OUKA
Osaka University Knowledge Archive

Title	Enacting Black Suffering and Laughter : Creative Restorations of Black Experiences in Suzan Lori-Parks's Plays
Author(s)	穴田, 理枝
Citation	大阪大学, 2016, 博士論文
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/55628
rights	
Note	

Osaka University Knowledge Archive : OUKA

https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/

Osaka University

博　士　論　文

題目　Enacting Black Suffering and Laughter:
Creative Restorations of Black Experiences
in Suzan-Lori Parks's Plays

提出年月　　２０１５年１２月

言語社会研究科言語社会専攻

氏名　穴田　理枝

Enacting Black Suffering and Laughter: Creative Restorations of Black Experiences in Suzan-Lori Parks's Plays

---

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of Graduate School of Integrated Studies

in Language and Society

Osaka University

In Partial Fulfilment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Languages and Cultures

By

Rie Anada

December 2015

日本語要旨

黒人の苦しみと笑いを演劇に
――スーザン＝ロリ・パークス劇における黒人の経験の創造的な修復

穴田　理枝

序章 時間と場所の交錯する場としてのパークス劇

序章では、まず、これまでのスーザン＝ロリ・パークスの業績を振り返る。パークスは、アフリカ系アメリカ人のこれまで無視され、言わば地中に埋められてきた声を掘り起こし、舞台化してきた。その中でアフリカ系アメリカ人の伝統的な修辞法としての「シグニファイ（イング）やジャズにおける「リフ」の形式である「反復と修正」を加えることにより、様々な形で「歴史についての歴史」、「文学の歴史」に疑問を投げかけている。過去から現在までの「アフリカ系アメリカ人の経験」を直線的にではなく、時空を超えて立体的に描くパークスの演劇は「ポストモダン的」とも評される。しかしパークス劇の特徴はそれだけでなく、アフリカ系アメリカ人の伝統でもある「サヴァイヴァルのためのユーモア」を劇の重要な要素として組み入れている。ユーモアと苦難を伝える言葉を取り混ぜ、建築物の設計図を描くように組み立てられたパークス作品は、アフリカ系アメリカ人の歴史の埋もれた歴史を掘り起こすだけでなく、様々な素材を組み合わせて創造的に修復するものであると考えられる。本論の目的は, パークスによるアフリカ系アメリカ人の歴史修復の過程を検証すると同時に、演劇という枠組みの中で彼女が描こうとする諸問題をも明らかにしていくことである。

第１章　収集されたアフリカ系アメリカ人の記憶のかけらを展示

第１章では､パークスの初期の代表的な作品を取り上げ､そこに登場する、奴隷貿易の時代から現代までの、白人のアメリカに翻弄され続けるアフリカ系アメリカ人の姿に注目する。初期演劇作品に描かれるのは、まず、白人主導のアメリカで自己を確立することを阻まれるアフリカ系アメリカ人達が、社会の

周縁に置かれ、死後もそのまま放置される姿である。パークスが試みるのは、彼らの骨を掘り起こし、その声を聞かせる作業そのものであると言える。パークスは「今、ここ」の劇場で彼らの死を看取る作品を上演し、具体的に演劇作品を「歴史を作る」場と成している。これらの作品を通じて描かれるのは歴史性そのものであり、「今」が歴史である、という観点だといえる。

オムニバス形式の『第三王国で感じられない変化』では中間航路で故郷から引き離される者達、都市部で英語力不足から失業の危機に瀕する若い女性、奴隷解放宣言後に主人宅を去ろうとする元女奴隷、従軍した父親と留守宅の母子、という様々な年代、場所でのアフリカ系アメリカ人の経験が示される。厳しい現実に向き合う中で、彼らの意識は少しずつ変化する。苦難にさらされる彼らは、身体だけでなく意識のレベルでも確固とした拠り所を見つけられず、さまよう「遊牧民」とならざるをえない。『全世界における最後の黒人の死』では、誰にも看取られずに死を迎えたアフリカ系アメリカ人が「生と死」さえも認識できぬままに舞台上に現れる。「十字架の道行きの留」のパネルとして示される彼らの様々な形の死を確認し、彼ら自身が死を受け入れるのを見守るのは、礼拝堂としての劇場に集う観客たちである。また、墓掘りに従事する男が「歴史の大穴」での仕事に人生を見出す『アメリカ・プレイ』は、メタフォリカルにアフリカ系アメリカ人の別の経験を示す。ここでは、白人主導のアメリカにおいて、生き抜くために重層的な役割を担ってきたアフリカ系アメリカ人の姿が、テーマ・パークで「リンカーン」を演じる、「リンカーンそっくりの男」として描かれる。本稿ではテーマ・パークという構築物そのものに言及し、無菌化、単純化されたテーマ・パークとしてのアメリカについて考察する。

初期のパークス劇は、何れも歴史を直線的に描くのではなく、自由に時空を超える実験的な手法で描かれている。しかしそれだけではなく、それらの作品は細かく組み立てられ、パークス流のユーモアに彩られている。パークスの演劇手法に注目しつつ、それらの作品に前景化される歴史、文化、社会について論じる。

第２章　黒人女性をセンター・ステージに

１９９０年代後半からのパークスは、初期の作品とは異なるドラマツルギ

ーを用いて、物語性の強い作品を創作するようになる。第２章では、従来の手法に加えて、劇中劇、ギリシャ悲劇的なコーラス、ブレヒト劇的な劇中歌などを効果的に取り入れ、過酷な状況を生き抜こうとする黒人女性の物語を演劇化したこの時期の作品について論じる。

実在のアフリカ人女性を主人公とし、パークスがブロードウェイでの高い評価を得たのが『ヴィーナス』である。１９世紀初頭、ヨーロッパへと連れて行かれ､劇場の呼び物とされた実在のアフリカ人女性を題材としたこの作品は、植民地支配の象徴としての見世物を再演するものであるとして批判も受けた。しかし、本作は「科学」の名のもとに白人男性を最上位として人種、性に優劣をつけるヨーロッパの知識人に先導された当時のヨーロッパ社会のメンタリティーを描くと同時に、彼らに野蛮人扱いされながら、実は感情豊かで繊細なアフリカ人女性の姿に焦点を当てている。それ故に､『ヴィーナス』を上演することが「歴史」という檻の中に閉じ込められた悲劇的なアイコンという位置付けから彼女を解放することになるのである｡『血だまりの中で』『ファッキング A』の２作品は、併せて『赤い文字の劇』とされ、共にナサニエル・ホーソーンの『緋文字』のリフとして書かれた。両作品はアフリカ系アメリカ人の母親による子殺しの物語だが、そこに描かれるのは死者の追悼ではなく、アフリカ系アメリカ人女性が生きねばならない地獄のような世界である。

パークスの取り入れた新たな演劇手法について確認しつつ、これらの作品に描かれる人種、性を中心に論じる。劇中劇を取り入れ「見る・見られる」という関係性を視覚化した『ヴィーナス』､ブレヒト的な劇中歌を取り入れた『赤い文字の劇』､それらはともに歴史的に「他者」として周縁化されてきた黒人女性の姿をセンター・ステージに配し、そのような立場に彼女たちを追いやる社会を告発する物語なのである。

第３章　アフリカ系アメリカ人の家族の夢

近年のパークス劇には、差別、貧困と闘いながらも家族の物語を紡ごうと奮闘するアフリカ系アメリカ人の姿が描かれ、それはアメリカ社会の理想と現実を映し出す鏡でもあるといえる。第３章では、パークスの描くアフリカ系アメリカ人の家族の物語をアメリカ社会の現実に照らし合わせながら読み解く。

さらに、最新作に描かれる、南北戦争という歴史転換期に家族を形成しようとする彼らの姿にも言及する。

『トップドッグ／アンダードッグ』は、父母がそれぞれ家を出たために崩壊したアフリカ系アメリカ人家族で、残された兄弟がやがて兄弟殺しに至るまでの物語である。インナーシティーのゲットーに生きる貧しいアフリカ系アメリカ人兄弟の心の動きを会話劇で見せ、リンカーン、ブースと名付けられた２人の運命を暗示しながら、アメリカ社会の１つの現実をあぶり出す本作は、パークスにアフリカ系アメリカ人女性劇作家初のピューリッツァー賞受賞という栄誉をもたらした。本稿では、白人社会の掲げる「アメリカン・ファミリー」について、社会学的視点を確認した上で、その理想の家族像を内面化してきたアフリカ系アメリカ人家族、彼らの理想を打ち砕く現実のアメリカ社会の孕む問題、について論じる。

パークスの最新作、『父が戦争から帰還する　第１部、２部、３部』は、南北戦争中に、南軍に参加する主人の世話係として戦地に赴いた奴隷、ヒーローが、戦闘によりで主人を亡くしてひとり戦場から戻り、新しい自己を獲得し、家族を形成しようとする物語である。叙事詩『オデュッセイア』を枠組みとした本作は、アメリカ史の転換期となる南北戦争から始まり、アフリカ系アメリカ人家族の物語を綴る第９部まで続くサイクルプレイとしてパークスが構想する作品群の幕開けとなる作品である。南部奴隷のアフリカ系アメリカ人が南北戦争下の過酷な状況に振り回されながらも生き抜くための道を探る、という深刻な内容ではあるが、ユーモアと共にブレヒト的な挿入歌で彩られた楽しめる内容にもなっており、彼らの経験を今後どのように見せてくれるのか、という期待を大いに抱かせる作品となっている。南軍兵士の世話係として戦地に向かった奴隷、ヒーローが、北軍軍服を南軍軍服の下に着込む場面は、当時の南部黒人奴隷の複雑な心境を表す。新しい人間として、新しい妻まで伴って帰郷する彼は、自らにユリシーズという名前をつけるのである。

アフリカ系アメリカ人の「家族」への思いと実際の家族関係について考察し、さらに、奴隷解放により彼らが自らの「家族」を形成しようとする時期の姿を確認し、その夢と現実を明らかにしつつ、論じる。

結論　過去を修復し、未来を建設するということ

結論として、パークス劇における歴史の修復作業について、その意味を再確認する。彼女が目指すのは、白人主導のアメリカ社会の中で築き上げられてきた「正史」を打ち壊し、その素材を生かしながらも、新たにアフリカ系アメリカ人の物語を組み込むことを可能とする、複合的な歴史を創造する場を今、ここで積み上げていくことである。また、商業的演劇の枠を超えた新たなパフォーマンスのあり方を提案し、演劇以外にも映画、音楽、小説といった、様々なメディアを使って発信し続けることで、パークス自身がアフリカ系アメリカ人の歴史を絶えず更新している存在であることも、見逃してはならない。彼女自身が、このような創造的な修復作業を行うことのできる能力を示し続けることが、アフリカ系アメリカ人の未来、そしてアメリカ演劇の未来を切り開くことになるだろう。

Synopsis

Enacting Black Suffering and Laughter: Creative Restorations of Black Experiences in Suzan-Lori Parks's Plays

Rie Anada

Suzan-Lori Parks dramatizes the individual voices of African Americans, which have been disregarded, abandoned, and buried underground. The purpose of this study is to examine the contradictory phases of the world Parks exposes, which we cannot face squarely without the framework of a play. For that purpose, I explore her method of adopting black experiences into plays and clarify a distinguishing trait of her style. Her plays depict historical events and the phase of the present world at the same time. Namely, they are at the intersection of time and place. Her writings are considered products of postmodernism applied to African American experiences. But that expression alone is not sufficient reason for the uniqueness of her works. An architectural way of writing plays that adopts caustic humor is the essence of her dramatic composition. Her plays are characteristic owing to her attempt to combine a mixture of academic works, historical events, and the African American predicament with sarcastic humor. She also uses the African American vernacular "sygnifyin" in a script and in the whole construction of plays creatively. I will call her attempt to collect black experiences and put them into plays "creative restorations of black experiences."

Chapter 1 focuses on the way African Americans were prevented from growing their self-conscious in her early major plays in the first place. *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom* is an omnibus-style play consisting of four different sections. Each section is

not continuous in time and place, but the resonances of voices coming from each section overlap. Parks accumulates the voices of African Americans who can neither go back to their homeland nor become members of their new land, namely, historical nomads. The structure of *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* is modeled after the style of the Stations of the Cross. The play does not mark a single man's death, but it connotes multiple kinds of African American deaths that are to be lamented. In the course of the play, audiences are present for the moment of the resurrection of the "Last Blackman." *The America Play* exemplifies Parks's strategy to make history into a form of hyperreality. The main character is a gravedigger who bears a strong resemblance to Abraham Lincoln. He left home to head west and make an "exact replica of the Great Hole of History." Disneyfication of history is applied to the great man's symbolism. And she also makes use of the Disneyfication of history in the theme park to represent a nation in which "the real is no longer real." Parks's strategy to make history in theater is to apply Disneyfication of history on the one hand and to attempt the creative destruction of the application on the other. Eventually, the figures in her plays show self-consciousness instead of being stereotyped.

Chapter 2 deals with the plays that bring black women center stage: *Venus* and *Red Letter Plays*. Following early experimental plays that show black experiences in fragments, Parks set about the task of giving narratives to dismembered or disregarded black women's minds through drama. *Venus* is a play about a real historical South African woman who was sent to Europe and displayed as "Venus Hottentot" in the early 19th century. Parks's efforts to dramatize her were criticized as re-objectification and re-commodification, but it must have been an attempt to summon her from a storage area named "history," and furthermore to demystify this Khoisan woman who was set up as an

ideological icon by South African people. *In the Blood* and *Fucking A*, together with *The Red Letter Plays*, contain narratives of mothers who kill their own children. However, the stories do not center on the resurrection of the dead but on the living hell African American women go through. I discuss the whole system of hierarchical society that functions to marginalize African American women that is explored in *The Red Letter Plays* and the dramaturgy Parks adopts to get to the heart of the matter.

Chapter 3 discusses African-American families and takes a close look at their historical aspects. First, I attempt to clarify African-American family values and the crisis created by the buildup of dissatisfaction in an unstable family relationship in *Topdog/Underdog*. Next, I look over Parks's newest play, *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)*. *Father Comes Home* focuses on a former slave struggling to form a new self during the Civil War era. Though the basic theme of the play is serious, Parks brings her imagination and humor into play when depicting the various aspects of American history and uses her theatricality freely. Parks plans to write a series of nine plays about America that span the Civil War to the present. I discuss how the cycle plays about the African-American family expand an animated narrative at a turning point in history.

Parks never stops restoring her theatricality as she advances the work of restoring African American history. She tears down a tower built on the sphere of history, culture, and social structure in the national context of America. Additionally, she builds an innovative complex capable of taking in African Americans, with a fantastic mixture of old material and new treatment. In addition, Parks has extended the area of her work by engaging in other mediums. She is a playwright, screenwriter, songwriter, and novelist. Parks has restored the utility of the theatre by starting and seeing through the grassroots festival that

originated from her everyday writing: *365 Days/365 Plays*. Furthermore, she held "Watch Me Work" performances in 2012 and 2013, during which she showed herself writing in the lobby of The Public Theater. Finally, it must be noted that an essential task for Parks is to continue demonstrating her capability to make history through her works as an African American playwright in order to explore the possibilities of opening new horizons to African Americans and American theater.

Contents

Introduction: The Restoration of Black Experiences on the Basis of African American Vernacular 1

Chapter 1. Finding Places for Exhibiting Collected Fragments from African American Memories 13

1 Collecting and Exhibiting Inaudible African American Voices in *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom*

2 Mourning Black Men's Deaths in the Moment in *The Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*

3 Examining the Theme of the Park: *The America Play*

Chapter 2. Providing Black Women with Center Stages 40

1 Liberating Hottentot Venus from the Cage

2 Staging Sorted Sexuality and Life of African American Women in *The Red Letter Plays*

Chapter 3. African American Dreams of Family 84

1 Restoring the Visionary Family in *Topdog/Underdog*

2 Starting Over from the Civil War: Non-Hero's Saga in *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)*

Conclusion: Restoring the Past and Building the Future 111

Notes 117

Works Cited 125

Introduction

The Restoration of Black Experiences on the Basis of African American Vernacular

> It is so ironic as to elicit continuous at times nigh hysterical laughter. First "They steal us from our homelands, make us slaves, make generations of the African American people, even now, in closer intimacy with hourly tragedy than almost anyone in North America!
>
> — Amiri Baraka, *Digging*

Suzan Lori-Parks was the first female African American playwright to receive the Pulitzer Prize for drama for *Topdog/Underdog* in 2002. According to Debora R. Geis, she is "the most recognized and innovative dramatist of her generation" (1). Parks started to write plays at Mount Holyoke College, where she took a short story class with James Baldwin, who encouraged her to write plays as a teacher. After graduating from that college, she studied in London at London Drama Studio for a year. Returning to the USA, she moved to New York and started her career as a dramatist. *Betting on the Dust Commander* was premiered at The Gas Station New York and read at the International Women Playwrights Festival in 1987. Her first major play, *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom*, was premiered at BACA Downtown, Brooklyn in 1989. For that play, she won the Obie Award for Best New American Play in 1990. She has been writing innovative plays and her plays have been acclaimed very highly. She is a versatile artist, creating more than 15 scripts for stage, two screenplays, a novel and many songs. She was

appointed the master writer chair of the Public Theatre in New York and she served as the director of the playwriting program at New York University. She is known to keep moving forward, adopting new ideas into her plays. She fixes her challenges on the basis of being "cool."

Suzan-Lori Parks' dramatizations go beyond space-time to challenge the existing stereotype of African-American history from the time of slavery to the present day. Parks stirs up the established dramaturgy by introducing experimental, unreal characters and scenes that deconstruct the dominant cultural constructions of history and race. She exposes human consciousness through her characters, both related and unrelated to racial problems. For example, she wrote *In the Blood* and *Fucking A* (together called *Red Letter Plays*), adopting a black prostitute and an abortionist both named Hester in alternate versions of *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. She challenges the cultural and social structure of the world to dramatize ignored or eliminated history. Additionally, she has been carrying out dramatic projects such as *365 plays/365 days* to be played across the USA as the yearlong 365 Festival. Through such projects, she has developed the potential of theaters, especially local small theaters.

Parks herself explains that the main element of her dramaturgy is "Repetition and Revision[1]" ("From Elements of Style" 8-9). This concept is integral to the composition of Jazz music and an antecedent in the tradition of "sygnifyin." In terms of spoken language, Geis argues that Henry Louis Gates, Jr. was the first scholar to pay attention to "Rep & Rev" as part of the African American vernacular. Gates suggests that Rep & Rev, or "repetition with a signal difference" (Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: The Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*; qtd. in Geis 15), is a practice deeply rooted in African culture. Parks takes, or "repeats," the dominant white discourse, rewriting, or "revising," it in a subversive way to replace it with black experiences. She claims that her

concern is not the binary opposition between black and white but the restoration of African American history that has been "unrecorded, dismembered, washed out" ("Possession" 4). Jacqueline Wood states that Rep & Rev establishes "verbal and structural anatomies of jazz pieces in the realm of dramatic literature," and in Parks' early plays, race and gender are foregrounded by the "jazzing" of the black female subject (Wood 42). By combining spoken words and phrases with various sounds and facial expressions, Parks uses "spell," that is, "a place of great unspoken emotion" existing between lines (16). She also emphasizes that the rhythm of the words and repetition are essential in her plays ("from Elements of Style" 9). Shawn-Marie Garrett and Len Berkman also discuss Parks's use of language in her plays. Garrett alludes to the links between language and history in her plays, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World, The America Play*, and *Venus* (Garrett 12). Moreover, Berkman argues that the language is the protagonist itself through his close reading of *In the Blood*.

Her dramas urge the audience to reconsider how people act when pushed to the limit, regardless of time and race. In *Venus*, the introductory scene starts with the announcement that the protagonist, Hottentot Venus, is dead. The subsequent scenes are numbered in reverse order from Scene 31 to Scene 1, and consequently, the audience is lead along in following her footprints to find out the cause of her death. Moreover, in *Venus*, techniques such as "alienation effects,"[2] including a play within a play or listing historical facts, dissuade the audience from feeling sympathy for the protagonist. Finally, the protagonist is commodified, changing from an ordinary African girl into a grotesque Hottentot Venus. In the end, she becomes an exhibit in a science museum in France, where objectivity of academic research affects her self-understanding. Using these methods, the mechanism through which characters revise how they view themselves is foregrounded.

Parks' style is unique, adopting "Rep & Rev" from the African American vernacular as well as introducing her original technique called "spell." She never stops challenging the audience to reconstruct their perception of history and humanity. She states as follows:

> The history of Literature is in question. And the history of History is in question too. A play is a blueprint of an event: a way of creating and rewriting history through the medium of literature. Since history is a recorded or remembered event, theatre, for me, is the perfect place to "make" history – that is, because so much of African-American history has been unrecorded, dismembered, washed out, one of my tasks as playwright is to – through literature and the special strange relationship between theatre and real – life locate the ancestral burial ground, dig for bones, find bones, hear the bones sing, write it down. ("Possession" 4)

Parks continues to attract an audience through her "cool" historical plays, going beyond space and time to deconstruct our historical recollection. S.E. Wilmer states that "Parks has deconstructed conventional American history through her theatrical redeployment of space and time and refigured African–American identity by remaking African-American history" (442), and quotes Homi Bhabha's suggestion, "[w]e need another time of *writing* that will be able to inscribe the ambivalent and chiasmatic intersections of time and place that constitute the problematic 'modern' experience of the western nation" (Homi Bhabha, "DissemiNation," qtd. in Wilmer 447-448). Parks herself talks of her works as follows:

> I knew the characters would be different after *Venus* and after *Venus* came *In the Blood*, and *Fucking A* and *Topdog* and *365*.

> But, to me, the plays have never been history plays. They're all about the intersection of the historical and the now. Even In the Blood is about that intersection because it is not based on *The Scarlet Letter* but *The Scarlet Letter* is one of its parents, let's say. (Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. 133-4)

Parks has been working at the "intersection of time and place" where dominant notions of white America can be subverted.

In this article, I will explore a little further how Parks depicts black experiences by mixing widely accepted academic themes and styles with her bitterly caustic sense of humor, and how this works to subvert the imperceptible mutability of the general recognition of the modern world. As Jonathan Kalb suggests, Parks's writing has always been considered as "much a product of Western postmodernism as of African-American consciousness and the black experience, and unusual amalgam of the two" (Kalb 154). Her method never having been fixed and having metamorphosed creatively, I would rather designate her styles as "Creative Restoration of Black Experiences."

Liz Diamond, the Resident Director at Yale Rep and the Chair of Directing at the Yale school of Drama, who enjoys a longstanding friendship and artistic collaboration with Suzan-Lori Parks, admits she shares the same sense of humor with Parks. In an interview with Philip C. Kolin, Diamond exemplifies Parks's jokes:

> Well…there are the names, first of all, which are never accidental: Brazil in the America Play recalls Brazil nuts, which, in racist parlance, were once called "nigger toes." The broken family at the end of Imperceptible Mutabilities goes by the iconic WASP family name of Smith. These are jokes, excruciating jokes. In Black Man you have the stunning

> Ham's Begotten Speech which is as sustained a piece of subversive wordplay as any you'll find in Shakespeare. "Yo be wentin' much too long without hisself a comb in from thuh frizzly that resulted sprung forth…"and so on. (Kolin 210)

These are good examples of Parks's adaptation of academic works and dominant discourse into her works with much humor.

As Geis points out, "rep and rev" is a product of both jazz music and the tradition of "signifyin," which is discussed by Gates (Geis 14-15). Gates discusses African American literature by scrutinizing African American vernacular traditions in his monumental work, *Signifying Monkey*, and describes black writers' tradition as follows:

> Black writers, like critics of black literature, learn to write by reading literature, especially the canonical texts of the Western tradition. Consequently, black texts resemble other, Western texts. These black texts employ many of the conventions of literacy form that comprise the Western tradition. Black literature shares much with, far more than it differs from, the Western textual tradition, primarily as registered in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French. But black formal repetition always repeats with a difference, a black difference that manifests itself in specific language use. And the repository that contains the language that is the source - and the reflection – of black difference is the black English vernacular tradition. (Gates xxii-xxiii)

In line with the above, Parks takes over "black tradition" legitimately as a way of her adoption of western canonical works and her style of "rep and rev." The works of Zora Neale Hurston are one of the main influences

on her style. Gates applies attentive reading to Hurston's "Speakerly Text" in *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* As Jonathan Kalb points out, Parks writes speech "with [a] self-conscious nod to Zora Nieale Hurston's seamless welding of the so-called folkloric and the so-called literary" and "the" is "t-h-u-h" in the scripts of her early works such as *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third World* (Kalb 169).

The quintessence of her humor is perceived not only in her lines and characters but also in her distorted storyline itself that gives too much weight to reasonably eliminated self-consciousness such as "a black man with water melon" in *The Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*, who is not conscious of his own death. Parks urges her adherence to the importance of humor in an interview with Han Ong as follows:

> Actually, humor is the only way to remember, because the relationship between throwing up and laughing is so close [*laughter*]. Humor crosses that gap between what you know and what you think, what you know and what you don't know. Laughter and that joke crosses that gap. That's the way I work; other people work in different ways. (Ong 40)

According to Glenda R. Carpio, "African American humor has been, for centuries, a humor of survival. It has been a safety valve, a mode of minimizing pain and defeat, as a medium capable expressing grievance and grief in the most artful and incisive ways" (Carpio 231).

