

**ED. BULLINS AND THE RE-CREATION OF
THE NEO AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN
*ELECTRONIC NIGGER AND IN THE WINE TIME***

By

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Abstract

One of the essential privileges of a literary writer is the opportunity to create and re-create worlds and characters to suit the thoughts, ideologies and messages he has for the society in his literature. A literary writer can satirically represent the society of the literary product to expose the euphoria of the values and at the same time reveal possible alternatives. This will enable the audience to juxtapose what they know and the new ideologies in relation to the harmonious existence of the human society. Ed. Bullins, an African-American playwright of the Black Arts Movement era, carefully replicates the everyday struggles of the African-Americans especially the underclass with the psychological depth of the ultimate result, as well as the possible alternatives for a better tomorrow and improved standard of living. He creates characters that move through a gritty existence towards little that can be called self realization or existential triumph as far as the present African-American tradition is concern. However, he goes beyond the above to creatively inform his audience of a better alternative. The creative alternative is the major concern of this paper using *Electronic Nigger* and *In the Wine Time*.

Key words: Creativity, Ed. Bullins, Neo-African-American Re-creation and society

Introduction

It is a natural duty for a creative writer to entertain his audience. Beyond the role of entertainment, literature allows the society to examine the various choices they make in their actions and inactions. By extension the

creative writer gives the audience, especially in a dramatic stage the rare opportunity to adjudicate over their actions, inactions and attitudes. Literature also guides the society in examining the differences between their choices and the other forgone alternatives. Most importantly, the audience through a creative work is challenged with the available choices for a harmonious relationship and better future.

Ed. Bullins is one of the most significant playwrights to emerge from the Black Power Movement (BPM). According to Mike Sell, “by Bullins’ own admission, he is one of the most important and controversial playwright of the cold war era” (1945-91) (Introduction, 1). This is because;

Bullins has persistently shattered critical and theatrical orthodoxy (including the paradoxical orthodoxy of the so-called avant-grade), recast the basic terms of dramatic criticism, engaged with some of the most pressing issues surrounding race representation and written provocation fascinating and quite often beautiful drama(Sell,1).

Bullins as a creative writer show cases the African-American ideals and the various futures of such life especially for an African-American in American society. He categorizes the inhumanities along the lines of the way America is treating the African-American and what African-Americans are doing to themselves.

A typical Ed. Bullins’ play represents his ideology on the African-American revolution, liberation and empowerment. He creates characters that move through what Mike Sell calls “a gritty existence towards little that can be called self-realization or existential triumph under the so called African-American culture” (1). Ed. Bullins, though critical of experiment for its own sake, he is better known as a realist, because he, in several ways has challenged the mainstream African-American society without meaning harm, but as a hard-core avant-gardist, has drawn the society via the theatre and drama to examine and re-examine the experimentation and widely audaciously, even dangerously, the tenets of the revolutionaries, their ideologies, and possibly the future of the African-American society from the present dispensation under the various facets of the Black culture as propelled by the elders, who purport to hand over to the younger generation the fight for freedom.

The plays of Ed. Bullins are composed from the happenings, rituals and historical pageant of the African-American society. Sell maintains that, Ed. Bullins in addition to the commercial aspect of his genre in the society creates “a form of political theatre that deconstructs the lines between theatrical representation and insurrectionary action, thereby redefining what art means as utilitarian and art as an end in itself (1). Bullins’ art creates direct address to the society especially in the confines of the theatre. These plays are replica of the life lived in the various streets of the African-American underclass with little appearances of the middle class and upper class members. Because of Bullins focus on the underclass, he avoids sophisticated use of language, hence he often subscribes to argots, cants and other street languages. Nwaiwu has observed that, “Bullins delights in black street argot and uses it to reveal its lyricism, while keeping its harshness and profanity unchanged” (152).

This essay adopts Priscilla B. Clark’s sociology approaches to literature and Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s ground-breaking approaches on the relationship between the African and African-American vernacular tradition and the black literature in the Signifying Monkey as the theories of explication. The selected plays of focus include: *The Electronic Nigger* (1968) and *In the Wine Time* (1976). Nwahunanya considers the study of literature as the study of a literally artifacts (11), which invariably is the study of the society of the literary product. Literature as a field of study is a complex area of human cultural development. Critics since Aristotle have tried to involve theories in the evaluation and interpretation of literary products.

