"No white man, however brave and well-intentioned, can ever sing the Negro song," stated Colin MacInnes, the noted English critic. Indeed, the "Negro song" was sung by the Negro writers themselves who thus heralded the inception of a Third Force on the American literary scene to challenge and crush the white supremacy. They created a rebel hero quite antithetical to the "traditional rebel" to articulate the aggressive, violent and militant mood of the American Negro. The traditional Greek hero is a rebel against outdated social conventions: his violence seeks to establish a better order. In the figures of Ajax, Achilles and Antigone there is a spirit of revolt on epical level, but the essential spirit is one of the sacrifice of self to a broader idea or ideal. The black rebel hero, on the contrary, is a dramatization of black consciousness which marks the sway of hatred rather than love, destruction rather than creation. Revolting against the forces of oppression, persecution, segregation, and mob brutality, the Black revolution sought the help of these very forces. Thus while the Greek hero sought redemption, salvation and order in spiritual sense, the Negro rebel is a trapped victim, the projection of man bent on destruction.
For centuries there had been an inhuman severance of all impersonal and cultural relationships, so far as the Negro in America is concerned. He was ashamed of his African ancestry because the whites regarded Africa as the land of ignorant and savage people. He could feel proud neither of his past nor of his present, neither of his culture nor of his personality. When the socio-political forces fostered in him a new consciousness, the American Negro realized for the first time in the post-War era that he had a separate identity which must not be allowed to be lost in any measure of integration. The black consciousness inspired in him a new confidence in his African culture and heritage and made him believe that "black is beautiful" and that the pre-European Africa had soul culture of its own. In open revolt against everything white, the Negroes came to insist on their apartness and demanded a new role for themselves. The new confidence and pride inspired Black Arts Movement which aimed at the destruction of white ideas and white ways of looking at the world. The rebel hero imbibed in him the major values of the black aesthetics like militant revolution, violence, destruction, race riots, and aggressive assertion of their rights. In the wake of the Black Arts Movement, the Black Theatre dramatized the militant spirit of the contemporary Negroes. To quote Nathan A. Scott, "In order to perform this task the Black Arts Movement proposes a radical reordering of the Western cultural aesthetic. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, critique and iconology."
The Black Theatre being the expression of the militant and aggressive mood of the Black Americans, there emerged hero as a rebel - a revolutionary change in the contemporary American drama for the protagonist embodied in him the militant and aggressive spirit to burn and destroy the white Establishment. Largely inflamed by the black consciousness, this neo-rebel hero uses violence to wreck the white values; besides, he insists on a complete socio-political change, a total reversal of the old and stagnant for something new and better. For the rebel hero the white-dominated Establishment, the whiteman's culture, is losing its vitality through the internal hemorrhage of its own dehumanizing civilization. It is no longer capable of offering any promise of redress. The "Negroes are more aware of the presence of the bomb than most white people are; and sense that alienation haunts the entire human race; they discern the presence of violence in a society which has lost its community, its humanity ... they know the meaning of these things."

For the Negroes the white dominance is to be doubly discarded because it has not merely suppressed them economically, socially and culturally but also dehumanized the Negro community and sucked their "soul", so that the average Negro does not ever feel himself an independent human being; downtrodden, he prefers grovelling before the white, slaving for the white, at best compromising with and accepting the white. It is through a wholesale destruction, a complete blood-bath, that the neo-rebel hero dreams of bringing in the revolution, the "New World," the
"Black man's world," the Black Soul's glory and ecstasy.

Inspired by these ideals, the Black theatre of the post-War era presents the traditional villains as heroes and the traditional heroes as villains. The rebel in the Black theatre is not a heroic idealist with noble aspirations born of the love of humanity; instead, the motivating forces are hatred, anger, violence and the zeal to wreck all white values of faith, charity, mercy, love, non-violence, clemency and humility. The new Negro-rebel, therefore, emerges gun in hand, murder in throat, battling the deadly virus of white culture.

This rebel is as anti-heroic in the framework of traditional protagonism as the neurotics, the victims, the perverts, the absurdists and the heretics. The Negro anti-hero is a passionate, angry, young dare-devil and a victim of racial neurosis. He embodies the message of hope for the blacks through his quest for a new identity as he seeks to propagate a new ideology, new culture, new philosophy and a new spirit to rescue the blacks from the malignant forces of history. He proudly and defiantly proclaims his identification with the rising black consciousness in the ghettos. He is revengeful, contemptuous and militant racist with zeal to exterminate the white culture and morality. In him, one can observe a committed negritude, a paranoid inversion to overthrow humility of the whites through revolution and violence, to extripate the values of love and clemency by propagating the cult of hatred and contempt. He does not look for goody-goody love and affection, grace and
tenderness, but indulges in public rapes, sexual promiscuity, perversion, and black masculine virility. He mercilessly blows over the ethical standards of the whites, their hypocrisies and pretensions, and urges the blacks to realize their own plight in a white world - their alienation, frustration, guilt and repressed feelings. An inversion of the white heroism, he reveals his traumatic experience of victimization by the white race. Thus, in the Black drama, the blacks are the heroes, and even the typical bad men emerge as black Robin Hoods or coloured Tarzans.

