CHAPTER - 3

Imamu Amiri Baraka: A Playwright of Black Consciousness

An unparalleled Black American poet, dramatist, story-writer, political activist and art critic, Amiri Baraka has been a beacon for the Black Americans. He entered the American consciousness not merely as a multifarious genius but as an event, a symbolic figure, somehow combining the craft and insights of Euro-American radicalism with the rebellious energies of young Afro-Americans. He is popularly known as one of the leading representatives of the Black aesthetic or Black Arts Movement. He is regarded in high esteem because he could create a compelling force of consciousness in the minds of the Black Americans. The overall theme of his works of art reflects initiation, renunciation and reformation of Black people in America. Critics say that Baraka's works have shown many stages of self-revelation and they are nothing but the outcome of his self-conscious sensibility. They present not only the dialectics of will and destiny but also the discovery of self through recognition and creation of lineage. They also present the ambiguities and necessities of history and cultural values. They put emphasis on the restoration of energy and purpose in human activity, which must be accomplished, in an extreme situation through a series of urgent acts. His works thus present "an essential play between an action and its perspective, between the present and all known (historical) and foreseen (prophetic) time, between the loss of oneself in the moment and the recognition of oneself in terms of one's whole destiny." Baraka's art charts the progress of a self, sacrificing for his own race with all dynamism. Thus Baraka's commitment to
change the American society through his art is motivated by a fervent idealism. So Barakan literature is always effective and profoundly social.

Born as Everett Le Roi Jones in Newark, New Jersey in 1934, in a lower middle class family, he experienced a heritage of teachers and preachers at home, in childhood. Baraka's own childhood was unremarkable, except for a surprisingly early fascination with political speeches by historical figures. And it is known that he tried to write short fiction in high school. He was apparently an academically gifted student in high school since he received several scholarship offers when he graduated. He accepted an offer from Rotgers University where he enrolled in 1951. He never felt comfortable with the social atmosphere there, largely, it seems, because he felt like the Black outsider in a predominantly white world. Then he transferred to Howard University where he eventually graduated in Arts in 1954. He was not satisfied with the social life at Howard University. His experience as a university student had a significant bearing on the development of his social consciousness. In many respects his discomfort with the predominantly white campus at Rutgers left a deep impression of a sense of cultural isolation. In turn, that sense of isolation sparked hunger for a racially compatible and culturally stimulating environment — the very hunger that eventually made Howard inadequate in his eyes, because the university seemed to be too much devoted to the business of Black middle class achievements on the terms of the white world. Thus, he was permanently influenced by his sense of isolation from the white majority and by his alienation from what he would invariably reflect in his writings as the self-hating Black bourgeoisie.
However, his college life was not altogether negative. At Howard, he had what proved to be an invaluable exposure to Black folk culture and Black music - an exposure that would be as important to his writing as his readings in Western Philosophy and Western Literature. It was at this period, too, that he developed an interest in both the histories of jazz and jazz criticism, an interest that would eventually lead to a career as one of the more significant jazz critics and historians of the 1960s.

After graduation from Howard University, Baraka satisfied the selective service requirements by enlisting in the air force. He spent some time serving in West Germany, but most of his time was spent in Puerto Rico (1954 - 57). Baraka's experience in the air force seemed to have intensified and broadened that sense of racial and cultural isolation, which he had first developed at Rutgers University. But in Puerto Rico his feelings amounted to more than isolation. He developed a growing and fundamental alienation from American society as a whole, from a socio political system that he found culturally and racially incompatible, even repressive. His intellectual activities during this period reflected a continuous ambiguity in his life as dissident or revolutionary; the intense and deepening alienation from America proceeded side by side with, indeed fed upon, his active participation in American Society. His repulsion from the air force and the armed services stood as the quintessential symbol of the American system and the Western tradition as a whole, but his intellectual rebelliousness against these, and his early writings, were actually stimulated and influenced by his reading in America's literary and philosophical heritage.
After his discharge from the air force Baraka found himself in a position that was familiar to young Blacks who had just completed their education or military service - or both. He had difficulty in finding a job. And in his case the choices were sharply limited by his growing revulsion at the usual middle class or working class options - like the ones that had been chosen by his parents and his sister Sandra (a school teacher). He chose instead to settle down in Greenwich village in 1957, the year of his discharge from the air force. At this time the village was the scene of the kind of intellectual and artistic ferment that lent itself readily to a genuine and substantive rebelliousness regarding the middle class mainstream. As the social atmosphere was liberal, racial, integrated to a degree, and decidedly permissive, it attracted considerable numbers of the politically alienated people.

On the whole, then, the village was an ideal environment for a young Black dissident whose racial alienation was not so militant as to be incompatible with a vigorous interest in the intellectual and artistic heritage of the white mainstream. The popular image of Baraka's earliest days in the village was one of a newcomer joining an established circle of writers and other artists. In the meantime, Baraka met and married his first wife Hettie Cohen within a month after moving to Greenwich village, and it appears that the circle of "beat generation" friends and associates actually developed after the marriage - largely as a result of the biracial couple's activities as writers and editors between 1958 and 1965.

They both worked for the Record Changer Magazine where they actually met. They also founded and coedited Yugen, a literary magazine that they launched in 1958. During this period Baraka also worked as an editor at Totem.
Press, handling the works of such writers as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and Diane Wakoski. In 1961, he also joined forces with Diana Di Prima to launch and coedit yet another literary magazine *The floating Bear*. And the same year he founded with Di Prima the "American Theater for Poets", an experimental writing and reading workshop. This was also the period when Baraka established himself as a young jazz critic and a regular contributor to *Down Beat*, among other publications in the field.

Not surprisingly, these activities as writer, editor, and workshop organizer brought Baraka into contact with a large number of writers and other artists - the members of the so-called "beat generation" of intellectuals who made Greenwich village their headquarters in the late 1950s and early 1960s. During these village years his home became a center for all sorts of informal activities and endless discussions. Regulars at these sessions included Di Prima, Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and authors who were to be identified with the "Black Mountain School of Poetry" – especially Charles Olson, whose ideals and practice had some impact on Baraka's own work, as we shall see in due course. This circle of friends and colleagues was predominantly white, but did include Black jazz artists like Thelonius Monk and Ornette Coleman. And in this connection it should be noted that Baraka's work as writer and editor was complemented by his activities in the area of jazz: he was responsible for the organization of several workshops and concerts for the benefit of new, avant garde jazz musicians.

The seven years at Greenwich Village were also years of increasing prominence. The then Le Roi Jones was coming to the attention of the academic world and the so-called literary establishment. This was the period in which some
of his earlier but major works were published: *poetry- Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note* (1961) and *The Dead Lecturer* (1964); *drama*: *The Toilet* (1963), *Dutchman* and *The Slave* (1964); *music criticism and history*: *Blues People* (1963); and *novel*, *The System of Dante's Hell* (1965). As his reputation as a radical young writer grew, so did the number of awards and other honours: a Whitney Fellowship (1960 - 61), the Obie Award, for *Dutchman* (1964), and the Yoruba Academy Fellowship (1965). Then there was the visiting lecturehip, at the New School for Social Research (1962-65) and at the University of Buffalo (1964). In less than a decade the alienated young air force sergeant became a young literary lion, basking in and profiting from his notoriety as all-round radical and Black militant - at a time when the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement was opening up a variety of opportunities to young Black rebels.

Many of his writings in this period reflect the kind of radicalism that had been developing since the college years - an intense but vaguely defined rebelliousness that found its targets in racism, social injustice at home, and America's role abroad, especially in the third world countries. Three major events or experiences in the early 1960s stimulated this early radicalism and provided the impetus toward Baraka's subsequent development as social critic, writer, and activist - the Cuban revolution, the emergence of third world nations in Africa and else where from the postwar remnants of European empires and the racial violence of the 1960s in America itself.

In 1960 Baraka was among a group of Black American writers who visited Cuba as the guest of Fidel Castro's fledgling revolutionary government. It is clear from one of Baraka's earliest collected essays ("Cuba Libre") that the visit had a
profound effect on him. Castro’s Cuba offered him a firsthand view of a revolutionary process in the making. And while it obviously did not make a Marxist revolutionary of him all at once, it jarred him into a new self-critical awareness about the limitations and contradictions in his own posture as radical and rebel within the fashionably dissident ambience of the “beat generation.” Revolutionary Cuba offered Baraka his first concrete impressions of an alternative to the kind of system in which he had been participating with an increasing sense of separation. From here on, his radical critique of America began to acquire a sharper focus, despite the fact that the ideological substance of that critique has often been unimpressive.

The Cuban revolution also heightened his awareness of America’s role abroad. What he saw as inadequacies at home were now complemented by the shortsightedness and moral bankruptcy with which America seemed to be responding to revolutionary movements in the Third World. And on the whole this increasing radicalism merged with the growing militancy of the Civil Rights Movement. The emergence of Black power as a rallying cry in the middle 1960s signaled the degree to which a significant segment of the movement had shifted from civil rights protests as such to a militant emphasis on new political and cultural goals – specifically, greater political power for Blacks, and a new emphasis on the distinctive qualities of Black ethnicity and Black history. These at any rate, were the major rhetorical emphases of the Black Nationalist, or Black cultural “revolution”. These emphases coincided with the race riots that raced like brush fire, through the major critics in the summers of the middle and late 1960s. And it is against this political background that the two crucial changes
occurred in Baraka's personal life. In 1965 he separated from his wife, Hettie, from whom he was subsequently divorced. And in that year he moved from Greenwich Village to Harlem.

A great deal has been said and written about the political implications of Baraka's marriage and divorce—particularly in the light of the fact that his first wife was white. Interracial themes in his writings, especially in the earlier plays, have been viewed in relation to the author's relationship with his first wife and conversely, there have been various attempts to link the break-up with Baraka's increasing support for Black separatists. But much of this is mere speculation. Neither Baraka nor his former wife has really spoken in detail, at least for public consumption, about the cause and effect links between Baraka's political experiences and his domestic life—what is clear enough is that the changes in Baraka's personal life have been as inseparable from his political choices as those choices have been from his writings.

Hence his interracial marriage coincided with a period in his life when radicalism was not defined entirely in terms of Black protest or Black culture. The divorce took place at a time when he entered into his Black separatist phase as Black Nationalist spokesman. And this Black Nationalist commitment coincided, in turn, with his marriage (1966) to a Black woman, Sylvia Robinson. Finally, in the late 1960s he followed the prevailing trend among Black nationalist spokesmen and their followers: he discarded the "slave name" that had been given by his family. He chose a Muslim name that conformed with his concurrent conversion to the Muslim Faith: Everett Le Roi Jones became Imamu Amiri Baraka, which means Blessed Prince.
From 1965 to 1970 Baraka's writings reflect the shift from civil rights protest to a belligerent Black Nationalism that celebrates the presumed distinctiveness of Black culture and identity in America. In this period he wrote essays, *Home* (1966), his *Short Stories and Tales* (1967), his third major collection of poetry, *Black Magic* (1969), and the plays, like *The Baptism* and *The Toilet* (1966) and *Four Black Revolutionary Plays* (1969). In addition to these major works, his writings during this period include a substantial number of agit-prop plays which were clearly intended as a species of political action - a means of mobilizing the support of the Black community for the ideals of the Black nationalist program. This kind of emphasis on the stage is a direct outgrowth of Baraka's increasing role as a political activist too. The writings command attention towards Baraka not only as a Black Nationalist spokesman but also as a prolific writer of America.

After leaving Greenwich Village in 1965, he plunged into political activities on the local level. At first he briefly directed The Black Arts Repertory Theater, a community group in Harlem. The project was funded federally, through the office of economic opportunity, but it soon foundered for lack of financial support when it came under attack for allegedly supporting works based on Black racism and antiwhite violence with the collapse of this project in 1965. Baraka returned to his old hometown, Newark, which remained his head quarters and the focus of much of his political activism since then. As an activist, he concentrated on the major issue that was to dominate much of his writings from here on the need for institutions and organizations (cultural and political) which could
promote local self sufficiency and mobilize broad political support for Black nationalist causes.

There he organized "Spirit House", a community and arts center, shortly after returning to Newark. Two years later, he founded Jihad productions to support Black Nationalist artists; and in 1968 he joined the committee for Unified Newark, and founded "The Black Community Development and Defense Organization". These activities culminated on the local level in the 1970 elections when the group, with which he was associated, worked successfully for the election of Newark's first Black mayor, Bob Gibjon. In fact, the 1970 elections became a standard example of what Baraka and others, like himself, then postulated as "Black Power". The Black community had been organized to use the existing political system and the electoral machinery to gain local political control in their own communities.

This phase of Baraka's political activism came to public attention in 1967, during the Newark riots when he was closely associated with one of the community groups: United Brothers of Newark. He was arrested on charges of unlawfully carrying firearms and of resisting arrest. His subsequent conviction was eventually reversed on appeal, and the case gained considerable notoriety partly because of Baraka's own media image as a Black militant leader, and partly because the conduct of the judge in the case sparked a spirited controversy, inside and outside legal circles, on his alleged intemperance and lack of judicial propriety in his handling of the defendant.

But this phase of Baraka's life as a political activist and community organizer owes much more to a far less publicized but much more significant
event. He taught as a visiting lecturer at San Francisco State College in the 1966-67 school year. And during that year he came under the influence of Ron Karenga, the West Coast Black Nationalist who had founded his own local group in the US. Generally Karenga's "Kawaida" doctrine suffered from some kind of intellectual thinness that plagued much Black Nationalist rhetoric in the 1960s and early 1970s. But Karenga did enjoy a certain appeal, largely because his vision of an effective Black nationalism emphasized the need to supplement rhetoric with action, to make ethno-political ideals effective by building organizations and institutions for that purpose. His "Kawaida" principles, which attracted Baraka very strongly, were essentially the formulation of pragmatic homilies on the need for social and political mobilization, with a continuing emphasis on those religious or deeply spiritual qualities, which, allegedly, distinguish Black history and culture worldwide.

Having spent much of his adult life in conscious rebellion against the prevailing systems of his society, Baraka was strongly attracted to Karenga's highly systematized approach to the definition of Black power. In Karenga and his doctrines, Baraka found ready made means of articulating socio-economic systems (local self-help) and political organizations (local community groups) which he translated with some limited success, to fit the needs of his political activities in Newark. Having also had a lifelong interest in world religions, he was naturally drawn to the religious emphasis of Karenga's brand of Black Nationalism.

Altogether the exposure to Karenga stimulated Baraka's interest in and enlarged his capacity for political organization. And this capacity led to his
prominent role in the planning and holding of the 1970 Congress of African people in Atlanta. In retrospect the Congress proved to be a watershed of sorts. It was largely a failure when considered to be an attempt to weld the disparate elements of the Black community into a single and influential political force. At best it succeeded in articulating an ideal unity in diversity - which proved to be a statement of hope (or a thinly sugarcoated admission of irreconcilable differences) rather than any practical political platform. But not withstanding its lack of any solid political achievement, the Congress won national recognition for Baraka as an effective organizer and persuasive political leader: in the mass media, at any rate, he was the one who received much of the credit for whatever sense of unity and purpose did emerge from the Congress.

After the Congress, Baraka's career as a Black Nationalist was comparable with the Black Nationalist movement itself in the 1970s. Both went into swift decline. The Black movement lost its impact as an explosive, potentially revolutionary force. America, specifically the white majority, was increasingly preoccupied with other crises, as the ubiquitous pollsters provided again and again the war(s) in southeast Asia, the economy, and more recently, energy crisis. The white majority had increasingly been convinced that racial relationship had improved, that things had changed for the Blacks, for the better, and according to some Whites, that the Blacks and other minorities had received too many concessions, already. It was the conservatism or apathy of the white majority regarding ethnic issues that began to make itself felt at a time when several leaders of Black militant groups such as the Black Panthers and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, were arrested or fled into exile
abroad. And, ironically, the more the white mainstream opened up opportunities for Blacks under pressure from militant Black movements, the greater was the loss of momentum for traditional and militant Black groups alike: current and potential leaders became successful members of the mainstream.

This latter development was particularly irksome to Baraka, who eventually came to look with a jaundiced eye at the overall impact of integration. From his viewpoint that impact had the effect of simply enriching the pockets and the political positions of the Black middle class. This was the viewpoint, which he had articulated on frequent occasions in explaining his eventual shift from Black Nationalism to Marxist Socialism (1974). He realised that America's racial and other social ills had to be tackled, not from an ethnic political perspective, but within the context of class divisions. The issue was no longer to be ethnic rebellion or Cultural Revolution defined in ethnic terms: it would be a class struggle to bring about the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The various changes in Baraka's political position had tended to encourage a certain skepticism, even cynicism, about the man, especially about the depth of his ideological commitment. The actual ideological shift had, of course, been obvious enough - the early apolitical rebellion of the beat generation, then the militant civil rights activism, followed in turn by Black separatism and Marxist-Leninist socialism. The thinness or untidiness that had marked his adoption of these varying positions had also been obvious. But there was really no basis on which his sincerity or commitment to the ultimate issue could really be doubted. And that ultimate issue had remained consistent throughout all the twists and turns of his ideological choices: he remained steadfastly and deeply antipathetic
to American mainstream culture - its social structure, its racial caste system, and its socio-economic values. And the consistency with which he had remained a rebel against the mainstream had actually been highlighted, rather than diminished, by the very enthusiasm with which he continually sought new approaches to change. Given his past record there is little reason to doubt that more ideological changes were possible, even likely. But it was also probable that he would continue to be motivated by the same deep-seated rebelliousness that had engaged him for much of his adult life as activist and as writer.

