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The Ever-lasting Process of “Rep & Rev”: Echoes in Suzan-Lori Parks’s *The America Play*

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要旨

アフリカ系アメリカ人女性劇作家、スーザン＝ロリ・パークスにとって、演劇は「歴史的出来事創造の孵化器」である。彼女は、白人が作り上げた「正史」の中で忘れ去られ、周縁へと追いやられたアフリカ系アメリカ人の歴史を「発掘」し、それらを「反復と改訂」というドラマツルギーを用いながら、歴史的事実・文学史上のキャノンとの関係において再構成する。このような歴史認識と劇作理念が最も前景化された作品が、リンカーン大統領暗殺事件をモチーフとした『アメリカ・プレイ』（1994）である。本論文は、パークスによる「歴史の書き換え」を完結することのない永続的なプロセスと捉え、そのメカニズムを本作で繰り返される「エコー」を手掛かりに読み解くものである。それにより、「歴史を語る」という手法とその行為に潜む「改訂」の作用をパークスが利用することで、さらなる「改訂」を可能とする点を考察する。

キーワード：historical narrative, rewriting, echoes

Echoes of the Bullet

In the closing scene of *The America Play* (1994), Brazil, the son of the Foundling Father, adds his father's body to the exhibit of “the Hall of Wonders.” Brazil's introduction of the exhibit concludes as follows:

To my right: our newest Wonder: One of thuh greats Hissself! Note: thuh body sitting propped upright in our great Hole. Note the large mouth opened wide. Note the top hat and frock coat, just like the greats. Note the death wound: thuh great black hole—thuh great black hole in thuh great head. —And how this great head is bleedin. —Note: thuh last words. —And thuh last breaths. —And how thuh nation mourns— (199)

The bullet that punctured the skull of Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, is introduced here as the cause of a death that brought tears to the eyes of the entire nation. This bullet returns as an echo in this play, the story of which takes place more than 100 years

after President Lincoln's death. Indeed, the Foundling Father, who has a strong resemblance to President Lincoln except for the color of his skin, has the sensation of an echo reverberating in his head after he watches a historical parade at a fictional theme park called "the Great Hole of History." In the second act, as the echoes of the gunshot continue to be heard on stage, the Foundling Father's wife, Lucy, and his son, Brazil, proceed to dig a hole and listen to the echoes in an attempt to recover what remains of the Foundling Father.

This act of "hearing echoes from the dead or past events" is also representative of Suzan-Lori Parks's approach to writing. In fact, "through literature and the special strange relationship between theatre and real-life," Parks seeks to "locate the ancestral burial ground, dig for bones, find bones, hear the bones sing, write it down" ("Possession" 4). Parks aims to excavate African American experiences that have been neglected and cast to the margins in the white-dominant history¹⁾, and aims to reconstruct their experiences in relation to historical facts and the literary canon, using the dramaturgy of "Rep & Rev."²⁾

Prior research has examined the repeated performance of the Foundling Father that embeds blackness in the historical Lincoln assassination, which could also be regarded as an authorized history of America. What is emphasized in the preceding research is the appearance of the Foundling Father. In support of this, Parks herself states in an interview, "You could look at Lincoln and see him as the sum of his outfit" (Pearce 46). Concerning this issue, Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. also observes:

Indeed, the cover photo for the Theatre Communications Group edition of *The America Play and Other Works* features a photograph not of the Foundling Father (the Lincoln character), but of his hat, beard and suit, as if Lincoln were standing in front of the flag but his face (except the trademark beard) had been erased. Lincoln is his 'costume', and the costume (and beard) is what makes The Foundling Father Lincoln. (90)

Wetmore argues that this set of clothes can be regarded as a representation of Abraham

1) The white-dominant history in this essay stands for both the history written by whites and the history mainly written about whites.

2) "Rep & Rev" is "a central element" in Parks's work and "through its use [she is] working to create a dramatic text that departs from the traditional linear narrative style" ("from Elements of Style" 9). This dramaturgy has its origin in jazz music, as Parks herself states: "There are aspects of music that I borrow and use in my work: repetition and revision. A big part of jazz is repeat and revise, and repeat and revise. That's what my work is all about" (Ong 38). In jazz music, a completely different tune can emerge through repeating the same musical motif and making small changes. Parks echoes this characteristic in her playwriting; fragments of historical and literary texts are incorporated into Parks's plays and these fragments are gradually transformed through repetition and revision of their forms. *The America Play* holds great importance in Parks's body of work because it exemplifies her dramaturgical principles, prominently featuring the repetition and revision of the motif of President Lincoln.