There is an episode in which it is exemplified. Parks got over her pain with bitter humor when she turned harsh criticism into motivation for her actions. Parks was invited to the commencement at Mount Holyoke College, her alma mater, on May 27, 2001, just after the premiere of *Topdog and Underdog*[3]. In her commencement speech, she expressed a sense of gratitude for James Baldwin, who suggested that she

should try playwriting, and she also extended her thanks to her high school teacher, who advised her not to study English, saying "you haven't got the talent for it [4] ." She stated that this was "an excellent suggestion" because it forced her to think for herself. Although she grasped how cruel the suggestion was for a high school girl who had been dreaming to be a writer, she did not give it up entirely. Instead, she accepted Baldwin's advice and carved out a career as a playwright for herself. Parks turned "a horrible thing" into "an excellent suggestion" by herself in a sense. As a matter of fact, Parks crossed the gap between what the high school teacher knew and what the teacher thought about her student and turned the cruel advice into a living lesson. This is truly one of her strong points as a playwright—she maintains a certain distance from harsh reality and even from herself, getting the viewpoint needed to view herself objectively. She develops her sense of humor through this objectification.

In clarifying the existing chasm between "what you know and what you think," Parks adopts a theme of "canonical literary works" and "historical light" on the one hand while she stirs them up constantly with her creative imagination to confuse "what you know and what you don't know" on the other. As a result, we cannot avoid being confronted with the overtly egotistical demand from our inner voice for the obliteration of our heretofore assumed self being confronted with reality. However, her purpose is not to carry out denunciation but to encourage people to become aware of the self-consciousness that has been disremembered and dismembered. In other words, she exposes the possibility of transforming something previously untreated seriously, such as forgotten self-consciousness or "selves," into "living" and memorable human beings with enjoyable distinguishing features. Parks elaborates her creative strategy for adopting "Literature" and "History" into drama, using some experimental methods.

Parks draws "the blueprint of an event" in various ways, including doubtful appendant notes (*Imperceptible Mutabilities*), glossaries (*Venus*), and a symbolic stage set as in "the Great Hole of History" (*America Play*), and recycling frameworks of canonical books (*Red Letter Plays*). In my understanding, she grapples with literature and history by displaying her sense of humor and creating elaborate creative restorations in a dignified manner. Her style of attaching notes to the play by mingling "real and imagined information" is expressed best in the following quotation:

> [...] and she juxtaposes real and imagined information as an indication that history (with its exclusions, especially of African-Americans) is predicated on *narratives* that may not tell the "whole" story, [...] Telling is suspect, Parks seems to say, and genealogies are by nature discontinuous because their parts have been dis-membered." (Geis 22)

This remark is very interesting because it shows that Parks's works indicate that we can classify written history as past events predicated on some past suspicious narratives as long as we recognize that the "whole" of history could never be presented by itself. Symbolically, "the Great Hole of History" in *The America Play* shows that it is possible to put any narratives into the "Hole." Parks takes any possible or impossible materials from that "Hole" to draw "blueprints" to construct theatrical performances. As has been noted, to Parks, a significant aspect of theatre has lain in its versatility. Parks makes the best use of theatre by drawing blueprints of events with all sorts of annotations.

Parks organizes or constructs her plays by manipulating a mixture of academic works and history and a sense of humor just like drawing blueprints for architecture. Una Chaudhuri addressed this vital point when he asked Parks about Richard Forman, an experienced director who

directed *Venus*, saying "I can think of so many places where your two theatrical universes might overlap–they are both 'architectural,' highly structured and stylized, both deeply engaged with language." in an interview with Parks (Chaudhuri 57). Chaudhuri expresses Parks's theatricality as 'architectural' and "deeply engaged with language." There are many examples to support this point of view in her early works. Additionally, she has been unceasingly working on the transfiguration of her strategic style of architecture. However, although her style of playwriting keeps changing, the essentials of her architectural composition are unchangeable. In the following sections, we will examine how she applies her creative restoration to the experiences of African Americans or black people and her style of architectural composition itself. That is, we will look over how she intertwines academic works and history and how she spices up them with a number of apocryphal anecdotes.

Glenda R. Carpio discusses Parks's early plays in the context of "tragicomedy," which is, according to John Orr, defined as "coexistence of amusement and pity, terror and laughter" (Orr 1). In my understanding, Parks has enacted the coexistence of suffering and laughter of African Americans not only on the bases of their experiences but also on the fictions of their experiences together with the fictions of "white America" in the sense of a nation of white domination. The times of sufferings and tribulations for African Americans never ended even after the Emancipation Proclamation. Their suffering under racial prejudice compelled them to practice perseverance. Although they got some rights as American citizens through the civil rights movement in the 1960s, racial prejudice still remained in some form or other, such as disparities in education and in income. After enduring all the afflictions of slavery and a long struggle for civil rights, they still grapple with how to be free from the past discourse of discrimination. To quote Carpio[5],

"Black American humor began as a wrested freedom, the freedom to laugh at that which was unjust and cruel in order to create distance from what would otherwise obliterate a sense of self and community"(Carpio 4). She also points out that for the African American people, "humor has often functioned as a way of affirming their humanity in the face of its violent denial" (5).

Parks makes free use of her sense of humor to join together fragments of the individual memory of African Americans and grapples with the restoration of their experience by evoking the dominant discourse of white America and the Western world, which has disregarded the humanity of black people in some degree for hundreds of years. What is important is her grand strategy to bring to undesirable aspects of the world. The purpose of this study is to examine the contradictory phases of the world Parks exposes, which we cannot face squarely without the framework of a play. She uses the African American vernacular "sygnifyin" in a script and in the whole construction of her plays. I also look into how Parks makes use of visual images, metaphors, and similes that Zora Neale Hurston claims African American vernacular relies on[6].

The first chapter describes how Parks conjures up African American voices in her early major plays, *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom*, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* and *The America Play*, in which her interest in the history of the United States is reflected strongly and in which a collection of African American voices are depicted plentifully. The second chapter presents a close examination of the Western myth of the female black body and a verification of the representation of African American women in *Venus* and *Red Letter Plays*. The third chapter presents how she narrates the reality and the dreams of African Americans in *Topdog/Underdog* and her newest play: *Father Comes Home from the Wars Part 1,2 & 3*. In studying her works, we need to consider them from every angle beyond

time and place. As she says, "A play is a blue print of an event" (Possession 5); hence, we must be able to perceive her plan for the creative restoration of black experiences by looking over her plays.

1

Finding Places for Exhibiting Collected Fragments from African American Memories

> I cannot believe in places. To believe in places is to know hope and to know the emotion of hope is to know beauty. It links us across a horizon and connects us to the world. I find there are no places only my funnyhouse.
>
> — Adrienne Kennedy, *Funnyhouse of a Negro*

In her early plays, Parks especially deals with the rich history of African Americans to reveal how it has prevented them for growing their self-consciousness. Fredric Jameson states that "Historicity" can be defined as "a perception of the present as history" and "allows us that distance from immediacy which is at length characterized as a historical perspective"[7] (284). Parks incorporates this sense of "historicity" in her work and it allows us not only to keep a distance from immediacy but also to measure the social distance between a compiled chronicle and unrecorded events that black people or African American people have been embroiled in from slavery to modern times.

Parks collects plentiful African American voices from their ancestors' burial grounds. The titles of Parks's early major plays, especially *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third World* and *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*, invoke a complex multidimensional exposition of African-American experiences. We are amazed at the wealth of verbal and nonverbal images of African

Americans. Philip C. Kolin and Harvey Young comment on her linguistic style as follows: "Suzan-Lori Parks often succeeds in giving voice to the least empowered" (15). Parks explains about the persons[8] in her plays as "They are *figures, figments, ghosts, roles, lovers* maybe, *speakers* maybe, *shadows, slips, players* maybe, maybe *someone else's pulse"*("from Elements of Style" 12). Parks deliberately conjures up their mutterings and elaborately adapts them for the plays. Empowered as they are, Parks's "figures" hardly succeed in delivering their feelings in the right way. Parks is not the voice of "figures" but an agency to report their struggles in a composed manner. We may say that Parks embodies a sort of "griot"[9] in African culture, who has handed down stories from generation to generation. However, she is an unusual griot going beyond space-time to grasp the emotion of "present" at the time. The setting of her plays shows her view of history, such as "Time: The present" (*The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*) and "Place: Here. Time: Now" (*In the Blood*). Adopting Jameson's idea about historicity, Parks perpetually appeals to the public about the "perception of the present as history." In this way, historicity allows plays to explore the possibility of breaking the spell that has masses viewing their lives as being outside of history.

1. Collecting and Exhibiting Inaudible African American Voices in *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom*

What makes Parks exceptional as a conveyor of African American voices is her dramatization of them in a chronicle: their defined images and their inaudible voices together at that. In *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom*, we are offered four scenes of African Americans from different period of history with arbitrary witnesses and

likely uncertified official records. Provided with uncertain information and reports, we are faced with an uncertainty of history. It is an omnibus-style play concerning African American experiences that are different and, at the same time, overlap with one another beyond time and place. Discontinuity of time and place is one of the notable features of Parks's early plays. This experimental play was premiered at BACA Downtown, Brooklyn in 1989[10] and won an Obie Award for Best New American Play in 1990. In this play, as Deborah R. Geis points out, we can observe "early forms of many of Parks's signature elements: choral figures, rep and rev, and inventive phonetic language" (Geis 45). The play consists of four different sections: "Snails," "Third Kingdom," "Open House" and "Greeks (or The Slugs)." Each section is full of African American voices dug up from what Parks calls "the ancestral burial ground" (*Possession* 4), or what Parks adopts as the setting of *The America Play*, "thuh Great Hole of History." The resonances of voices coming from each section overlap with one another to stimulate us to shift our viewpoint away from immobilized history. Moreover, the open-ended play allows us to exercise our imagination about what has become of African American self-consciousness right down to the present time. The figures are still confined or abandoned in "the third kingdom," which Parks defines as "fungi" (qtd. in Ben-Zvi 193) and which Geis calls "somewhat tongue in cheek[11]" (Geis 45). Namely, they are not able to return to their homeland nor get into the New World.

In Part 1, "Snails," a system to expel and weaken weak African Americans is presented by revealing the bitter truth of city life for young African American women. Three young African American females living in an apartment together are spied on as "subjects" by a white scientist named Dr. Lutzky. After he sets a camera in a fake giant cockroach to observe "subjects" and collects it, he intrudes into their room as an authoritative "exterminator professional with uh Ph.D." or a

"naturalist" for the purpose of exterminating roaches. Later, giving a report of his experimentation at the podium, he explains about how the girls whom he calls "them roaches" or "primitive" need help to accommodate themselves to the modern world. His speech recalls associations about Eugenics and the theory of social evolution that have prevailed in the U.S since the beginning of the 20th century. When the girls watch the TV program, *Wild Kingdom*, the image of the wilderness of Africa is superimposed upon their current situation. Watching Dr. Perkins shooting the wild beasts, Verona, one of the roommates, grumbles about not having paid their taxes. They are on the verge of extermination from the modern world as useless fellows just like the wild beasts shot by the white scientist and like the roaches exterminated with Lutzky's "squat gun."

Verona works at a veterinarian hospital as a euthanasia specialist. She speaks of her curiosity about wilderness at the podium, showing her favorable attitude toward Marlin Perkins who "encouraged us to be kind to animals" in *Wild Kingdom.* But surprisingly, she confesses that she dissected the body of black dog that did not take to her.

> I stayed late that night so that I could cut her open because I had to see I just had to see the heart of such a disagreeable domesticated thing. But no. Nothing different. Everything in its place. Do you know what that means? Everything in its place. Thats all. (37)

Verona is not able to find a compromise between her sense of discomfort about the black body and the fact that internal organs in both black and white bodies are the same. We may say that Verona's finding the black body disagreeable is a response to the Western discourse on race claiming that there is scientific evidence to show the difference between races.

Alisa Solomon describes how Parks uses "larger-than-life slides" on stage in *Imperceptible Mutabilities* to show the gap between "preconceived images of African-Americans and real people" (Solomon 75). This gap is also projected onto Verona's self-objectification when she says, "Once there was uh me name Verona" (36).

Molly, her roommate, has no option but to objectify herself with her back against the wall because of the language problem. She desperately wants to pass the English test at school in order to keep her job, but she fails. She recites "Once there was uh me named Mona who wanted tuh jump ship but didn't" (26). She gives objectivity to herself, recollecting the memories of black people on the Middle Passage who were threatened to be "jettisoned" and who were actually jettisoned from the ship. Solomon refers to the paradox of self-narration that "widens the gap between image and reality" and at the same time, "can create autonomy" and emphasizes, "Parks invokes the tradition of slave narrative, whose very project is the creation of the self through the telling of one's story (Solomon 77). The African American girls know that they need to narrate their stories but they fail to do so because they are trapped in what W.E.B Du Bois called double consciousness[1 2] and as Solomon pointed out, "confined to living within the shadow of white culture and shaded by it" (Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, qtd. in Solomon 76). Parks represents an ingenious contrivance to capture disoriented African American girls in that shadow.

In Part 2, "Third kingdom," Parks dramatizes the procedure of forcible modification of African people on the Middle Passage, cutting them from their homeland and forcing them to accept a "new-Self"(55) to survive in the new world. Part 2 is charmed with choral singing and inserted in other parts of the play. Actually, Liz Diamond reveals that "Third Kingdom" was written as "a kind of passage between panels" (Philip C. Kolin 207). Therefore, Part 2: Third Kingdom was inserted

between Part 1: Snails and Part 3: Open House, and the short version of "Third Kingdom" as "Reprise" was between Part 3 and Part 4: Greek (or the Slugs). African people make a rough passage between panels that show African American struggle for survival in the New World.

Over-seer continuously threatens black people saying "Quiet, you, or you'll be jettisoned" (38). One of the black people, Kin-Seer, explains about the dream where he saw himself standing on a cliff and waving at his "other self" on the other "cliff" reciting as follows:

> KIN-SEER. I was standin with my toes stuckted in thuh dirt. Nothin in front of me but water. And I was wavin. Waving. Wavin at my uther me who I could barely see. Over thuh water on thuh uther cliff I could see my uther me but my uther me could not see me. And I was waving waving waving saying aw gaw gaw gaw eeeeeee-uh. (38)

The other black character, Shark-Seer, indicates his transmigration.

> SHARK-SEER. I dream up uh fish thats swallowin me and I dream up uh me that is fish becamin uh shark and I dream of that shark becamin uhshore. UUH! And on thuh shore thuh shark is given shoes. And I whuduhnt me no more and I whuduhnt no fish. My new Self was uh third Self made by thuh space in between. And my new Self wonders: Am I happy? Is my new Self happy in my new-Self shoes? (39)

They unavoidably objectify themselves as "uh third Self made by thuh space in between" in a long painful passage across the Pacific. They are caused to sever their connections with their past selves physically,

emotionally and linguistically. Kin-Seer expresses what Kolin calls "ontological horror"(Kolin 45)[13], saying "How we gonna find my Me?" (40). With the self-negative image implanted in their mind, they cannot express their feelings anymore. That is, they cannot find themselves anywhere. They are internalizing the white American desire that the Africans are willing to transform into submissive African American slaves. Us-Seer murmurs a last resort for survival: "They like smiles and we will like what they will like" (40). To quote Kimberly D. Dixon, "*Imperceptible Mutabilities* deal most explicitly with the black Atlantic slave trade as a catalyst for Parks's characters' nomadic consciousness" (Dixon 223). That is to say, they lost not only their homeland but also their autonomy based on self-consciousness.

In Part 3, "Open House," circumstances alter for Aretha, a caretaker slave, at the time of the emancipation proclamation. She takes pictures of the children of her master on her last day after emancipation, saying "Smile, honey smile[14]" (41). They might be her own children that she had by her master. They are named "Anglor Saxon" and "Blanca Saxon." And paradoxically, African-American actors played the children in white face at BACA Downtown, Brooklyn in 1989 (Solomon 74). Hence, Parks obviously parodies or "signifies" (in the sense of Henry Louis Gates Jr.) blackface minstrelsy. Anglor and Blanca are too obsessive about "the book," which seems to be a history book, and try to make everything in accordance with the "facts" in the "book". White-faced African Americans make a caricature of the white people that believe blindly in the "facts" written in the history book.

Charles, her master and probable father of the children, emphasizes the importance of memory to her in a "dreaming time."

> CHARLES. [...] Memory is a very important thing, don't you know. It keeps us in line. It reminds us of who we are

memory. Without it we could be anybody. We would be running about here with no identities. [...] (48)

In this scene, memory is matched to identification by using dentition. Miss Faith, a nun who comes to the house, has faith in a history book, refers to the book, and quotes lines from the book, and adds footnotes to them all the time. We might say that she herself is a history book with plenty of footnotes. Miss Faith insists that Aretha is due for an extraction. Aretha has her teeth extracted by Miss Faith when she is about to be released from her duties. Geis argues about the extraction of her teeth as follows:

> Teeth, of course, are a sure maker of identity, used to identify corpses in cases of doubt. To extract Aretha's teeth is to remove her identity, to separate her from the past, just as slaves were forced to surrender their names and families. (51)

This clearly shows that the slavery is the system to compel individuals to lose their identity. Charles also issue a warning to keep her teeth for her identification:

> CHARLES. You let them take out the teeth you're giving up the last of the verifying evidence. All'll be obliterated. All's left will be conjecture. We won't able to tell you apart from the others. We won't even know your name. Things will get messy. Chaos. Perverted. People will twist around the facts to suit the truth. (53)

This remark confronts us with the fact that the history is made from the recorded evidence, and furthermore, the recorded evidence can be

selected and twisted by the people. People need beautiful stories for their own sake, and historical consciousness itself can be implanted in them through their favorite facts. However, those words for the powerless African American female are spoken only in a “dream time” ironically set by Parks, and Charles, a white master, never instructs Aretha about identity in reality from the very nature of things. Miss Faith tells the toothless Aretha, “Amendment! Amendment XIII. You have been extracted from the record, Mrs. Saxon. You are free. You are clear. You may go,” and Anglor and Blanca mercilessly say “Free and clear to go. Go,” “GIT! Wave goodbye, children! That’s it. That’s it! They’re so well mannered.” The toothless Aretha says, “Buchenwald! Buchenwald!” (52). Parks puts the footnotes stating the number of African people taken from Africa into slavery and the Jewish people killed in the concentration camps together. That is, Parks issues a strong warning to the “Historical Amendment”(53) to the history of the slavery, revising the genocidal experience to the beautiful memory of the past with an image of smiling master and gentle-mannered mammy.

In Part 4 “Greeks (or the Slugs),” the final part of the play, the Smith family gradually breaks down in the course of patriotic dedication to the nation. Mr. Sergeant Smith carries out his duties in some remote place. They have a daughter, Buffy, and every time Mr. Sergeant Smith comes home for furlough, Mrs. Smith has more children: Muffy, followed by Duffy. Mr. Smith cannot even match his children’s names with their faces because it is hard for a father who is away from home much of the time to establish a rapport with children. Finally, Mr. Sergeant Smith loses his legs when he saves a boy “fallin out thuh sky” on fire, who is said to be “flying too close to thuh sun” (71). The metaphorical Icarus-like boy he saves can be the nation he is serving, which pursues power greater than itself and “died years uhgo but was givin us light through thuh flap” (71). Mr. Sergeant Smith firmly believes that he

could be a "noble" American citizen by serving the nation as a soldier. However, his long-cherished desire ends with a catastrophe. He suffers a serious injury and his wife, Mrs. Smith, who blindly devoted herself to home-front defense, loses her eyes at last. This causes disappointment not for the nation but for Mr. Smith himself, who says "We'se slugs" to Duffy (71). Of course, this part reflects Parks's experience as a child of an army colonel, but it also gives us suggestions about African Americans who sacrificed their lives for the country in southern cotton fields, in northern industrial cities, and in the battlefield, but nevertheless could not succeed in winning the respect of white America in spite of their devotion to the country.

Parks collects delivered statements and African Americans faint voices, as well as serious warnings that should have been given to them in a specific time and place, in *Imperceptible Mutabilities*. They convey what Kimberly D. Dixon calls a "nomadic consciousness," which "causes the reader/spectator to experience nomadism's constant movement back and forth between different points of being" (Dixon 224). Carpio states that Parks embraces Aristotelian catharsis and explains about hers as follows[15]:

> I view catharsis in Parks as a purging of anger and pathos that occurs primarily among the actors on stage through the mirthless laugh. For Parks, this purging does not mean the ridding of pity and fear but constitutes a ritualistic release of the cosmic rage and grief produced by slavery and its legacy. This purging does not occur in front of a passive audience since Parks's formal experimentation constantly challenges audiences to participate in what may be understood as a kind of "cognitive catharsis." [...] In Parks's dramaturgy, the intellectual insights we gain are not so much related to the

> causes of suffering, for these are clear, but how such suffering inheres in the world we live in now." (Caprio 198)

Carpio explains precisely how Parks's plays arouse audiences' historicity, which implies a sense of participation in history. In other words, her plays ceaselessly demand audiences to be conscious of being a witness of the constitution of "a ritualistic release of the cosmic rage and grief" and to internalize it as it is.

In *Imperceptible Mutabilities*, Parks accumulates the voices of nomadic African Americans in different times and presents figures who personify "nomadic consciousness" in order to display them in a frame of theater as if it were an exhibition room. The room comprises four sections, one from the era of slave trade named "Third Kingdom" and another from around the time of the emancipation named "Open house," and two cases of African American ordinary people in the middle of the twentieth century, named "Snails" and "Greeks (or the Slugs)." Although the collected items are not arranged in chronological order nor put into numerical order, audiences might be able to go back and forth when making an imaginary tour there. Therefore, the key point is how the audience confronts the exhibition. The audience neither moves forward nor backward without having an acute consciousness and prompt curiosity that is grounded on a sense of historicity.

2. Mourning Black Men's Deaths in the Moment in *The Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*

The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World is also an experimental play that challenges us to make another attempt to sustain a sense of historicity by witnessing the body and hearing the voice of dead black men. It was first presented in a staged reading as

part of the New York Theatre Workshop's "Mondays at Three" Reading Series in the 1989–1990 season and then produced at BACA Downtown in Brooklyn in 1990. The play is beautifully organized in structure, starting with the "Overture" and followed by "Panels" from "Panel I" to "Panel V," and it finishes with the "Final Chorus." Parks modeled the play's structure after the style of the Stations of the Cross.[16] As for religious background, Parks was brought up in a Catholic family. Her family lived in many places because of her father's work, an army colonel's, and one of the places in which she lived as a child was Oberammergau, Germany, where she watched the reenactment of the Passion of Christ by the local community. In an interview with Hang Ong, Parks says "My plays are like these passion plays where the community comes together to reenact the passion of whomever" (Ong 42). She also indicates how the immediacy of her plays relates to actors' attitude toward her play as follows:

> Actors have told me that my plays require them to be there moment to moment. They can't start at the beginning of a scene, and say, "My character's angry in this scene and I'm going to play the whole scene angry." It won't wash. They have to say, "I'm angry here. Oh, this word, I'm mad. This word, I'm really happy. This word, I'm fuckin' pissed off." They have to do it word by word. It's a challenge because it requires them to be completely present. I do play with time, but it's because it's all happening right at once for me. Everything that ever happened, it's all happening right now. (Ong 43)

In *The Death of the Last Black Man*, figures are required to be "completely present" because the play shows their last moment and gives

us a chance to attend their deathbed. A bell rings to punctuate each panel into some episodes in a ceremonial way. In the course of the play, audiences are to be present at the resurrection of "The Last Blackman" in the moment.

Although the play implies ongoing events, above all, Parks attempts to recreate African Americans' various kinds of historical suffering. Samuel A. Hay assumes that Parks "fuses the two schools of drama by pouring a hardcore Du Bois theme (the sense of self and of race as seen through history) into a Locke form (something akin to ritualistic absurdism)" (Hay 129). Certainly the common feeling of being cut off from the world Parks presents has an affinity for "ritualistic absurdism," but we can say that she is rather conveying a powerful message throughout the play in her peculiar style. And her plays are definitely different from what Martin Esslin called "the theatre of the absurd" in his essay arguing about the plays of Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, Pinter and others.

