of a conception of a rupture in the historical process, an imaginary takeover of a town by revolutionary black forces out to destroy a history and culture of oppression. The play lacks physical dramatic action as the language in the dialogue loses its force and pressure of purpose. This is because in such drama the underlying conception already negates language, for such language represents and expresses the world which is the target of rejection. So the conflict is elsewhere so well represented by the outer explosions while Walker, because of his ambivalence, indulges in the useless talk in the living room. So his forces are more revolutionary for they are actually committed to the idea of pure action. So whereas the conflicts of ideology are so poorly expressed in the

living room, the sounds outside speak more convincingly of the ideology behind its explosions. So to the audience the strategy of the play underscores its intention of revealing the complexity of an ambivalent position in a revolutionary movement. The black audience who will inevitably side with Walker will comprehend his situation and weaknesses. His moments of indecision although so subtle would be perceived distinctly hence they would disapprove of the intoxication which almost leads him to the same fate as Clay. It is significant that even after the curtain comes down, the explosions continue as a way of informing the audience of its underlying and more enduring logic in a situation where other viable alternatives are clearly lacking.

#### IV. SLAVE SHIP: THE DRAMA OF INNER CONQUEST AND CELEBRATION

From our discussion of Amiri Baraka's two plays of the 1960's, it is now possible to define the playwrights development as a continual act of refining perspective and vision. The process of rethinking and refinement has moved with the progress of Baraka's black nationalist convictions

and Slave Ship (1967) is perhaps the best manifestation of this process of consciousness. Within this context, the play appears to me to offer a more tangible proposition than the proposition offered by Baraka's two former plays. For Slave Ship is a re-creation of the whole African American involvement in the historical process and in its form and content expresses a harsh indictment of Euro-America's cultural domination and supremacy. Thus within the context of such a judgement, the drama takes a different form by breaking away from the "normal" western-oriented elements of drama, and by creating different parameters and premises for the liberation of black drama and artistic expression. For unlike the Euro-American dramatic form within which he had been operating, Slave Ship does not rely on the sense of sight and hearing alone. It emphasises the creation of feeling and empathy rather than mere comprehension and sympathy. Within such a strategy it calls upon the audience to identify with the action on stage instead of merely relating to it. Thus the play's assumptions as well as its intention towards the audience is sharply different from those of the usual Western drama.

In the exposition of the play the darkness of the stage

becomes a significant theatrical event. The stage description evokes a feeling of misery and mystery, which is accentuated by the fact that human beings are in contact with each other but as masters and slaves not as ordinary and free people in mutual and reciprocal contact. As a "historical pageant" the drama recreates the contact between white people and Africans, an event only recorded in history and therefore heard but not seen and felt by this generation. The dramatic contact in this first movement is therefore faithfully in darkness, only to be heard and felt and not seen. Thus it is the senses that are evoked here: the sense of smell and sound and their effect on feeling. These are the dominant aspects of the drama since the nature of the subject requires a type of response from the audience, a response of empathy and commitment and not only of comprehension.

Within this exposition the African drums and the calls of worship to the African deities, Orisha and Obatala, are interrupted and broken by screams to denote the destructive contact of the enslavers. This destruction of normal and harmonious life and the enslavement of Africans is replaced

by the sounds of chains and lashes and the moans of people. Dramatically, the African calm and orderly pace have been replaced by an imposed harsh and disorderly sounds continue as Africans are bundled and "mashed" together, it is a portrayal of inhuman treatment on the freshly captured African slaves. The hideous sounds in the ship are joined by the ship preparing to sail and the white voices reflect that readiness. In the conversation which is only heard, the white voices underline their motivation for this devastation and pillage.

Voice 1: Ok Let's go! A good cargo of black gold. let's go. We head West. We head West. (Long laughter).  
Black gold in the West.  
We got our full cargo.

It is a voice fired with economic and material concern and perception, and in such a world human values and the Africans heightened sense of culture are deflated by the white enslavers who can only measure them as merchandise to be sold.

In the same movement the voices of the slaves begin to infiltrate through the dark, their voices filled with

shock and bewilderment, as they cry out to Obatala and Shango, and as children cry and women attempt to comfort them, trying to keep their own sanity as well. The enactment says more than words could have said since it acts out the African incomprehension of their enslavers' oppression and, by extension reveals their world as a harmonious and innocent world that does not deserve the brutality inflicted on it. The enactment also contrasts the cultural unity, innocence and spritual strength of the African with the economic and materialistic world of the white enslavers, setting up an oppostion between the two worlds inhabited by African slave and European enslaver.

Further audio-dramatic effects build up the temper of the drama, as the uprooted and dispossessed slaves beat the walls and floors to express their shattered reality. A general feeling of pain is evoked in the darkness and effectively communicated through the nature and texture of sounds emanating from the ship. This feeling is heightened by the sounds of chains, which are in themselves symbols of oppression and enslavement, but in this instance combine songs of sorrow to enact an endurance and resistance rooted in the slaves African culture.

As part of the deliberate build-up of audio-dramatic effects the slaves are heard to be cursing and beseeching their deities enacting the beginnings of an ambivalence towards Africa which has remained part of the African-American consciousness. In the same enactment the journey to the unknown now begins and the effects of enslavement start to show as the slaves' strength and worldview begin to break:

Drums down low, like tapping, turn to beating floor, walls, rattling, dragging chains, percussive sounds people make in the hold of a ship. The moans and pushed together agony. Children crying incessantly. The mothers trying to calm them. More than one child. Young girls afraid they may be violated. Men trying to break out, or turning into frightened children. Separated for the first time.

This denigration and annihilation of everything sacred to them contrasts with the self-satisfied and evil nonchalance of their captors and enslavers whose awkward and misplaced laughter contrasts with their weak moaning and humming.

It is within this context of aggression, response and weakened resistance that warriors call for freedom,

suggesting that the seething urge and drive to be free from humiliating defeat and degradation starts as early as the moment of capture. From this suggestion the playwright implies that revolt and defiance are a historical imperative that dates back to the time of forceful enslavement and continues in African-American history. To strengthen this suggestion, the playwright enacts evidenced in Man 3 was an aspect of this defiance:

Man 3: Devils! Devils! Devils!  
White beasts! Shit eaters!  
Beasts!

(They beat the walls and try to tear the chains out of the walls).

By juxtaposing such conscious resistance with the slaves' supplication to and exasperation with their deities, the playwright suggests the complex attitudes and feelings that accompanied the beginnings of African American resistance.

In addition to conscious resistance, the playwright reveals other repercussions of uprooting that lead to the breakdown of the slaves' social structure. Woman 3 kills

her child and kills herself, committing an act that is considered an aberration in her culture and by this revealing the desperation with which slaves responded to their capture. It shows how desperately the woman prefers death to ruthless violation and how she acts to prevent her child from growing up in bondage and slavery. Although this incident is not seen by the audience, the comments of other characters reveal the depth of its impact and the extent to which the act has shattered their sense of themselves and their relation to the social and sacred values of their culture. In another incident, a man's attempt to rape another <sup>is</sup> wife becomes an exemplification of the erosion of those cultural safety valves that ensured harmonious social relations and unity among Africans.