Lincoln. Likewise, Jennifer Larson states, "This costume becomes an all-inclusive signifier of Lincoln-the-President" (60). What is revealed from these discussions is that President Lincoln is reduced to a collection of fragmentary signifiers such as his hat, beard, and suit.

Furthermore, the racial identity of the Foundling Father is conveyed through visual information without his ethnicity explicitly specified in the text. Regarding this, Harry J. Elam and Alice Rayner observe that "the fake . . . points to the absent elements—one of which is the black body—in the myth of Lincoln and the difference between the myth and the embodied performance of the Foundling Father" (182). In other words, through the Foundling Father's performance, the "blackness" that has been erased in white-dominant history is visually emphasized, and the assassination of President Lincoln is repeated in this new context. This provides an opportunity to revise the white President to a black President³⁾. In this respect, the play can be evaluated as a work that has the potential to disturb the white-dominant history.

Many studies have discussed the play from the aspect shown above. For example, Philip C. Kolin and Harvey Young argue, "Inserting a black man in the Lincoln myth narrative changes how white America has projected and privileged itself" (10)⁴⁾. Una Chaudhuri elaborates on this point through her suggestion that "[a]s person after person goes through the murderous motions, the ludicrous script they follow is gradually transformed through repetition into a ritual, in which what is being celebrated, we realize, is the violence at the heart of American history" (264).

The fact that the mechanism of rewriting history is activated by the performance of the Foundling Father has been confirmed in previous studies. However, existing discussions do not fully take into account Parks's perception of time. In "from Elements of Style," Parks reveals, "Time has a circular shape" (10)⁵⁾. Parks's playwriting is based on the concept of a circular flow of time, where the past and the present are inseparable and interconnected. Past events shape present performances, which, in turn, influence perceptions of the past, ultimately transforming future performances. This essay will explore how, through this reciprocal process, Parks continually renews the "history" she attempts to rewrite—an aspect that previous research has not fully examined.

3) Presenting a black President Lincoln is also an act of filling the "hole in American history," which is created by excluding blacks. Soyica Diggs Colbert argues, "The hole in *The America Play* also represents the loss of narrative and the active process between writers and readers and actors and audiences that repeatedly attempts to fill the gaps" (3).

4) Their discussions also correspond to Parks's statement in an interview: "I take issue with history because it doesn't serve me—it doesn't serve me because there isn't enough of it. In this play, I am simply asking, 'Where is history?' because I don't see it. I don't see any history out there, so I've made some up" (Pearce 47).

5) Parks provides the following supplementary explanation: "Could Time be tricky like the world once was—looking flat from our place on it—and through looking at things beyond the world we found it round? Somehow I think Time could be like this too" ("from Elements of Style" 10).

The purpose of this essay is to examine the specific methodology of Parks's rewriting of history. As mentioned earlier, echoes of gunshots are repeated in the play, but the rewriting of the "history" associated with President Lincoln becomes activated through the repetition of visual images to a greater extent than through the repetition of sounds. Therefore, the following discussions extend the use of echoes as a symbol of repetition to the visual level⁶⁾. The hypothesis presented in this essay is that the performance of the Foundling Father uses visual effects to redraft the portrait of President Lincoln, thereby revising the mental image people have of the President and, by extension, the American history associated with the President's image. Based on this hypothesis, this essay explores Parks's rewriting mechanism to illustrate how she establishes the device that enables continuous and lasting revisions. The next section examines how past events construct the Foundling Father's performance by focusing on the echoes that reverberate throughout the play.