Parks clarifies the sacredness of the black man's death after the manner of the Stations of the Cross, which shows each station as a panel of "the death of the last black man." Borrowing the words of Philip C. Kolin and Harvey Young, "Parks thus transforms a sacred religious ritual into a template for the Black Man's tragic life" (Kolin and Young 9). The "death of the last black man" does not mark a single man's death but it connotes multiple kinds of death to be lamented. "Voice on thuh Tee V" announces as follows:

> Good evening. I'm Broad Caster. Headlining tonight: the news: is Gamble Major, the absolutely last living Negro man in the whole entire known world – is dead. Major, Gamble, born a slave, taught himself the rudiments of education to become a spearhead in the Civil Rights Movement. He was 38

> years old. News of Majors death sparked controlled displays of jubilation in all corners of the world. (110)

The main character, Black Man with Watermelon or "thuh last black man in thuh whole entire world," is called Gamble Major, as he is a person who embodies multiple black activists from Fredrick Douglass and W. E. B. Du Bois to Martin Luther King Jr. Furthermore, he embodies the "Holy Ghost" to convey the voices of the black men leaving this world in a tragic way. His partner, Black Woman with Drumstick, expresses various way of death beyond space-time, saying "Yesterday today next summer tomorrow just uh moment uhgoh in 1317 dieded thuh last black man in thuh whole entire world" (102). She says, "He falls twenty-three floors to his death" (102). Black Man with Watermelon suggests that he was executed in the electric chair (108), he got lynched and hung from a tree (114). Following that, he reports his choking to death and spectators watching the event. Black Woman with Fried Drumstick searches for the best method to perform a memorial for the dead, but in order to mourn over Black Man with Watermelon's death properly, she has to see him through her own eyes and listen to his voice through her own ears. They need to make a sacred ritual of the dead in their own manner.

It is clear that these figures have significant names related to African and African American history and culture. After pointing out that the figures are "representative and symbolic, drawn from a variety of sources – including history, literature, and religion," Alice Rayner and Harry J. Elam, Jr. put forth a detailed explanation of each figure's source (Rayner and Elam 453). I will now focus on the fusion of a sense of discomfort each figure has and a sense of mission each figure acquires beginning with And Bigger and Bigger and Bigger, a caricature of Bigger Thomas, a black character in *Native Son*, the novel by Richard Wright.

And Bigger and Bigger and Bigger is Born in America but is harnessed to the yoke of race. He ruins himself and is electrocuted, which causes him to cry out, "WILL SOMEBODY TAKE THESE STRAPS OFF UH ME PLEASE? I WOULD LIKE TUH MOVE MY HANDS" (110, 111). As for his statement, "I would like tuh fit back in thuh storybook from which I camed" (116), Rayner and Elam interpret his words as follows:

> Since its publication in 1940, the image of Bigger Thomas—the prototypical, angry, savage, and dangerous black brute—has grown "bigger" than the novel and remains a pejorative and pernicious symbol in American cultural and social interaction. (Rayner and Elam 453).

Bigger and Bigger and Bigger embodies the tangled feelings of African Americans for the pioneering African American writer and his brutal protagonist, whose image has been reinforcing the stereotype of a black man against his will. Ham is also a figure who needs to receive relief from a story based on a religious-myth-made-racial-myth to justify slavery. As a matter of course, he is totally kept in the dark about slavery. Parks gives several numbers of footnotes to his words but she does not give any notes to explain the words. This disordered part expresses his mental chaos that is brought when he hears that his offspring is "[s]old" (124). The figure named "Before Columbus" suggests the drastic change of the world after "the discovery of America" by his namesake. And then, Queen-Then-Pharaoh Hatshepsut remarks about the change as follows:

> QUEEN-THEN-PHARAOH HATSHEPSUT. Before Columbus thuh worl usta be roun they put uh /d/ on thuh end of roun makin round. Thusly they set in motion thuh end Without

that /d/ we coulda gone on spinnin forever. Thuh /d/ thing ended things ended. (102)

Then, the original question about slavery is brought up by Black Man with Watermelon as "Whose fault is it?" Nevertheless, all the figures respond, "Aint mines" (103). As a result, the question is suspended for the present. It does not suggest casting the blame on somebody in particular but rather enhancing historical consciousness in the present time.

As Parks herself states positively, "*The Last Black Man* was jazz" (Shelby Jiggetts 73), and it was made with free use of jazzy "Rep and Rev," in particular to impress the importance of recording the actual facts. Queen-Then-Pharaoh Hatshepsut claims, "My son erased his mothers mark" (116). Beforehand, Yes and Greens Black-Eyed Peas Cornbread gives the following instruction to everyone: "You should write it down because if you don't write it down then they will come along and tell the future that we did not exist. You should write it down and you should hide it under a rock" in "Overture" (104). His statement gradually changes into the final declaration in "Final Chorus" as follows:

> YES AND GREEN BLACK-EYED PEARS CORNBREAD.
> You will write it down because if you don't write it down then we will come along and tell the future that we did not exist. You will write it down and you will carve it out of a rock.
> (pause)
> You will write down thuh past and you will write down thuh present and in what in thuh future. You will write it down.
> (pause)

> It will be of us but you will mention them from time to time so that in the future when they come along they'll know how they exist.
> (pause)
> You will carve it all out of a rock so that in the future when we come along we will know that the rock does yes exist. (131)

With this revelatory declaration calling for recording the sufferings of African Americans, The Black Man with Watermelon develops his historical consciousness to ascribe a deeper meaning to his death and utters his dying words, "Miss me" and "Re-member me" (131). The message completes the performance of a memorial service with great solemnity, ending with a symbolic tombstone with his last words on it. He is to be entombed in "space 6 feet by 6 feet by 6 feet" in "a mass grave-site" (109), where he wants to be buried with company. Parks fuses together multiple factors of the deaths of African Americans and historical consciousness through the climax of jazz to give dignity to African Americans. At the beginning of "Overture," the figures announce their names in turn, which evokes an image of an imaginary community of black people with a perspective of history. Finally, they watch over the resurrection of the Black Man with Watermelon, who moves his hands for the first time, but their choruses of "Hold it" continue to the end of the play. Now he is to be buried in the grave with all due respect.

I would like to depict the play as a church with seven panels on its wall, which prepares a high altar to "the last black man in the whole entire world." Furthermore, if we could come to realize every black man as "thuh" last black man in the entire world, we would come round the corner continuously until the time Black Woman with Fried

Drumstick stops saying “yesterday, today, next summer tomorrow just uh moment uhgoh in 1317 dieded thuh last black man in thuh whole entire world.” That is, we could never keep away from developing our consciousness of the black tragedy until the historical consciousness about the dignity of every “last black man” is clearly established. This play creates a sanctuary for the “dieded” black men, where they have cognizance of audiences who are observing mourning for them and therefore can perceive a peaceful death.

3. Examining the Theme of the Park: *The America Play*

As we confirmed in the previous section, black men and women had been thrown into “Thuh Whole Entire World” after Columbus made the world “round,” which led the Western world to apply slavery as the “Middle Passage” of a triangular trade. Parks collects the blacken figures, who used to be ordinary African people in their birthplace but were sold into slavery and treated inhumanly in the New World. In the course of these events, they could not only verify their identity but also their existence. It is essential to go back and review the sufferings and tribulations of their lives. Still, preserving and exhibiting their sorry plight is not enough to arouse public concerns. Parks offers extravagant options for them in her next major play, *The America Play*, applying African American figures to a certain story stirring up public interest for the history of America. She makes a clever pun, “the whole hole,” to express the theme park of American history and set a place for an African American family. They are situated in “a Great Hole of History,” which consequently simulates an absence of African American people in the “History.”

The play is set in “A great hole. In the middle of nowhere. The

hole is an exact replica of The Great Hole of History" (158). Parks states that the hole is a grave to bury a black person who died a regrettable death. Beforehand, in *The Death of the Last Black Man*, she wrote a line in which Black Man with Watermelon—"Make me uh space 6 feet by 6 feet by 6. Make it big and mark it so as I wont miss it"—requested a proper hole to be dug for his burial (109). When Hang Ong asked Parks about that "hole" in an interview, Parks explained as follows:

> The joke with the hole is that it's not only h-o-l-e, but it's w-h-o-l-e. I want everything. I want the whole thing, the whole hole. It's not just that the hole represents what this country is doing to me and all that. I don't even think that. I think the black man wants a hole, because he wants to rest. (Ong 41)

The "hole" image Parks adopts seems to be both a graveyard for the nameless African American who died a lonely death on account of not being buried properly and a vast treasure trove of resources that can be used in her attempt to restore American history. This image makes it clear that Parks does not have an eye only on racial problems but on the whole circumstances surrounding people in America. That is, she will take in anything theatrical in America to activate her creativity. "Dig a hole" is exactly Parks's magic formula to carry on playwriting; she states her mission as follows:

> Since history is a recorded or remembered event, theatre, for me, is the perfect place to "make" history – that is, because so much of African-American history has been unrecorded, dismembered, washed out, one of my tasks as playwright is

> to-through literature and the special strange relationship between theatre and real-life – locate the ancestral burial ground, dig for bones, find bones, hear the bones sing, write it down.
> ("Possession" 5)

She also affirms that "there is no such thing as THE Black Experience," and she aims at exploring "The-Drama-of-the-Black-Person-as-an-Integral-facet-of-the-Universe" As an African American, she says she does "tell it like it is," "tell it as it was," and "tell it as it could be" ("an Equation for Black People Onstage" 21). Refusing to be incorporated in the racial classification, Parks gropes her way toward subvert an easy-to-understand history by digging a whole hole in America.

Moreover, multiple critics examine what the "hole" indicates historically, psychologically, and epistemologically. Elinor Fuchs and Una Chaudhuri argue that the Great Hole is "a precise metaphor for the peculiar atemporality created by the double erasure," and it is "the acute loss of African-American experience within a culture that erases its own history only to restore it as entertainment" (Fuchs and Chaudhuri 40). Geis mentions "Much as some would like to see history as having a whole, that is, a contained presence [...], that presence is an impossibility or an absence—that is, a hole rather than a whole" (Geis 101). Adding to this, Geis cites Mary F. Brewer's argument as representing "the specific absences of black narratives from white historical retellings" and mentions Houston Baker's "black hole" image as "a representation of black experience," consenting to Louise Bernard appropriation of that statement (Geis 101). The epigraph that precedes *The America Play* is a John Locke quotation, "*In the beginning, all the world was* America[17]" (159, original emphasis). Haike Frank explains that "America" is

"namely empty space," and "Mankind, however, cannot resist appropriating space and inscribing the world" (Frank 17). A hole can be either a space to be filled with some historical events or the abyss that has swallowed up so many black experiences. Parks designs theatre as a magic hole through which we can slip in and out of our dimensions in the theater itself. That is to say, Parks can use anything to fill the hole and, at the same time, she can draw anything from that hole in the course of *The America Play*. Eventually, the African Americans in the play show self-consciousness instead of being stereotyped.

It is noticeable that Parks chooses a "theme park" where a historical parade is held every day. She symbolically establishes a gravedigger as a main character, the Foundling Father (FF), to dig the hole of history. The former gravedigger starts a job to play Lincoln by himself and let the customers hit his head with some imitation pistol because of his resemblance to the Great Man. In "Act 1: Lincoln Act," he talks about his life in the third person using a Brechtian alienation effect technique and saying "There was once a man who was told that he bore a strong resemblance to Abraham Lincoln" (159). He is fascinated by the theme park, "The Great Hole of History," where he and his newlywed wife, Lucy, honeymooned. After a while, he leaves his wife and son for the west and makes an "exact replica of the Great Hole of History." During his long monologue, FF sometimes winks at "Lincolns pasteboard cutout" and nods to "the president bust." Parks produces an incarnation of the American way of symbolization of historical mythology, wherein a theme park is a perfect place for showing historical fragments through the simplification of given factors.

Geis states that "an exact replica" suggests that "it is a simulacrum" and that evokes "a Disneyfication of history" (Geis 100). According to Alan Bryman, there have been many assaults on Disneyfication because of its trivialization and sanitization of culture

and history[18]. A plan to build a theme park called "Disney's America," which Disney withdrew later, was opposed by historians who took a skeptical view of Disney's ability to treat American history in theme park attractions "such as *American Adventure* in Epcot and *Hall of Presidents* in the Magic Kingdom" (Bryman 7)[19]. Interestingly, Richard Schickel shows that Disney loved Lincoln as "the greatest of our folk heroes, the common man raised to the highest level of achievement, both worldly and spiritual" and he made "human simulacra" of the president by making the maximum use of his newly developed Audio-Animatronics (Schickel 234-235). In comparison with Disney's love for Lincoln, Parks seems to have no intention of admiring or censuring the president; rather, she applies Disneyfication to the great man's symbolism. Although Parks's Lincoln is different from Disney's, we can say that both are fascinated with the theatrical aspects of the great man.

Parks talks about her "organic" way of finding inspiration for her works, taking the case of Lincoln as an example in an interview with Lisa Colletta. She does not want to argue about slavery or Lincoln himself, but she is interested in him because of his unique upbringing and appearance because she was born on John Wilkes Booth's birthday[20] (Colletta 103-104). From her statement, it seems that although her choice of the Lincoln Act is a somewhat strange coincidence, she chose a suitable subject in light of the topic of the Disneyfication of history. Parks wisely put foundling African Americans into the hole of America in the form of "Disneyfication," thus indicating the trivialization and sanitization of culture and history[21].

Parks utilizes the frame of a theme park fully to expose people's defenseless attitudes about the information written in history books or given by an outstanding figure. To quote Jean Baudrillard, "Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulacra" (Baudrillard 12). Disney aspired to make up his perfect fantasy of American culture

and history in his theme park, namely simulacra. According to Baudrillard,

> Disneyland exists in order to hide that it is the "real" country, all of "real" America that is Disneyland [...] Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle. (Baudrillard 12-13)

Parks makes use of the Disneyfication of history in the theme park to represent the nation where "the real is no longer real." As Baudrillard says, "History is a strong myth, perhaps, along with the unconscious, the last great myth. It is a myth that at once subtended the possibility of an "objective" enchainment of events and causes and the possibility of a narrative enchainment of discourse" (Baudrillard 47). Furthermore, Parks exercises great ingenuity in bringing "an exact replica" of the theme park on the stage. That is, she attempts to simulate reproducing a perfect model of simulacra. Additionally, she shows the probable temptation of rewriting history by reflecting people's internalized desire for sanitized and simplified past events instead of bearing the weight of real ones. The great president Abraham Lincoln has been a symbol of American desire magnified just likes the statue of the president sitting in Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C.

Parks visualizes the mechanism of the possible implications of rewriting history. Disney adopted the famous speech of the president using Audio-Animatronics, while Parks goes as far as to emulate the

famous assassination played in Lincoln Act. The Lesser Known or FF talks about his reasons for changing his Lincoln Act in the form of the third person:

> THE FOUNDLING FATHER AS ABRAHAM LINCOLN. [...] when someone remarked that he played Lincoln so well that he ought to be shot, it was as if the Great Mans footsteps had been suddenly revealed:
>
> (Rest)
>
> The Lesser Known returned to his hole and, instead of speeching, his act would now consist of a single chair, a rocker, in a dark box. The public was invited to pay a penny, choose from the selection of provided pistols, enter the darkened box and "Shoot Mr. Lincoln." The Lesser Known became famous overnight. (164)

Any customer who pays money to play the assassin in Lincoln Act almost always chooses a derringer, as indicated in history books, and says some famous lines allegedly said by Booth, but others choose lines of some other famous person, such as Mary Todd or General Robert E. Lee. On the other hand, FF intends to change his hair into blond and grow a yellow beard for the sake of his customers' taste. The whiteface Lincoln Act by FF primarily demonstrates the tradition of African-American show business in the past. In the early 18th century, minstrel shows became very popular as entertainment to show the caricatured stereotype of slaves. Ohwada Toshiyuki argues that minstrel shows played by blackface white performers were later played by African American performers by themselves and this multilayered disguise led to the multilayered identity of African Americans in the sphere of music culture. FF follows the African-American tradition of multilayered identity in

show business by reenacting symbolized white president as a look-alike, making alternation to satisfy the likings of the general public. A theme park of history is surely the place that people can experience their favorite history.

FF talks about the transition of his relationship with the great president as follows:

> The Great Man lived in the past that is was an inhabitant of time immemorial and the Lesser Known out West alive a resident of the present. And the Great Mans deeds had transpired during the life of the Great Man somewhere in past-land that is somewhere "back there" and all this while the Lesser Known digging his holes bearing the burden of his resemblance all the while trying somehow to equal the Great Man in stature, word and deed going forward with his lesser life trying somehow to follow in the Great Mans footsteps footsteps that were of course behind him. The Lesser Known trying somehow to catch up to the Great Man all this while and maybe running too fast in the wrong direction. Which is to say that maybe the Great Man had to catch him. (171)

FF perceives what Baudrillard states as "hyperréel," simulacrum that "precedes the real" (Baudrillard 2-3). He gives "A wink to Mr. Lincolns pasteboard cutout. A not to Mr. Lincolns bust" over and over as if showing respect to the original. However, his gesture also draws a sarcastic laugh because they are not only mass produced replications but also incomplete replications of the original. To borrow Debby Thompson's phrase, "We are ghosted by a history that won't stay buried" and "For us in the present, histories are always already replications" (Tompson 169). FF drops his initial plan to replicate the replications

and he realizes the possibility of entry into histories that would be replicated in the future.

In Act 2, Lucy and Brazil search for the remains of the dead FF. Parks depicts another myth, which Haike Frank points out as "frontier myth" (Frank 16). Parks turns the development of the West by white Americans into the digging of the west by African Americans in *The America Play*. Parks depicts an African-American family searching for the remains of their "foundling father" and a burial place for him in the west. They are breaking fresh ground instead of cultivating it, and they consequently dig out some echoes and wonders from the distant past. Lucy, a listener of dying messages, is capable of distinguishing echoes. She names the father of a digger family Foundling Father, "foe father," or "faux father" (184). Replacing the father of the nation by that of the digger family, she devises a reform plan for the family history of the digger family that is similar to the national history. Namely, she suggests the father as the digger of the buried remains of history, the mother with the ear trumpet as the listener of a verbal will of the dead, and the son as a moaner for the dead to be positioned to look back on the past as an unfinished life story instead of narrating national history as a consistent story of the growth process of the nation. Parks's experiment in the "Great Hole of History" allows the rearrangement of the ways to look back at the nation in the past and in the present.

Parks's strategy to make history in the theatre is to apply Disneyfication of history on the one hand and attempt the creative destruction of the application the other. At the end of the play, Brazil fills the place of his father, mounting a parade of wonders, including the newest wonder, FF himself. An African American family makes a brilliant metamorphosis from the funeral business to the conductor of historical parades in the theme park that allows them to make history. It might be an ideological counterpoint to the nation that a huge hole of

history is left as it is and does not stop providing fantasies of the American dream and an image of a happy family consuming applied attractions in the theme park named America. And she gives a good account of the function of a theme park. "An exact replica of The Great Hole of History" is what Baudrillad assumes as "a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulacra" that reveals that America "belongs to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation" (Baudrillad 12).

2

Providing Black Women with Center Stages

distraught laughter fallin
over a black girl's shoulder
its funny/ it's hysterical
the melody-less-ness of her dance
don't tell nobody don't tell a soul
she's dancing on beer cans & shingles—

— Ntozake Shange, *For Colored Girl Who Have Considered Suicide/ When the Rainbow is Enuf*

Parks achieved an outstanding feat by showing how African American figures have been segregated from the center stage in the history of America. She had been attempting to form characters who could slip into history with free use of theatrical elements until the mid-1990s. After that, Parks set about the task of giving narratives to dismembered or disregarded black women's mind through drama. *Venus*, which premiered in 1996, won Parks her second Obie. Its highly organized story inlayed with stimulating side stories allowed her to join the mainstream of playwrights. She initiates us into the narratives embellished with historical and fictional details in which humiliation, mistreatment, and callous disregard for black women's feeling undermine their bodies and minds and dry up their longing for love. The subtle changes in a black woman's emotions, which have hardly been perceived by white men and women in the Western world as well as white men living in colonized Africa, are dramatized not by being manifested in words but

by being exhibited in the construction of the play itself.

As Shawn-Marie Garret points out, Parks played a peculiar role as an African American playwright in the middle of the so-called "culture wars" that surfaced around the late 20th century, when white theatre and black theater remained separate but unequal. Garret discusses her politics as follows:

> Separatism has frequently cropped up as both a white and a black utopian dream. Parks, more than any other recent writer – more than August Wilson or other polemicists "fired," as Wilson has written, in the "kin" of the '60s—shows, mostly through her sense of humor, exactly how and why trying to make black history a minor subplot of a white story laughable. Or laughable and painful, to be more precise: a stinging joke with real-world consequences, like the joke of "scientific" racial classification itself, a perverse fiction made fact in the 19th century by misinterpreters of Darwin, "proved" through phrenology and other invented sciences, written as history, and then denounced in the early part of the century by African-American intellectuals. More recently, though, race as well as gender and ethnicity, have been reworked into the more individualistic politics of "identity" — a word to conjure with at the time Parks was building her reputation. ("The Possession of Suzan-Lori Parks")

Parks does not concern herself in "culture wars" directly, but she makes it clear that black people are not to be identified only by their race, gender, and ethnicity but by their personalities in the same way as white people. She emphasizes that "there's no such thing as THE Black Experience" and "I write plays because I love Black people. As there is no single "Black

Experience," there is no single "Black Aesthetic" " ("an Equation for Black Onstage" 21). Parks does not stop searching for her own way to demonstrate how black people struggle to live through a world that is filled with malice against them. We can say that she is a mighty warrior and explorer fighting her way through the uncharted forest named America.

Following *Venus*, Parks advanced to dramatizing African American women's yearning for love and longing for a place to stay in the Pulitzer-nominated play, *In the Blood.* Stimulated by Nathaniel Hawthorne's canonical work, *Scarlet Letter*, Parks wrote *In the Blood* and *Fucking A* together as *The Red Letter Plays*. A black welfare mother on the street and a black abortionist yearning for her son are all meant to be dehumanized in the hell-like inner city life.

I will focus on Parks's attempt to construct or reconstruct the world of disregarded and disremembered black women who can never make their way through life in the world of white domination. Furthermore, since black women, nameless or well-known, have been watched in preconceived ways, inspecting the act of watching would provide crucial insights. In this chapter, I propose to look at what Parks attempts to dramatize by the act of watching black women, putting them on the center stage.

1. Liberating Hottentot Venus from the Cage

Venus, which premiered in 1996 at Yale Repertory Theatre, has an intricate play-within-a-play structure and a lot of descriptions from scientific records; however, it is based on episodic chronicles of actual events. The story is about a real historical South African woman who was sent to Europe in the early 19th century. She was a Khoi-san woman named "Saartjie Baatman," whose stage name in Europe was "Hottentot

Venus," and who was put on display in a show tent in London, in some English provinces, and in Paris. Her body parts were preserved in formalin and her skeletal specimen and anatomical model were displayed in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris until the mid-1970s. Parks thought of writing about Baartman when she happened to hear about her at a party. After looking over an autopsy report, drawings and other pieces, she filled "a lot in between those events[22]" and completed *Venus* by incorporating fabrications and adding some fictional people.

Historically, Saarjie Baartman is known as a tragic heroine who had been brought from Africa to Europe during the colonial period and exposed to public view in the early 19th century. She died at the age of twenty-six in Paris in 1815, and her body was dissected for analysis immediately by France's "greatest" anatomist, Georges Cuivie. Her genitalia was preserved in formaldehyde and displayed with her specimen and cast at the Musee de l'Homme in Paris. She was thus exposed to public view even after her death. In response to an angry protest made by feminists, they moved her to a storehouse in the middle of the 1970s and as a result, she was consigned to oblivion. In other words, she was put in a limbo until a famous biologist, Stephen Jay Gould, happened to "discover" her in the storehouse of the museum in the early 1980s[23].

This discovery took place just when the antiapartheid struggle was intensifying in South Africa and a movement for retrieving her body soon developed. Because of her predicament of having been exposed to public view in a freak show and her body parts having been exhibited in the museum until the late 1970s, Saarjie Baartman suddenly became an object of interest among African people around the end of the 20th century in the course of an intensified campaign against apartheid in South Africa. Her body parts, preserved in formalin and kept in storage in the museum, became the symbol of that movement. In 1978, Nelson Mandela, who had been elected as a president in the same year, made an

official proposal for retrieving her to the President of France. As a result, Africa got back Saarjie's parts and retrieved her honor more than 160 years after her death[24]. Saarjie Baartman was thus able to return to her hometown at last.

Although Saarjie found a place in the annals of history in this manner, this does not mean that she made a full comeback and regained her humanity. Parks dramatized Baartman's narrative beyond historical records because Parks's dominant motive to write plays is an unremitting inquiry about history. Her unchangeable position against history is expressed best by her words about the production of *Venus* in an interview with Tom Sellar:

> I've left some things out, and I've included other things. Most of it's fabricated, it's questioning the history of history. The play doesn't just swallow the story whole and regurgitate it onto the stage. It embraces the unrecorded truth. (Sellar 50)

It is clear that *Venus* is different from other plays Parks had written before as it creates a clear narrative for the protagonist. However, it is also a play of resurrection like *The Death of the Last Black Man* and *The America Play*. When Parks was asked about the risk of repeating the dehumanization of Saarjie, she explained the importance of telling the story, saying, 'Venus would say to me: "Sometimes telling the story is the only thing that makes it all right" ' (Una Chaundhuri 56). What Parks aims to do is not to trace the written history of Saarjie Baartman but to tell a story about the person named Venus Hottentot.