From these enactments, the playwright portrays the middle passage with all its hideous character and ominous influences, imaginatively recreating a portion of history to depict its connection with the black man's history in America. This connection is dramatized through the shift to the depiction of the shuffling Negro in America and the alternating light focused on him and on the ancient African warriors described as "hero warriors". Through

such alternating focuses the African American audience is given a glimpse of the past of African culture achievements, grandeur and resistance as contrasted with the America slave's negative history of sycophancy and shame. Yoruba dance and other old African dances are juxtaposed with the pathetic figure of the American slave "shuffling towards the audience... shaking his head up and down, agreeing with Massa, agreeing, and agreeing, white the whip ship", and in this juxtaposition emphasis is on the contrast between the dignity and cultural assurance of the African and the betrayal and ignominy of the American slave. The sailors in the slave ship now change to become plantation owners, still laughing suggesting the perpetuation of a historical continuum where white people are always the supreme and contented masters.

In a similar depiction of the American slave, Baraka, in characteristic fashion, presents an ironical portrait of a stereotyped slave and uses the portrait to debunk the myths and misconceptions that surround the American slaves' perception of his condition:

I's happy as a brand new monkey ass,

Massa, boss, Massa Jim, Yassa Massa  
booboo, I's so happy I just don't  
know what to do. Yass, Massa, boss,  
you'se so han'scome and good and  
you'se hip, too, Yass, I's so happy  
I just stan' and scratch my ol' nigger  
haid.

In debunking this popular American conception of the black man as a happy slave, Baraka depicts this character as a traitor to the brewing revolt in the plantation since the plantation scene sharply contrasts with the ironical portrait of the slave. Indeed, the banjo music which accompanies the plantation revolt is almost an echo of the drumbeats and warrior songs of the African past enacted earlier on. In another contrasting twist the African warrior courage is seen reflected in the slave characters at the American plantation, giving the audience a truer portrait of American slave resistance:

Slave 1: Reverend what we gon' do when white man come?

Slave 2: We gon' cut his fuckin' throat.

Slave 3: Devil. Beast. Murderer of woman and children. Soulless shit eater.

Slave 1: Reverend Turner, Sir. What we gon' do. When the Massa come?

Slave 2: Cut his godless throat.

This enactment then propels the drama to a phase of defiance identical with the defiance depicted in the slave ship, one that remains solid and steadfast in spite of the predictable betrayal of the shuffling Negro slave (which ironically recalls the rape in the slave ship and the slave's representation in America as a figure of shame).

This fusion of the past and the present is further attained through the sounds of the slave ship and the gunshots heard when the revolt led by Reverend Turner is ultimately brought to an end. There is a further fusion of past and present when as revolting slaves are killed off in the plantation, we see the shuffling slave gnawing on the pork chop given by the master as reward for his betrayal. The purpose of this fusion is not only to invite the harsh judgement of the audience but also to show the dichotomy in African American response to slavery as something dating back to history that needs to be addressed in the present moment.

Thus the drama deals with the condition of slavery as a perpetual rather than a temporal one and as a condition which takes different forms. This suggestions

gains significance when the dramatist's stage instructions inform us that the voices in the slave famrs are typical and are the same voices heard in the initial stages of the drama. Thus it is as if these voices have been transported in time from the past though the names attached to them are English rather than African names (names such as Luke, Sarah, John, Everett and Willie). This change signifies a change in the physical identity f the people who in the slave ship had had African names like Ifamami, Akiyele and so on. Their culture, moreover, has undergone some form of transformation as they no longer call on their deities, Shango and Obatala. We are now shown how the historical process of capture, enslavement and domination has shifted their allegiance to the dominant white culture and motivated them to chant the name of Jesus. At the same time we are shown the element of fusion in the transformation of slaves when their spirituals reveal a combination of inner and spritual identity which is African. Within this dynamics of change there is also the transformation of a people who had earlier called on Ogun for strength now reduced to moaning and weeping as they submit to the dominant culture and its slave values.

In this context of transformation the same uncle Tom

figure who had betrayed his peoples' determination for a meaningful liberation now becomes the preacher. Unlike the belligerent Reverend Turner, this preacher is described in negative terms as he successfully tries to assume some dignity, in a posture reminiscent of Martin Luther King Jr. he preaches non-violence using language which the playwright describes as "pseudo-intelligent patter". He reveals his treachery to use "patter" as he tries to hide the "wrapped-up bloody corpse of a dead burned baby", while in contrast, the drama magnifies this incident of the burned baby through the mournful drums and death-tone set. The presentation of this preacher represents Baraka's enactment of the theme of integration, a position which compared to past resistance in Africa and America, becomes a negative proposition implying acceptance of indignity and inferiority and a submission to an enslaving white culture.

In contrast to the integrationist position represented by the preacher Baraka offers a more enlightening alternative when the dramatic flow is bombarded with saxophone sounds, backed by drums and the preacher freezes in his position. There is the screaming

and humming emphasised by the capital letters: OMMMMMM-, echoing a historical pain and experience which is at the same time interspersed with white laughter. In giving us these elements the drama fuses past and present and prepares the audience for a final dramatic catastrophe, heralded by the nationalistic song of all black people: "like dead people rising". Here then is the final judgement, where the playwright repays the evil world in its own coin. All the people in the slave ship come up against the frightened preacher and in a mixture of the old and the new, in a cultural synthesis of the African and the American, dance, finally killing both the preacher and the white man. The drama becomes then a ritual of purification, as the partisan audience joins in the triumph of the black people who have now shaped and lived their history to reflect both their dual experience and their victory.

V. SLAVE SHIP: PERSPECTIVE AND FORM

After the mode of drama of Dutchman and The Slave, Slave Ship dramatizes in quite different terms the two worlds in conflict: the black and white worlds. But rather than base its perspective on individual conflict, the play

goes beyond the two earlier plays by adopting communal and collective terms in the mode of dramatic conflict. It goes far back into history to the beginning of the contact of these worlds, through the historical process of enslavement and then comes back to the contemporary social set-up. (But in the present it does not lose sight of the past which is shown as part and parcel of the present). In doing so the drama shows the currents of connections in history and delineates the resolution in collective and communal action in which cultural action combined with political will becomes the only source of meaningful liberation. Although the drama evokes the elements of the two opposing worlds it adopts a different mode and terms of reference which cultivates this drama as a more genuine expression of the African American's effort at reconciling themselves to their community and therefore to themselves. For it does not dwell in ambivalent action but on a forceful singular and creative action based on a righteous cultural vision. It takes the whole past as a lesson in which the negative is to be rejected and destroyed and the positive is to be embraced as ammunition of the creative will and force of a struggle against historical injustice and disequilibrium in the

individual and the community.