1. Circulation of Images: Echoes without Substance Continue to Resonate

The Foundling Father creates a complete replica of a fictional historical theme park, "the Great Hole of History," and presents an assassination show in this replica. What critics problematize is that the Foundling Father replicates a replica of history, not the original. Concerning this point, Elam and Rayner argue, "America is the land of hyperreality, where any ground for historical certainty is erased by the generation and circulation of images that have no original" (178). Also, from a similar perspective, Chaudhuri states, "The indiscriminate spatializing of history—the leveling of difference by myth—emerges as the special distortion of America, whose endless frontier holds out the promise of countless replications of the original spectacle of greatness" (262). People parading in the historical theme park are essentially actors and actresses wearing costumes of great historical figures. However, Brazil perceives these figures to be the historical figures themselves, such as Amerigo Vespucci (180). Just like the actors in the Great Hole of History, the Foundling Father impersonates President Lincoln and perpetuates the show. In the process of generating a new replica from an existing one, it raises another question: "What is the original?" In other words, the boundary between the original and its replica is eroded away through the perpetual re-productions of replicas. What is required

6) According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "echo," originally defined as "[a] repetition of sounds, which is produced by the reflexion of the sound-waves" ("Echo," def. 1.a), can be extended to the figurative sense, representing "[a] repetition or close imitation, chiefly of things that can be compared to speech, voice, or sound (e.g. a writer's thoughts or style), but occasionally with wider meaning; . . . an effect that continues after its cause has ceased" ("Echo," def. 5). This essay regards that an "echo" symbolizes the endless repetition of both aural and visual images, with the understanding that its effect persists even after its cause has ceased.

in parades and shows is not an "accurate portrayal" of history, but the presentation of a figure that accords with the "image" of a great person. As the countless number of replicas multiplies, we lose track of the original, and the authenticity of history, which relies on the original version, becomes destabilized.

Understanding these qualities of historical theme parks, the Foundling Father seeks strategies to entertain his customers. For example, while recognizing that President Lincoln without his silk hat, which is never worn indoors, is not favored by his customers, the Foundling Father says, "Some inaccuracies are good for business" (168), and adds variations to his performance, such as replacing his faux beard with a blond one. Furthermore, there is also another strategy that the Foundling Father adopts to engage and entertain his customers: making his performance composed of fragments that can be easily substituted. In fact, not only his costume is made up of fragments—a silk hat, fake beard/warts, and a frock coat—but also the flow of his assassination show is composed of fragmented elements: the customers choose the guns to be used, the Foundling Father laughs, the Foundling Father is shot, and the customers freely choose the lines for "their" Booth. The customers, in complicity with the Foundling Father's assassination show (Geis 104), can choose a gun different from the historical facts according to their own preferences and freely utter lines from historical figures other than Booth and even lines unrelated to history. Since the show is composed of fragmentary elements, these elements can easily be replaced, and changing even one element enables the assassination show to be customized to the taste of the customers. To put it another way, the assassination shows that the Foundling Father presents are composed of replaceable components, resulting in a fluidity in which replacing one piece can transform the entire presentation. The repetition of the assassination show as a replica endlessly creates new and varying versions of the assassination of President Lincoln.

However, this transformation is possible not solely because the performance is designed to suit the tastes of the customers. The very act of picking up and reconstructing past events has the potential to produce various versions. Indeed, the inception of the Foundling Father's show can be traced back to his seemingly arbitrary choices, which appear almost random. After visiting the Great Hole of History, the Foundling Father cannot forget the sight of the parade and has the feeling that the echo of it keeps resonating in his head (163). As a result, he abandons his wife and son, moves west, and begins to give speeches dressed as President Lincoln. Later, on the advice of a guest, he starts a performance in which he is shot as the President. The echoes resonating in the Foundling Father's head drove him to create various versions of the assassination show, introducing the potential for randomness and mutability

within the performance.

This creation of new and diverse performance versions is facilitated by three characteristics of the echoes in the play. First, the echo the Foundling Father senses after visiting the theme park originates from the past and has the effect of influencing the behavior of those who hear it. In addition, once the echoes begin to resonate, they continue to reverberate and repeat themselves, creating a time lag in the process. Furthermore, the echoes in the play symbolize the process of creating a replica without the original. As Elam and Rayner argue, “The ‘original’ gunshot is duplicated and repeated, but it is never the ‘one’ that shot Lincoln” (185). The echo that the Foundling Father senses after visiting the theme park, and the echoes of the gunshot that continually resonate throughout the play, are not generated by the bullet that struck the skull of the President. The echoes are something that could not exist without the historical assassination of the President, yet they continue to reverberate without any substance. For this reason, Lucy explains the importance of distinguishing the echoes in Act 2. Lucy classifies the echoes as follows:

Lucy: Echo of *thuh* first sort: *thuh* sound. (E.g. *thuh* gunplay.)

