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STAGING AMERICAN CONSTRAINT: FROM CONTAINMENT TO CONFINEMENT POST 1945

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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To Elizabeth, Tyler, and Simon

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small contribution to furthering justice for those victimized by oppressive forms of constraint.

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Abstract

An analysis of American plays from the mid-late 20th century, this study explores dramas representing and resisting social constraint on stage. It organizes its discussion around two primary forms of constraint understood to characterize the era: containment from roughly 1948-1968, and confinement from 1973 forward. Works by Tennessee Williams, Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka, and Hanay Geiogamah are investigated, revealing how each dramatist employs rhetorical and aesthetic practices to engage forms of social constraint, thereby enacting resistance to varied forms of oppression such as the closeting of non-normative sexual identities and racist housing policies during the containment era, and oppressive law enforcement tactics aimed at quelling dissent and promoting mass incarceration during the era of confinement.

Introduction

Space has long been a central factor in the calculus of power in America, even as particular understandings of space as a conceptual category have steadily evolved. Early on it announced itself in the form of geographical colonial expansion, which quickly developed, as Frederick Jackson Turner argues, into a frontier obsession culminating in westward "progress" from "sea to shining sea." John F. Kennedy famously dubbed outer space the "final frontier," and more recently, many conceive of globalism as shorthand, more or less, for the geographical spread of American cultural imperialism. But while all of these examples are forms of expansion, characterized chiefly by outward momentum, they have always already been reliant upon spatial impulses in the opposite direction, ones that both literally and figuratively constrain rather than encourage mobility. Various forms of enslavement were among the most fundamental and obvious manifestations of constraint starting with European contact and moving on through the colonial projects and up to the antebellum era. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 and later policies creating reservation spaces for indigenous peoples, the WWII internment camps for Japanese Americans, and numerous other examples further document this far less celebrated but nonetheless enduring legacy of American constraint.

But rather than a sweeping overview of historical progression, envisioning space as only a vague symbolic concept, this project aims instead to offer an in-depth exploration of how space figures in several important American plays of

the mid-late 20th century. These plays engage constraining measures directly by attending to one of two important spatial categories shaping the social regulation of space in the United States post-1945: first, the logic of containment (1948-1968) that dominated the era of the Cold War, and second, the subsequent form identified here as confinement, one best emblematized by the exponential growth of the American prison system since 1973. For these purposes, containment serves as a period-specific concept describing forms of spatially constraining social regulation in spirit and concurrent with George Kennan's Cold War objective of controlling the geographical spread of communism. Confinement, marking the next period, refers to even more restrictive and overtly punitive forms of constraint consistent with but not reducible to the dramatic rise in rates of incarceration. In the context of analyzing the period's plays, confinement is primarily associated with the aggressively punitive law enforcement policies of governmental power used to quell dissent, within which forms of incarceration are only one component. Additionally, the scope of analysis here is limited to several of the most canonical and influential treatments of space on the containment-era stage and a select few of the earliest plays engaging only the very beginnings of the confinement era. This is done in part to help mark the transition from one period of constraint to the other and to understand the shifting features and strategies employed by the respective dramas of each period.

By examining theater, a cultural form that relies on both literal and literary/textual constructions of space, this dissertation investigates the plays in

the context of the two constraining forms, paying particular attention to the ways in which the establishment of norms and expressions of resistance to them have been figured and explored dramatically in specific spatial representations and metaphors. It at times employs formal, aesthetic analysis, but always to specific, politicized, materialist ends, examining how various playwrights' aesthetic practices are turned more or less successfully to politically resistant purposes. In so doing, it also tries to understand the relationship between these two related and overlapping periods of constraint by focusing on a select few important texts and querying how the weakening and ultimate failure of containment logic in part paved the way for a shift toward confinement as the subsequent form of constraint. The overall aim, however, is to think productively about how these particular plays situated in a variety of sociopolitical contexts and with their own unique concerns reveal the nuances and evolving nature of staging space to challenge constraint. Gauging the strategies, strengths, and weaknesses of these playwrights and their dramas provides a framework for better understanding how they have resisted constraining injustices through politically-minded aesthetic practices vis-a-vis space.

§ Theorizing Space and Social Constraint: An Important Critical Debt

Insofar as it operates from the assumptions that certain spaces are socially produced and that the social regulation of space serves a primary constitutive function in the creation and regulation of our lived experiences of

social realities, this project is indebted to the work of the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre. As Lefebvre argues, "'ideal' space, which has to do with mental (logico-mathematical) categories . . . [and] 'real' space, which is the space of social practice . . . involve, underpin, and presuppose [each] other" (14). For Lefebvre, imagining space as an abstract/theoretical concept is inextricably bound to how one interacts with it as an actual site of social engagement. The plays in this study bear this out in the ways in which they rely on physical theatrical spaces both to represent and contest how both spatial concepts (often symbolic and theoretical) and 'real' spaces are brought to bear on lived experience, both oppressively and resistantly. Lefebvre's overall insistence on the unavoidably social dimensions of the production of space has helped to lay the groundwork for analyzing the ways in which producing and regulating spaces becomes a critical hegemonic tool, one which must be interrogated in order fully to understand how our socio-political fabric both emerges and is maintained. While not specifically Marxist in political orientation, this project aims to follow in Lefebvre's theoretical trajectory, and in so doing, positions itself as indebted to the pioneering influence of his concern with the relationship between space and social conditions and those issuing from its legacy.