The dramatic world of Baraka is immense. He writes his plays with a strong commitment and tries to bring about a social and cultural consciousness among the Black Americans. He reflects himself as a radical rebel of the 60s through them. He writes plays of great purpose, seeking justice for the Black Americans. His plays are very practical and social documents possessing Black artistic values. Like his poetry, his plays project a brilliant and pragmatic mind of an American Black writer. His plays expose several features related to Black culture, Black society and Black mind with a magical touch of the Black Arts Movement of 1960s. As such his plays constitute some of the typical characteristics which need to be outlined here. Evidently, they are affected very much by his tension between art and activism. He offers the role of the playwright from the perspectives of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tse-Tung Thought. So in his plays, the emphasis is on the greater legitimacy of the act over the word. Therefore they are understood in relation to the Maoist insistence on the unity of politics and art, on the fusion of "revolutionary political content" and "the
highest possible perfection of artistic form. This achievement is no doubt a hard task for any writer, but Baraka does achieve them.

The socialist ideal is peculiarly attractive to Baraka the dramatist, or more specifically, to Baraka the revolutionary dramatist. In this connection Brown comments:

Drama is the means of achieving that unity of political action and literary word, which has always been crucial to Baraka. Hence that interest in the word as act which dominates much of the later poetry culminates in the drama-especially in the later plays. In these plays the dramatic synthesis of language and action is both the symbolic and literal example of Baraka's ideal of the word as action. Indeed in Baraka's drama, even in the earlier works but especially in the more recent revolutionary plays, the very idea of dramatic form is both an aesthetic principle and political concept: the play as action is integral to the revolutionist's idealistic activism; dramatic form as motion through time and space is compatible with the revolutionary view of history as constant change.

Baraka's theory of dramatic art is so integral to his political principles and practice that Baraka's achievement as a dramatist is decidedly uneven. Indeed, on the basis of those very socialist standards, which he himself invokes, he is "least effective as a dramatist in the revolutionary plays of his Black Nationalist and socialist periods." However, it is known that all his plays of the 60s exclusively befit the purpose of the Black Arts Movement. William J. Harris writes, Baraka's
"abilities as a playwright transcend particular artistic milieus is suggested by the fact that although the Black Arts Movement is moribund, Baraka's influence and creativity is persevere". The spirit of Baraka's plays is the spirit of the Black Arts Movement.

Baraka's plays are written chronologically in four periods. They are: the 'Beat Period' (1957-1962), the 'Transitional Period' (1963-1965), the 'Black Nationalist Period' (1965-1974) and the 'Third World Marxist Period' (1974 - ). Most of his plays related to the Black Arts Movement are written at least in the second and the third Period. His first plays Dutchman and The Slave, The Baptism and The Toilet were written in 1964. His Four Black Revolutionary plays containing Experimental Death Unit # 1, A Black Mass, Great Goodness of life, and Madheart was written during 1965 and 1969. His Slave ship was written in 1967. Home on the range and Police were published in 1968. In 1970 a significant play Jello was written. S-1 was written in 1976 whereas The Motion of History was written in 1978. He has also written very short and effective plays like The Death of Malcolm X in 1969, Junkies are Full of (SHHH...) in 1971.

During the 'Beat Period', he published important little magazines such as Yugen and Floating Bear. He was greatly influenced by the white avant garde like Charles Olson, O'Hara, and Ginsberg. He wrote poems, which were full of imagery and spontaneous humour. They were sensuous or slangy knowledgeable passages. But gradually his consciousness as an American Negro grew. The Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black political upsurge of the late 1960s influenced him. His attitude toward race and art changed. He found that being a Negro wasn't some abstract and generalized stance but was integral to his
Early Plays

The early plays of Baraka include *Dutchman, The Slave, The Baptism* and *The Toilet*. Each play is a highly effective analysis of American society with immense radical value from the point of view of Black Americans' social and
cultural consciousness. *Dutchman* and *The Baptism* are symbolic and allegorical whereas *The Slave* and *The Toilet* are quite realistic and reactionary. These plays enact tensions or conflicts prevailing among the Black Americans.

Baraka is much known for his play *Dutchman*. Hudson comments, "Of the plays Baraka has written the best known *Dutchman*, starting as part of a twin bill offering along with *The Zoo Story* by Edward Albee, it has proved durable as theatre fare". On the literal level, *Dutchman* is concerned with two people, a Negro male, Clay and a White female, Lula, who strike up a chance acquaintance on a subway train. They take mental measurement of each other. To Clay, Lula is a white liberal, a Bohemian type, and a bit flirty. To Lula, Clay is a typical, middle class, intellectual young Negro anxious to achieve success in white America, the type who should feel honoured or pleased that she offers him her company.

The two engage themselves in small talk, full of love during which Clay agrees to take Lula along to a party that he plans to attend that night. Continuously they exchange good natured and playful railing remarks. When Lula suddenly teases Clay about compromising himself in order to get along in white society, Clay becomes resentful of Lula's comments. Inspite of Clay's displeasure, Lula accuses him of avoiding his identity as a Black man and proclaims him to be a murderer. She further reproaches him, calling him a "liverlipped white man... Just a dirty whiteman". This is too much for Clay. He is not the type to sink under pressure to her wills if this entails being insulted. Pushed to the point where he loses his possessiveness he angrily beats back Lula, declaring that it is his right to be whatever he is and he does not bother whether she approves or disapproves of it. Indeed his manner of living is a way of controlling his violence.
He says "I sit here in this bottomed up suit to keep myself from cutting all your throats". (P 32). He continues saying, "If I am a middle-class fake white man let me be. The only thing that would cure my neurosis would be your murder" (P. 34). Though Clay angrily expresses his wish to murder the white race including Lula, he only remains a man of words but not a man action. He continues his verbal fight till Lula, enraged, rather reflexively stabs him to death. Other subway riders look on at this murder passively. Lula, the true representative of her white class, orders them to throw Clay's dead body off the train and they do it silently. Lula behaves as if nothing had happened. Interestingly enough, when a similar young Negro boards the subway train at the next stop, Lula begins what apparently is going to be a similar temptation routine. Though the plot line has several implications, the most important is the survival of the Black man in America or in the Western World in spite of exploitation by the white man. For that matter, it is predicated upon his ability to keep this thought and true identity hidden.

According to critics, the play embodies three myths. First is the myth of the Flying Dutchman who roamed the seas and added unwary ships to its phantom entourage. The second myth refers to a Dutchman-of-war, which brought the first Black slaves to North America. The Third myth is associated with the apples—the apples with which Lula enters the subway eating so daintily at the beginning of the play seem to bear some resemblance to the Biblical fruit of the tree of knowledge in Christian mythology. Commenting on Lula, Lindsberg says, "Lula wants to believe in her version of funky Black vitality. So she can deny Clay's view of the Black arts as an escapist sublimation of hate for dominant
whites". So far as the character of Clay is concerned, he no doubt proves himself to be innocent and friendly with Lula. But his innocence does not mean anything to Lula. So she behaves with him in a mean and sadistic way. Her acts of temptation of Clay make us feel that Clay is going to be her victim any way. But later noticing his racial consciousness, she starts sneering at him. She tries to insult him by calling him a slave like Uncle Tom; she calls him to be an 'escaped nigger'; and in reaction Clay slaps her twice. This act of Clay is smart and reactive. When she calls him 'insane'. He reacts saying, "Just murder would make us all sane" (P 35). Of course his view is significant in a dynamic direction of Afro-American renaissance. However, L.W. Brown's comment on Clay is quite significant. He says, " Clay also fails in the end because, although his rebellious perspectives are substantial enough, his identity as a rebel is incomplete".

Clay's character analysis is based on two familiar and recurrent themes in Baraka's work. Firstly, as a Black writer and intellectual, Clay is caught up in a cultural conflict, which paralyses him. He limits his capacity for rebellious action, despite his intellectual awareness of the need for rebellion. On the one hand he is drawn towards Lula's ethnocentric white culture, but on the other hand he responds to the Black ethnicity represented by the Blues. His death, therefore, represents the self-destructive consequences of this kind of moral and intellectual paralysis. Secondly, Clay's ineffectuality as a rebel stems in part from the fact that his poetic art is self-contained rather than actively committed to social action. His poetic art is art for art's sake. He suffers from a fascination with words for their own sake.
According to Benston, "The confrontation releases from Clay's subconscious, an imaginative illumination that produces aspects of order. At the moment of greatest breakdown of sheer unleashed chaos (Lula's dance), Clay meets crisis with a response that represents the memory of truth and Black virtue". Clay follows Baraka's ideals of "Theatre of Victims" in "Revolutionary theatre", as he says, "it must Accuse and Attack anything that can be accused and attacked." When Clay begins to look up with assertive pride, he faces a mystery; but it is a mystery that challenges his preconceptions of good. His speech is thus a major epiphany of Black self-awareness, Black power, and Black freedom. It deserves to be isolated both as Clay's vehicle for self-discovery and as a Barakan manifesto of Black liberation. Benston argues that:

If clay could make of the poem a Lethal weapon, as Baraka wished to do with 'Black Art', he would create a safe, triumphant vision in opposition to the neurosis of his mulatto, or 'bastard', Poetry. But he is a Black man in transition, a prerevolutionary victim of his own multicultivated tastes and inability to act. In his major speeches Clay discovers his revolutionary, deeply spiritual self.

A thorough analysis of the character of Clay reveals us many things. His address is often cited as the pumping Black heart of the New Black Aesthetic and of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960's, and hailed as an act of political liberation. While it is true that Clay becomes, at this point in Dutchman, a Black Nationalist voice who rejects his middle-class background to affirm a restoration of sanity for the wretchedness of the earth, he articulates, at the same time, what Lula asks of him. He fulfills Lula's and Baraka's conception of Dadaism as established by
Baraka in “Black Dada Nihilismus” and expresses in simple words, Lula’s demand for “a dada man”. However, Baraka advances Clay one step further by subjecting him to the surrealist exaggeration of Dadaism. In the central scene of Dutchman, Clay once thinks of himself as a Black Baudelaire. He seems to display a claim of total revolt, complete insubordination, a malicious destruction according to the rule of the Black Arts Movement.

The racial dimension places Clay’s speech also in the tradition of Richard Wright’s Native Son. Seen in this context, Clay represents an inversion of Bigger Thomas. Whereas Bigger sees the “act” of murder (if only by accident) as a perverted form of creativity, as the only “artistic” endeavour that his society leaves open for him, Clay sees art as a neurotic perversion of violence, and violence as the only act which would restore the Black man’s sanity. Yugendranath says that “Lula may thus be seen ‘Surrealizing’ Black nationalism and ‘ethnicizing’ surrealism. This fusion of aesthetic and racial avant-gardism makes Clay’s speech a forceful example of Baraka’s strategy of populist-modernism and key passage for the avant-gardist Black Arts Movement of the 1960s.” The approach of Baraka in exposing Black consciousness here is a novel one. He tries to reveal the psychological reality of the Black young man as well as the white lady side by side. In this play, Clay shows self-assertion, a freedom of mind, daringness, protest and anger against the white Lady Lula who is affected by mania, a sadist and the representative of careless white people.

As a part of Black Arts Movement, Baraka’s Dutchman displays the depth of Black intellectualism. As a drama, Yugendranath finds it as “the most sophisticated realization of the native Black dramatic and theoretical ingenuity
coming down from Black cultural rituals, Minstrelsy and the tragic rhythms of the Blues. So the play is a beautiful piece of art reflecting a total Black consciousness at a preliminary stage that becomes profound in his next plays.

After the very first presentation of Dutchman in 1964, Baraka wrote another short play entitled, The Slave. Like Dutchman, The Slave is also concerned with the relationship between a Black man and a White woman. It describes the continuity of Black revolution in the role of contemporary Black revolutionary leader, Walker Vessels who is very much aware of the conflicting impulses implicit in the slave emblem.

The plot of The Slave is quite interesting. In the “Prologue” to The Slave, Walker Vessels comes out “dressed as an old field slave, balding, with white hair, and an old ragged vest. (Perhaps he is sitting, sleeping, initially-nodding and is awakened by faint cries, like a child’s). He comes to the center of the stage slowly, and very deliberately, puffing on a pipe, and seemingly uncertain of the reaction any audience will give his speech”

Walker gives a long speech, which is full of Black American social consciousness. It is agitating and revolutionary in tone. He calls for revival of Black culture and of the Blues People. He calls himself “an Old Man full of great ideas” and suggests that they “need, a hem, a meta language.” Walker Vessels is a “tall, thin, forty-year-old Negro” who leaves his career as an academic intellectual and poet and becomes a leader of the national Black rebellion. He pays a seminostalgic visit to the house of his former white wife, Grace, and her husband, Bradford Easley, a university Professor who was once Walker’s teacher. Walker’s relationship with his ex-wife had yielded two daughters who are now living with
their mother. While Walker’s troops are about to take the city, Walker comes ahead of them to take his two daughters away and to have a last confrontation with his former white friends. The entire play takes place in the Easley’s living room where the characters argue about the sanity and purpose of war, their rights to the children and the various aspects of their past.

After a great deal of debate, Walker finally insists that he has come to take back his children. Grace is horrified and refuses to believe him; Easley is angry and afraid. As a white man, Easley prepares to jump on to Walker, who has not only been holding a gun but has also become progressively drunk; the soldiers of Walker’s army arrive in the city and begin to shell the house. Finally Walker kills Easely and searches for his daughters who have supposedly been asleep upstairs. First he thinks them to be dead and as he emerges from the door he again becomes the old man of the “Prologue.” There is a long silence. Then the screaming of child is heard, followed by explosions that continue “for some time” after the final curtain.

Walker Vessels, the sensitive former poet cannot now cope with the racial opposition, which conflicts with his personal inclinations. On the one hand he is the Black rebel par excellence and leader of the race war with worldwide dimensions. On the other, he is in the military leader of the universal liberation struggle of non-whites. He prefers to murder his children as a symbolic act which is shown less as an attack upon a virtuous society by a malignant individual than as a symptom of that society’s own past sins. By killing his children, he has killed his past and is able to resume his place in the unyielding ticking of revolutionary history. He seems to have shed the slave image, and to have emerged as a wholly
committed rebel leader. Thus he expresses the same theme of Baraka's poem, "Black Dada Nihilismus":

may a lost god damballah, rest or save us
against the murders we intend
against his lost white children
Black dada nihilismus. 16

The play does not leave us here. As Walker again becomes the old slave of the "Prologue," we are left with the enigma of his identity. Benston comments:

Has Walker, truly escaped the hideous past of the "slave mentality" and entered a history of slave rebellion with leaders such as his namesake Denmark Vesey (a free Black South Carolinian who led a slave uprising in the first quarter of the nineteenth-century)? Or do the imperatives of history, which the old slave explicated for us in the beginning, make their inevitable mark upon mankind without his intervention? And as the explosions continue and the child's voice screams "as loud as it can," is it a birth or death shriek that we hear? Are the words of "Black Dada Nihilismus" to be intoned, or are these words of Yeats's, which Walker had known all too well, more appropriate?

Straddling each dolphin's back
And steadied by a fin,
Those innocents relive their death,
Their wounds open again. (Quoted by Walker on p. 50)
Whatever the answers, they lie between that ominous "sudden aggravated silence" and the intolerable music of the falling bombs."

Those few critics who have discussed the form of *The Slave* have been unable to observe more than the obvious: "realism" in the language of contemporary political argument, reinforced by truthfulness of place and extraordinary "fullness" in the evocation of the characters. Walker Vessels is enslaved by his blind adherence to race concepts. One of Baraka's essays contains an ironic allusion to the nationalistic sentiment as expressed in *The Slave*. In "The National Black Assembly and the Black Liberation Movement", Baraka criticises the "neocolonial development of the late sixties and seventies" during which the Black bourgeoisie took the road of "nationalism" without consideration for the Black masses as it happens to Walker Vessels. A further explanation of the play can be presented through Baraka's famous programmatic essay, "The Revolutionary Theater", which attempts to interpret *The Slave* as a revolutionary play. Although Walker is, like Clay in *Dutchman*, a "victim", the play is said to present what the Revolutionary Theater is supposed to show: "the missionaries and wiggly Liberals dying under blasts of concrete". The subject of race war makes the play, which was written just before the great urban rebellion of the 1960's, prophetic in more than its private aspect. *The Slave* is more thoroughly naturalistic than *Dutchman*, yet it too is not simply a slice-of-life depicting of modern racial confrontation. As much as with *Dutchman*, its form is not only a carefully devised medium for the issues the characters confront but also a kind of content or message for Afro-Americans.
Walker's long stay in the evening in the Easleys' house is a temporary escape from the rebellion that rages outside. Here Hudson observes that "the rebellion constantly encroaches upon the isolated living from until it finally blows the play to pieces, ending not only the verbal conflict but also the play itself. And as the explosions continue after the curtain has descended, we are forced to contend with a moral crisis as fundamental as that faced by the characters." 19

The key to The Slave as a formal structure lies in Baraka's subheading to the play: "A Fable in a Prologue and Two Acts." It is a story embodying a moral. This moral certainly resides in the bifurcated personality of its Willie Best (a version of the old Negro Slave, a shrewdly, impenetrable mind disguised by a shucking and smiling exterior) figure in the form of a composite of a slave and rebel. While Walker sits in the Easleys' living room, discussing and, in effect, relieving his past, he steps out of history; Grace is a kind of Duessa figure, a beautiful woman who sets Walker off from his quest, a creature from whom he learns but whom he must leave in the wasteland of the past:

Grace. I guess that's the point, now. Is that the point, Walker? Me being alone ... as you have been now for so long? I'll bet that's the point, huh? I'll bet you came here to do exactly what you did ... kill Brad, then take the kids, and leave me alone ... to suffocate in the stink of my memories

Walker. Yeah, Grace That's the point. For sure, that's the point.(83-84)
As a conscious rebel, Walker must step back into history to find himself as an individual, to achieve real heroism.