No wonder, for the first time in the 1960s, the aggressive, violent and militant mood of the American Negro was expressed in the literature which gained wide popularity as Black literature or Negro literature. Black theatre, however, did not grow on Broadway. It took hold in the community theatres, the library and school auditoriums, the writer's workshop studios. Black theatre became a workshop for playwrights like Douglas Turner, LeRoi Jones, Ron Milner and Ed Bullins. In 1965, LeRoi Jones demanded "a theatre about black people with black people, for black people and only black people." The usual themes of the consequent Black Theatre are slavery, lynching, race riots, illicit relations, miscegenation, substratum of Harlem culture - in brief, the "crime" of being a Negro. The rebel anti-hero is the product of these new forces of the Black consciousness. The militant mood of the Black writers and of their rebel protagonists can be conveniently expressed in the words of Larry
It is the opinion of many black writers, I among them, that the Western aesthetic has run its course; it is impossible to construct anything meaningful within its decaying structure. We advocate a cultural revolution in art and ideas. The cultural values inherent in Western history must either be radicalized or destroyed, and we will probably find that even radicalization is impossible. In fact, what is needed is a whole new system of ideas.*

Lorraine Hansberry was the first successful Black playwright who raised this "cultural revolution" slogan as she broke with the tradition of protest and infused in her plays "energy which could change things." Her two successful Broadway plays, A Raisin In The Sun (1959) and The Sign In Sidney Brustein's Window (1965) projected the black castrated protagonists, strong, fiery and lewd. In Raisin In The Sun Walter is the Negro Willy Loman who finds himself trapped in a situation as he adheres to false values and ideals. Both are split personalities, only Miller's hero suffers from psychological neurosis and Walter from racial neurosis. Like Willy, Walter is actuated by the delusive American myth of success at its face value as he proceeds to put all his money into the hands of a faithless companion who skips down. Being a typical angry Negro, his appearances, ways, values, ideals, and tastes are the product of "Near Negro Consciousness." Though "little compromising", he is seen as a victim of forces, praying and cursing, begging of absent Willy to bring back the money that was made "out of my father's flesh." Grief-stricken, he grows hysterical and, like a wounded tiger,
he cries and howls in helpless despair, though all in vain. Miss Hansberry exposes the hypocrisy of the Negroes who live in illusive world and calls for active, radical and militant changes through Walter and Sidney. *A Raisin In The Sun* is not yet anything comparable to *Dutchman* of LeRoi Jones. It is not yet an eruption of a volcano; nevertheless, the protagonist imbibes in him all the seeds of militant revolution, the mad fire to indulge in racial riots and wreck the pillars of American civilization. No wonder, Clive Barnes found "O'Casey Spirit" in the protagonist:

"Walter, the Negro Hero is more angry, more demanding, more committed and in a perverse way both more hysterical and yet more articulate." 6

Only a few years later, in 1964 - an epoch-making year in the Negro theatre - James Baldwin's *Blues For Mr. Charlie* (1964) and LeRoi Jones's *Dutchman* (1964) created a sensation in the American theatre by introducing such militant protagonists as were even more fiery and more volcanic than the protagonists of Lorraine Hansberry. Ever since the staging of John Osborne's *Look Back In Anger* (1956) the angry young man as protagonist grew popular on the Continent as well as in the American theatre. Baldwin's rebel hero Richard Henry, is a veritable coloured Jimmy Porter - angry, aggressive and determined to wreck the (white) Establishment. No wonder David Brudnoy observed, "James Baldwin has only once, to my recollection, written a totally dreadful book, his play *Blues For Mr. Charlie*. He expresses hatred of the white race, hatred of Western
Richard Henry possesses all the typical traits of a Negro young man: he embodies the black consciousness and emerges as an ideal Negro hero with gun in his hand and murder in his throat. His passion for wine and women, his impulsive temperament, his choleric behaviour, his provocative language, his militant spirit - all these traits are true of a nihilist personality. Richard has been living for a pretty long time in Harlem, the venue of Negro culture and civilization. As Lyle informs, he "Went North and got ruined and came back here to make trouble - and they tell me he was a dope fiend, too." Having been overwhelmed by the suffocating oppression of Harlem and having found in drugs a refuge from his own solitude, he returns to the South bringing with him a fury which expresses itself in the contempt with which he confronts the white community. He articulates his fiery spirit to his mother: "I didn't want to come back here like a whipped dog. One whipped dog running to another whipped dog. No, I didn't want that, I wanted to make my Daddy proud of me - because the day I left here, I sure as hell wasn't proud of him" (Blues, p.20). This attitude of Richard is quite significant for it symbolizes the inception of the Negro-white confrontation. Richard represents the black consciousness as he is determined to wreck all white culture to avenge the death of his mother. He is restless and crazy for the spirit of vengeance is consuming his mind. He made desperate attempt to escape from the guilt of being black, but in vain.
His father sent him to the North to study to be a jazz musician, but Richard found New York "less liberating than loose; its freedom sufficient only to dig pockets of corruption in the city's nameless concentration camp. He finds release in vengeful sex bouts with white girls and ultimately in drugs." Richard is sure that his mother was killed by a white man in an effort to resist his sexual advances. This humiliating guilt drives him to dope and sex bouts for he wants to take revenge on the white race by committing adultery with the white women. After the failure to overpower his anxiety, he returns home, a gun in his luggage and even more bristling vengefulness and hatred as his latest tonic. Richard returns to the South harbouring a bitter hatred for the whites which derives partly from his own experience and partly from his awareness of the Negro impotence, as manifested in his father's inability to revenge his wife's murder. As he says:

