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THE POLITICS OF DECOLONIZATION:
RACE, POWER, AND IDEOLOGY
IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN DRAMA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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in

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by

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I owe my greatest critical and personal debt to Dr. William W. Demastes, whose thoughtful guidance had a profound influence on the way in which I plunged into the studies of drama. Furthermore, his intellectual comment on this study led me to see the deeper levels of the modes of political expression of theatre. I would also like to thank Dr. Bainard Cowan whose "Summer Institute for College Teachers" inspired my concern in the aspects of history in literature as well as Dr. Patrick McGee, Dr. Carl H. Freedman, and Dr. Ronald Garay for their careful readings and useful suggestions. Additionally, I acknowledge Dr. Kook-Young Suh for his sustaining encouragement and intellectual interest in my study and Christopher A. Healy for his time and valuable commentary on this work. I am very grateful to my parents, my parents-in-law, and Mr. Hyung-Sool Kim and Mrs. In-Shil Kim, who have encouraged me to seek the higher ground of study. Finally, I wish to express my particular appreciation to my wife, Su-Young, my daughter, Hee-Jung, and my son, Yoon, whose love and contribution have become the fundamental source of my strength.
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This dissertation traces the politics of decolonization dramatized in selected plays from the contemporary American playwrights: African Americans (Lorraine Hansberry, Amiri Baraka, Adrienne Kennedy, and August Wilson), white Americans (Arthur Kopit and David Rabe), and a Chinese American (David Hwang). Through the application of cultural theory to an analysis of dramatic texts, I demonstrate how the plays enact the struggle for decolonization on social, political, and cultural levels. In keeping with the interactions of race, power, and ideology, the plays deconstruct the white cultural formulations of racial minorities. I explore the ways in which the playwrights reclaim the authority of racial minorities over their own ethnic identity, self-determination, and independence through the recovery of voice and power.

In exploring racial minorities' struggle for decolonized freedom, I examine in what context and how racial minorities are internally colonized. Fundamental to the internal colonization is the idea of space whose projections produce various limits in terms of its physical places, social roles or status, and stereotypes. This
colonization is conceptualized through differentiation or discrimination stemming from spatial binarism. I argue that this system of difference is internalized in the social structure and even in the psychological field. Behind this system lies the prestige for which white ideology serves to inscribe racial minorities within the world of discursive hierarchies based on the racial order.

The playwrights utilize their writing as a vehicle for interrogating the legitimation of white ideology as they expose its contradictions. Thus problematized, white ideology and its production of racial difference become an object to be disrupted for the formulation of a distinctive cultural identity. The plays call for a new order essential to racial minorities' autonomy, by decentering the white authority over the officially sanctioned force and reterritorializing the arbitrarily drawn yet degrading space. The playwrights' writing as revision thus has the power to act upon human consciousness necessary for refashioning history.
INTRODUCTION

In discussing American playwrights since the late 1950s, C. W. E. Bigsby identifies them as mainly preoccupied with "a desire to see behind the social surface a sense of shared anguish," and asserts that they had a tendency "to claim the right to speak for and to those excluded as effectively on a linguistic as on a political and cultural level, to reinvent a self which existed outside social and lexical definition." To be excluded is to be degraded and silenced or to lose authority over one's "self." In attempting to reclaim authority for those who are racially excluded, some of these playwrights are concerned with the struggle of racial minorities for their own ethnic identity through the recovery of voice and power.

Recently, many critical approaches to drama concerning racial minorities since the late 1950s have focused on these groups' struggles for ethnic identities. But very little attention has been paid to the colonial context in the analysis of racial minorities' "place" in theatre. Central to my argument is that racial minorities in theatre are "internally colonized" in the society that hides

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oppression in the rhetoric of freedom, justice, and equality.

In her essay, "Who Claims Alterity?," Gayatri C. Spivak employs "internal colonization" in order to refer to not only the way that "metropolitan countries discriminate against disenfranchised groups," but also the way that they differentiate the histories of these groups from other histories of postcoloniality. As the term "internal colonization" has been increasingly applied to the marginalized groups, questions exist in relation to actual colonialism. To what extent does the concept of "internal colonization" actually reflect the historical, political, and economic realities manifested in actual colonialism? What are the differences and common features between actual colonialism and internal colonialism? Colonialism refers to the economic and political policy by which a geographically distanced colony, generally inhabited by people of a different race and culture, is directly

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Who Claims Alterity?," Discussions in Contemporary Culture 4: Remaking Histories, ed. Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 1989) 274; Michelle Wallace, Invisibility Blues: From Pot to Theory (New York: Verso, 1990) 2: Wallace applies the term "internal colonization" to the situation of African Americans, maintaining that their culture is a "product of 'internal colonization'" and "constitutes an important variation on postcolonial discourse."
dominated by a minority of outsiders from the metropolitan country and dependent on it. Unlike traditional colonialism, internal colonialism in America stems from the group relations within a society, the absence of geographical gap between a metropolitan country and a colony, and the numerical minority of colonial subjects in a society.

Despite these differences, the experience of racial minorities in America reflects the situation of colonial subjects in the way that the colonizing power destroys the indigenous culture, controls the assumed inferior, and moreover, employs skin color as a means of differentiation for discrimination. Of course, this nature of internal colonization applied to racial relations is prevalent in the social structure including the relationship between each group in the advanced capitalist society. Viewed from the overall context, the Others in terms of gender and class share with racial minorities an experience of oppression and repression. Here this experience is embedded in the nature of stratified societies that produce systematic inequality and injustice. However, those who differ in race and national origin are most heavily excluded because race and ethnicity serve as the essential principles upon which they are differentiated and
discriminated in terms of social, political, and cultural forms.

The differentiation for discrimination becomes a way for colonizing or controlling these groups effectively. However, almost everywhere, this differentiation for discrimination produces an inevitable resistance to the colonial situation, culminating in what Edward W. Said calls "the great movement of decolonization." For him, decolonization is a multi-faced process of asserting "nationalist identities," "self-determination," and "national independence." Although there is neither the geographical gap between a mother land and a colony nor the numerical majority of the colonized as seen in traditional colonialism, a similar "decolonizing" attitude prevails in the struggles of the playwrights or racial minorities for ethnic independence.

While confronting American society and its beliefs and values, the idea of decolonization in theatre is conceived in terms of the problems that racial minorities share in achieving identity, self-determination, and independence. Racial minorities reject their socially given identity, asserting that they will not accept being contained in the

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dominant belief system. Such containment would result in sacrificing the unique and distinguishing features of racial minorities' own ethnic cultures as well as their cultural independence. The notion of colonized minorities points to a similarity of situation. Yet each ethnic group in the theatre shows distinctive ideologies for decolonization, well manifested in the plays by African Americans, whites, and a Chinese American concerning racial minorities.

Although the analysis of these plays does not produce a unique answer to the social conflict, I think that variously suggested answers are valuable in understanding the dynamic structure of American society. What kind of responses to colonization does each ethnic group or each playwright show in the experience of racial minorities in relation to the dominant group? How are the ideologies for decolonization presented in the playwrights' concerns for the relationship between politics and art—the style, the purpose of the work, and the function of the playwright and audience? Have the playwrights' perceptions of colonization been changed between the late 1950s and the late 1980s? In exploring the politics of decolonization, I first examine in what context and how racial minorities are internally colonized.
Fundamental to this study of "internal colonization" is what Said calls the "geographical sense," whose projections are exemplified in the imaginative, economic, historical, or cultural phases. In a society, this "geographical sense" is conceptualized through notions of center and margin, in which the dominant group constitutes the center and the dominated one the margin. This geographical binarism provides theatre concerning racial minorities with the dramatic structure of conflict and functions to variously constrain the independence of the excluded. Said asserts,

[M]odern Western societies . . . shape and set limits on the representation of what are considered essentially subordinate beings; thus representation itself has been characterized as keeping the subordinate subordinate, the inferior inferior.5

Underlying this geographical binarism is the idea that there is an "appropriate" space for racial minorities well manifested in the forms of physical places, social roles or status, or images. This idea of space provides theatre concerning racial minorities with a tool for aesthetic expression of these groups' colonization. Because they are supposed to be confined within the already drawn space, the

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5Said 80.

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*Said 78.

*Said 80.
action beyond the dominant idea of space means a kind of break of order. Thus, the movement of freedom from the given space is denied or controlled.

What kinds of controlling mechanisms are employed in order to confine the dominated within the dominant group's idea of space? As Antonio Gramsci suggests in his discussion of cultural hegemony, the control may be secured by giving the threat of officially sanctioned force a legitimate authority, and by the general acceptance of the belief in the existence of an "appropriate" space for the subordinate groups. Through force and general acceptance, the dominant group maintains its hegemony that Gramsci defines as

the "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

For the dominant group to have prestige, the subordinate groups are to be controlled or to be confined within the idea of space, regardless of whether consent involves the

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7 Gramsci 12.
active commitment to the established order or on the passive consciousness mixing resistance and resignation.

The idea of space is quite powerful in its impact on the social structure in which it has tenacious hold on the conscious and unconscious mind. This idea is prevalent in the plays concerning racial minorities, conferring social prestige on the dominant group. Yet this prestige is not unique to racist societies, for this idea underlies the domination of one group over other groups in terms of gender and economic classes. Of course, there is much that is unique about racial oppression, but it shares the common elements and dynamics that make up social oppression as a generic phenomenon. Like hierarchy and exploitation, such oppression is a universal feature of all class structured societies, including those in which ethnic and racial division are insignificant.

Despite the universal phenomenon of oppression, however, I intend to limit this study on the plays concerning racial minorities in order to examine the complexities of racial relations in the advanced industrial capitalist society that produces group politics different from the traditional colonial society. Here I will explicate the ways in which, challenging the dominant forms of beliefs, the playwrights interrogate the legitimation of
force or consent in an attempt to reterritorialize the already drawn space. To do so, I will place the idea of space at the center of approaching the internal colonization of racial minorities in the context of the overall distribution of political power. In the theatre, this idea of space creates an image of prison, producing various limits in terms of its physical, socio-economic, and cultural form. While functioning as places, roles, and stereotypes, the limits constitute the basic components of the internal colonization complex—the repression of indigenous values and ways of life, the socio-economic control of the subordinate people, and most importantly, racism.

Physically, the idea of space in the theatre is embodied in the ghetto, the plantation, the "slave ship," and the Indian reservation. While controlled by the dominant group, these places lead racial minorities to be spiritually imprisoned or colonized. The freedom from spiritual imprisonment may be achieved by two kinds of reactions to the colonization: one is to move away from the "colonized" place; the other is to transform the place into an independent community or to claim cultural independence. For example, African-American theatre is divided into two reactions against the ghetto, which I call geographical
colonization. In Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun, the Younger family members wish to move to a white neighborhood. Yet their wish is interfered with by a white representative, Lindner. In an attempt to defend the segregated residential community, he asserts that African Americans are supposed to belong only within their own community. This interference of the African Americans' free choice of places to live confines them within the white man's idea of place. In contrast, some African-American playwrights such as Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Ed Bullins show a different response to the ghetto life. They maintain that African Americans should control the ghetto under a set of values that are formulated to fill the needs of the African-American community and necessarily not influenced by the white society.

Like the physical forms of space, the socio-economic form of space appears as the inferior position or status of racial minorities. Because their status is channeled along the racial order, economic improvements do not directly increase social status or political power. As in the racist housing market of Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun, the relatively good income of the artists in August Wilson's Ma Rainey's Black Bottom does not generate the general respect of society and social status. Even though
African Americans occupy the majority of the production market, the African-American artists are denied the opportunity to participate in decisions concerning production. In this sense, their "place" is no more than a tool for a production for profit. With this perspective on the social status of African Americans in the workings of economy, the playwrights challenge the present distribution of economic exploitation, along with the destruction of ethnic identity.

In the cultural shape of space, the idea of space constitutes partly American cultural politics that creates its homogeneity through the hegemony of the dominant culture in the national consciousness and in myth-making. In order to gain more efficient control, the dominant group generally tends to ignore the existence of racial minorities's ethnic culture, and furthermore, to deny their autonomy.

Behind the dynamic of the idea of space lies white Americans' assumption that they are superior to the other groups. This assumption functions as a strategy for creating a social hierarchy based on color, thereby "legitimating" racial oppression. As sociologist David T. Wellman points out in his study of "racial consciousness," skin color becomes "a primary determinant of people's
position in the social structure." Therefore, the determining factor of race relations is "the superior position of whites and the institutions—ideological as well as structural—which maintain it." To gain the superior position means that the subordinate groups should be inferior according to the racial order based on color. This order tends to reduce the proper values of human beings in the form of stereotypes. In Arthur Kopit's *Indians*, for example, the dominant group is so obsessed with its superior position that it excessively categorizes Native Americans as "children." This idea of excessive categorization becomes a strategy for controlling racial minorities. Because "children" are so powerless that they cannot represent themselves, they should be dependent on the adult, in other words, the dominant group. Accordingly, the dominant group can exercise the "legitimate" privilege to control the assumed inferior; a mythic hero, Buffalo Bill, becomes a tool for the American ideology of destroying Native Americans and their way of life, which he admires. In this way, the dominant group is ultimately offered the superior position of controlling a physically less powerful people, especially racial

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minorities, without acknowledging their diversity in culture and history.

The playwrights consistently question how a society can advocate principles such as justice and equality when it confines racial minorities to marginalized or "appropriate" places. If colonization is born out of the dominant hegemony over the minorities in relation to race and space, the struggle for freedom is characterized by a rejection of the variations of marginalized space. The deepest rejection for emerging ethnic consciousness comes in the cultural sphere, where racial minorities attempt to discard the assumptions about the superiority of whites and their cultures. The playwrights suggest that the ideology for decolonization should establish the right to resist as "common sense" the dominant values, goals and norms of white society and historical experience of racial minorities. In giving a vision that celebrates cultural pluralism through the articulation of an alternative set of values and goals, the playwrights emphasize the cultural revitalization essential to the politics of decolonization.

If theatre about racial minorities has a great potential for the educational function and for the political improvement of society, an analysis of various plays requires the understanding of the politics of art as
well as the function of playwrights and audience. While claiming the cultural independence of racial minorities, the playwrights select the appropriate means for achieving their goals. They especially depend on Brechtian techniques such as epic structure and alienation effect, which enhance the instructive function of theatre as an instrument of social change. Unlike dramatic theatre, theatre concerning racial minorities generally reminds the audience that they are in an artificial setting in order to make them think rather than feel. Eliminating from theatre such effects as illusionism, emotional involvement, and catharsis in many cases, the playwrights use Brechtian techniques as ways to present the colonial conditions of racial minorities and to communicate a message of the necessity of their decolonization in the interaction with white Americans.

The communication of message between playwright and audience may form an essential aesthetic basis for the politics of decolonization. Defining the situation of their characters, the playwrights—especially, the African-American playwrights—attempt to judge the "appropriateness" of space, and then, to determine which roles, places, or stereotypes should be denied or assumed. No doubt, the playwrights play the roles of spokesperson,
teacher, or counselor of a group. Committed to such an instructive or socio-political role, therefore, they write to instruct the audience to deconstruct the mechanisms of control in a world of colonial oppression. In this sense, the playwrights concerning themselves with racial minorities have the power to act upon human consciousness in order to transform society.

The audience is also assigned to recognize the ideologically determined message through the theatrical experience reconstructed on stage. For the message to be foregrounded in the theatre, the playwrights generally employ episodic structure in which each scene is fragmented: as Bertolt Brecht asserts, "The episodes must not succeed one another indistinguishably but must give us a chance to interpose our judgment."9 In order to judge, the audience is required to have critical thinking on the racial relations rather than to be purged of fear and pity, for, as Terry Eagleton asserts concerning Brecht's epic theatre, "[the play] is less a reflection of, than a reflection on, social reality."10 In this process, the audience participates in new patterns of behavior,

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recognizing the need to avoid the conventional passive role. Even though the theatre commonly dramatizes racial minorities' quest for freedom and equality, it shows distinctive characteristics in its aesthetics in terms of the playwrights' race and gender, their strategies of decolonization, and the play's audience.

In inquiring into the "appropriateness" of space, I will divide my analysis of the plays into seven chapters: "Beyond 'Assimilationist Junk,'" "Dialectic of Change," "Identity Crisis 'In Between,'" "Leftovers from History," "Demystifying Power Relations," "The Other Within," and "Deconstructivist Madame Butterfly." I will consider African-American playwrights in the first four chapters, white playwrights in chapters five and six, and a Chinese-American playwright in chapter seven.

The African-American theatre aims to elevate African-Americans' consciousness through challenging the white ideas of their "appropriate" places, roles, and images. Although similarities exist within the theatre in terms of change, the theatre shows the strategic differences within the politics of decolonization. Disagreements by playwrights over strategic matters derive from the diverse views on American society and on the directions of change. Some African-American playwrights advocate the change
within the existing social structure by focusing on the importance of mutual respect between African Americans and whites. Other African-American playwrights emphasize the need for more fundamental social change, thereby involving themselves in rejecting such mutual respect, or more radically, even in justifying violent methods.

Besides strategic matters for change, the African-American playwrights also face the important question of how to manage the aesthetic issues of the struggle to be liberated from the hegemonic culture of white Americans. The question implies a need to decide whether to devote energy to the traditional form appearing as white canons of theatre in order to gain more audience or to use their African-American aesthetic appealing to African-American audience. In fact, the variations in the aesthetic approaches to the social issues are partly channeled along the differences over the playwrights' views on social systems and tactics for change.

In chapter one, "Beyond 'Assimilationist Junk,'" I will consider Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, which depends on American theatre tradition and the tastes of white audiences. Although she follows white aesthetic canons and technique, she does not present integration as the strategy for change. Rather, she advocates the
struggle for independent cultural definition, for, in spite of moving into a white neighborhood, the Younger family members reject the values and points of view of white middle-class Americans. Thus, their coming out of the ghetto signifies the desire to be liberated from their "colonized" state.

The other African-American playwrights echo Hansberry's perspective, yet deny the moving into a white neighborhood, believing that it results in another form of colonization. Rather, they focus on strengthening the existing African-American community. They claim a right to determine for themselves the purpose, content, and canons for their own work. The exclusive African-American form and technique may not exist, for they have been to some degree influenced by the general social value system and production market. Yet Baraka laid stress on the need for an African-American aesthetic of theatre with much attention directed toward the preferences of an African-American audience. For him, this aesthetic may produce a frame of developing a new African-American value system that brings with it a reevaluation of African-American cultural entities.

In his essay, "The Revolutionary Theatre," Baraka adopts the concept of the theatre as an alternative to the
conventional type of African-American theatre in his belief that theatre should be a means of African-American independence. Baraka maintains that the Revolutionary Theatre should be a "theatre of Victims," forcing change.¹¹ In order to serve politics, theatre should employ such methodologies as persuasion and didacticism as well as new dramatic structures. The African-American theatre commonly includes as part of dramatic structures the elements of music, dance, and rhetoric, which are indigenous to African-American culture. Integrated into such dramatic structures as fable, allegory, and rituals, these cultural elements help elevate new consciousness for social change. For example, African-American music in the ritual structure of Baraka's *Slave Ship* contributes to the subversive function of the theatre in calling for the resistance against African Americans' "colonized" state and for action to build a new place: "When we gonna rise above the sun, / When we gonna take our own place, brother."¹² This chant, along with drumbeat, develops the instructive function of the theatre in teaching the audience to recognize the challenge of freedom.


Despite the similarity in the aesthetic of African-American theatre, these African-American playwrights employ distinctive methodologies, which derive from considering how they elevate African-American consciousness and who makes up the audience. In his introduction to The New Lafayette Theatre Presents, a statement on the aesthetics and politics of African-American theatre, Bullins divides "Black dialectics," defined as a "dialectical nature among Black people," into a "dialectic of change," which "confront[s] whites directly and angrily," and a "dialectic of experience," whose attention is paid to a more faithful description of African-American experience. Depending on Bullins' conception of "Black dialectics," I will consider Baraka in chapter two, "Dialectic of Change," then Kennedy and Wilson in chapters three and four, which express "dialectic of experience."

Best known for a "dialectic of change," Baraka conceives of theatre as a revolutionary tool for change. His revolutionary plays deal with political problems by intensifying the victimization of African Americans and by showing the possibilities for specific actions. In The Slave and Slave Ship, Baraka comments on the intensity of

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the physical and psychological violence that dominates his vision of American culture. Here African Americans think that they exist as autonomous individuals struggling for existential awareness; however, their conception of self is not their own, but determined by white definitions. Baraka suggests that the cure for such violence can be achieved by a violent action against the white representatives and their African-American accomplices.

While Baraka makes the African-American theatre serve politics by using allegory and symbol, Kennedy and Wilson faithfully describe the African-American experience that is not abstracted into the concept. They see the theatre less as a revolutionary tool than as what Bullins calls "a sanctuary for re-creation of the Black spirit and African identity." Kennedy and Wilson have worked within a "dialectic of experience" that entails a more "realistic" picture of African-American life—generally, a "reality" shaped by individual perceptions. These playwrights do not employ didactic statements as in Baraka's plays; conversely, they encourage the audience to confront the experience presented rather than to accept didactic statements. Although they belong to a "dialectic of

experience," these playwrights show distinctive features in terms of gender and tactics.

An African-American female playwright, Adrienne Kennedy, dramatizes in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* a mulatto's psychological experience that attracts racially diverse audiences. By using a surrealistic or dreamlike form, which is characterized by little plot and symbolism, Kennedy focuses on a mulatto's search for "Who am I?" This theme is closely linked to her desire for freedom from white oppression and injustice, and, furthermore, from identity conflict.

August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* examines the plight of African-Americans' culture and economic oppression, implying that there is no essential change in their perception of society between the late 1950s and the middle 1980s. While the production of art is controlled by the dominant society, the artistic quality is determined according to economic success. Under this situation, the African-American musicians risk losing the form of music indigenous to African-American culture under the dominant economic structure; as Cutler complains, "the white folks don't care nothing about who or what you is."15 His

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complaint epitomizes the African Americans' desire for economic and cultural independence.

Chapters five and six consider white playwrights, Arthur Kopit and David Rabe, who also center their plays on the freedom of racial minorities. They do so by devoting more energy to explicate how the American ideology perpetuates the racial and cultural subordination. Despite the similarities in their claim to cultural independence, the African-American playwrights and these playwrights disagree on aesthetics in terms of how playwrights, audience, and characters function in the theatre. First, unlike some of the African-American playwrights, Kopit and Rabe are not spokespersons, leaders, or counselors of a group, even though they depend on the didactic purposes of the epic theatre. Second, these playwrights do not conceive of the audience's familiarity with the material on stage as necessary for dramatic structures; thus, they try to let the audience remain alienated rather than to encourage their identification with the actor as in some plays of the African-American playwrights. Finally, the African-American characters in the African-American theatre nearly always represent African Americans; however, the non-white characters in the plays by Kopit and Rabe are not limited to the representations of a specific ethnic group,
but extend to other racial minorities. In this sense, the special features of Native Americans and a Vietnamese are fused into the "universal" wish of racial minorities to gain cultural independence.