Within such a perspective the initial contact between the two dissimilar worlds of Africa and Europe is shown as the beginning of a historical destruction and enslavement. This is brought about by the white worlds' excessively materialist and economic minded outlook and perception which drives them to enslavement and exploitation, while on the other hand the black African worldview is portrayed as calm, serene and intensely spiritual and with a sane economic moderation which is actually part and parcel of a religious outlook. Baraka's delineations demonstrate that with such a clash of ideological positions, the innocent world is desired by aberrations of the white world's ideological positions and philosophy on existence. Baraka sees this conflict of values as the beginning of the black man's endless tribulations in a world which will probably never understand him. He sees the continual defiance and revolt in the slave ship as evidence of a resistance which remains with the African American and which can lead to collective endeavour through rebellion even though such collective initiatives will continue to be frustrated by those whose minds remain enslaved.

Within the context of this historical perspective, Baraka sees integration as evidence of weakness and enslavement and as a process which deprives the African American of cultural and spiritual strength. It is indeed for this reason that Slave Ship dramatises a fusion of sounds from the saxophone and the drum as a cultural creative assertion against the superficial integrationist positions of characters like the preacher. With such an assertion the evil world is negated along with all the weak slaves who are integrationists and therefore traitors.

This long-visioned historical perspective which now shapes the form of Slave Ship is the culmination of a perspective and form which Baraka was exploring and developing as far back as Dutchman. In Dutchman the action takes place in the modern subway train "heaped in modern myth" hinting that the deduction of the African American middle class men in modern America leads to his eventual destruction. Baraka uses such a setting because at this point he is looking at integration mostly from the point of view of the present and merely hinting at the slave status of the African American in the title Dutchman ("Dutchman" being the name of the slave ship that brought

the first slaves to America).

In The Slave the action takes place in the two worlds of black revolution and liberal America, with Baraka hinting that the black revolutionary's attempts to change his condition in America must begin with a reassessment of his liberal integrationist positions from the point of view of this his original status as a slave. However the unresolved conflict between the pronouncement of "the slave" and Walker's confrontations with his liberal positions reveal Walker's inability to extricate himself completely from a world whose language and mode of thought seem to be ingrained in him.

It is in the continuing exploration of a sustaining perspective and from that Baraka takes a long-visioned view of African American history and returns to the very beginning of the encounter between Africa and Europe. In this manner, Slave Ship represents the growth of the encounter in such a way that it gives a broader space to the African American and presents his original world more fully and meaningfully. It takes him back to his original world as if to link him with it mythically and imaginatively.

In dramatizing this mythic reconstruction of the African world, he links the African American with it and gives him identity that is much wider than his confined identity in America.

The form of the play also reveals this way of thinking. The action initially is not so much seen as heard hence the drama is being faithful as only a creative process of historical recreation, for the knowledge that informs it is acquired rather than experienced. But the intention is to make the audience relate to the painful rupture of such a historical process by the medium of feeling rather than through an objective comprehension. For effect it has to be a subjective experience of feeling such that the audience's feelings is aroused against the heinous act perpetrated by the white world against the black world. This is clearly delineated in the drama as it shows distinct category of two worlds, the white one as destroyers, the black one as sufferers. The drama also formulates the past experiences as essentially same to the present, as they are analogous and continuous rather than separate set of experiences. In this recreation the dramatist draw a line between the two opposing worlds and

shows that the past experience of exploitation and violation, and the black creative resistance to these continue to the present. This suggestion is dramatized through the medium of the African and American music and song. These are seen as authentic expressions of the black world's peculiar disposition. Baraka sees them as "blues people" and believes that their inner expression can only be meaningful in this medium and not the sterile western forms of theatrical action. Thus at the end of the dramatic action the audience joins the cast in a celebration of the defeat of evil and the triumph of good embodied in the action of the black world. This contrasts sharply with the theatrical tradition of Euro-American where the spectator is somewhat separated from the action of the drama. In this mode the spectator is part of the dramatic world as an actor who shapes history since the emphasis of the drama is communal action rather than a separate individual understanding. Thus Slave Ship makes its powerful dramatic statement as the final break with the ideological outlook of the western world and with its theatrical tradition. It is successful in the sense in which it reveals a perspective based entirely on the qualities of the black experience past and present and on a form shaped

CHAPTER FOUR

out of these qualities through the medium of music, song and spritual communion.

The new perspectives on drama illustrated by Baraka's work became part of a general trend in African American drama of the sixties. It was a perspective that scrutinized the implications of integration and explored the black experience on several dimensions. It was a drama of celebration, of shared communal feeling and empathy with audience, and he shared some of this perspective. Despite his open admission of Baraka's influence on him, there is a sense in which he carved out a place for himself in the black theatre of the sixties. Writing during the same period as Baraka, Buller managed to create an original and unique perspective and form. In fact he has written more than fifty plays which explore various experiences of the black people in the streets and ghettos. The major difference between his and Baraka's is that Buller's work explores African American life as it is and is not concerned with rendering, rather than in terms of its opposition to the white mainstream American

## CHAPTER FOUR

### COMMUNION WITH BLACK EXPERIENCE IN DRAMA:

#### PERSPECTIVE AND FORM IN BULLINS' DRAMA

The new perspectives on drama illustrated by Baraka's works became part of a general trend in African American drama of the sixties. It was a perspective that scrutinized the implications of integration and explored the black experience in several dimensions. It was a drama of celebration that inspired communal feeling and empathy with audience, and Ed. Bullins shared some of this perspective. Despite his open admission of Baraka's influence on him, there is a sense in which Bullins successfully carved a place for himself in the Black Theatre of the times. Writing during the same period with Baraka, Bullins managed to strike an individual tone, perspective and form. To date he has written more than fifty plays which explore various experiences of the black people in the streets and ghettos. The major difference between him and his mentor is that Bullins mostly explores African American life as it is and in an almost naturalistic rendering, rather than in terms of its opposition to the white mainstream America.

At the invitation of Robert Macbeth, who was the director of New Lafayette players, Bullins arrived in New York in 1967. This is the place he blossomed as a playwright and in addition to his proven talent also made his reputation. In 1968 his works were produced by New Lafayette players at the American place theatre, Bullin's plays reflect much about his personal life and experiences. He grew up in the Philadelphia slums, leaving school at the age of seventeen and joining the navy from 1952 to 1955. This period offered him an opportunity to read widely and sharpen his perception of the world around him. On his return to Philadelphia he finished high school and in 1958 moved to Los Angeles as a way of escaping what Leslie Sanders calls "a desperate existence". In 1961 he started writing poetry and fiction and turned to drama in 1965, in San Francisco. It is here that he became deeply entrenched in the world of theatre. However, his participation in the Black Panther Party at its headquarters in Black House came to an end in 1967 over the controversial subject of the relationship between art and politics.

The more political members in the group saw art in

terms of its utilitarian role of pushing people into the streets while Bullins saw art as an artifact of cultural expression. From 1968 to 1973, Bullins saw more and more of his works produced at various theatres in New York. All these productions made possible his influence in Black drama and helped in shaping a model for black theatre. In addition, his essays and contributions as editor of Drama Review enabled him to outline certain principles *of Black Theatre. Thus as a playwright he helped to* fashion an intricate and complex balance between political commitment and ethnic expression which was free from the constraints of rigid ideology. His plays revealed his abhorrence of art which subscribed purely and overtly to aims and whims other than artistic ones, and in examining his particular dramatic orientation, three of these plays provide a basis of argument especially as they deal with what Genevieve Fabre classifies as "Theatre of Experience". The plays are Goin' A Buffalo, In The Wine Time and the short play, The Corner.