§ Engaging Constraint on Stage

Visual texts in general often have a unique political resourcefulness,

something only heightened when the political dimension they seek to confront (constraint) is often conceptualized in connection to how it is perceived visually. Consequently, while other forms of literary and cultural production may be addressed incidentally, the predominant focus here is on the stage for a number of reasons. The first of these is rooted in the ways in which literal space functions as an essential component of set design. One obvious consequence is the opportunity afforded by the use of literal constructions of space both directly and metaphorically to present spatial relationships and dimensions of various social realities with which the audience might engage. How theatrical spaces are framed and how they function in relation to the social issues with which the texts contend thus becomes a central analytical concern.

Relatedly, the notion of the theater itself as an important sight of social engagement and spectatorship and its attendant spatial organization along class and other lines provides an added layer of spatial consideration that might enrich readings of dramatic texts. Even further, during the eras in question, the stage enjoyed status as a popular medium with greater penetration into mass audiences than many other cultural forms, especially other literary ones. Such factors position the analysis here productively toward questioning the plays' efficacies in representing and critiquing social norms and their regulation within the culture at large *to* the culture at large. Finally, the sense in which these texts rely quite literally on performance underscores the performative nature of socially produced and regulated spaces as emphasized by Lefebvre and others.

There is, of course, a considerable body of influential theory related to the critical political potential of theatrical presentations and their aesthetics. At various points the analysis here engages some of this discourse, most notably several important contributions from the early twentieth century when the need for theorizing politics and aesthetics in the face of rising fascism was desperately urgent. The Brechtian notion of the alienation effect, for example, suggests the pressing need for a surprising, jolting effect on an audience to awaken them from the sort of critical slumber Brecht finds bourgeois popular fare often engenders. Brecht champions an essentially modernist, experimental aesthetic as the most politically efficacious one. Georg Lukacs, on the other hand, points to social realism—particularly as expressed in the novel—as preferable for its socio-political potential. The engagements between these critics and others of their contemporaries (Benjamin and Adorno, for example) serve occasionally as reference points for analyzing the aesthetic and spatial dimensions of key theatrical texts, as do later voices that intervene importantly in theorizing the relationship between aesthetics and politics, such as Fredric Jameson's in his reflective analysis of these issues in the concluding epilogue to *Aesthetics and Politics*.

§ Considering Containment

While the socially regulating function of spatial constraint as contested in certain dramatic representations is the broad focus of the project, it is

purposefully divided into two parts. These are arranged according to two critically important forms of constraint identified as cultural dominants from the post-war era forward, namely and in sequence, containment (1948-1968) and confinement (1973-?[1]). Part 1 on containment carefully analyzes two of Tennessee Williams's plays in connection to containment sexuality, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *The Night of the Iguana*, and then looks at Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* in connection to race-based containment strategies. In identifying these chronological beginning and ending points for the era of containment, the intent is not to pin down a rigid time frame, but rather to reference two important spatially and socio-politically concerned events for framing purposes, in this case ones geographically significant through their impact on the real estate market and the demographics of neighborhoods. These chronological markers are meant to serve as emblematic bookends if not rigidly literal beginning and end points for the period. In 1948, the Supreme Court issued the Shelley vs. Kraemer decision, a landmark case disallowing the courts from enforcing racial covenants on real estate based on the high court's interpretation of the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment. In 1968, *The Fair Housing Act*, enacted as *Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968*, introduced enforcement mechanisms intended to ensure that racial discrimination of the sort in question in Shelley vs. Kramer might be meaningfully addressed through the force of federal law. It is worth noting that

[1] The terminating date is represented with a question mark here to refer to the as-of-yet undetermined nature of whether or not this era is ongoing. This question is taken up more fully in the epilogue.

dates of production or publication of the various plays explored in connection to containment need not always fall exclusively within these time parameters to be understood in relation to the prevailing emphases and points of distinction associated with containment and its dominant and resistant ideologies, rhetorics, and institutions.

The origins of the actual term “containment” used in connection with the Cold War era issue first from the work of American historian and diplomat George Kennan. Kennan formed the basis of containment doctrine in “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” also known as the “X Article” for the pseudonym under which he published it in 1947 in *Foreign Affairs* magazine. Kennan famously contended that "United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies” (575-576). The sense in which this statement was interpreted—which Kennan has since claimed was in many ways contrary to his intent, at least in scope—came to characterize the so-called Truman-doctrine, an ideology that would hold sway over US foreign policy in one form or another for decades. But while the term originates with Kennan, it is worth emphasizing that its use a conceptual frame for thinking about the mid 20th century in the US has become pervasive thanks to the work of a number of important American studies scholars such as Alan Nadel, Michael Rogin, Andrew Ross, and others. Nadel for example, defines containment culture thus:

> Containment was the name of a privileged American narrative

> during the cold war. Although technically referring to U.S. foreign policy from 1948 to at least the mid-60s, it also describes American life in numerous venues and under sundry rubrics during the period: to the extent that corporate production and biological reproduction, military deployment and industrial technology, televised hearings and filmed teleplays, the cult of domesticity and the fetishizing of domestic security, the arms race and atoms for peace all contributed to the containment of communism, the disparate acts performed in the name of these practices joined the legible agenda of American history as aspects of containment culture. (2-3)

For the purposes of this dissertation, the key claim about containment is that what was formally theorized as a spatially constraining geopolitical strategy for combating the global spread of communism also came back home, so to speak, in the form of aggressive containment efforts to socially regulate domestic spaces. This is most overwhelmingly evident in connection to the circumscribing of certain norms and power dynamics concerning race and sexuality, which are best exemplified in Cold War-era Jim Crow segregation and the widespread "closeting" of "deviant" sexualities[2].