Kopit and Rabe employ the episodic quality structured in multiple layers of racial reality that is based on a "metaphoric battlefield." In *Indians*, Kopit pays much attention to the socio-political conflict between Native Americans and whites in order to illustrate how the American ideology justifies the destruction of other physically less powerful societies or groups. However, Rabe in *Sticks and Bones* dramatizes the conflict of more subjective perceptions of racial relations. Rabe sees David's family members obsessed with racial prejudice living in a "battlefield" founded on racism in American life. Paralleling this racial violence to the military violence, *Indians* and *Sticks and Bones* show the implications of the violent effect of racism.

In chapter seven, I will consider David Hwang's *M. Butterfly*, which attempts to achieve self-representations of Chinese, racial minorities, or furthermore, of the marginalized through dispelling the traditionally accepted assumptions based on color and gender, assumptions formed in stereotypical perceptions. Like other playwrights,
Hwang seems to have similar perceptions on the "reality" of race relations in American society. Unlike some African-American playwrights, however, his artistic purpose is not directed to appeal only to the Chinese- or Asian-American audience, but to the racially diverse audience. While most of the African-American playwrights express the shared experience with African-American audience, Hwang makes *M. Butterfly* transcend the specificity of Chinese or Asian elements in order to grasp the issues of race, gender, and imperialism. This transcendence might be a result of his consideration of the relationship between "truth" and more audience. In this play, Hwang dismantles the assumption that the white/Western culture is superior to other cultures, and that male is superior to female. Thus, the "appropriate" space for the racially or sexually excluded gradually appears as an object to be denied for their own identity.
Since Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* first appeared on Broadway in 1959, critics have tried to penetrate her social, political, and philosophical ideas reflected in it. The widespread view is that the play embraces for African Americans a white middle-class way of life, without questioning racial restrictions on African Americans. On the anti-integrationist side, social critic Harold Cruse deplores this play as the effort to achieve African Americans' acceptance of the universal white values, and furthermore, makes a severe criticism of Hansberry as a playwright who has artistically failed to deal with their own ethnic materials.1

Recently, however, some critics have emphasized the play's concern for African Americans' freedom. Notably, Steven A. Carter pays much attention to the Younger family's attempt to claim the authority for self-representations, thereby describing *A Raisin in the Sun* as "celebrat[ing] both black culture and black resistance to

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white oppression." To celebrate "blackness" is indeed associated with restoring equality, justice, and racial integrity. When we start to discuss in a general way this "blackness," we perhaps find it natural to conceive of such restoration as occupying the "just" space for African-American autonomy. When the Younger family attempts to move from their ghetto into the white suburbs, the issues are not limited to the "physical" space, but extend to socio-political, economic, and cultural spaces. Therefore, by assigning the Youngers' move a metaphoric meaning, *A Raisin in the Sun* opens itself to a variety of challenges against all racist social systems colonizing them.

This struggle for the "just" space engages in a critique of the dominant ideology, for it is, as Cornel West argues, to dismantle their discourses that "invoke universality, scientificity, and objectivity in order to hide cultural plurality, conceal the power-laden play of differences, and preserve hierarchical . . . racial . . . relations." The dominant ideology is a mode of subjecting the Youngers into a "marginalized" ghetto built as a

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counter to the white world. However, by gradually distancing themselves from that ideology, the Youngers create an alternative African-American ideology in order to realize their aspirations for freedom. Therefore, *A Raisin in the Sun* can be fully appreciated if we consider it as an elaboration of African Americans' efforts to be liberated from white oppression. While enacting what Hansberry calls "coming out of the ghettos of America," this play exposes a subtext that links the idea of space to freedom. Thus, rather than following a single line interpretation of "coming out," I will discuss how the Youngers reject confinement within the whites' idea of space.

The dominant idea of space is most compellingly articulated when a white representative, Lindner, makes an effort to keep the Youngers from moving into his community while restricting their right to free choice. In fact, attempting to silence them, the community already organized "New Neighbors Orientation Committee," that is, "a sort of Welcoming Committee."Ironically, this organization does

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not welcome people, but judges whether or not they are qualified for the standard as members of that community. Of course, to judge them is an arbitrary act of categorizing them according to the racial order based on the dimension of skin color. In this sense, a mode of white ideology engaged in this organization refers to the existence of the "collective" racial discrimination.

Here I borrow the concept of ideology from Gramsci who distinguishes between "organic ideologies" and "arbitrary ideologies." By concentrating on the former, he considers ideology as being pervasively manifested in every pattern of personal and collective life. In this sense, ideology works to inspire concrete attitudes, to set orientations for action, and to produce what Gramsci calls "consciousness of people position." When internalized, ideology becomes a vehicle of hegemony that one class can exercise over the other classes.

In the play, Lindner employs persuasion and threat in order to achieve the hegemonic power over the Younger family. Lindner's rhetoric begins in a persuasive tone in order to gain the consent of the Youngers to the existing

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Gramsci 377.
social order: "the overwhelming majority of our people out there feel that people get along better; take more of a common interest in the life of the community when they share a common background" (99-100). By dissuading the Youngers from moving into his community, Lindner tries to restrict them within the "common," yet supposedly inferior, background. In addition to persuasion, Lindner also employs a warning threat by emphasizing that "some of the incidents . . . have happened when colored people move into certain areas" (98). Persuasion and threat serve as ideologically disguising Lindner's desire for hegemony as an enactment for the Youngers' happiness. But his intention is apparently exposed; as Lindner points out, the Youngers "aren't wanted" because the whites' "whole way of life and everything they've ever worked for is threatened" (101). As Lindner's stance here shows, his rhetoric stems in part from his fear that African Americans might "threaten" or subvert the whites' idea of space: it is the whites only who have reserved the right to enjoy the privileged "common" lifestyle. By defining social, physical, and cultural spaces for African Americans in terms of racial differences, the dominant group gains prestige through a variety of what I call "spatial distance."

While Hansberry approaches the political efficacy of dominant ideology, she strongly defends the idea of African Americans as decentered in terms of this "spatial distance." If we consider such distance through the Youngers' perceptions of reality, we can discover how widely the dominant ideology is pervasive in their ghetto life, especially in their defined social positions, roles, and attitudes. Set in a ghetto, *A Raisin in the Sun* draws a relation between space and the Youngers' frustrations about their present situation. By various means, Hansberry suggests that racism is tightly combined with positing African Americans as marginal to society. And it leads them to be excluded from the social, political, and economic benefits that the dominant group gains in the suburbs, and consequently, to be internally colonized. Nevertheless, such distance rather intensifies the Youngers' awareness of the absurdity involved in an arbitrary mapping of the space that should be shared.

Forced to live in the "colonized" ghetto, the Youngers feel themselves oppressed, disenfranchised, and silenced. Their experience of housing, jobs, and stereotypes makes them spiritually imprisoned. This sense of imprisonment is most visibly evident where their current house is described as a claustrophobic place. In the "Production Notes" of *A
Raisin in the Sun, Hansberry describes the furnishings of the Younger living room as "tired," for they have been used for "too many people for too many years" (9). In this overcrowded house, Lena and her daughter Beneatha share a bedroom, her grandchild Travis uses a makedown bed, and the Youngers share an outside common bathroom with the Johnsons. Furthermore, the house is infested with roaches and rats so that Ruth even calls it a "rat trap" (32). In addition, the price of the house in the ghetto area explains that the Youngers are continually excluded from social benefits of equal housing: while justifying her purchase of a house in a white neighborhood, Lena maintains that the houses for African Americans "cost twice as much as other houses" (82). Accordingly, the house represents a space to be marginalized by the dominant hegemony, thereby making the Youngers "[t]ired of everything" (20).

Jobs also become the index of how deeply African Americans are marginalized in the existing socio-economic systems. This is the consequence of not the Youngers' unwillingness to work, but of economic discrimination to which they are subordinated. Despite their Puritan work ethic, they are still assigned to the menial roles, and compensated so minimally that their social status remains basically unchanged as in the social structure erected.
during Big Walter's youth. Denied all status and respect, the Youngers are portrayed as serving others: Walter works as a chauffeur; his mother Lena and his wife Ruth work as maids for others' chores. Their serving roles demonstrate the persistence of African Americans' subservience.

Culturally, African Americans are generally kept within the degrading space categorized in light of a white norm. As Cornel West points out, African Americans relatively lack the "black power to represent themselves to themselves and others as complex human beings." In *A Raisin in the Sun*, the fact that Lena will call Ruth's employer that she had a flu proves how pervasively African Americans has been misrepresented in daily life. Feeling tired, Ruth asks Lena why she uses the term "flu" instead of "tired," yet Lena responds: "'Cause it sounds respectable to 'em. Something white people get, too. They know 'bout the flu. Otherwise they think you been cut up or something when you tell 'em you sick" (31). This illustrates that the images of African Americans are generally created through the dominant modes of excessively categorizing and even ordering. Likewise, their degrading image is also evident when, just before he informs Lindner

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of his decision to move, Walter parodies "STINKING NIGGERS" (126). These misrepresented images concern the absurdity of dominant culture's assumptions of African Americans. Consequently, underlying their degrading status analyzed in terms of a relation between race and space—especially, physical, socio-economic, and cultural—is the tendency of the dominant ideology to make them internally colonized.

Caught in white ideology, the characters can choose either to remain silent and oppressed or to claim self-representation and recognition. If the former option is manifested in the Murchisons' indifference to black pride and integrity, the latter embodies the essential desire of Asagai and the Youngers.

The former option is well manifested in George Murchison's struggle for assimilation through wealth. This attitude is evident in his indifference of the political power of education. Responding to Beneatha's question on the purpose of education, George sees education only as a means of taking pride in one's factual knowledge, passing the course, or getting a degree. For George, education "has nothing to do with thoughts" (85). This kind of attitude is also implied in his relationship with Beneatha. George explains that Beneatha is attractive to him, not because she is a person of "thoughts," but because she has
a physical beauty: "I want a nice— simple— sophisticated 
girl— Not a poet . . ." (85). As a middle-class African 
American, George has got a lot of benefits, especially 
economic, from the existing social systems, thereby showing 
his indifference to such "thoughts" that may inspire the 
necessity for change. In this sense, George is one of 
"assimilationist Negroes" whom Beneatha defines as "someone 
who is willing to give up— his own culture— and submerge 
himself completely in the dominant and— in this 
case— oppressive culture!" (69).

Through George, Hansberry creates a phenomenon of 
middle-class African Americans who are obsessed with 
materialistic success, the adoption of white values and 
beliefs, and even the distancing from the same ethnic 
group. When her family members wish that she would marry 
George, Beneatha opposes them by referring to the 
Murchisons as "honest-to-God-real-live-rich colored people 
. . . who are more snobbish than rich white people" (37- 
38). By contrasting George/the Murchisons with Asagai and 
the Youngers in terms of "black consciousness," Hansberry 
implicitly reveals her belief that once this middle-class 
enviously desires white beliefs, blackness turns out to be 
inferior and makes easy the dominant maintenance of 
supremacy.
By contrast, the latter option manifested in Asagai's and the Youngers' struggle for self-representation is an expression of decolonization. This is articulated in their strong desire that has been repressed and denied, a desire to transgress what I call the "spatial order" erected on racial differences. Here, that desire is not simply about rejecting white ideology, but also transforming the existing power structure.

Closely linked to this "decolonialist" reading of A Raisin in the Sun is the reference of Asagai, a Nigerian liberator. Asagai is committed to an independence from colonialism: Beneatha asserts, "You with all your talk and dreams about Africa! You still think you can patch up the world. Cure the Great Sore of Colonialism—with the 'penicillin of Independence!'" (115). Asagai is so idealistic that he might not mirror Hansberry's political view. Yet his role of a liberator might serve as a reference to her/African Americans' struggle for change in social systems. Specifically, a relation between independence and cultural identity is made when Asagai introduces Beneatha to the African culture in order to stress the necessity of cultural identity. African culture attracts attention not because it speaks of Nigeria, but because its interest lies in the way that Africa serves as
a vehicle for inspiring the necessity of African-American freedom and cultural identity.

Issues of freedom, then, are at the heart of A Raisin in the Sun. Hansberry seizes on the Youngers who claim the right to choose a place in which to live, since free choice is viewed as epitomizing their desire to be liberated from internal colonization. In a letter to Miss Dehler, Hansberry emphasizes African Americans' need to have the right to free choice: "our people don't really have a choice. We must come out of the ghettos of America, because the ghettos are killing us; not only our dreams . . . but our very bodies."9 This letter enables us to see that the "decolonizing" strategy of "coming out" is closely combined with free choice.

To achieve freedom, the Youngers attempt to create a totally different ideology, and simultaneously to place themselves outside the white ideology that makes them succumb to myths of their own inferiority. For them, what has been regarded as "natural" becomes an object to be demystified; it is socially and arbitrarily imposed, not naturally given. Refusing to accept "given" as "natural," the Youngers unsettle orders of white rhetoric in order to achieve a "new" space.

9Hansberry, To Be Young 117.
What kind of liberation strategies does A Raisin in the Sun express? How are the Youngers positioned in a shift away from dominant ideology toward the building up of "Black power"? In this play, economic increase, education, and racial pride become a means of producing such power to escape the restrictive pressures that dominant ideology places on African Americans. The liberating function of economic increase is well proved in the fact that, as Lena tells, her husband Big Walter died of his hard work to do "his own war with this here world that took his baby from him" (33). Probably Big Walter believes that, for those colonized, to improve their economic status is a strategy of freedom from "this here world." As Lena remembers, Big Walter complains to her of his society: "Seem like God didn't see fit to give the black man nothing but dreams" (34). Big Walter's wish appears to be that of everyone; yet, by drawing a relation between African Americans and "nothing but dreams," he links his poverty to economic and social systems of racism.

In order to escape "this here world," the Youngers work hard even in serving the whites. Yet in this economic system, hard work does not allow them to achieve their "deferred dreams." Ironically, the hope of freedom comes with Big Walter's death, because his death results in
bringing ten thousand dollars insurance money to the family. Yet the money is not enough to fulfill the Youngers' dreams such as a new house, a liquor store, and education. As a result, the conflict among them begins when each member asserts that the insurance money should be used for its own strategy of freedom: Lena and Ruth focus on having a new house outside the ghetto; Walter on increasing economic status by investing in liquor store; and Beneatha on her education of medicine. Despite some differences in degree, all the strategies become a vehicle of freeing the Youngers from white oppression, insofar as they are inseparably combined to inspire their racial identity.

Earlier in *A Raisin in the Sun*, Walter believes that money is "life," and that the democratic ideas such as equality and freedom are subordinated to materialistic affluence. To achieve these ideas, Walter plans to buy a liquor store. His plan is not to be contained in the white society. His purpose of earning money is not limited to money itself. Instead, money becomes a vehicle of rejecting white hegemony, for he is convinced that money makes possible the education for his son, the freedom from the serving roles of himself, Lena, and Ruth, and finally, cultural identity. Nevertheless, Walter is strongly
involved with the achievement of social status through the power of money. Walter's obsession with capitalistic materialism leads C. W. E. Bigsby even to argue that this play might be read "not so much as an assault on American racism as an attack on its substitution of material for spiritual values".

In fact, Walter disguises his materialistic aspect as a desire to become "someone" who might claim selfhood and racial identity needed for the challenge to white value systems. Yet Ruth criticizes Walter's investment in the liquor store as an intention to "be Mr. Arnold rather than be his chauffeur" (22). It is true that, like Mr. Arnold, he really wants to be rich and respected first of all. Angrily responding to his wife's attack, Walter complains that African-American women "don't understand about building their men up and making 'em feel like they [are] somebody . . . [l]ike they can do something" (22).

With this fraudulent belief in the "decolonizing" power of money, Walter becomes an "angry young man" when he thinks no one in his family is going to "understand" him, and moreover, when Lena refuses to entrust him to handle the insurance money. Here, his anger is linked to what

\[\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\text{C. W. E. Bigsby, The Second Black: Essays in Black Literature (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1980) 216.}\]
might deprive him of the chance for freedom through his investment—Ruth's indifference and Beneatha's study to become a doctor. When Walter talks to Ruth about his plan, she tries to avoid that topic by urging him to eat eggs. This causes Walter to angrily express his sexist attitude by calling African-American women "a race of women with small minds" (23). And when Beneatha asks for the money for education, Walter reveals his male chauvinism, asserting that she should be "a nurse like other women—or just get married and shut up!" (26). Thus, leaving to work, Walter shouts toward Ruth and Beneatha: they are "[t]he world's most backward race of people" (26). However, this chauvinistic attitude changes into love, when Lena declares Walter to be the head of the family and simultaneously gives him the remaining sixty-five hundred dollars after making a down-payment on a new house. Walter takes Ruth to the movies, and even encourages Beneatha to continue her study. This sudden shift from chauvinism to love proves how Walter's relationship with his family members is influenced by his strong commitment to materialism that he fraudulently believes serves to improve the family's freedom.

By the same token, A Raisin in the Sun shows that education is a strategy of producing power. Throughout
most of the play, education is suggested as a means for the Youngers to perceive the contradiction between their perceived reality and white ideology, the arbitrariness of "space," and the necessity of cultural identity. The relationship of education to freedom is invoked in reference to their persistent concern with education, especially for Beneatha and Travis. Beneatha is most powerful in her educational desire to become a doctor, to know African culture, and to express herself. For her, education probably increases social, political, and cultural positions of African Americans, for it not only produces professions, but also inspires "black consciousness" for the effective expression of themselves as they are. Although it is true that Walter criticizes Beneatha's desire to become a doctor, he does not ignore the political efficacy of education. Walter reveals his view of education when he dances with Ruth a "classic body-melding 'slow drag'" (94). When Beneatha derides their dance as "old-fashioned," he teasingly refers to Beneatha as one of "professional New Negroes," who exerts every effort to "successfully brain-wash [one's] own self!" (95). This comment allows us to suggest that education should function to inspire one's "own self" through cultural distinctiveness and to reject assimilation as a degrading
solution. Furthermore, the power of education is alluded to in a passage that describes the Youngers'—especially Walter's—concern with Travis's education for his freedom. Thus, education signifies the political efficacy for African Americans' independence, opening up the possibility of their participation in the black movement.

The Youngers face a new decision concerning their future after Walter loses the money he secretly invested in a liquor store, almost two thirds of the insurance money. This financial loss serves to test Walter's personal integrity. To Walter, this loss means that his dream of freedom might be deferred. Feeling responsible and even guilty for the loss, he considers selling back the new house to make up for some of the lost money. The "selling" naturally leads his family to be subordinated to the whites' idea of space, thereby sacrificing racial pride and integrity. In this sense, Walter's strategy of freedom through materialism is dangerously flawed. This explains why the Youngers are united to stand against Walter's will to sell the house, which might perpetuate housing discrimination.

By conceiving of Lindner's offer of money for this selling as racial insult, the Youngers emphasize the importance of love and their persistent will to freedom in
the emergence and construction of solidarity. Solidarity is constructed when Lena offers to Beneatha a lesson of love and then directs Walter toward racial pride. Here, Lena is portrayed as an embodiment of love. For example, when Walter considers Lindner's offer, Beneatha angrily calls him "a toothless rat" (127). Yet Lena asks Beneatha to love her brother, for he is "at his lowest and can't believe in himself 'cause the world done whipped him so" (128). Here, Lena ascribes his victimization to this world filled with racial barriers. Thus, Lena tries to help Walter to find a new way out of such a world rather than to reprove him for his indecision, by reminding him of racial pride that his ancestors have possessed for "five generations":

> I come from five generations of people who was slaves and share croppers—ain't nobody in my family never took no money from nobody that was a way of telling us we wasn't fit to walk the earth. We ain't never been that poor. We ain't never been that—dead inside. (125)

Above all, familial solidarity is partly erected by Ruth's consistency in her desire for a new house. Though receiving less critical attention, Ruth is the only character who, unlike the other members, consistently and desperately defends the necessity of "get[ting] OUT OF HERE!!" (122). For this end, Ruth declares that she will work with her baby on her back "twenty hours a day in all
the kitchens in Chicago!" (121). In a sense, her declaration involves the continuation of her "colonized" roles of serving the whites. Yet, since her work makes the possibility of freedom more solid, it can be in the long run considered a means of resistance to white hegemony rather than an act to be colonized. Closely related to the Youngers' struggle for "getting out," the familial solidarity brings the Youngers to the point of claiming their equal right to property ownership in a white neighborhood.

When Walter realizes that his strategy of freedom through materialism is wrong, he takes the first step down the path toward a manhood with racial pride and dignity. By acting with this dignity in claiming the authority over a new space, Walter declares before Lindner, "we called you over here to tell you that we are very proud. . . . And we have decided to move into our house—because my father—my father—he earned it for us, brick by brick" (131). Walter's decision is that he will break out of the socially given space that has dehumanized his family. This demonstrates that their future will be grounded in their own voice rather than a repressive matrix of dominant ideology. Now, Walter rejects being ideologically persuaded and threatened; rather, as Lena advises, Walter
is in a position to "make [Lindner] understand" what he is going to do, and simultaneously to "teach him good" (129). Such instructional methods of persuasion and teaching no longer become the property of the dominant group. Mostly drawn from the family's solidarity, Walter's maturity overshadows white ideology, thus leading Lena to conclude that "He finally come to manhood today, didn't he? Kind of like a rainbow after the rain" (134). Hansberry's text dramatizes this shift from "rain" to "rainbow" by way of "coming out," the symbol by which I mean the decolonization of the Youngers. While Walter's manhood rekindles a hope of freedom, it provides his family with a power to refuse the "appropriate" space that the dominant ideology has already drawn for them. This refusal signifies not only a "war with this here world" (33), but also a great step toward independence.