(Rest)

Echo of *thuh* 2nd sort: *thuh* words. Type A: *thuh* words from *thuh* dead. Category: Unrelated.

(Rest)

Echo of *thuh* 2nd sort, Type B: words less fortunate: *thuh* Disembodied Voice. Also known as “*Thuh* Whispers.” Category: Related. Like your *Fathuhs*.

(Rest)

Echo of *thuh* 3rd sort: *thuh* body itself.

(Rest) (184)

The second sort of echo is described as “*thuh* words from *thuh* dead” and “*thuh* Disembodied Voice” or “[*t*]huh Whispers.” Since the “sounds” and “words” are separated from the “body,” the echoes can never represent an entire picture of past events. Therefore, listening to the echoes and thereby recovering the past events or the figure of the dead is nothing more than the act of reconstructing incomplete fragments. This situation is symbolically represented in the restorations sought by the characters in the play. Indeed, the Foundling Father creates the assassination show after he feels the echo still reverberating in his head and attempts to reconstruct the past events through his show, resulting in his producing endless different

versions of the assassination. Similarly, Lucy and Brazil aim to recover the figure of the Foundling Father through the excavation and categorization of the echoes, but what Brazil inherits from his father differs from the Foundling Father's performance. Even though they listen and try to catch the incomplete echoes, what is reconstructed cannot be identical to the original that they attempt to regain.

The incompleteness of reconstructed fragments can also be identified in the structure of the Foundling Father's narrative. While not performing the assassination show, the Foundling Father introduces the life of President Lincoln, but this narrative itself is presented as a collection of fragmented information because the Foundling Father's lines are interrupted by winks at Lincoln's cutout, nods to Lincoln's bust, and the entering of customers playing the role of Booth. Furthermore, the story of the President's life narrated by the Foundling Father is interrupted with irrelevant phrases and events. For example, the line, "Useless Useless" (160) is inserted into the description that President Lincoln was struck by a deadly bullet just as he burst into laughter during the performance of *Our American Cousin*. As indicated in a footnote that is not originally attached to the play⁷⁾, "Useless Useless" are considered to be the last words of John Wilkes Booth (160). In addition, the words "the freeing of the slaves" (188), which have no relation to the context of the President's assassination, appear in the narration of the Foundling Father whose body is restored by Lucy and Brazil in the second act.

As indicated in the examples above, the process of reconstructing the past through listening to echoes carries the potential for irrelevant events to become intermingled with the narration of the past. This can also be observed in the scene where Brazil inherits his father's performance; even though Brazil attempts to restore the figure of the Foundling Father, what Brazil presents at the end of the play is transformed into an introduction to "the Hall of Wonders," where the Foundling Father's body is exhibited as the great man himself (198-99). In other words, through the Foundling Father's replication of the historical theme park and his repetition of the assassination show, the President's image becomes shifted and modified while the aura of the great man is preserved.

This is exactly how Parks presents an assassination show; she follows a method of

7) Prior studies have examined the attachment of notes to the play's script. For example, considering that the words such as "possibly," "allegedly," and "probably" are added by the notes, it is suggested that "Parks thus 'questions [the] legitimating authority' of 'last words'" (qtd. in Geis 102). Similarly, Elam and Rayner also argue:

Academic footnotes confirm meanings, elaborate ideas, and assign authorship but are peripheral to the textual body. Parks's written text parodies these purposes, satirizes the process of critical interpretation, and points out the impossibility of determining the Real. (186)

The original functions of footnotes are subverted in this play, and Parks plays with the norms of footnotes while disturbing the legitimacy of past events.

historical representation in which a replica generates subsequent replicas. In doing so, she reveals that the act of narrating history itself has the potential to generate various different versions. This endless mechanism is symbolized in the repetition of echoes in the play. In this play, however, it is not only “sounds” that are considered echoes. As the third sort of echo is described as “thuh body itself” (184), echoes in the play also include visible things. Both aural and visual echoes share the common feature that they are continually repeated and trigger the production of a wide variety of images of the President. The next section examines the possibility that the Foundling Father’s performance influences the portrait of President Lincoln, thereby altering the historical image of Lincoln.