A great number of critics and scholars have contributed meaningfully to how one might understand the Cold War era and its various socially constraining

[2] A particularly strong link was made between communist sympathy or complicity and homosexual identity in what is often referred to as the "lavender scare." This is well documented in the now infamous senate committee report "Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in the Government" (1950).

domestic manifestations of containment logic. Their influence foregrounds much of the analysis of the plays in part 1. Deborah Nelson's examination of the changing nature of how privacy was conceived in post-war America, particularly her model for how privacy might be theorized in relation to the policies and logic of containment and what she calls its "slow breakdown . . . from 1959-1973," provides an important theoretical framework for investigating the spatial dimensions and representations of the mid-century dramas of Tennessee Williams and Lorraine Hansberry. Catherine Jurca's work on understanding the importance of suburbia as a crucial subject of and setting for so many of the novels of the twentieth century also proves instructive. Jurca examines both the obsession with and disillusionment from suburban spaces as connected to a predominantly white male fantasy of escape but also of self-pity, victimization and powerlessness. These notions prove especially useful in thinking carefully about the racial politics of the urban/suburban binary and associated ideologies as expressed and critiqued in Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun.*

For its analysis of the containment of non-normative sexualities during the Cold War Era and beyond, this project also owes a debt to some of the fundamental works of queer theory, including Michel Foucault's famous rejection of the repressive hypothesis in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1.* It is also aided by Eve Sedgwick's landmark text *The Epistemology of the Closet*, which historicizes and theorizes the origins and development of what has come to be the principle metaphor for the containment of sexuality. The work of Judith Butler on the ways

in which performance shapes our recognition and naming of gender and sexuality also frames analysis of these issues in Williams's plays.

In her historical analysis of the family, Elaine Tyler May details in part how sexuality—especially attitudes toward issues like fertility, pre-marital sex, and "deviant" sexual practices such as homosexuality—was understood during, shaped by, and profoundly influential on experiences of the Cold War era. May's work opens possibilities for inquiry into how the plays of Williams, and, to a lesser extent, Hansberry and James Baldwin, both reflect and challenge such issues. In a similar way, James Zeigler's investigation of how the Cold War's red scare rhetorics inflected the era's prevailing logics of racism and various modes of resistance to them serves as another important touchstone for thinking about race, resistance, and the spatial dimensions of these same texts.

George Lipsitz very directly addresses specific spatial forms that produce racist and racialized spaces, lending a useful framework for analyzing Hansberry and Baldwin's plays especially. Building on his earlier arguments about the consequences of focusing on black disadvantages rather than white privileges when trying properly to account for racial inequity, Lipsitz chronicles how land ownership and housing policies such as the 1862 Homestead Act, the 1934 Federal Housing Act, and the history of lending practices throughout the 20th century, among other things, have wrought inherently racist spaces that persist meaningfully even in the present. He characterizes the challenge his *How Racism takes Place* poses to those blaming blacks for continued inequality even

after the successes of the Civil Rights movement and other progressive accomplishments aimed at creating equality of opportunity thus: "I mean [the phrase 'takes place'] figuratively, in the way historians do . . . but I also use it [like] cultural geographers do, to describe how social relations take on their full force and meaning when they are enacted physically in actual places" (5). Lipsitz employs this doubled sense of the phrase "taking place" for the purpose of "examining residential and school segregation, mortgage and insurance redlining, taxation and transportation policies, [and] the location of environmental amenities and toxic hazards." In so doing, he endeavors to substantiate his claims that "race is produced by space, that it takes places for racism to take place" (5). In connection with both the sets of events, policies, and issues he examines and the claims he makes concerning them, this project interrogates the racialized and racist dimensions of spatiality as represented, critiqued, and perhaps even produced by works like *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Blues for Mister Charlie*.

In a similar vein, Richard Rothstein's *Color of Law* focuses on the systemic roots of what he says is the force of *de jure* rather than *de facto* segregation contributing to enduring experiences of spatially apparent racial segregation in neighborhoods and urban spaces across the country. As he argues, "Without our government's purposeful imposition of racial segregation, the other causes—private prejudice, white flight, real estate steering, bank redlining, income differences, and self-segregation—still would have existed but

with far less opportunity for expression" (viii). Rothstein's attentiveness to the judicial and bureaucratic factors contributing to this perpetuation of segregated spaces suggests, in his view, the urgent need for a constitutional rather juridical remedy. Like Lipsitz's, Zeigler's and others, his work on the relationship between race and place informs the dissertation's analysis, especially as it relates to thinking strategically about the modes of resistance figured in or suggested by the various cultural representations and their utility. Hansberry and Baldwin's plays' spatially-concerned representations of and resistances to containment racism corroborate much of the theoretical insistences of these scholars.

§ Contemplating Confinement

Confinement serves as the second major conceptual category for analyzing plays confronting socially directed spatial constraint in post-'45 America. These plays include Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* and *The Slave* and Hanay Geiogamah's *Foghorn* and *49.* Confinement emerges in large part due to recognition of the failure of containment culture to neutralize the threat of resistance. Further, confinement more directly and vociferously lays bare the real impetus of containment culture: the denial of access to power for those marginalized by the norms of the dominant culture and ruling class. While it is not true to say that the era of confinement is reducible to the issue of incarceration, incarceration certainly stands as its most visible and literalized manifestation. The shocking statistics on American rates of incarceration are well

documented and widely known, such as the oft-referenced fact that the United States accounts for 5 percent of the world's population but 25% of its prisoners (Pfaff 1). There is a growing literature on the complex causes and most likely remedies for these circumstances, some of which will be explored more carefully in the epilogue. As it relates to incarceration, the starting point cited here for the confinement era, 1973, is not in any way an arbitrary one. It coincides with the very sharp rise in U.S. incarceration rates that began in that year. As a point of reference, it is worth noting that 5 decades ago, at the beginning of the 1970's, the American incarceration rate was one fifth its current size: 93 per 100,000 in 1972 vs. 498 per 100,000 in 2014[3]. This amounts to roughly 200,000 incarcerated in 1972 versus over 1.56 million in 2014. (Pfaff 1).

