

EXPOSE THEATRE: AFRICAN-AMERICAN DRAMA AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION IN BULLINS' *CLARA'S OLE MAN* AND *IN THE WINE TIME*

Nwaiwu, Michael C.
Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri
drmishaelnwaiwu@gmail.com

Abstract

Drama, as a literary genre, gives man the rare opportunity of sitting in judgment on his actions and inactions. African-American drama from inception has battled with the challenges of social engagement and aesthetics, notwithstanding the fear of the Blackman otherwise called, "negrophobia" mentality of the white audience. Although a great deal of African-American writing is literature of anger and strife, yet there is a strong assertion that their plays, in spite of the major challenges of being black in America, the playwrights decry the inhuman and social problems in the domestic African-American Society. This ranges from the evil of homosexuality and lesbianism to the ordeal of idle husbands of hardworking women and the process of growth, sexual promiscuity and drunkenness. This article in line with the African-American "Revolutionary Theatre", examines the representation of these social ills in the African-American drama especially in Bullins' *Clara's Ole Man* and *In the Wine Time*. The playwright represents the major phase in the development of African-American drama and theatre especially during the major outrage in the entire experience of the Blackman in America. Ed. Bullins, being an adherent to Amiri Baraka's Revolutionary Theatre represents the domestic front of the expose theatre of the Black Arts Movement of the African-American Literature especially among the African-Americans themselves.

Keywords: Expose Theatre, Theatre of Reality, Revolutionary Theatre.

Introduction

Any integral study of the plays of Ed. Bullins must pay attention to the understanding of his concept of "Theatre of Reality" in line with Amiri Baraka's Revolutionary Theatre. (Sander, 177) This concept complements Amiri Baraka's idea of the expose theatre of the revolutionary aesthetics. Bullins remains the prophet of the home front, warning his people against the dangers of self-inflicted destruction. His plays, among other values, make it clear that the whites are not always to be blamed in the problems of the African-Americans. Lenka Vanova has observed that, "Bullins' Theatre of Reality built up a sense of black world beyond the confines of the play script". (47) In fact, his plays are replica of life as

are lived in the African-American streets. Vanova observes that "Bullins typically pictures unpolished black characters who are often involved in drugs and misdemeanour. He shows them as unworthy human beings, able to find justification in their lives while seeking their betterment relentlessly". (20) Bullins' basic concern is with the people's values, aspirations and dreams as well as their future. He probes and questions clichés, stereotypes, and romantic illusions to test what are of value in them. This paper is strongly against the inhuman social misnomer repugnant to human natural habitation, perpetuated by the African-Americans against themselves, either as a form of social protest or revolts that are detrimental to lives and development of the domestic African-American society and the American nation in general.

Edward Artie was born on July 2, 1935 to the family of Edward Bullins and Marie Queen in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was primarily raised by his mother. He attended predominately white schools and got deeply involved with gangs. Among the schools he attended was Franklin High School, where he nearly lost his life as a result of gang clashes. Later he quit high school for the Navy. During his stay with the Navy, he won a boxing championship and this motivated him to start reading. Ed. Bullins enrolled into a night school in Philadelphia until 1958, when he gave an insight into the predominant ghetto life style of the African-American underclass. He even left his wife and kid for Los Angeles. One important virtue of Ed. Bullins which was his predominant clamour is self-development for a better future. After receiving his General Education Development (GED) in Los Angeles, Bullins enrolled into Los Angeles City Colleges where he began to write. Ed. Bullins was a product of African-American underclass (lower class) that lived out his teachings on the appropriate freedom for the Blacks through personal development and positivity in action and attitude towards one another.

Bullins' plays include: *Goin' a Buffalo* (1968), *Clara's Ole Man* (1968), *In the Wine Time* (1968), *The Electronic Nigger* (1968) *The Fabulous Miss Marie* (1971), *The Taking of Miss Janie* (1975) and others. These plays are elaborate characteristics of African-American underclass exposed in the literary works. Mensor-Furr observes that, "Bullins explores the dark side of the African-American experiences in his "Black America," focusing on issues and characters (like "common folk", pimps, prostitutes, etc.) that many mainstream Americans and middle class African-American's theatre patrons may wish to ignore". (iv) However, the African-American plays in the era of the Black Arts Movement draw a lot of pedigree on Amiri Baraka's "Revolutionary Theatre" ideology especially on his fundamental essay on the ideology in which he says,