2. Laughing Lincoln: Redrafting of the President’s Portrait and Images

In the first act, the Foundling Father performs his assassination show seven times. As previously indicated, in these seven performances, the costume of the President and the dialogue adopted by the customers playing the role of Booth differ. However, one element remains the same in the Foundling Father’s performance: each time, the Foundling Father laughs aloud, “Haw Haw Haw Haw / (*Rest*) / HAW HAW HAW HAW” (164, 165, 167, 169, 170, 171)⁸. This laughter is the aural echo that continues to resonate throughout the play. It serves as the device that initiates the assassination show, as well as the mechanism of rewriting history, a goal Parks aims for in her playwriting. Similar to gunshots and laughter, visual representations of the president can also be considered echoes due to their continuous duplication and repetition. Notably, it’s essential to recognize that the “laughing Lincoln,” or aural and visual echoes, repeatedly presented in the Foundling Father’s performance contradicts the portrait of Lincoln that people call to mind when they hear his name⁹. Actually, in *Topdog/Underdog*, when Booth (the character) takes a photo of Lincoln (Booth’s elder brother) impersonating the President, the black brothers have the following conversation:

Booth: Yeah. You look great man, really great. Fix yr hat. Get in thuh light. Smile.

Lincoln: *Lincoln didnt never smile.*

Booth: Sure he smiled.

8) The sixth time is different, and there is more laughter as the following line shows: “Haw Haw Haw Haw / (*Rest*) / HAW HAW HAW HAW (*Rest*) / (*Rest*) / HAW HAW HAW HAW” (170).

9) One of the most famous photographs of President Lincoln was captured by Mathew Brady, a prominent New York photographer during the Civil War. His most renowned work is the Cooper Union portrait of President Lincoln which appeared during the 1860 presidential campaign (Trachtenberg 39).

Lincoln: *No he didnt, man, you seen thuh pictures of him. In all his pictures he was really serious.* (*Topdog/Underdog* 91; italics mine)

The black Lincoln claims that the President never smiled or, by implication, laughed, using the President's pictures as a basis for judgment. This provides us with the idea that the portrait of President Lincoln evokes such a somber image of him that he never once smiled. If the repetition of the Foundling Father's performance, or in other words, aural and visual echoes, reconfigures the unsmiling portrait of President Lincoln into a laughing image in the audience's subconscious, this can also result in the modification of the concept of the President, which is associated with the portrait.

In *Reading American Photographs*, Alan Trachtenberg, who is interested in the way "the interpretation [the photograph] allows viewers to make of its subject" (xiii), describes the advice given by French photographer, Lerebours, on taking portraits: "the Frenchman Lerebours . . . prescribed that sitters occupy themselves 'with a serious or pleasing thought, according to the expression that may be desired'" (26). Behind this recommendation is the significance of taking portraits. Trachtenberg argues, "The term 'expression' came to represent the chief goal of the portrait: a look of animation, intelligence, inner character. The true art of portrait making lay in the capture of an inner essence, an 'expression' of 'character'" (27). In other words, taking a portrait leads to the expression of a person's inner self, and thus the portrait and the image of the person are inseparably related. In this respect, it is not surprising that "[t]o fix a portrait image . . . should be equivalent to fixing character" (Trachtenberg 27).

When viewed from this perspective, the distribution of the portrait, in which President Lincoln is photographed without smiling and with a stern face, has determined the image people have of the president. Furthermore, since the portrait is closely linked to the inner nature the person desired to express, changing the portrait can also revise the image associated with that person. Therefore, once a different portrait is distributed, different images of the person are simultaneously generated.

In fact, there is also a historical case that a portrait was replaced to transform the image of President Lincoln.