Actually, Parks's challenge started when she decided to make this historical woman a subject of her play. Her dramatization of historical myth aroused great admiration and devastating criticism at the same time. Saarjie was a servant of a settler's family in colonized South Africa and a

survivor of the "primitive" Khoi-san tribe, which had been subjugated by Dutchmen in the 18th century. Entangled in the plot to exploit her to make money by the brother of her "employer," she was brought to England. She went to London as a dancer but she was exhibited in a freak show as a malformed creature with extremely large buttocks there. Furthermore, her "malformed" genitalia received great acclaim and was regarded as proof of an indecent inferior creature or a "missing link." For all these reasons, it is impossible to talk about her life and body without taking issue with colonialism, racism, feminism, and human lights. As Shawn-Marie Garrett points out, "Baartman's is a dangerous story to tell, and many African-American audience members and critics were nervous, even angry, about the way Parks told it" ("The Possession of Suzan-Lori Parks").

Jean Young, a scholar, artist, and filmmaker, criticized Parks's production of *Venus* most severely in a critical essay on the play entitled "The Re-Objectification and Re-Commodification of Saartjie Baartman in Suzan-Lori Parks's *Venus*." Young extensively criticizes Parks's description of Baartman's complicity in her own exploitation. She reproaches Parks and critics exalting Parks's *Venus* as follows[25]:

> Unsurprisingly, white male New York theatre critics exalted Parks's framing of Saarjie Baartman for its lack of societal indictment. [...] Thus, Saarjie Baartman becomes twice victimized: first, by nineteenth-century Victorian society and, again, by the play Venus and its chorus of critics (Young 700-701).

Certainly, Young's condemnation is comprehensible from a certain viewpoint,[26] as the body of Saarjie was in a position to symbolize colonization, especially for African people, as I will show later.

However, exhibiting Venus in a show was controversial even when she was in a sideshow in London. As Young discusses in her essay, even then, there were people who thought the treatment of Saarjie was a humanitarian issue and expressed anger at her being displayed in cage like a beast. Ultimately, Saarjie was ordered to appear in court when a lawsuit against her exploitation was brought by an activist of the African Association. However, she did not admit that she was under compulsion in court and as a result, the attorney-general concluded that she was not under restraint and her keepers were not punished. In Parks's *Venus*, The Venus says at the court, "I'm here to make mint" (75). Young criticizes Parks for distorting Saarjie's situation and characterizing her as a person having free will. Young's criticism of Parks's misrepresentation of Saarjie is probably based on the anger against insulting a historical icon symbolizing outrageous indignity inflicted on oppressed women in the course of colonialism. The success of *Venus* led to Parks being criticized as an accomplice of colonialism, disregarding more controversial problems, but it also gave the writer broad recognition as a capable playwright.

Including Parks's *Venus*, many literary works about Saajie were composed by contemporary writers. Actually, inspired by the movement for returning her body, there were plenty of publications about her in South Africa, France, the United Kingdom, and United States over 8 years starting from 1995[27]. Jonathan Kalb introduces two poems on Saarjie to compare his approach to Parks's. They are both written in the first person and describe her inner life, and "seek a divinity to shape their ends." Kalb states that Parks's Saarjie, in contrast to his, keeps on "waving back where figures in Middle Passage keep waving goodbye to their African selves and the distant African shore," just like "the figures in *Imperceptible Mutabilities"* (Kalb 159-160).

Barbara Chase-Riboud, a famous American historical novel writer,

also wrote Saarjie's story and embellished it with more intimate emotions. The book, *Hottentot Venus: A Novel*, was published in 2003. It is also written in the first person, and almost the entire story is told by Saarjie Baartman herself. Additionally, her soul never stops telling her thoughts even after her death, watching how the autopsy of her body is conducted from the viewpoint of her floating soul in the air. Interestingly, the story starts with the report of her death ("The Venus Hottentot is Dead") just like Parks's *Venus*'s opening. Riboud's Saarjie is very talkative, reviewing her past life in Cape Cod and explaining the details of how she came to be in London and Paris in a rather mild tone. But after her death, her soul delivers curses on every white person in Africa and Europe. In the epilogue, she is satisfied to watch as all her vengeance is accomplished.

Riboud's Saarjie as well as the one in some poems are colored by protestation and the requirement of rehabilitation. Unlike other literary works about her, Parks's characterization of Venus Hottentot is criticized for not claiming her rehabilitation and seeming to choose her miserable circumstances by herself.

Primarily, we should look over the thoughts of Venus in the play, *Venus*. As Kalb points out, Parks's Venus never looks back at her past self and dreams of a happy life with The Baron Docteur in the future, and she even seems to accept subjugation by him. She even calls him "Columbus," as if she is allowing him to occupy her body in the manner of calling back postcolonialism to the audience.

THE BARON DOCTEUR.

Crowds of people screamed yr name!
"Venus Hottentot!!"
You were a sensation! I wouldn't mind a bit of that.
Known. Like you!

Only, of course, in my specific circle.

THE VENUS.

You could be whatshisname: Columbus. (104)

The Baron Docteur represents a European man who was exhibited child-like excitement with novelty. Venus symbolizes a nonresistant object who arouses the Baron's desire for not only subjugation of the black body as a novelty but also for achieving fame as a great scientist. However, we should look into what would be foregrounded by her manner of objectification.

Next, overlapped watching furnishes the key to the whole play. In an interview with Shelly Jiggetts, Parks says, "The most exciting thing about watching theater is that people are watching, and I think that's fascinating," which explains the mutual relation of her characters in *Venus* through the action of watching as follows:

> there's a lot of watching in Venus. In Venus, the doctor is watching Venus, and the Resurrectionist is watching everybody. Then actually at the end he becomes the watch, the death watch on Venus. So it's all this kind of looking. There's a whole lot of looking going on. (Jiggetts 70)

Actually, theater is the best place to show how the act of watching works on the one who is being watched. In that meaning, Parks is fully conscious of the function of theater to produce what Lionel Abel called "meta theater." Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. argues about Parks's dramaturgy through the technique of "rev & rep," saying, "Theatre does not simply re-write history for Parks, it enacts it, re-enacts it, and demands continual re-enactment" (89). To make the function of watching clear, Parks creates a sort of three-dimensional stage, showing how the doctor is

watching a play within a play and how Venus Hottentot watches the doctor doing so at the same time[28]. Watching the scenes where the "objectified" and caged Venus is peeped in on by the curious European people on the stage induces us to recognize the violence of watching itself as well as the violence of insolent curiosity to a nonresistant object. The overlapped watching of the exhibited Venus brings out a theatrical effect to build up the visual image and mental image of the violence of watching at the same time.

Additionally, the sheer expediency of the European man is delineated as the two-facedness of Baron Docteur through the figure of The Grade-School Chum, who tempts him to watch Venus not as a "lovely creature" but as "a 2-bit sideshow freak" and the one which will "make uh splendid corpse" (144). It gives a display of complex desire of the European man, who needed the justification of ownership of African American woman as an intellectual. Parks characterizes Baron Docteur as a person who chooses profit by looking down on her as an object rather than a lover. In this meaning, the audience cannot but be embroiled in watching Saarjie Baartman exhibited as Hottentot Venus on the stage and witness the representation of the shameful sense of intellectuals that was dominant in the Western world.

How the European mentality was molded and preserved in the 19th century needs to be examined in detail now. Gould wrote about his encounter with Saartjie Baartman on a shelf in the storage area of the museum. There, he found her as one of "the dissected genitalia of three Third-World women." Symbolically, on the middle of the same display shelf, there were bell jars holding the brains of "scientific cotemporaries-all white and all male." As Gould sarcastically points out, there were no brains of women or any male genitalia on the shelf[29] (Gould 291). What Gould calls "objectivity via quantification" (302) is one of the points Parks focuses on in her quotation of historical records

in the following lines:

> THE BARON DOCTEUR.
>
> The height, measured after death,
>
> Was 4 feet 11 and 1/2 inches.
>
> The total weight of the body was 98 pounds *avoirdupois*.
>
> (*Venus* 92)

Georges Cuvier, a model for The Baron Docteur, had been exerting his authority over physical science through the Thermidor Revolution and Napoleon era. Inose introduces another name as "Napoleon of the Intelligence," who was a great authority on the scientific world (Gould 466). He dissected her body and published a monograph on her dissection in the *Memoires du Museum d'Histoire Naturelle* for 1817. According to Gould, "Cuvier promised to present only "positive facts" in his monograph but his description about Saarjie is too lopsided in emphasizing her similarity with apes or monkeys in spite of his other moderate descriptions about her humanity" (Gould 295). Cuvier applied "objectivity via quantification" (Gould 302) on Saarjie Baartman, taking measurements of her body to imply how different the structure of the wild Hottentot's body form was compared to the intellectual, sophisticated Caucasian body. Cuvier treated her like a "missing rink" for accomplishing his achievement in a science academy, although he recognized her humanity, which strengthened the conservative mentality of the European world.

As is pointed out by the scientists and critics, the age of Enlightenment and colonialism required scientific reasons for racial supremacy to justify white domination. Gates depicts the mental state of Europeans lusting for hierarchy in the eighteenth century:

> Enlightenment is famous for establishing its existence upon man's ability to reason, it simultaneously used the absence and presence of reason to delimit and circumscribe the very humanity of the cultures and people of color which Europeans had been "discovering" since the Renaissance. The urge toward the systematization of all human knowledge, by which we characterize the Enlightenment, in other words led directly to the relegation of black people to a lower rank on the Great Chain of Being, an eighteenth century metaphor that arranged all of creation on the vertical scale from animals and plants and insects through man to the angels and God himself. By 1750, the chain had become individualized; the human scale rose from "the lowliest Hottentot" (black South Africans) to "glorious Milton and Newton." (Gates 130)

Adding to the above, Robert J. C. Young explains how academic establishment, such as "comparative and historical philology, anatomy, anthropometry (including osteometry, craniology, craniometry and pelvimetry), physiology, physiognomy and phrenology" (Young 93)[30] dominated racialized thinking in the nineteenth century. In this context, Saarjie Baartman was an optimum specimen for academic research to appeal to curious Europeans about "wild" creatures from far South Africa because of her "wildness" in characteristics such as skin color and projecting buttock. Parks's acute sensitivity to people's approval of scientific representations that could act to create the "other" was depicted clearly in *Venus.* We could find the same questions in *Imperceptible Mutabilities.* One is raised by "naturalists" who observe African American females, calling "them roaches" (*Imperceptible Mutabilities* 29), and the other is raised in Verona's speech about the TV

program, “Omahas Wild Kingdom” and her experience of dissecting her black dog, which was taking a defiant attitude toward her (*Imperceptible Mutabilities* 36). Parks takes another approach to history with the help of real African woman in *Venus* and gives us the opportunity to watch the very scene where the “other” is created by scientism.

Europeans were unable to disguise their concern for Baartman’s sexuality. At the opening of *Venus*, The Venus was circulated on the stage to show her body from every angle, which shows the way Europeans peeked at her body to gratify their curiosity about her seductiveness, hitherto known only through hearsay. As shown by the illustrations on newspapers of those days, they were extremely interested in her large buttocks (steatopygia) and large modified labium minus pudendi (tablier). Gould clarifies the “unsaid reason for her popularity” as follows:

> Khoi-San woman do exaggerate two features of their sexual anatomy (or at least of body parts that excite sexual feelings in most men). The Hottentot Venus won her fame as a sexual object, and her combination of supposed bestiality and lascivious fascination focused the attention of men who could thus obtain both vicarious pleasure and a smug reassurance of superiority. (Gould 296)

Her “bestiality and lascivious fascination” also stimulated “elegant” European women, which we can see in some satirical drawings of those times[31].

A lot of caricatures accentuating Baartman’s buttock were drawn and some letters and descriptions written about her have been found. Parks inserts statements from Newspaper effectively to project the mentality of Europeans of that time. In scene 20H, witness #3 states her opinion as “a noted abolitionist” saying:

WITNESS #3.

> [...] I think it base in the extreme, that *any* human beings should be thus exposed!" and "It is contrary to every principle of morality and good order as this exhibition connects the same offense to public decency with that most horrid of all situations, *Slavery*[32]." (*Venus* 72)

This statement is taken from newspaper columns of that time. The following statement is from witness #4, from the same paper[33]:

WITNESS #4.

> "Since the English last took possession of the colonies, we have been consistently solicited to bring to this country, subjects well worthy of the attention of the Virtuoso, and the curious in general. The girl in question fits this description and interest in her has been fully proved by the approbation of some of the First Rank and Chief Literati of the kingdom, who saw her previous to her being publicly exhibited. And pray, has she not as good a right to exhibit herself as the Famous Irish Giant or the renowned Dogfaced Dancing Dwarf?!?!"
> (*Venus* 72)

Harry J. Elam Jr. and Alice Rayner note that the writer of the first letter "fails to recognize the erroneous, damaging, assumptions about the inferiority of race and female sexuality" because the phrase "any human being" implies that "even Africans are human beings, thus continuing the assumption of inferiority"(Elam and Rayner 269). The mentality affirming imperialist exploitation exceeds a feeling of guilt for "others." This element is also incorporated into the lines of Court ruling:

THE CHORUS OF THE COURT.

[…]

It is clear shes got grand plots and plans

to make her mark and her mint by playing outside the
bounds so that we find

her person much depraved but she sez her show is part of
Gods great plan

and we buy that.

Besides she has the right to make her mark just like the
Dancing Irish Dwarf

[…]

we should note that

it is very much to the credit of our great country

that even female Hottentot can find a court to review her
status.

[…] (*Venus* 78)

Apparently, they drew a boundary line between themselves and African people even though the slave trade had been prohibited three years before the trial. Knowledge and power strengthened through the age of Enlightenment and raised white Europeans to the top of the hierarchy of creatures, putting African Hottentot at the bottom, turning them into "a missing link." The court ruling also suggests that Christianity helped to justify the hierarchy, bringing up God as the creator of all nature according to the "great plan." A systemization to grade all of creation for some reason through the age of Enlightenment was guaranteed by distorted scientific verification involving racial prejudice and by Christianity in the nineteenth century. Parks's *Venus* never passes over the core of this absurdity of European mentality to approve of the Hottentot tribe as the lowest rank on the "Great Chain of Being" in the

nineteenth century, in various phases.

On the other side, the description about "Dogface Dancing Dwarf" recalls another boundary line maintained by Europeans. In the early nineteenth century, exhibiting "abnormal" human for entertainment was a popular pastime. Richard D. Altick compiled a great work on the history of show business in London. There are rich exemplifications of sideshows exhibiting freaks with collected illustrations and letters. Non-Western native as well as physically deformity was a center of attraction. Additionally, this taste for exhibition of non-Westerners was common in the United States. According to Robert Bogdan, who argues about the American tradition of exhibiting non-Westerners in side shows, because of slavery, negroes were not an unusual sight at freak shows: "there are hundreds of examples of nineteenth-century African exhibits" depicting especially how Americans were fascinated by the South African Bushmen and Hottentots (Bogdan 187). This tradition of freak shows discloses poorly disguised real feelings of the people under the mask of high intelligence, and it is also a phase of European mentality.

Another challenge Parks offered on *Venus* was that she chose to work with a famed producer and director in Broadway she had never linked worked with before. *Venus* was first performed on March 28, 1996, at Yale Repertory Theatre, produced by George C. Wolfe and directed by Richard Foreman. Foreman suggests that George C. Wolfe, who was the "commercial director," cut many things out of the play to make it suitable for the Broadway theatre, and Parks was changing from being an experimental artist to be "commercial acceptable artist in the course of making the stage of *Venus*" (Jonathan Kalb 177). Hence, this does not mean Parks was compelled to lose her identity as a challenging playwright. Liz Diamond comments on the situation the play *Venus* brought on Parks, saying, "one of the things I remember exciting me about the play was its relationship to her own journey as an artist" (Kalb

183). She continues as follows:

> In *Venus* Suzan-Lori explored that scary moment when an artist achieves, if you will, the apogee of her fame and celebrity, the moment when she suddenly moves from being a subject to an object. In a grotesque way, the objectification of the Venus occurs at the very moment she is at the height of her fame in London. This moment, when everybody knows her name, begins the tragedy of her disintegration. I want to say that, despite Disney and other would-be destroyers and dissectors of Suzan-Lori's body of work and soul, I'm not too worried about her. I don't think she is going to suffer the same fate as Saartjie Baartman. I think she's tougher than that. I also think she's more conscious than Saarjie had the fortune to be. She's used her privilege, her fabulous education, and her amazing poetic gift of undertake an ongoing exploration of who she is. (Kalb 183)

We can say that Parks certainly started to challenge the difficult compatibility of art and business by learning about "show business" from capable Broadway directors of the time. However, as Diamond asserts above, Parks has the ability to find her own way and will never be torn apart between her aesthetics and commercial value. However, as an African American playwright, her plays are always inspected by African American faultfinders. In fact, she often disapproves of being categorized as an African American female playwright and seems to want to avoid being captured by "black Police" and being made "black enough[34]" (David Savran 92). However, this does not mean that Parks will retreat from her mission to "dig for bones, find bones, hear the bones sing, write it down" ("Possession" 4). Regardless of the authenticity of

blackness, she will never abolish her peculiar aesthetics as an African American playwright.

Parks demonstrates her ability to dramatize Venus's grace and intelligence, which Cuvier stated "in an offhand sort of way" (Gould 296). Actually, Saarjie was an intelligent woman who spoke Dutch and a little English and, as is depicted in Scene 12, learned French very well. Note "Footnote #5: Historical Extract. Category: Literary[35]" by The Negro Resurrectionist, saying, "The things they noticed were quite various but no one ever noticed that her face was streamed with tears" (47) in the scene of freak show. Venus is weeping silently in the play as Parks put her literary aesthetics to Venus's personality. Venus never makes noisy claims for her position but repeats the following inquiry to The Baron Docteur: "Love me?" She then asks, "Do you think I look like one of these little chocolate brussels infants?" to her lover, who turns his back to her and starts masturbating because she knows her function of a love portion just like a chocolate[36] (105-106). Her last plea, "*Kiss* me *Kiss* me *Kiss* me *Kiss*" reflects her earnest desire to be watched and warmly embraced by a sweetheart who turns his back to her after exploiting her fame and ignorance, which symbolizes the Western world that cast aside her body as a sample of the "other" after fully consuming her body. In a couple of interviews, Parks suggests that she wanted to write about "love" in this play. Venus's modest and desperate desire for love reveals that she is a person who could be and should be loved as she is.

Venus embodies Parks's challenge to put a historical body on the stage, showing the possibility to get a different angle on history. As has been noted, it is clear that *Venus* is the touchstone of Parks's ability to dramatize historical character viewed in a historical light. Her earlier plays, such as *Imperceptible Mutabilities*, suggested that it is necessary to step back for greater perspective to watch black bodies disregarded in history. Basically, *Venus* gives us the same perspective, but the play has

the more powerful assertion that theater can be a rich place to watch historical characters from every angle and watch how the character is watched at the time from the present point in time.

Venus has accomplished its aim ingeniously for Saarjie and Parks. As we have seen, the remains of Saarjie Baartman kept in the storeroom of museum in Paris were discovered and returned to her home country in the late 20th century. However, she should not be put into her burial place and left there for another hundred years undisturbed. Re-enacting the story of Hottentot Venus is this Parks's attempt to summon her from a storage area named "history," and furthermore, to demystify this Khoi-san woman who has been set up as an ideological icon. Namely, only by putting *Venus* on stage can we liberate her from the cage named history. Beyond that, giving a performance of *Venus* would be a test to examine how a ghostly apparition that dominated European mentality in the past is still striding around in the present time. Parks's attempt to dramatize Saarjie is not for "re-objectification and re-commodification" but for exposition of shameful European mentality still held today and colored by arbitrary discourse of scientism and discourteous curiosity for the "other." She has accomplished reconstruction of the individual experience based on close investigation for years with good use of theatrical function vertically and, furthermore, with several creative modifications. Actually, *Venus* brought her a "Black Belt[37]" in order to prove herself as a playwright capable of offering historical narratives to make us face our consciousness under the influence of Western mentality in the past beyond time and space.

2. Staging Sorted Sexuality and Life of African American Women in *The Red Letter Plays*

In former plays, Parks had focused on the resurrection of the dead,

especially in *Death of the Last Black* and in *Venus*. In *The Red Letter Plays*, she also describes the death of African Americans, but this time she places focus on sexuality and the life of African American women committing murder rather than the death depicted in the play. Both *In the Blood* and *Fucking A*, together with *The Red Letter Plays*, have narratives of mothers who kills their own children by themselves. However, the stories do not center on the resurrection of the dead but on the living hell African American women go through.

Parks wrote *In the Blood* and *Fucking A* as a "riff" for Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and collectively named them *Red Letter Plays*. The protagonists of the plays have the same first names as that of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester. Nevertheless, unlike Hester Prynne of *The Scarlet Letter*, Parks's Hesters are black women living at the bottom of the social scale. Furthermore, Parks provided the plays with the framework of the Greek tragedy and Brechtian songs. Namely, they bring an "alienation effect" that Bertolt Brecht adopted to his plays, which restricts the audience to feeling empathy for the play and urges them to watch the play critically. *The Red Letter Plays* are not plays of recollection or mourning, but the plays do bring an accusation against the world in which we live. Besides, Parks describes her plays as being "all about the intersection of the historical and the now" as follows.

> I knew the characters would be different after *Venus* and after *Venus* came *In the Blood*, and *Fucking A* and *Topdog* and *365*. But, to me, the plays have never been history plays. They're all about the intersection of the historical and the now. Even *In the Blood* is about that intersection because it is not based on *The Scarlet Letter* but *The Scarlet Letter* is one of its parents, let's say. (Wetmore 133-4)

I will clarify how African American female bodies as well as their sexuality is treated in *Red Letter Plays* at "the intersection of the historical and the now" in a different framework from the Puritanism of New England in the 18th century.

The brutal side of social system in bringing a cruel fate to the African American woman is depicted in *In the Blood*. Living as a lower-class African American woman is equivalent to living at the margins of society. Watkins and David provided an anthology of African American female voices as "a portrait of black woman" in *To Be a Black Woman*, to determine the way African American women have been implanted with self-negative image even after the abolition of slavery. The protagonist of *In the Blood* lives in extremely harsh conditions, struggling with the world to implant such a self-negative image that plans to consume her as she is.

Hester La Negrita, the protagonist of *In the Blood*, scrapes out a living day by day in wretched circumstances. She is a homeless single mother of five children. Unlike Hester Prynne of *The Scarlet Letter*, this Hester does not have the ability to do needlework. In fact, she does not have any skills to make living except for selling herself for money. In that case, the only skill she possesses is to perform sexual acts. The fathers of her five children are different and none of her children are acknowledged by their fathers. What is worse is that she is illiterate. She is not able to understand the meaning of the graffiti written on the wall of her dwelling place under the bridge. She is practicing writing English but there is no expectation of her joining the workforce and serving society, since she cannot even learn an alphabet but A.

In the Blood begins with the chorus of the entire cast of the play except Hester, who comes on the stage with her newborn baby in her hands through the passage made by the parting chorus[38]. Parks set a Greek chorus at the prologue and epilogue of the play. The chorus uses

abusive language toward Hester and even spits one time or another to demonstrate contempt for her:

> All.
>
> THERE SHE IS!
> WHO DOES SHE THINK
> SHE IS
> THE NERVE SOME PEOPLE HAVE
> SHOULDN'T HAVE IT IF YOU CANT AFFORD IT
> AND YOU KNOW SHE CANT
> SHE DON'T GOT NO SKILLS
> CEPT ONE
> CANT READ CANT WRITE (5)

The chorus renders the discouraging elements directed at this welfare mother explicitly. Harvey Young explains about the Greek theater and how it has an effect on audiences as follows:

> The mistreatment of the two protagonists is itself another example of how Parks has (post)modernized the Greek Chorus within her plays. Although the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides often feature Greek protagonist as heroes', they vilify the 'other', the non-Greek. Peter Arnott, offering examples of xenophobia within early Greek plays. [...] The Greek amphitheater was the place where the community gathered not only to watch itself but also to reaffirm its superiority over others. Audiences participated as spectators at and, vicariously (thanks to the chorus), as performers within performance events that intended to create a sense of civic pride by staging the community's own prejudices as

entertainment. (Young 45)

As Young notes, this chorus exemplifies "xenophobia," which means intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries. Hester's "otherness" is definitively stated by the chorus as voices of community and we can say that her theatrical "otherness" is shaped in the form of Greek theater at the same time because of her killing her child just like Greek mythology, *Medea*. Adding to that, the social definition of Hester in modern America as "a burden for the society" is declared, which secures the community's prejudice against her.

There are six characters who corner Hester individually. Each of them is related to Hester and makes a "confession" in six scenes out of nine scenes one by one. Barbara Ozieblo makes an analysis of the confession as follows: "during the confessions, we, the audience, take on the role of the Puritan worthies who judged Hester" (Ozieblo 56-7). In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne is accused of adultery by people who live on Puritan worthies. In *In the Blood*, Hester is to be accused of incompetency as an adult who has the responsibility to make an honest living and look after her children by herself. From the viewpoint of the middle class audience who goes to the theater, Hester is precisely a "Welfare Queen" to be blamed as a debt owed by American society.