These theories fundamentally are considered in two aspects. These are the consideration of art of art’s sake views and the utilitarian value of art. The former considers the artifact as an organism, while the latter builds on the social responsibility of the literally product. The proponents of art for art sake lay emphasis on the aesthetics components of the literary piece. However, in other to buttress the intent of the utilitarian values of the literally product, the proponents consider the content of literally work in relation to the society and environment, especially the impact the work is likely to create to the receiving society. In our case, the writers of the Black Arts Movement era claim to have blended the aesthetics and utilitarian roles of arts to the society as a result created literature from the people’s experiences (Nwaiwu, VI).

Clark (1974) elucidating on the issues concerning literature and the society opines that, the task of sociology of literature is basically one of translating literally equation into social equation. Clark's traditional approach, especially the reflection theory, views literature as a document of social phenomena or as a product of the same phenomena. In other words, one may read from society into the text or one may reverse the procedure. This Clark maintains is mere translation of social phenomena into the literary equations. This relationship can be defined as symbiotic (Clark, 5). This is an off shoot of Auguste Comte's positivism that builds its argument on the physical world that operates according to the gravity and other absolute laws, so does the society.

As Clark maintains there are three axes to literary interpretation, "The first looks at the place and functions of literature in the society, the second considers the effect of the literary phenomena, while the third looks at the literary turn of mind which concerns the place of society in literature". (7) Buttressing this relationship, Clark maintains that the society supplies the themes, character types, trends, manner within the literary work; these in turn are received as the literary product which goes back to the society to purge and show the society what they look like on the stage in the case of drama. Wellek and Warren (1965) have drawn attention to the same issue when they note that "literature has usually arisen in close connection with particular social institution. In primitive society, poetry, ritual, magic or play are inseparable. Literature has also a special role or use which can be purely individualized (95).

In line with Clark's position, the society supplies the literary raw materials required in the production of the literary artifact: the playwright, the novelist, and the poet organizes these raw materials into a literary finished product and sends it back to the producing society and others as the consumers of the literary product. Although we must not neglect the gap between the social role of the writer and the institutional role of the art of literature, which is purely economic: with the writer being part of society, literature reflects directly or indirectly his social ideologies which according to Wellek and Warren may find expression in extra literary documents (95-96).

Literary ideologies may create or recreate the society. In this vein, the literary writer may teach, correct, inform, entertain or chart a new direction to the society in the line of his thought. These invariably define the functions or the utilitarian valve of literature to the society. A writer

may also put himself in the service of other classes; this is still part of societal influence. Apart from being an artistic expression, Literature is an integral part of the society and societal expression. Chinua Achebe's thoughtful article "African and her writer" underscores the social responsibility of creativity. He says, "In the beginning, art was good and useful, it always had its airy and magical qualities, of course: but even the magical was often intended to minister to a basic human need, to serve, down to earth necessity, like when the caveman drew pictures on the rock of animals they hoped to kill in their next hunt"!(19)

In another article "The Novelist as teacher" Achebe makes it clear that; "The writer cannot be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done. In fact he should march as -Ezekiel Mphahlele says in his *African Image*- the sensitive point in his community" (45). This is the universal responsibility of every writer irrespective of culture, creed and class. It is also an important aspect of literary explication. Henry Louis Gates Jr. in the theory, "the signifying monkey" delineates these functions of the writers and literature to the African-American society with her peculiarities by extension the Black world.

The Signifying Monkey is a theory of literary explication that developed from the tradition and experiences of the African-Americans. Gates Jr. maintains that, the black experience is the root of black vernacular. He says, "The black vernacular, in other words is thriving despite predictions during the Civil Right era that it would soon be a necessary causality of school of desegregation and the larger socio-economic integration of black people into the mainstream American institution".(1) The theory of the signifying monkey, being built in the black vernacular explores the relationship of the black vernacular tradition to the African-American literary tradition.

By aligning to the vernacular to the literary tradition, Gate Jr., embodies all the phases in the development of the African-American from Jamestown Virginia 1619 to the contemporary times of Barack Obama. This is very familiar to the African-American literary trend irrespective of the era. James Baldwin in his introductory notes to Richard Wrights *Native Son* says that,

Any writer, I suppose feels that the world into which he was born is nothing less than a conspiracy against the cultivation of his talent-which attitude certainly he has a great deal to support it. On the other hand, it is only because the world

looks on his talent with such frightening indifference that the artist is compelled to make his talent important (2).