The core of *The Slave* resembles the Platonic views, with its issue-oriented dialogue. Easley's early remark on the "poetry of ritual drama" becomes a regular evaluation of the action, and he dies thinking of the experience of the evening as "ritual drama". Easley and Walker are distinctly incapable of communicating. Of the two, however, Easley's rhetoric is especially closed-minded. Whatever beginning Walker and Grace manage to make toward progressive communication is interrupted by Easley's bursts of temper and antagonism. His words have as Hudson says, "the demagogic ring of a spread-eagle orator". They are formally more uncompromising than those of Walker, the professional controversial political man:

Easley. You're so wrong about everything. So terribly, sickeningly wrong. What can you change? What do you hope to change? Do you think Negroes are better people than whites ... that they can govern a society better than whites? That they'll be more judicious or more tolerant? Do you think they'll make fewer mistakes? I mean really, if the Western white man has proved one thing ... it's the futility of modern society. (P. 73)

Ultimately, even the attempts of Grace and Walker to make contact through language utterly break down. When this happens, language itself seems to lose its frequency, for language is truly little more than a system of understanding:
Grace. You're out of your mind.  (Slow, matter-of-fact)

Walker. Meaning?

Grace. You're out of your mind.

Walker. (Wearily) Turn to another station.

Grace. You're out of your mind.  (P. 82)

When one person's vision of order is another's vision of chaos, each thinks the other as mad and communication becomes impossible. Finally, this battle in "mock-symposium" form is resolved symbolically in the determination of one who attains the ability to hurt the other with language. Grace's failure is signaled by her inability to wound Walker linguistically, to penetrate his feelings with her curse:

Grace. I wish I could call you something that would hurt you.

Walker. So do I.

Grace. (Wearily) Nigger.

Walker. So do I.  (PP. 85-86)

Similarly, Walker's defeat of Easley is confirmed by the latter's painful attempts to talk as he dies:

Easley. (Mouth is still working ... and he is managing to get a few sounds, words, out)

Walker. (Still staring at him, pulling himself up on the chair) Shut up, you! (To Easley) You shut up. I don't want to hear anything else from you. You just die, quietly. No more talk.

(P. 80)
As if to emphasize his superior position, Walker exults in his control of Easley’s lines (a reversal of Lula’s dictating of Clay’s “role” in Dutchman) and watches over the inarticulate dying white man in mocking victory:

Walker. No profound statements, Easley. No horseshit like that. No elegance. You just die quietly and stupidly. Like niggers do. Like they are now. (Quieter) like I will. The only thing I’ll let you say is, “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country”. You can say that. (Looks over at Grace) Grace! Tell Bradford that he can say. “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country”. You can say that.

Easley, but that’s all. (P. 81)

As the play ends, with Grace and Easley both dead, Walker escapes the collapsing home as he shouts the last words, “They’re dead” a quintessential proof of conquest over his white antagonists in their verbal battle.

No doubt, Walker is a victorious survivor. Yet in the passage just quoted he includes himself among those who will die “quietly and stupidly”; he seems to be another of Baraka’s “victim” figures. We can explain this enigma by remembering another, more archaic meaning of fable-foolish or idle talk for Walker’s crisis that stems largely from his ambivalent relationship to a language which his indomitable troops are extinguishing day by day. As a poet, Walker has imitated the “Western” tradition and becomes a victim to the illusion. Walker, the poet-hero-victim, does recognize the tension between his love of language and his dependence upon an alien, “bastard” vocabulary:
Walker. I swear to you, Grace, I did come into the world pointed in the right direction. Oh, shit, I learned so many words for what I've wanted to say. They all come down on me at once. But almost none of them are mine. (P. 53)

These lines recall the old slave's disclaimer in the prologue of his fund of theories and ideas, and especially his conclusion that "we need, ahem, a meta-language, some thing not included here"(p 32). In order to achieve complete revolutionary independence, there must be developed new ideas and new linguistic forms for their organization.

If *The Slave* is tragic, its tragedy is in Walker's being forced into an attitude of hatred that enslaves him, even if his side is the winner in the insurrection. The irony is that, although he is the victor, he is once the enslaved. He no longer has a capacity for love and compassion; he has gone from lack of affection to specific rage against a social order to undiminished hatred for all white people.

The subtitle of *The Slave* "A Fable in a Prologue and Two Acts" indicates that the play should not be considered to be literal and that it should be regarded as instruction. This being so, one must see how well it succeeds as fable. In this connection Brown's remarks are significant:

Walker is actually preparing his audience for a "dream", a self-revealing vision that will disturb and awaken. And since this is to be a form of self-revelation then it will shatter that apathy which characterizes the slave mentality. The shattering of this apathy can create "Killers" (real revolutionaries) or foot-dragging celebrities", 
who exploit their "militant" in sige for personal gain. (PP 43-44).

Applied to the events that follow the prologue walker's remarks imply that the race war incidents and the confrontation with Grace and Bradford Easley are the elements of vision that reveals Walker's divided ethnic consciousness to himself and to the audience. The consciousness includes a capacity for revolution, for the radical reshaping of his ethnic perception.²¹

Walker has consciousness of Black dreams of rebellion and his own rebellious temper set primarily. And in turn that predisposition lends itself to dreams of revolution-the kind of dream that constitutes the main action of the play.

Walker's capacity to dream of revolution in specific terms and his growing sense of commitment take him beyond Clay's rather confused impulses in Dutchman. But in general Walker is comparable with Clay because he too suffers from a destructive division of consciousness. Walker is out and out conscious of his primitive racial condition and thereby he becomes cruel. He himself says:

OK, OK, however you want it ... however you want it, let it go at that. Inspite of all the people I've killed. No, better, inspite of the fact that I, Walker Vessels, single-handedly, and with no other adviser except my own ego, promoted a bloody situation where white and Black people are killing each other despite the fact that I know that this is at best a war that will only change, ha, the complexion of tyranny. ... (laughs sullenly)” (P. 66)
His racial consciousness is quite clear from the excerpts of his conversation with Grace and Easley:

Grace. You stopped telling me everything!

Walker. I never stopped telling you I loved you..., or that you were my wife!

Grace. (Almost broken)

I wasn't enough, Walker. It wasn't enough.

Walker. God, it should have been.

Grace. Walker, you were preaching the murder of all white people.

Walker, I was, am, white. What do you think was going through my mind every time you were at some rally or meeting whose sole purpose was to bring about the destruction of white people?

Walker. Oh, goddamn it, Grace, are you so stupid? You were my wife... I loved you. You mean because I loved you and was married to you... had had children by you, I wasn't supposed to say the things I felt. I was crying out against three hundred years of oppression; not against individuals.

Easley. But it's individuals who are dying.

Walker. It was individuals who were doing the oppressing. It was individuals who were being oppressed. The horror is that
oppression is not a concept that can be specifically transferable. From the oppressed, down on the oppressor. To keep the horror where it belongs ... on those people who we can speak of, even in this last part of the twentieth century, as evil. (P.P. 72-73)

As the dialogues of the play reveal, Baraka vomits out his real interest of active protest against the whites which is quite raw and inspiring and speaks about fulfilling the real purpose of the Black Arts Movement. In 'Dutchman, though Clay acts as a conscious Black young man, he remains a man of words. But in 'The Slave', Walker is no more a man of words but a man of action. He is the real revolutionary representing violence, as a part of the leftist ideology.

His next play The Baptism, first produced in 1964, is a useful introduction to Baraka's drama because it includes features that dominate the earlier plays and others that foreshadow subsequent developments in Baraka's dramatic art. Set in a church, the play is actually a modern morality drama, which centres around a young boy, "15 or so. Handsome, almost to girlishness. Martyr like shyness, sometimes reigned". The other major characters of the play are a Minister with "Black robe, white haired, pompous, appears well meaning, generally ridiculous"; an Old Woman "strong from years of the Americans matriarchy"; a Homosexual, "Elegant, 40ish, priggish, soi-disant intellectual growing jat around the middle and extremely conscious of it. Very queenly". The white church Minister has profound faith in God and christianity. He has enough of faith in himself, being a religious head. So he ought to be impartial and sacred in his views. But it is clear that his speech on morality is ambiguous. Moreover, he seems to be confined to
the prejudice of white morality, which is devoid of love for the Blacks. As a result, he believes in the white Old Woman, who charges the Black Boy of masturbating whereas his talks with the Homosexual imply his mean desire. Their victimising the Boy of fifteen in a vulgar matter is unexpected. The Boy struggles to prove that he is guiltless. He says that while kneeling and praying, he can't do an act the Old Woman charges him with. But the Old Woman complains that the Boy is from hell and he should be punished: “Make a list, Lord, make a list of them. And I’ll root them out, and cast them in the pit” (P.14). She remarks that he is “a demon of that flesh,” a “Blasphemer and he should …….. “You are the devil. Satan! you are the blackest evil … You spilled your seed in prayer. You sacrificed these blessed vestals to your lust. You should die! Die!” (P 26). The Minister takes the side of her and says, “She has swooned in the service of the lord. A holy ecstasy has entered her soul” (P 16). Thus the boy stands undone before the false show of hatred of such elderly people. He becomes emotional and tells the Minister, “Yes father, I want to be baptized. I want to see God” (P 32). But the Old Woman jests at him constantly. The Homosexual vulgarises all their talks. The boy begs pardon from the minister and the Old Woman saying that he is innocent: “Father… Forgive me. It was the mistake youth… Forgive me, devout mother. I have made no sacrilege except to yield to the boomings of my flesh. I am not, not evil” (P 27). But instead of forgiving him, the minister and the Old Woman attack him with sharp words, threaten to kill him and move towards him menacingly. As they cannot tolerate the sarcastic remarks of the Homosexual, they throw him out of the way and move dreadfully towards the boy; attempting to kill him in the name of Christ. The Minister threatens him: “You must be sacrificed to cleanse the soul of man… Christ died for man. So you must die so
that He should not have died for nothing. You must be sacrificed" (P 27). The boy then finding no other way, pulls a long silver sword out of a bag and begins to strike both of them declaring "There will be no second crucifixion" (P 29). Both of them die screaming and in the meantime a Messenger arrives there. The Boys reaction to the question of the Messenger is quite remarkable. He says angrily "I have slain these sinners. They had no charity" (P 29). The boy emotionally treats the Messenger to be an agent of God. When the Messenger encourages him for more of such activities declaring, "I got miles to go before I sleep," the boy refuses to do so: "Neither God nor man shall force me to leave. I was sent here to save man and I'll not leave until I do. Nothing will make me forsake this flesh... I will not leave" (P 31). The boy seems to be more awakened racially, normally and religiously.

As the action unfolds it centers on a growing context for the soul-and body-of the Boy. The context pits the Old Woman and the Minister of the church against a Homosexual who is contemptuous of his opponents' hypocrisy toward sex and who expresses a frank need for love and for an honest sexuality. The Minister and the Old Woman are revolting not simply because they are puritanical but because their Puritanism is a thin disguise for sexual desires (for the boy in this case) that they are unable to express frankly. As the contest becomes violent, they strike the Homosexual to the ground and in turn they are cut down by the boy who now claims to be the "Son of God". At this point the play ends abruptly. The Boy is carried off by a motorcyclist who is supposed to be a "messenger" of the boy's father.
As a morality play *The Baptism* centres around a moral struggle between love and Puritanism, and exploits an old dramatic tradition with special ironic effects. The usual conflict between good and evil in the morality play tradition of Christian culture appears here with significant modifications. The forces of evil are now associated with the Christian Church itself: Love and charity are possessed by the Homosexual, a conventional figure of moral and sexual "Perversion". And given the ambiguous figure of the Boy himself (child figure and Christ arche-type), the moral struggle takes on an ironically double meaning: it is traditional, so far as it involves a contest for the soul of the human individual; and it is anti-traditional in that Christianity is no longer an unquestioned symbol of goodness but is actually associated with evil. Indeed the most crucial outcome of the play's moral conflict is the degree to which Christianity emerges as an obvious corrupt tradition which makes it impossible for the individual to experience love and sexuality to the fullest, except on nonconformist or rebellious terms. Social traditions in the play are inherently destructive because they sanction a diffusing lovelessness and a abnormal fear of sex and feeling. The church is the main target in this regard because it is the institution, which embodies these traditions.

The morality design of the play is, therefore, basically ironic in conception. Baraka recalls the old morality traditions of early Christian drama in order to attack these traditions and the Christian ethic that they embraced. And in so far as *The Baptism* overthrows Christian morality and art, it anticipates the use of the morality play format in Baraka's Black Nationalist anti-western Drama.
Both as morality play and as ritual drama, *The Baptism* is distinguished by a marked emphasis on the idea of role-playing. The characters have no names as such. They are presented as types (i.e. Old Woman, Minister, Homosexual, Boy and Messenger) and as such they are social roles reflecting the cultural values that are central to the play’s themes. In this instance each character’s personality reflects a theatrical self-consciousness about her or his role; the Minister is the sanctimonious voice of Christianity; the Old Woman energetically acts out her identity as the female chastity; the Homosexual deliberately exaggerates his role as a “queen” in order to emphasize his calculated contempt for social convention; and the Boy moves self-consciously from being the familiar symbol of childhood innocence to being a Christ-child. *The Baptism* is an impressive example of Baraka’s early ability to synthesise dramatic form and theme. And this synthesis is linked with the play’s major theme—the failure of love in contemporary society. The very issue of forms, roles and rituals is crucial in the play because they have become empty shells in the absence of any real feeling. Consequently moral statements and declarations of love are invariably hypocritical, particularly ironic in this regard: the arrested diversion emerges as the healthiest of the lot because he frankly expresses his commitment to love and because he refuses to accept the puritan antithesis between flesh and spirit. He is the subversive outsider, stood against the Minister who is the loveless, and unlovable, apostle of Christian “Love” and “Charity”.

This time the approach of Baraka is quite psychological. He wants to display the ugly reality of the whites through the character of the Old Woman.
and the Minister. They are quite sadistic in their attitude. The boy says protesting:

Boy: (picks up his bag): You have no charity! No humanity. No love, (Pulls along silver sword out of bag). No sense of yourselves. It is not right that youth should die to cleanse your stinking hearts! I am the Son of God. The Christ. (Begins to strike his attackers down with the sword). No charity! No Love! (P 28-29).

At the end of the play, the Boy emerges a fully conscious, revolutionary and converted personality. He moves from a state of negation to a state of positive commitment: "No! I refuse. Neither God nor man shall force me to leave. I was sent here to save man and I will not leave until I do. Nothing will make me forsake this flesh: (Screams at ceiling). I will not leave. (P. 31)

The conversion ending of the play is apparent here. The dramatist brings forward his broad thoughts through the boy whose name is Homosexual, which is quite unconventional to the so-called honest society. But in order to propagate the message of the revolutionary as well as conscious movement of the Black Arts, he finds, such new and strange themes, which clearly reflect the degenerated mentality of the whites.

*The Toilet (1964)* is a realistic play. It presents another confrontation of sensitive individuals with a group of others, this time against the background of a gang in an urban High school. It is a one-act play, which is set during the last period of a school day in the dirty and foul smelling latrine of a boys' High school; the urinals and the commodes are used throughout the drama, and the
language of the play matches the setting. As the play opens, the Black students slowly congregate in the toilet, constantly insulting each other and each others' mother. Ora is a "Short, ugly, crude and loud" character. He is motherless, and known as "Bigh shot". He emerges as the meanest of the kids. The other characters include a tall and thin boy, Willie Love; his close friend, Hines, who is 'big, husky and garrulous.' The other friends include Johnny, Perry George, Skippy, Knowles, Donald, Foots and Karolis. Among them Foots is rather intelligent. From the boys' violent interchanges the information that emerges is that they are cutting Miss Pawell's class in order to watch a fight in the bathroom: Ray Foots, their "popeyed", "short, intelligent, manic," gang leader who, in contrast, does attend class is supposed to confront the white student Karolis, a "muthafuckin", "sonafabitch" whose crime is that he allegedly sent Foots a love letter "telling him he thought he was 'beautiful'.... And that he wanted to blow him". While waiting for Foots, Ora socks the only other white boy, Donald Farrell in the stomach, and roughs up Karolis, who has been brutally "persuaded" to come into the toilet. When Foots, who has been talking with the Principal, Van Ness after class, finally, shows up, his ambivalence about the fight onto which he has been forced by the gang is obvious to the audience, but not to his fellow students.

Ray Foots almost succeeds in getting out of the fight by arguing that Karolis is knocked out already; then applause from the wrong side (the white student Farrell comments that somebody's got some sense here) forces Foots to take a harder line. Farrell doubts the validity of the cause of the fight and indicates with his remark, "Oh, Ray, come on. Why don't you come off it?" (P 56)
that Karolis' love letter may have been a response to a first move by Ray. At this point, Farell is hit by Ora and violently thrown out of the toilet by Knowles. As Foots is trying, for the second time, to persuade everybody to forget about the fight, Karolis comes to and challenges Foots to fight. Karolis gets the upper hand in the ensuing fight, and yells out the true story, ignored by the Black students. Ora, Knowles, and the whole crowd come to the aid of Foots and punch the fallen Karolis in the face until he stops moving. Then they pick up Foots and leave Karolis motionless in the Latrine. After a minute or so Karolis moves his hand. Then his head moves and he tries to look up. He draws his legs up under him and pushes his head off the floor. Finally he manages to get to his hands and knees. He crawls over to one of the commodes, pulls himself up, then falls backward awkwardly and heavily. At his point, the door is pushed open slightly, then it opens completely and Foots comes in. He stares at Karolis’ body for a second, looks quickly over his shoulder, then runs and kneels before the body, weeping and cradling the head in his arms.

