

Cain Attacking Himself: Black Intra-racial postcolonial Segregation as Presented in Amiri Baraka's Duthman and Charles H. Fuller's A Soldier's Play

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Abstract

After the independent years of the colonial history, there has been always a "Cain" acting and reacting the over repeated story of former and present times of American society, in that the sin of Cain, afterward, disputably, black skinned, as a sign of curse best explain or in a way may help to understand the consequences of negation in its social, cultural and historical background. DuBoise, an insightful writer and critic, decades before, has shown the Afro American individual's failure to balance between his conflicting sides, "double-consciousness". The Following generation of the American writers, executing the problem of "melting" with their society, captured the feelings of change, started to focus on the internal conflicts between blacks. Correspondingly, the post-colonial individual's anger, violence and resistance, even after the abolition of the slavery, I argue, became intra rather than extra. This paper aims at, first, describing this historical, cultural struggle specifically the history of US. political racial climate in the 1960s as a crucial period. Secondly, it will point to the impacts resulting from these struggles. The ongoing goal of the study, in a different, more illuminating light, is to examine two selective representative dramas of Amiri Baraka's (Hobson, O'Brien III, Falvo, & Superfine, 2020) and Parlett and Hamilton (1972), who practically, in a new critical direction, contradicting DuBoise about the dysfunctionality of the society, call for a triumphant conscious-raising redemption over, this time, and above the common theme of white supremacist dominance, the very black intra-racial destructive segregation. In this regard, post colonialism, which focused on rearticulating the blacks' relationship with the colonial history, will be taken into consideration.

Keywords

Black; Intra-racial; post colonialism; Segregation; Amiri Baraka; Duthman; Charles H. Fuller; A Soldier's Play.

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Introduction

Ultimately, any one writing about the African American literature, to generate the case, should have face the increasingly discussed and debated problem of "being". Representations of racism, segregation, struggle against multiple fronts are most significantly guided many African American playwrights to reanalyze perhaps to reform the scene. Of course, with the slow gradual gaining of social lawfully assured rights within the white enterprise, the ideas of those playwrights become definitely transformed from simply defying and redefining the image of the colored folk, to better understanding of the "black-centered" self that is akin to the culture itself. A valuable way to approach the "perennial conflict" between black and other races, is actually to follow an ancient fable of Cain and Abel as a symbol of this conflict. The Biblical story, raises questions about the intentions and sense of "shame" of a killer. This fancily fable, recognizing the consequences of lacking confirmation and recognition, generating the assumption Cain's decedents had had black skin, shows, fundamentally, that this racist interpretation was used, for centuries long, to justify slavery. Eva Mroczek remarks : Although nothing in the Bible suggests it is related to skin color, the motif that Cain was cursed with blackness- and that black people are cursed as well- was common from the 18th and into the 20th century... this interpretation of Cain's mark was deployed to justify the slave trade, and some religious denominations in America used it to support segregation and the exclusion of African American from church leadership. (Hagedorn et al., 2011). So that we can say, this widely held perception of the blackness of Cain's descendants can justify the choice of Cain to be the representative of blacks, still and effectually relevant to modern time, facing existing prejudice and marginalization in ways sometimes mount to fellow and self-destructiveness. Relatively, several thinkers and critics, however, tried to illustrate, analyse and perhaps to solve this problem of Afro American individual. For DuBoise The problem lies not in dysfunctional African American personalities but in the message, delivered to African Americans by a predominantly prejudiced European American society, they must choose between white or black- a matter of being, hardly of winning. Besides, after the Civil war, all the various attempts, during these crucial years of change, to emphasis the "commonness between races" where a community is begotten of communities, the notion of the melting pot, for "creating unity", as Alizadeh (2021) asserts, " without denying specificity", have ultimately vanished, seemed shadowy or at least weakened. Not a secret, American blacks alone had the desire to integrate with other ethno religious groups. All in all, this leads to increasing faith in the existence of DuBoise's prophesy of "color line". Drawing on this observation, it should not be too surprising that widely spread white connoted etymologies or "stigma" such as "Nigger", "mulatto", "miscegenation", to mention a few, are indirectly used to draw that line between the races. However, when the individuals, as Hamid Hammad Abed proclaims" are refered to as white or black, the implied meaning signifies that the black lack many things the whites may possess.(Abed, 2016) Nonetheless, both sides of the line- black and white- have the same tendency, as Robert Wetzork explains, " to conceal the possibility of mixed blood. In case of colored people, this makes sense in order not to be reminded of the often humility and discriminating causes of originating their ancestry" (2008:2) Then the law or the motto " separate but equal", cleft between the white and the black or (ex-slave) who knew full well that this law and many others like anti-miscegenation and one drop rule (not even one drop of black blood) evidently had already been one of the main illuminating patterns for shielding the ideology of the slavery. Relatively, Nathan Huggins exclaims that " for the Afro American in the 1920s, being a "New Negro" meant, largely, not being an "Old Negro" dissociating oneself from the symbols and legacy of slavery-being urbane, assertive, militant. Aboding dialect and the signs of submissiveness ... was one way of being a "New Negro"(Alizadeh, 2021). However, much of their energy, obviously, is spent in examine and negotiating the American psychological confusion of being both Negro and an American individual within this fragmented culture wondering and trying to emanate up with some definition of themselves. Interestingly, DuBoise attempted to explain that within the history of the American Negro, he has " to merge his double self into a better and a truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not bleach his Negro soul... he simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American" (King-Johnson, 2021). Additionally, in this essay, " The Souls of Black Folk", (Britannica, 2017), BuBoise coined the term " Double Consciousness", a perspective which anyone trying to figure out this inner conflict with any sort of thoroughness would certainly have had to resort to. He describes it as follows: It is a particular sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one' self through the eyes of others, of measuring one soul by the tape of a world that looks on in a mused contempt and pity, one ever feels his twoness – an American, a Negro; two