The literature of the African-American right from the period of orality is a reflection of this compulsion. The African-American desires to be heard got the magnitude in the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro movement. W.E.B Du Bois in his famous book of essay *The Soul of the Black Folk (1903)* defines the black experiences before the Harlem Renaissance as the experience of a people who are doomed to conceive of the world through a veil, a veil that requires the black person to see himself through the revelation of others.

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others... one ever feel his two-ness,-an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideas in one dark body who dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (626).

Alain Lock's expression in his article "the New Negro" carefully interprets the experiences of the African-Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. Harlem in Manhattan is not merely the largest Negro Community in the world, but the first concentration in the history of so many diverse element of Negro life. Harlem Manhattan attracted the Africans in America, the West Indians, the Negro-Americans: both from South and North, the man from the city and the man from the country side, village, town, the peasants, the students, the businessmen, the professionals, the artists, the poets, the musicians the adventurer and the worker, the preachers and the criminals, the exploiters and the social outcasts. Each of these groups has come with its own separate motives and for its own special end, but as Alain Lock has noted, "their greatest experience has been the finding of one another" (963). But one thing very important is as Lock opines;

With this renewed self respect and self-dependence, the life of the Negro community is bound to enter a new dynamic phase, the buoyancy from within compensating for whatever pressure there may be of the conditions from without ...the young Negro in his poetry, his art, his education and his new outlook, with the additional advantage, of course of the

poise and greater certainty of knowing what it is all about (962).

Langston Hughes a prominent poet, playwright, and novelist of the Harlem Renaissance in his reply to George Samuel Schulyer's article "the Negro Art Hokum", through his celebrated article "the Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" categorically says,

We young Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not it does not matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom tom cries and the tom tom laughs. If colored people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain free within ourselves (1271).

George Samuel Schulyer has in the above mentioned article denied the existence of the Negro Art thus:

Negro Art 'made in America' is as non-existent as the widely advertized profundity of Cal Coolidge, the 'seven years of progress' Mayor Hylan or the reported sophistication of the New Yorkers. Negro Art there has been is and will be among the numerous black nations of Africa; but to suggest the possibility of an such development among the ten million colored people in this republic is self evident foolishness (1171).

Schulyer's outright denial of the separate Negro Literature and Hughes violent assertion of same reveal a pertinent expression of the unguided neglect of the black expression which Richard Wright one of the famous writers of the Civil Right era captures in "Blue Print of Negro Writing". The Civil Right era inaugurated a violent defense and revenge in the African-American Literature. Wright in the above mentioned article makes it clear thus;

Generally speaking, Negro Writing in the past has been confined to humble novels, poems, and plays, prim and decorous ambassadors who went a-begging to white

America. They entered the court of American public opinion dressed in the knee-pants of servility, curtsying to show that the Negro was not inferior, that he had a life comparable to that of other people (1380).

To Wright, most of these artists were received as though they were French poodles who do clever tricks. This era was motivated with violent passion to defend and assert their position in America as reflected in Richard Wright *Black Boy* and *Native Son*. Most young African-Americans organized themselves in gangs to combat most of the white American agents of suppression and segregation. These American agents include: the Jim Crow Law agents, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and other white American agents to maintain segregation and discrimination against black and assert white supremacy.

The Civil Right era witnessed a lot of race instigated clashes. These clashes and violence against the blacks forced the African-Americans to organize their own gangs for defense and revenge. Although most of the black gangs claim to be non-violent, but gradually depreciated to what could no longer be controlled. They take laws into their hands. There are records of violent killings and clashes between the Black gangs and the white gangs. Often it will be between Black gang and another Black gang because of differences in ideologies. This conditions master minded a strong level of depreciation in values, aspirations and purposes among the young African-Americans. In a case that average African-American parents end up teaching their child how to defend himself on the American street and other attitudes of revenge and survival in a hostile society. This created a culture violence and survival of the mighty, thus giving opportunity for incessant arrest and regular police interventions.