... But I just wish, that day Mama died, he'd took a pistol and gone through that damn white man's hotel and shot every son of a bitch in the place. That's right. I wish he'd shot them dead. I been dreaming of my Mama falling down the steps of that hotel. My Mama I never believed she fell. I always believed that some white man pushed her down those steps. And I know that Daddy thought so, too. But he wasn't there, he didn't know, he couldn't say nothing, he couldn't do nothing. I'll never forget the way he looked - whipped, whipped, whipped!

(Blues, p.20)

Richard embodies, as it were, the guilt of the American Negroes who have been subjected to centuries of cruelty, brutality and maltreatment. When a man loses his sense of
manhood, the entire community is castrated. Richard's father lost this manhood and the son is determined to wash off that age-old guilt. He knows that white oppression in America has proved to be an insidious force since it constantly attacks the masculinity of the black community. Regarding the white man responsible for all the "crimes", Richard proposes the same radical cure which Bigger Thomas had proclaimed before him:

I'm going to treat every one of them as though they were responsible for all the crimes that ever happened in the history of the world - Oh, yes! They're responsible for all the misery I've ever seen, and that's good enough for me. It's because my Daddy's got no power that my Mama's dead. And he ain't got no power because he's black. And the only way the black man's going to get any power is to drive all the white men into the sea.

(Blues, p. 21).

Richard is an anti-hero because his revolution is not creative but destructive. He does not want a mere change of values but a total blood bath - a complete extermination of the white race. Great men of ideas like Rousseau and Marx too have aimed at changing the society, but they wanted renovation, not annihilation. They were not consumed by hatred and passions of revenge like Richard whose heroism is thus negative, destructive, in short, anti-heroic.

MOTHER HENRY: It can't be done. It can never be done. Hatred is poison, Richard.

RICHARD: Not for me. I'm going to learn how to drink it a little everyday in the morning, and then a booster shot late at night. I'm going to remember everything. I'm going to keep it right here, at the very top of my mind.

(Blues, p. 21).
The most predominant force which drives Richard to hate and revenge is his sex neurosis. In probing the sources and ramifications of racism, Baldwin finds the sexual component to be central. Richard is cast in the same mould as Rufus and Sommy. A jazz musician like them, he attempts, like Rufus, to achieve racial revenge through intercourse with white women, whose insatiable appetites, however, prove too much for him. Even more than Rufus and Sommy, he is proud, sensitive and tormented — in short, too rebellious and militant to survive anywhere in America. Since Richard's mother was murdered due to sexual involvement, Richard too enjoys sex with white women to quench his revengeful thirst. No wonder, he says, "I got a whole gang of white chicks in New York. That's right. And they can't get enough of what little Richard's got — and I give it to them, too, baby believe me. You say black people ain't got no dignity?" (Blues, p.25).

Sex and dope are common weaknesses of all the rebel heroes. They use them to escape from the guilty consciousness when they feel lonely, isolated and trapped. The sense of guilt and shame torments Richard, too, and to escape from it he indulges in dope — all typical of the "black aesthetics." After experiencing white racism, South and North, Richard has reached the conclusion that the only way black man can achieve power is by picking the gun:

MOTHER HENRY: Richard, what are you doing with that gun?

RICHARD: I'm carrying it around me, that's what I'm doing with it. This gun goes everywhere I go.
MOTHER HENRY: How long you have had it?
RICHARD: I've had it a long, long time.
MOTHER HENRY: Richard - you never - ?
RICHARD: No, Not yet. But I will when I have to. I'll sure as hell take one of the bastards with me. *(Blues, p.22)*

This "redneck aggressiveness" prompts Richard to go into Lyle's store and provoke a fight. He is determined to give vent to his radical vendetta through violence, the only way to grab justice and rights for the Black man from the white community. Thus in Lyle's store when he starts flirting with Lyle's wife, Jo, and the husband tries to put off the trouble by ordering him to "put them cokes down and get out of here," *(Blues, p.73)* Richard, mad with the spirit of aggressiveness and bent on encountering a confrontation, deliberately taunts Lyle, using all the cliches of race, and bragging of his superior male virility:

Look at the mighty peckerwood! On his ass, baby - and his woman watching! Now, who you think is the better man? Ha-ha! The master race! You let me in that tired white Chick's drawers. She'll know who's the master! Ha-ha-ha! *(Blues, p.75)*

A "reluctant murderer," Lyle is not so aggressive as Richard; so he wants an apology which Richard would not give. True to his colour, the Black protagonist is committed to the black ideology of confrontation, revolt, violence and terrorism; his racial fervour has made him dogmatic, assertive, bold, defiant and unlawful. He is a crazy blackman flaunting his male virility: "You ain't got nothing to give me. You can't eat because none
of your sad-assed chicks can cook. You can't talk because won't nobody talk to you. You can't dance because you've got nobody to dance with - don't you know I've watched you all my life? All my life!" (Blues, p.119). He is killed; he had to be, because as Lyle puts it, "I had to kill him then. I'm a white man! Can't nobody talk that way to me" (Blues, p.120).