Despite the potential triumph over white oppression, however, the quest for freedom might be in danger of being subverted by the possible problems. After their moving into the white neighborhood, the Youngers might face the difficulty of financial situation and their isolation in a white neighborhood. In fact, the white community has had the advantage of prestige from the racial order that might be threatened by the Youngers' move. Can we expect that
the white community easily relinquishes a variety of advantages deriving from such prestige? Certainly, there might be the community's collective resistance to the Youngers' act, for, as Lindner says to Walter, "You just can't force people to change their hearts" (101). This might stimulate a violent confrontation with the Youngers. When Lena purchases a new house in a place where, as Ruth says, "there ain't no colored people" (81), the responses of Walter and Ruth to this imply violence. Walter reproaches Lena for her purchase: "So that's the peace and comfort you went out and bought for us today!" (81). And, even though Ruth responds differently, her comment on Lena's purchase also hints at the possible violence, as she says that "[She] ain't one never been 'fraid of no crackers" (82). In addition to violence, their move does not promise a bright future in terms of the socio-economic problems, so far as they are assigned to menial jobs. In fact, even though three members have worked, they have difficulty in accepting Travis's asking for 50 cents. Even after their move, their financial problems might remain unsolved. Compared with their white neighborhood, the Youngers are too poor to be associated with, or even to emulate, middle-class whites. Consequently, the Youngers might be forced to be isolated in the white neighborhood.
What is the benefit of "coming out"? Why is this so important for the Youngers? Regardless of various possible problems, however, their decision to "coming out" demonstrates the degree to which the desire for freedom out of their shackled situation embodied in the ghetto life is strong. For the Youngers, peace comes with inner harmony, not with physical suburbs. Furthermore, with a renewed belief in solidarity, the Youngers will voice and celebrate the right to share what the dominant group have considered to be their own. Their act will be redeemed as paving a path to be decolonized. Thus, as George R. Adams points out in "Black Militant Drama," the Youngers—especially Walter—come to recognize that they have a "social right" to come out of the ghetto, a "psychological necessity" to change frustration into self-assertion, and a familial and racial pride. This recognition indicates the primary stage of African Americans' independence. In this sense, their dream is never the negative one, as implied in Langston Hughes's poem, "Harlem."

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?

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Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Or does it explode?12

Despite a variety of racial barriers, the Youngers' dream neither dries up nor explodes. Rather, it might be embodied in a new space that represents a place of relieving them of the spiritual imprisonment of the ghetto life.

The authority over "space" is the prelude to African Americans' cultural identity. One of the culturally distinctive factors is African heritage that motivates African Americans to overcome the stereotyped images. As Hansberry points out in the stage direction of A Raisin in the Sun, for example, Lena appears as one of "the Herero women" of Southwest Africa (27). In a scene just before Lindner arrives in expectation of Walter's decision to stay in the ghetto, the African heritage is especially emphasized. While Beneatha, dressed in African costume, is involved in African folk dance to the African music, this dance entices drunken Walter to act like an African warrior, wielding an imaginary spear. Here, African heritage appears as a revitalizing symbol of cultural identity.

Nevertheless, the importance of Africa does not lie in accepting the African culture as it is; instead, it lies in evoking the distinctive nature of African-American culture by setting its spiritual roots in a hybrid type of Africanness and Americanness. In this sense, Hansberry's view of African roots is different from Amiri Baraka's, for he writes in *Raise Race Rays Raze* that African Americans "are African, no matter that [they] have been trapped in the West these few hundred years." However, for Hansberry, the Youngers are not Africans, but African Americans, for their culture generally grows out of the new situation they face in America. The African-American situation reflects the slave tradition that produces Walter's jazz, his mother's spirituals, and Ruth's blues. Rooted in this tradition and created in America, African-American music occupies part of African-American culture, contributing to the elevation of morale whenever the Youngers feel frustrated in the existing condition. In this sense, Hansberry does not seem to agree with Baraka who clings only to "Africanness," and with Beneatha who, like him, dismisses these forms of music as "assimilationist junk" (64). By making these forms of music ...
music echo the experience "specific" to African Americans, Hansberry intensifies African-American audience's emotional response to white oppression.

In order to vitalize the Youngers' journey to freedom, Hansberry employs her artistic craft appropriate for the realistic description of characters and their present situation. In fact, as she maintains in her 1959 interview with Studs Terkel, Hansberry acknowledges that one can create "universality" by paying "very great attention to the specific." Yet, Hansberry denies that A Raisin in the Sun is written for "universality," by asserting that the Youngers are "a Negro family, specifically and definitely culturally."14 Despite the aspects of "universality," the play basically shows more "specific" elements that become evident when the Youngers opt for "black consciousness." Here, these "specific" elements contribute to showing realistically the ways in which the Youngers live with a dominant group.

This specificity provides a fundamental vehicle for elaborating the "lived experience" of African Americans as African Americans. And it makes their suffering become concrete, not abstract. In her article, "The Negro in the American Theatre," Hansberry notes that dominant hegemony

14Hansberry, To Be Young 114.
has been justified in its reduction of African Americans to "concepts" in the politics of art:

The Negro, as primarily presented in the past, has never existed on land or sea. It has seldom been a portrait of men, only a portrait of a concept, and that concept has been a romance and no other thing. By its very nature white supremacy longed for the contentment of the Negro with "his place."  

Literature, as Hansberry asserts, has served to perform the ideological power by which African Americans have been confined within an inferior "place." Their "place" has been treated as trustworthy; it has been taken for granted without evidence. In other words, the whites' idea of space precedes logic. While negating this idea in the politics of theatre, Hansberry forces change on social systems by portraying the Youngers not as "concepts," but as human beings struggling for the recovery of their "lost" identity.

While the Youngers work at liberating themselves of their internal colonization, A Raisin in the Sun encourages them to set their own house in order before they confront the whites. In addition, this play includes neither the obscene language nor the physical attacks directed toward the whites. Probably, this becomes a factor of attracting

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white audiences. However, this attraction does not mean that this play advocates "integration." Rather, this play aims at arousing in the racially mixed audience a sense of change for African Americans' decolonization, by inspiring them to, like the Youngers, penetrate what has been considered the whites' space. Therefore, this play solidifies a vision of independence, ultimately forcing the audience to change their old values and beliefs.
 CHAPTER 2

"Dialectic of Change":
Amiri Baraka's The Slave and Slave Ship

If Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun enables us to see how to achieve freedom through the internalization of African-American values and beliefs in the existing social structure, Amiri Baraka's revolutionary plays such as The Slave (1964) and Slave Ship (1967) articulate a more radical method by interrogating the possibility of change by challenging the validity of the social structure itself. Although both playwrights set the goal of establishing a new social order based on African-American ideology, their strategic approaches to the goal are totally different: Hansberry attempts to do so within the existing social systems; Baraka is committed to violently eradicating the roots of the oppressive power structure. The Slave and Slave Ship are concerned with critiquing the Hansberry-like strategy of freedom that, as Walter asserts to the white representative, Lindner, almost at the end of A Raisin in the Sun, will not make any trouble to the white neighborhood,¹ and that Baraka perceives ultimately to perpetuate African Americans' metaphorical status of

slavery. Both Baraka plays attempt this critique by justifying his assumption that, even though the real slavery system no longer exists, African Americans are still "enslaved" within and by the dominant culture. In this chapter I will focus on how The Slave and Slave Ship attempt to reveal and then subvert white ideology, as well as to build up what Baraka calls "nation" as a new space for African Americans, by employing his view of "nation" as a frame within which to read the plays.

Baraka reveals his concerns with the political role of theatre in a society. His concerns, as expressed in "The Revolutionary Theatre," are to employ theatre as an ideological weapon of teaching the audience the psychological need to "force change," by "Accus[ing] and Attack[ing] anything that can be accused and attacked." While criticizing the oppressive structure of society, Baraka presents a vision of the desired, yet long rejected, space for African Americans who are, in his words, "a race, a culture, a Nation." While Baraka identifies the "Nation" with black people, race, and culture, the concept of "nation" might be metaphorically applied in reading

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3Baraka, Home 248.
Baraka's plays. That is, his "nation" may be referred to as a space for expressing a cultural independence beyond white ideology, an independence in which African Americans can be represented.

The building up of a black "nation" is the most significant element in The Slave and Slave Ship, for the concept of "nation" both shapes and defines Baraka's vision, African-American cultural identity. While keeping the theatrical effect on the audience in mind, Baraka creates forms for instructing the audience through the elevation of black consciousness for freedom. Ultimately, Baraka makes the theatre serve as a vehicle for encouraging the audience to be committed to the achievement of freedom. In light of the relationship between the audience and the characters, there is a difference between Brecht and Baraka: one emphasizes the aesthetic distance of the audiences; the other encourages them to be involved emotionally. Nevertheless, Baraka seems to agree with Brecht in that theatre should be intended to awaken the audience's capacity to act. By similarly making his stage a place for teaching the audience to perceive his message, Baraka attempts to provoke it into awareness of the white

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ideology that has repressively worked on African Americans. In the introduction to the black theatre issue of Drama Review, Larry Neal defines this political function of the "Black Arts Movement": "The Black Arts and the Black Power concept both relate broadly to the Afro-American's desire for self-determination and nationhood. Both concepts are nationalistic."

By undertaking the politics of theatre in The Slave and Slave Ship, Baraka places emphasis on the necessity of African Americans to have their own space that is not contaminated with white values and beliefs and, furthermore, directs his audience to respond violently against the social systems of racism. To do so, Baraka employs violence as a dramatic strategy for African Americans to free themselves from white oppression. Substituting white victims for African-American victims, as seen in Dutchman, both plays argue that the only way to build up a black "nation" is to struggle actively against white oppression and, if necessary, to employ violence directed to the whites.

The Slave gives credence to Baraka's view of "nation" and also serves to criticize the dominant culture. Unlike

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Clay, passively victimized in Dutchman, the protagonist Walker Vessels of The Slave becomes a black revolutionary who struggles to be liberated from both white ideology and its persistent influence on his life. A black poet and militant leader, Vessels visits his white ex-wife, Grace, who had two daughters with him, and her husband, Bradford Easley. Vessels' strong commitment to Black nationalism leads him to be distanced from Grace and Easley, the white professor. The debate over racial injustice between Vessels and two whites serves to generate two kinds of ideology while positioning each ideology in a racial war.

The white liberals, Easley and Grace, are preoccupied with white supremacy despite their apparent liberalism. While Vessels defines white oppression as a horrifying fact, and even equates the whites with "evil," Easley attempts to justify white dominance that he believes is a due result of the supremacy of Western culture:

> Do you think Negroes are better people than whites . . . that they can govern a society better than whites? That they'll be more judicious or more tolerant? Do you think they'll make fewer mistakes? I mean really, if the Western white man has proved one thing . . . it's the futility of modern society . . . . Even so, will that change the essential functions of the world? Will there be more love or beauty in the world . . . more knowledge . . . because of it?  

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*Amiri Baraka, The Slave, Dutchman and the Slave* (New York: Morrow, 1964) 73. All citations are from this
Taking pride in "Western idealism" (62), Easley is convinced that Vessels, not the Western culture, is responsible for his own suffering. And then Easley criticizes Vessels' concern with violence. However, Vessels counters such white ideology by questioning the political efficacy and moral supremacy of "Western idealism." Vessels denies Easley's stated contribution of such idealism to the world: "Is that what the Western ofay thought while he was ruling . . . that his rule somehow brought more love and beauty into the world?" (73).

In fact, this white ideology strengthens rather than resolve racial discrimination, for it serves to legitimate the victimization of African Americans as "slaves." This legitimation makes African Americans feel that Western ideals, in the words of Vessels, are "too righteous to question, too deeply felt to deny" (44). White ideology at times seems to make people blind to reality so that it produces the forces that obstruct freedom. This ideology involves itself in defining the boundaries of roles for African Americans.

Implicit in the definition of the others' identity is an arbitrary wielding of power. This generally generates
prejudiced views that defy African-American values and beliefs. Vessels' black consciousness creates an argument for the "political correctness" of white perspective on African Americans. This consciousness arises from his awareness of African Americans' right to social justice. Thus, Vessels points out that, despite their apparent justification, whites' ideas should be seriously reconsidered in order to be justly evaluated: "They need judging. I mean, they don't come in that singular or wild, that whatever they are, just because they're beautiful and brilliant . . . just because they're right . . . doesn't mean anything. The very rightness stinks a lotta times" (44).

The act of judging is a form of performing power. While judging others has been in the hands of the dominant group, it loses its original function of "judging." Instead, because of the power involved in the act of judging, truth has been sometimes distorted. In this process, African Americans' identity is arbitrarily assigned by whites: as Vessels argues, "Brown is not brown except when used as an intimate description of personal phenomenological fields. . . . your brown is not my brown . . ." (45). Here are inserted the problem of perception that brings forth the conflicting views of reality.
Despite such a relativity of truth, the whites' judgment has been mostly considered "right," thereby excluding African Americans from determining their roles, defining their identity, and therefore, participating in social and economic benefits.

Language is a tool of producing the racial degradation that the dominant culture defines for African Americans. Despite his struggle to escape from the confining power of white ideology, Vessels acknowledges that what he uses is the idiom of the white educated people. Here he finds himself to have no means of representing his racial identity, in other words, language: "I learned so many words for what I've wanted to say. They all come down on me at once. But almost none of them are mine" (53). For Vessels, language is a means of claiming the right to identity. Yet, Vessels rejects the only language he knows, for he realizes that his language was inherited from the whites. Resulting from his rejection, the loss of language leads Vessels to become nobody. It is evident that he is excluded from the mainstream of society.

American ideals such as justice, liberty, and equality should exist for all people without discrimination. For Vessels, such ideals are no more than a romantic illusion, for they have worked only for the dominant group. Here
Vessels proclaims the absurdity of American ideals, when he, "like drunken opera singer," sings the opening lines of "America": "My country, 'tis of thee. Sweet land of liberty" (52). In his exclusion from American ideals, Vessels identifies himself with the Native American and a World War II Japanese soldier. These roles prove that, along with his loss of identity, he is disenfranchised, exploited, and decentered in society. Vessels' status is well summarized when Grace jokes about his struggle to define himself with various marginalized roles: "You're split so many ways . . . I don't even think you know who you are any more" (61).

When Vessels searches for the cultural identity of African Americans, he attempts to undermine the white ideology that the white liberals consider to be exempted from critical challenges. As Vessels seeks to reject white prejudices that tend to prompt an oppressed sense of African Americans, the hegemonic conflict derived from racial differences emerges. While sticking to each ideology, both Vessels and Grace are still "enslaved" to certain ideas with which they are used to living. When Vessels' claim that African Americans' degrading images should be reconsidered to gain their "just" status, Easley and Grace will not accept Vessels' ideology defending African Americans.
Though liberal in thoughts and ideas, Easley and Grace nonetheless serve and are served by implementing the white ideology. This ideology functions to restrict African Americans within their ideas of space by subjecting them into the metaphoric status of slave. While attempting to maintain racial order, they reject their collaboration with Vessels in accomplishing his ideal of revolution. Rather, they conceive of Vessels' ideal as an elaboration of egotism. Since Vessels' ideal is an act of threatening white logic, they consider him to be "out of mind" (82): Easley dismisses Vessels' involvement with Black revolution as cultivating "[a]ll the bigoted racist imbeciles" (61); Grace also jokes about it, asking, "Is the whole world yours . . . to deal with or destroy?" (67).

Disappointed with the white liberals' sticking to their own idea of space, Vessels dismisses white idealism as an obstacle to his revolt against the existing racist society. Vessels criticizes Easley's indifference to African Americans' claim to freedom from white oppression: "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" (74). Confronted with the gap between Easley's rhetoric and his attitude "backed off from reality too many
times" (75), Vessels acknowledges that white liberalism does not help to solve the injustice and oppression. Vessels' contempt for white liberalism is reminiscent of Baraka's attack on white idealism. As he suggests in his essay, "The Need for a Cultural Base to Civil Rites & Bpower Moonents," Baraka expresses his disbelief in the nature of white liberalism: "no movement shaped or contained by Western culture will ever benefit Black people. Black power must be the actual force and beauty and wisdom of Blackness . . . reordering the world." Easley's liberalism does not help in "reordering the world" because, according to Vessels, he "had moved too far away from the actual meanings of life . . . into some lifeless cocoon of pretended intellectual and emotional achievement" (75-76). Vessels dismisses white liberalism as no more than an abstract language itself that is not connected with its political efficacy. Thus, the disappointment with Easley's reluctance to realizing liberalism drives Vessels into being distanced from literature as a product of language.

With his realization of the incompleteness of literature for changing the world, Vessels sees it as

having lost political power. Black power, he believes, might be obtained through revolutionary acts, not through literature. Throughout The Slave, Vessels recognizes the need to act instead of to create literature for Black nationalism. Convinced that literature is powerless, he decides to turn to act: "I couldn't be merely a journalist . . . a social critic. No social protest . . . right is in the act! And the act itself has some place in the world . . . it makes some place for itself" (75). Literature itself is no longer considered a tool of his rebellion against the existing social structure. Thus, he tries to undermine his former confidence in the power of language. For Vessels, action remains as the only way of freeing African Americans out of the white ideology through their fight "against three hundred years of oppression" (72).

By rejecting his slavery status, Vessels struggles to create African-American ideology through which to be reborn as an African-American. The primary purpose of African-American ideology is to achieve what Henry C. Lacey calls "spiritual liberation."* To do so, Vessels should be liberated from the past that enslaves himself to white beliefs and values. Since his past produces the images

tied to whiteness, it is the object to be destroyed for the recovery of black power and his lost identity. In fact, his familial relationship with Grace and their two daughters remains as an obstacle to performing his public role as a military leader for a black "nation." While leaving his army behind, Vessels visits the house of Grace and Easley to justify his own logic concerning both racial injustice committed against African Americans and the necessity of revolution. Regardless of his efforts to be free of white ideology, however, we find in Vessels the tension of two conflicting selves: the slave who has been confined within white values derived from his personal past with whites and the leader of Black revolution willing to relieve himself of the psychological burdens of whiteness engaged in his identity.

Trapped in a sense of dual identities, Vessels has difficulty in achieving black liberation through revolution. In The Slave, one cannot find any clue to his desperate effort to leave for the space in which African Americans are represented by themselves. As indicated in the prologue of this play, Vessels is considered as remaining "enslaved" to the white world, without moving further to reject his enslavement. The gap between logic and act might indicate that he is inappropriate for black
nationalism. In a later interview with C. W. E. Bigsby, Baraka sees Vessels as a "slave" to the white world, thereby losing the ability to perform his political idea: "The Slave is actually intuitively correctly titled. . . . Walker Vessels was still hooked in that milieu, even though he is ostensibly fighting against it and trying to destroy it." Therefore, a revolutionary Vessels appears to be incomplete for his achievement of black revolution.

Despite his decision to move toward "the world pointed in the right direction" (53), one might find in Vessels a limited vision of freedom, for the residue of whiteness still becomes an obstacle to his willingness to change the whole structure of society. Therefore, although Vessels informs Grace of their children's deaths, the stage direction at the end of the play indicates that a child's crying is still heard. The crying is presumably not real; rather, it becomes a dramatic effect for showing that the residue of whiteness arising from his past constantly lingers in his mind. This means that he is still too weak to perform his public role as a black revolutionary. His incompleteness for revolution might function as forcing the audience, instead of him, to act immediately and

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collectively. By making Vessels' story "a fable," Baraka reveals his intention to stress the need of the audience to join its collective attachment toward a new space through Black revolution.

While *The Slave* focuses on the incompleteness of Vessels as a black revolutionary through the analysis of his psychological experience, *Slave Ship* depicts the collective, and revolutionary, revolt against what is considered the residue of the slavery system. As in *The Slave*, profound mistrust of white ideology pervades this play. The Western logic of colonizing blacks helps to shape the dramatic action as it conditions African Americans' present situation. The function of that logic is to produce, justify, and perpetuate their "colonized" status, as well as to create various forms of restrictions. By presenting the "slave ship" as a microcosm of their colonization, Baraka dramatizes African Americans' desperate need to have their own space by subverting the existing social structure.

This clash between blacks and whites and its consequences are embodied in depicting the shifts of African Americans' experience influenced by the slavery system away from their life in West Africa, through the sufferings on the ship and on the plantation, and finally
to their revolt. The community in West Africa before the
slavery system is presented as a harmonious one. People
are united to establish a communal order through
"religious" rites containing their wish for safety and
fertility. Motivated by economic profit and territorial
ambitions, however, the arrival of slave-traders shatters
the communal order. The community loses its proper
functions, and people become vulnerable to white colonial
power.

Although there are periodically distinct phases in
depicting blacks' sufferings, they are combined in the play
to show the continuance of colonization. To do so, Baraka
transforms the white sailors into later slave auctioneers
and plantation owners who preside over their colonization.
Under white dominance, blacks have been subjected to the
whites' racist attitudes under the institutionalized system
of slavery. As a result, blacks have been defined with
degrading images. This "given" degrading status forces
blacks to internalize their inferiority implied in their
"slave" status. Though the slavery system no longer
remains, the residue of colonization is still internalized
into African Americans' daily life. In this sense, Baraka
identifies them with "slaves" who are still confined within
the metaphorical prison of the slave ship. As Stefan
Brecht points out, this play employs history metaphorically to provide "information about the essence of a present state."\(^{10}\)

While *Slave Ship* focuses on the history of African-American experience, white ideology appears as a backdrop for subjecting them into racial inferiority. This ideology is well manifested in an offstage white voice that, while identifying itself with "white Jesus God," asserts to the black people on the stage: "I got long blond blow-hair. I don't even need to wear a wig. You love the way I look. You want to look like me."\(^{11}\) What the white God asserts implies that even Western Christianity has helped to produce and perpetuate the ideology that has become the vehicle for justifying white supremacy. In the white-dominated society, African Americans are generally denied self-definition. Instead, their identity is arbitrarily defined by white desire. Here their "given" inferiority makes it easy for whites to perpetuate control, exploitation, and cultural degradation. *Slave Ship* aims at restoring African Americans' true status by "judging" their


\(^{11}\)Amiri Baraka, *Slave Ship, The Motion of History and Other Plays* (1967; New York: Morrow, 1978) 145. All citations are from this edition and are hereafter noted by page numbers in parentheses.
cultural identity from their own perspectives. By substituting black values for white values, Baraka decenters the authority of white values and the white God. This decentering is accompanied by the shift of the relationship between whites and blacks: while blacks gradually move toward gaining the authority over their social, political, and cultural space, whites change their attitude from laughter into fear.

Inserted into the clash between blacks and whites is the theme of betrayal. Baraka creates a tension which derives from juxtaposing the nationalist voice against the integrationist attitude of the traitor, especially the preacher, and against the white violence on blacks. For example, Tom is presented as an integrationist who opposes the revolutionary will of the other blacks. When slaves in the plantation prepare for revolt, Tom appears as "a house nigger" loyal to his master, informing the master of their conspiracy. And the Tom character reappears in the form of a comically portrayed Reverend Turner. Instead of leading his people to freedom, he preaches a message of integration by asserting that "We Kneegrows are ready to integrate" (142). For Baraka, such Tom characters are "Kneegrows" who desire to be accepted in white society, thereby helping to perpetuate white oppression. Like the white masters, such
integrationist black characters are portrayed as objects to be eradicated.