At first, Lincoln suffered from what today's political spin doctors call an "image problem." Those who opposed him used his rugged image—an inspiring metaphor for American opportunity at home—against him abroad. Even his most ardent admirers on the American side of the Atlantic must have wished that Lincoln better suited the European

ideal of gentlemanly refinement. So it is not surprising that *separate-sheet Lincoln prints, published in England and on the Continent*, both to commemorate his rise and later to acknowledge his martyrdom, *softened the “rail-splitter’s” rough-hewn looks to make him look more gentlemanly.* (Holzer 45; italics mine)

The fact that the image of President Lincoln as a “rail-splitter” was so unacceptable in England and continental Europe that his portrait was altered to make him seem more gentlemanly underscores the effectiveness of changing a portrait to revise an image. At the same time, this also means that there is an inherent fluidity in the image of President Lincoln itself that changes along with the portraits.

The uncertainty in the image of President Lincoln has already been pointed out in previous research. For example, Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton state, “Lincoln has also been a malleable and protean figure, one who is forever being redefined to meet the needs of those who invoke him” (ix). Likewise, Verna Foster also comments, “The historical reception of Abraham Lincoln among African Americans has long been problematic. He has been both revered as the Great Emancipator and in the last half century or so criticized as a white supremacist” (31), suggesting contradictory images of President Lincoln.

Therefore, the image of President Lincoln is changeable and always leaves room for further revisions. Parks creates her play by using the nature of portraits—the image of the person changes when the portrait is replaced—exploiting the fluidity inherent in the image of President Lincoln itself. By presenting the aural and visual echoes of “laughing” Lincoln repeatedly on stage, and thereby triggering the redrafting of the President’s portrait in the audience’s subconscious, Parks creates an opportunity to transform the image of President Lincoln¹⁰.

10) The question left unanswered is how the revisions of images on the personal level can extend to historical rewriting. What is crucial to examine in this context is Parks’s attempt to rewrite a historical icon that symbolizes the United States. As Katy Ryan explores, “The iconography of Lincoln surpasses that of all other Americans; his speeches, which are often reproduced in classrooms and on stages, including the floors of the House and Senate, have become part of our national discourse” (82). Furthermore, Takayuki Tatsumi suggests that Abraham Lincoln, who was connected to the telegraph network during the Civil War, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who used radio during the World War II, and John F. Kennedy, who made full use of television during the Cold War, definitely helped shape the “American myth,” where the presidential portrait becomes equivalent to the very existence of the United States (14). The visual presentation of a black Lincoln on stage does not stop at redrafting the portrait of President Lincoln in the audience’s subconscious and his associated image; it is indeed the first step to transforming and revising a part of the history of the United States.

3. Image of Lincoln Continually Revised: From Portrait to the Inner Image and to the Next Creation

What has been shown in the previous sections is the process of revising President Lincoln's image; the Foundling Father listens to echoes from the past and presents an alternative assassination show that differs from history, and the image of "laughing" Lincoln, which can be considered a form of aural and visual echoes, reshapes the image of President Lincoln himself. In other words, the mechanism by which past events give rise to a performance in the present and how that performance subsequently shapes perceptions of the past has been established. This succinctly illustrates the circular nature of the aural and visual echoes. The following section examines how the "redrafted" image of the president influences both the present and the future.

The definition and the nature of images proposed in *Critical Terms for Media Studies* help us understand how revised images can affect performance in the present/future. According to W. J. T. Mitchell, images can be classified into two categories. One includes "material pictures or objects in the world, tangible things that can be created and destroyed" and the other encompasses "mental things—memories, fantasies, dreams, hypnagogic reveries, hallucinations, and other psychological phenomena" (41). Most importantly, these two types of images are in a circular relationship. As Mitchell points out:

Our pursuit of the image across media seems endless and perhaps circular, beginning in the real world with concrete pictures and representational objects in all manner of media, moving rapidly into the mental lives of the producers and consumers of these media, then returning to their physical existence in concrete circumstances. (41)

