CHAPTER - III

LEROI JONES
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1960s witnessed black literary blasts. It not only reflected the expression of a new mood but also poured revolutionary lava in the black art in general and Black theatre in particular. The Black theatre entered in the Second Black Renaissance with all its changed attitudes and motives. The theatre of this period was almost against the spirit and temperament of the traditional Black theatre. “The theatre from 1920s to 1959” as Dosris Abramson remarks, was concerned with the individual Negro’s problem of being assimilated into or revolting against the dominant white society.1

In the 1960s, Black experience was replaced by Black anger. It exhibited the mood of protest of the black community. The feeling of rage, resulting from the disillusionment of the hopes and the dreams of the black community, exploded like a volcano. The time had come to warn the whites of their responsibilities. The political leaders and original theoreticians of the Black Power Movement laid the foundation for the creation of a new black value system based on the rejection of all white American social, economic, political and artistic norms. The need to unify literature and theatre, for the creation of Black literary and artistic values, was realized on a broad scale.

The theatre of the African Americans after 1960s is variously known as the ‘Theatre of Revolt’, ‘the Revolutionary Theatre’ and ‘the Militant Theatre’. These terms have a common source of origin; change, a
complete change in aesthetic and artistic values, in symbolism, in mythology, critique and iconology. The black playwrights have realized that in order to retain the identity of the blacks they will have to eraze the white marks on their black psyche. Both, ‘the Theatre of Experience’ and ‘The Theatre of Revolt’ reveal the hope of liberation but in a different way. The way to liberation, as black revolutionary playwrights and thinkers believe, would be bloodless revolution. Maulana Ron Karenga, in his manifesto, The Quotable Karenga, clarifies the idea of revolution which consists of the war to bring about the collapse of the existing social and economic system in the U.S. He chooses to explain revolution in terms of theatre. It is quite clear that there can be no Black theatre without Black Nationalism and political ideology. In the ‘Theatre of the Revolt’, the platform turns into a battlefield, words into bullets and black artists into revolutionaries, prepared for the creation of their utopian world - ‘The Black America’. The empty space of the theatre transfers into a black cosmos which is the only place for the black playwrights to hold the white man responsible for their own deeds. Genevieve Fabre remarks “... the desparate longing for justice turns protagonists into judges, theatres into courtrooms ... Sentence is to be rendered without chance for appeal”.

This change of mood is strongly marked with the new way of presentation of the themes. Ed Bullins, a renowned black playwright, very significantly comments that the revolutionary nature of this theatre is not of style and technique but of theme and character.
The Militant theatre developed when riots were breaking out in many cities. It sends out a battle cry against white America. The protagonist of this theatre is now no more poor Uncle Tom or a ridiculous puppet, but a revolutionary, armed with weapons; set out for the destruction of the white structure. The Militant Theatre has a double purpose: to dismantle the white structure and to make the blacks aware of their dark power. Antonin Artaud observes that

"the action of theatre, like that of plague is beneficial, for impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the masks to fall, reveal the lie, the slackness, the baseness and hypocrisy of our world; revealing to collectives of men their dark power; their hidden force, it invites them to take in the face of destiny a superior and heroic attitude they would never have assumed without it". 3

In examining the struggle of the blacks, Militant Theatre not only intensifies the conditions of victims but also shows the possibilities of change. It represents the tension between the two races. This theatre holds white man responsible for the misfortunes of the black community and puts him on trial. It is revolutionary in a sense that it attempts to show blacks as protagonists, victims whereas whites as the antagonists, oppressors and major hostile forces destructive to black aspirations.

LeRoi Jones emerges as the most explosive, the most militant, the most controversial black literary lion on the African American socio-political literary scene. The more he attacked white society, the more white
society patronized him. For Jones, stage is not a platform for discussion, argument or propaganda but a “whipping post”. It is primarily didactic, geared towards arousing black people to take aggressive action to change the state of their existence in the United States. Jones has been typified as ‘the angry young man’ like John Osborne’s Jimmy Porter in Look Back In Anger. While reading his plays, it seems that LeRoi is solely interested in shocking the White man. Peter Brooks, a well-known director believes that the purpose of theatre is to disturb. LeRoi Jones certainly fulfills this dictum in his plays. His range of volume and stunning quality of his writing have made him an impressive and fascinating literary figure. His theoretical essays, poetry, prose, and plays are interrelated and project the sense that the organic unity of an individual and community has been lost. His writings are strongly influenced by Hegel, Hughes, Eliot, Toomer, O’Neill, Genet and Maulana Ron Karenga. His novels, political essays, stories, plays, poetry have placed him in the position of a teacher, an artist, a politician and a prophet.

Two major episodes which influenced Jones’ perception are, his trip to Cuba in 1960 and the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965. In July 1960, Jones accompanied several black intellectuals and activists to Cuba and discovered there a profound political rebellion successfully achieved by force of arms. Jones says that when he came back from Cuba he was turned completely around; he was never the same.

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LeRoi Jones' art is moulded by his perception of the Western and the Eastern world. According to his view, the West is dying and no man of soul wants to be identified with that death. He wants a divorce from the Western mode of living and thinking including his Western Christian name 'LeRoi Jones'. He has adopted the Pan-African Islamic title 'Imamu Amiri Baraka' to subvert the cultural hegemony of the Western world. In order to create a new awareness of the black race, he has insisted on theatre that seeks new forms, new intensity and a new language. In 1965, LeRoi Jones very clearly defined the role of black artist in America:

"His role is to report and reflect so precisely the nature of the society and of himself of that society, that other men will be moved by the exactness of his rendering and if they are black men, grow strong through this moving, having seen their own strength, and weakness, and if they are white men tremble, curse and go mad, because they will be drenched with the filth of their evil. The black Artist must draw out of his soul the correct image of the world. He must use his image to band his brothers and sisters together in common understanding of the nature of the world (and the nature of America) and the nature of the human soul.

The black artist must demonstrate sweet life, how it differs from the deathly grip of the white eyes. The black artist must teach the white eyes their deaths and teach the black man how to bring these deaths about."

Jones is speaking for all militant blacks who wish to bring about a revolution in America, for all those who are concerned with the
idea of liberation. Revolutionary theatre, which fulfils his demands, has a specific purpose. Defining the function of this theatre he says: “It must cleanse black audiences of their ugliness. It must force them to see their beauty, the strength in their mind and in their bodies. It must take dreams and give them a reality. It will show what the world is and what it should be”.

For LeRoi Jones, Revolutionary theatre is a necessity. It is a truth which would bring for the blacks a sense of realization of their own self. It is, therefore, a community-based theatre totally in tune with the people. It is as organic a part of community as anything else.

LeRoi Jones, as a playwright and as a political thinker, is well aware of the capacities theatre holds and its convincing effects. Therefore, he appealed black poets to try their hand in playwrighting to describe the need for Black Unity and Self-Determination. In an article “Black Revolutionary Poets Should be Also Playwrights” he says: “Plays reach our people better than literature or books. These plays cd [sic.] have songs, dances, poetry together or have the content through any one of these”.

LeRoi Jones, as a theorist, emphasizes on “high art” which must be free from slavish attachment to a social order or implicitly, to political ideology. According to LeRoi Jones, the Negro writer should utilize the entire spectrum of American experience from the point of view of the emotional history of the black man in America: as it’s victim and it’s
chronicler. The Negro writer, therefore, should create works which affirm the value of separation and condemn the decadence, hypocrisy and violence of American artistic and social institutions. LeRoi Jones envisions through art Black Nationalism wherein Black culture and Black power are necessarily fused concepts. His works echo the words of Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon that "the purpose of our writing is to create a nation". He places art to an uncompromising position saying that "Art without Nationalism is not Black".

Revolutionary theatre, therefore, must be ultimately anti-Western and an extension of the national spirit. In his manifesto, LeRoi Jones clarifies the nature of Black art. He says:

"The Art is the National Spirit. That manifestation of it. Black Art must be the Nationalist’s vision given more form and feeling, as a razor to cut away what is not central to National Liberation. To show that which is. As a humanistic expression Black Art is a raiser, as a spiritual expression it is itself raised. And these are the poles, out of which we create, to raise, or as raised."