The ritual killing of the black traitor and white oppressors brings to the final stage of *Slave Ship* the "reordering" of the world; thus, the tension between blacks and whites is relieved. When he is threateningly approached by the black characters, the preacher asks for the "White Jesus" instead of a "Black God." Regardless of his pleading, the blacks kill him and throw his head on the floor of the ship. This violence might be a symbolic action against white values and beliefs as well as the existing mechanisms of domination. Furthermore, filled with racial pride, the blacks voice a desire for freedom embodied in the song: "When we gonna rise up, brother / When we gonna rise above the sun / When we gonna take our own place, brother / Like the world had just begun?" (143).

This chant is an expression of African Americans' revolutionary challenge to white oppression. It encourages the audience to participate actively and collectively in recognizing their colonization, denying white domination, and establishing a black "nation" as "our place." In so doing, the collective efforts culminate in the ritual dance called the Boogalooyoruba, which lessens the gap between characters and the audience. It is through the ritual
dance that a sense of community, which has long been lost since the introduction of the slavery system in West Africa, is achieved. Thus, African Americans overcome individuality to be transformed into "we." In particular, "our place" is a new space for African Americans, to be built on their solidarity.

In light of its political power of solidifying African Americans for community, Slave Ship articulates what Samuel A. Hay calls "Baraka's effort to revolutionize the masses by teaching them, through drama." The instructional function of this play to inspire the audience to gain black consciousness for social change occupies the essence of this play. Antonin Artaud's definition of "theatre of cruelty" in The Theatre and its Double is helpful in understanding the political efficacy of theatre:

[T]he action of theatre, like that of plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of our world; it shakes off the asphyxiating inertia of matter which invades even the clearest testimony of the senses; and in revealing to collectivities of men their dark power, their hidden force, it invites them to take, in the face of destiny, a superior and heroic attitude

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they would never have assumed without it.\textsuperscript{13}

This "theatre of cruelty" provides \textit{Slave Ship} with a form for expressing the necessity of collective act for social change. This collectivity serves as a strategy of Baraka's revolutionary theatre.

In order to enhance African Americans' responsibility for a collective act, Baraka creates an emotional backdrop for the effective communication of their experience. Here he depends on the dramatic effects of lighting, sound, and smell. The stage directions for their middle passage indicate, "Rocking of the slave ship, in darkness, without sound. But smells. The Sound. Now slowly, out of blackness with smells and drums staccato, the hideous screams. All the women together scream, AAAAAIIIIIEEEEEEEE" (132). These effects are combined to make the audience emotionally involved in the suffering of African Americans.

In addition, music also serves as a cultural power of enhancing the African-American psychological awareness of revolt: "Rise, Rise, Rise / Cut these ties, Black Man Rise / We gon' be the thing we are . . . " (143). In \textit{Blues People}, Baraka stresses the politics of music in the way that it invokes African Americans' desire for the social

aggression that serves to establish "an order which would give value to terms of existence that were once considered not only valueless but shameful."14 And Baraka continues to argue that this politics of music ultimately becomes "an attempt to reverse social roles within the society by redefining the canons of value."15 In terms of its calling for reordering the society and for creating "our place," music is subversive. And, while elevating the audience to participate in ritual dancing, music also serves as an instrument of integrating them into a harmonious community.

The desire for the harmonious community is evident where Yoruba language is sometimes used instead of English. The use of such a language, along with that of drums, reflects Baraka's attempt to recover the lost identity for African Americans through African cultural models. This attempt is a product of his awareness that black cultural heritage manifests itself in its primordial beauty. Therefore, Africanness implied in the use of drums, music, and Yoruba language becomes a revitalizing symbol of making the audience aware of, and proud of, the African roots of African Americans' cultural identity.


Africanness provides Slave Ship with a catalyst for encouraging the audience to be collectively armed with a new sense of identity. Despite their efforts to redefine their social roles, African Americans still remain in a restricted space of slave ship in the social structure of racism. The collective power against such an imprisoning nature of a slave ship is necessary for them to transform the slave ship filled with their sufferings into a utopian "our place" as a metaphorical "nation." While claiming African Americans' right to "nation," Slave Ship undertakes the shift from destruction into construction, from tragedy into comedy, and from the slave ship controlled by whites to "our place."

In conclusion, concepts of political correctness, violence, and "nation" define the essence of new African-Americanness that Baraka advocates in his revolutionary plays. Despite a variety of overlapping spaces between blacks and whites, The Slave and Slave Ship turn to the extreme strategy of transforming all the spaces into a "nation" for African Americans. While they emphasize this extremity that ultimately causes whites to be victimized, both plays do not provide alternatives to the crisis of spaces in the name of a black "nation." However, this "nation" is not a physical space, but a crystallization of
the desire for African Americans' own space. In this sense, Baraka's revolutionary plays might best be considered metaphorical reflections and expressions of African Americans' need to revolt against their colonization.

This desire characterizes *The Slave* and *Slave Ship*, which, arising from distrust of existing social systems, attempt to communicate African Americans' perceptions that have been silenced within white ideology. Baraka suggests that the combination of resistant politics and theatre might work to express the necessity of challenging whatever is considered a residue of white ideology, and even to propose a utopian vision of "nation." To do so, Baraka employs violence as an essential element in the development of dramatic structure.

Violence is a focal point at which, despite the similarity between Hansberry and Baraka in the search for freedom from colonization, there is a strategic difference between Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and Baraka's revolutionary plays. While the former negatively responds to violence, the latter conceives of it as fundamental to achieving freedom. In light of the fact that Baraka's revolutionary plays generally limit the audience to African Americans, violence functions to relieve the audience's
racial burdens in the process of building up a "nation," a space in which African Americans exist as an authority over their culture and identity. As Mance Williams argues, violence might be therapeutic in the way that it "counteract[s] the violence that has been done to the Black image and to Black minds."\textsuperscript{16}

In forcing the audience to find their tasks necessary for freedom and to actively perform them, Baraka plays a role of a teacher and a representative of African-American community. Here both The Slave and Slave Ship go beyond the mere representation of African-American experience, for they set the direction toward the future for African Americans. By combining militant strategies and African-American arts, Baraka creates in his plays the dominated ideology through which African Americans might recover and legitimize their culture denied by outside power.

CHAPTER 3

Identity Crisis "In Between": Adrienne Kennedy's Funnyhouse of a Negro

If the "dialectic of change" in Baraka's revolutionary plays discussed in the previous chapter helps us to understand the degree to which theatre is a political weapon for social change, the "dialectic of experience" in Adrienne Kennedy's Funnyhouse of a Negro (1962) and August Wilson's Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (1984) articulates the consequences of racism by bringing into question the connections between race and identity. Though sharing with Baraka a negation of whatever is considered as producing African Americans' degrading images, Kennedy and Wilson dispose of Baraka's revolutionary dialogue which argues aggressively for a black "nation." Instead, they focus on depicting the experience of African Americans in the way that, as Ed Bullins points out in the introduction to The New Lafayette Theatre Presents, they might answer questions concerning "Black survival and future . . . by heightening the dreadful white reality of being a modern Black captive and victim." In chapters three and four, I will examine

the ways in which African Americans become "captives" and "victims" in the production of dominant ideology, by examining the psychological experience of a black woman in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and on the economic experience of black musicians in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*.

If the African-American playwrights discussed in the previous chapters employ the theatrical naturalism along with the linear plot established according to time sequence, Kennedy is highly imaginative in her use of surrealistic fantasy. She fills the stage with fragmented events and images from dream and memory. In *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, naturalism is sacrificed in order to establish the dynamic atmosphere of the consciousness of the protagonist, Sarah, as black and a woman. A story concerning Sarah's consciousness written by a female African-American playwright, *Funnyhouse of a Negro* might become a text both for feminist criticism and for the critique of the racist society. These approaches to the story of Sarah's psychological disintegration in a dominant culture can interrogate the complex interrelation of patriarchal and white ideologies. These ideologies overlap in numerous ways. Yet in this chapter I will focus mainly on the ways in which the social and cultural forces of racism make a psychological impact on Sarah.
By examining Sarah's consciousness in a racist society, one can identify how she is "in between" two cultures that struggle for hegemonic power. To do so is to bring to light the clash between the cultures: as Linda Kintz points out, "The initial clash of contradictions in Kennedy's plays is set up by the juxtaposition of symbolic logics, one historically linked to African culture, the other an outgrowth of the Greek and Judeo-Christian logic. . . ."2 Kennedy externalizes the two logics in Sarah's mental status in order to offer insight into the reality of the decentered African Americans. Here Kennedy pays much attention to what Robert Scanlan calls "the psychopathology of racism: the experience of feeling 'infected' and 'diseased' by one's racial heritage."3 Of course, white ideology forces people to define African-American heritage as a source of "infection" and "disease" and to accept such definitions as taken for granted. In silencing African-American voices, white ideology attempts to prove white


supremacy and to protect whites' idea of space from the space blackness stands for. Thus internalized, white ideology leads Sarah to admire, to identify with, and to be identified by Western culture. Here is established the racial order in which one culture has power over another. It is by considering this order as "natural" that we are subjected to the ideological logic of the powerful. In this process, ideology is embedded into our lives, and therefore we take white logic for granted. Nevertheless, because this logic is not testified by evidence, it is susceptible to being reconsidered by black ideology.

Sarah's consciousness becomes a setting of reflecting the clash between white and black ideologies. Sarah is a black English major at a college in New York who often lives with a Jewish boyfriend, Raymond, in a small room in Manhattan. Sarah suffers the schizophrenic trauma derived from her struggle with the social and political forces internalized in her sub-consciousness. The trauma is multidimensionally presented in the complex relationships between whiteness and blackness. Those relationships manifest themselves in Sarah's fragmented selves at odds with each other: Duchess of Hapsburg, Queen Victoria Regina, Jesus, and Patrice Lumumba. The first two female characters represent Sarah's mother who 'look[s] like a
white woman," who fears blackness embodied in the black father, Patrice Lumumba, and who worships the white European culture. The male characters, Jesus and Patrice Lumumba, represent Sarah's father. The Jesus character justifies the white dominance over blacks. Like him, Patrice later hates his blackness and abandons his desire to become a hero of African liberation who "wanted the black man to rise from colonialism" (15). Sarah's mental conflict between her mother's whiteness and her father's blackness becomes a metaphor for the debate over hegemonic power between African Americans and white Americans.

Kennedy's introduction of Sarah's two white female selves illuminates the controlling power of ideology in *Funnyhouse of a Negro*. One representative of two white female selves of Sarah, the Duchess of Hapsburg reveals to Queen Victoria her idea of white supremacy in terms of space and color. Obsessed with the whites' idea of space, Duchess criticizes her father, who struggles through the jungle to find her by breaking social order: "How dare he enter the castle, he who is the darkest of them all, the darkest one?" (3). When she identifies the castle with the

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4 Adrienne Kennedy, *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, Adrienne Kennedy in One Act (1964; Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1988) 3. All citations are from this edition and are hereafter noted by page numbers in parentheses.
space for "Queen Victoria Regina, Monarch of England," and the jungle with that for "the wild black beast" (3), Duchess creates the hierarchical order of space.

Such a hierarchy also arises out of the metaphorical division of color. While hoping for the death of her father defined as "darkest," Duchess shows preference for her mother's whiteness: "My mother looked like a white woman, hair as straight as any white woman's . . . but he is black, the blackest one of them all. I hoped he was dead" (3). Acknowledging that her father prevents her from being almost white, Sarah describes him as an "evil" to be destroyed. Thus established, the system of binary oppositions such as castle and jungle, human and beast, good and evil provides the dominant group with its strategy of establishing racial order through differentiation for discrimination. This system becomes a weapon of controlling the less powerful people.

This differentiation through binary oppositions serves to maintain white prestige, for it legitimates marginalizing the blackness represented by the black character Patrice. Sarah is imprisoned in the racial order that serves to define blacks as beasts and black culture as inferior. Here she perceives the assumptive inferiority of the cultural identity of blacks, especially black women.
This perception makes her obsessed with European culture; thus, her "idol" becomes "a thing of astonishing whiteness," that is, "a gigantic plaster statue of Queen Victoria" (5). Despite her efforts to overcome the inferiority of blackness through the symbol of European culture, however, Sarah remains a black woman with her "unmistakably Negro kinky hair" (6). Attempting to escape from her psychological burdens of blackness, she denies her blackness originating in the historical degradation of African roots by the dominant culture.

One recurring image is fear of blackness emanated from Sarah's recognition that she was conceived by her father's act of rape. Sarah's father takes her mother to Africa to force her to work for the African liberation movement. When she emotionally distanced herself from him, her father raped her mother in Africa. This rape leads her to express her racist attitude: "Black man, black man, I never should have let a black man put his hands on me. The wild black beast raped me and now my skull is shining" (4). By relating her skin color with the beast, she distorts the real identity of blacks. In fact, such words as "wild" and "beast" imply that, in the systems of white hegemony, male blacks are dangerous, uncivilized, and beastly. Despite the distortion of her father's image, his bestial image
occupies Sarah's consciousness. Her black father appears to her as a potential rapist who struggles to embrace her. As she reveals in her monologue, Sarah desperately exerted herself to avoid being raped: "I fled and hid under my mother's bed while she screamed of remorse" (15). To escape her black father, Sarah pleads with her Jewish lover Raymond for a place in which she will hide: "Hide me here so the nigger will not find me" (9-10). Raymond is very interested in blacks. Yet Raymond acts, though Jewish, like a representative of whiteness as he is cruel in reminding her of her blackness.

Trapped in her identity of blackness, Sarah criticizes her father's rape of her mother, for he haunted her conception, diseased her birth, killed her mother, and killed the light (21). Particularly arising out of his rape, the loss of hair controls Sarah's consciousness, thereby preventing her from being relieved from the psychological burden of her blackness. Rosemary K. Curb mentions that the baldness of Sarah's mother might be "an external manifestation of her sexual corruption," caused by the venereal disease derived from Sarah's father and, generally, from blacks.⁵ This disease functions to

reinforce Sarah's fear and hatred of blackness. By relating the black person with beast, disease, and violence, white ideology places the whites in a position of being more cultured.

Preoccupied with her belief that "black is evil" (5), Sarah rejects her black heritage through white makeup used to pass for the white Duchess. Sarah imagines and wants to be identified with the white oppressor colonizing blacks. Admiring white European ancestry and culture, Sarah dreams of living in such rooms filled with the materials of European culture, involving European antiquities, photographs of Roman ruins, a statue, and books. And she wants to have white friends, for she thinks that they will serve to be "an embankment" or "a stark fortress" (6) that prevents the never-ending reflection of her identity of blackness.

Furthermore, because of such bestial images defined for blacks, even Sarah's father attempts to escape his blackness. He always dreamed of becoming a liberator as his mother urged him to contribute himself to saving the black people in the jungle: his mother mentions, "I want you to be Jesus, to walk in Genesis and save the race. You must return to Africa... you must walk with a white dove and heal the race, heal the misery, take us off the cross"
However, believing that "the race was no damn good" (14), he does not accomplish his mission of African liberation.

The failure of his dream is evident not only in his alter ego Jesus's attempt "to escape being black" (19), but also in the description of Jesus as "a hunchback, yellow-skinned dwarf" (7). Presumably the deformation of Jesus signifies that Christianity loses its power to save blacks from colonial oppression. Despite acknowledging that he is black, the Jesus character serves to oppress blacks rather than to liberate them from colonialism:

I am going to Africa and kill this black man named Patrice Lumumba. Why? Because all my life I believed my Holy Father to be God, but now I know that my father is a black man. I have no fear for whatever I do, I will do in the name of God, I will do in the name of Albert Saxe Coburg, in the name of Victoria, Queen Victoria Regina, the monarch of England, I will. (19-20)

Because of the Jesus character's struggle to deny his blackness, Christianity becomes what Curb calls "a religion frequently used to support racial slavery."6 While failing to follow his mother's dream, while feeling guilty in this failure, Sarah's father loses his voice to claim blacks' authority. Ultimately, her father helps the Westerns perpetuate their colonization of Africa while "dedicating

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*Curb 183.
his life to the erection of a Christian mission in the middle of the jungle" (9).

Blackness is rejected from within and without; thus, blacks lose their own identity. This is evident when Sarah's landlady, Mrs. Conrad, tells about the relationship between Sarah and her father. The black father pleads for Sarah's forgiveness about his rape of her mother and its consequent contamination of the otherwise almost white woman. Yet Sarah denies embracing him, which signifies that she rejects blackness. Sarah imagines that she killed her father by bludgeoning him with an ebony mask and that she nailed him to the cross. While trying to relieve Sarah of her guilt over her father's death and her critical blame on his rape of her father, the landlady mentions that her father committed suicide in a Harlem hotel when Patrice Lumumba died. Yet, denying the landlady's assertion, her boyfriend Raymond states to the audience that he is still alive:

Her father never hung himself in a Harlem hotel when Patrice Lumumba was murdered. I know the man. He is a doctor, married to a white whore. He lives in the city in rooms with European antiques, photographs of Roman ruins, walls of books and oriental carpets. (23)

Here, Raymond's assertion implies that, despite Sarah's act of killing her father, the blackness represented by her father remains in her identity.
Although she struggles to escape racial memory through the search for materials of European culture and for white friends instead of rejecting her father, Sarah is "tied to the black Negro" (4). Psychologically torn between her mother's whiteness and her father's blackness, Sarah recognizes that she is "in between." Here she faces an identity crisis. The racial prejudice does not allow her to be liberated from her blackness. The father's image of blackness repeatedly appears in her memory as All speak tensely in a chant:

My mother was the lightest one. I am bound to him unless, of course, he should die.
But he is dead.
And he keeps returning. Then he is not dead.
Then he is not dead.
Yet, he is dead, but dead he comes knocking at my door. (21)

Sarah wants to be free of blackness, yet her blackness exists as a reality that cannot be denied. That image of blackness occupies her consciousness along with the repetition of knocking and of the losing of hair. Sarah's inability to repress the image returning from the jungle signifies that Sarah is psychologically imprisoned in the racial memory: as she says, Sarah is "the black shadow" (12). This repetition, as Ruby Cohn points out, makes the
play circle back to its beginning.' For Sarah, trapped in a circle, there is no exit from such a persistent racial memory in this world.

If there is a way for Sarah to be freed from the burdens of racism, it is the suicide that she commits at the end of the play. This is already implied at the beginning of the play, in which she brings a rope around her neck. Death becomes a vehicle of making her transcend the restrictions of the racist society.

The world of death might be a space for herself that she has tried to create. Rejecting any socially performed judgement, Sarah asserts, "I want to possess no moral value, particularly value as to my being. I want not to be" (5). Her rejection of moral value underlies her belief that any moral judgement is a product of the social systems of power. Thus, by denying society and even herself, Sarah can reject her confinement within the dominant culture in order to claim her right to defining herself in her own terms. In this sense, her suicide is a result of a "conscious" and "active" choice of her own destiny. Consequently, her act of choice is heroic in claiming the authority over her body as black and a woman. We cannot

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find Baraka's physical revolution in this play. Yet Kennedy's attempt to deconstruct the racist ideology might be psychologically "revolutionary" in terms of demystifying race representations, changing old values, and finally, undermining the social, political, and cultural space defined for African Americans.
In an interview with David Savran, August Wilson asserts that the history of African Americans in America has been written not by them, but by the whites who "have a different attitude, a different relationship to the history." His assertion implies that, while excluding African Americans from writing their own history, the whites have reproduced the monolithic ideology of racism as a means of power and domination. Here African Americans are to fall from autonomy into acceptance of their roles as defined by the dominant culture, to be silenced and to be confined within the degraded space. However, it is through the act of rewriting history that Wilson attempts to break the silence in order "simply to find out who you are and where you've been." To rewrite history in Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (1984) is to perceive history from below and even to subvert white ideology that, long considered "natural," becomes a source of making African Americans

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decentered in society. In reclaiming African Americans' authority over cultural identity, Wilson politicizes the lives of African-American musicians at the moment of social change during the 1920s. Wilson does so in the way that he elevates the audience's consciousness about the reciprocal relation between white ideology and its repressive power.

Set in a Chicago recording studio in 1927, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom reexamines African Americans' past by showing deep concern, as indicated in its introduction, at "their values, their attitudes, and particularly their music." Wilson sees this reexamination as fundamental to "political correctness," and hence contends that "if we're going to be pointed toward a future, we must know our past." Thus performed, the act of rewriting history is to reveal and criticize white ideology, thereby bringing with it an ideological crisis. However, this crisis does not take place in the way that Baraka's revolutionary plays justify the violence directed toward whites, the destruction of the existing social structures, and the construction of an African-American "nation." This play does not show such a

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3August Wilson, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (1981; New York: Plume, 1985) xvi. All citations are from this edition and are hereafter noted by page numbers in parentheses.

4Savran 295.
direct, violent confrontation between African Americans and whites. Instead, it shows the conflict among the African-American musicians as to whether they should preserve their Southern tradition of blues or adapt it to a more marketable urban experience. Inserted into this debate in the field of the recording and marketing of music is the cultural and economic oppression of the white recording executives.

To be fully understood, the white oppression might be considered in close conjunction with the physical structure of setting that becomes a microcosm of reflecting the hierarchical structure of society based on racism. The setting is largely divided into two playing areas: the band room in the basement of the building and the recording studio which is upstairs. In addition, above the studio is a small control booth that can be reached through a spiral staircase. As in the hierarchical structure of setting, the white executives, Sturdyvant and Irvin, occupy the position of controlling African-American musicians. For the effective control of them, Sturdyvant mostly stays at the control booth, or wants to deal with them "at arm's length" (17). Obsessed with the control of African Americans at an appropriate distance, Sturdyvant considers Ma Rainey's attitude in his office as breaking the spatial
order: he critically complains to Ma Rainey's manager Irvin, "She marches in here like she owns the damn place" (18). And this controlling role of the whites is also implied when Wilson portrays Irvin as proud of his ability to "handle" and "deal with" African-American musicians, and to get them "under control." Here the setting implies the hierarchy between African-American musicians and white producers. Thus internalized, such a hierarchical structure serves to perpetuate the ideological domination of the whites that gives birth to African Americans' "natural" acceptance of their subordinate position of providing labor for the whites.

Comprehending the economic exploitation requires its contextualization within the relationship between art and reproduction, for it is in Ma Rainey's Black Bottom that Wilson attempts to dramatize African-American experience through the fate of blues. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin points out that the presence of the work of art becomes shriveled in this age:

[T]he technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous
shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind.