Revolutionary Theatre [that] should force change...The
Revolutionary Theatre must EXPOSE! Show up the insides

of these humans, look into Black skulls. White men will cower before this theatre because it hates them. Because they themselves have been trained to hate. The Revolutionary theatre must hate them for hating. For presuming with their technology to deny the supremacy of the spirit... It should stagger through our universe correcting, insulting, preaching, spitting craziness – but a craziness taught to us in our most rational moments... It must accuse and attack because, it is a theatre of victims. It looks at the sky with victims' eyes, and moves the victims to look at the strength in their minds and bodies... The Revolutionary Theatre is shaped by the world, and moves to reshape the world. (210-212)

Basically, the African-American literature in spite of the genre is built around the African background and the Blackman's experiences in the American society also called the New World. This is fundamental to African-American studies; from the agony shouts of May 19, 1619 in the shores of Jamestown, Virginia to contemporary times. Peter Bailey in his thought-provoking article "[A] look at the contemporary Black Theatre Movement" underscores that, Amiri Baraka's plays were written as weapons with which to confront racism on a cultural level just as other Blacks were using other means to confront the same monster on the streets". (19) These plays mostly strive to show the world what the American nation has turned the "innocent" black man into. Bailey maintains that, the theatre was aimed at white audience and designed, as Baraka has stated in his definition of Revolutionary Theatre, to make them cower before it, but a playwright may not restrict the audience to a specific interpretation of his play, even though he may have his target.

Ed. Bullins, on the other hand, in his plays assumes 'a black stage reality' and a black audience. The matters he takes up are often intimate, sensitive, and particular to the black experience in the American country. (Vanova, 47) Vanova adds that, "Bullins' plays represent the peak of quality of black theatre not only during the Black Arts Movement, but beyond". (47) Certain aspects of Bullins' techniques, especially, the revealed imaginative assurance, which clearly shows that, the black stage realities are based on the practical lives of the Blacks as lived in the various streets, hence he employs street urchins, who use street argots with the background ghetto music to explicate the street language and enact plausibility. In fact, Vanova maintains that, "the frequencies of the black jazz music, rhythm and blues, provide the appropriate background that justifies the atmosphere of the characters and settings as well as their actions and inactions. (48) A typical Ed. Bullins' play often presents black community with promising

youngsters who grow up to become pimps, drunkards, urchins, gangsters, cultists, junkie, murderers and other miscreants in the society. Bullins makes an average African-American to look at racism in a totally new way. Mike Sell in an introductory essay to *Ed. Bullins Twelve Plays and Selected Writings* says that;

Though critical of experiment for its own sake and better known as a realist, Bullins has challenged the mainstream as a hard core avant-garde, experimenting widely, audaciously, even dangerously with dramatic form and theatrical events. He has composed happenings, rituals, historical pageants, Grand Guignol, Opera bouffie, and dramatic shaggy dogs. He helped develop (with Amiri Baraka and Ben Caldwell) one new genre, the revolutionary commercial and invented another all by himself, what I would call the 'agitprop closet drama' a form of political theatre that deconstructs the lines between theatrical representation and insurrectionary action, art as utilitarian means and art as end in itself. (1)

In considering Literature and society, Wellek and Warren observe that "literature is a social institution, using as its medium, language as a social creation", they add that, "literature has usually arisen in close connection with particular social institutions... literature has also a social function or use which cannot be purely individual". (94) The sociological approach to literature cultivates literature as a social phenomenon, in which every authentic domestic literature is the product of the story of the people. Clark holds the view that, "what the artist does is to transform social phenomenon into literary equation". (114) Clark also says that, "sociological readings view literature as either a document of social phenomena or a product of those same phenomena. One may read from society into a text or one may reverse the procedure". (114) For the literature of any society to make impact, in spite of adopting the flora and fauna of that society, the visible institutions or icons of the society must be boldly adopted either in the setting, theme, costume, language, character, occasion, event and others. These not only create plausibility, but also purge and educate as well as entertain the society with traits familiar to them. Ed. Bullins plays, vis-à-vis the concept of social revolution in the African-American drama as presented in: *Clara's Ole Man* and *In the Wine Time* remain our focus in this paper, although this article may make references to other plays of Ed. Bullins and other African-American playwrights. However, this work is anchored on Amiri Baraka's Revolutionary Theatre theory. It is poised to expose Ed. Bullins' perspectives in

the overall clamour of the Africa-American liberation, freedom and integration in the agenda of the main stream American society.