The Play functions forcefully as an extension of not only Baraka's vision of a more and more insoluble conflict between individual outsider and society, but also between Black and white. In The Toilet, the Black protagonist, has to choose between his generic identity as "Foots" and his individual peculiarity as "Ray"; while Foots denotes a "Lower" kind of "plebian" existence, that is closer to the ethnic roots and the soil, "Ray" suggests a more spiritual personality with a cosmic genealogy. In this context, Critics say that the protagonist is one of Baraka's frequent biographic projections Baraka used to name "Ray": (close enough to his appellation "Roi"). Seen as a play about love, The Toilet is the
affirmation of individual self-expression—of a person different from that majority which defines his reality negatively. *The Toilet* contrasts the possibility of the free expression of homosexual love, as admission of "any man's beauty", not only with the repression of this freedom of the protagonists through a "Social order", but, more than that, with a total inversion of the positive metaphor of homosexuality into the perversion of sadism. There is an important inter relationship between Ora's restrained homosexuality and his sadistic urges, between the group's obsession with calling each other names like "Cock Sucker" or "dik licker" and their violence against the white homosexual as an indefinable outsider. Willie Love, one of the less cruel boys, who "should have been sensitive" with that telling surname, spells out this interpretation when Ora gently pushes and beat-up Karolis. Willie repeats this view of Ora's brutality as a perverted outlet for repressed sexuality, when Foots tries to get out of the fight.

As a play about love, *The Toilet* is undoubtedly an indictment of brutal social order, depicted fittingly against the background of filthy latrine. Although the primary concern is perceived to be love, race comes the next. However the interpretation of *The Toilet* as simply "a play about Black people" is ultimately as insufficient as its reading as a "Lovestory". The characterisation of James Karolis and the ending of the play impede such a reading. Karolis is really supposed to be seen as a white agent. The sense of anger and racial consciousness of Ora is worth noticing. He is deeply hurt when he is called 'a nigger'. He tries to arouse this racial consciousness in his other black friends who are not hurt to that extent as he himself is. So he says, "Look man. If you want to get in on this you line up behind me" (P50). The statement is symbolic because he inspires his friends to
follow his way of taking revenge for injustice and hatred caused to them by the whites. Then he continues his speech grudgingly. To Karolis, he says, “I'd rub up against your momma too. (leaning back to Karolis). Come on, baby ... I got this fat ass sa-zeech for you” (P 35). These kind of vulgar remarks of Ora continue when Foots arrives there. The conscious expressions of him are remarkable. He laughs quoting his Principal’s remark that he is a “credit to his race”. Then he daringly accepts the challenge for a fighting by Karolis. Again he becomes violent to hear from Karolis that really his position is at his feet. Karolis tries to exercise his authority over Foots. His reactions are quite careless. After kicking and punching him, Foots and his other black friends leave him in the filthy latrine. But after sometime, when his anger is subsided, he comes there again to see the condition of Karolis. But when he finds Karolis to be dead, he bursts into tears. His feeling of friendliness is really deep. But to him insult to his position as Black is intolerable.

The ending of the play affirms the triumphs of “Ray” over “Foots”. This play reflects Baraka’s increasing ethnic commitments in his literary exploration of Black ghetto speech, the psychology of repressed Black male sexuality as a source of violence, and the sociology of the gang. His psychological and sociological view of the growing up male in the ghetto makes the Black gang in the play more important and interesting than the sentimental love story that Baraka may have been intended to write. The characterization of the male Black youngsters and their playful, tough interaction was generally interpreted as an innovation, for better or worse, on the American stage.
Baraka is a sharp thinker and an onlooker of the details of human affairs. In selecting such a school level event, he gives us the idea of his Black consciousness. The filthy images and the homosexual subject matters are indeed purgatorial for the people of the Black race and this kind of purgation is the ultimate motto of the Black Arts Movement. Baraka has severely focussed on the tools of naturalism. It is his effort to give expression to the Black leader's conflict between inner and outer world, between the possibilities of tenderness and the reality established by the harsh necessities of the social world.

II

Four Black Revolutionary Plays

When Baraka involves himself in the Black nationalist movement, he seems to be more stimulated. This stimulation makes a significant change in his plays too. So in the plays under this heading, we find him using dramatic art as political weapon. These plays become a means of political advocacy, simultaneously portraying the ideals of Black aesthetics. His Four Black Revolutionary Plays include the remarkable plays like Experimental Death Unit # 1, Madheart, A Black Mass and Great Goodness of Life. In the "Introduction" to these plays, he says to the Black People, "Unless you killing white people, killing the shit they've built, don't read this shit, you won't like it, and it sure won't like you". He further remarks:

i am prophesying the death of white people in this land

i am prophesying the triumph of black life in this land, and over all the world
We are building publishing houses, and newspapers,
and armies, and factories.
We will change the world before your eyes,
Sweet nigger i believe in black allah
Governor of Creation, Lord of the Worlds (P Vii-Viii). 25

Experimental Death Unit # 1 (1964) is one of the earliest plays of Baraka that manifests his theories of drama as expressed in his landmark essay, "The Revolutionary Theatre", written in 1964, his most prolific year in drama. According to Hudson, the play, to apply phrases from this essay, seeks to "expose", to "Accuse and Attack", to "show victims so that their brothers in the audience will be better able to understand", and to "force change".26

Using sex symbol-motif, the short play Experimental Death Unit # 1 presents two abandoned white males, Duff and Loco, both heterosexual but one also perverted in his sex habits, who come across a somewhat bedraggled Black woman about forty years of age but "still gallantly seductive". The Woman who is a prostitute entices them to such an extent that their desire for her rises to the point where they are willing to fight each other over her. Before the second can consummate a sex act with the woman, the other kills him and then proceeds to take her sexually. They are interrupted, however by a group of paramilitary Black youths that shoot both the white man and the Black woman just after she has reassured her customer. Then the soldiers regroup and march off.
It is found in the beginning of the play, both Duff and loco idle away their
time with some careless remarks on 'life of beautiful things'. Loco says that he
'despises beauty' and he calls artists to be fools. He says that existence is
important. That is 'self-expression'. In the mean time the Negro Woman's arrival
draws their attention towards her. When Loco is ready to be with her, Duff,
however talks to her very sharply. He calls her a 'whore', 'a symbolic nigger from
the grave... A black stinking mess of bitch"". But Loco is already tempted. Thus
Loco represents the loose vulgarity of the whites, whereas Duff is little conscious.
But the Woman's motto is not to be involved with them sexually but to teach
them and put them into conflict so that she can overpower them. She calls them
'fools'. But the consciousness of Duff about his dignity can be questioned, when
he makes Loco unconscious by clubbing and says to the Black Woman, "Now I will
deal with you, woman. See how deep I plunge!" (P 13). This statement is quite
ironical because the woman neither loves Duff nor Loco. So when Duff clubs Loco,
she shouts "Kill him ! Kill him !". This shows her disinterestedness to be involved
with them. But she enjoys their weakness for her even at the cost of her life. Had
she not tempted both of them, she would not have been killed by the black
paramilitary forces. But she sacrifices herself to show her hatred for the white
people like Duff and Loco. But the degree of hatred is found much more in the
soldiers. They mercilessly reject any link with the whites. Such a kind of killing
by the soldiers seems to be poetic justice for them. After killing the woman, the
soldiers don't feel remorseful in any way. According to them, perhaps she has
crossed the limit and deserves the punishment. The soldiers give and ironical
answer to the very thought of Loco regarding 'existentialism'.
The lesson in this play is plain enough for almost any audience to grasp. A Black who would literally or symbolically prostitute or worse still, pervert himself (herself, in this play) to the white world deserves summary execution. The malefactors' judgement has come quickly, for, as poet critic Lance Jeffers points out, their moral disease is "beyond the hope of redemption", it is a disease which has descended "into the psychic marrow". Recalling the ending of T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men", Jeffers notes that they have "died whimpering", "bereft of dignity", their last whimpers signifying "what the western world has wrought" and continues, "But while Eliot turned inward into spair and snobbery, Baraka turns outward to the great breadth of Black people turn outward to the cleansing fire".

The play reveals that Loco is fully tempted by the Black woman but is obstructed by Duff, as he wants to recreate their racial consciousness. Again, the woman very intelligently humiliates both of them for their mean desire, although she is a prostitute. Baraka means to expose here the filthy attitude and vulgarity of the two. It is indeed the ugliness of the characters that he wants us to expose. It is their abnormality or their absurdity that determines the limit of their minds. The final destruction of the two white young men is unexpected. But it is termed as literature of anger. It is obvious that Baraka uses the unusual angry methods of dramatic events as a part of the well-known Black Arts Movement.

His Madheart is written in 1966. It is a "morality play" in which characters like Black Man, Black Woman, Mother (black woman), Sister (black woman) and Devil lady are found. The play is in great measure as simplistically doctrinaire as any of Baraka's agitprop plays. The basic theme of the play, the emancipation of Black male identity from sexual bonds imposed by Black and white women is
presented in a straightforward manner. The Black Man, the play tells us, must destroy the white female 'demon' (represented here by a grotesquely masked Devil Lady) and create a new relationship with the Black Woman. As a result The Black Woman will be awakened to perform a new and refined role by submitting to his essential authority. The play is a self-explicated allegory of this thesis. It depicts Black Man aided by Black Woman, struggling to slay the Devil Lady and to overcome the slavish effort of the Black Mother and her white-loving daughter (Sister) to save the hated siren. This action is accompanied by Black Man and Black Woman's elementary explanations of the sexual and cultural confrontation. At the play's end, Devil lady is seen to be dead; nevertheless, Mother and Sister have become increasingly possessed by love for the horrible witch-devil, and thus Black Man and Black Woman, happily reunited, dedicate themselves to the task of rehabilitating or, if necessary, vanquishing their lost kin.

Madheart opens with two characters, Devil lady and Black Man exchanging words with each other and Black man insisting that there is 'no peace' and everywhere there is 'horror'. He finds only "wild cries? Souls on fire. Fire. Floods of flame". In the meantime three Black women, Mother, Sister and Black Woman enter the stage. Mother and Sister abstain Black Man from his attack on Devil lady owing to an argument for the latter's careless statement. Both Mother and Sister seem to be very polite and considerate. Black woman interferes too and says that the Devil lady is like a "stone beast" to which Black Man adds that she is just "An old punctured sore with the pus rolled out". In contrast, he says, a Black Woman can also be "something" and take the lead in the American Society. Although Mother expresses inability to exercise her womanly power for her old
slavish mentality (I'm dying of oldness... dying all the time. Diseased. Broken. Sucking air from dirty places)(P. 74)—both Black Man and Black Woman try to remove that idea from her. Black Man says "Our Mothers and Sisters groveling to white women, wanting to be white women, dead and hardly breathing on the floor... our women dirtying themselves" (P 76). Black Woman also supports this view and proclaims that it is time for the Black women to rise and listen to this Black Man: "Get up you other women, and listen to your man. This is no fattening insurance nigger graying around the temples. This is the soul force of our day-today happening universe. A man" (P 76). Both Black Man and Black Woman try to convince Mother that time has changed and it is time when Black Women should turn themselves "over to the Black Arts and get their heads relined" (P 77). Black Man is not ready to believe in the so-called 'white magic' any more. He becomes an angry man who stabs and kills the Devil lady out of an agonised sense of hatred against the white race. Black Woman feels deeply sorry for this incident because she has a soft feminine spirit. She feels as if she had also lost her life. Though Mother feels greatly sorrowful to find this murder, she is convinced that these white people have already killed a lot of sisters and mothers of their race. But time has reversed the situation. The Devil lady representing the white race is murdered by Black Man. Black Woman subscribes to the view of Black Man that she has an important role to perform in the society and thus wants to submit herself completely to the cause of Black Man's fight. Then Black Man declares for the Black Woman: "You are my woman, now, forever Black Woman" (P 82). He proclaims that he is "the new man of the earth" (P 84) to whom Black Woman must help sacrificing everything. He bursts into tears when he finds that Mother does not change her slavish and unreasonable sympathetic
attitude for the whites. Still then he is not disheartened. He shows his sense of positive commitment for the Black people and tries with Black Woman to bring a change in the life of the Black Americans:

Black Woman. You think there's any chance for them? You really think so?

Black Man. They're my flesh. I'll do what I can (looks at her). We'll both try. All of us, black people. (p 87).

The dominant action of *Madheart* is Black Man's slaying of Devil Lady. It suggests that Sexual discord between the races can be viewed as an example of fighting of good, versus Evil. Yet the miss shaping of Black sexuality, as Baraka understands it, takes many forms and occurs at several cultural levels. The contrast between Black Man and Devil Lady delineates one of the most important issues: the relation of Black man to white woman and 'White sexuality' in general. Although Black man declares his intention of killing off. Devil Lady in the play's first scene, her introducing lines hint that a deep ambivalence preceded Black Man's present determination:

Devil Lady. You need pain. (coming out of shadows with neon torch, honky-tonk calliope music). You need pain. Ol' nigger devil, pure pain, to clarify your desire. (P. 69)

The "pain" that the Devil Lady refers to stems from Black Man's attraction to the white female, an attraction suffused with guilt and made impure by hatred. It is argued that the "possession" of a white female, especially in sexual terms, has always seemed an extremely desirable achievement to Black men.
Defended by white men with intense and often vicious emotion, the white woman has become an idol, a mythically unspoiled virgin who, whatever her relation to the white male, is above all else not to be violated by Black hands. The natural consequence of this protectiveness is that the black man develops anger, frustration, and desire in his pursuit of the romanticized white female and in his quest for power and social status. By acquiring the white woman, the Black man symbolically overcomes the white man's control over the white woman. It is an apparent victory over oppression, history, and natural obstacles.

Yet the Black Man is simultaneously aware that such a "victory" is actually mean deception. He realises that the white woman remains essentially unattainable, and the fancy of possessing her only compounds his agony and pure hatred Baraka believes that Black Man's pure hatred for his oppressor is perverted into love-hate through the fascination which the ruled have for the rulers, a fascination based on the feeling that revolution cannot succeed. Black Man's obsession with the white woman diverts his natural energies and desires, those, which would cause him to assert his essential being against the suppliers of falsehood. The devastating effects designed upon the Black Man who accepts the empty hope of this lie have been seen in several of Baraka's earlier plays, particularly in the cases of Clay and Walker. They become victims precisely because they evade the truth until it is almost uselessly evident, and the revolutionary forces of history blot out their slow perceptions. Walker in particular can teach us much about what motivates Black Man in Madheart. He is away from his roots by the intellectual and sexual prizes of an alien culture. Walker nearly becomes a victim of his own rebels when he attempts to reclaim the
products of his sexual bond to white society—the two 'mulatto' girls. Black Man, then, must be considered a Clay or Walker who has survived his lessons and seeks ultimate exorcism of the corrupting demon.

It is noteworthy that the white man does not appear in Madheart. Baraka seems to say that the white male, who is the spiritual negative of Black Man, can only be confronted with once the more complex relation to the white female has been resolved. Moreover, Black Man's major task is to see Devil Lady as a projection of his own horrible dreams, an embodiment of a sexual mythology developed during slavery, which conceals flesh-and-blood realities with fanciful lies. The masked Devil Lady is thus presented as hideously lewd and ugly, a complete inversion of the mythic white virgin. Echoing Lula's assertion that she is "nothing", Devil Lady proclaims naughtily, "I am dead and can never die" (P. 70). And Black Man's reply—"You will die only when I kill you" confirms the fact that to kill this demon is to purge himself.

The presence of Sister and Mother serves as a brutal illustration of the complex effects produced by the prevailing sexual mythology and by the mainstream culture in general. The suggestion that Devil Lady exists only by virtue of Black people's dependence upon her is rendered theatrically explicit in the relationship between her and Sister. Dressed in "mod style clothes" and covered by a blond wig, Sister epitomizes the Black woman who rejects Black men with contempt ("If I have to have a niggerman, give me a faggot any day" - P. 76) and her own natural sexual and emotional inclinations. Her only goal in life is to become white through sheer action. In a moment of profound self-awareness, she speaks of the dilemma, which Black Man is now overcoming but which
plagues her more than ever: "I have so, I am in love with my hatred. Yet I worship this beast on the floor" (P. 73). Sister’s desire to be Devil Lady, subconsciously expressed in her clothes and straight, artificial hair, bursts forth in a madness of total identification when Black Man pierces the masked devil with his stake:

Sis. (Screams as Black Man stabs the Devil Lady, Grabs her heart as if the man had struck her) Oh god, you’ve killed me, nigger.

BM. What? (Wheels to look at her)

BW. You’re killed if you are made in the dead thing’s image, if the dead thing on the floor has your flesh, and your soul. If you are a cancerous growth. Sad thing. (PP. 77-78)

What had earlier been mere envy and heroine-worship soon erupts into quite literal sympathies, as Sister runs about the stage looking for the lost “body ... my beautiful self” (P. 85). Though mourned by Mother and even, in a brief instant of confusion, by Black Man, Sister is not the phantom she loves. Black Woman, Sister’s true spiritual counterpart, explains that “she’s not even dead. She just thinks she has to die because the white woman died” (P. 78).