Michelle Alexander refers to the fact that Ronald Reagan exploited the image of the "welfare queen" politically[39]. Besides "black man as a criminal," the "Welfare Queen," who abuses the welfare program is a stereotype of African Americans that has a wide circulation. Jon Dietrick takes up Hester's words, "my treasure," for her children and explains them as follows:

> Parks interrogates this idea of the "welfare queen" having children so she can receive money in the form of public

> assistance by having Hester refer to her children repeatedly as her "treasures" — indeed, this term, repeated three times, makes up Hester's first words in the play(12). (Dietrick 90)

Nevertheless, Hester cannot take advantage of having fatherless children as her financial source and she also cannot enroll in a welfare program. Although she talks about her dream of finding a job and becoming an independent mother, she does not even have the basic skills to do needlework as a welfare worker. Nevertheless, she tries to feed her children while enduring her own hunger. We can say that while she does not fit the stereotype of the "welfare queen," she is an incompetent single mother.

The Greek chorus conveys the image of an obscene black woman who easily becomes pregnant. This is another historically stereotypical image of African American woman, and it has reinforced the stereotype of the "welfare queen." Throughout slavery, African American women had been tarnished with the reputation of being "lecherous." During slavery, African Americans were under such adverse conditions as "social death," in which Judith Butler explains that slaves were treated as dying within life[40] (Butler 73-74). Adding to that, an African American woman was forcefully compelled to have sexual relationships with her master and was marked as "a slut" by his wife, who managed to gratify her pride by imputing her husband's infidelity to the slave girl. Thus, racially created gender images of African American women were built up to apply the stereotype of the African American "slut."

However, Hester desires to apply another stereotype of a very affectionate and self-sacrificing mother, which American women have internalized. We may say that she is caught in a gendered self-image. Hester's self-image as a desirable mother is denied by Doctor and Welfare, who employ an official privilege to guide and control her. However,

every person who comes into contact with Hester practices double standards in sexual behavior. Contrary to her gendered self-image, every one treats her as an outlet for their desires.

Both Doctor and Welfare think in an egoistic way. Doctor confesses about his sexual relationship with Hester and makes an excuse as follows:

> There such a gulf between us. What can we do?
> I am a man of the people, from way back my streetside practice
> is a testament to that
> so don't get me wrong. (44)

He despises Hester as one of the women of the streets but, at the same time, he adores her sexuality, saying, "she was very giving very motherly very obliging very understanding" (45). Welfare also confesses that she and her husband had a "threesome" with Hester to add "a little spice" to their sexual life.

> And I should emphasize that
> She is a low-class person.
> As her case worker I realize that maintenance of the system
> depends on a well-drawn boundary line
> and all parties respecting that boundary.
> And I am, after all,
> I am a married woman. (62)

Welfare is a middle-class African American woman. As she confesses, she draws a boundary line to separate herself from an under-class African American woman, denying to share anything in common with her. Although both Doctor and Welfare give a negative view about Hester's

sexuality publicly on the one hand, they make use of her sexuality in their private lives on the other hand, deviously concealing their sexual desire under their social situation. In other words, they avoid their responsibility with regard to her “womanly parts,” and Welfare backs it up. This means that Hester is equated with cats and dogs giving birth one after another to the extent that surgical sterilization should be applied to them.

Amiga Gringa and Reverend D. are principally thinking of moneymaking schemes for their own sake. Amiga Gringa is Hester’s white friend who will do anything for money. Having and selling babies is one of her professions and she earns money by conducting sex shows with Hester once in a while. She even falsifies some accounts in order to sell Hester’s watch, and when Hester expresses doubts about the accounts, she rattles away about the economic situation by referring to a stock market using technical language. Hester cannot express her discontent in words anymore and Amiga drives her into a corner financially even more. Amiga confesses about her policy as follows:

> Do you have any idea how much cash I’ll get for the fruit of my white womb?
> Grow it.
> Birth it.
> Sell it.
> And why shouldnt I? (71)

Amiga’s words reflects the acute stage of free-market capitalism to use female bodies as resources. Reverend D, the father of Hester’s youngest baby, has an inordinate greed for success. He carries on a “salvation business,” making a lot of recording tapes of preaching to sell although he does not give relief to Hester and even falsifies a payment as childcare

expenses. He makes use of Hester to satisfy his sexual desires, demanding oral sex from her on occasion. He shifts his responsibility onto Hester's sexuality, saying, "There was a certain animal magnetism between us. And she threw herself at me [...]," and tries to assume that she is "suffering" sent by God as he confesses:

> God made me.
> God pulled me up.
> Now God, through her, wants to drag me down
> and sit me at the table
> at the head of the table of her fatherless house. (79)

He does not have any spirit of compassion to help Hester and her children with their predicaments, because his love for the human race as a religious figure does not extend to African American welfare mothers. Amiga Gringa gets a package deal with a "womb and baby," and Reverend D does the same with "preaching and salvation." Both of them are devotees of capitalism and their god is money. In any case, Hester is left out of things. She cannot acclimatize herself to a capitalist system. Her sexuality is consumed by them despite the fact that she is never able to find a suitable consumer in order to earn enough money and buy things by herself.

Short-lived happiness deserts Hester instantly. She keeps a pair of white shoes, seemingly dreaming of a Prince Charming taking her away on a white horse. Additionally, Hester's first love and the father of her child Jabber, Chilli, returns to her suddenly. He proposes to Hester and presents an "adjustable" engage ring to her. Parks thus depicts an African American couple who are too immature to be swayed by the images of happiness implanted by Disneyficated fairy tales. However, Chilli also has certain boundaries and he leaves Hester when he learns

that she has five children. He abandons Hester, who does not meet his image of the ideal girl but who remains faithful to him and waits for him:

> I carried around this picture of you. Sad and lonely with our child on yr hip. Stuggling againt to make do. Stuggling against all odds. And triumphant. Triumphant against everything. Like—hell, like Jesus and Mary. And if they could do it so could my Hester. My dear Hester. Or so I thought.
> (Rest)
> But I don't think so. (96)

Both Chilli and Hester cannot erase the illusions of happiness they harbor in their mind selfishly. An instant love story, produced in a cultural encirclement set up with modern materialism, and covered with sanitized and simplified tales of theme parks, never brings African American couples great happiness.

A stereotype applied to her is reinforced so much that she cannot conceal her consciousness of her position. Hester believes her strength is to be "a mother" and acts like "an affectionate mother," but she sometimes discloses her real intentions so that Welfare accuses her of having five bastards, saying "Don't make me hurt you!"(58). At first, Hester calls her children "My treasure!" according to her self-image of an affectionate mother. However, when she hears the children quarrelling, she exclaims "You bastard!" and "You all bastards!" (21). Hester keeps a club, which Trouble stole from a police officer, in the belt of her dress. In the process of being driven into a more difficult situation, the incident provoked by her is going to be not a coincidence but a matter of certainty.

Consumed with her own dream of being Cinderella and perplexed by living expenses, Hester brings ruin upon herself. Hester goes to get

money from Reverend D. only to be called a "slut" by him (103). Both Chilli and Reverend D. never share their profits or feelings with Hester but see her as a stereotype that reflects their desire based on historical facts, social conditions, and their egoism. When Jabber sees Reverend D call her "slut," he reveals that the words of the aforementioned graffiti show exactly the same word, "slut." Hester finds that the wall which she practiced writing "A" on and on has been overwritten as "slut" for the first time. Namely, her wish to join society is rejected by the boundary line that excludes her for being a "slut" (104). Previously, Jabber pretended not to recognize the word for the sake of his mother. To help the illiterate mother practice writing a letter, Jabber told her to write the letter "A" like "Legs apart hands crost the chest like I showd you" (11), which shows his desire for his mother to be strong enough to stand by herself. Against his will, his mother is treated with contempt by the men just like a "slut." Jabber's voice calling her "SLUT" again and again changes into a public voice that accuses her and drives her to beat him with a club to death.

Not knowing what to fight against, Hester decides to have more children as an army to help her. She states her feelings as follows:

> I should had a hundred
> a hundred
> I should had a hundred-thousand
> A hundred-thousand a whole army full I shoulda!
> I shoulda.
> One right after the other! Spitting em out with no years in between!
> One after another:
> Tail to head:
> Spitting em out:

Bad mannered Bad mouthed Bad Bad Bastards!
A whole army full I shoulda! (107)

Although Hester desires to be labeled as a "faithful mother," she is still branded as a "slut." The chorus sings "SHE DON'T GOT NO SKILLS CEPT ONE" around Hester who is imprisoned for the murder of her son in the last scene. Against her will, Hester is supposed to have surgery to take away her "woman's parts." The consumption structure of African American female sexuality does not allow her to run out of control.

The professions of the characters who treat Hester as a "slut" are medical service, religion, and social security. Their attitude with regard to Hester is based on capitalism, which allows them to enjoy commodification. In that case, Hester's sexuality is one of the cheapest consumption goods for them. This circle is just like what Zora Neale Hurston called "the pecking-order in a chicken yard" (Hurston 139). They peck at Hester and corner her to prevent her from enjoying the minimum feed in the chicken yard. Parks makes a caricature of the social system, which accelerates this status and depicts the problem of inordinate commodification through the African American welfare mother's body.

In *Fucking A*, the fact is that a woman's body is treated as a device for reproduction, and it is clear that the same body is employed as a device for killing. Reproduction and abortion have been controversial topics in the United States politically and religiously, and as a matter of feminism. Ogino Miho, who studied the history of abortion, reveals that 40% of the hospitals in the United States set the condition that the woman who wanted to have abortion should have sterilization at the same time according to a study carried out in the early 1950s. Pointing out that sterilization was supposed to act as a sort of punishment to woman who wanted to have abortion, Ogino goes on to say, "It was related to a racial

and class discrimination because more African American women with low income were forced to have the operation than white middle class women" (Ogino 39). Hester Smith, the protagonist of *Fucking A*, works as an abortionist and her enemy of long standing is a white middle-class woman. I will discuss reproduction and abortion connected with racial and class discrimination in *Fucking A*, referring to the situation in the United States.

Hester is an abortionist and she is obliged to show the large "A" branded on her skin all the time. Instead of "confessions," there are several Brechtian songs written by Parks to let us know the characters' mind in *In the Blood.* For example, Hester and Canary, a friend of Hester who has extramarital relations with the Mayor sings "Working Womans Song" as follows:

> Its not that we love
> What we do
> But we do it
> We look at the day
> We just gotta get through it.
> We dig our ditch with no complaining
> Work in hot sun, or even when its raining
> And when the long day finally comes to an end
> We'll say:
> "Here is a woman
> Who does all she can." (123)

This song is so powerful that it evokes the spiritual force of working women. The song seems to urge ordinary women to stand on their own feet, but when it comes to women's problems, they are not as strong as the song tries to make them. Hester longs for the son who has been

imprisoned for many years. She is determined to provide bail for him, whereas she is prevented from meeting him again and again. Canary is longing for the status of mayor's wife, but she is twisted around him and has to accept the status of his lover indefinitely.

At Hester's abortionist's place, there arrives a woman who cleverly uses men's belief about her lineage. In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Dimmesdale is in constant fear of the disclosure of his immorality and in terror of Pearl's growing up to resemble him. In *Fucking A*, the First Lady, the wife of the Mayor and Hester's long standing enemy, cleverly uses the argument against her husband by pretending that an illegitimate baby is his baby, saying "One seed is as good as another. And when the husband resembles the lover, he won't be none the wiser" (191). She decides to make a counterattack against her husband because he believes in lineage as a dominant discourse[41] and has forced a responsibility onto her about infertility, although, needless to say, he must take at least a part of the responsibility. For him, the female body is just a device to continue and add some value to his lineage. Therefore, he marries a rich woman and never chooses Canary as his wife. On that point, we can say that Parks reverses the dominant paternal line of descent and signifies on the devotee of lineage.

Parks adopts her original language named "TALK" when the women gather in the abortionist's place and exchange gossip about their sexual relationships. Geis argues that "Parks hearkens back to the creation of coded and alternative language in historical African American culture" (Geis 136). It is generally known that Africans brought from various tribes to the New World as slaves managed to produce a common language by themselves under the necessity of mutual understanding. That is certainly a language for survival. In *Fucking A*, TALK functions as a means of survival in women's bodies. The English translation would be presented on the screen simultaneously and the audience would recognize

the strategic "double-consciousness" of women. This is what W.E.B. Du Bois called the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (Du Bois 8). This sense of women is the sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of men. Hester has had a grudge against First Lady because she was a person who reported Hester's son to the police for stealing food when she was a girl from a rich family. Canary sees her as a nuisance since she dreams to be the wife of the Mayor. Here is a scene where Canary and Hester are talking about the mayor's wife, First Lady, who is a long-standing enemy of both of them:

> CANARY.
>
> This time its better. He says she makes his stomach churn.
> *Die la-sah Chung-chung? Sah Chung-chung lay* <u>*schreck*</u>.
> *Lay frokum, lay woah woah* <u>*crisp*</u> *woah-ya*.
> (TALK Translation: And her pussy? Her pussy is so disgusting, so slack, so very very completely dried out.)
>
> HESTER.
>
> Rich Girl *seh tum woah Chung-chung crisp woah-ya*,
> (TALK: Yr pussy is all dried out!)
> Rich Girl!
>
> CANARY.
>
> Shes not the Rich Girl no more, shes our First Lady. You should give her respect.
>
> HESTER.
>
> First Lady teeh tum-ay wee kazoo oromakeum!
> (TALK: you got a respectable good-for-nothing vagina!)
>
> (119, TALK Translation:223)

Hester and Canary know how to use their words properly to communicate with each other in order to live in a patriarchal world. They heap insults

upon the First Lady, who they think is a willing accomplice to patriarchy, for her humanity and sexuality in TALK. Although they do not blame her publicly and pretend to be unconcerned as shown in the English lines, they disclose their real intention in TALK. How they distinguish between situations in which they might express their personal feelings and situations in which they are impelled to repeat the accepted view is implied in the manner in which they use TALK, putting the situation through the filter of men's eyes strategically.

In both *In the Blood* and *Fucking A*, the fundamental idea of giving birth and committing murder are simultaneously represented. Hester Smith in *Fucking A*, an abortionist, understands the inherent contradiction to live by performing abortions saying, "Their troubles yr livelihood, Hester, Hhh. There ain't no winning" (117). A Freedom Fund woman also recognizes her as an abortionist because she heard about her from her friend and says, "The public clinic had a looong wait list-yr quick and you do the job for half the price. Said you were very thorough. And that yr the most discreet woman in the country" (132).

Hester claims that her branded "A" always hurts just as though it was done yesterday. This symbolizes the pain a lot of women bear regarding abortion. Ogino discusses the complicated situation concerning abortion and childbirth in the present day. There has been a controversy on the legitimacy of abortion in the United States. Looking over the history of abortion laws, abortions were illegal all over the States from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. In that situation, a wealthy white woman could have a safe operation by a doctor insisting an emergency case. However, a poor black woman had to do it all by herself or undergo a dangerous operation by an unqualified abortionist, which might lead her to death. However, several state governments legalized abortion in the late twentieth century, quoting Ogino's words, "what kind of act the abortion is still highly controversial in the context

of ethics, religion, science and political ideology" (Ogino 78). bell hooks discusses the controversy of abortion linked with Christianity and "a capitalist patriarchal male-dominated medical system that controlled women's bodies[42]" (hooks 27-28). Extremely advanced reproductive technology caused the US to become the hub of the reproduction industry. It is not uncommon case for women who are able to bear children to charge money as surrogate mothers under the tradition of reverence for personal liberty. As a "Third Confession" in *In the Blood*, Amiga Gringa expresses contempt for Hester, who lives in poverty as a single mother of five children:

> Im doing well for myself
> Working my money maker.
> Do you have any idea how much cash I'll get for the fruit of
> My white womb?!
> (Rest)
> Grow it.
> Birth it.
> Sell it.
> And why shouldnt I? (71)

Her statement ironically reflects the poorly balanced viewpoints of human beings in the United States, where reproduction is growing into a profitable industry. The legitimacy of abortion is closely examined by the people who claim the dignity of life. Canary's statement about Hester—"We need you too much. Like me, you perform one of those disrespectable but most necessary services" (121)—might represent the feelings of many people who have been fluctuating between the rights of babies and those of women. Additionally, Hester's words, "There is no winning" might be applied to the political controversy about abortion that

has never really settled down in the United States.

The oppressive reality of the imprisonment of African Americans has gradually emerged. Hester's son has been in jail for stealing from a white family where Hester worked as a maid several years ago. His guilt was a minor offense but he has not been released for years. African American families have often been confronted with an embarrassing situation like this, as August Wilson depicted in his twentieth-century cycle dramas again and again. Namely, African American women have been waiting for their men returning from prison, for their husbands, and for their sons. Hester finds Monster, a fugitive from justice, to be her beloved Boy. When Hester asks about what happened to him, he says, "Better a monster than a boy" and sings "The Making of a Monster" as follows:

> You think it would take
> So much work to create
> The Devil Incarnate
> Its easy.
>
> The smallest seed grows to a tree
> A grain of sand pearls in an oyster
> A small bit of hate in a heart will inflate
> And that's more so much more than enough
> To make you a Monster. (218)

The lyrics do not describe the specific conditions of incarceration but imply that he had to change himself to survive. Michelle Alexander reveals the true facts under the African American predicament in her book entitled *The New Jim Crow*. Alexander states the mass incarceration of African Americans as "another racial caste system in the United States"

and as a racial hierarchy supported by disaffected whites, and argues how this influences the African American community:

> Like Jim Crow, mass incarceration marginalizes large segments of the African American community, segregates them physically [...] and then authorizes discrimination against them in voting, employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service. (Alexander 16-17)

Once such segregation is fixed, it is hard to break out from it, and as a result, the oppressed are to be oppressed all the more. Hester pays money to Freedom Fund regularly, but her dream to meet him never comes true. Their motto is "Freedom Aint Free" but despite her extra payment, they never give her equal treatment; far from that, they show an irresponsible attitude and bring a fake son to her. The Freedom Fund woman's explanation about his current incarceration is doubtful, as "His initial three year sentence has doubled and tripled and quadrupled and – since hes been in jail hes committed several crimes" (134). The rules are loaded with racial prejudice, what Alexander calls the "New Jim Crow." Hester got rid of her son for stealing because of poverty and she cannot get him back, and she is cheated by the Freedom Fund Lady for all her effort to put in bail for him.

Butcher, Hester's neighbor who likes her, shows another point of view about crimes. He lists several probable deeds and facts that are considered to be the crimes of his incarcerated daughter. His speech drags on for two pages and recounts multiple deeds as her guilt, including perfect nonsense such as "hanging upside down in a public place, walking in the rain without a flashlight, walking home from work without a ink slip," other common crimes such as "moneylaundering, cyber fraud, intellectual embezzlement, highway robbery," social and controversial

problems such as “selling her children without a permit, unlawful reproduction,” etc. Further, his speech is interspersed with references to ideological problems such as “fighting the power” and the historical fact, “slave trading” (160-162). By contrasting small offences for which African Americans might have been incarcerated with historic facts that have not been judged officially, the fundamental questions are foregrounded. These are as follows: who prescribes the rules for crimes, who applies the rules for people, what we should consider about social sin and a crime against humanity, and how we should live with a daily awareness of the deadly historic sin, slavery. Furthermore, we need to realize the situation of the nation where the type of person is considered before considering the kind of crime being attempted.

An air of death hangs over the play when three hunters come onto the stage. They are running after Monster, a wanted man. Their mental image of Monster is reinforced considerably by the exaggerated coverage of the newspaper: “Murder, necrophilia, sodomy, bestiality, pedophilia, armed robbery, petty theft, embezzlement, diddling in public, cannibalism-” (143). This description, which emphasizes the “otherness” of the target, guarantees the hunters’ legitimacy to hunt him. This system of drawing a boundary line between the general public and “other” people has been applied to colonial policy to justify slavery and colonialism and to justify exhibition of non-Western people as barbarians or beast, as shown in the history of freak shows in the Western world in the previous section. Meanwhile, the hunters are not particular people in the colonial period but ordinary residents in the present time who are chatting with Butcher in the tavern. They are betting on finding him and talking about how to execute him pleasantly, just as though they are playing a game. Their conversation recalls the nightmare of lynching a runaway slave and the fact that ordinary white residents gathered together to watch the lynching. The next scene is set at the Bucher’s shop.

Meat hanging around on meat hooks there creates an impression of hanging black bodies. A question arises as to what is a sinful act deserving death penalty and who has the right to issue such an act. We are confronted with the problem of a sinful act on checking our approach to the dignity of life. An inquiry about the fundamental idea of the dignity of life emerges again and again through abortion and death in *Fucking A*. Hunters seeking a lynching call Hester "babykiller," which refers to an actual event where the anti-abortion group attacked a doctor who was doing abortion, calling him "babykiller"[43].

A further discrepancy over the dignity of life is displayed in the scene where Hester makes the First Lady undergo an abortion forcibly. Not knowing that Monster, her long separated son, had a sexual relationship with the First Lady, Hester kills her own grandchild unintentionally. This killing alludes to her murder of her own son later. In the final scene, Monster comes to Hester's place and begs her to kill him before hunters come. Hester accepts his wish and kills him in the way that "never hurts" (162), which Butcher taught her beforehand. As Geis points out, "Hester's decision to "save" Monster by killing him herself conjures up slave narratives in which the mother chooses to end the child's life rather than give the child up to slavery," just like the story of Sethe and Margaret in Toni Morison's *Beloved* (Geis 138). Hester chooses to kill her son because of maternal love. We should see the condition of women in the context of social structure and the dominant mentality of the time.

Parks shows a significant contrast in the condition of women between *Red Letter Plays* and Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*. In *Scarlet Letter*, women ceased to live chastely within a framework of Puritanism. Hester Prynne was punished for adultery and made to wear a scarlet letter but she lives a self-devoted life as a resident of a town and as a mother of a beloved child. As a result, the scarlet letter becomes "a type of

something to be sorrowed over, and looked upon with awe, yet with reverence too" (Hawthorne 243). Both Hester La Negrita and Hester Smith live a self-devoted life as providers of sexual relations and of abortion. However, they are not able to break the invisible barrier that separates them from the other side of the world. They cannot take their rightful place in the world, and it is hard for them to recognize what is right and what is bad in the incomprehensible structure of the world. Hester Prynne gets burdened with the sin of adultery, symbolized as "A," whereas both the Hesters in the *Red Letter Plays* are saddled with the inconsistencies of the world. They cease to wear the red letter "A" that symbolizes an "African American woman" in a world where they are rejected as members of society.

Two cases of child murder in *In the Blood* and *Fucking A* put some broader questions to the audience. One question is how people can apply the dignity of life to themselves in a nation where the value of life is graded by a social hierarchy. This is the issue that African Americans have not been able to clarify since the days of slavery and that they have been struggling to find the answer to in the present time in the United States, where there is still a deep-rooted prejudice against non-Western people in society. As we have seen in the previous section about *Venus*, the racial prejudice has been taken over from colonialism and strengthened by natural science. This is not a question for only African Americans but for any other race or group of people who are made to be the "other" in the society. In *Fucking A*, Parks does not designate the race of characters, which means that any race or any individual can be pushed aside, and the rules are not applied by the seriousness of the crime but by the power relationship formed in the present social hierarchy.

Another question is presented to us concerning the complicated relationship between the value of life and the female body. If the dignity of life is sacred and inviolable, why does the value of maternity

and an antenatal life change according to the social structure? The sexuality of marginalized women has been treated as a commodity, and the reproductive ability of female body has been perceived through the social structure of the time. Furthermore, scientific progress has changed the notion of reproduction.

Now I will discuss the theatrical effect Parks applies to the *Red Letter Plays*. Raising a serious question to the audience, Parks never stops adopting humor in her works. She elicits a confession from each character, which brings an ironical smile to the audience's faces in *In the Blood*, and she intersperses powerful Brechtian songs with humor liberally throughout *Fucking A*. They constitute what Bertolt Brecht named the "alienation effect" and "create wonderment and curiosity[44]."

In the hands of Parks, even a battle over the reproduction between male and female seems to be a complete farce. Since Mayor and the First Lady have not been blessed with a child, they get examined for reproductive ability. He says, "Ive been thoroughly examined. Theres no question as to my effectiveness," looking his sperm under a microscope (128). Recollecting that experience, he calls his sperm "my own little private army" and sings a song entitled "My Little Army":

> Loyalty is the most important thing in an army
> And my men have loyalty to me
> They will lay down their lives
> So our state will survive.
> I find that kind of courage very charming.
> I salute the men of my
> Little army. (128-129)

When the First Lady becomes pregnant because of a casual romance with Monster and pretends that it is the Mayor's child, she also sings that song

in another version as follows:

> They say Fidelity
> Is the most important thing
> When yr married.
> But its such a pricey luxury.
> When yr up against the wall
> Yll take a poke from some poor slob.
> The child Im growing will be my salvation.
> Who knows, he may grow up to rule the nation.
> And my husband, blind with happiness,
> Will never guess
> The enemy in his army. (191)

Mayor's song depicts the childish belief in lineage to carry on one's power. Additionally, the First Lady's song represents an egoistic maternity. Although Brecht's *Mother Courage* talks about the Thirty Years' War in Europe from 1618 to 1648 between Catholicism and Protestantism with an underlying criticism of "the link between war and capitalism" (Hugh Rorrison 221), *Fucking A* discusses the war in modern America between men and women, the rich and the poor, and the white and the black. Further, Parks discusses problematic issues like reproduction in the play.