But while the insidious effects of rising incarceration might emblematize and help give name to the confinement era, the primary analysis of the associated plays in this project is connected more closely to a broader and more general shift toward harshly punitive and overt policies of aggressive federal law enforcement toward dissenting groups in the Black Power and Red Power movements, a shift for which incarceration rates only point to one part of the overall picture. Events such as the assassination of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by Chicago Police on December 4, 1969 and the history of police interaction with other major resistance figures like Assata Shakur and Eldridge Cleaver illustrate these tactics in the Black Power context, while incidents like the

[3] According to John Pfaff, at its peak in 2008 the rate was 536 per 100,000. 2010 marked the first time since 1972 that the prison population trended in a downward direction, which it continued to do up through 2014, the last year for which reliable national data is currently available.

seizing of Alcatraz (1969-1971), the Trail of Broken Treaties and BIA occupation (1972), and the Confrontation at Wounded Knee (1973) serve as key examples in the narrative of law enforcement engagement with Red Power.

As with the era of containment logic, certain critical and theoretical voices play key roles in shaping the methods and focuses of this project's exploration of confinement, even if their influence has less to do with providing direct literary-critical tools for close reading and more to do with theoretical frames for imagining how confinement functions as a form of social regulation. To begin, perhaps no work concerning itself with both forms of punishment and their socially regulatory power has been more influential than Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish.* Foucault analyses what he terms the carceral society, identifying a shift away from directly punitive methods administered by the state and towards the inculcation of self-discipline through the power of widespread surveillance. His is a landmark study of the relationship between forms of punishment and methods of hegemonic control. Foucault's work proves particularly important for thinking through how surveillance tactics, such as those employed by the federal government in operations such as COINTELPRO, were used in tandem with punitive strategies in forms of American confinement, somewhat in contradiction to the distinction Foucault suggests[4].

[4] Foucault's work is also interesting in connection to recent trends towards high-tech surveillance and remote monitoring, evolving forms of confinement in the recent climate of criminal justice and the ever-changing needs and tactics of the US prison-industrial complex.

For historicizing the ways in which federal law enforcement power engaged resistance movements of the late 1960's and 1970's, several other key scholarly contributions provide important context for the analysis of confinement era plays. William Van Deburg's *New Day in Babylon* traces important links between forms of Black Power activism and the Black Arts movement, setting a backdrop against which to interpret the plays of one of the key confinement era playwrights explored here, Amiri Baraka. Van Deburg provides a revealing account of the challenges posed by federal surveillance efforts as well as violent interventions and confrontations with radical dissenters. Similarly, Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior's *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* chronicles the legacy and activism of Red Power, probing in detail the strategies, successes, and failures of various events and key figures in struggles against confinement-era power. This scholarship provides crucial context for best understanding the spatially-informed dramaturgical practices of Hanay Geiogamah (Kiowa and Delaware).

§ Sequence and Structure

Part I: Containment (1948-1968) will contend with how space is figured in texts created during and/or set within the Cold War Era. The focus is on specific forms of containment, linking the geopolitical concerns with geographic space with the ways in which containing spaces also functioned to regulate social norms and related acts of resistance at home in the US. The first chapter takes

up Tennessee Williams's seminal plays *The Night of the Iguana* (1961, based on a 1948 short story) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) as its primary texts. It also briefly references their cinematic adaptations (*Iguana* 1964 and *Cat* 1958) in its analysis. The focus of the chapter is directed toward revealing how these texts explore the necessity of fleeting spaces—often marginal and/or exotic in nature—for resistance to closeting containment forces exerted on sexual "others." While potential problems arise with such a reliance on the exotic, and while Williams offers rather tortured figurations of non-normative sexual identities in many of his characters—problems the chapter's analysis makes clear—it remains the case that Williams's manner of engaging space to resist containment was highly progressive within its context and therefore is an instructive body of work for study.

The second chapter specifically addresses the containment of black spaces through racist housing policies and other segregationist strategies. Its primary artistic texts for analysis are Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) and James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964). The focus is on how each playwright employs literal and symbolic spaces and spatial concepts to challenge containment powers. It argues that each play potently challenges how these literal separations represent, produce, and maintain social realities denying the marginalized access to agency, accomplishing these challenges through their respective engagements with and representations of space through deliberate dramaturgical practices. Employing metaphors of claustrophobia and various

forms of division and separation works alongside more direct representations of actual constraining measures used during containment to substantiate the plays' critiques of how racism "takes place," to borrow the language of Lipsitz's argument.