Revolutionary theory is an aspect of sociological approach to literature. Among its principles is arousing of the oppressed/masses against the oppressors. This Theatre, Baraka states in his essay, is an integral part of Revolutionary ideology "The Revolutionary Theatre" (1971) that;

Americans will hate the Revolutionary Theatre because it will be out to destroy them and whatever they believe is real. The belief that the Whites are oppressing the Blacks is not new to the African-American history and literature". (297)

Harold Cruse's article "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American" gives an insight into the application of Marxist Revolutionary paradigm in African-American context. Marxism has remained the bases of revolutionary theory in literature. Adding to this fact Cruse notes that;

Many of the Western Marxism's fundamental theoretical formulations concerning revolution and nationalism are seriously challenged by the Cuban Revolution. American Marxism which, since World War II, has undergone a progressive loss of influence and prestige is challenged most profoundly. For while most American Marxist assert that the Cuban Revolution substantiates their theories of the nationalism, national liberation and revolution, in fact, the Cuban success is more nearly a 'succes de circonstance'. (39)

Comparing the Cuban experience, Cruse sees African-American case as a matter of domestic colonialism. He notes further that;

From the beginning, the American Negro has existed as a colonial being. His enslavement coincided with the colonial expansion of the European powers and was nothing more or less than a condition of domestic colonialism. Instead of the United States establishing a colonial empire in Africa, it brought the colonial system home and installed it in the Southern States. When the Civil War broke up the slave system and the Negro was emancipated, he gained only partial freedom. Emancipation elevated him only to the

level of a semi-dependent man, not that of an equal or independent being. (41)

African-American literature arises as a reflection of self-consciousness of the expression of the African-American society. It reflects their ideological and socio-cultural images at the various stages of the struggles for liberation of the Blackman in America. Amiri Baraka during the Black Arts Movement inaugurated the Revolutionary Theatre. This according to its manifesto published by Baraka is anti-Western. Baraka makes it clear when he says, (concerning the protagonists of the African-American plays like: Clay in *Dutchman*, Ray in *the Toilet*, Walker in *the Slave*, and others who are all victims) "In the Western sense they could be heroes. But the Revolutionary Theatre, even if it is Western, must be anti-Western. It must show horrible coming attractions of the crumbling of the West". (295-296)

But, Bullins' approach to the ideologies of Revolutionary Theatre is quite complementary to that of Baraka. Bullins in all his plays describes revolution from the object of concern in themselves (Vanova, 48). Bullins' characters live out their nuisances in their actions to showcase the Blacks' inhumanity to themselves in spite of the age long American racism. Bullins' major persuasion is for the blacks to test the revolutionary paradigm and rhetoric and set their house in order, instead of believing the revolutionaries hook, line and sinker and to amend their deviant behaviours inimical to human survival in spite of the level of freedom; hence he exposes the Blacks' induced violence against themselves. These he defines as: Blacks' impediments against the optimal development of the black society and the societal deviances which are detrimental to the natural human growth, habitation and life actualization in any society irrespective of colour, class or creed. Ed. Bullins discovers that there is weakness in the strength of the black community, a weakness that is never considered by the other African-American playwrights, this weakness that is assumed as strength that is seldom reflected in the plays of most renowned playwrights as a result of their beclouded search for Black liberation and freedom. This weakness as observed in the plays of Ed. Bullins is Blacks' inhumanity against other Blacks and against themselves.

Generally speaking, Ed. Bullins creates characters that move through a gritty existence towards little that can be called self-realization or existential triumph. This tradition sustains his ideology of a natural world and allows him to expose the vicious circle that has remained a recurring decimal in the entire history and development of the African-American and by extension the Black nations. Most important in the dramatic techniques of Ed. Bullins is that, each of the characters exposes himself and his pedigree as the play unfold and at last is dragged to the same stupor that has held the underclass of all African-American

society of all the eras. On the middle class, Ed. Bullins sees the preaching on freedom and liberation as empty propaganda. In his essay "Black Theatre: The 70s – Evolutionary changes". He notes that;

During the recently left behind 60s, some young Black people in these white, bleak lands imagined the metaphor of times to be revolution. All were inheritors of a radical Black political and social activist past in America that most were ignorant of being that they were Black and victims of their oppressors' school system and lack of system for them, members of an alien culture. (293)