If Sister represents the misguided Black woman in search of white society’s decaying luxury, Mother is obviously the symbol of the Black matriarchy which presumably shares responsibility for the creation of monsters such as Sister. Baraka, like many other writers of the Black Arts Movement, ridicules the image of the awesome Black Mother holding together her family without male help through pure toughness and unyielding hope. Benston has rightly remarked:
In contrast to matriarchal figures such as Ralph Ellison’s Mary in ‘Invisible Man or the relatively recent Mama Younger of Lorraine Hansberry’s A Raisin in the Sun, Baraka’s Mother encourages her child not so much to endure as to succeed at all costs and, further, teaches that “success” means substitution of white crudity and gaudy riches for Black values. She teaches her daughter a religion of assimilation, she falls into drunken obliviousness as the world changes around her. Baraka, ever-suspicious of any ambition dependent upon the power structure, quite evidently considers the Black matriarch a serious impediment to the natural aggressiveness and independence of the Black male. She and Sister represent the most warped aspects of Black womanhood, and Black Man Laments their “sickness” for all his brothers:

This is the nightmare in all of our hearts. Our mothers and sisters groveling white women, wanting to be white women, dead and hardly breathing on the floor. Look at our women dirtying themselves.

Black Woman stands for yet a third dimension of Black womanhood: the emerging breed of proud sisters who must become an integral (if male-dominated) part of the new Black nation. Strong Black women are notably absent in Baraka’s earlier works; even predecessors of Mother and Sister are over shadowed by Devil Lady’s ancestors. In the poetry of Black Magic, however, we begin to find pleas, tinged by masculine guilt, for a resurrection of Africanesque strength in Black women:
"Beautiful Black women, fail, they act. Stop them raining.

They are so beautiful, we want them with us (...)

We fail them and their lips

stick out perpetually, at our weakness( ....) her sadness and age,
and the trip, and the lost heat, and the grey cold

building of our entrapment. Ladies, Women We need you”

(from “Beautiful Black Women ..“)

Energy and heat, basic procreative principles must be the qualities of the Black Woman as much as they are of the Black Man. The Black Man, suspicious from slavery-times of the Black Woman who associates with whites, must reclaim her by providing the strength and well-being which she has tried to remove from the white man for her family. She, in turn, must place her trust in the Black Man and inspire him “to be the new Black consciousness, so that we must be defenders and developers of this new consciousness” (Black Woman Baraka says that Black Man and Black Woman must complement each other. They must dream of unity. He seems to say to expand upon the way of formulaic completion, the Black nation, like a secret code, is meaningless unless its two discrete halves (Black Man and Woman) are brought into considerable and satisfactory harmony.

Thus Black Woman, whose “soft natural hair” is “caught up in gele”, is initially mere possibility, the potential Black queen who can finally declare to Black Man:

(Her voice goes up to a high long sustained note)
I am Black and am the most beautiful thing on the planet. Touch me if you dare. I am your soul. (P. 74)

First she must prove herself. She wages ideological warfare with her damned sisters, Mother and Sister, telling them that they love the Devil Lady "because you have been taught to love her by background music of sentimental movies. A woman's mind must be stronger than that". (P74). When Black Man believes that by killing Devil Lady he may have indeed neglected and even murdered his Black female kin, it is Black Woman who remains strong and lucid, bringing Black Man back to his senses:

BM : This is horrible, Look at this.

BW : It's what the devil's made. You know that. (P. 80).

In stark and probably deliberate contrast to Lula, who asks Clay to "pretend ... that you are free of your own history", Black Woman pleads with Black Man to "stop pretending the world's dream of a puzzle". (P. 81). Questioning his manhood, Black Woman challenges Black Man to renounce past errors and claim her at last: "I am the Black woman. The one you need. You know this. Now you must discover a way to get me back. Black Man" (P. 81)

Thus begins a highly formal courting ritual between Black Man and Black Woman, leading from Black Man's violent, assertion of desire and her willing submission to his iron hand, through mutual confession of past sins, to the crowning marriage ceremony:

B.M. Submit for love.
B.W. I ... I submit (...) They both begin to cry and then laugh, laugh, wildly at everything and themselves.

B.M. You are my woman, now, forever, Black Woman.(P. 82).

Together they may form the Black nation based on selfless action, which finds its perfect synecdoche analogy in the selfless energies of a pure Black sexuality.

The murder of the Devil Lady in Madheart has shown a crucial development toward a complete Black communality. The meaning of this action can now be properly evaluated on a broader level of significance. Black Man and Black Woman (who asks her husband to "fill me with you seed" at the conclusion to the "marriage ceremony" P.83) are finally prepared to be creative in the fullest sense. At every stage of the play, Devil Lady is portrayed as a witch-goddess of false creation. Sister declares that Devil Lady is "the womb... the possibility of all creation" (P. 72), but her white goddess is variously described as "a stone ugly pagan," (P 73) as a diseased creature whose sexuality exists as pure egocentricity and whose womb yields only "cold", and as the mistress of the Western "Dark cold cave" which produces only "Illusion... Hatred and Death." (P.71). Devil Lady herself says "I am dead. And all my life is me" (P.73) and claims that from her "vast whole" flow "entire civilizations". (P 73) Hence the attack on her immediately becomes one against the whole of Western culture:

BM : Die, you bitch, and drag your... newspapers poison gases congolese brain stragglers devising ways to deal death to their people, your smiles, your logic, your brain, your intellectual death , go to a dead planet in some metal bullshit, dissolved, disappear, leave your address in the
volcano and turn into the horrible insects of a new planet...

but leave (PP 83-84)

It is interesting to note how devil lady stands for Christianity in general:

DL. I am the judge ... (Rolls on her back, with skirt, raised, to show a cardboard image of Christ pasted over her pussy space. A cross in the background). My Pussy rules the world through newspapers. My pussy radiates the great heat. (P 70).

Here Christianity is ridiculed by the image of a cardboard picture of Christ pasted on Devil Lady's vagina. Christianity is also ridiculed by symbolic action (Mother and Sister often form a parody of Madonna and child), irony (as Devil Lady dies, Mother supplicates her cultural patron-saints, Tonny Bennett, Beethoven, and Peter Gunn, to "deliver us... Oh please deliver us" (p. 83), and direct statement. Purgation of Devil Lady, then, is clearly intended to be the expulsion of the suffocating, dry, and barren value of the mainstream of Western 'civilization,' which allows for the rise of a prolific people.

The conflict between Black Man and Devil Lady reminds us of the conflict between Clay and Lula, and particularly those aspects, which emerge from Clay's speech. For Devil Lady, above all, is the queen of artifice, lies, and the unnatural; masked and luridly painted, she concretely embodies Baraka's idea that the white man doesn't have time for reality, the white woman uses her leisure to cover it up. She is the quintessential human workmanship of the Western aesthetic, and her rigid movement's contrast with the fluid motion of Black Man's deadly blows. Black Man's wooden stake may be taken as a traditional weapon for killing blood-sucking vampires such as Devil Lady and the death-giving blow plunged through
her (mad) heart as an incisive reversal of Lula's knife-thrust into Clay, a quasi-sexual penetration that extinguishes her sexual powers and, after help from the ever-obliging Black Woman, his own lust.

Baraka Presents the overcoming of Devil Lady (the "devil collecting and using our energies to pervert the world") as an affair producing no pause, no rhetoric, only action, which is divine. Yet when we consider Madheart as a dramatic structure, we find that it is anything but a fluid or pure action. The play presents a series of rituals, ceremonies, and symbolic representations, which are continually involved in dialectic of dissolution and reformation. The formless energy of the Black nation, embodied in the actions of Black Man and Black Woman, seeks out organization into forms of ritual and power only to be released again into the ever-changing reality of historical process.

The opening scene of Madheart abruptly takes the audience into the original flow of energy out of which the play's ceremonial and ritual forms are born. Black Man and Devil Lady are engaged in a highly stylized debate about pain and desire, good and evil, which leads into the first ritual: Black Man prepares to strike Devil Lady and, after "A fanfare of drums. Loud dissonant horns. The action freezes" and the actors become "fixed" (P. 70). Here, the rite of purgation is arrested into an exemplary representation, establishing this action as a major icon of the play. Soon, after a musical interlude that evokes present sufferings by progressing from "nasty blues" to screams and a "falsetto howl", the "action continues (and) the actors from the freeze go to life, but never complete the initial action" (p. 70).
The ritual is thus momentarily slowed, and when Black Man finally succeeds in driving his stake through Devil Lady's body, he becomes so obsessed with his conquest that the three Black women enter unnoticed. Mother suddenly cries: "No, Madman, Stop!" (P 71) thereby disrupting complete execution; in contrast, Black Woman wonders if "Perhaps we are intruding" (p. 72). By now the opening ceremony has dissolved and the focus has shifted to antagonism that arises among the Black women and between Black Man and Devil Lady. Within moments the action splits into two contrasting ritual forms: on one hand, Mother and Sister "begin to fight in aggravated pantomimed silence... finally subsiding into a frozen posture" (PP. 74-75) and, on the other hand, Black Man and Black Woman begin their formal courtship with first touches and then awakening to each other's sensuality. Their mutual courtship is interrupted first by Devil Lady's screams and then by the momentary unfreezing of Mother and Sister's dumb-show. As Devil Lady's power declines, so does Mother and Sister's energy, and they soon revert to a silent and pantomimic condition. Black Man delivers a highly didactic explanation of this image, thus completing the play's series of introductory rites and symbols.

Once Black Man has finished his oration, the action again breaks into several moments of free-form dialogue, simultaneously rhetorical and improvisational in nature. Devil Lady is now dead and Mother and Sister mourn her death in their sickness. As Black Woman emphatically denounces both of the mad women and unflinching by praises Black Man's action, the young couple enters upon the final stages of courting ritual, in which the growth of their love and of their Black consciousness are coincident. This courtship, as self-
consciously patterned as that of any medieval romance and conducted in much the same manner, culminates in the extremely stylized marriage ceremony, in which Black Woman "submits for Love".

When Black Man and Black Woman exchange their mutual vow, the ritual again gives way to the improvisational action of contemporary conflict, with the newly united defenders of Black sovereignty attempting to deal with the growing hysteria of their kin. Black Man assails Devil Lady rhetorically one last time and then throws her "into the pit of deadchange" (p. 84). The play draws to an end as Mother and Sister grovel after Devil Lady's corpse, Black Man and Black Woman endeavoring vainly to dissuade them. The last scene depicts Black Man and Black Woman standing over the women, vowing to "save them or kill them" (p. 87).

Madheart is subtitled as "A morality play" and the ultimate mission of Baraka's art is to project an image of "Black liberation on" that will elicit from his audience eager response and even action. Madheart draws through attention to this purpose at three striking moments: first, Black Man closes his speech about the fallen Mother and Sister with this sentiment: "Let the audience think about themselves, and about their lives when they leave this happening. This black world of purest possibility" (p. 76); second, shocked by Mother and Sister's behaviour, Black Man makes a more direct statement to the particular audience Madheart was written for: "All this silly rapping and screaming on the floor. I should turn them over to the Black Arts and get their heads relined" (p. 77); and third, Black Man concludes the play by inviting "All of us Black people" to join the struggle to save those like Mother and Sister (p. 87). These addresses to the
audience, however cumbersome and unnatural, obviously reveal Baraka’s desire to integrate the Black spectator and the ‘moral’ spectacle being presented.

With its awkward blend of allegory and straightforward political rhetoric, Madheart remains a complex sermon on Black sexuality. Its purpose, as with all propaganda, is to shape the ethos of its audience. While some question must be raised about Madheart’s ability to communicate to the mass of Black people, a more serious problem posed by the play pertains to Baraka’s notions of history and revolution. Devil Lady’s death suggests that the tragically cyclical quality of Dutchman’s murderous ritual have been, so to speak, interrupted by the Black Man’s ever-growing self-awareness. History (as Black Woman urges—as if in response to Lula) is no longer ignored; for if, as Baraka argues in “American Sexual Reference: Black Male,” the Black man thought he “transcended social history” by associating with the white woman, his renunciation of such desire plunges him back into history’s dizzying flood.

The harshness of the Afro-American’s history is not transcended during Madheart. Indeed, the play has its own deadly circularity, ending more or less as it began. Black Man is attacking (Black) women quasi-sexually (here, a firehouse replaces the stake), and, though he and Black Women are now united, the struggle they face appears as difficult as ever. Although Madheart moves Baraka closer to a theatre which “shows how we triumphed” by avoiding a major demon within the Black consciousness, the drama of purgation has yet to be superseded by a drama of celebration. Theodre Hudson writes:

The allegorical texture of the play is apparent. Written for the Black Arts alliance in San Francisco and first performed at San
Francisco State College, Madheart is a bit more poetic and a bit more intellectual in language than Jones' plays intended for audiences from the Black masses. This is not to say that the dialogue as a whole is consistently symbolic or cerebral. There is mass-directed humor. There are many lines heavy with obscenities. Subtitled A Morality Play, this work is intended as a message, and the closing lines are clearly indicative of the role that Jones expects young Black people to play in dealing with their white-oriented brothers and sisters. The theme preaches a doctrine that Jones espoused in a magazine article— the Black woman must inspire, submit to, complement, and praise her Black man and in that way contribute to the development of the Black nation. 

His next play, A Black Mass, which was exclusively devoted to the “brothers and sisters of The Black Arts” was written in 1965. It is a highly fantastic play full of mythic doctrine and it seems as if Baraka tries to create a dramatic device, which can communicate a universal vision of Black experience. The setting of the play shows “The outline of fantastic chemical laboratory... with weird mixtures bubbling, colored solutions (or solutions that glow in the dark).” Three Black male characters, “dressed in long exquisite robes, one with skullcap; one with fez, one with African hat (fila)” (P21) are found practising their Black magic in that laboratory. They are Nasafi, Tanzil and Jaouab. All of them are Black magicians. Nasafi and Tanzil are humming and keeping time to the music as they work leisurely at their tasks. They are preparing a Black mass
in which all participants "will dance mad rhythms of the eternal universe until time is a weak thing... until time, that white madness, disappears" (P 22).

In the meantime we find Jacoub, the protagonist, manufactures a white beast in the laboratory, whose evil progeny are rampant in today's world. He is absorbed in meditations over his work. He is in search of true knowledge. The play refers to the time of peace among the original black races when they are moving through "black endless space" at infinite speeds, creating the "music of eternal concentration and wisdom," celebrating the beauties and strength of their blackness, of their black arts. Jacoub declares, "And so I will on where I am moving. Where my eternal mind takes me. Into the voids of black space where new meaning lives" (P 24). He is full of strength. He is primitive and powerful. He is full of consciousness and vision. He is creative too. Again he declares, "I am creating. I have created. I made time... I speak of movement. Of creation. Of making. Of thought (P 25)... I speak of things, of knowledge that is beyond the human mind.... The creation of new energy. Yes. New energy and new beings (P 26).... I have created time. Now I will create a being in love with time. A being for whom time will be goodness and strength." (P 27). But Nasafi complains that the animals to be created by Jacoub are evil. But Jacoub denies this charge and says that he is going to create "only one" white man who is like themselves a "neutral being". All nature wisdom, law and sacredness stand against Jacoub's act, yet he persists. Finally the moment of his creation arrives:

Jacoub. Now is the time of creation. I enter one solution in the other. (Screaming). The blood flows in my head and fingers.

The world is expanding. I create the new substance of life,
Ai iiiicece. (Bright explosion flashes and a siren-like laughter blasting .... The Laboratory is intense red, then hot violent white. The sirens go up to ear-breaking pitch. The women scream). (P. 29).

Here Baraka Parodies Jacoub the "mad scientist" of Romantic and post-Romantic "horror" stories. He links Jacoub to a dark aspect of the culture to which the Black magician is giving birth and creating an effective and symbolically complementary theatrical spectacle. Jacoub's beast is born: (The figure is absolutely cold white with red lizard-devil mask which covers the whole head, and ends up as a lizard spine cape. The figure screams, leaping and slobberlaughing). When the beast appears, the "soft peaceful music" becomes "screaming Sun-Ra Music of shattering dimension" and the beast continues screaming, "I White. White. White..." (P30). When Jacoub pridefully displays his creature, the others are horrified. Tanzil remarks that it is "A mirror of twisted evil. The blind reflection of humanity. This is a soulless beast, Jacoub" (P31).

With a sudden burst of emotion Nasafi proclaims in horror:

THIS THING WILL KILL, JACOUB... WILL TAKE HUMAN LIFE... IT HAS NO REGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE !(31). When Tanzil complains that Jacoub has "turned loose absolute evil," Jacoub protests saying "How can there be evil in creation, brother? We will teach this thing the world of humanity" (P32).

Both Nasafi and Tanzil reject the idea of teaching the beast because they feel that white thing means it is a beast and a killer. Their argument finally comes to an end when the beast proves Tanzil and Nasafi to be correct through its inhuman
actions. Like other of Baraka's demons, the beast possesses brutish sexual lust. It attacks one of the women; she soon loses her colour and is transformed into a slobbering, white, beastly mate. The language of the Blackmass, "Izm-el-Azam", is impotent now that the monster has been physically realized. Jacoub finally sees that his creation will bring misery and madness, and he asks Nasafi to explain his error:

Nasafi. Jacoub, your error ..the substitution of thought for feeling.
A heart full of numbers and cold formulae. A curiosity for anti-life, for the yawning voids and gaps in humanity. We feel sometimes when we grow silent in each other's presence, sensing the infinite millions of miles in the universe, as finite as it is.(P34).