Parks wrote just one song for *In the Blood*, "The Looking Song," and 10 songs for *The Fucking A*, including another version of "Working Womans Song." Kolin and Young argue that "*In the Blood* also retains traces of Parks's "Brechtian-feminist aesthetic." The play's fast-paced action and "The Looking Song" cogently link *In the Blood* to Brecht's social protest dramas. It might be regarded as Parks's version of *Mother Courage*, except that Hester's courage is stretched to the breaking point"

(Kolin and Young 17). "The Looking Song" is a romantic song prepared by Chili, a man who has a penchant for escapism. He sings, "Im looking for someone to lose my looks with [...]. Could it be you?" (*In the Blood* 81-82). Compared to that, the songs in *Fucking A* have more powerful messages just like the songs in *Mother Courage*. After calling each other "Whore" and "Babykiller," Hester and Canary sing "Working Woman Song" together, as I mentioned before. They do not approve of their ways of life in society, which in turn does not accept them as regular members of society. *Mother Courage* also resolves to live through the war and sings "the Song of the Grand Capitulation" to state her attitude towards life for the young soldier who is longing for honor in the war. She sings, "Two kids on my hands and look at the price of bread, and things they expect of you!" and "Takes all sorts to make a world, you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, no good banging your head against a brick wall" (*Mother Courage* Loc. 1256). There is a contrast between the woman who will not shy away from harsh reality and the man who plays around with ideas like political power, honor, and dreamy love in both *Red Letter Plays* and *Mother Courage*.

Hester and her children are isolated from not only ordinary society but also the American dream. Jabber does not accept the happy ending of the fairy tale Hester tells to the children. He changes the happy ending into a tragic one in which all of their fathers die on the battlefield. He is not able to picture to himself a wonderful world as a fairy tale. Canary shows a pessimistic view of the world as follows:

> Do you know how many men and women they got locked up? More thans walking free in the streets that's how many. It's a wonder they aint lost them all. Prisoners get lost all the time, I'll bet. Sounds crazy but that's what kind of crazy world we live in. Something crazy happening every

day.   (*Fucking A* 193)

What she depicts as a "crazy world" is the dystopia in the setting for the *Red Letter Plays.* We can hear the sounds of alarm bells in the social structure, which is updating the mechanism of producing the "other," and the tragicomic play, which represents ridiculous egocentrism and misunderstanding to lead every person to the dystopia. Black female bodies appearing on the center stage in *Venus* and *Red Letter Plays* surely represent the construction site of social structure, where dystopia is formed beyond time and place.

Finally, as I remarked above, Parks acquired the power of story-telling by placing black women on the center stage in *Venus* and *Red Letter Plays*, and she became aware of the power of music through *Red Letter Plays*. Although Parks wrote *Venus* and *the Red Letter Plays* after studying historical facts and canonical literary works, she restored black women's experiences in an extremely deformed hierarchical society in the form of a clear narrative colored by powerful songs.

3

African American Dreams of Family

> Our song, our toil, our cheer, and warning have been given to this nation in blood-brotherhood. Are not these gifts worth the giving? Is not this work and striving? Woud America have been America without her Negro people?
>
> — W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Parks advanced her dramaturgy to the new stage in her next play, *Topdog/Underdog*. Different from her former plays, *Topdog* is characterized by an emphasis on psychological elements with a lot of conversation between two people. It is also a family history play. In her former plays, family history was not focused on much. For example, the situation of the Smith family in *Imperceptible Mutabilities* changes illogically, and they hardly exchange meaningful words or mention their family history between them. The Foundling Father, Lucy and Brazil in *The America Play*, find family ties at last but this connotes a history of rational and national identity in a metaphorical setting. Hester in *Blood* dreams of family, but the family history she tells to her children is a sheer fairy tale. Conversely, the family in *Topdog* is very realistic, and the brother describes their childhood memory specifically. Because of their same background and different viewpoints, their emotions go back and forth between rivalry and love. *Topdog* is a very strained psychological play, and family history is the key to explain their states of mind.

Parks's newest play, *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)*, is the beginning of narratives of African American families starting from the Civil War era. *Part 1, 2, & 3* refers to the struggle for freedom

of fathers, and it is followed by their family histories in the future.

In this chapter, I will focus on African American families in Parks's recent plays and take a close look at the historical aspect of them.

1. Restoring the Visionary Family in *Topdog/Underdog*

In 2002, Suzan-Lori Parks became the first African American female playwright to receive a Pulitzer Award for her play, *Topdog/Underdog*. The play, written in a realistic style unlike other plays before, allowed her to enter the mainstream of Broadway. However, Deborah R. Geis comments that this does not impair the characteristics of her play:

> It is true that Topdog/Underdog is more "accessible" than most of Parks's earlier words. [...] What follows is a relatively straightforward tragicomedy that ends with one brother killing the other. I want to argue, however, that Parks has not stepped off the powerful artistic platform of her earlier works. Rather, there is a strong continuity in terms of performative issue, language, and themes such as ancestry, violence, and commodification. (114)

What Geis calls the "performative issue" plays an important role in this play to accelerate the changing relationship between the African American brothers Lincoln and Booth. In both the card games they play together and the Lincoln Act they practice together, their performative words affect their relationship by the minute. Actually, the play claims acute consciousness of the words and behaviors each brother displays. In regard to this, Parks states that "This is a play about family wounds

and healing" ("Preface," *Topdog*). However, how can we find out about the "family wounds and healing" in this play that tells us the full story of the murder that takes places between the brothers? In this chapter, I will discuss the image of the family built up through the power relationship between the brothers, with the reference of the history of the American family.

In *Topdog*, a family controls the brothers' destiny. Abandoned by their own parents, the brothers Lincoln and Booth live together in the latter's shabby room in the apartment downtown. When their mother left home, Lincoln was sixteen and Booth was eleven. Their father left home two years later. Booth keeps a family album with great care and he cherishes the memories of his parents. On the contrary, Lincoln tries to blot out all traces of his parents by throwing everything away. They see the memories of their families differently, and the difference changes the flow of their game for survival.

Lincoln and Booth are very close to each other. However, they have very different inner worlds, especially with regard to their family relationships. Thrown out by their parents, they are barely able to survive inner-city life. As Booth says, "It was you and me against thuh world" (70). Lincoln becomes a successful player of 3-card monte, but when he quits that, he is kicked out by his wife and comes to live with Booth. Their mother and father often come up in their conversation. However, their ways of understanding their parents are quite different. Booth sees the mother having an affair more than once, but this does not spoil his memory of her. He says, "She was always all cleaned up and fresh and smelling nice" (100) during the day. He does not betray his promise not to tell anyone about her affair. For Booth, even the sexuality of his mother is a part of her beautiful memory. When he sees his mother running off with her lover, he is given an "inheritance" by her, a pile of stocking which she says contain five hundred dollars. He keeps

the “inheritance” without checking the inside of the stocking, and also keeps a family album carefully. And Booth seems to think that happiness is symbolized as the dinner table shared by family. He wants to share the memory with Lincoln and says, “Youd sit there, I’d sit on the edge of the bed. Gathered around the dinner table. Like old times” (13). Booth tenaciously adheres to a beautiful memory of his boyhood. Lincoln recalls his father’s attempts to impress his son about his patriarchal masculinity by displaying sexual acts with his partner. He did not care about it then and even had a relationship with the same woman. His father was not a respectable or fearful person. Lincoln uses up the five hundred dollars he received as “inheritance.” Booth has respect and fear for his father, so Lincoln looks cool to Booth because he is not frightened of their father. Lincoln is not concerned about if his father is furious at them for having done his car so much mischief. Booth is even surprised when Lincoln burns up the father’s stylish clothes after his disappearance, which Booth had dreamed of wearing when he grew up. Lincoln has eliminated the inheritance of his father and destroyed all traces of his existence. On the other hand, memories of their parents and the family are preserved carefully in Booth’s inner world with a family album.

There is an atmosphere of tension throughout the play, because the protagonists are named after the great president and his great assassin. When Lincoln discloses the reason their father named them so, he says, “It was his idea of a joke” (24), which eases the tension. At that time, they can confirm that their father did not expect the dark future for them that their names suggested. That relaxes them enough to share the memory of their father, who was a drinker and a joker.

Parks adopts Rep & Rev to dredge up the brothers’ past and revise their memories, which stirred up desire in the past. Memory and desire are mingled in their inner world, and the family in the memory is

transformed into a visionary family.

The family escaped from a small apartment house and achieved its dream of getting a house. The house their parents got was "the best fucking house in the world" with a "Cement backyard and a frontyard full of trash" (64). Lincoln says, "We had some great times in that house, bro. Selling lemonade on thuh grass and looking at thuh stars" (65), which Booth denies at once. What Lincoln signifies is a parody of the American family, which circulated through TV programs and other mediums in the 20th century, the sort of white middle-class family that lives a utopian family life in the suburbs.

In order to discuss the problems of the house their parents had abandoned, I will clarify what kind of trouble American families had in the latter half of the 20th century, referring to the social conditions of that time. Stephanie Coontz makes an analysis on American families in the latter half of the 20th century in her book *The Way We Never Were*. Coontz points out that the image of American family living in the suburbs as in the case of the traditional American family does not reflect real facts. She states that it was a model made up in the 1950s, and that it was justified through TV dramas and other mediums of that time. Actually, American families who aimed to reach that model faced up to the reality of family life. They found that the family model was a sort of myth created for the image enhancement of the nation. As a result, American families came to face a great deal of trouble such as a domestic violence and rising divorce rates.

The situation of African American families was even worse than that. Lorrain Hansberry wrote *A Raison in the Sun* in 1959 to reveal their sufferings. It is a play about the bitter struggle of an African American family that tries to move from the small apartment downtown to the house in the suburbs. They are obstructed by the white residents, who cannot accept African American families as their neighbors.

According to Coontz, African Americans “faced systematic, legally sanctioned segregation and pervasive brutality” in the South and they were “excluded by restrictive covenants and redlining from many benefits of the economic expansion that their labor helped sustain.” Moreover, “whites resisted, with harassment and violence, the attempts of blacks to participate in the American family dream[45]” (Coontz 30). African American families were prevented from living in a good environment by white people through a racial discrimination policy about housing and a discriminative social convention through the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s[46].

Toni Morrison takes the story of a children’s beginning reader for the opening of *The Bluest Eye*. It starts in a normal way of writing, and when it is repeated, the form is changed a little, and then it is repeated again:

> Hereisthehouseitisgreenandwhiteithasareddooritisveryprettyher
> eisthefamilymotherfatherdickandjaneliveinthegreenandwhiteho
> usetheyareveryhappyseejaneshehasareddressshewantstoplaywho
> willplaywithjaneseethecatitgoesmeowmeowcomeandplaycomepl
> aywithjanethekittenwillnotplayseemothermotherisverynicemoth
> erwillyouplaywithjanemotherlaughslaughmotherlaughseefather
> heisbigandstrongfatherwillyouplaywithjanefatherissmilingsmile
> fathersmileseethedogbowwowgoesthedogdoyouwanttoplaydoyo
> uwanttoplaydoyouwanttoplaywithjaneseethedogrunrundogrunlo
> oklookherecomesafriendthefriendwillplaywithjanetheywillplaya
> goodgameplayjaneplay. (Morrison 2)

We may say that Morrison’s revised lines imply the state of African American children who are filled with confusion. The image of white middle-class family encroaches on African American children’s consciousness. They cannot connect the reality of an African American family living in misery with the image of a happy family living in the suburbs. The story of the white middle-class family is dissolved into a meaningless line of letters. In *Topdog*, Lincoln knows the situation very

well and makes fun of the image by signifying it.

The parents of Lincoln and Booth wanted to buy the house of their dreams, but it was far from this because it was located unfavorably, with only two rooms in it. Soon, they found "special something that they was struggling against" (67), namely, something better than home for each of them, and they left home separately. Their parents had thought that they would achieve happiness when they bought a house with their family, but when they did get it, they were not able to maintain their dream any more. And the dream house became a house of empty dream after all. We can refer not only to the historic racial prejudice that Hansberry and Morrison coped with but also to the changing economic structure and growing wealth gap among the African Americans in late 20th century. In the 1970s, there was a change in industrial structure that relocated factories from inner city to suburbs, and consequently, the unemployment rate went up in the city. A few African Americans gained the position of middle class at that time, but the greater part of them was compelled to put up with living as underclass citizens in the inner city. For the African American underclass, raising a family gradually changed from a dream into a burden. The parents of Lincoln and Booth lifted the burden in turn allegedly for a "special something." They abandoned their home and turned their dream of family to another dream of momentary pleasure.

Although Lincoln and Booth were abandoned by their parents, they carry different images of family. Lincoln sees their parents' human weakness but at the same time he feels sympathy for them. Booth deliberately snubs their inner lives and claims that it was a mortgage that led to the family breakdown. He makes an excuse for having no regular job, saying, "I seen how it cracked them up and I aint going there" (68). Their ways of seeing their parents in their memories seriously affect their ways of life at the present time. Despite the different way of seeing their parents, they share a sympathetic attitude for them:

BOOTH.

Theyd been scheming together all along. They left separately but they was in agreement. Maybe they arrived at the same place at the same time, maybe they renewed they wedding vows, maybe they got another family.

LINCOLN.

Maybe they got 2 new kids. 2 boys. Different than us, though. Better.

BOOTH.

Maybe. (70)

These conversations still suggest the dream of an ideal family despite their suspicion about it. They see that the house of dreams that their parents had conceived was an imaginary house, a pure fabrication. Booth preserves the house of dreams and the dream of family, which the family photo album symbolizes. On the other hand, Lincoln leaves his parents' dream of family behind.

Thrown out by their own parents, Lincoln and Booth have to survive the severe inner-city life. After a while, Lincoln distinguishes himself as a player of 3-card monte. He gets money and women and shortly becomes a hero for Booth. Knowing that this is dangerous, fraudulent gambling, Lincoln decides it is high time to quit when his partner, Lonny is shot dead. Booth thinks it is a shame that Lincoln's talent will not be put to good use and dreams to enter 3-card monte together with Lincoln. Booth says,

BOOTH.

I didn't mind them leaving cause you was there, That's why Im hooked on us working together. If we could work

> together it would be like old times. They split and we got that room downtown. You was done with school and I stopped going. And we had to run around doing odd jobs just to keep the lights on and the heat going and thuh child protection bitch off our backs. It was you and me against thuh world, Link. It could be like that again. (70)

Forming a team with Lincoln against the world is the first step for him to achieve his dream of family.

Booth believes in family ties with Lincoln, and at the same time, he wants to deal with a family hierarchy. Lincoln and Booth are naturally very good brothers, but there is a power relationship between them. Lincoln engages in the Lincoln Act at a shopping mall, where he dresses like the great man, President Lincoln, and a customer shoots him with a toy pistol. When he brings his weekly paycheck home, they mimic the typical conversation of a married couple in a minstrel show, calling each other "Ma" and "Pa" (26). They look like a pseudo-married couple. However, since Lincoln is a lodger, Booth asserts his right as a patriarch to consider how to use Lincoln's paycheck. Lincoln blames Booth for not having a job. Booth looks down on Lincoln for being abandoned by his woman and blames his Lincoln Act for self-deception. Lincoln fights back to disclose that Booth has plenty of nude magazines under his bed. Jason Bush discusses their power relationship as follows: "Lincoln and Booth struggle to define the 'other' within a particularly gendered familial hierarchy in order to establish breadwinner and the controller of the space" (Bush 77). Isolated from the social hierarchy, they corner themselves using the "gendered familial hierarchy."

Lincoln and Booth are both concerned for each other's good fortune at the same time. Lincoln is anxious about Booth's clumsy way of life and Booth wishes Lincoln to live his real life instead of acting like other

person with a white face. When Booth displays luxurious clothes as the fruits of his shoplifting, they enjoy watching each other in brand-new suits. We can see that they share the same destiny, since both of them carry the pain of a broken family and get through a harsh life together by breaking out of the "gendered familial hierarchy." Booth transforms his desire for their father's masculinity into the desire for a family. He longs for a family to complete his family photo album. He believes that the only way to accomplish his dream is to get money by playing 3-card monte paired with Lincoln.

Lincoln compares Booth's room, which has no bathroom, to the "Third World." Bush discusses Lincoln's indication as follows:

> His reference to the "Third World" discursively affronts his brother's claim to any semblance of the 'American Dream'. The fact that the apartment is in America makes no difference as it becomes a part of an unknown land far away from America, at least the America of dominant narratives. (Bush 79)

From the above statement, we realize that Booth cannot estimate the distance between his position in the "Third World" and his ideal image of the "American Dream." Booth prepares a dinner table with tableware and food that he shoplifted, dreaming of a reconciliation with his former girlfriend, Grace. He also cannot estimate the distance between the woman who is "Making something of herself. Studying cosmetology" (43) and himself. Turned down by Grace, who says that Booth has "got nothing going on" (107), he cannot bear her reproach and levels a gun at her. Tied to his own dream, Booth cannot think of his lower social hierarchy or form proper human relationships in the real world. Furthermore, this enhances his adherence to the family hierarchy.

Booth can never erase the image of the cool gangster that Lincoln projected onto him once. Booth believes that living on the Lincoln act is considerably against that image and would be like going "Back to way back then when folks was slaves and shit" (22). Parks adopts the motif of the Lincoln Act in *Topdog* after *The America Play.* This time, the African American man named Lincoln plays the Lincoln Act in white face, which makes us see the complex issues in a larger context. Geis argues about Lincoln's white face as follows:

> Here Parks creates her own version of a trope that appears frequently in African-American literature: that African-American identity almost inevitably involves disguise and role-playing as part of the effort to function in a hostile culture. (Geis 114)

Geis describes the Lincoln Act as "disguise and role-playing," while Booth describes it as "shiteating motherfucking pathetic limpdick uncle tom" (21). As I mentioned in chapter 1, Lincoln Act is concerned with African-American tradition of multilayered identity in show business to survive. Lincoln replies that it is honest work, and he endures the bad wage, which is lower than that paid to his white predecessor, and is threatened to be replaced by a wax dummy soon. He faces reality at least and seems to accept the fact that it is safer to live as a submissive African American than as what Booth thinks is cool. If Lincoln cannot compromise with his role-playing with the white face anymore, when and how he exposes his real feeling is a subject of interest now.

Lincoln has an African American regular customer who speaks meaningful words to him every time. He says, "Does thuh show stop when no ones watching or does thuh show go on?" and "Yr only yrself – no ones watching," trying to disclose Lincoln's blackness under his white

face (34). Lincoln plays a black man who plays an obedient black man to disguise a white president on demand. In other words, it is a show to expose constructed blackness, an obedient uncle Tom. Both Lincoln and Booth know that the customer sees through to the heart of things. Feeling that the man grasps Lincoln's blackness, Booth says, "Hes a deep black brother" (35). Parks gives African Americans suggestions of a spiritual bond by describing a black brother as a levelheaded person.

Booth has a longing for the cool image of dangerous African Americans living in an inner city. It is the image of street gangs who enjoy rape, drugs, and violence and who are inspired by gangster rap music, which is closely tied with the male-dominated culture Booth places so much value on. Booth advises Lincoln to adopt a more realistic dying performance in order not to be replaced by a wax dummy. Booth demands that Lincoln create an impression of an idealized cool image of street gangs, commanding, "You can curse" "You practice rolling and wiggling on the floor?" and "Now scream or something" (51-52). Lincoln is a showman who knows that when ordinary customers want plausibility, they can refer to history books; they never want to see a realistic assassination. However, Booth cannot forget the cool image of the dangerous African American, as implanted by black popular culture.

Bush states that "anti-authoritarian forms of black popular culture have themselves become so popular with a mainstream American audience" and "they also reproduce their own version of capitalism and patriarchy which fetishizes money and the signification of male power" (Bush 86). Ohwada argues that gangster rap music projects the image of dangerous African Americans conjured up by white teenagers, and so the plausibility of the image is more important than the reality for them (Ohwada 238-239). The image of dangerous African Americans has been reproduced because of their collusion with the juvenile whites who are attracted to the image of cool gangsters. Booth is an African

American who internalizes that desire and sticks to it. Inspired by the male-dominated desire, he says, "Who thuh man?!" to compare his male power with Lincoln's. Booth adheres to his "American dream" to be "thuh man" in his small world.

There is another point to be paid attention to. Coontz shows an increase in the gap between rich and poor through the 70s and 80s as a socioeconomic problem in the U.S. and discusses "The values issue in Modern Families," which "cut[s] across race and class." She adds that "any preteen knows that an American has a better chance of winning a fortune by committing a crime or some truly sleazy act, then selling the media rights to the story, than by working hard at a menial job" (Coontz 271). Booth is one of those who embrace this sort of values. Michelle Alexander looks at the incarceration system, which is loaded with race issues, and the jobless rate of young African Americans is associated with this issue. Though Coontz states the values issue goes beyond race and class, we can say that African Americans living in the inner city cannot but embrace these values and easily be driven to live in an antisocial and ephemeral way because of the lack of opportunities to obtain economic independence. Because of little experience in the real world, Booth never acquires flexibility for survival and cannot but stick to the two alternatives, Uncle Tom or a gangster.

Lincoln is a capable dealer of 3-card monte, and he knows that it is just a fraudulent in the form of a card game that is at the opposite end of household affairs and is also far from being "cool" business. Actually, he does not take money from street gangs nor company executives but from ordinary lower-class people like a couple from out of town come to see the bigger city, a father who was going to get his kids a new bike, and a mother living on the welfare check. Lincoln abandons the dangerous 3-card monte game in order not to involve Booth in it because he knows that his little brother is naïve and lacks dexterity. Despite this, a card

game is so addictive that Lincoln cannot break away from it after all. When he loses his Lincoln Act job, he carries out a 3-card monte fraud again. Lincoln knows that the visionary life of a gangster does not end happily, but he cannot escape from what Charles Scruggs states "the city of brute fact in which blacks in the twentieth century have had to live" (Scruggs 4-5). Just then, Booth challenges him to bet Lincoln's profit and Booth's inheritance on 3-card monte.

Lincoln teaches Booth the essence of 3-card monte, saying, "First thing you learn is what is. Next thing you learn is what aint" (73). This is also the essence to survive, which Lincoln wants to teach his brother, who has little experience in the real world. Lincoln uses masterly storytelling and clever manipulation to induce customers to play a game for money. This time, Booth is taken in because he cannot distinguish fact from fiction at all. In the course of the manipulation, Lincoln asks Booth a disturbing question about their relationship:

> LINCOLN. You think we're really brothers?
> BOOTH. Huh?
> LINCOLN. I know we brothers, but is we really brothers, you know, blood brothers or not, you and me, whatduhyathink?
> BOOTH. I think we're brothers. (103)

Lincoln does not answer the question and Booth is deeply shaken by Lincoln's words. As a result, Booth loses his last game, to which he had committed his mother's inheritance. When Lincoln is about to cut the stocking in which his mother's inheritance is kept, he is shot by Booth in the head just like the great man was. As a symbolic mother and beautiful childhood memory, Booth has kept his mother's stocking unopened. However, when he shoot his only brother, his visionary

family disappears forever. Not knowing who is real and who is not, Booth loses his only family at last.

Parks dramatized African American men struggling to gain identity in a closed society filled with malice and the spurious "American dream." Richard Wright states that the reason he thought of "Bigger," a malicious African American character in *Native Son*, was that actually he met more than one Bigger in his childhood. According to his description, they were all defiant and challenging and almost all of them passed their last days in a piteous state. Long after the days of Jim Crow, when Richard Wright met his Biggers everywhere, more sons of the Biggers are born in the nation every day and Booth might be one of them.

Charles Scruggs examined how twentieth-century African American literature concerned with the place of African Americans in modern urban life. He named the visionary community of African Americans in the city "invisible cities," referring to aspects of urban life which are "invisible yet present" because their existence are "denied or diminished by the majority culture (Scruggs 3). And he claims that "The house as focal point of community has become even more important in the literature written by Afro-American women in the 1970s and 80s," quoting Toni Morrison's distinction between "outside" and "inside" in *The Bluest Eye* (qtd. in Scruggs 216-217). As Morrison depicts, for Booth, outside of the house is "the real terror of life" and if he loses community he has on the inside, "there is no place to go" (Morrison 17). Booth has been seeing a vision of family and has lost his real family as a close-knit community at last.