The idea of black nation has made Black theatre 'The Theatre of Protest'. In Jones' work the image of the devil enemy appears in the shape of bums, policemen, immigrants, homosexuals and women. He is so violent in his plays that some critics find his speech shower of stones and his diction naked with no shadows, no ambiguity. In 1965, Baraka wrote to the Amsterdam News:
"If my words seem full of hate, they are. For too long we have been instructed to Love Our Enemies. But I will love them only when they are safe in Hell where they belong. Until then, the only thing that will flow from my pen, or give me any peace at all will be a violent uncontrollable hatred for the white man and his hellish vision of the world".12

LeRoi Jones himself accepts that he is bitter about a lot of things. In an interview he says; “I’m trying to work with complications of feelings, love and hate at the same time.... What I’m after is clarity: if it sounds like anger may be that’s good in a sense”.13

LeRoi Jones believes that his plays reflect the fact that he is a black man, and a sensitive black man who is trying to make his own people realize that what they are doing is aligning themselves with something that is destined to die. LeRoi Jones’s strong commitment to his people emerges from his own conception of art which is supposed to be integrated into society. He strongly supports Ron Karenga’s statement that Black Art must be ‘functional’, ‘collective’ and ‘committing’. Moreover, it should be providing consciousness. It is quite clear that Jones is talking about theatre that is part of a New Black system. He holds Black theatre an extension of the Black Nation that practices Black value system. It is an economic institution, a political institution a creative institution, and a religious institution. It is a place where social organization can be taught. Defining its role, Jones declared :”The theatre must be an institution for bringing change...Black theatre must be a school for teaching high morality, for
inspiring Black people to move for Self-Determination, Self-Respect and Self-Defense".14

In 1965, Jones went to Harlem to conduct the Black Arts Repertory theatre/school (BART), a well known performing organization with a nationalistic outlook. He called his participation in BART the “true move to Home and Light”.15

LeRoi Jones’ theory of art and aesthetics is ultimately utilitarian and moved by a particular political and moral orientation toward the world. The Revolutionary theatre is a political theatre, a weapon against what is unnatural and mad. Its impulse is violent and its vision apocalyptic. He says:

“What we show must cause the blood to rush, so that pre-revolutionary temparaments 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 tought, we will scream and cry, murder, run through the streets in agony, if it means some souls will be moved, moved to actual life understanding of what the world is, and what it ought to be. we are preaching virtue and feeling, and a natural sense of the self in the world. All men line in the world, and the world ought to be a place for them to live”.16

Jones’ passion for causing the blood to rush projects his devotion to art. Thus, for Jones, Black theatre is a stance, an attitude.

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As a playwright, Jones has always been a restless experimenter. His major plays are *The Baptism, The Black Mass, Experimental Death Unit #1, Great Goodness of Life (A Coon Snow), Madheart Police, A Recent Killing.* His plays record a search for meaning and a progression of consciousness which derive from his perception of racial conflict in American life. His works present an essential play between an action and it’s perspective, between the present and the history and foreseen time, between the feeling of loss and recognition of oneself. He considers drama a platform for experimentaion and fuses rituals, history, cinematic technique, music with great variety to heighten the theatrical effect.

*Dutchman* is Jones’ most intensely analysed and highly praised play. With the successful production of *Dutchman* at the Cherry Lane Theatre on March 24, 1964, he became the fierce and blazing talent. It is with this play he got international recognition and came to be known as one of Americas angrier young men. *Dutchman* won the Obie Award for 1963-64. David Littlejohn describes this play as “the most important imaginative literary document of the American race war since *Native Son*”.17 No other play of the new Black theatre, possibly of the whole American drama of the last twenty years, has been more widely discussed than *Dutchman.* It is a two-scene, two-character play which deals with the survival of the black man in America. It is a play of powerful dimension and chilling experience. Werner Sollors considers this play “a continuation of *The Eight’s Ditch* and *The Toilet*” and”a social drama of lyrical introspection”.18
The story of Dutchman is brutal and assertive. It is a dramatic encounter between Clay, a twenty-year-old middle class respectable Negro who is murdered cruelly by a thirty-year-old white Bohemian woman, Lula, on a New York subway. Baraka employs realistic and absurdist drama techniques in his setting. "In the flying underbelly of the city. Steaming hot and summer on top, outside. Underground subway heaped in the modern myth". The subway train connotes a complex reality. It is a symbol of actual events which mirrors the violence of the modern city. Moreover, it represents a more elusive inner psychic reality.

The underground train of the play also has mythical implications. Baraka converts the legend of the flying Dutchman into a modern myth. There is a similarity between the legendry ship and Baraka's train. It is quite significant with profound implications that the train never emerges from its darkness.

Hugh Nelson interprets the subway as the flying Dutchman ship and casts Lula as captain and the other passengers as crew. Sherley Williams has suggested that white Lula is linked to a ghost ship in Dutchman. The title of the play is equally significant against the background of the slave trade, for it was a Dutchman who brought the first slaves to North America. Lloyd Brown remarks that:

"the underground setting recalls the holds of the slave ships, and this image is reinforced by the title itself: the first American slaves were reportedly brought to the New World by Dutch
slave traders. The image of slavery is further reinforced by the possibility that the underground setting refers to the famous ‘underground railway’ which assisted runaway slaves on their way from the South to the North. The Dutch reference may also be linked with the legend of the Flying Dutchman, the story of a ship doomed to sail the seas forever without hope of gaining land. This ship is also supposed to be a slave-trading vessel”.

By choosing the underground setting Baraka wants to see the truth beneath the surface of the conventional, social and racial relations. The train gives the audience a sense of speed and pace which henceafter becomes synonymous with the speed of the killings of the blacks in the United States.

Defining the role of the setting as a realistic presentation of American life, Hugh Nelson comments: “As the ‘underbelly’ of the city, it is a place of darkness and potential danger, lonely, beyond recourse, crowded with humanity but massively impersonal.... Subway, like doomed ship, seems to operate either senselessly or according to some diabolical plan”.

The train in ‘Dutchman’ moves with tremendous bursts of energy. With the speed of the train, the tension of the play also accelerates. LeRoi Jones’s theatrical instructions like “dim lights and darkness whistling by against the glass. (Or paste the lights as admitted props, right on the subway windows. Have them move, even dim and flicker. But give the sense of speed....)”(p.3) bring out his strong passion for cinematic
techniques. Actually it seems while reading the play that Jones wants to create a film within a procinium arch. When the play opens only Clays’s seat is visible. The train stops. Clay sees a woman’s face staring at him through the window. A long look is exchanged between Lula, who is outside the car and Clay, who is inside it. The woman’s face takes visual possession of the man by staring at him. Lula smiles at Clay and it is he who feels self-conscious and breaks the eye contact. It is very significant to note here that LeRoi Jones has mentioned Lula with a pronoun ‘it’. By doing this, he wants to reduce Lula to a lifeless thing, an inhuman talking body, “When ‘it’ realizes that the man has noticed the face; ‘it’ begins very premeditatedly to smile” (p.4). LeRoi Jones places Lula as a mechanical puppet rather than a person. On the contrary, Clay’s response to Lula is instinctive. LeRoi Jones has designed all these incidences in a dumb show which again is a powerful theatre technique. A dumb show prepares the mind of the reader about what could happen in future.

Werner Sollors marks the significance of the first sequence. He says: “As the black writer stares through a glass darkly, he sees a white woman with sunglasses who becomes a witch with a knife; she is a deadly metallic enclosure, Baraka’s familiar “shell”.22

Lula enters in the car with a purpose and occupies the seat beside Clay who is chosen by her as probable victim. 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. Using the stereotypical images whites have about black sexuality, her games reveal the stratagems America use to entrap blacks: flattery, seduction, degradation and castration.

In Lula’s flirtation with Clay, we see symbolic treatment of the spiritual and moral bankruptcy of the dominant culture. She seeks no real attachment with Clay because she is incapable of the demands of such a relationship. She wants a quick affair. Lula is clearly in control of the situation from the beginning. She assumes the right to determine how Clay will behave.

Lula and Clay play a game of surface communication, exchanging ritual insults, sexual ‘innuendo’. Language serves as a tool for domination. Lula is a white victor-woman who imposes her values on her black male Victim. She represents White-America that abides Negro America whereas Clay represents Negro-America that wears a mask of respectability and non-violence, a schizoid Negro America that tries on one hand to accept America on white terms and on the other hand to accept its own identity. Lula, from the beginning is an aggressor. Her character has mythical dimensions. She is considered as an archetype of a white witch. She also evokes the association with furies, witches and vampires.

Lula is, like Crow Jane, an emasculating luller. She lulls the young black protagonist from truth. Like her namesakes, Lilith, daughter of Satan and Lulu of Wedekind she is primarily a seductress.
Lula is also a modern Eve who enters eating an apple in a role of a temptress searching for the victims. She is holding a basket full of apples which she will use to lure her victims and pull them into a death trap.

Sherley William rightly observes: “Clay’s acceptance of the apple is, presumably, the first step in his “quest” for carnal knowledge of her or at least submission to the idea of knowing her”.23

Clay is a bourgeois Negro who embraces those social structures or traditions which have oppressed Black people. Clay’s every act is designed to distance him from the reality of the black existence in America.

Lula teases Clay about compromising himself in order to get along in the white society. Lula, like America, does not know Nigro except as a type.