Jacoub still wishes to try to educate the beast, but again Tanzil explains:
"Jacoub, You cannot teach a beast. A blankness in humanity. And we cannot kill. We must set these things loose in the cold north. Where they may find a life, in the inhuman cold. (P. 36). But Jacoub is confident enough to teach the beast quite successfully. He is ready to “prove the power of knowledge. The wisdom looked beyond the stars”(P38). He prays to God to be successful in his mission.

The beast is banished to the northern caves. Though the physical monster is sent away, the most horrible evil remains, a kind of wildly devouring Blatant Beast: "And this thing is not ourselves. But the hatred of ourselves".(P 38). Baraka indicates that the ultimate evil is assimilation of the beast within the Black-self, and the Jihad can begin only with this recognition. The Black women attempt to fight the monster with the old soft songs but in their terror, they
soon shriek their music. The Black mass which Nasafi and Tanzil were preparing in the beginning has never taken place. As the beast slobbers amidst the audience, the Narrator's voice closes the play with a plea for Black people to fight for a renewal of the old strengths and the old myths, to perform finally the long-awaited Black mass themselves:

And so Brothers and sisters, these beasts are still loose in the world. Still they spit their hideous cries. There are beast in our world, Brothers and Sisters. There are beasts in our world. Let us find them and slay them. Let us lock them in their caves. Let us declare the Holy War. The Jihad, Or we cannot deserve to live. Izm-el-Azam. Izm-el-Azam (P. 39).

The play ends with a declaration to find out the white people whom they call as beasts and to "slay them", and "to lock them in their caves". A declaration is made to raise the Holy War against them. The play thus synthesises both the implications of Jacoub's moderate thought of reforming the whites and others, extreme thought of revolting against the whites.

A Black mass reflects Baraka's new spirit of thought and action against the whites after his conversion to Islam. Decay, transition and the vicissitudes of historical flux have apparently begun to threaten the world of his people. So Nasafi and Tanzil complacently prepare the Black mass to save their nation whereas Jacoub stands apart. He is deeply intent upon making such white people and teaching them not to be beast-like as they are now. Their bestiality will be avoided when they will accept Black people as their brothers, love them and live with them on the basis of humanitarianism.
The ritual of the play is based on the religious myth, "Yakub's History", in the Nation of Islam. The title is therefore ironic: It confirms the evil connotations of Black mass (Black magic) and Black identity in white Christian culture; but at the same time it defines evil on an anti-Christian, anti-white basis. Hence the evil in the play is really caused by a Black scientist, Jacoub, who creates the first white being, a creature that quickly turns out to be a monster. The beast corrupts and destroys Blacks—including Jacoub himself—by tainting them with its whiteness.

The beast represents Jacoub's moral bankruptcy and his racial self-betrayal. In creating the beast Jacoub not only gratifies his base passions but also presents his fragmented approach to science as an enclosed system which is destructive. Jacoub's is a limited kind of knowledge in the sense that it is divorced from humanistic concerns and moral values. This kind of science is a perverted and destructive kind of "magic" with all the negative connotations with which white, technological cultures have responded to nonwhite traditions of "science". Jacoub does not envisage his creation in any functional sense. And on this basis his scientific talent belongs to that tradition of a narrow, self-serving rationalism which Baraka repeatedly attacks in his writings. But Jacoub's scientific narrowness is not only suspect on this moral basis but also reprehensible because it reflects his racial self-hatred. "Creating for the sake of creating, whether in art or in science, is a "white" Western value system, and in catering to such a value system Jacoub betrays his racial and cultural tradition—a functional tradition, as defined in Black Nationalist terms."
A Black Mass, is therefore, one of the typical plays giving us the sense of protest of Christians against other Christians converting themselves to Muslims as they identify their myth with Islam. The magic power and the mythological Islamic Characters in the play express their protest against the whites in an absurd and more philosophical way. It focuses on cultural, racial and social aspects of Black People. It calls for a Black vision, which must be effective and hopefully existential.

Great Goodness of life was written in 1966. It is the fourth play of his Four Revolutionary Plays. Though the play has nine characters, but the main theme of the play revolves around the character of Court Royal. The play enacts a trial scene in the court of law. So the commanding voice of the judge is to be noted. When the scene opens, Court Royal is found walking right upto the centre of the lights. He is “gray but still young-looking. He is around fifty”. He is ordered to come from an old log cabin which symbolises their slavery. He serves in the postal department as a supervisor for pretty long time. He is quite irritated with this trial of him in the court. When he inquires about his trial, the judge orders him to shut up and condemns him again and again with angry remarks. The judge calls him a “Black lunatic” and charges him with the crime of shielding a wanted criminal, who is also a murderer. But Court Royal tries to convince them that he has not done any such a thing. He is simply a postal worker. He is known to everybody in his locality. In a fit of nervousness he says that he might have done some mistake in his office duty in these thirty five years. But he is not involved in such a criminal activity. When he is quite nervous to reply the answers of the judge, the judge laughs long and cruelly which makes Court Royal dumbfounded.
However, he has got his attorney John Breck to plead for him who is to arrive in
the court just after a few minutes. He informs this to the judge. But the judge
does not wait till his attorney’s arrival. He appoints a “legal aid man”, “a wind­
up”, “house-slave” robot who is, infact, John Breck. The slave tells Court to plead
guilty just as public defenders enter their poor black clients into ruinous plea­
bargaining procedures. Court insists on his innocence and so the judge (the
Voice) dismisses Breck. Finally Court is declared guilty. But he demands a fair
trial. He says, “What ? No I want a trial. Please a trial. I deserve that. I’m a good
man” (P 55). But the judge gravely replies, “Royal, you’re not a man!” (P 55).

Attorney Breck laughs at him again and again. He leaves him suggesting
that he should be ready to accept the punishment of the Court of law. In the
mean time a Young Victim arrives there too. He tries to convince Court in a
harassing manner. He says, “Plead guilty you are guilty stupid nigger. You’ll die,
they’ll kill you an you don’t know why now will you believe me ? Believe me,
half-white coward. Will you believe reality ?” (P 50).

Then the judge orders to beat and shut the Young Victim up. While taken
away, he condemns Court Royal saying “You liar. You weakling. You woman in
the face of degenerates. You let me be taken. How can you walk the cartttttttt....”
(P 51). Court Royal is puzzled to see this young victim. He wants to know about
him. But he is asked to shut up. Only he consoles himself saying “That voice
sounded very familiar” (P 51). This gives us the idea that Court Royal becomes
conscious of his destiny since he is now racially conscious. He has to face the
consequence like the young victim. The young victim is helpless and Court Royal
is himself equally helpless. He is convinced that their race has been helpless for
generations together. They are destined to be oppressed in the hand of the white masters. When Court is helpless, the Voice in the court laughs dreadfully. He calls Court Royal a “donkey... piece of wood... shiny shuffling piece of black vomit. (The laughter quits like the rite rolling softly back to silence. Now there is no sound, except for Court Royal’s breathing and shivering clothes. He whispers ...)” (P 52). He behaves like a madman.

Then the rest of the play shows that Court Royal gradually accepts the judgement of the voice. He is forced to look at a screen upon which are flashed the faces of “Malcolm. Patrice. Rev King. Garvey. Dead nigger kids killed by the police” (P56). A gloomy atmosphere makes the play deliberately irritating. Out of confusion, Court Royal does “a weird dance.” He finds a Black woman is carried before him. She screams out of torture. At the next moment he tries to prove himself to be a sound citizen, a good man who wants peace only. But the voice of the judge declares that the murderer is already dead and the Court Royal “must be sentenced alone” (P58). But the next moment the voice of the judge changes. He suggests Court an alternative. He says:

We have decided to spare you. We admire your spirit. It is a compliment to know you can see the clearness of your fate, and the rightness of it. That you love the beauty of the way of life you’ve chosen here in the anonymous world. No one beautiful is guilty. So how can you be ? All the guilty have been punished. Or are being punished. You are absolved of your crime, at this moment, because of your infinite understanding of the compassionate God of
Cross. Whose head was cut off for you, to absolve you of your weakness. (P 59)

Now Court Royal feels happy that he is going to be made free of guilt. But a final condition is put forth before him by the judge. The judge orders that Court Royal has to perform a special rite of killing his own son in order to make him guiltless. Then he is given a pistol to perform the rite which he can't understand. He is dumbfounded. The judge explains that "the murderer has been sentenced" and he has only to carry out the rite:

The murderer is dead. This is his shadow. This one is not real. This is the myth if the murderer. His last fleeting astral projection. It is the murderer's myth that we ask you to instruct. To bind it forever... with death.... The rite must be finished. This ghost must be lost in cold space. Court Royal, this is your destiny. This act was done by you a million years ago. This is only the memory of it. This is only a rite. You cannot kill a shadow, a fleeting bit of light and memory. This is only a rite, to show that you would be guilty but for the cleansing rite. The shadow is killed in place of the killer.

The shadow for reality. So reality can exist beautiful like it is. This is your destiny, and your already lived-out life (P 61-62).

Court is puzzled for a moment, but in the end, he kills his son because he desires for peace, guiltlessness and safety of his own. The judge's voice then dismisses his case and declares him free. But as a reaction, Court Royal becomes abnormal. He starts wandering off the stage declaring, "My soul is as white as snow... I am free. I'm free. My life is a beautiful thing" (P 63). But then a "brighter mood
strikes him” (P 63) Raising his hand he calls Louise, and inquires about his “bowling bag”. He declares that he is “going down to the alley for a minute” and “He is frozen” (P 63). It is clear that Court also dies at last very miserably. His suffering symbolizes the life manner of many other Black people too.

The play is subtitled “A coon show”, which suggests that it is nothing but an allegorical one. It suggests the hopelessness of the very existence of Black people. Even the court of law does not provide them justice. The mentality of the judge is very crooked here. Equally critical is the murder of Court's own son. Benston comments beautifully on this play:

The determinants of the black man's fate (the voice) are invisible to him and the guilt he avoids by killing his own son is merely the oppressor's condemnation. The real crime and guilt are the higher sins of moral and spiritual betrayal. Court, a comic and pathetic slave, believes these sins are really acts of expiation that “free” him to his bowling-alley bliss and “guiltless silence”.36

Court Royal, although a middle class Black man, does not realise his racial commitment. He could not be self-confident. In killing his own son by the instruction of the unseen Voice, he exposes his weakness and abnormality. Baraka, thus seems to urge the audience to be revolutionary to see Court's action throughout the play:

The lesson to be learned is that Negroes unintentionally kill the black spirit if they are not aggressively involved in discovering and nurturing their blackness and their children's blackness. Court Royal never realized that he had committed a crime (killing his
own blackness); never saw his judge face to face (the determinants of his fate are invisible to him), and he carries out his destiny (the killing of his own son) unquestioningly, feeling this to be an act of expiation.”

III

Other Plays

The Other plays of Baraka include Slaveship and some of his short pieces. These are more than agit-prop and like Street-plays. When Slaveship is quite ritualistic and cultural, Home on the Range, depicts the attitude of a Black burglar towards members of a white suburban family. The Death of Malcolm X dramatises Malcolm X's assassination and Police centers on the dilemma of a black police officer whose job places him in the role of killing Blacks on behalf of the whites. Junkies Are Full of SHHH...repeats his ideology of Black youth spearheading revolutionary consciousness. Baraka's revolutionary play, Slave Ship, was first produced in 1969. Baraka demonstrates his continuing awareness of the newest theatrical modes in this play. In it, the objectives of "the revolutionary theatre" are fully realized. There is no definite plot in the play. Baraka uses very little of moving speech and there is almost absence of steady dialogue. Every theatrical element is set towards creating an "atmosphere of feeling", appropriate to a Slave Ship. The horrors of the Middle Passage, and the grim consequences reflect the history of the Afro-American experience. Baraka transforms the entire theatre into the Slave ship. The Black passengers of it make a historical Journey from first enslavement to contemporary revolution. This mythical journey takes from African civilization through enslavement to spiritual re-ascendancy of the present
time. Baraka moves us along these historical and mythical paths by a series of vivid pictorial impression and symbolic actions. In *Slave Ship* Baraka exploits elements of Time, Space and Action by opening up the traditional playing area into the usual terrain of the spectators. The characters of the play are "African Slaves". Only the Captain, the Sailor, and the Plantation Owner are white. The Blacks are however categorised as Prayer, Curser, Struggler, Screamer, Dancers, Musicians, Old Tom Slave and New Tom who is a Preacher.

The set itself, takes place on a wooden platform mounted on huge springs. It is a brilliant conception and the play's chief metaphor. It suggests rhythmic rocking not simply with the swell of the ocean as the slave ship sails across it, but the structural insecurity of the Black man both as a slave on his way to America and as a citizen once he has arrived and settled. The lower level of the set, the dark hold forces the audience to roll forward in order to see what is happening during the first part of the play.

In this way the dramatist convinces the audience to relieve the agony of the middle passage. The viewers are participants too and the cramped slaves experience a similar discomfort. Just as they seek to make "real" the history of Yakub, the dramatist tries to fix concretely in the minds of the viewers an awareness of the tragic Black past. Baraka also supplements the exclusive visual effect of this scene with equally affecting sounds and smells "ship groaning ... sea smells ... odors of the sea and sounds of the sea... Burn incense... African Drums .. people moaning" - all of which contribute to what he calls a "total atmosphere of feeling".38
First, we hear the disembodied voices of the white sailors, whose malevolent power is understood in their vague representation:

Voice 2. *Aye, Aye, Cap'n. We're on our way. Riches be ours, by God.*

Voice 1. *Aye, riches, riches be ours. We're on our way. America!* (laughter). (P. 133).

Against the careless voices, Baraka juxtaposes the spirituality of the enslaved Blacks who attempt to hold onto their traditional religions. They moan and implore their gods of the Primitive time:

Woman 1. *Oooooo, Obatala!*

Woman 2. *Shango!*

......


Much of the action takes place in darkness or half-light. There is regular use of beating of African drums, humming of the Slaves, cries of children and their mothers, shout of slave drivers, and cracking sound of the slave master's whip.

The sights and sounds of the slave ship remain throughout, but they alternate from time to time with other forms, which depict successive stages of Black American History—the plantation of the slave holder, the non-violent Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Nationalist Movement. History itself becomes a succession of rituals, particularly the ritual of suffering which gives way after repeated cycles to the new rituals of racial assertion and cultural awakening. The
main sounds which dominate the music are those of the African drum making a rhythm of the fresh African memories of the new slaves. Then as the plot moves toward the contemporary period the sounds of the African drum are gradually integrated with the musical forms that evolved in Black American history since slavery. And this musical progression culminates in the blues and Jazz idioms both as forms of protest and as the celebration of Black Nationalism. By a similar token the humming of the slaves in the holds of the slave ship gradually gives way to the sounds of protest and eventual triumph.

The play speaks of Baraka's message as a Black Power Nationalist and Black visionary artist. The play enacts the events by which Black people could experience the growth toward communal identity and solidarity during the very theatrical happening itself. So as a drama, Slave Ship fulfills the objectives of the "revolutionary theatre".

The Afro-American historical experience expressed in Slave Ship is the product of event, memory and communal emotion. Baraka perceives the importance of this history not so much in its "facts" as in its moral significance. For Baraka, slavery is the key to interpretation of Afro-American history: it is both the central, finite epoch and the general, persistent condition of Afro-American life. Appropriately, slavery is also, dramatically speaking, the condition of the audience caught with the actors inside the hold of the slave ship. The audience's consequent alienation is a perfect analogy to that of the Black slave, the latter's struggle for communal identity becoming ultimately the entire theatre's concern. This struggle which takes place in the Afro-American mind as it
does in history, gives us an idea of "images" that identify the origin, evolution, and eventual transcendence of the slave condition.

The first is the image of glory of the primitive African community. The African sensibility is depicted as reformatively religious. We witness a complex fertility rite involving the dances of warriors, farmers, and priests; chants and praises to harvest and protective gods; the whirling dance of the masked fertility goddess; and the culminating expression of social order through a hierarchical procession leading from youngest child to head priest. The ritual is nearly complete when the white slave-trader enters, destroys the tribal harmony, and rounds up his Black cargo for the Americas. The Black prisoners, proud and once powerful, are dragged from their homeland calling vainly upon their gods and fighting to maintain contact with mates, children, and kindred.

In the second image, the slaves are brought aboard one by one. Chains rattle, sea-smell mixes with that of excrement, women moan. Soon suffering begins to overwhelm African strength. A man curses the highest of gods, the creator Obatala: "Fuck you, Orisha! God! Where you be? Where you now, Black God?"(P134) The tribal leader, once holiest of holy high priests, attacks a Black girl. Unity dissolves as old people call on God, the young for war; others are merely confused, hurt, and fearful. Worst of all, families are separated for the first time. The community is fractured into anarchy of individual wills; their isolated cries, rapes, songs, and moans define a moving tortured existence. There is horror but there is also life, and we feel it all. The agonized cry signalling both suffering and survival are echoed while the white man howls at the condition of the Black people.
The third image opens to us the complexity of Black life in America. The survivors of Middle Passage are taken together onto land. The auction block separates man from wife, mother from child. The break-up of the family is accompanied by the emergence of cultural conflict and debasement. The latter state is portrayed by the archetypal “housenigger,” the grinning assimilationist who predicates his life upon white recognition. The epitome of Baraka’s “slave” figures, he dances about the auction block for his master’s pleasure and approval:

Yassa, boss, yassa massa Tim, yassa, boss. I’se happy as a brand new monkey ass, yassa boss, yassa, massa Tim, Yassa, massa Booboo, I’s so happy. I jus don’t know what to do. Yass, massa, boss, You’se so han’some and good and youse hip, too, yass, I’s so happy I jus’ stan’ and scratch myol’ nigger haid. (Lights flash on slave doing an old-new dance for the boss; when he finishes he bows and scratches).