Beginning in Part II: Confinement, the project responds to a shift in tone and posture by the structures of power relative to resistance struggles, especially as it relates to dissenting minority groups and the policies of policing, punishment, and identity politics. It especially engages emerging forms of constraint in law enforcement strategy as nascent forms of confinement tactics, analyzing the kind of open aggressions which strongly foreshadow the emergence of punishment in the form of incarceration as a hallmark of confinement-era power. It puts theoretical and activist texts directly in conversation with plays/playwrights from different cultural contexts, focusing in chapter three on how the shift toward confinement is made evident through analysis Baraka's *Dutchman* and *The Slave,* especially as distinct in tone and aesthetic approach from contemporary texts earlier analyzed in connection to containment, like Baldwin's *Blues*. Where *Blues* serves as a late example of critically engaging the logic of containment, Baraka's dramas are understood as providing a prescient challenge portending the force of confinement as the emerging dominant category. The avant garde forms and radical tone of Baraka's theater respond to and in some senses forecast the escalation of intensity that accompanies the shift to confinement. It is for these reasons that

Baraka's dramas are both powerful and polarizing, marking them worthy of attention in connection to leveraging theatrical space to contest confinement.

Chapter four then turns to two important Native American dramas, Hanay Geigomah's *Foghorn* (1973) and *49* (1975). It explores how, in ways both akin to and distinct from Baraka, Geiogamah responded to confinement in efforts both to represent and resist its tactics and attendant socio-political realities. *Foghorn* should be understood in part as a direct response to the aggressive actions of the federal government to quell the resistance efforts of the American Indian Movement in its representations of the events of the 19-month occupation of Alcatraz Prison from 1969-1971 and the 1973 encounter with the FBI at Wounded Knee. Many other aspects of the play offer forceful challenges to the literal and figurative constraining efforts deployed against natives by the dominant culture. *49* does similar work by dramatizing the cultural event of the 49 and staging it with careful attention to space and spatial metaphors in order to suggest means of enacting resistance and ensuring the continued presence and vitality of Native cultures in the face of confinement power. The unique tone and forms of Geigomah's work provide an interesting study relative to both the polemical aggression of Baraka's politicized work and the well-known debates about politics and aesthetics in the theater one associates with Brecht, Lukacs, and others.

An Epilogue concludes the project with a brief examination of mass incarceration, which would steadily emerge as the central feature of the

confinement era, something the plays explored in part 2 signal through their determined resistances to confinement's earliest practices. The epilogue briefly engages debates about mass incarceration's chief causes and the most efficacious approaches to curtailing it. It also points to more recent plays and television productions, many of them set in prisons, that might be analyzed for how they challenge confinement, especially by attending to how race, gender, and sexuality are figured in connection to incarceration. The epilogue questions how and whether these more recent cultural texts might be responding to new developments as to what shape constraint is taking and/or will take in the present and future. In other words, it prompts questions about whether confinement is being replaced as the dominant form of constraint, or if contemporary realities are instead part of its continued evolution and increasing strength.

The overall claim of this dissertation is that by exploring the nuances of spatial concerns within key Cold War-era works and those signaling and responding to new policing strategies and the coming rise of mass incarceration, new possibilities materialize within scholarly treatments of these issues and specific cultural and literary texts. By interrogating the plays through the lens of space, the project hopes to open up exciting lines of inquiry into the development of American constructions of racial, gender, and sexual identities in connection to constraint and the various spatially-informed dramaturgical practices resisting it. Ultimately it intends meaningfully to inform and influence the various exchanges between dominant cultural norms and the resistance efforts deployed to

challenge them by both championing and learning from the strategies for resistance represented and critiqued on the post-1945 American stage.

Part I: Containment

Ch 1: Resisting Containment Culture in the Dramas of Tennessee Williams: Liminal Spaces as Zones for Resistance

As the first segment in Part 1 exploring spatially figured modes of resistance to containment on the American stage, this chapter focuses on two plays by Tennessee Williams. While Part 1 on the whole concerns itself with varied forms of containment-era constraint, the primary issue analyzed in this first chapter is the regulation of sexuality. It looks particularly at how characters navigate the potential for enacting non-normative sexual identities in resistance to the closeting effects of containment culture. Williams's treatments of liminal spatiality—figured here most notably in the forms of marginal and transient spaces, the plantation, and exoticized spaces—reflect the extent to which his productions work to resist the strictures of their times. But at the same time that they reveal the useful and progressive functions of liminal spaces for challenging containment, the plays also mark their limits. The other side of the potential afforded by the interstitial, in-betweenness of liminality is restriction from proceeding fully toward the outcome Williams's characters yearn for: freedom from the closet and other restrictive forces of containment-era normativity.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1954) and *The Night of the Iguana (1961)* each present characters whose non-normative sexualities put them at odds with the sexual mores of the dominant culture. In both dramas the metaphorically

containing space of the closet becomes a tortuous constraint, serving to discipline and normalize all "deviants" should they not find some means of escape from its power. In *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* one finds a compelling literary example corroborating how theorists have understood containment culture working domestically to regulate sexual behavior and maintain normativity. Williams illustrates the punishing effects of the hegemonic order and the strong barriers to resistance it imposes. Even as the play engages hopefully with the promise of certain spaces from which either to avoid the closet or exert the power of privilege to overcome it, it also suggests that such resistance is, for its characters at least, less than fully efficacious. *The Night of the Iguana*, on the other hand, refigures resistance to containment by relocating its potential in the license offered by exoticized international spaces beyond the reach of America's containing borders. This idea, addressed only cursorily in *Cat,* is much more fully explored in the later play, and yet *Iguana* too ultimately offers limited prospects for its characters realizing much more than distractingly indulgent lives of excess as expatriates and outcasts. Taken together the two plays offer a potent representation of the injustices of containment power on the one hand, and the degree to which resistance to containment sexuality is still very much fraught with difficulty on the other. In this respect, the plays' spatially informed resistances seemingly occupy their own sort of liminal position vis-a-vis resistance, one not unlike the sorts of spaces on which they rely in their challenges to containment.