The scene reveals "Baldwin's early diagnosis that the root of American racial conflict lies between the legs of a white man and a black man confronting each other. Richard must act out of his racial-sexual stereotype even if it means his death." 10

Externally Richard strikes a militant spirit with all the volcano of hatred for the white race, but internally he is a lonely and frustrated victim of anxiety and alienation. Unlike the traditional rebels, he is a slave of his passions without balance and elegance. Fired with the destructive ambitions to wreck the white culture, he carries out his ambitions: "I been in pain and darkness all my life. All my life" (Blues, p.89).

Throughout the play, he appears a racist committed to "black aesthetic," but is devoid of any sincere idealism, moral or spiritual. He knows only the use of physical force believing that the gun is the only solution of all his problems.

C.W.E. Bigsby finds nihilistic tendencies in the character of Richard who revolts against "a religion which preaches 'passivity' and yet which can be made to endorse violence." 11 Baldwin himself once observed, "The play, then, for me, takes place in Plague-town, U.S.A., now. The plague is race, the
plague is our concept of Christianity and the raging plague has the power to destroy every human relationship." And it seems Baldwin had Camus' "Plague" in his mind when he fixed the background and environment of Blues. Indeed, it is not surprising to find here the entire paraphernalia of Camusian heroism: revolt, nihilistic despair, and tendency to defy the moral order. When Camus observes, "What I reproach Christianity with is being a doctrine of injustice," he is identifying that same certainty which is felt by Richard when he says: "You know I don't believe God, Grandmama." Lorence also gives vent to his nihilistic faith in God when he says:

"... here you sit - in this - this - the house of this damn almighty God who don't care what happens to nobody, unless, of course, they're white. ... It's that damn white God that's been lynching and burning us and castrating us and raping our women and robbing us of everything that makes a man, man.... (Blues, p.15)

In their militant passion to "kill white man's God," the nihilistic, distrustful and atheistic black rebels are anti-heroes. They mercilessly wreck all those values which the Christianity has bequeathed them, for they believe in gun and hate the Bible. No wonder Larry Neal remarked: "The Old Spirituality seeks to recognize Universal Humanity. The New Spirituality is specific. It begins by seeing the world from the concise point-of-view of the colonialized. Where the Old Spirituality would live with oppression while ascribing to the oppressors an innate goodness, the New Spirituality demands a radical shift in point-of-view."
The black anti-hero rebels against the old spirituality which fosters oppression and black emasculation. Richard has a passion to propagate the new spirituality, the blackman's faith to exterminate the whites from the globe. He is like Johnny, the protagonist of Garret's We Own the Night, who begins a vicious attack on his mother when she pleads for Christ and Church:

I have been a heathen for three days. He has for three hundred years. But I am not guilty. I feel passion when I kill love. He don't give a shit for nobody. He kills efficiently I kill passionately. He is your God and I have sworn to kill God.15

The situation of Richard and Johnny is paradoxical: they passionately struggle to revolt against the Old Spirituality which fosters evil, but in their zeal, they themselves become oppressors clamouring for bloodshed. They epitomize the predicament of anti-hero in the Black Theatre. This negativistic meaning is "heralded by the very title: blues for Mr. Charlie, i.e., a dirge for the Whiteman, whom Negro slangs calls Mr. Charlie."16 Indeed, Richard does not stand for a hope for the humanity; he is as trapped by colour as the whites are. His aggressive violence, his guilt, repression, alienation lead him to morbidity and despair. His murder is not a sacrifice of the protagonist, nor is it a quest for redemption; rather this is the result of the violent confrontation with the whites, symbolizing the pervasive mood of hatred and tribal loyalty so fierce that love and mutual understanding seem quite out of the question. Indeed, like LeRoi Jones's Clay, Richard has "broken out, asserted his dark, phallic, frightening id-energy and is
LeRoi Jones is an angry black artist who created violent, angry, rebellious and fiery protagonists to wreck the white culture and civilization in a fervour to propagate the "black aesthetics." As the father of the Black Arts Movement, his abomination of white people grew into a kind of paranoia. He revolted against the so-called American way of life, substantially altered his style, and channelled his genius into interpreting the lives, history, culture and feelings of his people for his people by an unrestrained use of gut language, apocalyptic imagery, and savage polemics against the white society. No wonder critics labelled him as John Osborne of America. Anyway, his protagonists are aggressive and militant blacks who place their faith in the immediate need for "cutting throats."

When Dutchman was first staged in New York, it came across as an assault on white liberalism, as a promise - fiercer than any earlier ones - of fire, bloodshed, and unassuageable hatred. But in an interview, Jones said, "Dutchman is about the difficulty of becoming a man in America." The rebel hero, Clay, is a victim of the white forces of repression and inhuman corruption. Clay-Lula confrontation forms the core of the play as it reveals the victimization of Clay and the loss of his black identity in the white world. Lula is a thirty-year-old white woman, ten years older than Clay, perceptive to the point of omniscience, a "kind of white bitch, with murder on her mind, and most significantly, as symbol of the white world and part of the
greater construct of a racial allegory." Lula knows everything about the protagonist's life, his place of origin, his destination on the train and his friend's names. She is even aware of Clay's most intimate incestuous memories or fantasies, and knows all about "Black manhood," which Clay struggles to repress. Clay emerges an anti-hero in Dutchman for his confrontation with Lula leads to his moral, sexual and spiritual castration and corruption.