The technique of producing phonograph records in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* becomes a means of making money for white producers. When Ma Rainey's voice is recorded, and when she signs release forms, the white executives do not have to "pretend" to respect her. They can sell her "down-home" blues in the form of phonograph records. In this process, Ma Rainey's voice can be heard in any time and place without her direct presence. Therefore, the reproduction of blues brings with it the inescapable result of transforming blues into a commodity for profit.

Presumably Wilson sees this phenomenon of transformation partly as arising out of white producers' materialistic obsession. Wilson portrays Sturdyvant as a person who, "[p]reoccupied with money" (17), considers blues as a means of his economic success. Even though Ma Rainey helps the recording company controlled by the whites to earn a lot of money, only her voice has a meaning for him. Although the market generally consists of African Americans, Sturdyvant considers neither what blues means to African Americans nor who Ma Rainey is. It is evident at the response that Sturdyvant shows when she is late for a

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recording time. While Irvin prepares for the recording session, Sturdyvant expresses his hate of Ma Rainey, who he believes acts as if she were "Royal Highness" or "Queen of the Blues": "I don't care what she calls herself. I'm not putting up with it. I just want to get her in here . . . record those songs on that list . . . and get her out. Just like clockwork, huh?" (18). For the white producers, Ma Rainey is only a machine that produces a commodity for profit.

African Americans' decentered status has become the way they are represented. However, with their acknowledgment of their own right to authority over blues and cultural identity, such a status becomes an object to be revised, or even subverted. The right to participating in the administration of the music industry is denied for Ma Rainey. Her challenge against white oppression is well exemplified when, feeling betrayed by the white producers, she complains by comparing her status as a machine with the female body for sexuality. This image of betrayal is articulated through a sexual metaphor in the acute realization of her existence in the white-controlled music industry: "As soon as they get my voice down on them recording machines, then it's just like if I'd be some whore and they roll over and put their pants on. Ain't got
no use for men then" (79). Furthermore, she includes the other African-American musicians into her logic that they are also judged and exploited according to the capital value: "If you colored and can make them some money, then you all right with them. Otherwise, you just a dog in the alley" (79). So far as African-American musicians contribute themselves to the production of a marketable commodity, they are to fall from the preserver of tradition to commodity-makers: as Cutler complains, "the white folks don't care nothing about who or what you is" (97).

Fundamental to understanding the degree to which African Americans are deprived of the right to blues is to examine an issue of the authority over blues. For one to have this authority, the right to choose the songs for recording is necessary. Discussing the fate of blues in the dominant culture, Wilson emphasizes African Americans' need to reclaim the authority over blues:

The music is ours, since it contains our soul, so to speak—it contains all our ideas and responses to the world. We need it to help us claim this African-ness and we would be a stronger people for it. It's presently in the hands of someone else who sits over it as custodian, without even allowing us its source.6

Despite the fact that blues is African Americans' own music, it is and has been in the hands of the whites. For

6Savran 305.
example, the white executives already chose the songs for recording without consulting the African-American band members, or even Ma Rainey.

The debate over choice between African Americans and whites begins when Irvin gives the list of the four songs for recording to Cutler, the band leader. Then Toledo, the only member who can read, realizes that the songs in that list are different from six songs Ma already chose. While reducing six songs into four songs, the white producers include Bessie Smith's version of "Moonshine Blues" and Levee's version of "Black Bottom." In order to record the songs in his list, Irvin persuades Ma Rainey to sing "Moonshine Blues"; yet she responds angrily, "Bessie what? Ain't nobody thinking about Bessie" (78). Furthermore, without considering her pride, Irvin then attempts to make her sing Levee's version of "Black Bottom," while contending that "Times are changing. Levee's arrangement gives the people what they want" (62).

Revealing the contradictions between Irvin's language and his real intentions will serve to illuminate the problem of white ideology. While he advocates Levee's version, Irvin emphasizes the importance of "times" and "people." Here his logic disguises his desire for economic profit as an act of meeting the changing tastes of people.
who he believes want to be excited in order to forget their troubles. However, the whites' desire for economic profit becomes evident when Sturdyvant links "changing times" and business. Sturdyvant regards Ma Rainey's version of blues as "garbage," for he believes it will not make a good profit: "Times are changing. This is a tricky business now. We've got to jazz it up . . . put in something different. You know, something wild . . . with a lot of rhythm" (19). This assertion stems from Sturdyvant's expectation that a new style probably brings with it more economic profit by fulfilling the audience's expectation.

Although African Americans consist of the majority of customers for the products of blues, African-American musicians are excluded from their participation in choosing the songs for recording. In this process, African-American culture is at the hands of the dominant culture. Only based on the theory of economic profit, white producers' arbitrary decision on the songs for recording leads to Ma Rainey's complaint at Irvin: "What you all say don't count with me. You understand? Ma listens to her heart. Ma listens to the voice inside her. That's what counts with Ma" (63). The whites' decision is a product of their willingness to achieve materialistic success, not of their paying attention to African Americans' cultural identity.
Reluctant to be subjected to white hegemony, Ma Rainey rejects the whites' attempt to substitute Levee's version of "Black Bottom" for hers. Arriving late at the recording room, Ma Rainey asserts that she will sing the song in "the old way" (62). In addition, demanding a Coca-Cola, and, despite the whites' opposition, contending that her nephew Sylvester should introduce her songs, Ma Rainey attempts to break the racial order by "controlling" the whites. White producers reluctantly accept her requests, not because they personally respect her, but because she earns money for them.

Although the white producers accepts her requests, Ma Rainey's control is limited. In fact, Ma Rainey knows that she also has power in the way that she withholds the release forms. Nonetheless, Ma Rainey's power is not extended to the existing social structure, for, just after she signs the release forms, she should give up her own authority over her voice. Ultimately, her music no longer belongs to her or African Americans, but to capitalistic white producers. In this social and economic order based on racism, Ma Rainey is no more than a "nigger" who offers labor for the whites' profit; as Cutler criticizes the whites' attitude toward her, Ma Rainey is "just another nigger who they can use to make some money" (97).
Revolving around an issue of white hegemony is the question of how African Americans gain authority by occupying their own space defined by themselves. Wilson presents the African-American musicians as struggling for survival from white oppression: Ma Rainey and her band—the leader and trombonist Cutler, the pianist Toledo, the bassist Slow Drag, and the trumpeter Levee. However, according to the differences of their view on whether to preserve an African-American culture as it has been or to adapt it to the need of marketability, the members of the band are divided into two parts. Like Ma Rainey, Cutler and Toledo take a conservative attitude to maintain their cultural heritage based on a southern tradition; Levee wants to be distanced from the history of African Americans and to create a radically changed form of blues. The two conflicting attitudes to tradition culminate when African-American musicians debate over which version of "Black Bottom" they will use for the recording session.

Cutler and Toledo agree with Ma Rainey's view of blues as a form of expressing and relieving African-American sufferings from slavery to being socially, economically, and culturally exploited. Ma Rainey emphasizes its power of curing the disillusionment of African Americans that results from white exploitation.
The blues help you get out of bed in the morning. You get up knowing you ain't alone. There's something else in the world. Something's been added by that song. This be an empty world without the blues. I take that emptiness and try to fill it up with something. (83)

For Ma Rainey, the act of singing is to "[fill] up that empty space a little bit" (83), for blues is not created by her, but by African Americans' experience. As Sandra G. Shannon points out, blues is "a means of ventilating otherwise inexpressible reactions to the harsh realities of life in America." In this sense, blues may be equated with what Ma Rainey calls "life's way of talking" or "a way of understanding life" (82).

However, preoccupied with a new style, Levee ignores such an interrelations of blues and African-American experience. Levee dismisses Ma Rainey's "down-home" blues as countrified (38), "old jug-band shit" (26), "old circus bullshit" (64), and "tent-show nonsense" (65). While contending that Ma Rainey's blues cannot be called "art," Levee regards his own "jazzed-up" blues as "art" (25) or "real music" (26). When Cutler asks them to continue to rehearse the Ma Rainey version of "Black Bottom," Levee claims to play his own version that was already approved by the white producers. Levee accepts the whites' right to

choose the songs for recording as he asserts that Irvin is "the one putting out the record! He's gonna put out what he wanna put out!" (37). For the conservatives like Cutler and Toledo, who claim that Ma Rainey has the authority over blues, Levee's boss seems to be not Ma Rainey, but the white producers.

Through his cooperation with white producers, Levee not only dreams of owning his band, but also of getting his songs recorded. Levee believes that his "physical" status will offer him the same respect from the whites as Ma Rainey has achieved: "I'm gonna be like Ma and tell the white man just what he can do. Ma tell Mr. Irvin she gonna leave . . . and Mr. Irvin get down on his knees and beg her to stay! That's the way I'm gonna be! Make the white man respect me!" (94). Levee misunderstands Ma Rainey's situation, for she is no more than a money-maker for the whites' industry. What she gets from the white producers is only the "pretended" respect: as Cutler responds quickly, "White folks don't care nothing about who she is . . . what kind of music she make" (95). Cutler's response is an attempt to prove that it is worthless for Levee to expect respect from the whites.

In order to illuminate the situation of African Americans in such a hierarchical economic structure, Cutler
alludes to what happened to an African-American minister, Gates, waiting for a train to visit a sick relative. The racist white mob took from him his cross and Bible and made him dance. In this dangerous society based on racism, the minister had no choice but to follow their command for his life: as Cutler argues, "the only way he got out of there alive . . . was to dance. Ain't even had no respect for a man of God! Wanna make him into a clown" (97). Like the white mob, which did not consider the minister a man of God, the white producers do not consider who Ma Rainey is. Even though Ma Rainey has achieved a position of "Queen of the Blues" in the world of music, she belongs to the inferior race.

Nevertheless, obsessed with his logic of survival through materialistic success, Levee ignores the spirituality of the "old" blues tradition. Levee does not want to place himself in the context of African-American history, yet instead claims to exist as an autonomous self. However, Levee's strategy is not acceptable to the African-American conservatives who advocate the importance of black power through solidarity. Toledo criticizes Levee's integrationist-like strategy for survival that might produce the loss of cultural identity: "as long as he looks to white folks for approval . . . then he ain't never gonna
find out who he is and what he's about. He's just gonna be about what white folks want him to be about" (37). Toledo believes that Levee's use of "yessir" to Sturdyvant proves how deeply he is "[s]pooked up with the white men" (67).

The "yessir" strategy for survival, Levee asserts, is never based on subordination; rather, it is a result of studying "how to handle white folks" (68). Levee attempts to justify his own strategy while telling the story that his family experienced. Levee's strategy has been influenced by his father who attempted to do whatever he wanted only by himself. After a gang of the white men raped his mother and hurt Levee, his father hunted for them without any help from outside. Finally, he sold his land to one of a gang of the white men with a smile in his face, and then killed four of them before he was caught, hung, and set afire. Levee mentions that his individualism is the same strategy as his father's as to how to handle the whites, concluding that he is not spooked up by them. Levee's "yessir" is not different from his father's smile or grin in the face of the whites: as he asserts, "I can smile and say yessir to whoever I please. I got time coming to me. You all just leave Levee alone about the white man" (70). For Levee, his strategy is not a product of his assimilationist attitude toward the whites.
Preoccupied with his own way to "handle" the whites, Levee dismisses the strategy of getting freedom through communal power as "that old philosophy" (68). Levee becomes an advocate of individualism while criticizing Cutler's interference: "You stay out of my way about what I do and say. I'm my own person. Just let me alone" (68).

This individualism becomes an object to be criticized by the other African-American musicians, for, even though he tries to justify it, such individualism is an act of betraying African Americans' cultural identity. This criticism is epitomized in Toledo's emphasis on the necessity for African Americans' solidarity to establish a better world:

What you think . . . I'm gonna solve the colored man's problems by myself? I said, we. You understand that? We. That's every living colored man in the world got to do his share. Got to do his part. . . . I'm talking about all of us together. What all of us is gonna do. (42)

Convinced that what African Americans need is the power of "we," not of "I," Toledo calls Levee "fool" and "devil" for attempting to justify his individualistic and "yessir" strategy for survival.

By linking food images with the history of African Americans, Toledo argues that the colored man is "a leftover from history" (57). According to him, different
tribes and cultures were mixed to become "one big stew" (57) that might refer to history. Then African Americans of course participated in making history as a stew, yet they are excluded in its equivalent distribution. What they are offered is "some leftovers" (57). In this sense, Toledo equates African Americans with "leftovers": "The colored man is the leftovers. Now, what's the colored man gonna do with himself? That's what we waiting to find out" (57). The first thing they should do is to recognize the present situation of themselves as "leftovers" in order to create their own history. Toledo's use of food images is intended to stress the necessity for solidarity, while attacking Levee's betrayal of African-American community. However, Levee persists to exist as an ontological individual by refusing to be contextualized in the history of African Americans.

Considering the political efficacy of Levee's strategy of individualism, Toledo relates the devil to Levee who apparently struggles to be assimilated into the white society:

We done sold ourselves to the white man in order to be like him. Look at the way you dressed . . . That ain't African. That's the white man. We trying to be just like him. We done sold who we are in order to become someone else. We's imitation white men. (94)

Unlike the other African-American musicians, Slow Drag does
not pay attention to the issue of strategy for survival. He becomes indifferent to the shift of music form as long as he is paid; thus, he asserts that "whatever version" (34) of the song makes no difference to his life. Though negatively involved in criticizing Levee's strategy almost at the end of the play, however, Slow Drag also assists Toledo's view by mentioning that "You can't change who you are by how you dress" (94).

By reminding Levee of the blasphemous acts that a gang of white men did to the minister, Gates, as "a man of God," Cutler attempts to prove that it is worthless for an African American to expect respect from the whites. In angry response to Cutler's allusion to God, Levee reveals his cynicism to God. With a sense of victimization given to his family by the whites, Levee interrogates the power of God Who he asserts should have saved the minister from a gang of white men: "if he's a man of God, then where the hell was God when all of this was going on? Why wasn't God looking out for him. Why didn't God strike down them crackers with some of this lightning you talk about to me?" (98). Levee ignores Cutler's threat that such a blasphemy will result in striking him down. Rather, Levee maintains that God does not exist for African Americans: God is "a white man's God. That's why! God ain't never listened to

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no nigger's prayers. God take a nigger's prayers and throw them in the garbage. . . . God hate niggers!' (98). For Levee, God and the whites are the same in perpetuating African Americans' victimization. This confrontation drives Levee to pull out his knife and to threaten Cutler, and to criticize the inability of God to save his mother from rape from the whites. As Wilson indicates in the stage direction, Levee's blasphemy culminates in his gesture of "stab[bing] upward in the air, trying to reach God" (100).

The confrontation between Levee and the other African-American musicians in terms of their strategies for survival leads him to be alienated from them, and finally fired by Ma Rainey. Then, Levee tries to depend on white producers. However, Sturdyvant also rejects Levee's desire to record his own version of blues; instead, he wants to unfairly pay five dollars for each song. In fact, Sturdyvant encouraged Levee to write the songs for recording. But Sturdyvant now contends that the songs Levee wrote are "not the type of songs [the white producers are] looking for" (107). Thus exploited by the whites, Levee represents the fate of African Americans in the white-dominated culture that excludes them from social justice. At this moment, he cannot bear his alienation
from his African-American band members, as well as a sense of betrayal and insult by white producers.

Levee's disillusion is channeled first into Cutler, who criticizes his strategy for survival through the story of the minister, Gates. Then it goes into Toledo who steps on one of Levee's Florsheim shoes with his shoes. While establishing the relationship between Ma Rainey's "down-home" blues and the old fashioned shoes, Levee has contemptuously called Toledo's shoes "[o]ld brogans" (40) and "them raggedy-ass clodhoppers" (110). Against his will, Levee stabs Toledo. In fact, as Wilson points out in his interview with Kim Powers, his stabbing of Toledo represents "a transference of aggression from Sturdyvant to Toledo, who throughout the play has been set up as a substitute for the White man."*

Although *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* is set in Chicago in 1927, the victimization of African-American musicians is not restricted to any specific period or place, but extended into the present. In his interview with David Savran concerning the history of African Americans, Wilson points out that their status remains unchanged through history:

> We're leftovers from history—history that

*Powers 54.*
happened when there was a tremendous need for manual labor, when cotton was king. But history and life progress, you move into the industrial age, and now we're moving into the computer age. We're left over. We're no longer needed.⁹

As leftovers, African Americans have been denied the right to defining themselves and to participating in the history of America. This play shows how to overcome their decentered status by contrasting Levee with the other African-American musicians. In depicting the dilemma that the African-American musicians face in the oppressive society, Wilson encourages the audience to acknowledge the necessity of African-American cultural identity and of black power for forcing change on social systems.

⁹Savran 295.
If the previous chapters present the African-American discourse for self-representations as a "decolonizing" strategy, Arthur Kopit's *Indians* (1968) criticizes what he perceives to be the conventional structures of assumptions inherent in white ideology, the structures that stem from the process of myth-making. A white playwright, Kopit attempts this critique with an extended commentary on the politics of America and its engagement in colonizing the less powerful within the larger political culture and its historical unconsciousness. The projects of the white and African-American playwrights for the racial Other's "real" representations overlap in numerous ways, but in this chapter I will focus mainly on the white strategies and motives for creating myth, and the ways in which Native Americans are produced and controlled in this play.

A reading of Kopit's critically acclaimed *Indians* strongly suggests his concerns with exposing the fraudulent project of myth. Considering the situation in which America forced Native Americans to leave their land, Kopit foregrounds myth as a vehicle for rationalizing her deeds associated with greed and racism. Here Kopit extends his
theme to the inclusion of the issues of colonizing racial minorities: as he argues in his interview with John Lahr, "I wasn't principally concerned with the Indians or the plight of the Indians today but the way in which our treatment of them was rationalized and how this gave to the myth of the West."¹

The myth as an ideological mode allows people to have a belief in justifying white oppression in terms of racial supremacy. Although this belief is a product of distorting reality, the myth-maker creates such a belief as "natural." The act of myth-making defines myth as reality, whereas Kopit's play-making aims to expose the distinction between myth and reality and the errors of confusing the two. John Bush Jones compares myth-making to play-making:

Like the myth-maker, the playwright may begin by fictionalizing, i.e. dramatizing, what is real, but he does not then try to pass off his theatrical creation as real; rather, it remains an artistic re-shaping of its 'parent reality.' In this way, then, Kopit can keep separate the damaging confidence game of the myth-maker and

the legitimate task of the dramatist.\footnote{2} Kopit makes a critique of the process of myth-making, for the dominant group employs myth to produce the ideology for controlling the racial Other. To do so, Kopit exposes the gap between myth and the "parent reality," thereby giving birth to the contradictions within white ideology. In this process, Kopit involves himself in rewriting history "from below" in order to establish a sense of order, while presenting the war situation as a backdrop for illuminating the substance of America's ideological dominance over racial minorities.

The preface of Indians, "Chronology for a Dreamer," lists the historical events for the Native-American suppression of the late nineteenth century. Historically, a journalist, Ned Buntline, was himself occupied with the act of myth-making in an attempt to justify this suppression. Later turned an author and dramatist, Buntline idealized an average individual, William Cody, as a national hero, Buffalo Bill, in dime novels and melodramatic plays. In fact, William Cody is a man who annihilated the buffalo as the major source of Native Americans' foods, ostensibly in order to feed the railroad

laborers. Despite his annihilation of the buffalo, however, his action is celebrated through the process of myth-making. Buntline tells Buffalo Bill about the necessity of myth-making: "I think you're what dey need. Someone t' listen to, observe, identify wid. . . . I think you could be de inspiration o' dis land." As Ol' Time President says, Buffalo Bill's role in the Wild West Show exists "[f]or this country's pride, its glory" (65). In Buntline's use of "magic" power of a pen (19), this myth is invented in the way that it serves to produce white ideology of masking the white colonialist brutality.

Buntline's project aims to control racial minorities through the ideological justification of white oppression by drawing on the contradictory nature of myth. This contradiction places Buffalo Bill in the crisis of identity that is epitomized in Buffalo Bill's relationship with the Native Americans, a situation defined by a sense of hypocrisy. On the one hand, Buffalo Bill is celebrated by the dominant group for his deeds in the service of colonialist ideology; on the other hand, he is equally drawn to guilt over his actions toward Native Americans.

3 Arthur Kopit, Indians (1969; New York: Noonday, 1993) 18-19. All citations are from this edition and are hereafter noted by page numbers in parentheses.
Despite his assertion that he intends to help Native Americans, Buffalo Bill nevertheless lives on his "invented" public image. Furthermore, he creates a sphere of beliefs through which to extricate himself from his sense of guilt. If we have a critical approach to such a gap between words and actions, we can recover the contradictions that his speech attempts to efface and, by extension, the irrationality of white ideology.

Revealing the contradictions within the white ideology revealed by words and actions of Buffalo Bill and the US government will form a basic frame for my reading of Indians. The gap between Buffalo Bill's words, which are intended to help the suffering Native Americans, and his colonizing deeds well illustrates the problem of white ideology in this play. The problem of this ideology is evident when we follow Buffalo Bill's memory, whose various projections are forced to be exposed by a mysterious voice that informs him of the "time to start" (4) and "to close" (88). The voice joins us to the journey of Buffalo Bill's search for identity. This journey consists of a cinematic structure of thirteen scenes, which cover such settings as Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, Sitting Bull's tent for an 1886 US Senate Indian Affairs Commission hearing, the White House, and sites of various Native-American sufferings.
Kopit derides Buffalo Bill's accomplishment through the juxtaposition between his life as a historical fact and his invented role as a hero, a role that serves to justify white oppression. As an aging performer, Buffalo Bill reveals his split consciousness in his monologue at the beginning of the play, the consciousness arising from the gap between his past deeds against Native Americans and his role as a hero for the nation. In an attempt to identify himself with his mythic role in the Wild West Show, Buffalo Bill deems himself a hero and tries to rationalize his deeds: "I am a fine man. And anyone who says otherwise is WRONG! . . . My life is an open book; I'm not ashamed of its bein' looked at!" (5). However, Buffalo Bill questions his personal quality by describing himself as "A GODDAM HERO!" (5).