Goin' A Buffalo was for instance, Ed Bullin's first full-length play and was written in 1966, two years after Baraka's Dutchman and The Slave. Although written in 1966

it was first staged in 1972 at the Players Art Theatre in Buffalo. The action of the play takes place in Los Angeles and the period it covers is the early sixties. The notable characters are Curt and his wife Pandora, their friends Rich, Shaky and Shaky's girlfriend Mamma Too tight (the only major white character) and Art, Curt's friend.

The drama is in three Acts, and it begins in a room occupied by Curt and Pandora. The exposition of the drama is significant in the way it builds up certain impressions from the atmosphere of the room and the jazz music being played. These impressions provide the underlying formulation of the drama and the basis of the thematic issues raised in the play. We are introduced to Curt and Rich who are involved in a game of chess and in terms of the play's overall structure and meaning this provides the audience with the clue to the type and quality of relationships the play explores. This is so because the relationship between Curt and Rich is reflected in their roles and responses to the game of chess in which Curt easily beats Rich and establishes himself as the superior intelligence, wit and force. This impression is further heightened in an incident soon after when Rich steals a

glance at Pandora, Curt's girl, discreetly looking at her hips while Curt merely drums his fingers on the chess board, making Rich aware of a warning that he is stepping out of line. As this personal interaction develops, Bullins creates the impression of mistrust between the characters, hinting that anything is possible in such a "social" and emotionally charged climate. Through the scene Bullins also suggests the quality of the relationships among the characters, hinting that they have no other basis apart from being expedient and useful, indeed, the nature of the relationship is intensified when Curt's girl, Pandora, complains of her duties, making the audience aware of Pandora's painful role of actually taking care of both of them and sometimes as well as their friends.

The drama therefore exposes the quality of relationships by its natural treatment of conversation:

Pandora: I didn't know you gave out advice too. But I wish I could take some of it. Ya see're already in the middle of some deep shit.... and cool it, hone.....

Art: Yes, you can.... just sit back  
look back and look around and  
wait a while. You don't have to  
do anything.... baby, the whole  
world will come to you....

This revelation is reinforced by Curt's behaviour and action, especially in his cruel treatment of Pandora which sets the action of the play going and suggests other possibilities which are to Curt's disadvantage.

This possibility comes clearer to realisation when Art enters the scene. This is inferred basically from the way he relates differently to Curt and Pandora. The genesis of his friendship with Curt is the jail where he had saved Curt in a fight. In his narration of this incident and his behaviour of defending the women reveals a pattern and reinforces the impression of a clever person whose apparent good covers a calculating intention. He protects the woman against their men and he implicitly warns Curt in his admission of weakness for women. Therefore whereas the momentum of conflict is played out between the women and their spouses openly (because of the dependent nature of the women's lives) the real conflict of interests are submerged in this world of euphoria and ecstasy induced by Marijuana.

These types of interactions in which characters depend so much on each other are finally more entrapping than liberating, and all the characters except Art are caught in this dependency and entrapment syndrome. Thus in the play Art becomes a central and important figure, acting as a foil to all the dependent characters. It seems that within the context of this dependency syndrome no other attractive quality can be developed. These lowly characters of the streets, living in a stultified environment cannot create anything positive. Their environment only nurtures meanness and crudity, and their relationships are devoid of love and trust, leading finally to the betrayal and self destruction which Bullins depicts in the play.

The atmosphere of the bar creates the illusionary nature of the characters' lives, offering another dimension of people's lives in this environment. The stage directions warn that "reality is questionable here" and must be keenly scrutinized. Just like the way the characters smoke and use drugs to attain a different kind of atmosphere and a feeling of well being against a stark and sordid reality, so does the scenario at the bar give its

own kind of hallucinatory effect mostly through alcohol and performed music. Pandora works here as an entertainer, and it is this dimension of her life which reveals another form of dependence and exploitation. Deeny, the bar owner, controls her life and as the stage directions say, Deeny could be white or black, depending on the director's discretion. This in its own way brings to the fore a point of importance since Bullins seems to suggest that exploitation is not really confined to the white world alone and that both greedy black and white people could be acquisitive and exploitative. In this Act conflict becomes more overt and violent as a statement and a comment on a reality too harsh to yield any positive qualities. Such a suggestion contrasts sharply with the initial atmosphere of illusion and tranquility effected by artificial gadgets and alcohol. Thus when a fight breaks up between the bartender and the bouncer on one hand Curt's group on the other, the violence is presented as another bitter alternative. Its dramatization becomes a representation of a way of life for such characters trapped in a world where hope and well being can only be attained in a dream-like and drug-induced world of fantasy. We are shown how their cyclical existence oscillates between their humble

places of abode, the streets, the bar place and the prisons reflecting a sordid repetitive pattern that makes a statement on a life without meaning and without hope of liberation or emelioration.

These characters, Bullins suggests, are too conditioned by social structures, social impediments and personal apathy to transcend their repetitive lives. They become too readily resigned to their designated roles and remain vulnerable to their own situation. It is within the contest for survival in their own ranks that a character like Art, using his wit and sense of timing emerges a winner. Within the suffocating pressures of this group Art still lays down the foundation for an eventual "coup" in the bar by slowly and surely creating a dissatisfaction within Mamma, talking to her at a different level than she is used to. Art therefore achieves more in this world by his blithe calculation and understanding of his friends, hence he plays with their inner needs in order to achieve his ends.

Goin' A Buffalo therefore becomes a play whose strategy is reflected in its treatment of character and

space. It clearly deals with black characters in their own environment without ridiculing them or making heroes of them but depicting an all together believable though painful existence and reality. It is through such an exposure that Bullins seems to have the strength to portray an edifying dramatic experience, showing how the characters make negative commitments which hamper their inner freedom, that which is crucial for the subsequent outer freedom.

Bullins seems not to be in a dilemma about what strategy to adopt. The play's message and form can only be meaningful to a black audience, and Bullins deals with the experiences of the poor blacks in such an honest way that they become meaningful only to black audience. It is the playwright's way of stating his faith in black people and his understanding of their reality that gives him a sure grasp of these street and jazz people. The black world in Goin' A Buffalo is thus dominant on stage not as a power but as a presence. White characters portrayed are perceived as part of this world and its ethos. Mamma, the white character in the play is, for instance, only white by the colour of her skin. All the ethos imbued in her as a character are distinctly black. Thus as a woman in this black world she faces the same dual oppression that

the other women characters face. Oppressed by both the environment and the men folk, she too is unable to realize her potential since she has been conditioned as a woman to work for the benefit and fulfillment of her men folk.