A suburbanite living in New Jersey with his parents who belong to the Black middle class, Clay finds himself defined and confined by externals of bourgeois manners and aspirations, clothes and beliefs. In college, Clay thought himself a Baudelaire, not a black nigger, and the playwright has portrayed him not as a man but as a poser who does not acknowledge what he is. Lula is quick to discover his hidden black identity and the artificial repression of natural inclinations as she questions him, "Would you like to get involved with me, Mister Man?" Lula knows that he is a weak victim so she attempts to impose the emasculating puritan sexual ethic upon Clay. She taunts Clay, flinging at him the allurements of her saucy sexuality: "You look like death-eating a soda cracker." To quote Julian C. Rice:

Soda cracker in black dialect means white man. Thus death eating a soda cracker implies the history of sexual exploitation of black people, as well as the black man's continuing metaphorical and psychological prostitution to the exploitive white society by confronting to that society's definition of his identity.
Lula taunts Clay over his masculinity, maturity and independence in an effort to strip him of his facade. Those Ivy-league clothes he wears, Lula reminds him, "come from a tradition you ought to feel oppressed by. A three-button suit. What right do you have to be wearing a three-button suit and stripped tie? Your grandfather was a slave, he didn't go to Harvard" (Dutchman, p. 18). Lula's cultural indictment is to rip off the black identity of Clay as she warns him: "Your submission to the white order is only a pretense." She tells Clay frankly in sarcastic language that he can never be free from his history, the heritage of slavery, even as she herself cannot be free from her history, the heritage of oppression. She enlightens Clay on his mental and emotional emasculation as, in the mythical and allegorical sense, she is the doomed "Flying Dutchman" of literary legend. In another sense, she is a twentieth century Eve, tempting the new Adam Clay to another fall from grace. When Lula offers Clay an apple, her action symbolizes traditional temptation, i.e., giving knowledge of good and evil - an awareness which leads eventually to his death. Clay's assimilation characterizes his anti-heroic bent of mind, and his pretentious middle-class background reveals his emasculation of Negro virility and vitality. Lula highlights Clay's "lack of place" i.e., his loss of black identity in the white world.

Scene II dramatizes the seduction and emasculation of Clay who is caught in the trap of the "white witch." Lula is seen at her seductive best when she promises: "I lead you in, holding your wet hand gently in my hand . . . into my dark living room."
Where we'll sit and talk endlessly, endlessly" (Dutchman, p. 25). Clay has been teased by Lula as a man, and baited as a blackman. Lula finds him weak and clumsy and makes a parody of Clay's suppressed self. Breaking into an hysterical obscene dance, she insists, "And that's how the blues was born. Yes. Come on Clay, let's do the nasty. Rub bellies. Rub bellies" (Dutchman, p. 30). After a full repertoire of gross ethnic mockeries, she turns upon him and exposes his false assimilation. Yet while Clay appears wholly assimilated, he remains a threat precisely because his adoption of middle-class white standards is merely a pose. Underneath there is a threat of violence. Clay's three-piece suit and the "stripped neck tie" are simply antidotes to going berserk and killing whites in the street. Lula tries her best to induce Clay to throw off "the false masks of white morality," for she views him as a problem, as an "escaped nigger." To Lula, Clay is "blackman with a white mind, and as a consequence, he has no manhood." Alternating sexual incitement with racist insults, Lula is finally able to needle him into angrily denouncing her and all the white world. She mocks him as she dances wildly down the aisle of the subway:

... You middle class black bastard. Forget your social working mother for a few seconds and let's knock stomachs. Clay, you liver-lipped white man, you would be Christian. You ain't no nigger, you're just a dirty white man. (Dutchman, p. 31)

Surprisingly, Clay still remains "cool" and unprovoked, quite passive, though the symptoms of his inner black fire are vivid in his "cold eyes." Clay has attempted to be "cool" throughout Lula's
hysterical outburst and his "cool", as Jones suggests, is the blackman's way of coping with life in a hostile and alien culture. "To be cool was, in its most accessible meaning, to be calm, even unimpressed by what horror the world might daily propose... In a sense this calm, or stoical, repression of suffering is as old as the Negro's entrance into the slave society..." Lula plays the last trump card and taunts him with showing the passivity of an Uncle Tom:

> There is Uncle Tom... I mean Uncle Thomas Wooly-Head. With old white matted mane... Old Tom, let the white man hump his Ole' mama, and he 'jes' shuffle off in the woods and hide his gentile grey head... you're afraid of white people. And your father was Uncle Tom Big lip! (Dutchman, pp.32-33)

Clay drags her to her seat and slaps her "as hard as he can, across the mouth. Lula's head bangs against the back of the seat when she raises it again, Clay slaps her again" (Dutchman, p.33). And with this act of violence, Clay asserts himself; and his real self comes to the surface. He had escaped into the white world and wrapped himself in it, but he could not escape the rage that eventually burns through him and defines his blackness. In a fit of rage, he says:

> Shit, you don't have any sense, Lula, nor feelings either. I could murder you now. Such a tiny ugly throat. I could squeeze it flat, and watch you turn blue, on a humble. For dull kicks. And all these weak faced Ofays squatting around here, staring over their papers at me. Murder them too. (Dutchman, p.33)
Here, with all his prefabricated, protective masks of white philosophy, white religion, white language stripped away, Clay faces the blackman's dilemma. Turning explosive and aggressive, Clay finishes his speech by rejecting the Whiteman's value system and refuses to murder because "it takes no effort. To kill you idiots" (Dutchman, p.33). Clay comes to his real black self determined to wreck the entire white Establishment. Even though Clay tries to bow out, to be "safe with my words, and no death," Lula cannot let him be. Even though passive, he is now a threat and thus Lula kills him in a bloody ritual with the collaboration of the passengers in the subway: "Get this man off me, open the door and throw body out. And all of you get off at the next stop" (Dutchman, p.37).

A victim of the internal and external forces, a weak conformist, a fallen Adam guilty of the sin of assimilation into the white culture, Clay is an anti-hero. He is a black-Messiah who brings the message of darkness - the message of violence and bloodshed. Adam was expelled from Paradise for a sin which led to his sexual shame and humiliation - "sin" that proved the cause of his spiritual and moral death. Clay's acceptance of white values is a similar sin and he must suffer because of his assimilation. However, his is not a "fortunate fall" like the fall of Adam and Eve; it is a fall leading to disgrace, humiliation, murder and bloodshed. Anyway, Clay's choice to get himself murdered ritualistically by Lula has great dramatic significance; he will not be resurrected, but he is symbolically reborn in the young Blackman, who enters the subway car at the end of the play and who will have to undergo the same blood ritual as Clay did.
Clay transcends the domain of an ordinary black victim and assumes the form of Black Messiah for the Black world, inspiring all the blacks to burn and destroy the White Establishment with all force. He is not to preach the perennial values of love, justice, tolerance, tenderness, humility and mercy but to inspire hatred, contempt, violence, and all forms of perversion. Obviously Clay's heroism is anti-heroic - the inversion of all value judgements upheld by the traditional heroes. Poked and prodded by Lula, Clay "strips down to his true self; he stops being nice, well-spoken, reasonable, and assumes his full Negro identity; that is, he announced the homicidal rage toward whites that Negroes bear in their hearts, whether they act on it or not."

Like Richard Henry, Clay is also trapped by demonic forces. The kind of Black Messiah which Clay is to become will have to be in accord with the perverted values of the society which Lula represents. Lula represents evil forces and Clay will have to expose Lula's evil forces, not in a spirit to evolve new institutions but in a fervour to wreck the white aesthetics. The world of Clay as a Black Messiah is not going to be a paradise, but a hell where the destructive forces will have free play. In the words of Craig Werner:

Baraka's protagonist Clay is a doomed Adam, an underground dutchman fated to fly from self-destruction to self-destruction. Immobilized by his awareness of his own complexity, he overlooks the simple social conflict which kills him. Clay assumes a place in a distinguished file of black underground men, all of whom march in a column led by Fyodor Dostoevsky's original.
It is interesting to note that certain critics have treated Clay as a tragic hero of sorts. For instance, Kimberly W. Benston observes:

The murder of Clay seems to be just such a ritual victimization, and the nemesis of sacrifice recognizable in his fate is a tragic motif. His is a tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge, and the tragic glass through which we view his catastrophe is an ironic perspective, in which the hero is in a lower state of awareness and freedom than the audience.28

But to consider Clay as a tragic protagonist is to misunderstand LeRoi Jones who never wanted to make his hero a tragic figure. Clay's murder is a simple case of racial hatred. The protagonist never acquires a moral stature after his murder, nor does he get awareness: he simply discovers his lost black identity. A victim of his own sin of assimilation, he does not struggle with any mysterious force. His explosive speech at the end reveals his own identification with the white forces which must destroy him. In his murder, there is no glory, no grandeur, and no destruction of the evil forces. Rather Clay himself is caught by the evil forces and destroyed. The theme of the play is racial confrontation between the black and the white; there is nothing metaphysical about it. In short, Clay is an anti-hero - a trapped protagonist, violent and destructive. One could conclude with C.W.E. Bigsby:

For the Negro the danger of assimilation has already been made clear in Clay's death. Yet for all his passive conformity he had demonstrated a potential which represents Jones' own simplified solution. This potential exists as the threat of violence. For Clay could have been the violent messiah come to redeem his people not with the message of love but with the sword.29
In *The Slave* (1964), Le Roi Jones presents Walker Vessels as a rebel-hero determined to blow up the entire white race with bombs. The play is set in a time of radical warfare. It was presented at St. Marks Playhouse, New York, in December, 1964 and evoked heated controversy among critics and reviewers. Harold Clurman declared: "*Dutchman* was an angry play; *The Toilet* and *The Slave* are rabid. They are full of the rage which precedes, anger for anger has a definite form and a clear objective; rage only smolders and explodes." The critics were provoked by the murderous, violent black rebellion of the protagonist who wages a war on the white society. George Dennison found the role of the protagonist provocative, exciting, sensational and offensive: "I would like to identify the slave as part of the rot of America, particularly the racist rot that flickers back and north, north and south, east and west. I myself found *The Slave* something more than offensive."