In college he never thought of himself as Baudelaire. Never did he think of himself as a black nigger. Lula makes him sneer at his name, his parents, their dreams and their past. She demonstrates her unpredictable nature by abruptly taking hold of his jacket and shouting: “Boy, those narrow shoulder cloths come from a tradition. You ought to feel oppressed by. A three button suit and stripped tie? Your grand father was a slave, he didn’t go to Harvard”. (p.18).
Lula also insists that Clay can not be free from his history and the heritage of oppression. Lula's flirtatious talk turns into bitterness, mocked and humiliation of the blacks in general and Clay in particular. She weaves an alluring tale of a 'sophisticated' affair, creating for both of them a new history. Lula takes him in total control of herself. Lula's verbal attacks upon Clay's sexuality, racial insults, middle class background and supposedly half-white manners all are ultimately concerned with his manhood, his essential identity which provokes Clay to struggle.

He can not resist the insults and finally answers back. He slaps Lula across the mouth as hard as he can and forces her to her seat which create tremendous dramatic impact. At this point, the latent manhood in the Negro is aroused. Clay launches into a long and obscene rage against Lula and against all whites who profess to understand the Negro. In control for the first time, he expoldes into emotion realizing speech and attempts to put-forth a new powerful identity.

"Clay : You great liberated whore! You fuck some black man, and right away you are an expert on black people.... Let me be who I feel like being. Uncle Tom Thomas. Whoever its none of your business." (p.34). Clay's speech reaffirms the tradition of black culture. Lula's dance is mocked as a gray imitation of true black vitality.

She says to Clay, "You aren't nigger, you are just a dirty white man". (p.31). Lula taunts Clay by claiming to know more about blacks than he does. In a very insulting manner she invites him to the dance.
Lula insults not only Clay but the black community and the black traditions and black art forms like ‘Belly Rub’ and ‘Blues’.

Earlier in the play, Clay gives an account of the genesis of the Blues which holds the art form to be a product of lazy tranquility. Now he discovers a truer motive for the blues. He affirms his belief in the blues people and challenges whites to understand the message transmitted through the music.

Clay describes how for centuries black rage has either been repressed or deflected into the musical expression of a Bessie Smith or a Charlie Parker.

For the first time Clay makes an attempt to liberate himself from the evil spell of Lula. The sense of revolt springs form the fact that Lula humiliates the whole Black value system. Clay realizes that only words and poetic imagination can’t liberate him from the white network. His creativity and identity can survive only when he involves in action. He realizes from within that he should use his words blades.

Clay’s words are often cited as an act of political liberation and a dangerous advocacy of violence. As a political vehicle Clay’s long monologue concerning race relations, black victimization and the imperative recognition of this reality functions as an emotional appeal to the black. Werner Sollors remarks that “While it is true that Clay becomes, at this
point in *Dutchman*, a Black nationalist spokesman who rejects his middle class background to affirm a restoration of sanity for the wretched of the earth, he articulates, at the same time, what Lula asked of him. He fulfills Lula’s and Baraka’s conception of dadaism as established by Baraka in ‘Black Dada Nihilismus’ and paraphrased by Lula’s demand for a ‘dada man’.”

Clay’s address is often cited as the pumping Black heart of the New Black Aesthetic and of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s.

Werner Sollors places Clay’s speech in the tradition of Richard Wright’s *Native son*. He observes that Clay sees art as a neurotic perversion of violence and violence as the only act which would restore the Black man’s sanity. Clay warns Lula not to teach the black man the ways of the white man, not to talk too much about the advantages of western rationalism or the great intellectual legacy of the white man.

Lula interrupts Clay only once during his long outburst, to call him a “fool”. She knows his action will cost him his life and in this sense her reaction is correct. In his speech, Clay discovers his revolutionary, deeply spiritual self.

Clay’s speech just before the murder becomes an act and a prophecy of rising Black Consciousness. It marks his transition from innocence to awareness.
Clay: My people, they don’t need me to claim them. They got legs and arms of their own.... They will murder you, and have very rational explanations very much like you own.” (p.36).

If Lula knows how to raise Clay’s consciousness, she also has power to stop its flow. She can easily initiate him to talk and with the same ease she can reduce him to a dead silence.

Having heard enough, Lula’s voice, takes a different, more businesslike quality. She calmly stabs Clay as he reaches across her to retrieve his belongings. She orders the other passengers to open the door, throw Clay’s body off the train. The passengers throw Clays’s body from the train. Lula composes herself, “takes out a notebook and makes a quick scribbling note”. (p.37). The train stops and the others leave. Another young Negro enters and sits near Lula. She turns and gives him a long slow look’. An old Negro conductors enters the car, does a soft shoe dance and mumbles a song, greets the young brother, tips his hat to the lady, and departs.

The last scene of the play indicates that the victimization of the blacks in America is still continued. It will go on till blacks take a sound and militant move. Lula represents white American structure which stains creative black brain programmatically and keeps a record of it in a notebook.

Donald P. Costello considers Clay’s murder a ritual and says: “In a ritual act, with the collaboration of the rest of the congregation in the
subway, whitey kills the black man as indeed whitey has been doing all along. The black man who refuses to murder, is himself murdered.”26 Clay falls easily to Lula’s knife because he admires her whiteness. Lawrence Neal calls this play “a ritual murder, standing for the collective murder and castration of Black manhood.”27

There is a shadowy ritual of sacrifice in which Lula is a devouring demon and Clay the innocent prey. Seen from Lula’s animalistic point of view, Clay is a scape-goat who is selected for ordeal and death in order to strengthen Lula and her society. The ending of the play demonstrates that Lula’s desire for Clay was not for him, an object of love but as an object of racism.

In an interview with Bigsby, Jones says that “Dutchman just came flowing out, the line is defensive but still positive, in the sense of what Clay says to Lula about not wanting to be suffocated under the whole American white oppression. But at the same time he gets killed-he is still a victim in that sense.”28

LeRoi Jones wants to project the fact that it is not only Lula, the symbol of an American killer, who is responsible for Clay’s murder but Clay’s own consciousness is equally at fault. It is the ingrained black psyche that allows Lula to kill Clay.

It may be said that Dutchman is an encounter between Clay, a sensitive, creative young black man and a very seasoned, programmatically
trained killer, White woman, Lula. Clay’s murder is just an addition to Lula’s list of killings. It suggests that the murder of the black man in the white world is a casual thing that remains unnoticed.

Donald Castello remarks on the last episode saying that -

“Clay knows that it is insane to conceal his blackness, but Jones gives him only two alternatives. He can continue the insanity of living half-hidden in whitey’s world; or he can relieve his insanity by asserting his blackness through murder...Clay chooses to avoid the easy way of murder. He chooses, instead, to stay in his insanity, to deny his blackness, to deny the murder that would liberate him.”

One is reminded of Jones’ poem ‘Clay’ in which the death of Clay is connected with the success of the black middle-class sensibility.

Killed
By a white woman
On a subway
in 1964,
he rose
to be the first Negro congressman from Missouri.
We’re not saying
that being dead
is the pre
requisite
for his honour
but is certainly helped make him
what he is
today.”

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The names Clay and Lula in the play are symbolic. Lula represents the gaudy showy and yet cruel beautiful face of American culture. Clay, on the other hand, needs to be moulded in a perfect form. He has not attained the perfect black manhood. Clay’s death gets associated with the death of a creative man and creative sensibility. Jones has created Lula as an intellectual white liberal who knows everything in order to be in control. Lula ‘knows’ only what she has been taught to know. Clay, as a character, shows a black man who wants to be associated with the whites. By his dress, demeanor, and conversation, Clay is established as a clearly scrubbed decorous young black intellectual, the type of young man Jones himself, affected in his tweed wearing, intellectually and artistically oriented early village days. The dialogue are precise, poetic, with a pace, a tone that fit the narrative movement and the characterization at any given point. There is an easy alternation of the two character’s line, a natural and unforced alternation. The high point in the dialogue is Clay’s soliloquy about whites ignorance of blacks.

LeRoi Jones’s love for cinematic technique reflects throughout the play. He possesses the vision of a film maker. In his interview with C.W.E. Bigsby, LeRoi Jones accepts that the film media is vastly superior. The sequences and actions of the Dutchman reveal his cinematic vision. The whole episode of the dumb show and the speed of the train also reveals this.
It is because of this quality of the play, C.W.E. Bigsby, a critic, believes that -

“Dutchman is a reflective work. At its heart is a consideration of the artistic process, a debate over the legitimacy of sublimating social anguish into aesthetic form. It addresses itself to a central problem of the black artist who is alive to the invasion which may be implied in the act of writing”.

Clay fails in the end because his identity as a rebel is incomplete. Clay himself is a poet whose art lacks the ethnic integrity of black, and grassroots forms like the blues. His poetry is an escape from direct rebellions action. His words as poet have become a contemptible substitute for the act.

Clay’s submissive role indicates Jones’ willingness to forsake senselessness and inhumanity of mass murder. He is urging not racist militarism but awareness and acceptance of blackness and subsequent self-determination.