Bullins sees American Educational system as being predicated upon keeping the Blacks ignorant of themselves and of the other coloured races of the world. (293) But the most unfortunate is that Blacks go through these white cultural propaganda mills that produce schizoid misfits, properly called "Black intellectual"

The world of Ed. Bullins, indeed the Black Arts Movement decimated herself into the Bourgeoisie, which is the upper class, the middle class and the underclass which is the lower class. Ed. Bullins, in his popular essay "Black Theatre..." sees the bourgeois as equivalent to the White Americans. In his critique, he observes that;

When the Black artists from the ghettos of Harlem to Watts began challenging, then changing the aesthetic assumption of America through art and theatre, the Black bourgeois intellectual became one of the major active enemies to this Black people's theatre movement. (289)

Ainiri Baraka and the proponents of the Black Arts Movement and the Black Theatre Movement are consciously centred on conscientization of the people. Mishael Nwaiwu has noted that; the emphasis is built on Baraka's affirmation, "we want an art that was recognizably African-American, that was mass-oriented" (55). Nwaiwu, further observes that;

Generally, from the inception, African-American literature especially the drama has two major concerns: Firstly, how the African-Americans should be represented. Is it from the perspective of the upper class, which the mainstream American will cherish or from the middle class whose aspirations are towards whiteness (that is, becoming like

the white man to the detriment of Black culture) or from the underclass whom Americans will not want to be televised? (4)

This is simply because; the mainstream Americans would not want the world to see the underclass as Americans. The second concern is on whom should the drama be focused? Is it the mainstream white American audience or the African-American audience whose life and experiences are being reflected in the plays? (5) On this, Amiri Baraka built on the middle-class characters and experiences while Ed. Bullins' plays concentrated on the experiences of the underclass. The upper class is considered as being one with the white Americans. Bullins addressing this observes that;

The newer phase of Black writing is in the dialectic period of evolution. Black artists are discussing ideas, discussing about the problems and concerns of their Black audience reader, and peers among a body of evolved Black consciousness, hence, it is a Dialectic of Black Contemporary Literature/Art/Theatre that this generation's artists are engaged in. (*Black Theatre*...291)

It has also been observed that the dichotomy between the Black artists and the reactionary Black pseudo-intellectual elements that exploit the community is most evident today in the "Destroy Black Theatre" propaganda of the so-called Black critics, who have greater access to national publications". (*Black Theatre*...290). Baraka's experimentation of the expose metaphor of the revolutionary theatre centred on the middle class, while Bullins conversely presents the pimps, winos, prostitutes, drug addicts/sellers, drunkards, gamblers, bullies, hustlers, school drop outs and others that can be regarded as street people. In plays like *Clara's Ole Man*, *In the Wine Time*, *Fabulous Miss Maria* and others, he extends the societal urchins to include: university undergraduates, working class, ex-navy and other middle-class category of the African-American society who are drawn into the vicious circle of the Black ghettos. Sanders observes that;

Bullins' characters are no longer black figures in a white ground, nor are they haunted by degrading stereotypes or by fears of judgment by an ultimately hostile white audience. Rather, they are fully themselves and fully a part of their dramatic landscape. Bullins' imaginative and artistic assurance and the resulting black stage reality

allows him to explore the black experiences with a freedom denied his predecessors. (18)

Clara's Ole Man is a testamentary statement on the inhumanities of the Black underclass on the Blacks and Blacks' aspiring middle class, especially on the female members of the African-American society. The play tells the story of twenty-year-old Jack, an upwardly mobile black who goes to the ghetto to visit Clara his intended girl friend one afternoon when her "ole man" is supposed to be at work. Not realizing that Clara's lover is actually Big Girl, a lesbian bully who is home when Jack calls, he gets brutally beaten as a result of his ignorance. Bullins in *Clara's Ole Man* raises many fundamental questions which include: the nature and pattern of raising an African-American child and his life in the society. These he saliently exposes with Baby Girl representing the process of growth, Jack as an agent of change, Clara and her desires for change, Big Girl as agent of oppression to Clara's desired change, because she is comfortable with the old system as a result of her selfish gains, hence she does whatever it takes to protect her territory of lesbianism and drunkenness, and finally the gang led by Stogie.

The hero of this play, Clara, was saved from sexually transmitted disease and unwanted pregnancy by Big Girl. She reminds her of this always.