The chapter's discussion of the plays proceeds in order of their

publication. It does so in part to demonstrate how *Iguana*'s characters' attempts to relocate resistance to exotic spaces outside the US are hardly more effective than the established zones of domestic resistance figured earlier in *Cat.* In both plays, Williams introduces the idea that measures of agency within liminal[5] spaces might provide some respite from the punitive constraints of the closet. Importantly, however, this strategy fails to enact any complete form of liberty for any of the characters, as even in these marginal and/or seemingly empowered spaces or when faced with the potential of them, characters are forced into some sort of compromise in which any freedom they find from constraining social forces comes at the considerable expense of something else important to their happiness. While transient/marginal spaces, empowering plantation spaces, and exoticized spaces promise some measure of potential for resisting containment, all fall short of providing fully transformative or liberating effects.

Williams's plays should be and have been acknowledged, even lauded, for their progressive impact on representing and thereby confronting the punishing strictures of containment culture. Further, any analysis of their contributions in these respects should be sympathetic to the containing limits of Williams's precarious position within the rhetorical constraints of Cold War-era Broadway. Yet, astute critics from a contemporary socio-historical vantage must also contend with the limited political utility of the torturous tenor of the plays'

[5] It is worth pointing out that the notion of liminal spaces—places of transience, permeability, and marginal activity—serving as zones of resistance during the containment era has manifestations in other important works of American literature from the cold war era. William S. Burroughs's novel *Junky*, for example, presents the street corner and its associations with illicit drug use, transgressive promiscuity, and other non-normative activities and characters as a highly resistant space within which challenges to containment culture were possible.

representations of queer and "deviant" subjectivities. While resistant, his characters are by no means liberated. Further, one must account for the ways in which Williams often views and/or ignores spaces beyond the U.S. through American-centric, exoticized lenses. In these ways, alongside celebration of their resistance to containment through engaging spatial concepts, accounting for how the dramas are in some ways troublingly symptomatic of their times—constrained, ultimately, by the same sort of still-developing liminality that makes temporary escape from limits possible—is also an important part of understanding their impact.

§ Liminal Spaces for Resistance in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, one of Williams's most widely celebrated works, has enjoyed considerable critical and commercial success in its various productions. In this respect its rather middle-brow position as both a popular and socially-concerned drama strikes an important tension impacting the scope of its political sensibility. As a result, *Cat* is a characteristic example of the kind of liminal, in-between positions that occur so frequently in connection to Williams's work. This quality surely accounts in some ways for both the promise and limits of *Cat*'s figurations of resistance, and it is these figurations and their efficacy for the play's characters that serve as the chief points of analysis here. It is *Cat's* compelling explorations of its characters "problems" that have served as the main ingredients fueling both commercial and critical interest, and hardly any

questions so thoroughly pervade critics and audiences' reactions to it as ones querying the nature of the characters' sexualities. This is especially true of Brick's sexual identity, making his characterization a natural starting point for thinking through the relationship between liminal space and resistance in the drama.

To say that the precise nature of Brick's queerness has been the subject of considerable debate is still understatement. His sexuality easily serves as the most critically contemplated aspect of the play, and it likewise seems to be what critics have found the most pressing issue when looking at *Cat* specifically through queer theory lenses. While acknowledging the somewhat daunting quality of the sheer volume of criticism of this sort, Douglas Arrell nonetheless summarizes the general lines of inquiry about Brick's behavior by posing them as basic questions that might be paraphrased as follows: Is Brick a closeted gay man? Is he a "repressed," or "latent" homosexual, in the terms of the 1950's? Is he a homophobic heterosexual, or perhaps the play's representation is deliberately too ambiguous to discern such things" (60)? Williams himself offered little help with answers, even compounding their difficulty with notoriously obfuscating responses that often tried actively to diminish the import of the questions, his way of forcibly resisting what he feared were too reductive modes of analysis for the psychological complexity of Brick's "problem" (Critic 71-73). Arrell describes Williams's responses as "famously evasive," but following

others'[6] lead, he is careful to insist that "tak[ing] [Williams] seriously" when he claims that he is trying to capture something more complex in the play than closeted or repressed homosexuality[7] is crucially important (63).

For Arrell, Eve Sedgwick's contribution of the social-constructionist theory of homosexuality is a helpful place to start when thinking about Brick, something other critics have noted at length; but more specifically, Arrell argues, Brick is an excellent example of what Sedgwick calls "homosexual panic," the social double bind in which men of the era often found themselves wherein strong male bonds were expected while homosexuality was expressly prohibited (61-63). As Arrell understands Sedgwick's concept, the consequent difficulty of the bind's effect leads to an inability even to consider a homosexual identity, perhaps even to a "shutdown of [one's] sexuality altogether" (63). According to Arrell, Brick's behavior is best understood as the product of such panic.