The Black Power Movement is an agent of the African-Americans aimed at using force to end police or mob violence against Negroes. This group worked so hard to gain the political powers, to control schools, police, firemen and other services in the black neighbourhood. Black Power as Dasilva has noted gave young African-Americans a new sense of pride. Some of them began to say they would no longer take orders from the whites irrespective of their position, but the whites were in-charge of most city life (437).

Ed. Bullins belongs to the Black Power Movement. The experiences of Black Arts Movement period were not different from the

experiences of the Civil Right era. Amiri Baraka's in his article "the Black Arts Movement" says,

By the late 50's the US Civil Right Movement had reached a new height of intensity with the victory of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the emergence of Dr King and the formation of the S.C.L.C. The Cuban Revolution brought the 50's to a roaring climax with yet another popular democratic victory. By 1960, the Black Students Movement had formed out of the Greensboro Black Students 'sit-ins and soon S.N.C.C. would step onto the stage of Black peoples' struggle (495).

In another article, "Cultural Revolution and the Literary Canon" Baraka asserts that, these development of the African-American society reflected in the Literature of the era.

The reactionary trend of the 1950s which produced McCarthyism and the Hollywood, and academic purges, the Korean War and Eisenhower was reflected in the American Literature by its domination, by a punishingly dry highly mannered Magazine verse equipped with hot and cold running Latin and Greek phrases mit footnotes and emotional significance of a *New York Times* crossword puzzle (150).

The climax of the utility of art in this era of African-American Literature is the 'Expose Theatre' this concept is an integral part of Amiri Baraka's "the Revolutionary Theatre"

Revolutionary theatre (that) should force change...the revolutionary theatre must Expose! Show up the insides of these humans. Look into the black skulls. White men will cower before this theatre because it hates them. Because they themselves have trained them 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 craziness taught to us in our rational movements. It must Accuse and Attack because it is a theatre of victims. It looks

at the sky with the victims' eyes and moves the victims to look at the strength in their minds and their bodies (295).

There is something very pertinent to this concept of the revolutionary theatre; it considers both the White man's side and the Black man's side for wholistic revolution. Ed. Bullins, an illustrious son of Amiri Baraka considers the Black man's side of the revolution which states;

The Revolutionary Theatre should force change, it should be change (All their faces turned into the lights and you work on them black magic, and cleanse them at having seen the ugliness. And if the beautiful see themselves they will love themselves.) We are preaching virtue again, but by that to mean now towards what seems the most constructive use of the word (295).

Ed. Bullins was born Edward Artic on July 2, 1935 to Edward Bullins and Bertha Marie Queen in Philadelphia. He was primarily raised by his mother. He attended predominantly white schools and got involved with gangs. Among the schools he attended was Franklin High Schools where he nearly lost his life as a result of gang clashes. He later quit high school for the Navy. During his stay with Navy, he won a boxing championship and this motivated him to start reading.

Bullins returned to Philadelphia and enrolled in a night school and stayed until 1958, when he left his wife and kid for Los Angeles; after receiving his General Education Development (GED) in Los Angeles, he enrolled in Los Angeles City College. There he began to write shorts stories and other genres of Literature. He has written a lot of plays and has effectively excelled in other genre. In this research as we said earlier are: *The Electronic Nigger* (1968) *In the Wine Time* (1976).

One thing Central to these plays is the examination of the various ideologies of growth and paradigm of development in the Contemporary African-American Society. The Neo-African-American Community is faced with devastations and the depreciation of the young African-American as a result of the revenge to the behaviours of violent instruction and suppressions of the whites in the various communities, this situation forced the young blacks into revenge gangs and violet group even when they claim to be non-violent. Most of the ex-veterans resort to the life of drug abuse, drunkenness, gay and lesbianism, and other vices. Because

most of these vices have taken root, they are been described as the ways of the Blacks. Bullins adopted the theatre because the theatres are the most common place for the recreation of the Blacks irrespective of the class. Hills notes that,

One of the founders of the Black Arts Theatre in 1964 was LeRoi Jones (as he was then called now known as Amiri Baraka), the rented leader of the movement. His plays Dutchman is eventually cited as one of the first examples of the black revolutionary drama of the period... That play had all the hallmarks of revolutionary drama its theme was blatant racism on a global scale. The anger generated on the stage was harshly explosive, and there was a deliberate and unsettling confrontation with its audience (Hills, 424).