1. GOIN' A BUFFALO: PERSPECTIVE AND FORM

The perspective of the play revolves around the idea and the possibilities found within a life in the ghettos and streets inhabited by black people. The characters in the drama are shown as being stultified by their social climate but there is a sense in which with more personal effort they could transcend and overcome the situation. The playwright depicts them as actually inhibiting themselves by indulging in acts that are enslaving rather than liberating. But through its form the play, by using cultural elements of the black world, shows the possibilities that are available for black people if they are to liberate themselves from negative values that have become internalized.

In the drama Pandora is shown as the only working

person and Curt entirely depends on her. This dependence cripples Curt so much that he does not think in terms of self-realisation which would elevate him from such a disadvantage. His cruelty to Pandora is therefore not because of malice but comes out of a sense of inadequacy. The drama builds this relationship as a way of re-enacting the negative attitudes which should be understood and transcended. It portrays the characters as consciously refusing to face themselves. At the same time it suggests that facing truth of their false existence is the only way to transform themselves from their dependence on outside sources of comfort since such dependence is only an illusory feeling of security that eventually makes these characters enslaved, impotent and unable even to search for a formula of self-liberation. Within this context Bullins introduces another perspective through his presentation of the character Art. Through Art's complexity as a character, embodying both the negative qualities and the positive qualities of the black cultural world, Bullins suggests that the black world has to strive for its own cultural and inner resources. These resources are amplified in the drama through the indigenous expression of music and an autonomous language. The music underlines Bullins' point

that black people's own creativity and expression provides a more genuine option to their problems than the dependence on drugs and the false sense of power they create. This is because the feeling of euphoria and ecstasy induced by drugs are delusions that are negative because they only provide an unrealistic view of their existence and make them unable to liberate and realise themselves.

The idea of exploitation in the scene between the bar owner, Deeny, and his workers like Pandora is significant especially in view of the stage directions that Deeny could be either black or white. The playwright here presents the view that exploitation is not confined to a particular colour, and in this play he implies that middle class blacks have also internalized white values and white ways of seeing and have acquired attitudes that are coloured by white exploitative values rather than communal values of brotherhood and shared experiences their type of alienation and shows it up as an alienation from their own cultural and racial context. Bullins shows that the black middle class sees this separation from the black world erroneously as the only avenue towards social equality and participation. But through his delineations in the play

Bullins reveals that the black people in the streets have their own mirage in migration though he also demonstrates that migration does not necessarily offer better prospects. The drama shows both "dreams" as futile and suggests that values can be created from within the individual and his cultural setting. As Bullins suggests, the question is that of attitude, and neither social movement by way of upward mobility or migration as exemplified in the prepared journey to Buffalo can set the black man free. This is accentuated further by the symbol of the box, Pandora's box. Its contents are revealing as it contains a gun and marijuana, one a symbol of violence and the other a symbol of illusion. The symbolic significance of this box is that it is the characters who invest it with meaning and quality rather than it having its own independent contents. Such a symbolic representation emphasizes the perspective that it is within the grasp of the characters to decide their own fate and destiny through their actions, attitude and commitment.

Such a perspective is reflected in the dramatic strategies which Bullins adopts to communicate in Goin' A

Buffalo. Its special strategy towards the audience and its special emphasis on human capacity makes it a different mode of drama from the previous decade's mode of drama as well as the "Barakian" mode of drama. It presents the play as intending to commune with the black audience and prod them towards a consciousness which would be separate from the two traditions; that is, the integrationist-oriented tradition of drama of the 1950's and the Barakian tradition of revolutionary imprecation against the mainstream white American power structure. For the plays strategy and intention towards the audience reveals that Bullins's overall view of the audience is that it forms an extension of the dramatic world so that any dramatic communication here is actually a confession, celebration and analysis of the black world as it really is. The form of the play portrays this fact by its use of music as the purest expression of the black world and making its language part and parcel of the street language spoken by black people. Bullins suggests that the language is theirs and they can lay claim to it. The entire dramatic process becomes then a communion with the quality of black life as it is lived. The audience is supposed to feel this affinity and relationship and

perceive its negative traits while at the same time transforming itself through the vision of possibility offered by the suggestions and alternative attitudes and values in the play.

II. BLACK LIFE AND CULTURE AS POTENTIAL FOR TRANSFORMATION AND VISION: PERSPECTIVES AND STRATEGIES IN IN THE WINE TIME AND THE CORNER.

Bullins's commitment to delineating other dimensions of black lower class experience continues in his plays after Goin' A Buffalo. The two plays, In The Wine Time and The Corner focus on black urban life in the 1950's and cover the same setting and time span as the earlier play. Indeed they overlap in meaning, setting and character types and can be examined under a common theme. In many senses they both bring out in special ways, certain striking differences with the drama tradition of the 1950's. Indeed, by making the historical period of the fifties the setting of these plays Bullins ironically suggests that a certain face to black life had been overlooked in the middle class-oriented dramas of the fifties. Black families

in Take A Giant Step and A Raisin in the Sun make choices and aspire to better lives within the larger context of American aspirations, black characters in these two plays appear to be caught up in a repetitive world of drink and debauchery. In opening up the lives of these black characters Bullins presents the other side of the coin and reveals another quality of life which exposes negative qualities and celebrates the positive potentialities of black urban life.

In The Wine Time, first produced at the New Lafayette Theatre on 10th December, 1968 reflects aspects of Bullins essentially 'black' drama in the sixties. All the characters in the play (except Krumps, and the white policeman) are black and live in the black area of Derby street. The description of the houses suggests that the inhabitants of the street are of lowly status in life. The narrow street with its type of writing, drawings and painting reveal and accentuate the constricted, fast and buzzing atmosphere of a ghetto life with its mixture of protest and resignation. The music in the Dawson's house sets the trend and style throughout the play, revealing how the drama is embedded in the black world's physical and cultural

reality. Even the gospel music that comes through the window of Miss Minny Garrison's house makes a statement by suggesting different and conflicting aspirations in the urban world of the drama. The activities such as drinking, listening to music, playing checkers, talking and gossiping going on the sloops also reveal the type of pastime the people indulge in and together with the descriptions and visual impact of the houses in the street make up the sultry and voluptuous social climate of the drama.

Ray. All the central characters are black which means and suggests a typical black world atmosphere which is emphasized even more by their movements from Derby street where the Dawson's live to the "the Avenue". The quality and contradictions in the lives of the two central characters, Cliff and Lou come out in exchanges of arguments which they live. Cliff's response to this world reveals how he had internalized his hatred of white oppression. His refusal to work and his preference to live on welfare and Lou's earnings reveal negative internalisation of this perception. Indeed he extends his dislike of white oppression to blacks who conform to white

definitions and therefore work for the white world for a pittance. He sees them as posing a threat to his inner need for control and his very manhood. In this sense he seems himself as fighting against castration. He extends this attitude even to the white policeman whom he sees as contemptuous and condescending towards black people. In many senses therefore, Cliff becomes the assertive tough guy of the street. Yet Cliff's character as portrayed in the drama is an ambivalent mixture of both toughness, rebelliousness and warmth. This ambivalence is illuminated more by his fatherly relationship with Ray, and the image of toughness he projects in the neighbourhood. In spite of being the tough guy he can also be the affectionate father figure who can inspire warmth and trust. This fluid quality which characterises the internal make up of Cliff generates a lot of strength, a strength of spirit which becomes part of his character even though he lacks the means and status to change his life and that of others. The disagreement between him and Lou about Ray should do with his life reveals the myriad of feelings, perceptions and emotions which embody this strength of spirit and separate him from Lou as well as the other loafers in the street. Cliff's plans

for Ray reveal his concern for Ray's future as a person of experience against Lou's interest in making Ray remain at home. In a way Cliff's position reveals him as more understanding towards Ray's need to get out of Derby street. His desire to get Ray to make something of himself projects what he himself would have wanted in life. It shows his sense of what a man should do to become a man.