Big Girl:

(Enjoying himself, Hahaha... That wouldn't do no good. Would it? Just remember what shape you were in when I met you, kid. Hahaha. (To Jack) Hey, boy, can you imagine this pretty little trick here had her stomach seven mouths in the wind, waitin' on a dead baby who died from the same disease that Baby Girl had... (34)

In addition to this, she gave her some sex education and personal hygiene tips which Clara's Christian parents neglected to teach her.

Big Girl:

(Condescending): Awww... forget it, sweetie... don't make no never ninth, but you remember how you us 'ta smell when you got ready to bed... like dead hoss or a baby skunk... (To Jack, explaining) that damned Christian mamma and papa of hers didn't tell her a thing 'bout herself... Hahaha... Thought if she ever found out her little things was used to anything else 'cepts quattin' she'd fall backwards right up in it... Zaaa BOOM...

STRAIGHT TA HELL... haha... Din't know that ti'l
Clara had already found her heaven, and on the same trail.
(34)

These goodies as claimed by Big Girl, could only earn Clara her lesbianism sex toy. That Clara can say "Clara, (*ashamed*): sometimes...sometime... I just want to die for bein' here" (34). The invitation to a young man, Jack, and Jack's visit to Clara is her attempt of escape from the ghetto stupor; instead of realizing this earnest desire, it spurs the fire of the inhumanity and jealousy in Big Girl. Clara has earlier told Jack to visit at a time she presumed Big Girl will be at work.

Jack: Well, Clara said for me to come by today in the afternoon when her ole man would be at work...I was wondering what time he got home... (44)

Not knowing that Clara's ole man is Big Girl he has been discussing with;
Big Girl:

(*Stands, tilting over her chair to crash backwards on the floor.*) Her bust juts out, she is controlled but furious:
Clara's ole man is home now... (44)

Big Girl is a lesbian, who works in the medical laboratory. Every other means Jack applied to give Clara freedom from the slavery of Big Girl is blocked. At last, the gangster kingpin, Stogie and his boys: Bama, Hoss are invited by Big Girl to attack and possibly eliminate Jack.

Baby Girl, her cursing behaviour and her mental health challenge the process of raising the infant child among the African-Americans. Big Girl justifying the process says,

Well, it was to give her freedom, ya know? (JACK *shakes his head.*) Ya see, workin' in the hospital with all the nuts fruits and crazies and weirdo's, I get ideas 'bout things. I saw how they get these kids in who have cracked up and even with older people who come in out of skulls, they all mostly cuss. Mostly all of them, all the time they out of their heads, they cuss all the time and do wild things and boy do some of them really get into it and let out all of that filthy shit that's been stored up all them years. But when he does start shockin' them and puttin' them on insulin, they quiet down. That's when the docs think they're gettin'

better, but really they ain't. They're just learn'n like before to hold it in ...just like before, that's one reason most of them come back or are always on the verge afterwards of goin' psycho again. (Sic) (32)

Clara, as Bullins' agent in need of change, makes an explicit statement to Big Girl, "You shouldn't have taught her all them nasty words, Big Girl. Now we can't do anything with her. (32) But Bullins raises the hope which Jack voices out, "Yes, it does seem a problem. But with proper guidance, she'll more than likely be conditioned out of it when she gets into a learning situation among her peer group". (32) The problem in the whole case is that Big Girl and her class is ignorant of what should be done and are not ready to learn, a fact Bullins notes in *the Electronic Nigger*, where Bullins portrays the learners as not humble or patient enough to learn and the teacher, Mr Carpentier not feeling successful enough to teach others. In *Clara's Ole Man*, Big Girl instead of learning from Jack asks Jack, "I said bullshit! Whattaya mean with proper guidance? ...(*Points*) I taught that little bitch myself...the best cuss words I know before she ever climbed out of her crib...Whattaya mean when she gets among her 'peer group'?" (32) All other characters in the play are integral parts and parcels of the stupor of the black underclass as well as their drunkenness and "uneducability" in the language of Bullins in *the Electronic Nigger*. Like those in many of Bullins' later plays, the characters emerge from brutal life experiences with tenacity and grace. While their language is often crude, this eloquently exposes their pain and anger, as well as the humour that sustains them."