While Arrell is largely convincing on this point, and it seems both useful and important to struggle to understand Brick's sexuality when thinking about the play, for the purposes of this analysis, Big Daddy's advice to Brick in their famous exchange in Act II is even more critical for thinking about sexual identity and liminality in connection to resistance. It touches on Big Daddy's sexual promiscuity and a related, implicit queerness and suggests certain possibilities for how one might find a way outside of the double bind which plagues Brick. The cavalier attitude Big Daddy has towards "knock[ing] around" (85), a sure

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[6] Arrell is drawing especially on the work of John S. Bak's "Sneakin and Spyin . . .," even as he rejects Bak's ultimate conclusions about reading Brick as an existentialist hero.
[7] Williams makes this claim quite clearly in the stage directions of act 2 (85).

reference to non-normative sexual practices (including but not limited to homosexual ones), demonstrates a characteristically Foucauldian attitude towards the "repressive hypothesis[8]." In other words, the way in which Big Daddy seems unconcerned with the moral weight of prevailing containment culture attitudes about sexuality and the privileged status of prohibitive heteronormativity provides a corroborating example of Foucault's observation that sexual repression—insofar as it exists—is purely a socially discursive function of power rather than some sort of ontological or "natural" phenomenon. For Big Daddy, "knocking around," if indeed it includes homosexual sex acts, would not be tantamount to homosexuality as some sort of marker of identity. Rather, in keeping with what Foucault argues was a more typical understanding of sexuality prior to the 19th century, Big Daddy's response suggests that engaging in such acts is merely something one might *do*, which has no meaningful correlation to who or what one *is*.

This is not to suggest that Big Daddy is unaware of or unconcerned with the necessity of projecting heteronormative masculinity as an indispensable part of any claim to social capital. In other words, he is decidedly not advocating that Brick renounce his marriage to Maggie and live openly as a gay man. Rather, he seems to understand the ways in which the discursive practices of social power through performing normativity (in this case, Brick's heterosexual marriage and

[8] In his landmark text, *The History of Sexuality Vol. I,* Foucault urges the abandonment of what he terms the "repressive hypothesis" in favor an acknowledgement of how the proliferation of discourse about sexuality actuality constitutes rather than describes modern notions of sexuality and their implicit connections to theorizing subjectivity.

ability to produce children as heirs) can be distinct from individual, private sex acts, so long as such acts are conducted strategically and with some modicum of public discretion. Further, it seems that for Big Daddy, a crucial way in which this discretion is enacted hinges on the spaces in which "deviant" sexuality can be safely practiced, and these are unavoidably marginal spaces and/or spaces rendered safe by the entitling and liberating functions of cultural and economic power (i.e., the plantation).

When recounting his youthful promiscuity in Act II, it is important to note that Big Daddy is careful to articulate the settings in which the events took place: "hobo jungles and railroad Y's and flophouses in all cities" (86). Crucially, these are all sites of transience and impermanence[9], or in other words, zones of liminality. Temporary and mobile visitors frequent Big Daddy's "flop houses" and "hobo jungles," and the interstitial qualities of these spaces along class and other lines seem part and parcel of what makes engaging in "illicit" sexuality there possible. Brick immediately picks up on Big Daddy's implicit suggestion that "queer spaces" exist, reacting to Big Daddy's announcement with the accusation that this is exactly why Big Daddy has arranged for Brick and Maggie to stay in the room where Jack Straw and Peter Ochello lived as a gay couple: "Maybe that's why you put Maggie and me in this room . . . in which that pair of old sisters slept in a double bed where both of 'em died!" (86). Big Daddy rejects this particular accusation, but before he can even finish his retort, he is interrupted by

[9] Here again, the parallels to Burroughs's nostalgic depictions of similar spaces are worth noting. If nothing else, they suggest the possibility of a certain consensus among queer writers of the era concerning such places.

the entrance of Reverend Tooker, a character clearly meant in this moment to symbolize the discursive weight of Christian theological and social values, values whose presence would prevent the queering of any proximate space. As Big Daddy goes on to say after dispatching the Reverend (who claims to be looking for the bathroom), "It's hard to talk in this place" (86). By implication, it suggests Big Daddy believes there are other possible spaces in which such talk is much safer: namely marginal spaces, as reinforced by his earlier examples. The specific places Big Daddy has mentioned signify as marginal primarily through their class connotations, but as further analysis will soon suggest, these marginal spaces might also be constructed racially and/or nationally, most especially insofar as they are exoticized.

Though not set in a tropical locale like *Iguana*, *Cat* is rife with semi-vague references to the exotic and at times explicit references to overtly exoticized spaces. The description of the plantation in Williams's opening "Notes for the Designer," for example, renders it as "Victorian with a touch of the Far East" (xiii)[10]. This quality is immediately connected with its having been constructed and then occupied by Jack Straw and Peter Ochello, directly linking its commingled exotic and Victorian qualities with the ways in which the two queer characters' "ghost[-like]" presence has marked the space. Williams draws a further connection to inspiration from a photograph of the veranda of Robert Louis Stevenson's home on one of the Samoan islands and the "tender light on

[10] This attentiveness to how physical spaces signify recalls Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological approach to thinking about architecture, especially the architecture of literary-textual spaces, in his *The Poetics of Space.*

weather wood . . . exposed to tropical suns and tropical rains" (xiii). Such references only reemphasize the traces of exotic locales evident in the plantation's ethos, further suggesting the ways in which the Ochello plantation space is in part an orientalist construction in the Saidian sense, one linked with transgression of the mores of contained domestic space.