Apart from revealing Cliff's own sense of his failure and weakness, the argument also demonstrates that ambivalent mixture of harshness and warmth which characterizes the strength of his personality. His reaction in slapping Lou and insulting her reveals at the same time his love and affection for her. This exchange between him and Lou is for instance a clear illustration:

Cliff: Damn that! Damn it! I don't care what his dead mother wants. Who the hell cares what the dead want? Its what Ray wants that counts. He's got to get out of here.... don't you, Ray? Of' a Derby street and away from here so he can grow up to be his own man.

Lou: Like you?

Cliff: No, not like me.... not tied  
down to a half-grown scared,  
childish bitch.

Lou: You don't have to be.

Cliff: But I love you.

This mixture of harshness and warmth, consistently remains the bottom line of Cliff's personality. He is honest, and in spite of his abrasive and crude nature and aspect, is capable of love and affection.

It is this internal complexity and strength which helps him to react responsibly to Lou's pregnancy. Lou's pregnancy forces Cliff to face the question of responsibility and dignity and to refuse to submit to being reduced to the status of other blacks. His experience and internal development makes him accept the pregnancy and take a definite and positive stand against all odds.

In the play the relationship forged between Red and Bunny presents another aspect which parallels and contrasts with the relationship between Cliff and Lou. The incident in which Red slaps Bunny recalls Cliff's violence on Lou and reveals that in Bullins's drama of black urban life

the men are portrayed as insecure and prone to violent action when their inner weaknesses and uncertainties stand in danger of being exposed. As the play's action progresses a similar tendency is revealed as the young Ray begins to imitate Cliff exhibiting new acts of taughness and proving the suggestion that the tough image exhibited by black males conceals inner insecurities.

Thus the two plays dramatize street life in the black world and emphasize its qualities as a way of life for the black people who make up its world. Within this world, Cliff, the central character struggles to attain an identity and freedom though he is constrained by inner forces like his feeling of inadequacy which is compensated for in his excessively aggressive nature towards his wife and other neighbours. His relationship to his immediate family and his neighbours and friends could therefore be understood in terms of his innermost nature which is reflected in his search for a type of balance in his life, and in order to create something out of this urban life he overindulges as a way of achievement. The urban life offers no possibilities which are creative and suitable, thus Cliff achieves fame but negatively. His pride does

not allow him to work as a labourer, the only opening available in this urban situation, he would rather be idle than be degraded this way. So he searches for a meaningful self discovery and freedom in an urban situation which does not allow such an exploration. This insistent search can be seen in the other play which he features in, The Corner, where Cliff somewhat attains that sense of maturity which seems to elude him in the first play. In both the plays wine becomes the main preoccupation of the people of the street and in itself becomes a significant pastime in a world with limited avenues for creative occupation and self-expression. In such a world it becomes a source of comfort and ironically a celebration of life.

Cliff's development is clearly seen from the instance he renounces the relationships in the streets and makes a decision to go back to Lou, invariably coming back to terms with his responsibility as a father to be. This is dramatically contrasted to the other characters who seem not to understand his decision, something that magnifies Cliff's achievement because it is not an easy process to overcome such a desperate life for a more meaningful option. The playwright seems to make a point

out of this sharp contrast that amidst such hopelessness still there is hope and potential for redemption and a meaningful life if only the blacks could come to terms with their inner forces and be creative in their attitudes. He seems to call for a change of attitude towards values as the source of changed lives. So Cliff in both the plays is dramatized as a central character able to transcend and develop into a responsible person. Thus by the end of the second play, The Corner, he has gained a sense of who he is and what his responsibility is and has abandoned street life for a settled life with Lou. The playwright in this development seems to suggest that street life does not pay and that urban blacks have the potential to grow out of it into self-awareness and acceptance of responsibility.

In the processes of transformation in this drama the audience invariably becomes part of the drama of transformation since the process reflects an honest portrayal of their own lives and becomes a genuine drama of self-observation and eventual correction. This is because in all the three plays the dramatic exploration centres on the inner forces that constrain the characters from a realization of their potential and liberation.

This is developed in their choices and commitment which emphasize their negative qualities rather than liberating values, and in this way the characters themselves generate values in their various attempts to overcome such handicaps. This is evidenced in the two plays where Cliff is undergoing transformation and distinctly becomes different from the rest especially in The Corner.

The language and other symbols in these plays emanate from the distinct black frame of reference. The language is purely the black language used in the streets and ghettos and through its use Bullins presents the black urban world in its eloquent harshness. In the same way he reveals its ambivalent nature by demonstrating how its profane terms and tone embody a high capacity for warmth, love and understanding. The playwright consciously works towards a revelation of this ambivalence in black language:

Lou: You're bad, Cliff. You're bad.  
Bad!

Cliff: Sho' I'm bad, hon-nee chille.  
(Singing) I'm forty hands across  
mah chest.... I got a tombstone  
mind an' and a graveyard disposition....  
I'm a bad mathafukker an' I don't  
mind.... dyin'.

Lou: (cutting) You're just a  
dirty-mouthed....

Cliff: (cutting) Yeah, I know.... and I'll  
have you know that just because I  
spent one third of my navy time in  
various brigs.... that I was still  
one of the saltiest salt water  
sailors in the fleet.... on  
dry land, in the fleet or in some  
fucken marine brig!

Lou: You wasn't shit,--Cliff..... You know  
that, don't you?

(Patterson, 1971:607).

So in spite of the abrasive tone of the language all through the plays comes out this distinct quality in the language which has the ambivalent capacity to renounce their situation and still be able to instil hope as it works to reveal the positive values in this world as these characters show. Bullins seems to suggest here that these qualities should be exploited as they have the positive potential to exert a liberating influence on a black life constricted by the connotations of enslavement and the conditioned thinking and patterns of life in the black ghetto.

It is in response to this ambivalence in black life

CHAPTER FIVE

that wine and women come to possess double meanings in the plays. Thus if wine represents the height of communion with black life and its situation on one level it ironically also represents the height of irresponsibility and destruction. In the same way, women give life and are symbols of resourcefulness and creativity in the play but can at the same time be the occasion for despair and frustration. For Bullins all these represent ambivalences within the black world that complicate the choices made, the choices that will determine and create the difference between freedom and enslavement.