(P. 138)

Inspite of disturbance in their community, the African sensibility remains in most others: the tribal rhythms, the pride, and the urge for freedom. Reverend Turner prepares plantation of slaves for rebellion. Some are afraid, but the leader is determined and committed:

Slave 1. Reverend, what we gon’do when the white man come?

Slave 2. We gon’cut his fuckin’ throat.

Slave 1. Reverend Turner, sir, what gon’ do when the massa come?

Slave 2. Cut his godless throat. (P 139)
Yet the master's Tom betrays the conspiracy for a pork chop and, as the white man laughs in triumph, the others are crushed. The white man seems all-powerful.

The other images deepen the complexity of the African endurance in America. Tom becomes a modern version of the housenigger, the comically "proper" Reverend who preaches a self-negating meaningless talk is devoid of Africanisms, absent of meaning. African chants-"Moshake! Moshake! Moshake!... beeba... beeba"-are chanted against the preacher's tomming-"We Kneegrows are ready to integrate". (P142) African names-Olabumi, Dademi, Aikyele-mingle with slave names like John, Luke, Sarah. (PP 140-141). The prayer to Obatala, the African God, dies into cries for Jesus Lord: "JESUS, LORD, JESUS... HELP US, JESUS..." (P141). African rhythms are beaten while spiritual songs rise up. Historical degradation is overshadowed by spiritual transformation; African sensibility fuses itself into Afro-American culture. The call for war, for revolt, comes from the old African warrior with remembered religious invocations: "Beasts! Beasts! Beasts! Ogun. Give me spear and iron. Let me kill..." (P 143)

The African power, which is always present, but merely molded in the alien land for survival purposes, gradually builds up until the liberating revolt can take place:

Rise, Rise Rise

Cut these ties, Black Man Rse

We gon'be the thing we are...

(Now all sing "When we gonna Rise")
When we gonna rise up, brother (P. 72).

... ... ...

When we gonna show the world who we really are

... ... ...

When we gonna take our own place, brother

Like the world had rust begun? (P. 143)

The preacher and the white man (now Uncle Sam) first ignores the rising Black anger, but then begin to lose confidence. The group converges upon the preacher and kills him. We get an idea that the re-emerging Africans are killing off the insidious myths by which the oppressor controlled the oppressed.

The revolt has really been obvious throughout, from the first crossing of the gangplank to Reverend Turner's rebellion to final victory. The true victims, symbolized by the heads of the preacher-Tom and Uncle Sam, are always just waiting to be killed. At every stage of his evocation of Afro-American history, Baraka instists upon the survival of real African communalism in the Black slave population.

Benston's remark on *Slave Ship* is valuable here. He says:

*Slave Ship* is the most successful dramatic work to emerge from the Black Arts Movement precisely because it "reclaims" and utilizes the musical base of the Afro-American genius. Baraka galvanizes a communal response to his vision by calling upon collective creation and participation in the play's musical life. Music aids the transformation of reality but it is at the same time the affirmation of this process. The pulse of back rhythms (not just musical, but
those expressing The Life's total style) cements the multiple aspects of the Black soul, communicates a lyric lightness with heavy Dionysian intuitions; rhythm-tom-tom, jazz, field hollers, street shouts, the horns of Armstrong, Trane, and the mythical Probe represents the temporality of Black existence while carrying messages from beyond. Energy, prophecy, judgement, affirmation, the naked thing itself-Black music is for Baraka all of these at once. It is the spark of being and of needing-to-be: it makes the "total jazzman" and he makes it."

*Slave Ship* ends with a treatment of the militancy and nationalism of the post-civil rights era. As the rebellious Blacks, urged on by a new-sound saxophone tearing up the darkness, break their shackles and leave the stifling hold of the ship, the viewer-participants simultaneously experience liberty. The complete communion is saved for the end, after the adversary forces-both the preacher and the voices-have been killed. After this purgative violence, we witness, dance in half fixed Black light, and at the end "somebody throws the preacher's head into center of Floor." (P.145)

This dance serves two vital functions. First, it invites the members of the audience to act out the aggression and violence, which they have held in check both during the lay, and in their everyday lives. Secondly, with its unifying force, it also celebrates the spiritual restoration of the Black man. The final scene suggests that the primal energy of the Africans is now being reasserted.

The mythical and religious tradition through music marks culmination in Baraka's dramatic art. He proves that through song and dance man expresses
himself as a member of a higher community; through music, he shows how they have African roots in their totality, and so also his Black people control the destiny of their Nation. The tragedy-burdened slave ship of Dutchman has become the dance-filled celebration of Slave Ship only through musical transcendence that has risen from the spirit of tragedy.

Jello (1970) is an extremely clever and satiric parody of "The Jack-BennyShow" format. All of the characters are meant to be as close to what (they are) on TV/Radio as possible: Jack Benny the miser, Dennis the high-voiced underling, Don, the robust and smiling announcer, Mary the fussy tagalong and Rochester, the Black Valet of Jack Benny. Rochester's age is the same as his master and his voice is still gravely, but he is no longer the surely but basically compliant servant. He is now a black militant who stages his own rebellion by refusing to work for Benny. When Benny has been waiting for Rochester to bring him the car, the servant enters after a long time and shows a radically altered behaviour to his master:

Roch. (Comes out, walking very fast, as if he's going to walk through Benny) What the hell you want man? Don't be calling me all the time. Damn, can't never get away from you.

Benny. Rochester, what are you talking about? What kind of tone is that? I want my car, and I've been looking all over the place for you. Where've you been?

Roch. Man don't be asking me where I been. Do I ever ask you where you been?
Benny. You don't have to, you know already, you drive me everywhere I go.

Roch. You damn right I do! 40

Benny is absolutely startled, and his reaction alternates between dismay and anger as Rochester continues to insult and threaten him. Finally, Benny "fires" Rochester, believing he has found the ultimate weapon in economic sanction.

Rochester proceeds to turn the tables. He is only too pleased to have their "relationship" so severed, because he is going to rip off Benny for every last cent he has kept in his shoes, wall safe, etc. The play progresses like a normal Jack Benny routine; Rochester threatens Benny and finds his money step by step, Benny becomes increasingly hysterical as all his precious gold slips away. Finally, as Rochester completes his ripping off Benny, Dennis, Mary, and Don enter one by one, each thinking he or she has walked into a particularly outrageous gag until the more extraordinary truth becomes apparent. Rochester procures their cash, too. Rochester picks up the last moneybag (which is tied to one of Don's Jello Boxes) and runs out to a waiting getaway-car, "howling with laughter". Three piano chords follow to designate a change of program, and the play ends.

In Jello, Baraka has manipulated a naturalistic imitation of a "popular culture format" to create absurdity effectively. By keeping all of the white characters in the same rigid roles of the TV show and completely inverting the one Black character, Baraka has subjected the white world to a "white-face" parody of its entertainment heroes. It is no longer Benny's controlled presentation of miserliness that makes us laugh; rather, it is the repeated motif of his enslavement to money and his surprise at the new situation he can not
control that is comical. Benny is no longer simply a humorous figure with a self-consciously played obsession, but a figure with a “humour” that has become a ruling passion, a state of ritual bondage. His uncontrollable love of money is not only funny (as it was in the real Jack Benny skits) but also morally condemnable. Money worship is used by Baraka both as a comic “humor” and as an example, both symbolic and literal, of white exploitation of the Black community:

Benny I worked hard for that money boy ... and don’t you forget it.

Roch. Another boy come out of your mouth, you’re gonna see permanent stars, J.B.

Benny. But I worked hard for this money .. you know that?

Roch. What you own, one of them appliance stores on 125th Street?

Benny. Ohh, that’s just one of my interests.

Roch. Yes, you own a few butcher stores and stuff too. prices ten cents higher than downtown too. (PP. 23-24)

As Rochester goes through Benny’s safe he comes upon a human skull (an emblem of Benny’s murderous pursuit of wealth) and decides to leave this last piece of “loot” to the fallen comedian, who replies with unconscious self-condemning irony: “Rochester .. no .. Rochester you’ve left me nothing. Please man, have some feeling for another human being”. (P. 25) By the end, Benny is a slobbering fool; and with his demise the action of the play, the main thrust of which has been to ridicule the absurdity of his passion and expose its underlying cruelty, is complete.
The petty prejudice beneath Benny's eagerness for wealth is revealed as it progressively refers to Rochester as an "unfortunate Negro man" (p. 15), "my chocolate friend" (p. 15), "you savage" (p. 22), "you illiterate swine" (p. 25), and "you crazy coon" (p. 29) etc. But Rochester's reaction is calm and amused. He has known his boss's true self all along and has calculated that his own switch to a truer self would unmask Benny as well. At one point, Benny appeals to him as a "friend" but Rochester rejects that false show with some brutal facts:

Friend, Damn, man what you talking about?

If I am all that much you friend, why am I the chauffeur? If we so tight, why're you the one with all the money, and I work for you?? That don't sound like friend, to me, Sounds just like a natural slave. (P. 17)

Now he has rejected the slave image. He poses himself a clever, skillful, and proud self-maker. Specifically, he has become a representative of the particularly Black life-style of the street man. By reversing roles and turning Benny's world on its head, he has become another in the line of Black tricksters who knowingly crashes against the conventions and holds his own versions of right from a system which condemns his every effort toward dignity and self-assertion as moral or legal wrongs.

When Benny is first confronted with the "new" Rochester, he says, "you must be going mad"; near the point of breakdown he accuses Rochester of being "a mad thief and murderer" and if reduced to shouting "you're crazy". But Rochester contemptuously mocks at Benny and curses him saying "go back to your horrible life":

... Shit You don't know nothin' about my life. But I know all about yours. Driving you stinking broken down pennypinchin' sort I found out all about your hopeless life, brother. Wait a minute, you aren't my brother. Have you must be Mack. That cat that people talk to in gas and train stations. may be they're carrying the baggage, and a cat like you comes up and says. Hey. Mack. Well that's what I'm saying to you now. Hey Mack! Where the hell's the rest of your bucks. .. (P. 19)

Benny continues to call Rochester's private world a "shitty little life" where "illiterate swine" do unimportant, tiny things. But it is Benny's world that is shallow and it is, ironically, the very medium he manipulates that reveals his inner poverty:

Roch: I watch all your little white nasty sterile bullshit imitation life all the time. Drivin' you car. Or lookin' at the TV (Laughs) Now That's where you really show up, my man. That evil tube. All I have to do is sit around and watch The Guiding Light or The Donna Reed Show or Peyton Place, or one of those things, and I find out all about your shallow little lives, and your ugly little needs (PP. 25-26)

As Rochester, the happy, "crazy" Black trickster, makes his getaway with the help of one of his waiting associates and he seems to leave the so-called corrupt white culture in a ridiculous heap of chaos. Through a simple change in the regular script, he uses his "white-face" as a method of disrupting the complacent white world and achieves a comic triumph for himself.
Apart from the previously discussed longer plays of Baraka, he has also written some important shorter plays. These are the outcome of the spirit of the Black Arts Movement of the 60's. The plays express his social, communal and leftist consciousness. His creative modes of protest against the American social system can be clearly visualised in these plays. He reflects on the Black American culture and real social and political events to make them relevant for the Black audience.

_The Death of Malcolm X_ is a play of real account. The mixture of fantasy and history is found in the play and it has a precedent in the myth-histories that are a part of _Madheart_ and _A Black Mass_. It describes the situation that leads to the murder of Malcolm X, the Black Nationalist leader who is described as a man of position among the Black people.

The play is in fact written in a unique manner. The playwright goes on giving a series of accounts happening in _Inner chambers of Uncle Sam Central_, “busy office... staying area for para military operation” and _Operating room_, where “Drugged Negroes lying almost at random around the room, strapped to tables... some nodding as if to come out of it” (P2). A black figure is seen on a stretcher, taken to the operating room where “closeup of doctors operating on black boy, taking out his mindsoul, replacing it. They take out a black brain, substitute a white one for it” (P2). There is also a classroom where a white instructor is writing certain instruction: “White is right” on the blackboard. He is practising this slogan to a group of Negroes saying... “This is why the white man is so cool. This is Negroes saying why the white man is so great” (P3). In the classroom, “movies of a black caricature” are also shown to the Black people. The
blacks in the audience “boo and cheer, stomp their feet and wring their hands, saying, “save us master... save us” (P3). One klansman informs the Hippy President: “that Ol' nigger's giving us trouble... but don't you worry about that. It'll be taken care of in the usual way”. (P4). And he seems to be requiring money for that. Then the action of the play proceeds towards gathering of weapons so as to get ready to kill Malcolm X. Once Malcom X is seen discussing in a panel in a television studio, about the position of Black men in America. The setting is shown completely dominated by whitemen. A group of Black men are seen marching on the outside road and are being controlled by the Policemen. A series scene is seen with creditable activities of Black men: “The grey-haired Negro is receiving his award. The crowd applauds. His wife comes to embrace him... the Negro grinning from ear to ear” (PP16-17). Malcolm X is seen walking towards the stage. He is speaking of raising the consciousness of Black people. In the meantime “The shooting begins. The killers move up to the aisles, blasting away... Close up of Malcolm's face. He grabs his chest. People scream”(P 18). The news on TV, is heard in all the rooms. The white men are howling with laughter at their victory. When the news is announced, “all of them begin to change clothes, and put on Uncle Sam suits, top hats and chin beards. The banker begins to call people about his party" (P 19). As Malcolm is falling on this stage, People are screaming. The assassins are disappearing in the prearranged manner in cars to an abandoned part of town since it is sunday. Then they go to a waiting helicopter and they are off. At the same time a group of Black people are seen clutching their breasts, as if shot. The Grey-haired Negro is finishing buttoning on his Uncle Sam suit. The audience is still applauding. Malcolm is seen dead on floor “with weeping hysterical mourners”(P 19). All hear the TV announcing:
"Today Black extremist Malcolm X was killed by his own violence". (P 19) The white people are seen "together at a party in Usam suits, celebrating and making jokes... leading a slow weird dance... making growing unintelligible noises, but ending each phrase rhythmically with "White !" "White !!" "White !!!" and c". (PP19-20).

Baraka strikes on two important points here. The first point is the chaotic, unconscious, and poor imitative mentality present among the Black people which makes them disintegrated socially, mentally and in all other possible ways. The second point shows the result of the poor Black mentality leading to the death of Maccolm X, which is remarkable for the Black Americans. The proclamation of the death message of Malcolm X is not only painful but also ironical because it declares him to be a "black extremist" who "was killed his own violence" (P 19). But it is known to everybody that Malcolm X is not extremist but a moderate and non-violent Black American leader who has struggled a lot for the reasonable and peaceful survival of Black people in America. Thus the way of presentation of such a fact must create a social and political consciousness among the Black audience which is key to Baraka's purpose as a playwright under the Black Arts Movement.

*Junkies Are Full of SHHH.. (1971)* teaches in much the same way as *Experimental Death Unit # 1*. It focuses on the Black labourer, Bigtime who is treated roughly by two Italians named Frankie and Sammy. These two characters treat the Black characters quite roughly. Frankie tells that in old days they were hiring niggers to take the place of the Sicilians to do all the hand stuffs. In scene-one Bigtime is seen working rightly upto his limit. But the Italian boss is
still dissatisfied. He puts Bigtime to heavier work. As a result, Bigtime is irritated but he has no way out but to obey his master's orders. All the efforts of Bigtime to know his fault and to make his boss calm become fruitless. The conflict between Bigtime and his Italian boss grows more and more till it reaches a deeper racial feeling of the white Italians and the Black people.

In scene-2, the action changes as a young Black boy steals a TV set from one of his neighbours, who is also a Black. When Bigtime and other Black men like Damu and Chuma come across the event, they do not appreciate the action of the Black boy. Damu tries to change the mentality of the Black boy through his positive advice:

You 'sposed to be my man... you want me to teach you martial arts, karate, and all that, and have you are dragging around the streets look in like a junkie. I wouldn't teach you nothin', my man. Not till you clean up and try to be black (P 15)

Damu's advice has tremendous effect on the boy who agrees to change his character: "I'm gonna clean up tomorrow man... really, brother..." (P 15)

In Scene three, Chuma and Damu try to inspire both Bigtime and the Young Boy about the idea of Black Nationalism. When Chuma explains that "A nationalist man is somebody who's trying to build up his people. That's why the Italians call their organisation the cosa nostra. It's their thing. Pure Nationalism" (PP 18-19). Damu adds "Yeh, only thing, we talking black nationalism. 'Cause we black people" (P 19). Bigtime seems to be convinced about his present position and becomes racially conscious.
In scene four, the white characters are very much concerned about the activities of the Black leaders who are going to unite their people against them by forming a Black Nationalist organisation. Chuma, along with his Black Nationalist friends, gets ready with weapons to start his work called “community sanitation” (P21). He is even ready to kill Black people if they are not convinced about his ideal. He is basically trying to convince them against taking dope because it spoils them in every respect. When Chuma finds that Bigtime does not change his habit of taking dope he becomes greatly upset and decides to teach him a lesson so that it will be a lesson to the whole Black community. He holds Bigtime forcefully and injects overdose of dope by which Bigtime dies helplessly at the end. Chuma mercilessly comments:

Nigger, You an example. We gonna put you in the middle of Howthorne and Bergen with a big sign say, JUNKIES ARE FULL OF SHIT, and let all them pushers and Junkies look at you. You see, BT, you gonna be a martyr, and a true help to the race. You gonna do some good with sick ass before it’s carried away from here by the worms. You gonna be a nationalist symbol. 42

Thus the play remains an excellent example of raising the consciousness of Black people to become an inseparable part of the Black Nationalist Movement.