One thing common with the artists of the Black Arts Movement as Vanova has asserted in;

Similarly, to the development in the society, artists often engaged in raising black consciousness and racial awareness. They employed two powerful means of doing so, either portrayed the beautiful black self distinct from its white stereotype picture but all the more valuable, or they set examples of radical protest and even violence to be followed by blacks, or both (Vanova, 71-72).

This is because most of the artists transport street life to the theatre. Ngugi, Wa Thiongo opines that;

Literature cannot escape from class power structures that shape our everyday life. Here a writer has no choice, whether or not he is aware of it, his works affect one or more aspect of the intense economic, political cultural and ideological struggles in a society. What he can choose is one or the other side in the battle field: the side of the people or the side of those social forces and classes that try to keep the people down. What he or she cannot do is to remain neutral (whites)... (iv).

In this direction, Bullins plays reflect violent revolutionary instincts and outrages occasioned by incessant race riots and other racial

developments. Carefully, he presents the blacks as partly responsible to their mishaps and makes it clear that the change they desire should begin from them. Bullins beyond the above concentrates on the inter-personal and intra-personal relationship of the Blacks among themselves, especially among the underclass-the class which American will not like to televise. Bullins raises question on the pattern of revolution among the people who are uneducable but live in abject sexism, alcoholism, unemployment, drug abuse and many other agents of self destruction. Most African-Americans sees these as what American has turned the innocent Black man, but Bullins' worry is on what the Blackman continues to do to himself. In other words, Bullins sees the Blacks as not doing enough to save themselves.

Bullins felt that the so called Black intellectuals and revolutionaries movements are not doing enough to bring the liberation of the Blacks instead they are enslaving them the more with their selfish interest, consequently, his plays stand out as mirrors of the society. This is because the plays interpret both the ideologies and practices. In fact the plays visualize aspects of the life lived by the African-American from the beginning to the end. In other words, while the Black Arts Movement teams is clamouring for the liberation of the African-American from the American racial hegemony, Bullins is making the essential call on one African-American to make a change from their erroneous perception of life, self maltreatment, poor moral attitude and illicit behavioural patterns that ultimately will lead to self destruction. Through the plays he showcases end of the route they are taking as well as the reasonable and responsible approaches to life.

To explicate the above, Bullins centres his plays on their growth and development paradigm, the future of the ideologies of the revolutionaries, and the community process of reintegrating the change. Hay puts it better in a brief literary biography of Bullins,

Who Ed. Bullins was became insignificant because of what he was—simply contrary. Whatever already existed was there then only to be opposed. It is predictable then that his plays unlike anything ever seen in African -American theatre such proper and right Art-theatre classics as Willis Richardson's the claps women's future... Bullins' plays had to be different even from Baraka; *Dutchman* which Bullins took as the new right proper (23).

Bullins captions his plays Theatre of reality; he strongly asserts in his plays that the method is not the goal, but the persons to whom this method is directed. It is obvious that because of the aim, most of Bullins plays are presented from the African-American culture as an observer or as participant. As an observer/ participant, he vividly capture both the subtle and obvious nuisance that make one experiences unique and indigenous to the African-American peculiarities from any other inhabitants of the American Society. Hence he calls this theatrical contrariness' which dwells on the immediate and future societal choices imminent to the friends in black experiences.

To buttress his concept of theatrical contrariness, Bullins tries to describe the various nature of the Blacks American, from their respective and experiences. This makes his plays natural. Bullins natural style reflects in his choices of character in and setting, the actions of each character in the various settings reveal their replica in the wider community, at the end Bullins will allow the audience see and reach conclusion on the end of such characters in order to fore warn the community on their choices in the African-American clamour of liberation. Hence all plays of Bullins relentlessly explore the internal or inner forces that constrain black people from achieving their desired freedom in the wider American Society. The plays we will consider in this Bullins re-creation of the Neo-African-American Community are: *Electronic Nigger*(1968), and *In the Wine Time* (1976). These plays have the general features that represent Ed. Bullions and the African-American Society of his dream as an artist.

Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s the Signifying Monkey is a character of African-American Folklore adapted from the trickster figure of the Yoruba Mythology, "Esu Elegbara",. This images and persons from African were brought into the African-American under the name of Esu, Echu-Elegua, Papa Legba, and Papa Le Bas. Esu and his variants are messengers. They are also intermediaries between the gods and men by mean of trick. Esu and cohort agents of the god carry out their assignment irrespective of the nature as long as they are designated to carry the message. Most importantly, they are what you made them to be for you. As a trickster, the Echu Elegua this is the Monkey figure can carry all sort of message and crafty dealing with other animals and emerge successfully.