The cultural conflict within Clay paralyzes him and makes him inactive at the critical moments. Clay’s death, represents “the self-destructive consequences of the moral and intellectual paralysis”.

Had Clay used poetry as a weapon, he would have created a sane, triumphant and a different kind of vision.
The production of Dutchman shook the pillars of white literary as well socio-political world. Though Clay is killed in the end, his death marks the beginning of the militant moves LeRoi Jones has decided to take in his next play The Slave.

The Slave is meaningfully constructed as a "companion piece" to Dutchman. The dramatist himself underlines the complementary nature of the two works by publishing them jointly. The play opened in December 1964 at St.Mark's playhouse in New York city. It won the annual Obie Award for the best American play done off broadway and the Drama prize at the first world festival of Negro Arts held in Dekar, Senegal in the spring of 1966.

The Slave pursues racial tensions. It takes place at the moment of black revolt in America. The form of the play, is supposedly a fable in which a debate takes place. The race conflict in America is particularized through the relationship of a Black man and a white woman. The Slave takes place in the future, during a race war. It is part war and part prophecy. LeRoi Jones thinks that a war between Whites and blacks is inevitable. It is set in a white professor's home under siege off Black Revolutionary Army. In The Slave, the black man has made up his mind to pay the price. The play is fearful in its foretelling. LeRoi Jones announces what will happen and what he will do.
Walker Vessels, the leader of the black Revolutionary Army and a poet, confronts his former wife Grace, a white woman, who is the mother of his own two children and her present white husband. Easley, is the professor and Vessel’s former friend. The encounter is terrifying, hopeless and poignant. LoRoi Jones is trying to work with complications of feeling; love and hate at the same time. The clue to violence in The Slave can be found in LoRoi Jones’ own essay “what does Non-violence mean” in Home : Social Essays. After exposing the myth of non-violence, LeRoi Jones proclaims; “I advocate a violence, a literal murdering of the American socio-political stance, not only as it directly concerns American Negroes but in terms of it’s stranglehold on the most of the modern world”.

He further affirms:

“The Negro must take an extreme stance, must attack the white man’s system, using his own chains to help beat that system into submission and actual change. The Black man is the only revolutionary in American society.”

The play is subtitled as ‘A Fable in a Prologue and Two Acts’. Here the playwright is a teacher and the subtitle indicates that the play should not be considered as literal and it should be considered as an instruction. Walker, through the prologue, is actually preparing his audience for a dream, a self revealing vision that will make them feel disturbed and awakened.

The main action of the play is preceded by a prologue in which Walker is dressed as an old field slave, balding, with white hair and
an old ragged vest. He is awakens to a child's cry and then slowly starts his 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 murderer. We invent death for other. Stop their pulses publicly.... possible lovers with heavy worlds we think are ideas and we know, even before these shapes are realized, that these worlds these depths or heights we fly to smoothly, as in a dream, or slighter, when we stare dumbly into space, leaving our eyes just behind a last quick moving bird, then sometimes the place and twist of what we are will push and sting, and what the crust of our stance has become will ring in our ears and shatter that piece of our eyes that is never closed."35

The prologue deliniates the ambiguous existence of the Slave. He seems to be in search of himself. The core of his personality is as uncertain as the future of the black man in America. Jones employs the familiar symbols of Negro sterility and oppression, the archetype or stereotype of white imagination, in order to convert his image into something more positive and complex. What Walker, an old slave, deliniates are the central questions underlying any interpretation of his behaviour as a revolutionary. The prologue echoes the history of the black man from the slave tradition to the present state of the revolutionary.

Walker's ideas involve the rediscovery of a long history of militancy and resistance. His speech dissolves with an old song of blues people.
Theodore Hudson calls prologue “a parade of mental Cliches is all that blacks and whites have given themselves as a means of coming to grips with matters of race”.

By showing walker dressed as a Slave, LeRoi Jones takes us back to the beginning of the black-white relationship in order to revaluate the race implications in America. In the prologue, the universal pronoun ‘we’ has a significant role to play. “It states” says John Lindburg, “that history no longer allows private compromise but throws individuals into public roles”.

In Act I we see the same slave turning into a black revolutionary. It is quite clear that Walker is a complex figure having two souls in one. Walker is the rebel-tortured warrior and Walker-the slave-practical embodiment of history. The action of the play is essentially a conflict of these two identities. Walker himself points to his ambiguity in the prologue.

“I am much older than I look or may be much younger. Whatever I am or seem to you, then let that rest. But figure, still, that you might not be right” (p.44).

The prologue shows us Walker after he has lived through the play. In other words, the playwright has used flash-back technique. In the play, Walker, is a liar and murderer of the whites who deny him public role. “The Prologue” says Henry Lacey “is concerned with moral failure and the drastic need for a reappraisal of values”.

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The very first event on the stage sets the mood and tone of the play. A light from an explosion lightens the room. Outside the apartment and off the stage, the race war is on between blacks and whites in which Walker's side is obviously succeeding.

Easley, with his wife Grace, enters his house abusing black revolutionaries who are killing whites and blowing up cities. Enraged and upset with the race war outside, Easley turns to make a drink but freezes when he stops Walker holding a gun in his hand. He is surprised to see Walker with the gun because Walker is his former student who has left his carrier as an academic intellectual and become a leader of the National Black Rebellion. It is implied by LeRoi Jones that blacks have given up defending themselves with words learnt from whites. The weapon is more than a symbol and its use is the most creative work for the black man. Walker is a poet-turned activist. His poetry is also changed with the time. Walker quotes Yeats' poem ironically, a poem about wounded consciousness. Baraka wants to declare the fact that the black man has made up his mind to unify his art with armed struggle. His words have turned into action. Walker has chosen bloody rebellion as an ultimate choice for his freedom.

Easley holds Walker and his 'noble black brothers' responsible for the killing of whites. He takes it for granted that Walker is dead as an artist because of his activist posture.

The debate that takes place between Walker and Easley is a complete failure of the hope of reconciliation between the two values i.e.
black and white. It is a fierce battle that moves from disagreement within the social fabric to utter destruction of it. Inability to understand each other leads them to violent clash of ideas. Donald Costello calls it "Jones' doctrine of race violence."³⁹

"Easley: [...] Is that why you and your noble black brothers are killing what's left of this city? (suddenly broken) I should say what's left of this country... or world.

Walker: Oh, fuck you (Hotly) fuck you...Just fuck...that's all just fuck you! (keeps voice stiffly contained, but then it rises sharply). I mean really, just fuck you Don't tell me about any Goddamn killing of anything." (p.49).

Easley is a professional polemicist. He strongly disapproves the way of armed struggle adopted by the black militants. Easley asks Walker if a Negro victory in this war will bring more love, beauty or knowledge.

Walker's answer to Easley's very question significant. "But thats not even the point...The point is that you had your chance, darling, now these other folks have their". (p.73). The answer implies the fact that oppression breeds oppression. Only the colours of tyrants will change. Easley and Grace scorn Walker's involvement in destructive political activities. She says that Walker was driven by a need for some false heroism a selfish passion that finally led him to an insane search for power. Walker's break up with his wife is indicated by a stage direction which also establishes cannotations with Dutchman.
“Walker: (Looks over slowly at Grace and waves as from a passing train...)” (p.47) As Werner Sollors remarks: “Like passing trains, Walker and Grace had moved in different directions. And under the pressure of walker’s increasing Black nationalist commitments, which Grace could no longer understand, they had separated.” Easley defends Grace’s desertion of Walker.

Walker has rejected Grace because she can not reconcile his personal love for her with his political activity to kill white people. To Walker, Grace’s departure comes as a shock. She is still his wife and he still loves her.

Walker is a sentimental individual whose private life contradicts his public role. Here, LeRoi Jones is posing a very significant question. Can marriage of two opposite cultures prove successful in a critical situation? Grace could not differentiate between Walker’s personal world and the social world of which he is an inseparable part. Grace lost her faith in Walker when he started getting involved in activist actions. It threatened her personal world which was essentially white. Out of the sense of insecurity she deserted Walker and married Easley.

LeRoi Jones very meaningfully brings out the fact that the racial implications terrorise even the most intimate relationship of a husband and wife. Grace feels secured only when she is protected by her white society. Sherley Anne Williams has observed that “Walker’s world seems to be divided into They (the Blacks), Them (The whites) and me.”

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The separation of Walker and Grace indicates that the race consciousness of both the communities is deeply ingrained in their psyche. The Black and the White, these two cultures, are opposite poles that do not seem to unify. This unresolvable dilemma is dramatized with a sentimental theatricality.

The white couple represents the emotional and intellectual aspects of Euro-American culture. Walker agrees with the whites that this future is created by violence and argues in Machiavilian way that the end justifies the means.

He emphasizes the fact that ideas can neither make the world better nor can it change the attitude of the whites towards the blacks. Walker admits that in the past he valued personal ideas but had to give them up in the need for revolt. "Walker: No social protest...right is in the act! And the act itself has some place in the world...It makes some place for itself." (p.75).