In the play *In the Wine Time*, Bullins exposes the relation perspectives among family members. The central character of the play, Ray is a step son of Cliff Dawson and the nephew of Lou Dawson the wife of Cliff. The setting is the door step of the Dawson's where many of their neighbours gather for feasting on cheap wine. Bullins in this play exposes the ordeals of the life of drunkenness. All members of this neighbourhood: Bunny, Gillette, Doris, Red, Bama and Tiny are representatives of the larger African-American world, using the "Avenue" street as the focus setting. The steps at the Dawson's door provide the seats, the soap boxes and the end tables upon which the members of this group define their world and the individual perception of reality and fulfilment, which are not strong enough to separate them from the common circle of the entire African-American underclass. These are reflected in alcoholism, unemployment, sexism, violence, gangsterism, indifferences and other obnoxious vices.

The gallons of "cheap wine", they share represent the semblance of their thoughts and aspirations, which are reflected in Cliff's "preparatory class" for Ray's steps into adulthood. The teachings of Cliff to Ray are seen as the channels

of their fulfilment and sense of achievement, this is crystal clear as can be seen in the following conversation Cliff has with Ray;

Cliff: Well, why don't you get one of the girls next door? Screw one of Homer's sisters. (Chuckling) Get some of his stuff while he's away Ray: Yeah... Yeah, Marigold likes me a lot. Homer even wants me to get Marigold so I might have to marry her and he'd have a brother-in-law he'd like, but she don't want it, not like that, and I don't see the sense of goin' with a girl if I can't do it to her. (85)

This conversation represents the process of handover adults give to the younger ones. Ray a nephew of Lou Dawson was the centre of contention. Cliff wants to live his unlive life through him, while he is the only hope Lou has for the family future. The fact that Cliff wants him to be enrolled into the Navy shows his only hope of survival and escape from the ghetto, but Lou's fear is that, he may come back to be like Cliff, an idle husband, who has no usefulness other than drinking and womanizing. This remains the point of conflict. Nwaiwu buttressing the theatrical implication of this discussion on the audience and society at large observes that;

In other to explicate the change and revolutionary inclination of this play, Ed. Bullins presents Ray's youthfulness and aspiration as the chance for escape from the confines of the wine times. Ray aspires to join the Navy, but he is legally too young to join without the consent of his guardian Lou. His uncle Cliff says 'I'll sign for you' and encourages Ray to go, for he wants him to see the world and have a chance to get beyond the wine time and the Avenue in general. On the contrary, Lou his Aunt, opposes Ray's enlistment for fear of losing him and the even greater fear that he will return just as Cliff has, an unemployed, cussing drunk, who as she says 'refuses to work for a dollar'. (88)

The conflict revolves around Cliff and Lou's desire to live out their unfulfilled dreams through the younger person Ray, who essentially is their last chance of success but in different perspectives. The play shows that they are ready to do anything to safe guide this non-existent future, but each in his or her own opinion of fulfilment. At the point when Ray murders Red, Cliff has to claim guilty, and is ready to go to jail or die, for Ray to continue the empty life he has handed over

to him. A type of messianic hope Bullins sees among the ideologies of the Black revolutionaries, whose promises are more or less empty in the development of the African-American future.

Cliff: Lou... Lou, I want one thing of you...

Lou: He's all I got left, Cliff...

He's all the family I got left.

Cliff: (*handcuffed to the policeman*):

It's your world, Ray... It's yours, boy...

Go on out there and claim it. (100)

Lou is disappointed in Cliff, especially in the way he has chosen to end his miserable life. She is not comfortable with her choice in him. She married him to keep him out of the Brig and more often than not sees him as far below the standard of her hardworking father. In spite of her love, tolerance and endurance of his verbal and physical abuses, he also sleeps with her female friends and neighbours and other members of the community. Considering all the above, with Cliff out of the way, the question remains, what has Lou to offer to this young man that strongly desires escape from the hopeless life of the drunkenness and immorality of the ghetto? This unanswered question remains Bullins concern in the entire attitude he shows to the Black revolutionaries. He believes that, it is only the black artists that are in position to give their brethren the direction in the midst of the numerous ranting on revolution. He maintains that;

The conditions must be created for sweeping social cultural change. It is the Black artist's creative duty to plant, nurture, and spread the seeds of change. It is a deadly serious way of life to make some small contribution in this area of human endeavour which has an extremely high mortality rate. And there is little chance to contribute to this activity- altering human consciousness- when dead through revolutionary, reactionary, or ritual suicide, except that the work survives and is propagated. (300)

The government on their part gives Cliff the G I Bill, which is an offer to the service men to enable them readjust and reintegrate into the society. This is the service men's readjustment Act of 1944, or better known as the G.I. Bill of Rights. In this programme, the U.S. Veterans are provided with billions of dollars to enable them get vocational training and higher education. Jack in *Clara's Ole Man* is a partaker of this adjustment programme having served in the Navy.