To overcome the fear from the crisis of his identity, Buffalo Bill depends on the belief in the idea behind national needs. Buffalo Bill explains that the killing of the buffalo produces food for the railroad laborers:

I wiped out their food, ya see . . . . Didn't mean to, o' course. I mean IT WASN'T MY FAULT! The railroad men needed food. They hired me t' find 'em food. Well. How was I t' know the goddam buffalo reproduced so slowly? How was I to know that? NO ONE KNEW THAT! (79)

In response to his sense of guilt over Native Americans, this explanation serves to defend his deeds against them.
This defense becomes an attempt to mask his complicity in the nation's colonialism. Filtered through his "heroic" experience, the colonialislist idea brings him to the degree which he fantasizes his "heroic" image in the way that he contributes himself to the ideal of the nation:

Well, my plan is t' help people. . . . whatever . . . it is I do t' help, for it, these people may someday jus' possibly name streets after me. Cities. Counties. States! I'll . . . be as famous as Dan'l Boone! . . . An' somewhere, on top of a beautiful mountain that overlooks more plains 'n rivers than any other mountain, there might even be a statue of me sittin' on a great white horse, a-wavin' my hat t' everyone down below. . . . (14)

Internal colonialism ideologically disguises its desire for dominance over the Native Americans as an intention to help them. For instance, Buffalo Bill sees the extermination of buffalo as an expression of his desire to make Native Americans become farmers and, moreover, to direct them in the way to the world of civilization:

[T]he Government policy of exterminating the buffalo, a policy with which I myself was intimately connected, has practically reached fruition. Almost no buffalo are now left, and soon the Indians will be hungry enough to begin farming in earnest, a step we believe necessary if they are ever to leave their barbaric ways and enter civilization. (89)

By defining the lifestyle of Native Americans as "barbaric," Buffalo Bill rationalizes white oppression, which he believes is a natural product of white supremacy.
Buffalo Bill believes that the Native Americans, like "children," need the guidance for survival, and hence, that the whites' control of them is good for their future. J. W. Fenn suggests that Buffalo Bill is confined in a cultural mythology, thereby becoming "part of the psychological prison of cultural traditions." Confined in this prison, Buffalo Bill legitimates the perpetuation of colonialism: it becomes "natural" to use the power to stop the Native Americans' "uncivilized" and "barbaric" ways of life.

This cultural mythology even makes it possible for Buffalo Bill to betray friendship for the maintenance of his heroic image. While Buntline tells the Russian visitor, the Grand Duke Alexis, on his expedition how Buffalo Bill is brave in his fight against Comanche, Buffalo Bill takes pride in his exploitation of Native Americans. Impressed by Buffalo Bill's bravery and pride, the Duke fires into the dark, thereby fatally wounding Buffalo Bill's friend, Spotted Tail. Despite his grief, Buffalo Bill will not acknowledge his friendship with Spotted Tail. Rather, Buffalo Bill does his best to ignore

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his friend's death, fearing that he might lose his heroic image. In fact, Spotted Tail does not belong to the Comanche tribe. Nonetheless, Buffalo Bill distorts Spotted Tail's dying words in order to tell the Duke and Buntline that Spotted Tail is his enemy Comanche: "I . . . should have . . . stayed at home in . . . Texas with the rest of my . . . Comanche tribe" (23). This lie explains how little Buffalo Bill regards his friendship with Native Americans in order to keep his heroic image, by "drawin' on what I was . . . and raising' it to a higher level" (42).

While calling in question the implications of the Wild West Show, Kopit exposes the white ideology embodied in Buffalo Bill's myth. Instead of elevating Buffalo Bill into the sphere of myth, Kopit describes Buffalo Bill as a fraudulent hero, an aging performer who distorts historical facts. Kopit argues in his interview with John Lahr: "Of course he would alter the facts. Buffalo Bill became involved in the dilution of history because he made what happened into a fiction; and he used real people to fictionalize themselves" (K99).

Like Buntline's history in support of internal colonialism, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show mystifies power relations between whites and Native Americans. As in the gap between Buffalo Bill's words and deeds, we can see the
purposes this mystification serves: Buffalo Bill's Show enhances the white ideological project of subordinating Native Americans into a degrading space. As an entertainer, he employs Native Americans to play their "inferior" roles that work to rationalize white exploitation. In particular, Buffalo Bill persuades Chief Joseph to repeat his "celebrated" surrender speech in the Wild West Show, a speech that serves as a vehicle for justifying the whites' control: "I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever . . ." (56, 94). For Chief Joseph, this Wild West Show degrades the Native Americans to reenact their defeat and to lose their identity. In this process, the Native Americans are transformed into objects for entertaining whites.

The White House scene also provides a useful way of understanding why myth is produced. In the prologue to the performance of his melodrama, Scouts of the Plains, for "The Ol' Time President," Buntline reveals the purpose of his involvement in myth-making:

As for my soul's redemption, it came thus:
I saw the nation profit more than us.
For with each one o' my excitin' stories,
Cody grew t' represent its glories.
Also helped relieve its conscience,
By showing pessimism's nonsense. (35)

Buntline aims at creating myth in order to help America
"relieve its conscience" for exploiting the Native Americans. To do so, Buntline creates mythic heroes such as Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill Hickok who play their own roles. By contrast, Buffalo defines as inferior the Native Americans who are played by an Italian, a German, and the others. Buntline's "magic pen" (19) is employed to sacrifice the racial Other's truth to justify the white colonialist brutality. Like Sitting Bull in the Wild West Show, Uncas as Chief of the Pawnee Native Americans is assigned to speak the distorted "vision":

[T]he white man is great, the red man nothing. So, if a white man kills a red man, we must forgive him, for God intended man to be as great as possible, and by eliminating the inferior, the great man carries on God's work. (43)

In this play-within-the-play, Kopit reveals the lies of myth while contrasting Buffalo Bill with Hickok in terms of the views on their roles. Actively involved in the process of myth-making, Buffalo Bill performs without doubt his role of a mythic hero. Although he is in sympathy with Native Americans, Buffalo Bill cannot escape the white ideology that advocates the white supremacy for the colonialist control: "I . . . just want to say that anyone who thinks we have done something wrong is wrong!" (92). Preoccupied with his public image of a hero, Buffalo Bill attempts to prove that his actions against Native Americans
stem from his patriotic spirit: "I am doin' what my country wants! WHAT MY BELOVED COUNTRY WANTS!" (41). Such a colonialist idea forces Buffalo Bill to believe that, as Uncas as a Native American argues in Buntline's' play, "the Indian is in no way wronged by being murdered. Indeed, quite the opposite: being murdered is his purpose in life" (43).

By contrast, Hickok is able to perceive the gap between illusion and reality. Hickok rejects his "heroic" role that Buntline defines for him in his melodrama, while feeling himself that this role brings to him "the humiliation o' havin' to impersonate my own personal self" (45). And he criticizes Buffalo Bill as "[d]umb, dudelickin' FRAUD" (46) for distorting truth to give people "somethin' t' be proud of" (40). Instead of playing his role, Hickok wants to play what he really is by asserting that "I AM Hickok!" (45): "If I gotta play Hickok, I'm gonna play Hickok the way Hickok should be played!" (46). Hickok's rage against his unrealistic role forces him to kill Buntline and to rape an Italian actress playing a Native-American maiden. Like Hickok, who denies the mythologizing of facts for power, Kopit criticizes the unrealistic aspect of myth that leads people to accept fiction as reality.
The bigger force is also engaged in the national scale in the scenes of the 1886 US Senate Indian Affairs Commission hearing concerning the grievances at Standing Rock Reservation. Like Buffalo Bill, the government is involved in producing colonialist ideology in order to justify its unpleasant deeds. The meetings are held between the Native-American representatives—Sitting Bull and John Grass—and the senate committee including Logan, Dawes, and Morgan. As a mediator, Buffalo Bill intends to make the government responsible for correcting its wrongdoing done to Native Americans. Buffalo Bill asks the President directly to negotiate with Native Americans, for he believes "A committee won't be able to help!" (65). Yet the President has no intention to help the Native Americans. Instead, he is preoccupied with playing cowboy on a mechanical horse at the White House. Furthermore, while preferring to send the senatorial committee in his place, the President defines this meeting between the Native Americans and the government as a "gesture" (65). To fall into "gesture" is to make it impossible for the Native Americans to expect the solutions to their complaints from the senatorial representatives.

Such a "gesture," of course, brings to the Native Americans the disillusion exemplified in John Grass's
complaints at the fraud of the government. Because he is educated at the school operated by the dominant group, John Grass is elected to discuss the Native Americans' grievances with the senatorial committee. When he appears in his clothing imitating the whites at the meeting, John Grass seems to lose his cultural identity. However, John Grass points out the broken promises of the government and its attempt to assimilate the Native Americans to the life pattern of the whites:

[The Great Father [the President] said he would send us food and clothing, but nothing came of it. So we asked him for the money he had promised us when we sold him the Black Hills, thinking, with this money we could buy food and clothing. But nothing came of it. (9)

In response to this critique, the committee disguises the greed of the nation as a willingness to guide Native Americans. The committee acknowledges that the government "bought" the Black Hills from the Native Americans. Yet the committee rejects Native Americans' request for money on grounds that money will be used for drinking and that the Native Americans have "not been educated enough to spend it wisely" (30). In order to silence the Native Americans, Senator Logan fraudulently argues that money is "in trust" (30). Senator Morgan also mentions that, interpreting Logan's words, money is "in a bank. Being held for you in a . . . bank. In Washington! Very . . .
fine bank" (30). Therefore, these logics of the dominant group become an ideological defense of its conquest of the Native Americans.

Buffalo Bill's attitude toward the committee's disguise of greed proves that, like the committee, he also remains in the white ideology. When John Grass rages against the disguise, Buffalo Bill attempts to persuade him to "be patient with them" and asserts that "These men have come to help you!" (30). To do so, Buffalo Bill adds that "their ways are different from yours" (30). This difference makes it impossible for the two groups to communicate with each other and serves to perpetuate white oppression. For instance, John Grass exemplifies the items, including houses, bulls, chickens, a wagon, and even a steamboat, which the Native Americans were promised to receive in return for peace. Yet Senator Logan points out the invalidity of spoken words in a treaty, by arguing that "You . . . really believe . . . these things were in the treaty?" (31). This fraud becomes evident when Buffalo Bill admits that this non-communication arises from "the Government's policy of having its official interpreters translate everything incorrectly when interpreting for the Indians, thereby angering the Indians and forcing them to learn English for themselves" (89-90). Buffalo Bill
regards this fraud as an "aspect of our benevolent attitude toward these savages" (89).

Furthermore, non-communication lies at the differences of views on land. The Native Americans do not recognize their right to own land, for it exists for community, not for private use. This difference of the views on land leads the Native Americans not to understand the whites' claiming of the full ownership of land. Although they are forced to sign treaties concerning the Black Hills, the Native Americans cannot understand the contents of the treaties because they do not know English. Here, by employing the Native Americans' ignorance of English, the committee attempts to perform its purpose by suggesting the broken promises that do not appear in the treaties. In the process of non-communication, the less powerful is bound to be controlled. In his interview with Lahr, Kopit suggests that this strategy for control spreads in the national "ideals": "This country was founded on anticipation. But our dream of glory wasn't the nightmare of destruction, of willfulness, of greed, of perjury, of murder, which it has become" (K58).

This fraudulent strategy works in the service of colonial ideology, thereby putting forth what Kopit calls "the symptom of a national disease" (K54). This is an
effort to control the resistance of Native Americans who reclaim their authority over autonomy. Buffalo Bill asserts that the three senatorial representatives "have come to help [John Grass] and [his] people" (8), and that these representatives are "[their] only hope" (31). However, the senatorial committee embodies the nation's struggle to justify the occupation of the Black Hills by defining Native Americans as "children" (7, 52). Despite his willingness to help the Native Americans, Buffalo Bill is also representative of white ideology in the way he defines Native Americans as the national enemy. Here Buffalo Bill justifies his distance from Native Americans, by ascribing the responsibility for the government's wrongdoing to them:

I am sick and tired of these sentimental humanitarians who take no account of the difficulties under which this Government has labored in its efforts to deal fairly with the Indian, nor of the countless lives we have lost and atrocities endured at savage hands. (90)

The inferior images for Native Americans such as "children" (7, 52) and "savages" (89) serve to legitimize the whites' control. Therefore, white ideology intends with its power of image-making to silence the Native Americans whose life is not understandable to the whites.

This silencing of the Native Americans culminates at the scene in which, just after Sitting Bull is
assassinated, his tribe is massacred at Wounded Knee in 1890. Despite the cruelty of the massacre by the order of the government, Colonel Forsyth in charge of the massacre attempts to rationalize it as an impulse to protect the whites. After the Army's massacre of Sitting Bull's tribe, Colonel Forsyth has an interview with a reporter about that action: "One can always find someone who'll call an overwhelming victory a massacre. I suppose they'd prefer it if we'd let more of our own boys get shot!" (84). Such a rationalization becomes a vehicle for relieving the nation's conscience. Furthermore, in response to a reporter's critique of his "harsh" step, Colonel Forsyth justifies the massacre as an action for the nation:

Of course innocent people have been killed. In war they always are. And of course our hearts go out to the innocent victims of this. But war is not a game. It's tough. And demands tough decisions. In the long run I believe what happened here at this reservation yesterday will be justified. (84)

This statement echoes that of General Westmoreland concerning the killing of Vietnamese citizens by American soldiers (K59). By inserting Westmoreland's words for justifying the massacre, Kopit makes Indians transcend time and place in terms of the continuation of white oppression.

Returning from the massacre at Wounded Knee, Buffalo Bill is psychologically fragmented. Suffering from such a
fragmentation, Buffalo Bill asserts: "I dunno what's happenin' anymore... Things have gotten... beyond me" (77). Disillusioned at the cruelty of massacre, Buffalo Bill cannot be liberated from his sense of guilt. Buffalo Bill asks for Hickok's help, for he believes that "Hickok knows just who he is!" (80). It is true that Hickok appears at the saloon scene as a person able to distinguish illusion from reality. Instead of helping Buffalo Bill to relieve his sense of guilt, however, Hickok is realistically preoccupied with his benefit—commercial and ideological—through the enterprise of the Wild West Show. Hickok plans to create many Buffalo Bills for the world performances. Just as Buffalo Bill as a national hero serves to justify the ideological dominance over the Native Americans, a lot of Buffalo Bills will perform the similar purpose in various stages. Hickok tells Buffalo Bill about his plan:

[T]his... enterprise... is still in its infancy. The potential, though... is unlimited. For example, think of this. The great national good... that could come from this: some of you, let's say, would concentrate strictly on theatrics. MEANWHILE! Others of you would concentrate on purely humanitarian affairs. Save... well, not Sitting Bull, but... some Indian down in Florida. Another up in Michigan. Perhaps expand into Canada. Mexico. Central America. SOUTH AMERICA! My God, there must be literally millions of people who could benefit by your presence! Your... simultaneous presence!

(81-82)
It is through Hickok's speech that Kopit provides the play with the possibility of applying white oppression to the national and international stage of politics.

Disappointed with the world of lies upon which he depends, Buffalo Bill attempts to destroy his false self by shooting the Buffalo Bills. Buffalo Bill's dilemma explains why dead Native Americans are not silenced. The dead Native Americans fill the stage to begin their story while debasing colonialist rhetoric. As a result, Buffalo Bill is haunted by the voices of the dead Native Americans in the midst of the Wild West Show. Particularly, Buffalo Bill is powerless in talking with Sitting Bull, which dramatizes colonialism's failure to suppress their voice. The dead Sitting Bull gives a satirical comment on Buffalo Bill's humiliation of the Native Americans and on the governmental Native-American policy: "We had land... You wanted it; You took it. That... I understand perfectly. What I cannot understand... is why you did all this, and at the same time... professed your love" (85). And the dead Sitting Bull points out the political efficacy of myth-making. For the Native Americans, this Wild West Show means a tool of humiliating them, for, while turning reality into fiction, it degrades their images according to the racial order: as Sitting Bull tells
Buffalo Bill,

We had all surrendered. We were on reservations. We could not fight, or hunt. We could do nothing. Then you came and allowed us to imitate our glory... It was humiliating! For sometimes, we could almost imagine it was real. (87)

Determined to be liberated from a sense of guilt, Buffalo Bill still attempts to find a shelter in his false images on which he wants to live. As the dead Native Americans haunt his consciousness, Buffalo Bill attempts to defend himself by refusing the Native Americans' right to land:

For the truth is, the Indian never had any real title to the soil of this country. We had that title. By right of discovery! And all the Indians were, were the temporary occupants of the land. They had to be vanquished by us! It was, in fact, our moral obligation! (90-91)

And Buffalo Bill agrees that the provisions of treaties between the Native Americans and the whites could be revised for "the interests of the country demand" (91). This maneuver of internal colonialism is only momentarily successful, when he identifies himself with the false image of a mythic hero. However, as he begins his journey into the search for his real identity that remains behind his mask, Buffalo Bill experiences a crisis of his identity that dramatizes the futility of his attempt to live on his mythic image. This crisis serves as a signal that Buffalo
Bill's effort to be liberated from his guilt over Native Americans is bound to fail.

Although the contradictions in the colonialist ideology between words and deeds are revealed, white ideology still operates in the hands of the whites. When the stage is lit at the end of the play, we can see the same three glass cases as those of the opening scene. Kopit makes the theatre a kind of museum, in which the history of America becomes an object to be displayed for revision. In particular, the shape of the effigies serves as a reference to the white ideological domination.

Buffalo Bill is displayed as "a larger-than-life-size effigy" (1). This size of the effigy implies that the history of Buffalo Bill as a mythic hero—by extension, of the whites—is exaggerated. However, Sitting Bull's unadorned effigy, along with a bloodstained Native-American shirt, an old rifle, and a buffalo skull, is displayed to signify the "inferior" and defeated aspect of Native-American culture. These materials for the setting provide the system of differentiation that serves as a vehicle for legitimatizing white oppression.

Furthermore, by identifying the opening of Indians with its end, Kopit emphasizes the circularity of actions in terms of the white ideological production through myth.
This myth-making process as applied to the Native Americans' case extends to the contemporary problems of US politics toward the less powerful as cultural inferiors in terms of racism. As John Lahr observes, "Kopit's play is ostensibly about America's first 'enemy'; but the Indians are prototypes for our hysterical reaction to other 'alien forces.'"

Kopit encourages the audience to see not only the ideological domination over the Native Americans, but also why ideology is produced. Kopit sees this society as involving itself in continually creating myth, thereby providing the audiences with the impulse to feel their personal and collective guilt and to examine their beliefs and values. As Michael C. O'Neill writes, "Kopit involves his audience in the role of myth-maker, only to demonstrate that finally the Western myth is a collective expression of a violent supremacy deeply embedded in the American character." In this sense, the audience is placed in a context similar to Buffalo Bill and the government in the way that they have participated in the process of myth-

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making. This process of myth-making occurs without doubt, for it has been taken for granted. Therefore, the audience is offered a responsibility for restoring the social order that has been distorted, hence saving the society from the "nightmare" of history.
CHAPTER 6

The Other Within:
David Rabe's Sticks and Bones

David Rabe's *Sticks and Bones* (1969) begins with David's return from Vietnam war. By taking David's return as a focal point in which he becomes a tool of criticizing the systems of American values, Rabe makes this play reveal what Samuel J. Bernstein calls "the materialistic decadence and selfish, ethnocentric cruelty of our culture."¹ Physically blind, yet with moral insight, David attempts to expose the "cruelty" embedded in the social system in which his family is inscribed. In challenging the "common sense" of the family's values, David reveals the contradictions between its values and reality. Revolving around such contradictions, *Sticks and Bones* is indeed subtly subversive. Since David is speaking for the racial Other and on behalf of the silenced Other, however, this subversion does not take place in the way of the direct racial confrontations as discussed in the previous chapters. Rather, it does so through the ideological conflict within a white family.

Set against white ideology, David's voice serves as a vehicle for restoring the "just" representations of the racial Other. In this sense, *Sticks and Bones* can be read as disrupting racial difference by interrogating the system of differences that has been employed for legitimating the racial order. To do so, I pay attention to the context of this disruption, the conflict between David and his family in terms of how the racial Other is perceived. The conflict constructs the dramatic structure of the play: as Rabe comments, "One of the major conflicts between the characters in *Sticks and Bones* is a disagreement about the nature of the world in which they are living. . . ."  

Revealing such a disagreement will serve as a useful way of illuminating the racial prejudice embedded in the middle-class American family. Here David's challenge to his family is a challenge to its beliefs and to its confinement of the racial Other within white ideology.

If *Sticks and Bones* aesthetically expresses a critique of white ideology, an examination of the whites' attitude toward the racial Other would enhance our understanding of the dynamic structure of American society. What kind of

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1David Rabe, introduction, *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel and Sticks and Bones* (1973; New York: Penguin, 1983) xx. All further references to this introduction and to *Sticks and Bones* are noted by page numbers in parentheses.
responses do the family and Father Donald show to David's obsession with his Vietnamese lover, Zung, whom he loved but left behind? The whites' response to her bears importantly on the prejudice they pose toward the racial Other. Rabe conceives that *Sticks and Bones* is "as much about obsession as it is about tribalism—a more inclusive term than 'racism'—just as [he] consider[s] the root of racism to be sex, or more exactly miscegenation" (xxiii). In the dominant society, this tribalism is conceptualized through notions of disease and health, darkness and light, barbaric and civilized, human and inhuman, in which the dominant group occupies the superior and the dominated one the inferior. Underlying this binarism is the idea that racial minorities should be confined within social roles that the dominant culture already has drawn for them. Such defined roles are the invention of the dominant society, born of its intention to enforce social order and to keep racial minorities within the confines of control. The practice of such an ideological domination through binarism is found when *Sticks and Bones* reveals how the Vietnamese are represented in the efforts of the dominant culture to regulate the Other within the racial order.

For the whites obsessed with the idea of racial superiority, miscegenation is an action by which racial
minorities transcend their "appropriate" space, thereby breaking the racial order. Thus, the relationship between David and Zung provides the play with a vehicle for examining the beliefs and values of his family members and Father Donald who live according to their belief in the existence of an "appropriate" space for racial minorities. Although Zung does not verbally and physically attack the family, her appearance brings a threat to them in the way that she might "contaminate" their generation.

When Harriet recognizes her son's sexual relationship with Zung, her shock is revealed through her vomiting. In her fixed view, Harriet stresses the superiority of her whiteness while expressing her hate of racial contamination: "I would be insane if I didn't want you to marry someone of your own with whom you could be happy, if I didn't want grandchildren who could be free and welcome in their world" (208). In order to justify her racial prejudice, Harriet relates the color, nose, and lips of Zung to her/the Vietnamese's inferiority, and asserts that "The human face was not meant to be that way" (208). Because the human face cannot be changed, Harriet argues, the mixing of Vietnamese blood with white blood should be prevented at every cost. Racial mixing means to her that, along with the loss of "whiteness," the whites disappear.
Harriet concludes that the Vietnamese "take us back and down if our children are theirs—it is not a mingling of blood, it is theft" (209). Despite her fear of blood mixing, Harriet finds her solace in that Zung does not contaminate her grandchildren: "[David] didn't bring her back—didn't marry her—we have those two things to thank God for. . . . We don't matter, only the children" (205).