Walker denies social, economical, political, cultural and aesthetic principles of his professor. He wants the art that will function. He condemns Easley for his hypocritical talks "you never did anything concrete to avoid what's going on now. Your sick liberal lip service to whatever was the least filth. Your high aesthetic disapproval of the political letting the sick ghosts of the thirties strangle whatever chance we had." (p.74).

Easley, for Walker, is now no more a professor but a hypocrate white liberal. He attacks Easley's manhood incessantly. He refers to Easley
as “Grace’s faggot husband” (p.54). Michael Kaufman defines the conflict between Easley and Walker. He says: “It is obvious that Jones attempts to reduce Easley to the embodied symbol of white cultural decadence, particularly its liberal element. Easley is described as broad...with thinning hair, and his impotence, to which Walker continually refers, is further emphasized by his childless marriage and his defenceless acceptance of Walker's physical aggression.”

After a great deal of debate, Walker finally insists that he has come to take back his children. He is still emotionally attached to them.

While working up to the climatic scene, Walker plays mock roles as a stupid darky (“I did not mean to hit you that hard professor Easley sir. I just don’t know my own strent”) (p.56), the stage Irishman (“Sure and they looked well enough”) (p.53), and the raving drunk Indian-African (“more! Bwana, me want more fire water”) (p.56). The mock roles played by Walker is a deliberate act because Easley and Grace refuse to take him seriously as a militant leader.

Continually drinking, Walker becomes intoxicated and reveals that he had been there earlier while they were out. He had already seen his daughters. Walker now wants to take them. Grace sees no reason why the girls should suffer because of Walker’s weird ambition. The whites refuse to believe that a killer can love his children. The action of the play speeds up as the bombardment goes on.
The confrontation with the liberal ends when Easley attacks Walker. Walker kills Easley in an act which the play depicts as necessary self-defense. Shortly, thereafter, the explosion shakes the house. Grace is hit across the chest by a falling beam. Dying, she cries for Walker to save the children who have supposedly been asleep upstairs. “Grace : The girls Walker (she is losing her strength) our children” (p.87). After a long silence Walker replies, “They are dead, Grace ! They are dead.” (p.88) Though Walker declares that they are dead, still the fate of Grace’s and Walker’s children is left unclear. The final scene is more ambiguous in the concluding stage directions. “...there is a child heard crying and creaming as loud as it can”. (p.88) Although, nowhere in the play it is mentioned that this child is one of the daughters, on the other hand it is said that it is not. The problem of children remains open to varying interpretations.

Some critics, like Kimberly Benston, believe that Walker has killed his children because,"by killing his children, he (Walker) has killed his past and is able to resume his place in the inexorable ticking of revolutionary history.” Walker kills his children to free himself from all whites taint. He has become the man without a past- “the stone revolutionist, Clay no more”.

During the course of the action, the mulatto girls become objectified symbols of the split historical reality. By disaffiliating himself totally from the white influence, Walker has come back to his senses. It is
not only Walker but it seems that the whole Black race has joined the motion of time. Walker "looks at his watch" and "listen to see if it is running". (p.88) The action implies that Walker checks it out whether his bloody revolution has brought him and his race back into the present or not. Till now the black man was lost in the past, cut off from time, enslaved, by the dark history.

But the play doesn't leave us here. Walker again becomes the old slave of the prologue. The circular ending shows that Walker remains the eternal entertainer, the poet, the 'Slave' unable to liberate either himself or others. LeRoi Jones wants to suggest that the Slave is a potential revolutionary but revolutionary can still be a Slave. Donald Costello remarks that, "as the city explodes Walker is again a Slave enslaved by mutual hatred, hatred received and returned. Walker is a slave to his "mission of hate"."\textsuperscript{45} /

Even after the destruction of the white America, Walker has not been able to wipe out the impact of American slavery. Walker is still a Slave to the white world to which he returns in order to justify himself.

LoRoi Jones famous programmatic essay, 'The Revolutionary Theater' attempts to interpret The Slave as a revolutionary play in which "the missionaries and wiggly liberals dying under blasts of concrete."\textsuperscript{46} The slave projects an unresolvable dilemma because of the contradictions within the protagonist. LeRoi Jones expresses a severe criticism of Walker in a later interview:
“Walker Vessels suffers from an ego worship. He’s hung up in his own ego syndrome, his individualism. That’s why I call the play The Slave, because if he is the general, the commander of this revolutionary army, he has no business being in that white man’s house. He has no business there talking to these people. He is supposed to be out leading his brothers. He is supposed to be fighting, he’s not supposed to be sitting there bullshitting with white people. And this is why, essentially, Walker is a weak man. But his intentions are close to the reality that I believe in. That is, he believes if an equitable social structure is going to be reared in America, it will probably be by force”.

Whether Walker is a slave or a revolutioner still is an enigma. In an interview, LeRoi Jones said that The Slave was really the last play where he tried to balance and talk to blacks and whites. Walker doesn’t represent only the prototypes like David Walker or Denmark Vesey, a free south black Carolinian, who led a Salve rebellion uprising in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. He goes beyond the representation of the militant African Americans and links us up, by allegorical extension, to the other victims of white racism such as ‘Indians’ (p.56) and ‘Asian’ (p.58). The references to Bigger Thomas and Othello makes The Slave the benchmark work of the universal liberation struggle of non-whites.

Many critics have mentioned The Slave as a ritual drama. The act of Walker’s killing his own children is a part of a purgation rite. As Syed Manzoorul Islam observes:
"As though to remind the audience of the possibility of a renewal and as a journey back to the ritual of the Year-God, Baraka uses a child's voice back stages 'crying and screaming as loud as it can'. The voice could as well be the voice of the reborn God announcing the end of evil and the triumph of God.'

However, Werner Sollers refuses to call The Slave a ritual drama saying that it never ascend to the level of ritual.

The Slave is considered as the most controversial and terrifying experience. The play shows the complete destruction of the white America. The violence in the play is created with the help of theatrical effects such as lights and sound which do not remain merely the theatre effects but become the internal element of that environment. The terror in the play is constructed out of suspense and stage effects. The use of sound effects plays as an important role as action or speech. The frequent explosions, coming closer and closer to the house, echoes the rage and and anger of the suppressed militant blacks. It accelerates the tempo of the play and also anticipates the future. It shakes the set and the audience's consciousness also. The intensity of the verbal conflict in the house is heightened with the lights of explosion. The light of the explosions mark the destruction not only of the white world but the darkness of the history itself. When the words and actions are inadequate to express the inner rage and protest of the blacks, the light and sound of the explosions fulfill the requirement of the playwright.

In the act of killing Easley, LeRoi Jones creates tensions in the play which shows his perfect sense for dramatic timing.
Many critics consider *The Slave* a follow-up to *Dutchman* or a "son of dutchman" kind of work because they offer many striking parallels, or, as John Lindburg points "reversed parallels" Lula in "Dutchman" imposes her values on her black male victim, Clay. The Black revolutionary male, Walker, in *The Slave* forces his triumphant philosophy on his white ex-wife, Grace. Lula, the white American bitch kills Clay in the train. Walker who had two children by Grace, his former wife, kills them and the white professor Easley. It clearly shows that *The Slave* is an improvement over *Dutchman*. Walker in *The Slave* is the reincarnation of Clay. The prophecy of Clay at the end of *Dutchman* is fulfilled by Walker in *The Slave*.

In both the plays, the protagonists reflect the particular psycho-social situation of the poet. Both, Clay and Walker resemble LeRoi Jones.

*The Slave, Dutchman* both are manifestations of DuBoisian consciousness. Hatch and Shine observe as to how the play and LeRoi Jones are the victims of this dualism.

"The Slave is at once a highly personal work and a political statement. It is a mid-balance-point in the purgatory of a poet's life and work. It is the Half-Way House between the death of LoRoi Jones and the birth of Imamu Amiri Baraka; it is the mid-point between the death of an assimilationist and the birth of a black nationalist. The play stands witness to the fury inherent in the process."
Many critics criticize *The Slave* for devoid of conflict and dramatic content. Werner Sollors argues that despite persistent talk of violence and revolution, Walker’s rebellion lacks any social vision beyond that of a change in the complexion of tyranny. He argues that

"Instead of developing a political concept of Black liberation, Vessels merely follows the impulses of his own love hate emotions..."\(^{52}\)

Though Sollors criticizes the play for the lack of social vision, he considers its subject of the race war prophetic more than its privite aspect. Sollors also marks that the play severely suffers from the cardboard characters who are offered as opposing forces to a contradictory protagonist. Another piece of adverse criticism of *The Slave* comes from Louis Phillips. He argues: "The logic of *The Slave*, however, if it is a logic it is not that Negroes, once they use violence to gain their ends, will govern society better than the whites, or that they will be more judicious and more tolerant, and will make fewer mistakes, but that it is simply some once else’s turn."\(^{53}\)

*The Slave* and *Dutchman* are Baraka’s most popular and successful plays. They can be interpreted as dramatization of the intense personal conflict seen in the poetry of this period. "The conclusion of the Slave" says Donald Costello, "is that the answer for the black man is to find himself, and at the same time destory himself, through killing the white man. There is only loss, and a madness. The victim world remain a victim."\(^{54}\)
Similarly, *The Toilet*, *J-e-l-lo*, and *The Baptism* are the interesting examples of LeRoi Jones’s experimentation with the form. *The Toilet* is a direct continuation of the dramatic exercises in *The Eighth Ditch* and *The Baptism*. It presents a confrontation of sensitive individuals with a group of others. *The Toilet* is a realistic play which examines the interaction of the black and white cultures in America. It was presented in December 1964 at St.Mark’s playhouse.