Jack: Ohhh... I'm goin ta College prep on the G.I. Bill now... and workin' a little. (43)

Instead of appreciating this self enhancement advancement grant from the government, they mock him asking him if it is the reason why he is speaking as one with his mouth full of shit. Upon all these opportunities, they refuse to enhance themselves, a situation Ed. Bullins describes as uneducable in *The Electronic Nigger*.

The Electronic Nigger is a direct address to the middleclass freedom movement, whose ideologies are unrealistic to the situation of the African-American underclass and society in general. But its frontier on the education and the educator are unresolved issues of the African-American society. This statement by A.T. Carpentier summarizes Ed. Bullins views about them thus:

A.T. Carpentier:

What I'm saying is this... with our present cybernetic generation it is psycho-politically relevant to engage our socio-philosophical existence on a quantitatum scale, which is, of course, pertinent to the outer-motivated migration of our inner-orientated social compact. Yes! Yes, indeed, I might add. A most visionary prognosis, as it were but... hahaha... but we pioneers must look over our bifocals, I always say... hahaha... giving me added insight to perceive the political exiguousness of our true concomitant predicament. True, preclinical precociousness gives indication that our trivialization is vulva, but, owing to the press of the press, our avowed aims are maleficent! True! Yes, true! And we are becoming more so. In areas of negative seeming communications probing our error factors are quite negligible... For instance... Senator Dodd getting a pension for someone who has gotten abducted and initiated at "kukluxklan" meeting... well... it's poesy!... Monochromatic! (60)

Ed. Bullins in an essay "Black Theatre..." makes it clear that;

The future of Black theatre will be in its evolution into a profound instrument of altering the slave mentality of Black Americans in an evil white world of ever shifting values and reality; for the Black persona, there must be sanctuary for re-creation of the Black spirit and the African

identity, so as to survive in racist mainstream America. The Black theatre has carved out this part of the future for itself. (302)

These concepts revolve around the plays of Bullins in the twentieth cycle. The most elucidating is *Fabulous Miss Marie* which like *Clara's Ole Man* presents an African-American woman who is so comfortable in the stupor of decay and self-destruction. Marie grew up at Buffalo, Wanda her niece tells the rest of her story thus:

She had quite a reputation of being wild.... My my, the stories that they still tell. They said that her mother died in childbirth. She being the child nobody knowing who the daddy... And Aunt Marie was brought up by her mother's mother who was one of the first coloured teachers of Pittstown PG. And they said that Aunt Marie was very spoiled from receiving almost anything that she wanted... they said that Aunt Marie used to drink Com whiskey and smoke cigarettes in public and cuss and race in cars with their top rolled back and she wouldn't go to school... 'look what school did for my poor little mamma she would say. And was a show girl and went to Philly and New York... and somethin' happened that nobody ever talks about and she ended up with Bill (125-126).

Bills Marie's husband in his case is not an exception. Bill has this to say about himself,

Bill: It ain't been a bad life. Hell no, not a bad one. It could have been worse, ye know... yeah, chief... it could have been a buste... wow... But I met Marie (110).

The life of Bill and Marie together is an eye sore. The worst aspect being that undergraduates like Toni, Gafney, Art and others, in spite of their education and exposures are drawn back to the world of Marie and Bill, just as Jack is drawn into the world of Big Girl and Clara and possibly is destroyed.

The life stories of persons like Cliff, Big Girl, Marie and others are dangerous entities in the world and society like African-Americans. They are natural leaders acknowledged by their compatriots, having the knowledge and abilities to motivate others in the underclass with all the experiences they have gathered; they build their own world and recruit others in deviant choices. Instead of using their smartness to build a better future for themselves and their

society, they continue to dissipate characteristic antics that hold the underclass captive such as drinking, smoking, narcotics abuses, sexual promiscuity and societal violence and others. Younger generations represented by Ray in *In the Wine time*, Clara in *Clara's Ole Man*, Wanda in *Fabulous Miss Marie* and others, naturally adopt these deviant characters as ways of life and as norms of the black underclass and they live it out as the African-American way of life. At the end Ray becomes a murderer living free in the society and ready to enlist in the Navy. Clara has no opportunity of true love, Jack meets his dead in an attempt to rescue Clara, while Wanda got pregnant and runs away.