The fear of miscegenation is not limited to Zung; rather, it has been embedded but not revealed in the family's beliefs long before David's return. This is evident in David's memory of the responses that his mother showed to a family consisting of a white man, an Asian woman, and their child at a church. David reminds his mother of her revulsion of miscegenation:

You spoke to us . . . Dad and Rick and me, as if we were conspirators. "I feel so sorry for that poor man—the baby looks like her," you said, and your mouth looked twisted as if you had been forced to swallow someone else's spit. (209)

Furthermore, Harriet's racial prejudice extends to the issue of war. When David recollects the cruelties of war, Harriet does not recognize that war is a product of the ideological conflict. Instead, Harriet ascribes the Vietnam War only to the responsibility of the Vietnamese. Harriet superficially portrays the Vietnamese as involved with the "inhuman" violence:
It's so awful the things those yellow people do to one another. Yellow people hanging yellow people. Isn't that right? Ozzie, I told you—animals—Christ, burn them. David, don't let it hurt you. All the things you saw. People aren't themselves in war. . . . that's not human. That's inhuman. It's inhuman, barbaric and uncivilized and inhuman. (162)

These degrading images are internalized in the social structure and even in the psychological field so that racial minorities are inscribed within discursive hierarchies. In this process, the racial Other loses authority over self-representations in the society that masks oppression in the rhetoric of rationalization.

Ozzie's reaction to the sexual relationship between his son, David, and Zung indicates how the racial Other is denied the "just" representations. Ozzie regards it as a natural form of "secretions." Here the Vietnamese women are degraded to the point that they could become objects for sexual pleasure of those who are assumed as superior. Yet, when Ozzie recognizes that David's relationship with Zung might give birth to the loss of prestige arising from their assumed superiority, he shows an abrupt change in manner. Here Ozzie cannot bear the thought that David might have had yellow kids: "You screwed it. A yellow whore. Some yellow ass. You put in your prick and humped your ass. You screwed some yellow fucking whore!" (144).

For him, Zung's body appears as a symbol of disease:
Dirty, filthy diseases. They got 'em. Those girls. Infections. From the blood of their parents into the very fluids of their bodies. Malaria, TB. An actual rot alive in them... gonorrhea, syphilis. There are some who have the plague. He touched them. It's disgusting.

Furthermore, Ozzie also expresses that he fears that the dominant idea of space is broken by miscegenation: "I JUST CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT. LITTLE BITTY CHINKY KIDS HE WANTED TO HAVE! LITTLE BITTY CHINKY YELLOW KIDS! DIDN'T YOU! FOR OUR GRANDCHILDREN! LITTLE BITTY YELLOW PUFFY-.. creatures" (174). His intention to maintain the assumed superiority of whiteness culminates when Ozzie strangles Zung's throat, thereby making her permanently silenced: "Flesh is lies. You are garbage and filth. You are darkness. I cast you down. Deceit. Animal. Dirty animal" (217).

Father Donald's view on David's relationship with Zung is not basically different from those of Harriet and Ozzie in the way that, obsessed with racial prejudice, he rejects miscegenation. When Harriet invites him to cure David's pain, Father Donald assumes that it is a result of the psychological impact of whoring on him. Thus, he tries to solve David's problems by applying a case from a psychological magazine to his case. Guessing that his sexual intercourse with a Vietnamese girl derives from his
ignorance, Father Donald reveals his racial prejudice, echoing the family's denial of blood mixing: "The sexual acceptance of another person, David, is intimate and extreme; this kind of acceptance of an alien race is in fact the rejection of one's own race—it is in fact the rejection of one's own self—it is sickness, David" (188). Father Donald is convinced that his comment on sexual relationship is "what is proven fact whether that fact come from science or philosophy or whatever" (188). In fact, he has nothing to do for David except to examine the young man's pain psychologically and blessing him. Like David's family, Father Donald does not perceive the essence of his anger. Instead, what he is offered is the poking from David with a cane, a poking that he believes is a result of his "bringing the truth" (188). Here such deviations from his role as a priest might imply that religion loses its spiritual function in such a racist society.

These representations of Zung by Harriet, Ozzie, and Father Donald are the product of the binary structure of Western thought. As Zung is transformed into a symbol of disease in the fixed views, this process works in the service of white ideology that assigns the power of ordering to a racial order. The ideological construction of Zung is the sign under which racial difference manifests
itself in society. This difference derives from the hierarchical classification of race that distorts representations of racial minorities. Regardless of whether racial minorities accept the representations given by the dominant culture, the representations work to control them, sometimes combined with the "legitimately" sanctioned force. In challenging this hierarchical structure, however, David speaks for racial minorities in order to reclaim the authority over their self-representations. In order to do so, David attempts to revise or even destroy the images of disease defined for the Vietnamese while interrogating the legitimation of such definition. For David, the dominant forms of assumptions for the racial Others are not "natural," as the dominant culture would have us believe, but socially given to strengthen its prestige through the racial order based on the dimensions of skin color.

How is the dominant ideology produced in Sticks and Bones? If there is a controlling metaphor wed to such a production in this play, it is television that, along with the materials for mass media such as film projector and camera, serves as what Louis Althusser the "Ideological State Apparatus" to produce the dominant ideology embedded
in the family's life. Rabe seems to see television as making the family superficial in thinking and, particularly, in their views on the racial Other. Television is described as "glowing, murmuring" (120) in the "Middle room . . . TV room" (128). This identification of "Middle room" with "TV room" suggests that television occupies the center of the family whose names Rabe intentionally models on the popular 1950s television show, "The Adventure of Ozzie and Harriet." As in this television show, the family, with the exception of David, represents the conventional American beliefs and values. By taking the world of the television show as the basis of the play, Rabe seems to see these beliefs as the source of diseasing David's family, thereby having an ill-effect on

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3 See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review, 1971) 143. According to Althusser, the materials for mass media including television, camera, or slide belong to "the communications ISA [Ideological State Apparatus]."

4 C. W. E. Bigsby, A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama, vol. 3 (New York: Cambridge UP, 1985) 326. Bigsby describes "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet" as "one of the most popular of post-war situation comedies on radio and television." And she asserts that "The series, which ran for some twenty years, concerned a middle-class American family—Ozzie, Harriet and their two sons Rick and Dave. A sentimental celebration of American values, the series excluded all evidence of anxiety and pain."
the dominant order in terms of moral corruption and alienation.

This moral corruption spreads the family in the way that Ozzie refuses to accept the blind David as his son. This refusal derives from Ozzie's fear that the "disease" of David's blindness might prevent his family from preserving the self-image of a happy family. At the beginning of the play, in which Ozzie casts doubt on the identity of David as his son, the Sergeant Major tries to present materials such as papers, pictures, prints, and blood types to prove David's identity. Then, Ozzie reluctantly accepts David not as a human son, but as a materialized one. Later, Ozzie suggests checking David's teeth and fingerprints to verify his identity.

Furthermore, without considering the ideological problems of politics that cause war, Ozzie attempts to dismiss David as "somebody living in this house who's killed people" (196). These examples prove the degree to which, fearing the confrontation with reality, Ozzie is prejudiced and superficial in thinking.

David's initial impulse to his family is to deny the world to which he once belonged. David describes the T.V. room as corrupted: "The air is wrong; the smells and sounds, the wind" (132). In this room, David feels
alienated from his family with "a kind of realization": "there's something wrong; it all feels wrong . . . I don't know these people! . . . I AM LONELY HERE! I AM LONELY!"

Ironically, he is at home, yet does not feel at home among his family members whom he perceives as strangers.

The family's obsession with the world of clichés indicates the ways in which it has no intention to see the truth, especially the essence of racial minorities. While explaining why, though he had worked as a journalist, he failed to keep a journal in Vietnam, Rabe argues that "Clichés were welcomed, as they always are when there is no real wish to see what they hide" (xvii). The family lives in such a world of clichés in order to keep the self-image of happiness in their routine life:

Rick: Hey, Dad! How you doin'?  
Ozzie: Oh, Rick! Hi!  
Rick: Hi! How you doin'?  
Ozzie: Fine. Just fine.  
Rick: Good.  
Ozzie: How you doin', Rick? (166)

It is in these kinds of noncommunicative verbal exchanges that words might take the place of human concern. For the family, words seem to be more important than a matter that lies under the superficial verbal expression. Rodney Simard points out the relationship between clichés and isolation: "Rabe uses the empty social speech, generally of
the basically inarticulate, to suggest both the hollowness of normal social intercourse and the lack of communicative power of language."

With his new moral codes gained from the war situation, David perceives the truth of racial minorities and the fallacious views of the family on them. Despite the efforts by his parents to assimilate him to their belief systems, David remains resolutely outside the familial conventions. Offering himself as a "conqueror" to the family, David intrudes into the otherwise "happy" family that, preoccupied with their own illusion, lives according to the traditional social beliefs. David's return from Vietnam War serves as a prelude to the tensions at work in *Sticks and Bones*, for he attempts to disrupt what Rabe calls in his "Author's Notes" "their self image in which reside all their sense of value and sanity" (225). David attempts to impose his sense of reality—particularly of the racial Other—to his family by challenging its representations of the racial Other. So far as he engages himself in this disruption, David is transformed from a blind veteran into what William W. Demastes calls "a catalytic force that will convert his naive though brutally

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prejudiced family, give them an insight into their own metaphorical blindness."

David, who returns from Vietnam War with an insight into the truth of the racial Other, tries to disrupt the family's racial prejudice, born out of the white hegemony over the less powerful people. Here two worlds conflict in relation to race: one is to reclaim the authority over self-representations; the other is to distort their images while confining them within the degrading space, regardless of whether they consent to the given space or resist it. In a passage that describes the absurdity of the whites' racial prejudice on Zung, David suggests that different views on the racial Other make it impossible for them to communicate: "We are hobos. We make signs in the dark. You know yours. I understand my own. We share... coffee!" (163).

The arbitrarily drawn "signs" function to preclude David and his family members from understanding each other. When David attempts to disrupt the family's fixed views on the racial Other, the family members do not understand what makes David angry. Here, David feels that the power of insight is not allowed to correct what is wrong in the

family. Disappointed with his inability to change his family's beliefs, David defines himself as "a young ... blind man in a room ... in a house in the dark, raising nothing in a gesture of no meaning toward two voices who are not speaking ... of a certain ... incredible ... connection!" (162).

Convinced that Zung should not be degraded within the arbitrary "signs" of white ideology, David claims to restore her identity as a human being. David argues that Zung exists not so much a symbol of "disease" as "the thing most possibly of value in [his] life" (177). David recollects his good relationship with her to the point that silence takes the place of words and makes possible their mutual understanding: "we looked in the dark and our eyes were tongues that could speak and the hurting ... all of it ... stopped, and there was total understanding in you of me and in me of you . . . ." (174). Appearing in David's memory through her rejection of the theatrical naturalism, Zung also serves as a symbol supporting his metaphoric moral war against his family.

Moral blindness is at the center of the family in a form of racial prejudice, "disease," and the "fraud" which "keeps [the family] sane" (170). If Zung's disease is ideologically produced as a result of the family's
preoccupation with illusion, Hank's congenital disease of the face and hands is a reality. Through the ironic juxtaposition between the ideologically produced disease of Zung and the real disease of Hank, Rabe suggests that metaphorical disease spreads throughout the whole family.

Fundamental to this metaphorical disease is the physical disease of Hank, who has become a mythical model for Ozzie and Harriet. In fact, Hank made their marriage possible and encouraged them to buy the present house. A man of material success, Hank is a person whom Ozzie really wanted to become. By revealing Hank's hidden disease, however, David forces his family members to face reality, that is, their spiritual disease. For David, Hank's myth is no more than a fallacious belief on which the family's cultural identity is built. David denies Ozzie's argument that Hank was hurt by an auto accident, by asserting that "The sickness was congenital" (140). Confronting David's conviction, Ozzie still casts doubt on the reality: as he tells Harriet, "You think it's possible? I don't myself. I mean, we knew Hank well. I think it's just something David got mixed up about and nobody corrected him. What do you think?" (152). David's assertion is not acceptable to Ozzie, who believes "his parents were good fine people" (141). However, David criticizes Ozzie's blind belief in
the myth of Hank, "Why did you make me think him perfect? It was starting in his face the way it started in his hand" (141).

Facing the fact that the myth of Hank might be a "fraud," Ozzie fears that his world might be filled with lies, among them his views on the racial Other. To escape the pain arising from the contradiction between reality and his belief, Ozzie attempts to escape into the world of fantasy that also exists in television and the memory of the past. When David appears to break the life pattern of his family, Ozzie tries to find solace in television. We can see Ozzie obsessed with television when he is eager to repair the broken television: "I'll get it fixed. I'll fix it. Who needs to hear it? We'll watch it" (216). Whenever he faces David's critique of his moral blindness and his racial prejudice, Ozzie runs to watch television and wildly turns the channels without paying attention to what is happening around him. For Ozzie, the fantasy deriving from the visual images of television takes the place of reality.

In addition, Ozzie also find an escape in his memory of his youth filled with a dream, future, and hope, for example, with his pride of winning in a foot race and of sexual desire. However, he recognizes that his youth no
longer exists. Instead of giving him satisfaction, memory serves to stress his failure as father and husband. This failure drives him to express the repressed desire for violence: "How I'd like to beat Ricky with my fists till his face is ugly! How I'd like to banish David to the streets. . . . How I'd like to cut her tongue from her mouth" (150). Ozzie shifts the responsibility for his disappointment with the present life onto the other members, thereby hating David, criticizing his wife for their marriage, and dismissing Rick as immature: "I was nobody's goddam father and nobody's goddamn husband! I was myself!" (150). Alienated from his family, Ozzie feels that he does not accomplish what can be considered valuable: "There's no evidence in the world of me, no sign or trace, as if everything I've ever done were no more than smoke. My life has closed behind me like water" (193).

When Ozzie recognizes that his identity has been built on "fraud," he shows a desperate desire to build his identity on any kind of materialistic forms. David criticizes Ozzie's desire for materials by dismissing his house as "a coffin" (194). Nevertheless, Ozzie has no intention to revise or destroy his values and his views on the racial Other. Responding to David's attack, Ozzie rather attempts to justify his own life pattern: "I got a
minor problem of ambiguity goin' for me here, is all, and you're exaggerating everything all out of proportion. You're distorting everything! All of you! If I have to lie to live, I will!" (197). Such a lie is submerged into his life in the way that he dismiss as absurd David's attempt to make him face reality and, by extension, the truth of the racial Other. Despite his attempts to justify his beliefs, Ozzie feels that his identity is threatened by David's attack: "I can no longer compel recognition. I can no longer impose myself, make myself seen" (203).

The crisis of identity brings him to the moment of recognition that his life has been filled with "[f]oolishness and deceit"—"a trick of feeling inside me being played against me, seeking to diminish me" (211). This crisis culminates at his "feeling of being nothing" (211). In an attempt to hold his identity, Ozzie makes a list of whatever he owns in order to "[l]et people know who [he is], what [he has] done" (212). For him, materials have been essential to the formation of his identity. David jokes about Ozzie's obsession in the way that he sees materials as the only way of proving his identity:

They will become the floor and they will become the walls, the chairs. We'll sit in them; sleep. We will call them "home." We'll give them as gifts—call them "ring" and "pot" and "cup." No, no; it's not a thing to fear.... We will notice them no more than all the others. (215)
Furthermore, Ozzie distributes the list to three empty chairs representing his family members in order to show his identity. Yet there is no one to listen to his address; instead, chairs are substituted for human beings. Of course, there is no communication between him and chairs. Here, his identity is transformed into materials that are included in the list. For this reason, David perceives the moral blindness of his father who he believes "doesn't know . . . there's nothing really there to see" (214). Therefore, his/the family's prejudiced views on the world, especially on the racial Other, are so groundless that they become objects to be revised or even destroyed.

Whenever David forces his family to face the reality of racial minorities, he is considered a destroyer of the logic that the family has cherished. In order to maintain their logic, the family members consider silencing him. Like his parents, Rick dismisses David's speaking for the racial Other as "the stupid stuff":

[Ozzie]'s sick of you. What the hell's the matter with you? He doesn't wanna talk anymore about all the stupid stuff you talk. He wants to talk about cake and cookies and cars and coffee. He's sick a you and he wants you to shut up. We hate you, goddamn you. (216-17)

Two logics of David and his family clash. While David criticizes his family, he is assaulted by his family. The scene in which his family helps David kill himself shows
that the family denies the voice for the racial Other's self-representation. Instead, the family members want to keep their logic that might perpetuate their spiritual disease. Attempting to protect themselves from David's threat to their logic, Ozzie, Harriet, and Rick persuade him to commit suicide by cutting his own wrists. To do so, they prepare razor, silver pans, and towels to collect the blood.

Here we see not only the ideology of the family, but also why it is produced. The motive is to control David who is speaking for the Other and on behalf of the silenced Other, and furthermore, to control racial minorities. The family silences the voice speaking for the Other in order to live according to their own beliefs and values, which exist in a form of rituals: as Rabe points out in his interview with Philip C. Kolin,

[T]here were domestic rituals—the food routines and rules about the way you're supposed to say hello. When you don't say "hello" right in Sticks and Bones, there's trouble. Those are rituals and when people violate them, then there's a sacrifice. . . .

David refuses to follow such rituals the family already created. Thus, silencing his voice is inevitable for maintaining these rituals. Pamela Cooper observes the

effects of the silencing of David: "David's defeat at the hands of his family leads finally to the extinction of viable human personality. The watching family of second-generation Nelsons is just a collection of voices." This ritual killing might protect the family members' values and beliefs from being reexamined.

David appears as a "conqueror," yet his mission of changing the family's views fails. This failure sends David's family "back to the regular way" (147). As the stage direction indicates, Sticks and Bones ends with the victory of his family: "Rick, sitting, begins to play his guitar for David. The music is alive and fast. It has a rhythm, a drive of happiness that is contagious" (223). Mindlessly, Rick captures the scenes of killing with his camera as if David's death is something happy:

Rick: . . . Mom, I like David like this.
Harriet: He's happier.
Ozzie: We're all happier. (223)

As Rabe points out in "Author's Note," the shift from David's superficial domination to his suicide forms the dramatic structure: "At the start, the family is happy and orderly, and then David comes home and he is unhappy. As the play progresses, he becomes happier and they become

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unhappier. Then, at the end, they are happy" (226). Ironically, their happiness does not derive from their insight into reality, but from their ritual killing of one who intends to provide such an insight.

Although what he is asking for is not accomplished, the story of David is not restricted to his simple failure. The image of David as a symbol of truth is made vividly present by virtue of his absence. David's presence-in-absence, like Zung's, might be offered a position of inviting us to examine, in Rabe's words, our "accomplice in a ritual," "to see something about [ourselves],"9 and furthermore, to demystify power relations that remain between the dominant majorities and racial minorities.

9Kolin 155.
CHAPTER 7

"Deconstructivist Madame Butterfly":
David Hwang's *M. Butterfly*

The critique of white ideology in the plays discussed in the previous chapters helps us to understand the remarkable degree to which writing serves as a vehicle for reflecting and even expressing the struggle for self-representations of racial minorities. The voice for their freedom becomes a matter of concern in the context of social, political, and cultural space. This concern, as we might expect, serves to disrupt power relations that society would assume. Here, what is important to racial minorities is to deny their image as a negation of all that is white and Western. Just as the African-American and white-American playwrights discussed in the previous chapters attempt to redress racial minorities' image as an absence, a Chinese-American playwright, David Hwang, is also engaged in criticizing and even deconstructing the modes of representation fundamental to the dominant ideology.

Hwang's *M. Butterfly* (1988) attempts this critique by commenting more broadly on what Hwang calls such "isms" as racism, sexism, and imperialism, the "isms" that are well manifested in "an attempt to degrade 'the other,'" to make
'the other' less than oneself." Written against the political efficacy of these "isms," *M. Butterfly* can be read as disrupting the mode of oppositions that proliferate into unresolvable differences in terms of race, gender, and culture. In this sense, *M. Butterfly* functions in the way that parallels Derridean deconstruction of binary oppositions for hierarchy, while doing what Hwang calls "a deconstructivist *Madame Butterfly*."

In deconstructing such binary oppositions, post-structuralists reject the notion that meaning is fixed in a one-to-one correspondence between signifier and signified, sign and thing. Instead, they suggest that meaning should be produced through language systems. Among them, Jacques Derrida, asserting that the signifier "has no constitutive meaning," sees the notion of sign as remaining "within the heritage of that logocentrism which is also a phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being of voice and the ideality of

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2David Henry Hwang, afterword, *M. Butterfly* (1986; New York: Plume, 1988) 95. All further references to his "afterword" and to this play are noted by page numbers in parentheses.
meaning."³ For Derrida, it is an illusion to believe that meaning is apparent at the moment of speech, for the belief in the existence of truth functions to suppress the play of language. This suppression of the freeplay of language brings forth the particular pattern of difference that functions to establish the social order. This pattern is based not on true difference, but is created for the ideological domination from hierarchical oppositions that play a determining role in organizing Hwang's textual world.

The problem with the West's assumptions is that they seem to fix meaning and confine it to a limited category by denying its plurality. This fixity of meaning leads the Other to be defined in relation to the dominant group and in terms of the former's relations with the latter. In this way, this fixity works to perpetuate social order in the light of its preference to division and hierarchy of meanings. By calling into question the "legitimacy" of the social order arising from the law of binary oppositions, I will read M. Butterfly as disrupting the Western fantasy of the East, as perceived by Gallimard, the play's central character.