This mechanism whereby images circulate from the concrete to the abstract and again to the concrete parallels the process through which the Foundling Father creates the assassination show. As previously discussed, the Foundling Father is so impressed by the historical parade in the Great Hole of History that he decides to perform the assassination himself. In other words, seeing the tangible image (i.e., the parade) influences the Foundling Father's inner self and drives him to repeat the show. Also, although Brazil is not performing anything when he is excavating in search of his father, he begins to introduce the exhibit of "the Hall of Wonders" after actually seeing an assassination show performed by the Foundling Father. Again, it can be proposed that actually seeing his father's assassination show, the tangible image, influences the

mentality of Brazil. Just as images are metaphorically described as “dangerous microbes that could infect the minds of their consumers” (Mitchell 38), the viewing of images, including photographs and plays, affects the viewer’s mind and prompts the production of the next image. As long as the relationship between the external, concrete image and the internal, abstract image is circular, this mechanism continues without end. Therefore, once the history of President Lincoln is taken up as a subject and images inclusive of portraits and performances are produced, images associated with President Lincoln can be continually produced endlessly. Both aural and visual echoes do, in fact, offer the possibility of an everlasting process of revisions.

However, the echoes in this play do not represent mere repetition but repetition with gradual transformation. As already discussed, the assassination show, and the president’s image presented by the Foundling Father, are incompatible with history as it has been documented. If the audience, who sees the laughing portrait of Lincoln, or in other words, visual echoes, produced by the Foundling Father, generates the next portrait or performance, it would be farther removed from the “original” image of President Lincoln. Even if the external, concrete images and the internal, abstract images are in a circular relationship, the portraits or performances produced do not remain the same, and so the mental image resulting from these tangible images also becomes shifted. As the mechanism of re-production continues in a circular manner, “what is produced” continues to be altered. In essence, as long as the forces representing historical events or figures operate, the mechanism of image reproduction cannot be stopped, opening up the possibility of endless reenactment and alterations. Every time the assassination of Abraham Lincoln is represented through aural and visual echoes, the assassination itself can be modified in a way that no one could have predicted. Through her play, Parks confronts us with the fact that historical representations of icons continue to be produced in different forms, producing time lag, in so far as we pick up echoes resonating from the past, and create a replica of past events.

4. Echoes that Recur across Time and Space

Suzan-Lori Parks has been recognized as a playwright who intends to create “new” historical events. However, her methodology itself is not necessarily new. First, Parks presents various versions of the assassination show by following the way history has been narrated: picking up and reconstructing events from the past. She also exploits the fluidity latent in President Lincoln’s image and triggers the redrafting mechanism of his image. Furthermore, by

exploiting the way that seeing a concrete image can trigger the creation of the next performance, Parks generates an opportunity for her rewriting to continue perpetually. In essence, she exploits the fact that the act of narrating history is accompanied by gradual revisions and transformations, and in that sense, her methodology is rather conventional. What sets Parks apart is her unique and distinctive approach; she repeats the method of historical representations while intensifying the impact of revisions and modifications. The echoes in this play, indeed, possess a nature of mutability and variability, the effects of which endure permanently.

Deborah R. Geis observes, "the sounds of gunshots echo loudly; this is both an echo from the past (the Foundling Father's assassination routine) and another image of repetition" (106-7). However, this echo does not merely anticipate the next performance. It transcends the difference between fiction and nonfiction, and even the barriers of time and space. Indeed, the echo crosses the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, and the echo of the bullet that brought death to President Lincoln reaches the Foundling Father. Furthermore, considering that the Foundling Father's performance redrafts the portrait and the image of the president, and this in turn results in creating the next performance, it can be said that the echoes reverberating in the second act transcend the wall between the performance and reality, and even between time and space. The same is also true of Suzan-Lori Parks; she is also influenced by the echoes she creates.

Parks's *Topdog/Underdog* (2001) is the "Rep & Rev" of *The America Play*. Since the created performance affects the minds of the producers/consumers of the image, it can be argued that *The America Play* influenced Parks herself, driving her to write *Topdog/Underdog*. The echo of the Foundling Father's assassination show goes beyond the differences in the plays and reaches the black brothers, Lincoln and Booth, transforming into the bullet that brings death to black Lincoln. Therefore, the play's transition from *The America Play* to *Topdog/Underdog* represents the mechanism by which concrete and mental images circulate with modified images continually produced. The bullet that punctured President Lincoln's skull continues to penetrate barriers on various levels. As long as the drive to represent history about President Lincoln is sustained, the echoes endlessly reverberate and provide opportunities to create historical icons that differ from the historical facts.

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Dramaturgical Analysis of Suzan-Lori Parks's Historical Plays, completed in 2023 at Osaka University.

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