souls, two thoughts, two un reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body. (Ibid.) Actually, DuBoise, as a thinker and critic, insightfully diagnoses and puts his hand on the blacks' confronted selves, their sense of worthlessness. In addition, after many desperate frustrated attempts, the black people, once one asked about the issue in a more private dimension, failed to balance between those conflicting sides of their personality which were all about this "merging" by sometimes going to the extent of ceasing to be colored, an essential part of their being and self-esteem, physically passing the imaginative "color line", - passing to whiteness-, or by assimilating the attitudes of the oppressor, overcoming racial boundaries. Mark Black in "Fanon and DuBoisian Double Consciousness", smartly, relatively theorized, the point to which I have drawn attention, that "double consciousness is also a condition of colonized people.... The double consciousness link strengthens the claim that African Americans are colonized within their own country." (Black, 2007). Correspondingly, a number of native intellectuals, commonly as a reaction to the threatening serious loss of African Americans cultural identity, believing in the power of the word, moved towards a serious hopeful attempt of changing the images black people identified with specifically with the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance movement of the 1920s and 30s - later The Black Arts Movement during the sixties. In all this, advocates of this movement, artists, poets politicians and philosophers aligned with The Civil Rights, Harlem Renaissance and Black Power Movements in their struggle, though untraditional in asserting an African American "centered consciousness" and identity, to "revolutionize the psyche" as Nilgun Anadolu Okur in Contemporary African American Theatre illustrates, "in order to liberate black minds from lexicon, metonymy and configuration" (Monteiro, 2021). In other words, they, parallel, most commonly, "advocated black separatism, black pride, and black solidarity." (ABRAMS, 1957). Further, after raising up the protest and struggle for the "art sector", primarily to a black audience, practitioners of the Black Arts most notably the father who coined its term, Imam Amiri Baraka (or Le Roi Jones) started to envision works that help to better explain or in a way meet the needs and aspirations of Blacks through, to quote Okur's words, "the transformative power of the word". He goes on to say "the question for the black critic today is not how beautiful is a melody, a play, a play, a poem or a novel, but how much more beautiful poem, melody, play or novel made the life of a single black man? How far has the work gone in transforming an American Negro into an African American or black man?" (14) Without neglecting the aesthetic value of poetry in initiating the cultural uprising, those writers - in accordance with their time - are looking for a "literary vehicle" which would be able to reach and "dissect" the heart of their people. So, being the most social of all arts, the Black theatre has the aptitude to induce that change. Drawing on this, Amiri Baraka and later Charles Fuller, among many others, as playwrights, call for a "drama for the sake of the community consciousness" (Ibid., 4). Particularly, Baraka's *Dutchma* (Britannica, 2017) has been widely identified as the beginning of the 1960s Black Theatre Movement or theatre of revolt. This premise shall be explored through an examination of the works and mission of those two playwrights who resist being read as simple victims of colonialism, but rather this time, analyzing, criticizing even condemning black unnatural, willful self-colonialism. Initially, Amiri Baraka's experience (Britannica, 2017), is fairly one of transformation following conflict and contradiction- he undergoes "a series of radical breaks". The most telling example is his decision to be a black Muslim naturalist, realizing the impossibility of racial harmony in America, by discarding his "slave name" Le Rio Jones to Amiri Baraka or (Blessed Prince) in 1968. As a black playwright, poet, essayist, who is also a political activist, he experienced a period of intense meaningful conflict with, in essence, inner forces. There is naturally, no better description of this than his: "It was as if I had two distinct lives, one a politically oriented life, with a distinct set of people I knew and talked to, the other the artsy bohemian life of the village (Kim, 2003). Meanwhile, he continued to incite the African American community to action and his acknowledgement of his conflicting identity and struggle seem to provide necessary interpretation of his despise of his former self; he cannot yet bring himself in terms with his white society, white friends or more significantly with his own family,- he left his white wife and their children. In a similar key, as Daniel Won-gu Kim in "In the Tradition: Amiri Baraka's, Black Liberation, and Avant-Garde Praxis in the U.S" has observed: "This division within his subjectivity(his old and merging selves) was not only political/bohemian but was also coded black/white." Drawing on this observation, at the center of Barak's works, including "Dutchma", is this black rage against unjust whiteness as they relate to his new project of the Black Arts Theatre. It is, one that has received abundant critical attention, a dramatic portrait of the racial events and struggles that crucially initiated and created the 1960s. Relatively, Douglas Kern in his book, *Killing in the Name of Struggle* commented that " ... the strain of black-white racial relations, specifically, interracial relationships, is central in *Dutchman*, which hints towards the