A story in the *New York Times*, "France Jails 2 in Odd Case of Espionage," serves as a backdrop for *M. Butterfly*.¹ According to this story, a French diplomat, Bernard Boursicot, had a love affair with a Chinese opera singer, Mr. Shi Peipu, for twenty years and had a child, Shi Dudu, by the latter. Boursicot was sentenced to be imprisoned for six years, for he gave diplomatic secrets to that singer for the Chinese government. The most incredible fact was that, though a man traditionally played a role of a woman in the Beijing opera, Boursicot was ignorant of the identity of his "mistress" as a man. Boursicot was reported to justify this ignorance by asserting that "[Shi] was very shy. I thought it was a Chinese custom."⁵ As Hwang puts it in his "afterword," this ignorance probably led Boursicot to be occupied with the "assumption . . . consistent with a certain stereotyped view of Asians" (94) and women, thereby allowing him to live in his own fantasy. Hwang continues:

I therefore concluded that the diplomat must have fallen in love, not with a person, but with a


⁵Bernstein K7.
fantasy stereotype. I also inferred that, to the extent the Chinese spy encouraged these misperceptions, he must have played up to and exploited this image of the Oriental woman as demure and submissive. (94)

Hwang employs this real story to challenge this cultural blindness. To do so, he places Gallimard's misperceptions at the center of *M. Butterfly*, in which Boursicot is renamed as Rene Gallimard and Shi as Song Liling. As Gallimard expresses in his aside, the story of a love affair between Song and himself "play[s] through [his] head" (4). Douglas Street notes that Gallimard "selectively relive[s] the meaningful events of his twenty-year romance as he perceives them," and that this perception serves as "the working catalyst herein for playwright and protagonist."6 Filtered through his head, Gallimard's memory in a prison cell is projected on the stage while revealing the white/patriarchal/Western ideology. In this process, Gallimard's head is transformed into a theatre for what he calls "[his] ideal audience—who come[s] to understand and even, perhaps just a little, to envy [him]" (4). Ironically, Hwang encourages the audience to be placed in a position not of understanding or envying Gallimard, but of examining the ideology that contributes

6Douglas Street, *David Henry Hwang* (Boise, ID: Boise State University, 1989) 43.
to producing imperialism in the context of racism and sexism.

Behind these "isms" lies the idea that there is an "appropriate" space for the Other in terms of social, political, and cultural forms. The belief in the existence of such a space serves as a vehicle for efficient control through the hegemony of white/Western culture over the subordinate groups. In M. Butterfly, this idea of space creates various limits that, while functioning as roles and stereotypes, constitute the identity formation of the Others, the repression of their indigenous values and ways of life, and racism. This idea is well exemplified in the story of the play-within-the-play, Puccini's Madame Butterfly, in which an Asian woman sacrifices herself for a white male Westerner. In addition, we can see how the idea of space is internalized in the West's way of life though Gallimard's response to the performance of Puccini's opera at the German ambassador's house in Beijing. In this performance, Song does the death scene of Butterfly for Western diplomats. Based on the white/male/Westerner's supremacy, Puccini's opera serves to enhance Gallimard's fantasy in which he plays Pinkerton, his friend Marc plays Sharpless, Song plays Butterfly, and Chin plays Suzuki. Preoccupied with the white, male, and Westerner's idea of
space, Gallimard sees the Asian Butterfly's "pure sacrifice" for Pinkerton as "a very beautiful story" (17).

However, by interrogating the "legitimacy" of the West's assumptions as perceived by Gallimard, Hwang reclaims the authority of the Other over self-representation in the world that hides control in the dominant forms of beliefs. From the Asian perspective, Puccini's opera is not a beautiful story, because it is about what Song calls "[t]he submissive Oriental woman and the cruel white man" (17). Thus, Song asserts that Madame Butterfly is beautiful only "to a Westerner" (17), thereby dismissing Gallimard's view of the performance as "one of [his] favorite fantasies" (17). For Song, what has been considered "natural" to a white male Westerner is no more than the product of "fantasies." By linking such fantasies with the ideologies of patriarchy and imperialism, Song attempts to deconstruct Gallimard's position by exemplifying the reversal of the story of Madame Butterfly:

[W]hat would you say if a blonde homecoming queen fell in love with a short Japanese businessman? He treats her cruelly, then goes home for three years, during which time she prays to his picture and turns down marriage from a young Kennedy. Then, when she learns he has remarried, she kills herself. Now, I believe you would consider this girl to be a deranged idiot, correct? But because it's an Oriental who kills herself for a Westerner—ah!—you find it beautiful. (17)
This reversal of positions is not "beautiful" to Gallimard/the West, but to Song/the East. Their contrasting views on Madame Butterfly give birth to the relativity of truth that provides M. Butterfly with a strategy for articulating the Other's refusal to be contained in the conventional beliefs and values.

The relativity of truth enables the audiences to interpret the ideologies of patriarchy and imperialism as not natural but arbitrarily imposed, as not fixed but contradictory. To interrogate these ideologies, Hwang appropriately makes a prison cell the place for Gallimard's confession. While he acknowledges that he mistook Song the man for Song a woman, Gallimard reveals the contradictions between his fantasy and reality. In his fantasy, Gallimard identifies Song with "the Perfect Woman" (4), in other words, the feminine ideal of Madame Butterfly, for "she" gives up everything for "her" lover. Living in his fantasy about his position of defining the images of the Other, Gallimard cherishes his ability to entrap Butterfly in his arms. Here his fantasy develops into the imperialist assumption that the dominant group has the right to conquer the Other: "We, who are not handsome, not brave, nor powerful, yet somehow believe, like Pinkerton, that we deserve a Butterfly" (10). If power over the Other is
considered ideologically "deserving," this perception functions to legitimate the confinement of the Other within the dominant idea of space. In this way, it becomes "natural" to use this power to dominate the Other.

However, dominant ideologies are not as "natural" as Gallimard's fantasy would imply. Through the contradictions in Gallimard's perception, Hwang attempts to demystify what has been considered "natural." In fact, at the beginning of his relationship with Song, Gallimard is obsessed with his idea of "the absolute power of a man" (32) and feels certain that his experiment to catch an Asian Butterfly was "a success" (36). Furthermore, Gallimard even characterizes this belief of power as an Absolute Truth: "God who creates Eve to serve Adam, who blesses Solomon with his harem but ties Jezebel to a burning bed—that God is a man. And he understands! At age thirty-nine, I was suddenly initiated into the way of the world" (38). However, at the scene of prison, Gallimard acknowledges the gap between the initial pride in his position and his recognition of reality, the gap that reveals the contradictions in the ideologies of patriarchy and imperialism.

Although the Others have their own cultures, the ideologies of patriarchy and imperialism work to degrade
these cultures only because they are different from the dominant culture. Considering the relationship between power and its contribution to justifying these ideologies in his interview with Jackson R. Bryer, Hwang suggests that "the universality of the other" pervade *M. Butterfly*:

"Whether we talk about it in terms of race or whether we talk about it in terms of gender or imperialism or whatever, there is a desire to degrade the person who is not like yourself and to feel somehow superior, to feel that you have power over them."7 Produced by the system of difference, the Asian women's bodies are here turned into the degraded objects for Gallimard's fantasy that ignores their cultural and female essence:

There is a vision of the Orient that I have. Of slender women in chong sams and kimonos who die for the love of unworthy foreign devils. Who are born and raised to be the perfect women. Who take whatever punishment we give them, and bounce back, strengthened by love, unconditionally. It is a vision that has become my life. (91)

This vision is a result of the assumption that the Asians serve themselves for the Westerners. Arising from Gallimard's racial, gender, and cultural prejudices, this assumption functions as a strategy of creating a social

hierarchy, thereby providing the dominant group with the "legitimate" privilege to control the assumed less powerful. As Gallimard judges the Others' truth with his/the West's own perceptions, this process works in the service of patriarchal and imperialist ideologies. Marc's narrative also mystifies power relations between the West and the East. A friend of Gallimard, Marc believes that for an Asian woman to submit to a white Western man is "her destiny" (25). In this imperialist assumption, Marc takes pride in the Westerners' role as conquerors: "Their women fear us. And their men—their men hate us" (25).

As the patriarchal ideology intends with its power of image-making to conquer the woman's body, so the imperialist ideology serves to rationalize the conquest of East. In his conversation with the French Ambassador, Toulon, concerning the issues of Vietnam, Gallimard applies these ideologies to the international world order. This is evident when Gallimard explains the political relationship between America and Vietnam: "If the Americans demonstrate the will to win, the Vietnamese will welcome them into a mutually beneficial union. . . . Orientals will always submit to a greater force" (46). This assumption tends to reduce the proper values of the Vietnamese in the forms of stereotypes, finally becoming a tool of colonizing them.
The deepest rejection for the Other's consciousness comes in the sphere of cultural space. Here, the Other needs to reject accepting the dominant beliefs and values as "common sense" in order to achieve cultural independence. When Gallimard extends his fantasy to the realm of reflecting international politics, Song dismisses his/the West's preconception of the East as the "international rape mentality" (82). Interrogating the legitimacy of this preconception, Song defines this mentality at a French judge's request at the court scene: "You expect Oriental countries to submit to your guns, and you expect Oriental women to be submissive to your men" (83). Song attacks the West's unwillingness to accept the East's truth:

The West thinks of itself as masculine—big guns, big industry, big money—so the East is feminine—weak, delicate, poor... but good at art, and full of inscrutable wisdom—the feminine mystique.

Her mouth says no, but her eyes say yes. The West believes the East, deep down, wants to be dominated—because a woman can't think for herself. (83)

By establishing the relationship between the West as masculine and the East as feminine, the ideology of imperialism justifies the former's dominance over the latter. Here we can move toward a fuller perception of the power of this ideology to distort Song's and the
Vietnamese's desire for freedom from such domination. Gallimard's narrative mystifies power relations, specially those between the East and the West. If we examine Gallimard's response to the killing of Vietnam citizens by US soldiers, we can see the purpose this mystification serves. Gallimard agrees with General Westmoreland who justified that killing:

General Westmoreland's remark that the Oriental does not value life the way Americans do was oddly accurate. Why weren't the Vietnamese people giving in? Why were they content instead to die and die and die again? (68)

Like Westmoreland, who undervalued the Vietnamese's desire for freedom, Gallimard becomes a symbol for the exploitation up which the dominant culture tries to cover. As the dominant group creates the Other to be confined within the degrading images, its ideological project is to colonize the Other.

Yet the imperialist ideology is not static as Gallimard's fantasy would like to imply, for what has been considered as the "destiny" of the less powerful is arbitrarily given for controlling them. While identifying Gallimard with "an adventurous imperialist" (21), Song doubts Gallimard's ability to "objectively judge [his] own values" (21). Gallimard's inability to tell illusion from truth, particularly his ignorance of Song identity as a
male, provides *M. Butterfly* with a tool of disrupting his perception of the Other and, by extension, the Western ideology. Unable to tell a man from a woman, Gallimard becomes an object of derision by a community in Paris that is part of the "ideal audience":

Woman: He still claims not to believe the truth.
Man 1: What? Still? Even since the trial?
Woman: Yes. Isn't it mad?
Man 2: He says . . . it was dark . . . and she was very modest!
Man 1: So—what? He never touched her with his hands?
Man 2: Perhaps he did, and simply misidentified the equipment. (3)

Gallimard's blindness to reality dramatizes the absurdity of the imperialist ideology that is grounded in his/the West's fantasy. This failure of ideology becomes most evident in the confrontation between Gallimard and Renee, a French student studying Chinese in China. Here the imperialist ideology becomes the object to be reexamined. In order to call this ideology into question, Renee alludes to the size of a penis underneath clothes: "you conquer the country, or whatever, but you're still wearing clothes, so there's no way to prove absolutely whose is bigger or smaller. And that's what we call a civilized society" (55-56). Here clothes hide the penis signifying the reality, thereby preventing us from perceiving the essence of the Other. Nevertheless, the
imperialist ideology serves to assume this essence and to see the assumption as "natural" without evidence. With an emphasis on the importance of the Other's identity, self-determination, and independence through the recovery of power and voice, Hwang attempts to destroy the assumptions created in the imperialist ideology. Through the contradictions between Gallimard's assumptions and reality, Hwang emphasizes the irrational elements in the assumptions that prevent people from having access to the truth.

Hwang tries to disrupt assumptions, a disruption that manifests itself when, challenging Gallimard's blindness to reality, Song struggles to exist as what Song is, that is, a male, not as a "mistress" perceived by Gallimard. To do so, Song attempts to prove his identity by stripping nakedly, in other words, by removing the disguise that might produce Gallimard's fantasy. This act of stripping is a process of not only revealing the truth, but also destroying the fantasy internalized in Gallimard and the West. To maintain his fantasy, however, Gallimard tries to stop Song's stripping: "No! Stop! I don't want to see! .. You're only in my mind! All this is in my mind!" (87). At this moment, the positions between Song and Gallimard are reversed. Song suggests that the words Gallimard employs to define Song as his "mistress" are
appropriate for Gallimard's situation: "Your mouth says no, but your eyes say yes" (87). This reversal implies that the East is not a place where human beings become stereotypes. As James S. Moy notes, M. Butterfly aims "to offer a truer view of what it means to be Asian in the space created by the tension between the audience's stereotypical perception and his 'slangy and jarring' contemporary reality."

Subject to change is not the essence of what Song is, but Gallimard's view of Song. At the beginning of his relationship with Song, Gallimard ever casted doubt on Song's identity. However, Gallimard did not involve himself in the search for truth in the fear that truth might destroy the happiness stemming from his supremacist position: as he confesses later, "Did I not undress her because I knew, somewhere deep down, what I would find? Perhaps. Happiness is so rare that our mind can turn somersaults to protect it" (60). Later, Gallimard confronts the threat of truth when Song struggles to take off the mask. It might be true that Gallimard acknowledges Song's truth. Yet he prefers to live in the world of

illusion: "You showed me your true self. When all I loved was the lie" (89).

Of course, the Other rejects being contained in the ideologies of patriarchy and imperialism that legitimizes the dominant oppression. While revealing Gallimard's fallacious belief, while revealing Song's identity as a man, Hwang makes his writing a critique of these ideologies in an attempt to deconstruct the mechanisms of domination in a world of colonial oppression. Responding to Song's struggle to reveal his identity, Gallimard asserts that Song has "some kind of identity problem" (88). Yet Song places emphasis on the fact that he has existed as what he is:

It's the same skin you've worshiped for years. . . I'm your Butterfly. Under the robes, beneath everything, it was always me. Now, open your eyes and admit it—you adore me. . . . So—you never really loved me? Only when I was playing a part? (89)

Song's resistance against his "given" role for Butterfly serves as a signal that the dominant group's effort to confine the Other within the degrading space is bound to fail. While he rejects being stylized in Gallimard's imagination, Song declares that "[he]'ll never put on those robes again!" (91). Thus, Song becomes an emotional threat to break down Gallimard's/the West's solipsistic world.
Brought into contact with this threat of reality, Gallimard finds it impossible to retain belief in the submissiveness of the East. Instead, Gallimard is forced to alter his view of Song and of the East. This alteration results from Gallimard's recognition that Song's identity is the ideological embodiment of his wish-fulfillments. At the end of *M. Butterfly*, Gallimard acknowledges that he has lived in his imagination: "I'm a man who loved a woman created by a man. Everything else—simply falls short" (90). Despite his ability to "tell fantasy from reality" (90), however, Gallimard still would like to live in the world of fantasy: "I am pure imagination. And in imagination I will remain" (91). To remain within imagination is to remain within the realm of the Western ideology that masks the truth. In his essay, "Evolving a Multicultural Tradition," Hwang criticizes Gallimard's fantasy by suggesting that Song's words for the audience should be as follows: "All right, we'll give you the Orientalia you seem to desire, but then we're also going to talk about why you're so attracted to this, and how that attachment to stereotypes blinds you to the truth of your own experience."^9

The contradiction between Gallimard's assumption about the Others and their essence makes it impossible to suppress the burden of his psychological fragmentation. This impossibility signifies the problem of the ideologies of imperialism and patriarchy, a problem manifested in the reversal of the positions between Gallimard and Song. If Song has played a role of Butterfly as in the performance of *Madame Butterfly*, Gallimard becomes a "real" Butterfly while putting on the kimono with the makeup of his face. As Gabrielle Cody mentions, Gallimard experiences metaphoric castration "by taking the failed man 'off' and putting the idealized woman 'on.'" Gallimard has thought that his "mistress" as the Asian Butterfly sacrifices herself for him as Pinkerton. At the scene of prison, however, Gallimard realizes that it is he who sacrifices himself for love: "Love warped my judgment, blinded my eyes, rearranged the very lines on my face ... until I could look in the mirror and see nothing but ... a woman" (92).

At the culmination of his disillusion, Gallimard imitates Butterfly's last words: "Death with honor is

better than life . . . life with dishonor" (92). Gallimard
is unable to reconcile his shift from his identity as a
white Western man into the opposite yet "real" role. Thus,
Gallimard tries to perpetuate his fantasy even in his
disillusion by choosing suicide:

The devastating knowledge [is] that, underneath
it all, the object of her love was nothing more,
nothing less than . . . a man. (He sets the tip
of the knife against his body.) It is 19__
And I have found her at last. In a prison on the
outskirts of Paris. My name is Rene Gallimard—
also known as Madame Butterfly. (92-93)

With the death of Gallimard, Song is placed in a position
of revising the distorted and "fantasized" relationship
between them, between the East and the West. Additionally,
Song is offered the power to define Gallimard as Butterfly
at the end of M. Butterfly and to subvert Gallimard's
definition of Song as Butterfly. Shadowing this play, the
subversion of the ideologies of patriarchy and imperialism
therefore signifies the overt desire of the Other to be
decolonized.

By decentering the West's logocentrism, Hwang invites
the audience to disrupt the Western stereotypes of the
Asian and, in particular, of racial minorities in America,
the stereotypes that stem from the system of difference.
As Robert Skloot notes, Hwang "forces the audiences of his
play into complicity with the discovery, dismantling, and
reestablishment of theatrical illusion, while at the same
time confronting them with challenges to traditional
cultural and gender assumptions."\textsuperscript{11} In a world in which
all values may be relativized, the logic of the white,
male, and Westerner is hardly the only standard for
judgment. When Hwang brings us the absurdity of this logic
that the Other might continue to confront, we might be
encouraged to have the dramatic moral decisions that might
implicate us all in the revision of our beliefs and values.

\textsuperscript{11}Robert Skloot, "Breaking the Butterfly: The Politics
Decolonization has been central interest to numerous contemporary American dramatists since the late 1950s. From *A Raisin in the Sun* forward, the plays in this study are the aesthetic tools created by these artists to express racial minorities' unwillingness to be remain colonized by white ideological domination. In keeping with the politics of theatre, the playwrights discussed grapple with the power of white/Western ideology that denies the right of racial minorities to have access to the means of defining themselves. While examining how deeply the dominant ideology is implicated in the mechanism of identity formation, the playwrights deconstruct the process by which the white/Western culture develops an ideology of legitimating its dominance over racial minorities.

Given its obsession with the power of defining the images of racial minorities, the white power structure depends on the systems of difference stemming from binary oppositions. Assuming its superiority to racial minorities, the white culture defines them as "uncivilized," "savage," "evil," "childlike," and "dark." When such images appear as a negation of what is white and Western, racial minorities fall into "fantasies" of the
white/Western culture. This differentiation established according to skin color, as I have asserted throughout, is internalized in the social structure and even in the psychological field so that the fantasies are considered as "common sense." The fundamental mechanism of differentiation works in the service of internal colonization while confining racial minorities within an "appropriate" yet degrading space. This is well manifested in the forms of social status and roles, stereotypes, and the physical places such as ghettos, South plantations, and Indian Reservations.

The dynamic of the boundaried spaces is necessary to maintain the dominant group's prestige so that it inscribes racial minorities within discursive hierarchies. Nevertheless, the view of "internal colonization" does not provide the perfect framework essential to explaining the complexities of racial relations in the industrial capitalist society, for this colonization applied to racial relations is prevalent in the social structure. Yet, the plays I have discussed tend to ignore the existence of the complexities in American society as a total structure beyond binary oppositions. Despite the complexities of the relationship of social relations, the playwrights generally depend on rhetorical reductions in order to intensify the
racial issues at hand. This reductive nature gives birth to the limitations of these plays, which establish their dramatic structure on the binary oppositions stemming from racial division.

In the theatre, the space for racial minorities is not naturally given, but arbitrarily produced by the white power structure. The playwrights reclaim the authority of racial minorities over their "own" space by disrupting the system of difference. While unmasking the repressive ideology in the context of racism, the playwrights attempt to reterritorialize the spaces given for racial minorities. Attacking legitimacy to the white colonialist position, the playwrights make a critique of the conventional hierarchical structure existing between whites and racial minorities. Here the playwrights' writing becomes a tool of "revision" fundamental to political change while encouraging the audience to interrogate racial minorities' given space and to engage in the struggle for freedom.

While theatre engages the politics of decolonization, racial minorities' culture manifests itself as a submerged presence in the decolonizing discourse. Foregrounding the distinguishing features of each ethnicity, the playwrights force the audience to elevate the consciousness for the cultural independence. Preoccupied with cultural materials
such as music, rhetoric, dance, and clothing, the playwrights are engaged in an enduring quest for the cultural community embodied in the concepts of racial minorities' "own place," "nation," and sense of "we."

Culture exists for translating difference and for insisting upon racial minorities' difference denied at the center of the political and rhetorical center of the dominant ideology.

Although racial minorities employ their own strategies to be freed from subordination, this strategy of course causes the confrontation with that of the dominant group. Here the dominant group fears that racial minorities might "pollute" the world of hierarchy based on the "just" order. This confrontation between whites and racial minorities leads to the violence that forms the culmination of the dramatic structure in each play: the possibility of violence between African Africans and whites (Hansberry), the ritual killing of the whites by African Americans (Baraka), the suicide of a female African American (Kennedy), the killing of an African American by an African American (Wilson), the ritual killing of a white by whites (Rabe), the massacre of Native Americans by the whites (Kopit), the suicide of a white male Westerner (Hwang). Regardless of who is victimized by white ideology, the
violence signifies the conditions of a society that negates racial minorities' challenge to the repressive white ideology. Here violence is a catalyst not only for reflecting a racist society, but also for expressing racial minorities' rage against such a society. In this sense, the violent endings call for the recognition of the degree to which racism still exists as the illness of a society that ignores cultural pluralism.

The playwrights in this study exploit radically different techniques to revise the space for racial minorities and to reconstruct history. In different ways they present history as a backdrop for dismantling the white preconceptions of racial minorities. The playwrights ground their work on the historical contexts: the African-American life from the middle passage to the present, the conflict between Ma Rainey's band and the white music industry, Native-American massacre, Vietnam War, and French espionage trial. The historical facts serve as vehicles for exploring how the dominant ideology continuously works in the service of "colonizing" racial minorities.

While emphasizing racial minorities' need to participate in "political correctness," the playwrights articulate the "decolonizing" process in which they elevate racial minorities' consciousness of self-representations.
This process suggests a politics of theatre ultimately intended to force change on social systems. Here the playwrights represent racial minorities' struggles for their own languages and, in consequence, for self-definition. Regardless of the differences in race, gender, and the time in which the plays were written, these playwrights generally present their writing as revision.
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