By bringing this trickster image, Gates Jr. draws in the embodiment of the historical and sociological experiences of the signifying Monkey because Esu-Elegbara is whatever the society makes out of it. In this

theory, Gates Jr. defines the concept of the black vernacular as the compendium of African-American literary tradition. Taking a lift from Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacob Derida, Gates Jr. draws the linguistic relationships between the signified and the signifier, thus establishing the relationship shared by the internal structure of linguistic signs and their significations.

Gates Jr. while explicating the relationship shared between the African-American experiences and their vernacular uncovers the uniqueness of these experiences of the African-American because they vary from experiences of the American mainstream literature. He maintains that the African-American vernacular has strong attachment to the experiences of the people which are expressed in their literature and they manifest in their day to day activities in the streets and homes of African-American Society. Defining relationship thus, Gates Jr. opines that “no true interpretation, evaluation or appreciation of African-American literature irrespective of the era should neglect the experiences that gave birth to the literature” these he termed the signified and the signifier.

For Gates Jr. they are embedded in the African-American Vernacular tradition; because black writers also read each other and see the intent on redefining what we might think of as key canonical topoi and tropes received from the black tradition itself. In a nutshell, the theory of the signifying Monkey draws a relationship between what is said and the image behind the expression or the image the expression creates. George Hutchinson and John K. Young’s Introduction to the book *Publishing Blackness* note that,

Henry Louis Gates Jr. in the signifying Monkey and beyond, suggest a sometimes ambivalent yet very productive relationship between print and oral expression in African-American literary tradition. A distrust of the printed word especially when it concerns or presumes to represent black experiences (even if produced by writers of African descent), is written into much Black literature after world war 11 (5).

The major thesis of Gates is, what did /do black people signify in a society in which they were intentionally introduced as the subjugated, as the enslaved ciper. Nothing on the x-axis of the white signification, and everything on the y-axis of blackness (47).

Bullins as a playwright wrote in an era that was dominated by three distinct African-American Movement: The Black Arts/ consciousness Movement, The Black Power Movement and The Black Studies Movement. The Black Arts Movement has cultural nationalism consciousness as their major motivation. The Black Power Movement has political nationalism, while the Black studies Movement is influenced by the motivations of the two above. Carefully, the plays under our study represent the various segments of the era. Although careful studies have shown that they intertwine. *Electronic Nigger* raises question on the pedigree of revolutions and their educators while *In the Wine Time* re-examines the concept of handing over to the younger or succeeding generation and the content of what is being handed over.

In the play, *Electronic Nigger*, Mr. Carpentier, a large dark skinned man in his late thirties represents the inter-racial class among the African-American society. Mr. Jones the instructor in the Creative Writing course, English 22 E. Bullins carefully exposes the fundamental pitfall created by the inter-racial and intra-racial hegemony rampant in the general American society and African-American society in particular. This war of superiority makes the students uneducable and raises instructors of questionable pedigree as teachers. Each character in the play represents a class in the African-American society.

The choice of characters in the play reveals the essential message the playwright has for the audience. In the writing on the rubrics,

Mr. Jones, A light-brown-skinned man. Thirty years old Horn-rimmed glasses. Crew cut and small mustache. He speaks in dipped manner or when in control of himself but is more than self-conscious, even from the beginning. Whatever, Mr Jones Speaks as unlike the popular conception of how a Negro speaks as possible. Not even the fallacious accent acquired by many “cultured” or highly educated Negroes should be sought but that general cross-fertilized dialect found on various loy league campuses and those of the University of California. He sports on ascot (46).

The descriptions given to Mr. Jones makes obvious the nature of his class and kind the African-American Community Jones belongs -a class of the Black Arts Movement, who work so hard to showcase everything in Black aesthetics- Mr. Jones appearance on the stage unequivocally says that his

kind are in the community. As a lecturer on Creative Writing English 22^E, he has pedigree on creating an art that is truly African-American, but it is so unfortunate that his artistic productions have not been successful. Jones says,

I want everybody to go home now and think about what has happened tonight ... and if you want to be writer after this, then please don't come back to this class. I've just published an unsuccessful novel, as you know, and I thought I'd teach a while and finished my second one and eat a bit... But if any of you'd like a good steady job, I could recommend you... Reading is the answer. It must be...cultivating the sensibilities...Plato...Aristotle...Homer...Descartes...And Jones...