C H A P T E R     F I V E

REDEFINITION OF DRAMATIC CONTEXT, ORIENTATION AND  
STRATEGY: BARAKA AND BULLINS COMPARED

Both Baraka and Bullins in their individual styles reflected that fundamental change in dramatic strategies that characterized the African American drama of the sixties. The previous chapters have shown how in reflecting the incisive questioning and self-critical modes of the sixties the two playwrights delineated black experience in various ways and fostered radical communication with their audience. As has been revealed the dramatic art of the two playwrights was their wish to counter a dramatic culture which had been developed and nurtured without a truthful and complete awareness of all aspects of black experience. For the two playwrights the complexities of the African American experience in a plural society (where relationships to the larger society are at best ambivalent) require a dramatic rendering that takes into account a double treatment of both the inner and outer reality of the African American. This is why both writers in their own ways fall out of the fifties tradition which to a large

extent tended to inhibit a full portrayal of the inner and private truths of black life. However, in reflecting this fundamental differences from the drama tradition of the fifties the two playwrights took different paths, offered different arguments and created different forms in response to these paths and arguments. Thus, in underscoring their achievements as individual playwrights within the same historical and social context, it is imperative to examine and give their works a kind of framework and on this basis determine the type of theoretical thrust and orientation they emanate from. It is this focus which would reveal the important assumptions behind their work as well as their uniquely personal craftsmanship within these assumptions.

Amiri Baraka, known earlier as LeRoi Jones, had set the tone for the decade with his forceful drama which in so many ways provided a base for others to build from or react against. Hence his works provided both an artistic and theoretical basis for argument (Sanders p. 121:1988). Because they accelerated the artistic and cultural thrust for a meaningful liberation from forms and standards dictated by the white culture, they had the positive effect

of encouraging and developing authentic standards and literary forms which reflected their own cultural plane of reality. Baraka's definition of black drama sets forth the important aspect of attitude and perception; how the black world views itself, how it relates to the larger society and how intricate and complex this relationship can be. Underlining all of Baraka's works is the argument that African American art can be validated only when it is imbued with an imperative black aesthetics and as a writer, critic and thinker, he had gone through "a painful journey" of evolution in which he had moved from a liberal integrationist position to a radical black perspective. In a similar way his plays take the form of a journey during which his characters are exercised into self-awareness and self-definition. It is through these intricate realisations that he gives his commentary to black people in general. His depictions reveal their state of confusion as they grapple with an alien identity and as they struggle to negate it and search for their true selves. For Baraka this painful journey towards self-assertion and self-acceptance are the essential elements of the dramatic rendering of black experience. Leslie Sanders commenting on these aspects of Baraka's plays, has said

that his:

... play with language and image revealed to him that his isolation and alienation were cultural and racial rather than personal, and this realization led him to redefine his sense of the poet's task.

(Sanders, p. 126:1958)

From this understanding and grasp of his own particular and personal experience Baraka shaped the experience of his people in drama thus making the individual experience be understood. This then is the personal and collective perspective which inspired the innovative forms that characterized his drama in the sixties. It was a perspective built from a personal and collective sense of history and its transition into drama needed a radical way of experiencing the world as well as a radical way of articulating this experience.

It is within this new mode that Baraka negates and denounces the values consonant with the Western dramatic tradition, a renunciation which is also a renunciation of Euro-American thought systems. In his drama at least,

Baraka seeks to replace such values with black oriented spiritualism and thought systems as a way of expressing a cultural and a separate sensibility. To Baraka these two thought systems are always in confrontation with each other precisely because they have different assumptions about personal relationships and spirituality. In all these confrontations Baraka highlights the relevance and superiority of the spiritual oriented black life, urging a transcendence of the mundane reality represented by the larger Euro-American world. His drama becomes then an ethical struggle against the worldliness and falsehood of the mundane reality with its restricted and limited perceptions. Invariably the struggle ends in a victory for spirituality, and the mundane reality is replaced by a mythological construction of a new society in which truth, beauty and spirituality are possible. Such a reconstruction and transformation of the real world is interestingly what Fabre asserts as the actual role of drama and theatre:

Theatre thus transmits the vision of a free world more utopian than real. The immediate goal of theatre is to reaffirm its right to exist as an art and as a means to influence the dominant ideology. Because art itself is possible only in a free society, theatre will search

for the path to its own emancipation.

(Fabre, p. 25:1983)

Within the reconstructed world of Baraka's drama characters usually undergo some form of inner movement towards consciousness. This process normally involves a violent exorcism of values inculcated by the larger society after a parallel exposure to new and edifying values more realistic and relevant to their racial needs. That is why in Dutchman Clay is capable of comprehending the nature and form of his delusion and capable also of negating his middle-class pretensions and confronting a truer more wholesome definition of himself. That is why in The Slave Walker seeks in his rebellion, a repudiation of a way of thinking which had enslaved and deformed him. That is why in the Slave Ship, the black people struggle to connect themselves to their splintered historical sense of themselves by reenacting the middle passage experience and its ramifications in America. So Baraka envisages and creates in his drama a different social order born out of a persistent confrontation with the evil white order. By creating such a dramatic possibility on stage he invokes an optimism based on the basic goodness of his black

characters as opposed to the selfish assumptions of the white characters who are the villains of his drama. On the ethical level it becomes the truth of a moral order opposed to the rational chaos which exists and has to be rejected and destroyed. In Baraka's view any transformation, any deviation from mainstream expression to create a different consciousness in black audiences is justified in the struggle. As he has contended, the surrealistic qualities in his plays become realism in the American context because perception and judgement are always influenced by the consciousness of the individual.

Ed Bullins presents the same basic argument as Baraka though in a radically different form. The difference occurs because Bullins's assumptions about the presentation of the black experience are different from Baraka's. Whereas Baraka's revolutionary zeal is always transparent and apparent in his drama, Bullins's drama is never overtly ideological. Though it also manifests a change in perspective and dramatic formulation, Bullins' concentration on the general and particular experiences of the ghetto and street people in their own environment and cultural context makes his drama more true to life and

'realistic' in a conventional sense than Baraka's. Though in many ways, he too achieves the aims of the Black theatre movement. In physical terms, Bullins's drama presents the black world as it is and as the audience knows it. In spiritual terms, the drama also embodies the various rhythms in their lives, becoming an expression of their artistic selves and their aesthetics. In this world of Bullins' drama characters and their experiences are explored in terms of the deprived physical environment and confinement while such a physical world is by implication an indictment of America, the dramatic movement is shaped in such a way that the characters emerge as real and multi-faceted characters showing weaknesses as well as strengths. Such a dramatic world is of course different from Baraka's deliberately created conflict-based drama. Here in Bullins's drama, the actions of characters are explored as a matter of course, conflict emerges as a natural and internal development which is very much a part of the life and relationships created in the dramatic universe. In this sense and by creating such a world on stage in physical terms, Bullins confirms the existence of the black reality, effectively excluding the white audience by ignoring their world and its influences. In this way