A small one act play, Home on the Range, which was read as a part of the 1967 Black Communications Project was produced at Spirit House in Spring 1968. It has much of music, suspense and absurdity. It takes place in an American family whose members are found “seated in room watching television, eating popcorn, chattering.”43 The language that the family members like Father,
Mother, Son and Daughter use are quite symbolic which the Black Criminal can't understand. However, the Black Criminal wants to command them variously. It seems as if he is sadistic and revengeful in mood. But the family members do not take him seriously and watch TV. When laughter comes from the television set, "they all begin to imitate the laughter... are wiggling and shaking, slapping each other and grabbing themselves in a frenzy of wicked merriment" (PP 107-108). The Black criminal fails to understand this kind of strange behaviour and asks them to shut up: "What the hell's wrong with you folks? Godamit, shutup, shutup." (P 108) But the families members do not pay any heed to his words and howl even louder. The criminal becomes very angry and shoots at the television set. As a result, "the Family stops laughing as suddenly as the bullet shattering the set's tubes" (P 108). But the next moment the family members start dancing and singing in response to the criminal's confession that he has come to commit a crime. Looking at the absurdity of the actions of the family members, the criminal guesses that probably they are panic-stricken. So he tries to convince them that "it is not the reign of terror" (P 108) and tries to bring them to reality. When vague sounds come from a concealed loudspeaker, he shoots at it in anger. The next moment as lights in the stage become "dim, and go down... finally off", the criminal sleeps for a while and again "comes awake with a start" (P 110). He listens to "the FAMILY singing: first a version of 'America The Beautiful,' then a soupy stupid version of the Negro National Anthem, 'Lift Every Voice and Sing' and brings the action to a super-dramatic climax by "having been moved to tears, finally giving a super-military salute". (P 110) The stage direction continues to describe the following situation:
As they reach the highest point of the song, suddenly a whole CROWD OF BLACK PEOPLE pushes through the door. The criminal wheels around, at first, started, then he lets out a yell of recognition, and there is a general yowl from all the Black People, and they proceed to run around and once they take in the family, with second takes, over the shoulder Jibes, and stage whispered insult - inquiries, they race around and begin getting ready for a party. (P 110)

The party, dance and movement go on and everybody is absorbed in it. The criminal is absorbed in the party too. But then he turns smartly toward the audience, holding his gun at them. He then says:

Criminal. This is the tone of America. My country, 'tis of thee. He shoots out over the audience. This is the scene of the Fall. The demise of the ungodly. He shoots once. Then quickly twice. This is the cool take over in the midst of strong rhythms, and grace. Wild procession, Jelly Beans. French Poodles. Razor Cuts. Filth. Assassinations of Gods. This is the end, He shoots. Run. Bastards. Run. You grimy motherfuckers who have no place in the new the beautiful the black change of the earth. Who don't belong in the mother fuckering world.... He shoots again three times. The world! (PP.110 - 111)

Then deep in the night gradually everybody is found asleep except the criminal. He listens to the father speaking while sleeping "I was born in Kansas city in
1920. My father was the Vice-President of Fertilizer Company. Before that we were phantoms ... waving at his family. Evil ghosts without substance.” (P 111) He repeats this statement again. In the mean time the criminal shouts “Come on, Come on” which Black girl compliments with “Good Morning” as morning arrives. This symbolises the change of the life style of the Black people.

*Police* is another such short play having the characters like Black Man, Black Woman, Black Cop, and White Cops. The play starts with a good will conversation between Black Man and Black Woman. In the mean time Black Cop arrives saying “I’m crazy. I don’t know why I hurt people. I hurt people. I don’t know why”. “Then a White Cop arrives there too. He says to Black Cop, “You couldn’t take it that’s all, You’re not fit for justice among the civilized. The great face tooters. That’s all.” And to this Black Cop responds angrily, “I’m a savage ? I’m a savage ? Savage ?” (P112) Then such hot conversation continues. Though Black Man and Black Woman try to cool down both the Black Cop and the White Cop, they don’t listen to them and go on arguing till more white cops arrive and inquire about the matter.

Then a sudden pantomime takes place on the stage. In dim light there is shift of players. Black Man and Black Woman take up roles. They enact to show how their race is in misery:

Black woman. You don’t have no money. You don’t have no life in Sun. You just swagger black heaviness. Where is a sweet thing for me ? A cool, a hip diamond layout...

Black Man. Later Black bitch. Later. I got terrible life shit to buck. And you always on me 'bout some soft shit. It ain’t no
soft shit. It just ain’t no soft shit around. None. So shut up. (P 113).

When the conflict between the White Cop and the Black Cop becomes more intense, all declare that they want to report a murder. Getting confused, Black Cop starts shooting and runs over. He shoots the Black Man and the Black Man dies on the spot. Then all shout for rescue and help:

Black Woman. Help! Murder! Will you, to COPS, solve this crime?

... ... ...

Young Girl. Help. Help, murder...murder. The cops are murderers...

A Black Cop is a murderer. He just shut my man. (P 114)

But interestingly enough, the cry for help for murder turns to a bitter conflict between the Black Woman and the Young girl as to whom The dead Black Man belongs:

Black Woman. What’s that bitch sayin’? Her man Bitch. What?

That’s my man, there dead.


Help people. Black cop shot my man.

Black Woman. You shut up. It’s my man.


... ... ...
Black Woman. Was my husband.

Young Girl. Was my brother! And was his sister! But was you his wife, woman? Don't lie! PEOPLE, TRAITOR NIGGERS KILLED MY BROTHER... KILLIN YOU! (P 114)

The young girl appears to be highly conscious of their position in society. She severely criticises the Black Woman for running after the so-called 'soft shit'—the luxurious items like money, diamond etc, even at the cost of her husband's life. She asks the Black Woman to use her whip on the Black Cop who has murdered her husband. Black Woman obeys her and insist on the Black Cop to shoot himself calling him "white man's fool". Finally the Black Cop kills himself. The scene ends with "WHITE COPS do not even hear, they are all assembled around the dead nigger cop doing pixie steps, or slobbering on his flesh, a few are even eating chunks of flesh they tear off in their weird banquet".

Lack of self-assertion and mutual trust among the confused and suppressed Black community happen to be the key issue of Baraka's plays. He, no doubt, reflects the sense of hatred, anger and protest of the Black people for the white very effectively. But his portrayal of the conflict and misunderstanding among the Black people is more remarkable. Very frequently, his Black protagonists have tried to present themselves as conscious, revolutionary and Black nationalists. But either misunderstanding or traditional understanding of the Black people about their own position put these protagonists into their tragic end. By this Baraka tries to draw the attention of his audience to find where the fault lies to achieve success in their mission.
Among his other latter plays, *New Ark's a Moverin* was first performed in Newark in February 1974. It has political and nationalistic implication. The play is a mixture of ritual, agitprop, and caricatures of white and Black political figures in Newark. The play ends with a note of plea, that all power should flow from the will of the people and there should be a reasonable change in the society. Similarly *A Recent Killing* looks back upon Baraka's past involvement with the white community and integrated approach to rebellion against repressive forces in America. The play is a unique act of expelling evil spirits by certain rituals and visions for black liberation.

Baraka's life long struggle for the Black Americans credits him greatly. His struggle through literary art proves him to be a true a leftist and socialist. However, it is found that first of all, he is an extremist and revolutionary. As a result, he makes his characters use arms and ammunitions to fight against the so-called injustice. He makes his characters speak openly against the Whites and become conscious of their own Black culture, art, and music so that a quintessential harmony among themselves can be maintained. He uses his plays as weapons to make Black Americans conscious of their own existence in American society. In addition, plays of the first three periods are mostly imaginative and they greatly express the playwright's individuality. But gradually the thoughts of Marx and Mao-Tse-Tsung influence him. So he becomes a leftist of more universal outlook. From individual, he shifts his reactions to more social and universal problems. Thus in his last period he writes plays in which conscious reaction of characters is found with reference to their actual political, social, mythical and historical problems. The latter plays like, *The Motion of History* and
reflect this idea. These plays facilitates the revolutionary process by depicting the past and its impact on the present. The nationalist sense as well as the distinct Black culture is added with the historical perspectives of socialism, which create social awareness and racial consciousness. They call for revolution too. Both *The Motion of the History* (1975-76) and *S-l* (1976) speak of revolution in order to solve the problems of Black Americans. *The Motion of History* brings it back through the years, reflecting mainly on the deliberate division created between black and white workers who are both exploited by the so-called white capitalists. It emphasizes history as a progressive force of socialist revolution. However *S-l* is based on a mythical incident that is historically relevant. The plot focuses on the passage of law (*S-l*) that heavily controls over political activities and freedom of expression. It curtails civil liberties. Revolutionaries group together to protest the passage of law. They plan not to obey it at any cost. At the same time they celebrate their unity and purpose.

Baraka's literary career, more than that of any other Afro-American writer, has illustrated the ethic and aesthetic of "change". The impulse to harness the energy of Black life's chaos is constant with his desire for political and cultural transformation. At the core of Baraka's art is the insistence upon the formulation of life-giving energy and the energetic or fluid nature of all form. It is no wonder that events in his work are violent, his images often alarmingly brutal. The only fruition or finality honored is that of death, which produces a sudden enlargement of vision—the realization that personality or the "deadweight" of any fixed idea or being is inevitably annihilated by history's progress: "The only constant is change".
The restless search for forms which Baraka's literary corpus exhibits—engendered by an aesthetic of process and the belief in inevitable change—links him to a similar motive in all modern art. He partakes, with the modern Western artist, of the quest for a proper idiom or voice, although his desire to control some manner of expression is conceived in political as well as aesthetic terms. Yet his sense of continual challenge, of the constant need to test positions, is specifically Afro-American in its deliberately improvisational thrust and, concomitantly, its persuasion that life is essentially dramatic. Baraka's creed of Black Being as Ideal yet ever-changing calls to mind Zora Neale Hurston's suggestion that "acting out" or "drama" is the Black man's fundamental trait: "Something that permeates his entire self ... Every phase of Negro life is highly dramatised. No matter how joyful or how sad the case there is sufficient poise for drama. Everything is acted out."45

The above analysis shows that the plays of Baraka, no doubt, present a clear and talented system of Black literature in America. They clarify the concepts of the Black Arts Movement. Baraka's association with Harlem Renaissance and Black Arts Repertory Theatre in 1960s in fact makes him an authentic dramatist of the Black Arts Movement. As Bob Bernotes says, "Baraka is hoped to create an art that would stir Blacks, raising their consciousness so that they might rise themselves in art that would take them higher, ready them for war and victory."46 Baraka's works are well informed by a sense of moral urgency and an agonised consciousness generated by over three hundred years of degradation and inhuman treatment which represents the core of the history of Blacks in America. Thus as the spokesman of Black upliftment, Baraka is of the opinion that the
Blacks should be proud of being Black and that they should strive to rid themselves of the enervating mythical perception of reality induced in them by whites. He asserts that believing in what is implied as “Black is Beautiful”, the Blacks will be able to achieve a creative self-hood or an identity matching their expectations as citizens of America. His protagonists believe in struggle. They cut loose from society to the community themselves as victims, rebels and finally come triumphant.

Baraka's artistic endeavour focuses on the recovery of Black Self through the acknowledgment of ambiguities of history and the necessity of action, even 'violent' to impart meaning to activities in which the Blacks are engaged. It insists on bringing about a collective consciousness that would clash with a society so as to help liberate the Black self. His art, therefore, traces the possible course that the Black Self follows so as to overcome the dilemma endangered by the split consciousness, Baraka considers art as energy that could undermine fossilized traditions and their artifacts, that needed to invest feeling with significance and to disclose the characteristic qualities of a culture which in his representation is Black culture. For Baraka, art, or more specifically, literature, is not an entity that is intended for contemplation but an attempt to make the self compatible with language in order that it may address itself to the crucial issues fermenting the society. For Baraka, the Black art creates a Black national spirit. As a humanistic expression, Black art is a raiser, as a spiritual expression. It is itself raised.

In an interview with Baraka, Marvin X observes, “As you begin to beat your way back through the symbols, getting close to the source of what Black
Arts is, you begin to see that it comes out of Islam. The closeness of man with natural evidence of Divinity reveal the presence of one force that animates everything. He says, "Black art must concern with reconstructing the political, cultural and spiritual identity of the emerging Black nation."

Larry Neal comments:

The Black Arts theatre, the theatre of Le Roi Jones is a radical alternative to the sterility of the American theatre. It is primarily a theatre of the Spirit, confronting the Black man in his interaction with his brothers and with the white thing. Their theatre will show victims so that they are the brothers of victims, and they themselves are blood brothers. And what they show must cause the blood to rush, so that pre-Revolutionary temperaments will be bathed in this blood, and it will cause their deepest souls to move, and they will find themselves tensed and clenched, even ready to die, at what the soul has been taught. They will screen and cry, murder, run through the streets of agony, if it means some soul will be moved, moved to actual life understanding of what the world is, and what it ought to be. They are preaching virtue and feeling, and a natural sense of the self in the world. All men live in the world, and the world ought to be a place for them to live. 

Actually the plays of Amiri Baraka are directed at problems within Black America. He begins with the audience that must see itself and the world in terms of its own interests. His plays take the task of a profound re-evaluation of the Blackman's presence in America. Thus, in this context, The Black Arts Movement
inspires him to develop a kind of flowering of a cultural nationalism that has been suppressed since the 1920s. Through these plays, Baraka searches for Afro-American life with full creative possibilities. He calls the Black Art the harbinger of future possibilities. The most remarkable thing is that Baraka becomes so revolutionary under this movement that he rejects his white wife and even changes himself from a Christian to a Non-conformist and later he identifies himself with a Muslim. Thus Le Roi Jones becomes Amiri Baraka only for the reawakening of his race in America. The themes, the characters, the setting of his plays no doubt suit to the purpose of the Black Arts Movement. The characters like Clay of *Dutchman*, Vessels of *The Slave*, Homosexual of *The Baptism*, Foots of *The Toilet*, the Black Woman as well as the Black youths in *Experimental Death Unit #1*, the Black Man in *Madheart*, represent the practical protest, anger and subsequent revenge to win the whites variously. He uses 'Sex' as a deliberate subject matter in some of these plays as a weakness of whites and the social, cultural consciousness of the Blacks as constructive elements in order to make the Black audience feel purgatorial. In his plays like *A Black Mass* and *Slave Ship*, he becomes nostalgic. He becomes increasingly an anthropologist and very much conscious culturally. He reflects the mythical Black Power through them. The characters like Rochester, the Black militant in *Jello* and Malcolm X in *The Death of Malcolm X* etc reflect his commitment towards the formation of a conscious Black community in America. At times his artistic, and cultural depiction knows no bound. He becomes an extremely traditionalist at times or even resorts to absurdity in order to bring a Black assertion. In fact, as described in the chapter, "The Black Arts Movement of 1960s", Baraka's ... follows its principles in detail.
It includes the creation of a kind of effective music for the plays as his Blues People and Jazz only to serve the purpose of the Movement.

As Harris writes, “Blues People, gave Baraka an opportunity to mediate on a profound and sophisticated art form created by Blacks and to do so during a time when he was trying to find a model for his own art”.

Thus Baraka is the High Priest of the Black Arts Movement. His plays are the finest products of this Movement. He developed “a kind of Bildungsroman for the Movement. So powerful was his influence, particularly in the latter half of the 60s, that, too many chose the name Jones to symbolise his commitment to the spiritual and cultural life of Black people.” L.C. Sanders says, “For Jones Black Theater is ultimately a stance, an attitude; its “reference” is the world as it appears to Black Americans during the height of the Black Arts Movement.”

Notes


4 Ibid.


All subsequent references to this play are to his edition and have been incorporated in the text itself.


9 L.W. Brown, "Drama", *Amiri Baraka*, 146.


14 Ibid.
Amiri Baraka The Slave in Two Plays by Le Roi Jones: Dutchman and the

All subsequent references to the play are to this edition and have been
incorporated in the text itself.

Amiri Baraka, “Black Dada Nihilismus”, Black Magic Poetry (New York:

K.W. Benston, The Renegade and the Mask, 182.

Le Roi Jones, “The Revolutionary Theatre”, 210-211.


Ibid.


Amiri Baraka, The Baptism in Le Roi Jones’ The Baptism and The Toilet

All subsequent references to the play are to this edition and have been
incorporated in the text itself.

Amiri Baraka The Toilet in Le Roi Jones’ The Baptism and The Toilet (New
York: Grove Press Inc., 1963) 33

All subsequent references to the play are to this edition and have been
incorporated in the text itself.

25 Le Roi Jones, vii-viii.


*All subsequent references to the play are to this edition and have been incorporated in the text itself.*


29 Amiri Baraka, *Madheart* in *Four Black Revolutionary Plays*, 73.

*All subsequent references to the play are to this edition and have been incorporated in the text itself.*

30 K.W. Benston, *The Renegade and The Mask*, 227


All subsequent references to the play are to this edition and have been incorporated in the text itself.

Lloyd W. Brown, 154.

Amiri Baraka, *Great Goodness of Life: A Coon Show in Four Black Revolutionary Plays*, 45.

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44 Amiri Baraka, *Police* in *New Plays from the Black Theatre*, 111

All subsequent references to the play are to this edition and have been incorporated in the text itself.


48 Interview with Marvin X, 142.


52 L.C. Sanders, 121.