I've always wanted to carry the Jones banner high (61).

The class of the Blacks who draw much from the earliest Negro intellectuals, venerating their lives as cultural styles for the Negroes only to end up at the limbo. Men like Booker T. Washington who taught at West Virginia before teaching at Hampton. One thing general to the class of Jones is that they live their lives in such a way that they will receive the commendation of the whites, just as principal General Samuel C. Armstrong Commanded Booker T. Washington.

In *Electronic Nigger*, Mr. Carpentier is described as one with large dark skin and is in his late thirties. Bullins presents him as an African-American among the inter-racial class who refuse to be taught, hence Mr. Jones remarks about him "you are utterly uneducable" he further suggests that Mr. Carpentier withdraws from the class.(54) The class is noisy both the students and their lecturer are not ready to learn for reasons best known to them. In the case of Marie in Bullins other play *The Fabulous Miss Marie*, Marie's mother was a victim of school child pregnancy and she died at the birth of the child Marie who was brought up by her grandmother. However this becomes Marie's excuse for not going to school. As narrated by Wanda, "And Marie's excuse for not going to school is: "look at what school did to my poor little mamma" she would say, and she was a show girl and went to Philly and New York... and somethin' happened that nobody ever talks about and she ended up out here with Bills" (126).

With the above Marie refuses to go school instead lives a life of drunkenness, drug abuses, smoking, and marathon sexual activities with too

many patterns. When the lecturer declares the students as uneducable in Bullins *the Electronic Nigger*, what hope is left for the society. The lecturer declares himself first as a failure. This is a fundamental statement on the revolutionists and the revolutionary ideologies. Bullins in an article “the New Lafayette Theatre” says,

The literature has changed from social protest oriented from one of a dialectical nature among black people -Black dialectics- and this new thrust has two main branches-the dialectic of change and the dialectics of experience. The writers are attempting to answer questions concerning Black survival and future, one group through confronting the Black/white reality of America, the other by heightening the dreadful white reality of being a modern black captive and victim (4).

Sander observes that, there is relentless exploration of the inner forces that constrain black people from realizing their freedom and potential to survive (177). Bullins locates these constraints in the process of training, development and what is handed over. These are all integral part of character and societal structure and they defines the future of any society.

In the Wine Time is Bullins first play in the twentieth century cycle collection. This play interrogates the African-American family foundation, pattern of succession, the act of growing in the African-American society in the midst of unpredictable violence, the effect of drunkenness and others. The characters represent the various facet of a healthy society yet, the chance of growth is slim because of the mindset of the members. This is because they are always under the influence of alcohol.

The major characters are Cliff and Lou Dawson (husband and wife); this couple is the care givers of their nephew, who is also their foster child, Ray. Other characters, who are also members of the neighbourhood include: Bunny, Gillette, Doris, Red, Bama and Tiny. The combination of these characters represent a sub-culture which can be identified as the image of the larger African-American society. They all live in “the Avenue” neighbourhood. Bullins sets the actions of the play at the steps of the Dawson home, their popular drinking joint. It is at this joint that nightly wine times, the communal gathering of this motley crew take place. The steps naturally provide seats, the soap boxes and the end tables upon which the members of this community define their world and their individual

realities which do not take them far from the avenue squalor of alcoholism, unemployment, sexism, violence, indifference and other vices that have turned a regular tradition of the African-American underclass. These invariably define their world, growth, development aspiration and possibly what the bequeath to the younger generation. As Nwaiwu has noted,

Symbolically, the gallons of cheap wine they share represent the sameness of their lives as well as the communal hedge which invariably makes it impossible for anyone of them to escape, because their entire being are defined within the confines of these realities as a result, they are confined as a group in this world, except the youngest member of the group, Ray (82).