In fact, Walker Vessels is an intriguing protagonist, almost enigmatic because he emerges in the play as a hedonistic individualist who would destroy all the loves in order to hide from himself his essential nothingness. He is an anti-hero in that he himself does not know what he is doing. As Louis Phillips argues, "Walker and his followers . . . are still enslaved by certain ideas and forces they do not understand." If we explore the complexity of Walker's violent struggle, there emerge two souls of his split identities - the identity of his poetic and intellectual idealism and the identity of destructive rebel-hero. Indeed, the real identity of the anti-hero emerges only after the
two disparate identities are harmonized. Only by exploring the schism in Walker's disordered and split personality, we can fully comprehend the real nature of this protagonist.

The main action of the play is preceded by a prologue in which Walker, "dressed as an old field slave, balding, with white hair and an old ragged vest," awakens to a child's cry and then delivers a speech:

> Whatever the core of our lives, whatever the deceit.
> We live where we are, and seek nothing but ourselves.
> We are liars, and we are murderers. We invent death for others. Stop their pulses publicly.

Obviously, LeRoi Jones is alluding to the futility of Walker's confrontation which is going to take him nowhere. His existence as a rebel-hero is ambiguous: he is a slave of historical forces as well as of his personal poetic and intellectual idealism. There is a remarkable split in Walker's personality - the split between outer and inner self, between the historical pressures and his private selfish passions. It is this disorderly split which eventually makes him anti-heroic.

Walker is a "tall, thin, forty-year-old Negro" who has left his career as an academcian, intellectual and poet and become a leader of the national black rebellion. He has returned to the home of his former white-wife, Grace, and her husband, Bradford Easley, a University professor who was once Walker's teacher. Now, with his troops bombarding the city, Walker has come to their apartment to rescue his "mulatto daughter." What made Walker to assume the role of a violent rebellion is the failure of Easley's
liberalism: "You never did anything concrete to avoid what's going on now. Your sick liberal lip-service to whatever was the least filth. Your aesthetic disapproval of the political. Letting the ghosts of the thirties strangle whatever chance we had" (Slave, p.74).

This virile condemnation of Walker is an expression of his own guilt for he himself had once believed in the efficacy and significance of liberal humanism, but its complete irrelevance to the practical world had made him a violent rebel-hero. And he insists: "But you all accuse me, not understanding that what you represent, you, my wife, all our old intellectual cut-throats, was something that was going to die anyway. One way or another. You'd been used too often, backed off from reality too many times" (Slave, p.75). This dissociation from reality has led Walker into despair and frustration. He is caught in his own trap - a black intellectual jammed between his Western education and his people's call to arms. Walker is a victim who has become culturally, emotionally and sexually entangled in the tastes and standards of the white world in which he has been educated.

Grace and Easley easily identify his tormented state and they deride him as a "racist nigger murderer." Grace recognizes him as a "lost self": "There are so many bulbs and screams shooting off inside you, Walker. So many lies you have to pump full of yourself . . . I don't even think you know who you are any more. No, I don't think you ever knew" (Slave, p.76).

Walker is experiencing a conflict in his soul: his old
passionate involvement with Grace and his present rebellion disintegrate his personality. "He has had the strength of intellect and will to undertake a revolution, but the vestiges of passion and sensitivity that once made him love Grace still threaten his ability to lead an army steadfastly." Walker has come in Easley's house of ideals to exorcise the ghosts of "luxury." The house has also emotional weight for Walker as he still feels some fondness for Grace. Walker is confronted with a predicament to balance his intellectual and emotional pulls which ultimately distort his personality. He uses Othello as an analogue to the relationship among himself, Grace and Easley: he is Othello, maddened by the words of Easley in the role of Iago; Grace, of course, becomes Desdemona. Like a true anti-hero, Walker acts other's roles and destroys the possibility of achieving an integrated self in the tradition of heroism. Instead, he loses his self as Grace comments on Walker's fragmented selves:

... You're split so many ways ... Your feelings are cut up into skinny horrible strips ... like umbrella struts ... holding up whatever bizarre black cloth You're using this performance as your self's image.

(Slave, p. 61)

Grace is certain that Walker was driven by a need for some false "heroism," a selfish passion that finally led him to an insane search for power: "I had enough of your twisted logic in my day ... you remember? I mean like your heroism. The same kind of memory. Or lie. Do you remember which? Huh?" (Slave, p. 49). Easley and Grace characterize Walker as "crazy ego-maniac,"
an "arrogant maniac," one whose "mind is gone." To Easley, the whole radical stand of Walker is nothing but a "wild butchery of scape-goats," under the false illusion that it is sacrifice for the eradication of evil. In other words, to both Grace and Easley, the present radical movement launched by Walker is an inhuman sin against humanity, an anti-heroic act of malevolent bloodshed leading to nothingness. "Walker's crazy roles, his empty ideology, and murderous revolt have a dual perspective. Grace and Easley see them as destructive egotism." Grace exposes Walker's pretentious egotism and his "mad" illusion to renovate humanity by violence:

Isn't there any way something can exist without you having the final judgement on it? Is the whole world yours . . . to deal with or destroy? You're right! You feel! You have the only real vision of the world. You love! No one exists in the world except you, and those who can help you . . .