the black audience is compelled to come face to face with itself and to interpret its world as it responds to the drama. By establishing such an important and familiar link between the action on stage and the audience, Bullins develops a creative and critical relationship between the drama and the audience which is eventually cathartic and liberating. In both perspective and form such a mode of communication in drama departs from the usual mainstream oriented drama by being authentic to black experience and particularly by allowing this experience to inform and set the pace of dramatic action and create its values. Within such a setting the values of the dominant culture and its conception of reality are fully debunked not through rhetoric but through a purposeful representation of a different dimension of reality made too real and powerful to be disputed. Bullins achieves this effectively by creating an authentic cultural plane of reality which is only found in the black world. Black language and black music affirm and authenticate this cultural plane effectively to present an informed and real view of black experience. For instance, Bullins manage to present a double view of black language in all his plays revealing its harshness and profanity as well as its lyric and emotive quality, and by using language

in this way he authenticates the dramatic action to reflect a view of life informed by the black experience. His drama exudes the real atmosphere of black life making it different from the Baraka's struggle on stage which challenges the other world and enforces this conception of black life. In addition to language black music, a truly personal and creative expression by black people reinforces cultural assurance and in conjunction with the behaviour and personalities of black characters depicts the dramatic world as a truth and in this way becomes an eloquent expression of blackness as a condition created through historical experiences.

In locating his drama in such a socio-cultural context Bullins's perspective and form are not dependent on any notion of superior culture or even the existence of another cultural and social reality. His drama becomes a definition of a world which is representative, whole and educative. As he employs symbols, signs, and other cultural references found in this world he convinces audiences about its undisputed truths and its creative possibilities. In the same vein Bullins implies that amelioration of the negative aspects of this world must come from within this world. For

a more meaningful liberation is the one which liberates a person from the close elements of his oppression. This is the personal liberation which should proceed and ensure a larger cultural and social liberation.

Operating within such aesthetics Bullins's drama evokes a slow building of the foundations of meaningful black liberation through its enduring qualities. It advocates an inherent change which is more formidable and assured and cannot be manipulated or be eliminated. It is a symbolic formulation and agenda for emancipation which is definite as it is built on an undisputed social structure with autonomous cultural, social and personal values. And because of the nature of drama as a social and public medium its instruction is powerful and the audience would have learnt from the honest portrayal where they need to change in order to overcome and succeed without alienating themselves and discarding their cultural identity and social perception.

Seen in these terms, Baraka's and Bullins' perspectives are radically new and a real contrast to the perspectives of the past decade. This difference informs

and to a large extent dictates their dramatic forms and strategy. In essence, Baraka is preoccupied with the relationship between black and white worlds not in the manner of the integrationist playwrights but on a new and different level by explaining and defining in vehement terms, the unequal relationship and how it has affected and alienated the black person. The blacks, by accepting the white system of reference, have alienated and deracialized themselves and have been transformed by cultural racism. His dramatic strategy is therefore a way of exhorting his audience to a reorientation of values in an attempt to capture their sense of the past which he sees as synonymous with their truth and conception of life. As he demonstrates, there is a certain "truth" which can be captured in their history and culture and which could help them overcome false definitions imposed on them by a racist society.

The message contained in an individual playwright's perspective is mostly dependent on the disposition of the dramatic discourse created and its effect on the audience. The message of the two playwrights can be discerned in this general statement. Baraka's style and the typology of discourse is that of denunciation which sets the dramatic

pressure and purpose against the white power structure and the immediate audience of both compliant blacks and whites. Bullins's dramatic discourse is different in the sense that he creates an authentic dramatic situation where blacks are self-occupied in their own affairs, a discourse on how blacks live in their natural and uninhibited ways and how they relate and communicate with each other in their own language and style of expression. Hence Bullins creates this sense of a stage reality deeply embedded in the black cosmological reality by presenting its environment as well as characters who inhabit this space. He is not bothered about misconceptions as he delineates this world because only one kind of audience (the black audience) can fully appreciate and comprehend this dramaturgy. In this way the audience itself becomes the source and foundation of any regenerative spirit embodied in the drama. Through their empathetic participation the drama achieves its objectives of affirming and edifying the black world and its spiritual and lyrical aspects.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Any discussion of drama, especially of perspectives and forms, will invariably connect it to social, cultural and even political developments in society. Drama, being a socially based artistic expression will always manifest such changes and respond artistically to it. In an atmosphere of racial tension and suspicion, drama can become an even more effective social tool in the hands of the underdogs. By cultivating daring approaches and strategies it can become an effective tool of resistance, education and empowerment. Playwrights of minority groups can through its various openings express communal longings, dramatize the desire for release and assert their cultural difference from the dominant culture.

This study of African American drama of the sixties has therefore emphasized its relationship to the changes in social and political thinking in America and its impact on perspectives and forms of African American drama. Accordingly it has given as background, an analysis of the

various social and political influences that created the optimistic integrationist drama of the fifties, using it as a comparative and contrasting base from which to consider the drama of the sixties. The discussion of the perspectives of the sixties has taken into account the mood of disillusion created among African Americans as a result of the social failures of the fifties. It has in addition, considered how this mood was translated in the political and social thinking of black movements like the Black Power Movement and how this thinking influenced trend of drama.

In connecting these developments to specific cultural actions, and mainly to the dramatic ventures of two playwrights, we have shown how such social developments are translated into dramatic perspectives and eventually how these perspectives affect dramatic form. -In this way the specific relationship between dramatic perspective and form has been explored especially how with change of a dramatist's perspective invariably dictates a change in form to contain it. Hence the study has looked at how the playwrights use various cultural artifacts and mainly language to express that distinct cultural difference as well as their particular artistic visions. The two

playwrights have crystallised the moods of the sixties as they were translated in the African American drama of the sixties. My analysis and discussion has revealed that on one hand, they complement each other in rejecting the integrationist perspective of the fifties and in deliberately communicating almost exclusively with the black audience. On the other hand as the separate discussion of each of the dramatist's work has revealed, they had different approaches to the idea of black self-assertion in drama and different conceptions of the black theatre movement. While Baraka interpreted the black experience in terms of its opposition to the larger American society and thus fashioned his drama to reflect this, Bullins on the other hand, perceived it and dramatized as a world in itself and therefore treated black experience within its own framework of strengths and weaknesses which could be utilized or transcended as the case maybe.

The two playwrights therefore in this discussion represent the sixties transcending impulses of new perspectives as opposed to the conciliatory and evolutionary process envisaged by the playwrights of the past decade. As their drama has revealed, it is based on the mutual and

intense relationship between the action on stage and the audience's active participation. In order to be effective in creating a real relationship of communion with the audience, the drama in this revolutionary period had to activate the cultural imperatives of the black world for a meaningful expression. Hence the dramatic discourse expresses the needs within the audience and therefore in a sense bringing forth their comprehension of themselves as evidenced in the perspectives contained in the plays analysed in the previous chapters. Although we have also distinguished their different methods of achieving this both dramatists' formulated the problem in different ways and terms; Baraka's drama is more of a reaction hence it is forceful and violent as cultural action is fashioned to achieve political ends, Bullins's drama is more direct hence it has a serene and passive quality since it is geared towards cultural action as a transformation. But both are revolutionary as they seek to transform the perceptions and quality of the African American life.

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