*The Toilet* was supposedly written in one night’s session of six hours. LeRoi Jones says: “I like it best... it came so much out of my memory, so exact. Just like I was a radio or something and zoom! I didn’t have to do any re-writing”. LeRoi Jones thinks *The Toilet* as “a product of particular time place and condition” as far as his own development was concerned. The play, is a wild experience. It is a brutal tale of his examinations of split identity, crushed sensitivity and victimization. The whole tone of the play is consistently violent. *The Toilet* is about Northan Negroes and white boys, about how they love, hate and suffer in the limited world they know.

The age group, LeRoi has chosen in the play, is that of adolescents, in which they are neither small boys nor grown up men. Passing through this crucial period, these boys form some concepts of manhood. Still, they are confused and unaware about their own developing personalities due to their physical and psychological changes.
The play problematises the issue as to who are the mythic black heroes and models from whom black young derive their concept of manhood. These heroes or models determine not only their psychological awareness of the self but also shape their behaviour. These mythic heroes have their impact on the development of the individual psyche of the blacks.

When LeRoi Jones was composing *The Toilet*, most of the blacks were just following white models and they did not have black heroes to help them in shaping their psyche. LeRoi Jones was aware that what he had studied in college was primarily the literature of the white society. Therefore, Jones wanted to emphasize as to how the black psyche of the adolescent boys is dehumanised by imitating white models.

In *The Toilet* the victim is a black boy, named Ray Foots, who cannot express his love for a white boy named Karolis because of what Jones calls the brutality of the social order.

The one act play is set during the last period of a school day in a urine stinking toilet of an urban high school. It is an operating world of the gang of black and white students. The setting of *The Toilet* reflects as E. Brady says, “the explosive and corrosive essence of American Society which ultimately destroys individuals” is a metaphor for the “impersonal ugliness” of main stream American Society. Throughout the play, the toilet is a place where comments are made on social order by the members of the gang. The toilet becomes the microcosm of the outer American society; it is a
place of "moral filth" where conceptions of love, hate, and beauty are formed and sometimes these concepts pervert into brutality. In *Raise, Race, Rays Raze*, LeRoi views America "a smok filled miniatere cosmic toilet".59

The setting is more naturalistic than those of *Dutchman* and *The Slave*. There are no mythical dimensions. "The grey rough cement... a few roles of the toilet papers" and the bleak place become the metaphor for the inner world of the adolescent black boys.

"The scene" says Daphne S. Reed: "is an appropriate metaphor for the kind of life that cripples, smothers and permanently maims so many of our adolescent youth who live in the urban poverty".61

As the play opens, black students assemble in the school toilet in an anticipation of a fight between their leader, Ray Foots and a white boy, Jimmi Karolis. The school toilet is an operating world for these boys because it seems to be the only place where they can be themselves.

It is in this age that the boys in *The Toilet* are cut off from their childhood and seeking admission in youth. The turning age has created their separate world which is full of physical energy and sexual confusion. During this age they imitate the outer models. The boys are in search of the meaning of sexual implications. Physical changes, emerging awareness about their own age and manhood create secrecy about sex and its function. To unfold the private world of these boys, the dramatist has chosen equally
private place, a toilet, where females are not supposed to enter. Most of the actions of the gang members result from their adolescence. In the toilet, in this transitory age the excitement to attain manhood and the fading innocence of the childhood clash and create physical, mental and sexual confusions for all the black boys.

Ora’s “hand on his hip” is a typical posture that of a grown up boy; yet “spraying urine over the seat” indicates that he is still lingering in his childhood. Ora urinates over the seat of a commode and flushes all the urinals in a row.

The gang members, Love, Holmes, Hines feel insulted when Jimmy Karolis, a white boy, sends a homosexual love letter to their leader Ray Foots in which he says that Ray is beautiful and he wants to “blow him” (p.56). To mentain the honour of the gang, black boys must take action.

However, for much of the play, they are waiting for two of their buddies to bring Karolis, that “Skinny nose punk” (p.38), “sonofabitch” (p.38) “muthafucin” (p.41) down to the toilet where Foots, will later join them and beat him up. While waiting they talk about fighting and sex which are two dominat male images. As Robert Tener observes: “Their talk about fighting is always done in the context of their still being boys. The proposed fights are imagined, not real.” The physical actions of the boys strengthen their unconscious imitation of white models. Fight is a matter of honour for them.
The relationship among the black boys in this world is projected through their emphasis on physical contact, their tough talk, their games, the actions and their assumptions. Their activities exhibit the physical involvement as well as emotional strength of the black boys.

In their rhetorical playing, the force is on talk and male dominance. Their language about sex and their sexual terms reveal their participation in a male world. In their language, black boys imitate white models. They relate sex to their male egos and their need to dominate.

Holmes: (To Love) Hey Damn. Why don't you go get cuteria to do that stuff for you.

Love: She-et (Grrinning) Huh. I sure don't need your Ol' lady to be pullin' on my joint. (p.37)

The language of the black boys is also affected by the masculine images provided by the white society. They refer to a penis as a "joint". (p.37) They call each other "cocksucker". (p.41).

Though these boys talk about sex, nowhere in the play do they actually engage in sexual activities. Robert Tener observes that their uncertain sense of masculinity and of heroism has not taught them how to cope up with their ambivalent sexual feelings and response or how to express them.63

Owen Brady a critic, points out that in discussion, these black youth make insulting remarks on blackness. Ora denigrates other members
of the black community by insulting their blackness. He calls them “black ass bastid” (p.41), “you black sonofabitch” (p.46). But his insults are friendly and self ironic.

The world of the toilet is essentially an origin of communal strength. Farrell’s arrival threatens the homogeneity and security of the black community as well as the secrecy of their plan to beat Karolis. The cultural differences between Ora and the white boy. Farell, cause violance which occurs as Ora punches Farell and later pushes him out of the toilet. As Owen Brady observes, “the conflict between Ora and White boy Farell introduces the first counter point. Their interaction, which contrasts black and white cultural background, foreshadows all the conflicts of the Play: Ora and Ray: Ora and Karolis, Ray Foots and Karolis and the psychic conflict between the protagonist’s two self-concepts, Foots and Ray.”

The fight has become a matter of honour and prestige for the gang. Moreover, the gang members feel that they deserve the entertainment of seeing a fight as they have done a lot of hard work for it. Farnell’s comment that “somebody’s got some sense here” (p.54) forces Foots to take harder lines. Farrell doubts the validity of the cause of the fight and bitterly remarks, “Oh, Ray, come on why don’t you come off it”, (p.56) that Karolis’s love letter may have been a response to a first move by Ray. His remark is a threat to Foot’s masculine image. Finally Ora and Knowles, the blackest members of the gang, violently shove Farrell out of door. As Foots
himself attempts to leave, Karolis surprises him and the gang by refusing to deny the accusation and insists on fighting with him.

Foots is tartled, but Karolis is absolutely determined to fight him. This scene becomes the climax of the play and creates a tremendous dramatic effect. Amidst this Chaos, Karolis brings out the central problem of the play. “You have to fight me, I sent you a note, remember. That note saying I loved you...the note saying you were beautiful you remember that note Ray?” (pp.58,59) Karolis gets the upper hand in the fight. He reveals the true story behind the letter.

“Are you Ray or Foots, huh? ...I’ll fight you. Right here in this same place where you said your name was Ray...you put out your hand on me and said Ray! (pp.59,60).

The dialogue brings out the double consciousness in Ray Foots. For Karolis, “Ray” and “Foots” are two different images. As Robert L Tener points out that “Karolis sees Foots as two different persons: Ray, a human being, beautiful, whom he wishes to be involved with; and Foots, a stereotyped leader of a gang of corrupt heroes”.65

Sollers very significantly analyses the two-ness in Foots. He says; “While ‘Foots’ denotes ‘lower’ kind of ‘Plebeian’ existence, that is closer to the ethnic roots and the soil, ‘Ray’ suggests a more spiritual personality with a cosmic genealogy familiar from Baraka’s poetry”.66 Kerolis loves the finer aspects of Foots. i.e. Ray. He wants to destory the credibility of Foots in the eyes of the black gang.
The moral curruption that is suggested by the toilet setting is associated with a kind of perverted masculinity. Foots and his gang represent a cult of manhood which takes the form of mere brutishness.