Bullins in his style created Ray as a possible route of escape from the cervix circle. Ray has the entire plan to be liberated, but the strife between Aunt Lou and Uncle Cliff is a strong hedge against his escape. Ray is rarely sixteen yet he can drink as much as any adult around the Avenue neighbourhood. He has been an unwilling victim of the wine times since childhood. He is also familiar with smoking and womanizing. Nwaiwu observes that, “Ray in spite of his age is just as much an adult as any grown up member of his society and is an integral part of the membership who frequent the Dawson home nightly for wine” (82).

Ray’s age and aspiration is Bullins tool for the re-creation of the already marred future of the society. As a growing youth, Ray aspires to join the Navy but legally, he cannot without the consent of his guardians who have conflicting views about the aspiration. Cliff Dawson wants to sign for him to enable him join the Navy and by the naval training and tours see “the world” he wants Ray to go beyond the wine times and develop outside the Avenue. But Aunt Lou thinks differently, feeling the Ray may come back to be like Cliff, who returned to drunkenness, unemployed, and amorality. The two have an unfulfilled life which they want to fulfill through Ray. As a wife Lou is not happy with Cliff because he falls short of all what can be called ‘good’ in a husband which she has been covering.

Cliff on his part feels that everyone should be allowed to experience the ruffles of life. At the end of the play violence emanates, Ray murders Red, the Police intervenes, Cliff accepts responsibility and goes to jail in place of Ray who murdered Red at the steps in the Avenue during the wine

drinking session and within the Police dragging handed over to Ray amidst confusion and troubles, in the following conversations with Lou:

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

Lou: He is all I got Cliff... He's all the family I got left.

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

Go on out there and claim it (100).

He has already taught him how to womanize and live an amoral life. One wonders what is in such world for Ray to claim.

One thing to note is that Cliff is an Ex Service man, who benefited from the readjustment Act of 1944, better called the G.I Bill of Right. This is an opportunity given to Ex Servicemen to gainfully re-establish them after discharge from the military service. An opportunity which was utilized by Jack to be educated in Bullins other play *Clara's Ole Man*. As an experienced Navy officer, Cliff is knowledgeable enough to chart a better future other than drinking and womanizing. But Cliff instead of forging towards a better goal for the future, he continues to set himself back with drug abuse and alcoholism, in the language of Bullins "the drug of choice"(67).

One wonders the type of future these foundations can build. As Nwaiwu asserts: In "*In the Wine Time* Bullins raises question on the legacy adults bequeath to the youthsUncle Cliff's legacy to Ray is womanizing and drinking and these he carefully handed down to young Ray".(85) Who has just escaped the punishment of a murderer and has been thrown into the psychological torture of guilt and undefined future. Because the probability of Aunt Lou allowing him or not allowing him to enroll into the Navy is still hanging. This is to say that the adults have nothing to hand over to the upcoming generation. Bullins in his article "Should Black Actors Play Chekhov?" says,

It was as if the American Reconstruction/Revolution had been successful to a point: The Blacks had gotten their forty arces, their mule, and more. But the leaders of the movement, the Black Bourgeoisie, like Madame Ranevsky, were morally, materially, and spiritually bankrupt (304).

One can imagine the product of such faulty foundation in a society devastated by racism and other segregation vices.

In conclusion, literature and artistic creativity stand out as essential tools for mirroring the society. By such literary mirroring, the dramatic genre has the peculiar advantage of giving man the opportunity, in the confines of the theatre to be entertained by his follies while he is being taught. This is also an ample chance given to man to examine his decisions and also to see them in practice with or without been involved in practical terms. Edward Artie Bullins in his plays carefully draws the attentions of the underclass, middle class and possibly the upper class of the African-Americans to what they have made themselves in spite of what they accuse the white Americans of to have done to the Blackman, beyond the above he raise their thought to what they have been bequeathing to the upcoming generation. Bullins in the play *the Electronic Nigger* makes it clear that there is a wealth of prospect in learning, but raises doubt on the future of an uneducable society, who refuses to learn either from their past experiences or the experiences of others. Worst still with ideologies built only on revenge and wanton destruction. *In the Wine Time* on its part raises the question on what is handed over in the midst of such chaotic and irresponsible society fill with drunkenness, violence, unemployment, sexual promiscuity, and other vices. Bullins in these plays make a fundamental statement with the plays thus supports the truism that whatever one sows will be what one will surely reap. Therefore Bullins in the play has given other playwrights irrespective of the locale to dramatize their society so as to instill positive effects in the values of their society.

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