Parks provides a possible shelter for them as a family, even if it is visionary. Booth has made his vision of family through the distant memory of his parents, and his aim in life is to start his own family by earning money together with his brother. Booth's dream has been shattered by him, but we cannot miss his voice filled with grief:

"*AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!*" (110). In an interview with Shawn-Marry Garret, Parks discusses her request for the audience to see the play:

> Space. The rhythm of the words. Repetition. How the character is saying what she's saying. Each choice should indicate a specific emotional thing. Which can vary in color night after night after night as the actor continues making it anew. Is it y–o–u–r or y–r? With y–o–u–r there's more room. See what it feels like in your mouth, in your tongue, in your body. Allow the language to inform the choices. Read the words, and *feel*. My plays *beg* for feeling. They *beg* for the gut response. Let the stomach – brain, let the heart – brain, inform your head – brain, and not always the other way around. Because then we're getting to some deep stuff. And it's frightening. But it's also healing. (Garret 189-190)

Booth's yelling might strike sorrow into every heart and raise doubts about what caused this frightening tragedy to the brothers who had been bound by rigid ties.

Topdog/Underdog portrays the crisis created by dissatisfaction built up in an unstable family relationship. Parks adopts the framework of the historical assassination of President Lincoln by Booth to the fratricide between African American brothers. Booth cannot escape the illusion of the American dream although Lincoln, awaken from that dream, chooses the realistic way of life. Parks urges us to pay attention not only to social structures for shutting out African Americans but also to the formation of American families as a possible shelter for them. Parks brings up the question of the original inconsistency generated by the formation of society, going back to the assassination of President Lincoln,

who aimed to unify the divided American family, choosing emancipation as a strategy for dealing with the Confederate.

2. Starting Over from the Civil War: Non-Hero's Saga in *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)*

Parks's newest play, *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)*, is a highly powerful Civil War drama following a slave named Hero who goes with his master from West Texas to the Confederate battlefield. It was awarded the 2015 Kennedy Prize for Drama Inspired by American History and 2014 Horton Foote Prize. It also became the 2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist. Originally, she wrote it as a one-act play about Hero for the workshop in The Public Theater in New York in 2009. Subsequently, Parks worked on making it a nine-part cycle play, and this trilogy play was premiered at The Public Theater on October 28, 2014[47]. In this trilogy play, Parks dramatizes the struggling of African American men to acquire a new self in an age of Civil War.

Father Comes Home is a riff on Homer's "*The Odyssey*," the epic poem about a Greek warrior's repatriation from the Trojan War. Quoting Charles Isherwood's review, "her classical borrowings are loose" and look "frisky and far from self-important." Actually, Parks wrote cheerful songs for the play and put appropriate imaginative lines in the play. Isherwood follows up his comment by stating that "As matters moral are endlessly chewed over in Greek tragedy, so Hero's decision is examined from all sides, with slightly enervating results." I will clarify how Hero reconciles the basic contradictions between morality and humanity that underlie the Greek tragedy, looking into Hero's mental conflict between his former self-consciousness and future possibility.

In the first part: "A Measure of a Man", Hero is wrestling with the choice between going to the war as a servant-slave for his master who

promises him freedom for his service, or staying with his wife, Penny. This is an aporia, because if he takes the side of the Confederates, believing his master's promise to set him free, he will fight against the Union Army, which promises to free the Confederate slaves. Anticipating the trouble to be caused by his denial of his Master's command, Hero agonizes over his decision. At last, he decides to go to the Confederate battlefield, although he knows that it is not his preferred path. He says, "The non-Hero I am. Odd-See!" at his departure, which is his dog's name and Parks's way of pun on the Greek hero's name. He cannot identify with the hero of his story and claims to be called "Odd-See" miserably.

The second part, "A Battle in the Wilderness", opens from the scene where Colonel (Boss-master) and Hero, his servant-slave, are separated from the troops in a wooden area in the battlefield. They keep a Union soldier in a wooden cage as captive. After the Colonel heads out toward the Confederate line, the prisoner talks to Hero. To Hero's surprise, the captive reveals that he is a colored man though he has a typical white surname, Smith, and looks white. When Smith shows his branded mark on his forearm just like Hero has on him, Hero releases him from the cage.

The third and final part of this trilogy is named "The Union of My Confederate Parts." In this part, we return to the cabin in Texas where Hero and Penny lived. Three runaway slaves are given refuge for a while in the cabin. Penny is coupled with Homer even though she says she still loves Hero. The news about the colonel's death and Emancipation Proclamation is brought to the mistress.

PENNY.

She was rambling. I couldn't make head or tail of it.

"War's still going on," she says. "Proclamation," she

says. "Freedom," she says.

THE RUNAWAY SLAVES AND HOMER.

"Freedom?" (120)

A state of disorder in the southern plantation in the fall of 1863 is depicted in this scene. All of the slaves, even the ones who run away for freedom, cannot believe their "freedom" in the South at that time. Additionally Old-Hero, now Ulysses, comes home as a new self, a man who cannot be dealt with in an ordinary way. He explains about his name as follows:

> Ulysses suits me and I chose it for myself. Any of you ever done that? Choose your own name? No, right? It's really something. Take all the time you need getting used to it. (141)

Additionally, as Isherwood says, Odyssey is Ulysses in Latin, and it is also the name of Union's general, Hiram Ulysses Grant[48]. He even has a female companion as his "new wife," saying he wants to have a baby with her. Old-Hero who considered himself as "non-Hero" when he left home as a servant of the Confederate comes home as a self-confident person with the firm intention of naming himself with the same name as the Union's hero.

As mentioned above, *Father Comes Home* focuses on the struggle of African Americans to form a new self at the time of Civil War. Though the basic theme of the play is serious, Parks brings her imagination and humor into play when depicting the various aspects of American history and uses her theatricality freely.

In the first place, Parks describes various stages of African American recognition of their status in the Civil War era in this trilogy

play. It is a matter of general knowledge that liberating African American slaves was not the major issue during the Civil War. Southern slaves did not participate in the Civil War as soldiers but they were engaged in supplying goods for the front line of battle or building a fort as home-front defense. According to James M, Vardaman, one of the motives of the emancipation of slaves by the North was to be rid of the workforce at the homefront by giving them a chance to run away from there (Vardaman 88-97). However, even if the slaves ran away to the North, there was no assurance that they would be given the treatment they wanted. If they were caught and brought back, they would be punished severely by their masters. Although liberation from subordination was their dream, their willpower for freedom varied in status.

The contrast of the reception of freedom between Homer and Hero is described in Part 1. Homer failed to run away once and lost his foot as a penalty. However, he never abandons the hope to gain freedom by himself and plans to go with the runaway slaves he has sheltered, dreaming of liberation from his white masters. When he tempts Hero to run away in Part 1, he says,

> You'll have your Freedom already.
> Taken.
> Taken for yourself
> It'll be completely yours. (44)

Hero does not listen to his words because his father had run away and was hung from a tree as a result. Hero talks straight about his way of thinking as follows:

> I ain't some wild man who will

> Break away from good common sense and
> Go running. Go running here go running there
> Go running who knows wherever.
> No real map no real nothing and getting no real freedom that way.
> Grabbing, taking, snatching, begging, borrowing, stealing?
> My Freedom's gonna be free of that.
> Cause who would I be when I'm free that way?
> Something stolen. A Stolen-Freedom?
> That ain't me. (47)

Hero does not take the risk of getting over his self-consciousness as a property of the white master, and he feels that running away is stealing from his master. Then, he decides to go away with his master, who promises to give him his freedom in compensation for his service. For Homer, freedom is still an aim to be achieved at the risk of his life. On the other hand, Hero places priority on surviving an unpredictable period from an practical point of view.

Hero's view of freedom is thrown into confusion by Smith in Part 2. Smith tests Hero's ability to recognize the meaning of freedom. Smith explains about the price of freedom to Hero, saying, "There's more to Freedom than I can explain, but believe me it's like living in Glory," but Hero cannot understand this. Hero knows how much the price of him as a slave is, and so it is difficult for him to consider how to measure his value if he is not in someone's possession. He expresses his doubts as follows:

> HERO.
> Who will I belong to?
> SMITH.

You'll belong to yourself.

HERO.

So---when a Patroller comes up to me, when I'm walking down the road to work or to what-have-you and a Patroller comes up to me and says, "Whose nigger are you, Nigger?" I'm gonna say, "I belong to myself"? Today I can say, "I belong to the Colonel." (96)

Hero's question depicts the bewilderment of former slave who is confronted with the sudden demand of thinking how to acquire a sense of subjectivity for himself. It is also a new experience for him to think about his own subjectivity. The title of this part, "The battle in the wilderness," represents both the Civil War and the Hero's battle to establish his identity in a place where no one shows him the way to go forward.

The combination of African American man and patroller depicts another contemporary issue in America. At the time of the Civil War, it was a matter of life and death for a slave in the South to identify himself to the patroller, and if he failed, he could be cruelly punished. As I mentioned before, African American men today also undergo police checkups all the time in accordance with the policy of what Alexander calls "The New Jim Crow." There is still a fear of patrollers among the people living at the margins of society, especially jobless African Americans categorized as under-class. Parks also adapts a sense of superiority among the whites, as shown by Colonel's words:

> I am grateful every day that God made me white. As a white I stand on the summit ad all the other colors reside beneath me, down below. For me, no matter how much money I've got or don't got, if my farm is failin g or my

horse is dead, if my woman is sour or my child has passed on, I can at least rest in the grace that God made me white. And I don't ever have to fight the Battle of Darkness. What difficulties I may encounter will at least never be those. Life might bring me low but not that low. And I know what I will be received in most any quarter. And if the Lord would choose to further advance my economics, then I will be received in all the great houses. Not so with the lower ones. The lower ones will always be lowly. No matte how high they climb. There is a kind of comfort in that. And I take that comfort. For no matter how low I fall, and no matter how thoroughly I fail, I will always be white. (83)

Colonel's childish belief in whiteness is not a relic of the previous century in America, but the thought underlies the present issues like a series of hate crimes against African Americans.[49] In an NPR interview program, Parks says that the play is about "things that are happening today." Thus, some kinds of problems of today that remain unresolved from the previous era emerge in the trilogy play set in the time of the Civil War.

Interestingly enough, Parks applies "African-American magic realism[50]" to explain the circumstances of the play. Hearing about Hero's death from mistress, Penny is making up her mind to run away with Homer, who is planning to leave with other runaway slaves when Hero's dog comes back home. The dog begins to talk about the experience of Ulysses, a former Hero. He tells the long story of Ulysses' adventure, wandering away from the subject over and over. He says, "Hero distinguished himself. And he took a new name" (132). The very talkative dog narrates everything that happened in Part 2 and

out of the stage between Part 2 and 3. At last, he finishes his story by saying that Ulysses is coming home soon. This Odyssey Dog, which was called “Odd-See” in Part 1, plays the role of the trickster and meddles in everyone’s affairs, and he also seems to be a messenger of the god because he speaks as if he knows everything happening to each character, including Penny’s pregnancy.

Before that, at the end of Part 2, Old-Hero puts on the blue coat of the Union Army that Smith had given him and does swear to be a Union soldier after that, but he did not follow him to the North. Instead, he puts on his grey Confederate Army coat to cover the blue one and heads to the South. The conversation about the uniform among the slaves when he comes home in Part 3 signifies the betwixt-and-between status of them in the South. When the dog says that Ulysses “put the blue coat underneath his grey coat” and “kept his own grey pants on though,” Homer reacts, “A confederate from the waist down” and the runaway slaves says, “He can read the signs” (132). Beforehand in Part 1, Old-Hero’s ambiguity is notified as the name of his dog, Odd-See, by one of the runaway slaves, questioning, “The dog with eyes that go this way and that?” (12). Although which side he is going to take is not clear, it is obvious that he notices that he can choose from several options freely. He does not come home as a Confederate soldier nor as a Union soldier, but as the “Union” of his “Confederate.” Whether Ulysses acquires the character of a clever tactician or a valiant warrior remains obscure for other slaves but it is clear that he has got a multilayered identity to survive through the war time.

Next, I will focus on the songs of this trilogy play. There are a lot of songs and melodies written by Parks in this play. The musician sings most of the opening and ending songs along with the lyrics to explain the situation of each part. Only Part 2 opens with the Colonel’s Brechtian song to explain his difficult situation and his true feelings.

Interestingly, he commands Smith to sing with him, and the latter changes the lyrics to "I'm being held prisoner by a drunken dumb Jeb / When I get my freedom I'll cut off his head." "The original lyrics" taught by Colonel are annotated as "I'm being held prisoner / My leg's bleeding red! / I'm lucky he found me. I'd been left for dead" (58). The cross talk and singing between the Colonel and Smith creates a comical atmosphere even though they are enemies in the battlefield. Parks makes full use of the songs to arouse the fertile imagination of the audience. She says,

> All my writing is more like songs, cause in a song you're in the ocean, the ocean of emotion, and you're moving around, and you're trying to breathe, and that's what it feels like, trying to write. That's what I try to do. I try to sing to people. (Garrett 143)

Parks lays emphasis on building emotion through songs, but at the same time, songs achieve such effects as those in *Mother Courage*. Namely, they alienate the audience from feeling empathy or sentimentality for the characters and, as a result, urge them to think about the event on stage by themselves, especially in Part 2.

Finally, I would like to add a few words about the title of the play. As Parks comments, the motif of *Father Comes Home* originates from her own childhood experience. Her father was in the military, so her family moved around in the U.S. and in Europe. She says, "Those are some of the biggest memories I have, of my father coming home from the war" (Garrett 140). She was always watching her father go to war and return from war. For Parks, her father might have been Ulysses coming from the battlefield. That experience could have inspired her imagination about the saga of an absent warrior and the gap between the man and his

empty house. This gap is highly expressed as the lack of communication in the Smith family in *Imperceptible Mutabilities.* The gulf between Mr. Sergeant Smith and his wife continues to widen during his absence. Mrs. Smith tells about the memory of taking a child to meet her father—implying that he is her "maker"—during his furlough and how she tried to look perfect for her husband (60). Mr. Smith delivers a report of his latest duty to his children, but when he comes home, he cannot recognize his child who was born during his absence. In *Father Comes Home*, the war definitely causes estrangement between Old-Hero and Peggy. Peggy is now pregnant by Homer, and Ulysses brings his new wife to make his family tree. Ulysses is going to be a "father," as the title gives us suggestions.

Parks plans to write a series of nine plays about America from the Civil War to the present. She states that the plays will have two families, Ulysses and Alberta and Homer and Penny[51]. Interestingly, she names Ulysses' new wife Alberta, which is the same name as that of the "gal" Troy had a baby in August Wilson's *Fences*. Certainly, there was a plan for Parks to direct *Fences* on Broadway around the time she was writing *Father Comes Home.* Therefore, this might have had a direct influence on her. It is also possible that she writes the cycle plays of African American experiences in homage to August Wilson, the great African American playwright, who chronicled African American experiences of 20th Century in ten cycle plays and passed away in 2005. Parks is planning to follow the two families, the Ulysses family and the Homer family, in these cycle plays. Furthermore, it is highly probable that the cycle plays will refer to how African Americans have been related to the United States as the extended family since the Civil War. Although Parks's way of writing plays is different from Wilson's, she must be conscious of the legacy of the fearless pioneer while she advances her own schemes for dramatizing African American

experiences.

Conclusion

Restoring the Past and Building the Future

> I believe in the American theatre. I believe in its power to inform about the human condition, I believe in its power to heal, “to hold the mirror as ‘twere up to nature,” to the truths we uncover, to the truths we wrestle from uncertain and sometimes unyielding realities.
>
> — August Wilson, *The Ground on Which I Stand*

Suzan-Lori Parks has developed her playwriting skills both in the construction of the scenes and the framework of the plot. Furthermore, she has applied powerful theatrical methods to give us a perspective of the difficult situations African Americans have been through. She also applies narratives and songs full of implications in her recent plays. Parks highlights the European mentality handed over to America and how it has been sanitized and simplified in the new world. The black body appears to represent a shameful legacy of sexual desire underlying the scientific discourse. The illusion of American dream encroaches the black body in various ways. Parks has never stopped restoring her theatricality as she advances the work of restoring African American history.

Parks started her career as a playwright giving experimental plays, looking back and forth at African American history. In her early full-length play, *Imperceptible Mutabilities*, she arranged African American experiences in pieces and exhibited them on the stage just like in a museum. In her next major play, *The Death of the Last Black Man*,

the figure of an American man who died a regrettable death emerges on the stage. A sacred ritual to give them a proper burial takes place in the metaphorical chapel named theater. *The America Play* follows the death and resurrection of the African American man in the theme park of history. The "Lincoln Act" is a unique device that Parks employs to disguise the historicity. She also adds some alleged historical annotations to those history plays to stir up the "historical facts." The unities of time, place, and action are taken apart and restored creatively in her early plays. They are also characterized by tragicomedy incorporating both tragic and comic elements.

Parks set to work on narratives of real or fictitious characters. However, she does not just narrate the story; she restores the "history of history" and "history of literature" by adopting a clever riff and adventurous modification of the original discourse, putting the clever riff to full use. Her early plays are tinged with a collection of the divided pieces of African American experiences just like their divided and lost history itself. Next, she starts to connect the stories of the figures on the stage more clearly. In the first, she conjures up the iconic African woman in *Venus*, demonstrating her unrequited love in the multilayered structure of the play. Then, she creates a riff of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* as *Red Letter Plays*. Instead of seventeenth-century Puritan settlement in New England, Parks's Hesters are restricted to living at the margins of society at present. Powerful songs help the plays, especially *Fucking A*, in bringing lively feeling into the tragic stories. At the same time, these songs work to alienate the audience from empathy and make them think about the events on the stage by themselves.

Parks's tragicomedy goes to the narrative of the closest relationship formed as family. African Americans' minimal desire for their offspring is inserted in the early play as a dream of the family. Parks set the black

family's only son and the last child as a white person in *Imperceptible Mutabilities*, which is performed in Manhattan Theater Club. Jonathan Kalb states,

> When I asked her what she meant she said: a black family would dream of having a child that they wouldn't have to fear for, and you don't have to fear for a white boy. He'll be okay. The thought that you might have a child that you wouldn't have to protect was critical in her exploration of this play. In some ways the dream comes true, the assimilationist dream of that play comes true in the end, which she sees as a kind of tragicomic fact. (Kalb 181)

Mr. Sergeant Smith tries to save the life of an Icarus-like boy falling from the sky. For him, the boy is "Uh star that died years uhgo but was givin us light through thuh flap." The African American sergeant saved the white boy's life but he has never seen him since. Mr. Sergeant Smith talks to his children about the fact that they are in a defenseless state in the white-dominant society in spite of their service. Mr. Smith talks to his children: "No, boy – Duffy - uh – Muffy, Buffy, no, we ain't even turtles. Huh. We'se slugs. Slugs. Slugs" (71). This racial subordination handed down with the memory of slavery to the present casts a cloud on the African American family. However, Parks finds the possibility of breaking through the cloud of family itself, revealing all sort of tricks to break down their family dream. Now Parks has embarked on another challenge to write cycle plays entitled *Father Comes Home from the Wars, Part 1 through Part 9*. Parks is groping for a way to open up the project for African Americans to maintain their sense of self, and at the same time, to be conscious of their family tree from the past to the future.

Parks had extended the area of her work to many branches. She is a playwright, screenwriter, songwriter, and novelist. Her wide-ranging activities actually did go beyond time and place when she conducted a "Nation-wide grassroots festival: 365 Festivals for a year." She was challenged to write a play every day from November 2002 until November 2003 and the script was published as *365 Days/365 Plays* in 2006. She allowed theater companies, both amateur and professional, to present one week's worth of plays at a fee of $1.00 per play for one year from November 2006. Hundreds of theater companies and groups committed to this project not only at theaters around the USA but also overseas. She started this work after winning the Pulitzer Prize. She explains how she thought of this project:

> What good can this award, the Pulitzer Prize, do? What is it for? It affords the winner (and by extension, the community) some possibilities. So I wrote a play a day and then gave them away. [...] I wasn't even a thought, it was just the right thing to do: fling yourself open and say, "Let us play." To offer people a part. And how is that different from doing a play on Broadway, a play with $70 tickets, a play with Equity contracts? We had a big free for all. Which was the only right thing to do after the Pulitzer, after you climb the tower and hist the flag and "Yaaay!" and then you fling yourself into the mosh pit of people and say, "Let us play," and somehow that was the only right thing to do.
> (Garret 141)

Parks and her cooperators utilized websites to promote the project. We can say that Parks finds one solution to the difficult task of uniting show business and art in this project. In other words, she opens up the

original function of theater as the place to convey messages to the world directly. She is now a cross-media creator making full use of time and space.

Parks applies her energy to experiencing the bodily sensation of being "exhibited" as an African American female playwright, objectifying herself in the public. She held "Watch Me Work" performances at the ZACH Theatre in Houston and at the Public Theatre in New York City in 2012 and 2013, showing herself typewriting in the Lobby of the theater. This project is also put on her website[52]. Kolin and Young indicate that this is "act of generosity" to allow observers to see the process of writing casually, and that "This staging certainly aligns with Parks's interest in the scopic – the watching of black bodies at work within her plays" such as Venus Hottentot in *Venus* (Kolin and Young 22). Moreover, she plays "Suzan-Lori Parks" by herself and puts her figure on exhibition as an African American experience.

Parks has restored the utility of the theater by starting and seeing through the grassroots festival that originated from her everyday writing. Furthermore, she makes herself a medium to convey her daily experiences theatrically. Fred Lee Hord stressed on critical reading of African American literature to assist black students for understanding their history and re-connection to the real world in *Reconstructing Memory*, published in 1991. Parks suggests the more direct method of restoring history by herself. In her words, it is to "make history" in the theater. Parks will never stop stimulating people's imagination about the distant past and the distant future through her never-completed work of restoring African American experiences. She tears down a tower built on the sphere of history, culture, and social structure in the national context of America. Additionally, she starts to build an innovative complex capable of taking in African Americans, with a fantastic mixture of old material and new treatment. Parks applies her "equation": "BLACK

PEOPLE + x = NEW DRAMATIC CONFLICT (NEW TERRITORY)" ("an Equation for Black People Onstage" 21) to her plays and her own life as a cross-media creator. Even if the new territory is in utter turmoil, she will go forward by adopting a bold strategy colored with the humor of survival. How to share in theatrical experiences with people at large is another problem for her. We should keep our eyes upon the next move she makes to handle that problem. Finally, it must be noted that an essential task for Parks is to continue demonstrating her capability to make history through her works as an African American playwright in order to explore the possibilities of opening new horizons to African Americans and American theater.

Notes

Introduction

[1] Parks explains "Repetition and Revision" is "a central element" in her work and she also mentions to the fact that this is "an integral part of the African-American literary and oral tradition" ("Element of Style" 9-10).

[2] "An alienation effect" is an artistic effect to prevent audience from empathizing with the play, which was advanced by a German playwright, Bertolt Brecht.

[3] She brought "16 Suggestions which may be of use as you walk through the rest of yr lives." One of suggestions was "SHARPEN yr 7 Senses: the basic 5 Senses + the 6th Sense: ESP & the 7th Sense which is yr sense of HUMOR."

[4] As Geis depicts in a section about Parks's "Biographical sketch," Parks attended a junior high school in Germany and returned to the States for the last few years of high school, her English spelling was "allegedly poor"(Geis 4).

[5] In *Laughing Fit to Kill*, Carpio makes a study of "the relationship between violence and humor"(28) depicted by African American writers, performers, artists and playwright, such as William Wells Brown and Charles W. Chesnutt, Richard Pryor, Ishmael Reed, Robert Colescott, and Suzan Lori-Parks.

[6] As Sieglinde Lemke quotes Zora Neale Hurston's word about African American vernacular as follows:

> In her anthropological essay "Characteristics of Negro Expression," Hurston claims that the reliance on visual images, metaphors, and similes is unique to African American vernacular culture. Whereas "the white man thinks in a written language," the black man commonly thinks in "rich metaphors" and what she calls "oral hieroglyphics" (Hurston "Characteristics" 24). The oxymoron "oral hieroglyphics" refers to the fusion of and mediation between the visual and the oral as well as between standard English and black vernacular English. (Lemke 70)

Chapter 1

[7] Jameson states "Historicity" as follows:

> Historicity is, in fact, neither a representation of the past nor a representation of the future (although its various forms use such representations): it can first and foremost be defined as a perception of the present as history; that is, as a relationship to the present which somehow defamiliarizes it and allows us that distance from immediacy which is at length characterized as a historical perspective" (Fredric Jameson 284).

[8] She also explains as follows: "A person from, say, time immemorial, say, Past Land, from somewhere back there, say, walks into my house". Therefore, she thinks to call them "characters" could be "injustice" ("from Elements of Style" 12).

[9] Mary Bogumil describes August Wilson's character of Aunt Ester as griot and states main features of griot as follows:

> Wilson's character of Aunt Ester possesses many of the African griot's attributes. In Africa, the griot is the tribe's historian, one who chronicles history and imparts wisdom within the parameters of an oral tradition and often communicates them in song and rhyme. Aunt Ester always conveys her wisdom through the use of metaphor. Traditionally the great, older male who held a high position within the tribe was a doctor of knowledge and the teller of history. In the African American community the griot may be an elder woman who holds the same esteemed position, much as Aunt Ester does. (Bogumil 102)

[10] It was directed by Liz Diamond and the lengthy relationship between the director and Parks started at that time.