The final scene functions as an “epilogue”. Foots enters the toilet, stares at Karolis’s body for a second and after a quick look over his shoulder, cradles the white boys head in his arms and weeps as the play ends.

The last sequence is the most suggestive are Foots deals with the same situation in two different ways. He confronts Karolis twice. First time he enters as a leader of the gang whereas his second entry symbolizes his disassociation from his community. He returns to see Karolis, “to mourn the lost love” of Karolis. His second entry is a renewal of his relationships with the white society. Foots can not accept love of Karolis because he is a victim of divided identity and existing social order on the other. He is a member of the black community and at the same time he loves a white boy. The separation between the two cultures alienates him from his world and from that of Karolis and his world.

The conflict in the play is an extension of LeRoi Jones’ own conflict between an individual outsider and society. It is also a conflict within Ray Foots. He is a victim of his own dilemma. If he refuses to fight Karolis, he will be disloyal to his gang and subsequently lose his honour and position. When he allows Karolis’s beating, the only person he loves is crushed.
Foots’ entry in the last sequence is a secret demonstration of his love for Karolis. He can not respond to him openly due to social pressures. In this sense the toilet represents a place of “guilty secrecy” where Foots’s feelings of love for Karolis are corrupted by the social values. The black identity within Foots doesn’t allow him to accept Karolis love openly in the gang. In an attempt to remain the gang leader, Foots betrays Ray, his own second self. The finer aspect in Foots is defeated by the false concept of heroism. Kimberley Benston examines Foots’ personality as “the homosexual union of two souls in one flesh”. According to Sollors, “the homosexuality is viewed positively by LeRoi Jones”. Karolis, the white boy sees beauty and love in Foots which his gang, friends fail to see.

Ora’s violent repression of homosexuality is a positive, almost heroic step toward affirming black manhood. He is a symbol of blackness. He represents that group of Black Americans that Jones in Blues People calls the “freedmen”. As a freedman, he is closest to the African tradition, which remains isolated from the white mainstream of America. His role becomes very significant in the play. Theodore Hudson points out that the love in this play is homosexual, to an extent irrelevant, except for the dramatic setting.

Foots comes back to Karolis as a response to his love. Ray expresses a mature tenderness and love. In a toilet, a private place, the relationship between the two becomes more meaningful. As Robert Tener
rightly points out that "their relationship rise above the stereotyped and artificial responses of the other boys." Foots leaves the gang for love and tenderness and with this return, Foots has become a man, or at least he along has the possibility of becoming a man.

Foots symbolizes a bridge between the black and the white that incorporates the concepts of the black middle class citizen and freedman. The love between blacks and whites is not totally condemned; it can overcome the rules imposed by both the groups.

*The Toilet* is an example of LeRoi Jones' awareness of how white society has affected the lives of black boys. The black boys have no expression for beauty, for compassion and for selfless love. The gang members are alienated from the world at large.

Owen E. Brady views *The Toilet* from ritualistic point of view. According to him, the toilet is "a ritual place for Ray Foots's loss of self identity through an initiation into the filth of American society" and urination becomes "a reverse purification rite, preparing the toilet for the ritual baptism of Ray Foots". In setting, LeRoi Jones has carried the possibilities of 'fourth-wall' naturalism to their extreme.

*The Toilet* is accused of its obscenity. Theodore Hudson says the *The Toilet* is "Jones most "obscene" play. And Jones' characters are not using the language exclusively for any symbolic content". Hudson also
accuses Jones for using excess realism in language. However, the language of the play is entirely the type of talk actually found in such places. It attempts to project the cult of raw life LeRoi Jones has fused naturalistic language and setting in order to arouse the feelings of pity, pathos and fear. His use of a special cult language along with metaphoric setting and distinctive games create a distinctively black atmosphere. The verbal games are accompanied by the atheletic movements of basketball or boxing which bring to the performances a whole set of gestures full of dramatic possibilities. Musical effects are sometime added: For example, finger drumming on a table, feet tapping or head bobbing on an imaginary rhythm.

LeRoi Jones in The Toilet reveals his psychological and biological view of growing up male in a ghetto. Majority of the other dialogue are given to the black gang.

The Toilet is a picture of what Jones has called in Blues People, "The hopelessly interwoven fabric of American life where blacks and whites pass so quickly as to become only grays".79

LeRoi Jones gave a call for anti-western theatre. He fused the political movement with art. Black Power Nationalist and black visionary artist both come together in LeRoi Jones’ post 1965 plays. LeRoi Jones turned to the theatrical problem of communicating to an audience whose members are to be integrated into a new wholeness. It was the beginning of the New Black theatre. Slave Ship is an outcome of LeRoi Jones Black
Nationalist period. It is a different experience for both, the playwright and the audience because of its theatrical experiments in form and total abandonment of the traditional plot. The play is a radical departure from the norms of African American theatre.

_Slave Ship_ was produced by The Sprit House Movers in Newark, New Jersey in March 1967. It demonstrates LeRoi Jones continuing awareness of the newest theatrical modes. Henry Lacey calls this play "a consummate example of the "living" or "environmental theatre of the 1950". The message of this new experimental theatre is "come together". The _Slave Ship_ retraces the historical voyage of Black Americans from Slavery to Black power. It attempts to raise the political consciousness of the black audience. It addresses the African American community. It seeks to convince the audience that they are an integral part of the drama.

One of the most important characteristics of the New Black theatre is the use of rituals, which Shelby Stell calls:

"the strong presence of Symbols, characterizations, themes and language styles which are frequently repeated from play to play and over a period of time with the result that easily recognized patterns are established which have the function of reaffirming the values and particular commitment of the audience for whom the plays are written."
By showing historical events of black oppression on the stage, the playwright invites the audience to join in the ritual.

"Slave Ship's energy is at base, ritualistic" says Addison Gayle and refers to the same play as, ".....ritualized history. That is, history that allows emotional and religious participation on the part of the audience. And, like all good ritual, it's purpose is to make the audience stronger, more sensitive to the historical realities that have shaped our lives and the lives of our ancestors".

Slave Ship takes into account successive stages of Black American history - the plantation of the slave holder, the non-violent Civil Rights Movement and the Black Nationalist Movement. The playwright himself calls the play a historical pageant. Confronting history through series of experiences and expressions, the playwright depicts the horror and the madness of the black predicament. It moves through the passage of slavery, early attempts of revolt, reconciliation, betrayal and the final act of liberation.

Stefan Brecht rightly comments that:

"The play’s dramatic genus is national epos. Its species is not only that of patriotic spectacle but of a partisan contribution to communal deliberation. To the extent this definition applies to Jones’ play, its partnership is reactionary. But given the African American plight of servitude, the play’s conservative nationalism takes the form of, and may have the effect of a revolutionary appeal".
From the beginning of his career, LeRoi Jones has been acknowledging history as 'knowledge'. It is a process, a dynamic dialectic of opposing forces. Though historical in content, the play is not merely a historical drama, it evokes the history metaphorically. The successive images of human conditions reveal the horrifying effects of slavery on the oppressed community. LeRoi Jones interprets black history as a chain of oppressive situations in which blacks are the victimized group. The survey of African American history provides political dynamite for the contemporary audience.

*Slave Ship* has no definite form. It consists of images, dances and pantomine together with sporadic dialogue. There is just a continuous rush of sounds, groans, screams and souls waiting for freedom and relief from sufferings. The strength of *Slave Ship* does not rely on a plot but theatrical effects. These effects are achieved through the use of lights, sounds and movements.

These technical devices form its own language. The play is a fusion of words, many in Yoruha, many really only human sounds rather than words. An attempt has been made by the playwright to create an environment rather than a typical play structure. It may be said that *Slave Ship* is a script written in a form of a set, lights, music and dance. The whole situation is designed through these theatre properties.

Syed Manzoorul Islam has commented about its unique theatricality. He believes:
"The play's emphasis on a theatrical projection of the world as a slaveship which includes in its fold and actors and the audience alike brings it again and again to "the horror! the horror!" of the Black American situation".86

In *Slave Ship* LeRoi Jones concentrates more on an actual performance than the script. Henry C. Lacey observes in this context that *Slave Ship* is a work "characterized more by its collective movement than by dialogue".87

LeRoi Jones transforms the entire theatre into a slaveship. With the help of most advanced theatre techniques, the playwright relates us to the history. The ship appeals the consciousness of the audience as a memory and a collective-communal emotion.