* (Slave, p.67)

Walker's anti-heroic dilemma is epitomized in Grace's attack on his egotism. Being the leader of the black rebellion, he knows that another tyranny will result after the violent rebellion - a tyranny more complex and more terrible. It is not going to bring an era of love and beauty, peace and bliss in the American world. His rebellion is only an expression of his selfish ambitions and a mad attempt to capture power: "The point is that you had your chance, darling, now these other folks have theirs" (Slave, p.73). Indeed, despite persistent talk of revolution, Walker's rebellion lacks any social vision beyond
that of a change in the complexion of tyranny. Instead of developing a consistent political concept of Black liberation, as Marx did, Walker follows the impulses of his love-hate relationship. It is this inconsistency in his "heroism" that reduces him to a schizoid "egomaniac" and his political potential to "a nihilistic form of action-for-action's sake." Therefore, to Grace and Easley, "bad nigger" is an expression that describes Walker's bestial violence and insane logic which threaten their own idea of order. Of course, for the Black world, Walker is a promethean black hero, the symbol of freedom through his murder of the white world. Thus when Prof. Easley tries to attack Walker, the latter shoots him and tells him to "just die quietly."

No profound statements, Easley. No horseshit like that. No elegance. You just die quietly and stupidly like niggers do. Like they are now... 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.

(Slave, p.80)

It is indeed a victory of Walker but not his redemption. "The irony is that although he is the Victor, he is at once the enslaved at the end of the play. He no longer has a capacity for love and compassion, he had gone from disaffection to specific rage against a social order to undifferentiated hate for all white people." The self-divided Walker, compelled forward by blackness and chained forever to white ideas, passes with time. He fails to renovate the society and his personal guilt; his sacrifice goes waste and he remains an enigma till the end.
The Slave "posits an unresolvable dilemma dramatized with a sentimental theatricality. It is unresolvable not because of a complicated dramatic collision but because of contradictions within the protagonist." 38

Not only in LeRoi Jones but also in all the black playwrights, we have destructive rebel-hero, nihilistic and anarchist - an anti-hero protagonist corresponding to the "black aesthetic."
The contemporary playwrights like Ed Bullins, Ronald Milner, Jimmy Garret have created such anti-heroic protagonists to propagate and transform the traditional white values of love and compassion into hatred and violence. Instead of putting faith in the Christian God, they act on the principle that there is no God, no purpose, no higher world beyond. They denounce and deride love and exult in sexual perversion, rapes and homosexuality. These protagonists believe in ego-maniac individualism and hate all that is "white" - morality, culture, values, norms and religion. Jimmy Garret ridicules the white values in his play And We Own The Night:

MOTHER: You see, Johnny. He's got no heart. He's got no love.
LIL' T: Love! Love! Everybody knows that love ain't enough for the white man. He don't understand love. You got to kill him. . . .
MOTHER: Jesus said love those who are spiteful. . . .
LIL' T: Strokin' his rod, Cleanin' his shit. . . .
MOTHER: Forgive those who do harm. . . .
LIL' T: Blowin' up black children in churches. . . . Beatin' pregnant women. . . .
Thus in all the contemporary Black theatre, the rebel-hero is anti-heroic as he represents a destructive force devoid of any milk of human kindness, love, affection, humility, sacrifice, mercy, clemency. His quest of black identity reveals cultural crisis, and his inevitable confrontation with the white world eventually propagates hatred, violence and racial malice. These rebel heroes are in no way messiahs but the victims of racial neurosis—trapped and morbid personalities, hedonistic and nihilistic, destroyers of virtues and values which have been the pillars of human civilization. The emergence of this neo-heroism, diametrically antithetical to the traditional characterological stances, was, as it were, the climax of the post-War antiheroic protagonism in the American drama.
Notes


7 "Blues for Mr. Baldwin," *National Review*, 7 (July 1972), 750.

8 James Baldwin, *Blues for Mr. Charlie* (New York: Dial Press, 1964), p.13. All subsequent page numbers refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text, the title-abbreviation being Blues.


12 "Notes For Blues," *Blues for Mr. Charlie*, p.xv.


15 Jimmy Garret, *And We Don The Night*, in *The Drama Review*, 12, No.4 (Summer 1968), 58.


21 LeRoi Jones, Dutchman and the Slave (New York: William Morrow, 1964), p.4. All subsequent references are from this edition and are incorporated in the text.

22 "LeRoi Jones' Dutchman: A Reading," Contemporary Literature, 12, No.1 (Winter 1971), 45.


26 Susan Sontag, "Going to the Theatre etc.," Partisan Review, 31 (Summer 1964), 392.


31 "The Demagogy of LeRoi Jones," Commentary, 39, No. 2 (February 1965), 68.
34 Kimberly W. Benston, Baraka: The Renegade and the Mask, p. 178.
38 Werner Sollors, Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones: The Quest for a Populist Modernism, p. 137.
39 And We Own the Night, p. 67.