break Barak would eventually make, both from his first wife and the village in general" (Kern, 2014). The protagonist, with considerable connections, is black and Lula is a white woman with evil intent who shares him, suggestively, a moving subway train. The first thing to observe is that she is both predatory and seductress. Clay is attempting to connect with her, generally representing, exceeding the narrowness of personality to social spirit, "white America" and it is this preoccupation with this "assimilation" that enables Lula to control him. Importantly, Baraka uses "the white woman" as Jiton Sharmayne Davidson suggests, "to satirize the black man trying to be white; seeking his white woman trophy". (Davidson, 2003). Relatively, the carefully chosen title has a historical and mythical significance. A "curse" laid upon a haunted ship, the title is, in relation to white literary myths and legends, derived from the ancient sailor myth, doomed to sail eternally, hardly one can ignore its resemblance to Cain's curse of endless wondering, without possibility to set port. However, the symbolic slavery, Kern makes clear, regarding the historical dimension of the title, still present in a way that it was a Dutchman or Dutch man of war, which trades the first captured black slaves to Jamestown in North America. He detailed that Baraka, especially when he began to break from his village "comfortable" life, "saw 1960s contemporary black Americans still as slaves, confined by the chains of a white oppressive system, and its title, Dutchman, draws parallels in this regard" (37). Along the same line of reasoning, it is not entirely surprising nor accidental that Baraka's choice of Clay's name is, definitely strategic and purposeful nor it is that of "Walker" in *The Slave*. Clay is a name symbolically and practically carrying the darkness of ground, equally earth from which the Creator made Adam. While the name "Walker" significantly, refers to Cain's punishment, along with that of skin color, of eternal wondering: Walker: We are liars, and we are murderers. We invent death for others. (Britannica, 2017) This biblical illusion of Cain is paired with Lula, who is in this regard evokes Eve, she is described as "a tall, slender, beautiful woman "who enters the subway " eating an apple, very daintily" (Britannica, 2017). So far she, matching expectations as a prominent accepted symbol of temptation, tempts Clay. Gradually, she becomes, being a universal symbol of evil as well, very aggressive: "everything you say is wrong" (4). With the rise of tension and action, she continues to attach Clay's ethnicity by, for instance, referring to the color of his skin: "I bet you never once thought you were a black nigger" (5) and an "uncle Tom. At the beginning, Clay "tries to appreciate the humor". Naturally, he tries to "assimilate" within the white America. At one point, she tells him about himself by saying: "your grandfather was a slave", and then, "you are a murderer" actually, this statement, has equally two folds of meaning. The first shade of meaning is that of being, as Baraka labeled "blacks as murderers, referring to those who 'align themselves with the enemy by both accepting and pushing for a conservative white agenda" (Kern, 2014). Moreover, Lula called him "a liver-lipped white man" and a "dirty white man" (8). Considerably Baraka's conscious use of the murderer image becomes even more relevant Cain- with his dark skin as a sign of "divine disfavor", perhaps, significantly, that's why she instantly said "and you know that". Trying to attain success, in his suit and tie, on the terms laid down by white America, Clay allowed Lula to control the conversations, and Lula with her many faces, deliberately provoked Clay. On one occasion she urged, almost drugged him to dance with her; dancing fundamentally, away from it being a seduction sign, can suggest Lula's negative stereotyping of Clay, no doubt to recall the history of slavery, to remind him of him being a "Jim Crow". Finally, Clay is "stunned" into his self-actualization which leads to his uncontrollable bursts clenching Lula's throat and announcing:

I could murder you now. Such a tiny ugly throat. I could squeeze it flat, and, watch you turn blue, on a humble....If I'm a middle-class fake white man ... let me be. And let me be in the way I want. [Through his teeth] I'll rip your lousy breasts off! Let me be who I feel like being. Uncle Tom. Thomas. Whoever. It's none of your business (You don't know anything except what's there for you to see. An act. Lies. Device. Not the pure heart, the pumping black heart. You don't ever know that. (9) His roaring statements powerfully and precisely depicted the tortured conflicted psyche and outrage of blacks and for a moment he gained the upper hand. Despite the fact that he discovered that "Murder. Just murder! Would make us all sane"(9), he decides to resort to language, safe inaction, and not to kill Lula: But who needs it? I'd rather be a fool. Insane. Safe with my words, and no deaths, and clean, hard thoughts, urging me to new conquests. My people's madness. Hah! That's a laugh. My people. They don't need me to claim them. They got legs and arms of their own.... They don't need all those words. They don't need any defense.(9) Notably, Clay's interwoven monologues perfectly shows who is the aggressor, and this black intellectual may well be the most exemplary display of his people who unfortunately turns expectations upside down. No matter if in itself an act of defense, he is aware that after killing her,

he is to be socially alienated and cursed; as a result he becomes, at the crucial time, tragically indifferent. This apparent indifference, which will lead to his downfall, and powerlessness to avoid or challenge the danger of such violence makes life threatening and uncertain. Eventually Clay is stabbed to death by Lula. Knowing begins with understanding. In the play, this essential view of colored people who are "only colored in their skin", perhaps by neglecting his true identity and trying to be everything he is not. It is clear that Clay's weakness or fear to act, basically recalling Baraka's period of avoiding political activism, and that indifference, for him, depicts his virtual alliance with the enemy. No wonder, Baraka sees Clay, and plenty of colored people as well, as "white murderers of colored people. Themselves were first to be murdered by them, in order to qualify" (Kim, 2003). Consequently, Clay's naïve wish to stay safe never can assure his survival. He wasted the chance to kill the oppressive Lula, but she did not. After all, Baraka has not provide a cure for blacks' problem; by all means, it can be read as a warning, drawing on the experience of Clay, and a prediction of fate of those who fail to recognize the vitality of black unity. No wonder, then, that after killing Clay. Lula ordered other subway riders to throw his body overboard who passively did. No one cared; the finishing lines assured that Clay's death is not primarily incidental:

LULA: busies herself straightening her things. Getting everything in order. She take out a notebook and makes a quick scribbling note. Drops it in her bag. Then he train apparently stops and all the others get off, leaving her alone in the coach. (10)

nor, to generalize the case, touching Barak's point, would be final:

Very soon a YOUNG NEGRO of about twenty comes into the coach with a couple of books under his arm. He sits a few seats in back of LULA. When he sits eated she turns and gives him a long, slow look. He looks up from his book and drops the book on his lap. (Ibid.)

Time of course changes; Baraka is not alone in discussing the tension that took place during the sixties, ultimately initiating the African-centeredness. Charles Fuller tried to continue that mission. Admittedly, have not been one of the Harlem Renaissance pillars, yet his plays were 1960s oriented, at least a product of that era. A murder mystery during World War II in 1944, the story of Pulitzer Prize winning play *A Soldier's Play* (1982), has shown his quest to attain this aim. In it Fuller staged the injustices faced by black soldiers, as shallow and segregated, in the Armed Forces of the United States. Although the play explores confrontation between evil and innocence and racial tensions, segregation and anger; nevertheless, the play is not about war at all. More than a detective story, the play is an incisive exploration of feelings of segregation, prejudice and resentment African Americans have towards one another. In essence, the theater of revolt, bringing with vivid imagination the themes of racism and corruption of American system, has given him his fame and success. Both *A Soldier's Play* and *The Zooman and the Sign*, discussing how blacks need to stand together to achieve justice, create a picture of African American society. On surface reading, the story depicts the role of Negro Soldiers in World War II- war normally accepted as a place defying the segregation, most commonly an opportunity to prove blacks' bravery. But as the play unfolds, readers recognize Fuller's attempt to force audience members- white and blacks- to control their persisting prejudice, though now better masked The slain waters, a self-centered black officer, is tyrant if not a racist himself, one who, domineering as the Sergeant, adopted white attitudes and imposed stereotypes on his fellow people whom he treated with disdain because of his light-skin and he having an education. Captain Richard Davenport, an intelligent black lawyer and army officer, led the racially charged investigation of Waters' murder. In *A Soldier's Play*, we had no a clear-cut protagonist nor story line that is linear; the play is opened with the end- the potential antagonist murder with series of flashbacks to complete the scene. Davenport, facing, manages a series of interviews with Negro enlisted men meanwhile the audience get a series of flashbacks of his interactions related to Stg. Waters mistreatment of his men. Waters, comparatively, is a second Clay had he been given a chance to live. He is initiating a query, has a similar case persist in the 80s? like him, he is a black intellect without neglecting his concern with self-development to stop setting the blame on the other as an intellect struggling to develop himself, gain respect, acceptance and power in his society:

"Waters: we got to challenge this man in his arena- use his weapons, ..., we need lawyers, doctors-generals-senators! Stop thinkin' like a niggah!" (18) With time, the notice that Waters, despite being best embodiment of a successful black, was not a popular man. He undermines any "niggah" that was " unfit and a shame to the race" (43). Actually, this attributable to his opinion, absorbing his white oppressor's attitudes, that " the only thing that can move the race is power. It is all that white respects" (43) Significantly, he used violence and disdain to make this point, as obviously and continually shown, He saw, paradoxically, war as an opportunity for blacks to escape the restrictions of segregation. This might, in a sense, justify his condition with his people and his earn to be with and equal to white oppressor and that's why he preferred sending his own children to an elite college where they would associate with white rather than black students. In addition, during his interviews with men, Davenport quickly learn that each man has reason to dislike Waters- he mistreats, abuse, punish and often hard on the men of his platoon especially southern blacks. Unfortunately, while being seemingly true to his advocate of race development, there is a serious dangerous transformation in his character. What is noteworthy about Waters , like all genuinely tragic figures, is that, instead of reluctantly defending rights and combating whites, they started unnaturally and willfully attacking their own people in most often, unavoidably, mirroring their unconcealed defect(color), more worse, in this case, playing the stereotypical fool. No matter that the murder mystery comes to dominate the play events, nonetheless, the larger problem, more than handling the investigation into Waters' violent death, is the question of motive. Minding the fact that everything takes place in the past and revealed in flash backs. The portrait of Waters displays a man who relentlessly tried to get rid of any "niggah" presenting uncle Tom, and Jim Crow stereotype which reflected poorly on him and other successful African-Americans. Private Henson tells Davenport of Waters' "crazy hate" for C.J. Memphis- country-bred young man who played guitar and sang at the white officers' club. His cruelty and vindictiveness drove that person, as he has previously getting rid of the three other "ignorant" colored soldiers, to suicide " We are men-soldiers, and I don't intend to have our race cheated out of our place of honor and respect in this war, because of fools like C.J. ." (54) While, ultimately, Waters' men hated him for his abuse, mistreatment and loath of southern black, the white colonel reports that this crime was" the usual, common violence any commander faces in Negro Military Units". Initial suspicion after murder discovery, significantly, without normally exceeding the assumption of the two bigoted white officers being involved, falls on the local Ku Klux Klansmen.

Peterson. Who do they think did it, sir?

Tkylor. At this time there are no suspects.

Henson. You know the Klan did it, sir.

Tkylor. Were you an eyewitness, soldier?

Henson. Who else goes around killin' Negroes in the South? (Anadolu-Okur, 2013)

An analysis of this gang fame, known for attacks on black soldiers in the past, more than the brutal fact itself may, especially with the discovery that the humiliation done for any victim might have been an enough evidence of them being responsible, a white humiliation over the inferiors. Collectively, it helps greatly to understand and reach eventually the hidden clue which is at the core of my hypothesis. Now, to illustrate, it is not the white racist brutal gang, to our surprise; the brutality is done, interestingly, this time by one of his skin. It was a black soldier in his own company PFC Melis Peterson who shot Waters. The enigmatic, anguished last cry of the dead "They still hate you" reveal his self-proclaimed belated moment of enlightenment- the more they emulate white ways, the more their hatred and disdain of black men increases, happily for, once realized, the spectators as well, the fear of associating themselves with this hostile yet sympathetic character , an image, most probably, every black character has and hate in himself. The conclusion to be derived from every case is that both Baraka and Fuller, in their attempt to escape the demon of racism, show consequences of, this time, internal conflict within black Americans. The problem remains, but the basic premise have shifted. For all their achievements, advanced the African American cause though differently, each of his method, the difference between their dramas is one of approach: the earlier angrily, violently while the latter quietly contemptively. Most significantly, they both refuted the stable and accepted theory of so great insightful critic like DuBoise about the dysfunctionality of the European American society: the "onus" for change is not on the black individual but on the American society. They have a reconsideration of this notion; change started within the individual himself. Evidently, their genuinely tragic figures, more or less, mirror image which each black hates. They encourage them to make a move towards sustaining

black unity; to break out of their defeated suicidal cycle, only by the discovery and acceptance of self rather allowing the society injustice, prejudice or bigotry to define the ambitions of their life.

Conclusion

Decades ago, African intellectuals have traced the source of their people's misery and loneliness to his/her sense of "shame": dissociating from one's people as ex-slaves. Admittedly, now, being colonized within their own country, in essence, was and had been the source of the same problem, at present more serious and dangerous. The cause of threat is no more the white race. Through the themes that pervade their plays, those writers concentrated diagnosing on the one-sides attempt of social-assimilation, the socially accepted idea of being inferiors, the serious gradual loss of cultural identity and equally , most importantly, the intra rather than extra segregation. Expectation witnessed self-caused destruction, a crack in black unity and tragic and unnecessary deaths all empowered them to draw their own conclusions leading to recognition, expecting outrage and naturally action. All things considered, the personal psychological pain, and self-colonization are to be replaced by a sense of fulfillment and self-acceptance as a key component to long waited, painfully gained black unity certainly itself, in its part, as a path towards actual retribution and liberation.

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