Another reason for this instance theatricality effect may be that LeRoi Jones wants to transcend the limitations of the words. He is well aware of the capacities of the audio-visual effects. The ship created on the stage becomes the microcosm of the entire slavery episode. It becomes an objectified symbol of the exploitation of the black race. Stefan Brecht has rightly observes: "The production is spectacle, the play being imagist and exhortatory. It does not develop. It shows."88 The setting helps to recreate the environment on the stage. One witness of the first Newark show of the play remarks:

"The set itself, a split-level wooden platform mounted on huge springs, was a brilliant conception and the play's chief metaphor, suggesting with its rhythmic rocking not simply
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... forced the audience to hunch over in order to see what was happening during the first part of the play”.

According to some critics, Slave Ship is a sequence of audio-visual images, each of which highlights a particular historical and psychic condition of the black race. In the beginning, LeRoi Jones shows the rich and natural communal identity of the African people. It opens with a ritual atmosphere. The African sensibility is depicted through religions ceremonies. It is a primeval African life which is “quintessentially religious”. Kimberly Benston defines it as:

“a complex fertility rite involving the dance 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 the head priest”.

The dominance of technique in the play is apparent when LeRoi Jones projects the white terror through voice. Though the white man doesn’t appear on the stage, still his evil presence is felt throughout the play in a form of voice. The play begins in a dark. “Whole theatre in darkness. For a long time. Just dark. Occasional sound, like ship groaning squeezing rocking sea smells. In the dark keep the people in the dark”.
The horrying experience of the slaves is created through darkness. Much of the action takes place in darkness or half light. The slaves on the ship are no more human beings now but things conquered by the white men. It is the ‘black gold’ as one of the white captains on the ship calls them, which whites have found and taking away with them to America.

“Voice 1: ok let’s go! A good cargo of black gold. Let’s go! we head west! we had west! (long laughter) Black gold in the west. We go our full cargo.

Voice 2: Aye, Aye, cap’n we’re on our way. Riches be ours, by God.

Voice 3: Aye, riches, riches be ours. We are on our way America! (Laughter).” (p.133).

The agony of separation from their home and the destruction of the families bursts into their cry. The man on the ship curses the God the creator. “Where are you be, where are you now Black God” (p.133). LeRoi has written the actual vocal expression of agony of the people in words to express its intensity. “woman: AAAAA III EEEEEEE” (p.133).

The slaves are separated not only from their homeland and family but also from their own self-respect, human dignity pride and honour. The white man rapes a black woman. The unbearable shock compels her to kill herself and her child.

“Woman 1: she strangled herself with the chain and choked the child”.

All the victimized slaves on the ship move with a fear of separation. In this image, the destruction of the family is shown. The whole community is thrown into anarchy. The isolated cries, rapes, songs express their tortured existence. In Kimberley Benston’s view in *Slave Ship* LeRoi Jones “emphasizes in every way concrete aspects of pain, the heavy reality of chains, the screams and smells of degradation”.

The next image exhibits the complexity of the African American man in the alien land. LeRoi Jones calls the audience to participate in the process of “Americanization”. The enforced culture is seen in taking of English names and the adoption of Christian faith. It is not only the forced fusion of African and English words, but the painful process of cultural conversion.

In the next image, Tom becomes a modern version of the house-nigger. This character is further updated in a modern black preacher, a symbol and supporter of Civil Rights Movement.

The play ends with a treatment of the spirit of nationalism of the post-Civil Rights era. African rhythms are beaten while spirituals rise up. The spirit of Africanism transfers the degradation into pride. There is an appeal for the war, for revolt. The African power breaks the shackles of slavery. The liberating revolt takes place in the end. The chants are heard. The sense of liberty is expressed through song and light effects. New sound of saxophone tears up the darkness. The chants work as the spiritual force in the life of the enslaved people.
Rise Rise Rise

Cut these ties, Black man Rise. (p.72) At the beginning the whites and the preacher ignore the rising black revolt but soon loose their strength. “Precher: Please boss, these nigger goin crazy... Voice: I am God. You can not kill white Jesus God” (p.145).

The collective force of the blacks kill the preacher and the white voices. It is a “purgative violence.” Stefén Brecht relates the final revolt with social references. He says that “the final revolt is a genocidal call to arms to the young African American audience, a call for the killing of the white man. But the only enemy killed is a black man. This may be significant. Not only because of the alleged killings of Malcolm X by Black Muslims and of Black Panthers by Kareaga’s men, but because it suggests that Jones’ stress on cultural community identity may ultimately override his advocacy of social revolt.” The restoration of the black people is suggested through the stage movements and their theatrical devices lights, group movements, and audience’s participation.

The final participation of the audience in the dance create a vital and strong sense of bond among the blacks. With the celebration of liberation, the play fulfills the ritual rites of Africa. Kimberly Benston very aptly remarks; “In Slave Ship, the black nation promptly transforms itself into history, for the imitation of suffering has conferred on it a collective past and assigned it a triumphant future.”
All the images in Slave Ship are incarnated out of the theatre techniques. Lloyd W. Brown points out that the succession of audio-visual forms is integral to the pattern of ritual upon which Baraka bases his historical pageant. The light and sounds of slaveship remain throughout, but they alternate from time to time with other forms which depict successive stages of Black American history...”  

The African American art form has got its own aesthetics and beauty. It is the most original in its structure. It has its roots in ministerial shows. LeRoi Jones owes heavily from the tradition of masks, pantomime, dance and music. The tradition of African american theatre-form is musical. “The blacks in America”, says Harold Cruse” attempt to reclaim their musical tradition in terms of pantomime, music, movement, dance, in a theatrical form, which is more natural to them because for many years the Negro’s chief form in the theatre was a musical form.”

Throughout the play, lights and sound function as a character. The White man is created through sound which is a new experiment. The sound creates the whiteness on the universal scale, which perhaps characters could not have done so effectively. The presence of the White man through the sound moves as a constant terror.

The lights in the play takes us back to various stages of black life. It also function as time. The blinking light, the shade light, sometimes black out; these are the theatrical devices which influence the ultimate effect of an event on the audience to a large extent.
The effects of lights are well supported by music. Music is the energy of the black spirit and the bedrock of black strength. Musical energy "manifests liberty services prophecy, and signals immanent ascendance".98 As Benston remarks, "LeRoi Jones elevates music to the duel position of central metaphor and primarily theatrical vehicle."99

The main sounds are those of African drums, reminding the African memories to the new slaves. As the ship moves to America the sounds gradually mix up with the cry, shouts, painful voices. The humming of the black slaves expresses the agony, the protest and eventual triumph.

Along with the lights and sounds, dance also is a unifying force in Slave Ship. It celebrates "a real communal exorcism and "spiritual restoration"100 of the blackman. In Slave Ship drumbeats, ritual chants, and tribal dance remains a basic means of expression among the slaves.

The Slave Ship has elements of realism. It follows the method of a street-theatre. The audience in the play becomes participants and there is no wall between the actors and the audience.

Theodore R. Hudson rightly observes that LeRoi Jones must have intended "agit-prop theatre, that edifies and motivates the audience".101 The reason behind writing a history of the African American people was as LeRoi Jones says "to try to explain naturally to sensitive people, black people exactly, what the realities of the slave ship were and how they were carried
over, how America in a lot of sense is just a reply or a continuation of that same slave ship, that it's not changed".102

*Slaveship* is necessarily a theatre experience. The language of the lights, music and setting becomes predominant. All the theatrical devices form their own language to create unforgettable experience of the past of the African American people.

The technique of this play is almost cinematic. The images flicker and fade against a heavy backdrop of rhythms. It is a play which almost totally eliminates the need for a text. It functions on the basis of movement and energy.

The plays written between 1961 to 1964 mark the first phase of LeRoi Jones' career. It was a transitional period. The end of 1964 witnesses another change in LeRoi's racial, social and political awareness. In this phase, he adopted Black Muslim faith and became a cultural nationalist. The period from 1965 to 1974 is the third phase in the evolution of Jones' socio-political consciousness. It is described as the 'Black Nationalist' Period. The Fourth stage in his literary career is described as the third World Marxist period which begins from 1974. In this period he has made a crucial move from black nationalism to internationalism. His recent essays and articles reflect his interest in a new kind of black socialist art which aims at building a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party. His plays *The Motion of History* and S-1 talk about the origins of this society, state,
nation, it's internal contradictions and developments. He interpretes politics in accordance with historical and social relativity. Both the plays are founded on the Marxist theory of disjunctive and inherently antagonistic relationship between the classes.

In all his plays, there are manifestations of his theories of the theatre. His essay, 'The Revolutionary Theatre', defines theatre as a device for edification and motivation. He has insisted on a theatre that energetically seeks new forms, new intensity, and new language. LeRoi Jones has contributed to the World of theatre by his views on form and content. He has revitalized the form and content of drama. He has given a new dramatic protagonist, the black poet-intellectual, seeking meaning in the hostile environment. He has re-established roots of stage language. "His ingenious forms" says Esther M.Jackson "will undoubtedly find interpretation and development in world theatre of the seventies, eighties and nineties".103
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