[11] Geis explains it as "somewhat the tongue in cheek" meaning "as we shall see, the resonances of the text are more complicated and allusive than the definitions." (Geis 45)

[12] W. E. B. Du Bois defines American Negro's sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others as "double consciousness." (Du Bois 8-9).

[13] Kolin states, "That "Me" was stolen through the Middle passage when slaves brought Africans from their homeland, and a strong sense of self, and subjected them to the "rupture [and]forced migration" (Brown-Guillory 186) that dislocated their identity. (Kolin 45)

[14] Geis points out that "the images of the forced smile and of slavery are reiterated." (Geis 50)

[15] Caprio borrows a term used by R.Darren Gobert in "*Cognitive Catharsis in the Caucasian Chalk Circle*" and she also states as follows:

> Drawing on a denotation of catharsis meaning "clarification," recent scholarship has emphasized the "intellectual insight" that spectators gain through vicarious experience of the pitiable and the fearful. "The audience's understanding," or clarification, writes R. Darren Gobert, "derive not from intellectual argumentation…but rather from an emotionally engaged spectatorship that leads spectators to a judgment about the causes of the protagonist's suffering." (Caprio 198)

[16] The Stations Of The Cross are a popular Catholic devotion commemorating the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. Geis explains, "Parks models Stations of the Cross, fourteen stations replicating the Passion of Jesus that the faithful can follow themselves." (Geis 58)

[17] Geis quotes Michele Pearce's statement about Parks's thoughts behind the epigraph as follows:

> Putting it at the beginning of the play and also in the program notes may encourage people to think about the *idea* of Aerica in addition to the actual day-to-day reality of America....All the world was an uncharted place, a blank slate, and since that beginning everyone's been filling it with tshatshkes, which we sho come next receive and must do something with. (Pearce, "Alien Nation: An Interview with the Playwright," qtd. in Geis 99-100)

[18] According to Bryman, trivialization and sanitization associates with the frequent critiques of Walt Disney's treatments of fairy tales and other stories are more noticiable. (Bryman 6)

[19] In this connection, *Hall of Presidents* was originally produced as "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln," the Illinois Pavillion's prime attraction in the New York World's Fair of 1964 and relocated to the Disneyland later. (Bryman 7)

[20] Parks explains her organic way of getting inspiration:

> Someone could say, "Oh, slavery," but it's more interesting than just a piece of American history or African American history. It's something else. A combination of his height, the log cabin aspect, the fact that I was born in Kentucky, his costume, the fact that John Wilkes Booth was born on my birthday. All these amazing things. I didn't know anything about him when I started. I didn't know until last year when my fience told me, "You're born on John Wilkes Booth's birthday." And I just started laughing. But what was very uncanny was that there were two dates given for his birth. It was either May 10, which is my birth date, or August 26, which is my sister's birth date. It's that kind of stuff. It's not that I want to say something about slavery (certainly it was bad: it sucked, but it got us here) or that I want to say something about Lincoln. So it comes from those weird, deep places, deep inside the root of your spine or the back of your head. (Colletta 103-104)

[21] As quoted by Alan Bryman from *The Disney Version,* "Disneyfication" was given a signification by Richard Schickel as the process of trivialization and sanitization. On the other hand, Bryman employs "Disneyzation" to dispute on the process of globalization of "Disneyzation" (Bryman 2004).

Chapter 2

[22] In an interview with Tom Sellar, Parks explains the process of her creation of *Venus* from the historical documentation. (Sellar 49)

[23] See "The Hottentot Venus" in his essays in criticism, *The Framingo's Smile: Reflections in Natural History*. It also has a copy of "A Satiric French print of 1812 commenting on English fascination with the Hottentot venus." (Gould 291-305)

[24] Inose Kumie describes in detail about the backgrounds of this movement.(Inose 467-472)

[25] Young criticize *Venus* as follows:

> Unsurprisingly, white male New York theatre critics exalted Parks's framing of Saarjie Baartman for its lack of societal indictment. New York Times critic Ben Brantley praised Parks for not "present[ing] Baartman as just an uncomprehending victim," and he believed Venus to be at its "best when it drops its sweeping condemning historical perspective....this woman is clearly an accomplice in her own humiliation" (C3). Likewise, critic Robert Brustein lauded Parks for "wisely avoid[ing] pushing sympathy buttons" and for "portraying the humiliation of Blacks in white society without complaint or indictment," and, incredibly, he framed the dramatic presentation of Baartman's kidnap, nude exhibition, and sadistic exploitation as an "interracial, inter-sexual and inter-cultural pageant" representing "a major advance of r an integrated American theater"(29). Thus, Saarjie Baartman becomes twice victimized: first, by nineteenth-century Victorian society and, again, by the play Venus and its chorus of critics. (Young 700-701)

[26] Young is a scholar specialized not only in theater and performance but also race theory, feminism, gender and sexuality studies.

[27] According to Inose, the most conspicuous works which influenced the accomplishment of the movement were a documentary film entitled "The Life and Times of Sara Baartman" and a poem "A Poem for Sara Baartman" (Inose 473-474).

[28] Wetmore states this watching as "The display is put on display" quoting the title of Jason Bush's master's thesis (97, 105).

[29] Jonathan Kalb states about this situation paraphrasing Shakespeare, "a spectacle for mechanic slaves and quick comedians, a study for science and death (158).

[30] Young argues scientific studies relating to the nineteenth century racial theory:
[31] Gould put a picture on his essay showing their interest on her womanly parts, explaining as follows:

A satiric French print of 1812 commenting on English fascination with the Hottentot Venus. The soldier behind her examines her steatopygia, while the lady in front pretends to tie her shoelace in order to get a peek at Saarjie's *tablier.* (305)

[32] This is taken from "a letter of protest appearing in *The Morning Chronicle, Friday, 12 October 1810."*

[33] This is also taken from *The Morning Chronicle, 23 October 1810.*"

[34] When Parks was asked about her statement in "An Equation for BlackPeople Onstage," she replies as follows:

> [...] there are what I call the black police, which are not black police officers but the people who are making sure that you're black enough. I guess other groups have these police, too. People who are making sure that your writing is black enough, who you are dating is black enough, and what comes out of your mough is black enough, and what you wear is black enough. There are some people in the community and it's their job to monitor others, making sure you're up to the snuff. That essay was more talking to those people who would ask, "Why don't your plays deal with real issues?" And on the other side, there are the people who are not part of the community, white people and other folks, who think the black plays should only deal with certain issues. Like every black play should only deal with certain issues. Like every black play should be another *Raison in the Sun* or another *Fences.* They should deal with the struggle, uplift the race, in a kind of basic, twelve-step way. There's a light at the end of the tunnel and we are walking toward it. I don't know about that. I haven't really looked too hard but I haven't seen that kind of policing going on in other groups as much. It seems to me that others have more flexibility or allow their members to do lots of various things. (Savran 92)

[35] Anthony Reed interprets the footnotes read by The Negro Resurrectionist as follows:

> The Negro Ressurrectionist introduces most scenes. He mostly inhabits in a choral role, presenting footnotes, drawn from the Baron Docteur's (the French scientist figure, based on Robert Cuvie, who seduces her and later dissects and display her body) notebook, Robert Chambers's 1863 *Book of Days*, Daniel Lyson's *Collectanea*, a fictional autobiography called *The Life of One Called the Venus Hottentot As Told By Herself.* (Reed 166-177).

[36] Geis argues Venus's participation in her own consumability is indicated in her line mentioning chocolate as follows:

> In a monologue, Venus says that her favorites among the chocolates are the "Capezzoli di Venere," the "nipples of Venus" (a glossary of chocolates appears the end of the play text), implying that she has

become a participant in her own consumability. (Geis 93-94)

[37] In an interview with Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr., Parks says, “Venus was like passing a test. I always felt that *Venus* was my black belt” (Wetmore 133).

[38] Parks gives the stage directions as “They part like the Red Sea would.” (*In the Blood* 7)

[39] Michelle Alexander clears up the situation that perpetuate the stereotypes of African American people in *The New Jim Crow* as follows:

> [...] Condemning “welfare queens” and criminal “predators,” he rode into office with the strong support of disaffected whites—poor and working-class whites who felt betrayed by the Democratic Party’s embrace of the civil rights agenda. As one political insider explained, Reagan’s appeal derived primarily from the ideological fervor of the right wing of the Republican Party and “the emotional distress of those who fear or resent the Negro, and who expect Reagan somehow to keep him ‘in his place’ or at least echo their own anger and frustration. (Alexander 48)

[40] Judith Butler argues as follows:

> The slave-master invariably owned slave families, operating as a patriarch who could rape and coerce the women of the family and effeminize the men; women within slave families were unprotected by their own men, and men were unable to exercise their role in protecting and governing women and children. Although Patterson sometimes makes it seem that the primary offense against kinship was the eradication of paternal rights to women and children within slave families, he nevertheless offers us the important concept of “social death” to describe this aspect of slavery in which slaves are treated as dying within life. (Butler 73-74)

[41] Donna Haraway discusses the issue of “blood ties” including Eugenics in the twentieth-century in the United States as follows:

> [...] No great distinction could be maintained between linguistic, national, familial, and physical resonances implied by the terms kinship and race. Blood ties were the proteinaceous threads extruded by the physical and historical passage of substance from one generation to the next, forming the great nested, organic collectives of the human family. (Haraway 251)

[42] Bell hooks argues abortion issue as follows:

> “The abortion issue captured the attention of mass media because it really challenged the fundamentalist thinking of Christianity. It directly challenged the notion that a woman’s reason for existence was to bear children. It called the nation’s attention to the female body as no other issue could have done. It was a direct challenge to

> the church. Later all the other reproductive issues that feminist thinkers called attention to were often ignored by mass media. The long-range medical problems from cesareans and hysterectomies were not juicy subjects for mass media; they actually called attention to a capitalist patriarchal male-dominated medical system that controlled women's bodies and did with them anything they wanted to do. [···] (hooks 27-28)

[43] According to Ogino, the number of doctors and receptionists who were killed by anti-abortion group members were 7 in 1993 (Ogino 2012: 139-140).

[44] According to Hugh Rorrison, Brecht's definition of "alienation effects" is as follows:

> What is alienation? To alienate an incident or a character means to take from that incident or character what makes it obvious, familiar or readily understandable, so as to create wonderment and curiosity. (Rorrison Loc. 495)

Chapter 3

[45] It is strongly exemplified in the following passage:

> When Harvey Clark tried to move into Cicero, Illinois, in 1951, a mob of 4,000 whites spent four days tearing his apartment apart while police stood by and joked with them. In 1953, the first black family moved into Chicago's Trumbull Park public housing project; neighbors "hurled stones and tomatoes" and trashed stores that sold groceries to the new residents. In Detroit, Life magazine reported in 1957, "10,000 Negroes work at the Ford plant in nearby Dearborn, [but] not one Negro can live in Dearborn itself." (Coontz 30-31)

[46] Coontz depicts the situation of African Americans in the postwar period as follows:

> Yet even during the period of their greatest opportunity, blacks faced more severe obstacles than did other low-income Americans and migrants to the cities. Continuing job discrimination created black unemployment rates twice those of whites; the late entry of blacks into unionized industries meant they had less seniority and were more vulnerable to the periodic layoffs that plagued such industries, and racist housing policies and lending practices made it difficult for blacks to buy homes in areas that would rise in value. None of the postwar gains changed the historic concentration of black Americans in the lowest rungs of every job, income, and educational category, which made them least likely to have reserves to help them through hard times. (Coontz 244-245)

[47] Co-produced with The Public Theater, it was presented as part of The National Civil War Project. Parks says she had planned to stage Part 1, 8 and 9 at first but changed to play just Part 1 in Public Lab

because of limited time of rehearsal. And in an interview with Shown-Marry Garret, she suggests to the possibility of changing the whole cycle. (Garret 142).

[48] Patti Hartigan explains about the characters' names in *Father Comes Home* as follows:

> In Father, Hero's faithful dog is Odd-See, or Odyssey dog. Another slave is Homer, after the poet. Hero's wife is named Penny, which evokes both Penelope in The Odyssey and the image of Abraham Lincoln imprinted on a copper coin. And the master is simply known as the Colonel, putting him in the same league with the nameless refugees simply known as The Runaway Slaves. But while the character names are thought-provoking, Parks doesn't belabor them: "My very first friend growing up in west Texas was named Penny Lincoln. I was 6 years old, and I was grooving to her name. Penny Lincoln was a poem to me." (Hartigan online)

[49] To cite one example, 21-year-old Dylann Roof committed a mass shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina during a prayer service on the evening of June 17, 2015. Following that attack, black churches began getting fired across the South.

[50] In an interview with Michele Norris, Parks mentions on the scene of talking dog as "that's African-American magic realism right there" (Norris, "Suzan-Lori Parks' New Play, '*Father Comes Home From The Wars.*" 2014)

[51] Parks talks about the family trees of the *Father Comes* as follows:

> Penny and Homer. And then the other family tree is Hero and Alberta. And both family trees produce 2 different men, both named Smith. A Lincoln-Lincoln, Jill-Jill kinda thing. Or the Hester-Hester kinds thing. So both family trees produced a man named Smith. And one is a poet. And one is a critic. (Garret 142)

Conclusion

[52] *Watch Me Work* can be seen on Parks's website.
<http://www.suzanloriparks.com/watch-me-work>

Works Cited

Abel, Lionel. *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*. New York: Hill and Wang. 1963.

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press, 2012.

Altick, Richard Daniel. *The Shows of London.* London: Belknap Press, 1978.

Baraka, Amiri. *Digging: the Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2009.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation.* Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 1994.

Ben-Zvi, Linda. " 'Aroun the Worl': The Signifyin(g) Theater of Suzan-Lori Parks." *The Theatrical Gamut; Notes for a Post-Beckettian Stage*. Ed. Enogh Brater. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1995. 189-208.

Berkman, Len. "Language as Protagonist in *In the Blood*," Wetmore and Smith-Howard, 61-72.

Bogdan, Robert. "Cannibals and Savages." *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988, 176-199.

Bogumil, Mary L. *Understanding August Wilson*. Columbia, South Carolina: U of South Carolina P, 1999.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Mother Courage and Her Children*. Trans. John Willet. Commentary and Notes. Hugh Rorrison. : Kindle.

Bryman, Alan. *The Disneyization of Society*. London: Sage Publishers, 2004.

Bush, Jason. "Who's Thuh Man?! Historical melodrama and the performance of masculinity in *Topdog/Underdog.*" *Suzan-Lori Parks: A Casebook.* Eds. Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr. and Alycia

Smith-Howard. New York: Routledge, 2007. 73-88.

Butler, Judith. *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life And Death.* New York: Columbia UP, 2000.

Carpio, Glenda R. *Laughing Fit to Kill*. New York: Oxford U P, 2008.

Chase-Riboud, Barbara. *Hottentot Venus: A Novel.* Trans. Inose Kumiko, Anpo Eiko, Yoda Aiko. Tokyo: Hosei UP, 2012.

Chaudhuri, Una. "For Posterior's Sake." *Suzan-Lori Parks in Person: Interviews and Commentaries*. New York: Routledge, 2014, 55-57.

Colletta, Lisa. "An Interview with Suzan-Lori Parks at CalArts" *Suzan-Lori Parks in Person.* Kolin and Young, 102-106.

Coontz, Stephanie. *The Way We Never Were: American Families And Nostalgia Trap.* New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Dietrick, Jon. ""A Full Refund Aint Enough": Money in Suzan-Lori Parks's Red Letter Plays," *Suzan-Lori Parks: Essays on the Plays and Other Works*. Ed. Philip C. Kolin. Jefferson: Mcfarland, 2010.

Dixon, Kimberly D. "Uh Tiny Land Mass Just Outside of My Vocabulary: Expression of Creative Nomadism and Contemporary African American Playwrights." *African American Performance and Theater History: A Critical Reader*. New York: Oxford U P, 2001, 212-234.

Du Bois, W.E.B.. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Ed. John Edgar Wideman. New York: The Library of America, 2009.

Elam Jr. Harry J. and Alice Rayner. "Body Parts: Between Story and Spectacle in *Venus* by Suzan-Lori Parks." *Staging Resistance: Essays on Political Theater.* Eds. Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1998, 265-282.

Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd: Third Edition With a New Foreword by Martin Esslin.*. New York: Vintage Books, 2004.

Frank, Haike. "The Instability of Meaning in Suzan-Lori Parks's *The America Play*," *American Drama* 11, No. 2 (2002): 4-20.

Fuchs, Elinor and Una Chaudhuri. "Reading for Landscape."

Land/Scape/Theater. Eds. Elinor Fuchs and Una Chaudhuri. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2002.

Garrett, Shawn-Marie. "The Possession of Suzan-Lori Parks: By listening to "the figures that take up residence inside me," the playwright resurrects a lost and dangerous history—and dares audiences to venture with her into its depth." *Theatre Communication group-American Theatre-Achives October.* 15 Aug. 2012 <http://www.tcg.org/publications/at/2000/parks.cfm>

---. "An Interview with Suzan-Lori Parks." Kolin and Young, 136-144.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.

Geis, Deborah R. *Susan-Lori Parks.* Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2008.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993.

Gould, Stephen Jay. *The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections in Natural History*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1985.

Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*. 1958. Introd. Robert Namiroff. New York: Vintage Books, 1988.

Haraway, Donna. *The Haraway Reader*. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2004.

Hartigan, Patti. "What's the big idea?: Playwright Suzan-Lori Parks goes after stories with a commitment to discovery and to the power of dreamy moments." *The Writer.* 17 Mar. 2015 <http://www.writermag.com/2015/03/17>

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlett Letter*. 1850. New York: Penguin books, 2009.

Hay, Samuel A. *African American Theatre: A Historical and Critical Analysis*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1994.

Hord, Fred Lee. *Reconstructing Memory: Black Literary Criticism.* Cicago: Third World Press.1991.

hooks, bell. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics.* Boston: South End Press, 2000.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* 1937. New York: Harper Perennial, 1991.

Inose Kumie. "Saarla Baatman wa Nemurenai: Postcolonial ni Okeru Rekishi-Shosetsu no Kokoromi" [Saarla Baartman cannot sleep: an attempt to write a historical novel in the area of postcolonialism], trans. Barbara Chase-Riboud, *Hottentot Venus: A Novel.* Tokyo: Hosei U Press, 2012.

Isherwood, Charles. "Ulysses as an American Slave: 'Father Comes Home From the Wars,' by Suzan-Lori Parks, at the Public Theater" *The New York Times Online.* 29 Oct. 2014. <http://nytimes.com/2014/10/29/theater>

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. 1991. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1997.

Jiggets, Shelby. "Interview with Suzan-Lori Parks." Kolin and Young 66-75.

Kalb, Jonathan. "Remarks on Parks I," Kolin and Young 151-174.

Kennedy, Adrienne. *Funnyhouse of a Negro: The Adrienne Kennedy Reader: introduction by Werner sollars.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001.

Kolin, Philip C., and Harvey Young, Eds. *Suzan-Lori Parks in Person: Interviews and Commentaries.* New York: Routledge, 2014.

Kolin, Philip C.. "An Interview with Director Liz Diamond". Kolin and Young 201-212.

Lemke, Sieglinde. *The Vernacular Matters of American Literature.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Norris, Michele. "Suzan-Lori Parks' New Play, '*Father Comes Home From The Wars*' ," *NPR.*

5 Dec. 2014 <http://www.npr.org/2014/12/05/368640540>

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

Ogino, Miho. *Gender-ka Sareru Shinntai* [Gendered Bodies]. Tokyo: Keiso, 2002.

---. *Chuzetsu Ronso to America Shakai: Shintai wo Meguru Ronso* [The Abortion Debate and the Society in the United States: A Dispute over Female Bodies]. Tokyo: Iwanami. 2012.

Ohwada, Toshiyuki. *America Ongaku-Shi: Minstrel Show, Bruce Kara Hip-Hop Made* [A History of American Music: from Minstrel Show, Bruce to Hip-hop Music] . Tokyo: Kodansha, 2011.

Ong, Han. "Suzan-Lori Parks." Kolin and Young 37-45.

Orr, John. *Tragicomedy and contemporary culture : play and performance from Beckett to Shepard*. Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 1991.

Ozieblo, Barbara. "The 'fun that I had': The theatrical gendering of Suzan-Lori Parks's 'figures'." Wetmore and Smith-Howard 48-60.

Parks, Suzan-Lori. *The America Play. The America Play and Other Works.* New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995. 157-99.

---. "An Equation for Black People Onstage." *The America Play and Other Works.* New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995. 19-22.

---. *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World. The America Play and Other Works.* New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995. 99-131.

---. *Father Comes Home From the Wars Part1,2&3*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2015.

---. "From Elements of Style." *The America Play and Other Works.* New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995. 6-18.

---. *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom. The America Play and Other Works*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995. 99-131.

---. "Possession." *The America Play and Other Works.* New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995. 3-5.

---.*The Red Letter Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2001.

---. *Topdog/Underdog.* New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2001.

---. *Venus*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1997.

Rayner, Alice and Harry J. Elam, Jr.. "Unfinished Business: Reconfiguring History in Suzan-Lori Parks's *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*" *Theatre Journal* 46 (1994): 447-461.

Reed, Anthony. *Freedom Time: The Poetics and Politics of Black Experimental Writing.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2014.

Rorrison, Hugh. "Commentary," *Mother Courage and Her Children.* Bertolt Brecht, Loc. 216-560.

Shange, Ntozake. *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf.* 1975. New York: Scribner, 2010.

Schickel, Richard. *The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art, and Commerce of Walt Disney, Third Edition*. 1968. Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1997.

Scruggs, Charles. *Sweet Home: Invisible Cities in the Afro-American Novel.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993.

Savran, David. *The Playwright's Voice: American Dramatists on Memory, Writing and the Politics of Culture.* New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1999.

Sellar, Tom. "Making History: Suzan-Lori Parks: The shape of the Past." Kolin and Young 49-54.

Solomon, Alisa. "Signifying on the Signifyin': The Plays of Suzan-Lori Parks." *Theater* 21.3 (1990): 73-80.

Tompson, Debby. "Digging the Fo'-fathers: Suzan-Lori Parks's histories." *Contemporary African American Women Playwrights.* Ed. Philip C.

Kolin. New York: Routledge, 2007. 167-184.

Vardaman, M. James. *America Kokujin no Rekishi.* Trans. Morimoto Toyotomi. Tokyo: NHK, 2011.

Watkins, Mill and David Jay. *To Be a Black Woman: Portraits in Fact and Fiction*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1971.

Wetmore, Kevin J. and Alycia Smith-Howard, Eds. *Suzan-Lori Parks: A Case Book*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Wetmore, Kevin J. "It's an Oberammergau Thing: An Interview with Suzan-Lori Parks," Wetmore and Smith-Howard, 124-140.

Wilmer, S.E. "Restaging the Nation: The Works of Suzan-Lori Parks." *Modern Drama* 43, No. 3 (2000): 442-52.

Wilson, August. *The Ground on Which I Stand.* New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2001.

Wood, Jacqueline. ""Jazzing" Time, Love, and the Female Self in Three Early Plays by Suzan-Lori Parks," *Suzan-Lori Parks: Essays on the Plays and Other Works.* Ed. Philip C. Kolin. Jefferson: McFarland, 2008, 34-44.

Wright, Richard. "How "Bigger" Was Born," *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Native Son.* Ed. Houston A. Baker. Jr. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall. 1972, 21-47.

Young, Harvey. "Choral Compassion: *In the Blood* and *Venus.*" Wetmore and Smith-Howard 29-47.

Young, Jean. "The re-objectification and re-commodification of Saarjie Baartman in Suzan Lori Parks's *Venus," African American Review* 31(4). Terre Haute: Indiana State U, 1997, 699-708.

Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Graduate School of Language and Culture Doctor's Thesis Correction Chart

言語文化　博士論文　修正・訂正　正誤表

Title 論文題名	Enacting Black Suffering and Laughter: Creative Restorations of Black Experiencesin Suzan-Lori Parks's Plays 黒人の苦しみと笑いを演劇に ——スーザン＝ロリ・パークス劇における黒人の経験の創造的な修復
Name 氏名	ANADA Rie 穴田　理枝

Page 頁	Line 行	Before Correction 修正前	After Correction 修正後
Synopisis 3		theatre	theater
9	25	theatre	theater
11	29	Part 1,2 & 3	Parts 1,2 & 3
27	14	Bigger and Bigger	And Bigger and Bigger
33	4	theatre	theater
37	24	not	nod
38	23	theatre	theater
41	4	theatre	theater
47	24	postcolonialism	colonialism
48	27	"rev & rep,"	"rep & rev,"
79	10	They cease to wear	They wear
85	15	Topdog/Underdog	*Topdog/Underdog*
105	30	failin g	failing
117	27	Suzan Lori-Parks	Suzan-Lori Parks
	29	As Sieglinde Lemke quotes	Sieglinde Lemke quotes
119	10	Aerica	America
120	37-38	"The Life and Times of Sara Baartman"	*"The Life and Times of Sara Baartman"*
120	38-39	"A Poem for Sara Baartman"	*"A Poem for Sara Baartman"*