In conclusion, Worthen, W.B. in the preface to the brief edition of the *Harcourt Anthology to Drama* (2002) notes that, "studying drama is more than reading plays. It requires the study of where the plays were produced, the culture that framed those theatres and the critical and performance history that have framed the meaning of the drama over the time". (3) This entails a study of the symbols and the meanings especially in relation to the messages the play communicates to the first society that receives the drama. Worthen maintains that, "of the many kinds of literature, drama is perhaps the most immediately involved in the life of its community" (3). Drama confronts the audience in the confines of the theatre and lets them watch and judge their actions and inactions. Amiri Baraka in his concept of Revolutionary Theatre exposes the life lived in the African-American society with undoubtable condemnation of the Whites as architects of the Blacks misfortunes. In his Expose theatre plays, he enacts the various scenes and episodes of Whites inhumanity to Blacks, thus exposing the vulnerability of the Blackman in a White dominated society. Ed. Bullins in the same line but on the other hand, exposes the Blacks vulnerability at various streets of the African-American society in his Theatre of Reality. This is the complementary aspect of the revolutionary theatre, for Bullins gives the audience the side of African-Americans inhumanities to themselves. In other words, while Baraka is busy challenging the Blacks to rise against the Whiteman's inhumanity to Blackman, Ed. Bullins complements his vision by asking the Blackman to be careful with his choices against their fellow Blackman and against themselves.

Works Cited

- Bailey, Peter "A look at the contemporary Black Theatre Movement" in *Black American Literature Forum*. 17 (1) 1983, 19-21
- Baraka, Amiri "The Revolutionary Tradition in Afro-American literature in *Selected plays and prose of Amiri Baraka*/le Roi Jones New York Marron 1979. 242-251.

- . "The Revolutionary Theatre" in *Afro-American Literature an Introduction*. Robert Hayden et al (eds.) New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc. 1971. 295-298.
- Baraka, Amiri and Larry Neale (eds). *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing* Classic Press, 1968.
- Barnes, Clive. "American Place Stages' *Electronic Nigger*" by Ed. Bullins. In New York Times 9 March, 1962.
- Bullins, Ed. Clara's Ole Man" in *The Drama Review*. 12(4) 1968 159-171.
- Clark, Priscilla B. "Literature and Sociology". *Interrelations of Literature* ed. Jean Pierre Barricelli and Joseph Gibaldi. New York: MLA, 1982 107-122.
- Cruse, Harold. "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American" in *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing*: Amiri Baraka (ed.) Classic Press, 1968.
- Gates, Henry Louis and Nellie Y McKay (eds.) *The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature*. New York ww Norton Company, 1997.
- Grant, Lisbeth "The New Lafayette Theatre. Anatomy of a Community Art Institution in *The Drama Review*: TDR Vol. 16, No. 4. Black Theatre Issue. December, 1972 46-55.
- Harris, William J. *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader*. New York Basic Book, 2009.
- Menson-Furr, Ladrica C. Audience and the African American playwright: an analysis of the importance of audience selection and audience response on the dramaturgies of August Wilson and Ed Bullins. PhD Thesis, Louisiana: Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2002.
- Nwaiwu, Mishael Chinaecherem. Social Engagement and the African-American Aesthetic in the Selected Drama of Amiri Baraka and Ed. Bullins PhD Thesis. University of Port Harcourt, 2015.
- Sell, Mike (ed. *Ed. Bullins: Twelve Plays and Selected Writings*. The University of Michigan Press, 2006.
- Sanders, Leslie G. *The Development of Black Theatre in America: from Shallow to Selves*. Baton Rouge: La, 1989.
- Stevens, Bonnie Klomp et al. *A Guide to Literary Criticism and Research*. New York: CBS College Publishing, 1987.
- Vanova, Lenka "The Power of Black Theatre: ImanuAmiri Baraka and Ed. Bullins' Play as Reflection of the Transformation of the Civil Right Movement in 1960. Masary University, 2009.
- Wellek, Rene and Austin Warren. *Theory of Literature*. Mitcham: Penguin, 1963.
- Worthen, William B. *The Harcourt Anthology of Drama*. Australia, Hernie Pub, 2002.