Further, the exotic is often figured as a zone available for potential deviance from sexual normativity within the dialogue and events of the play itself. For example, Big Daddy recounts to Brick his experiences in "the hills around Barcelona" and also in Marrakech, where encounters with exoticized and orientalized figures shocked even him to the point of disgust. Here Williams offers perhaps the most direct example of orientalist perceptions of Middle-Eastern figures as barbaric, primal, and morally underdeveloped. Big Daddy claims, "In Morocco, them Arabs, why, prostitution begins at 4 or 5 [years of age]" (66). He goes on to describe being solicited by a young "naked child" who tries to "unbutton his trousers." He claims immediately to have returned to the hotel to fetch Big Mama and leave the country at once (66). Though he clearly professes a kind of disavowal of pedophilic exploitation, it is also true that he uses this anecdote rhetorically as an example of the extreme permissiveness available in exotic spaces that disregard containment culture and the constraining forces of heteronormative sexual practices. Relatedly, the only other significant reference to a queer figure in the play is when Brick offers as an example to Big Daddy his own homophobic rejection of a queer fraternity pledge at Ole Miss whom he and

his fraternity brothers "told to git off the campus, and he did, he got! All the way to . . . North Africa!" (89). Once again, North Africa is offered as an exotic place of license, and this time for homosexual orientation and sex acts specifically[11].

Brian Edwards has demonstrated how Tangier in particular was widely understood during the Cold War as a zone of "financial, sexual, social, and governmental [excess]," but also a place ripe with potential for escaping the constraining influence of American social values (122). Yet while he acknowledges the potent challenge this foreign space offered to Cold War logics, he is also careful to point out how it was in large part an exaggerated and exoticized vision of Tangier that pervaded the American imaginary. As he argues, "From afar, Tangier seemed more glamorous, its writers' colony denser, its gay scene wilder, its cosmopolitanism more liberating, its opportunities for rapid financial gain more certain, even its weather less changeable." This understanding was especially tempting "For Americans who did not make that trip, for whom Tangier existed [only] on the page and in the imagination" (123). Further, Edwards suggests it was precisely this exaggeration and especially the accompanying exoticization that functioned as a discourse with which to stifle the threat of any genuine potential places like Tangier might promise:

> The queerness of Tangier, a term that most commentators employed while describing the city (or suggested or signified) was about more than

[11] It is worth noting that Williams himself spent time in Tangier as the guest of Paul Bowles, who, along with his wife, became an important part of the community of American and European immigrant community living there in the 40's and 50's. Other visitors include Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, and, later, Allen Ginsburgh, William S. Burroughs, and Gregory Corso among others. Importantly, Tangier at that time was an international zone jointly administered by multiple European nations, likely contributing to a more laissez faire attitude toward social behavior.

> Tangier's well-known relationship to gay male tourism. (The presence of an openly gay population was only hinted at by some journalists.) More largely, there is buried within the American fascination with Tangier a sense of a potential that might threaten domestic America at its roots. Thus the need within the national narrative to cordon off the city, to repress that potential, so that the route to Tangier did not become a detour. (142)

In not only positing Morocco as a potential liminal zone for resistance, but also exoticizing it so thoroughly in his depiction as to make it seem strange, foreign, and even threatening, Williams perhaps unwittingly participates in a discourse about Morocco which "cordons off" and "repress[es]" any legitimate consideration of its utility as a model for resistance. Both Brick and Big Daddy's tones in referencing North Africa as a queer space are fraught with warning and negative connotation. In other words, neither seems the least bit likely to embrace exotic spaces himself; quite the contrary, in fact.

While Big Daddy and Brick both acknowledge in varied ways the potential license of exotic spaces, on the whole, Big Daddy's faith in the possibility of defying the closet rests on both the potentiality of liminal or marginal spaces within which to avoid the reach of constraining forces and the privilege of his position of considerable economic and social capital. Such privilege is conflated, in many ways, with the plantations space itself. Big Daddy's immense fortune and position in his family he hopes will afford first him and later Brick the kind of

patriarchal, oligarchic agency from which to exert their own wills in strategic defiance of heteronormative social expectations (compulsory heterosexuality, monogamy, etc.). Writing about the plantation setting in *Cat*, Michael Bibler argues, "it allows for elite white male homosexuality even when homosexuality remains ideologically inconsistent with it." This inconsistency, according to Bibler, arises from the contradiction between making homosexuality a "viable" option while at the same time requiring reproduction to maintain "an oppressive system of heterosexualized paternalistic relations" (382). When Big Daddy thinks he has escaped a brush with death (he naively believes, for a time, the misleading diagnosis of his health condition as a spastic colon rather than cancer), he gleefully plans to exercise the power afforded him as the patriarch and plantation owner to indulge himself sexually at his every whim (72).

As his conversation with Brick in Act 2 suggests, he imagines the same possibility for Brick too, if he will only come to see things as Big Daddy does. He comments to Brick at one point, in diction laden heavily with irony, "now that *I'm* straightened out, I'm going to straighten out you" (75). Big Daddy also contends that he has "lived with too much space around [him] to be infected with the ideas of other people. One thing you can grow on a big place is more important than cotton!—is *tolerance*" (emphasis original). Harry Thomas picks up on this in his analysis of Big Daddy as a character who believes in the possibility of space as one ingredient for "bridging the gulf between the homosocial and homosexual that so paralyzes his son" (8). This is ultimately just Big Daddy's fantasy for both

characters, however. Neither Big Daddy nor Brick is able to succeed in escaping the power of the closet through marginal or exotic spaces or the exercise of patriarchal power. The plantation space, as Bibler rightly points out[12], is built on a paradox, and an unsustainable one at that, one that cannot deliver the escape from the closet that Big Daddy believes to be possible.

In the end, any license afforded by the plantation space and its empowering functions depends on the sustainability of that space through heterosexual reproduction, so that escaping normativity is paradoxically enabled only by outwardly performing normative expectations. And the alternatives—the "flophouses" of Big Daddy's youth or the faraway exotic locales referenced earlier—will simply not do for someone of Brick's social class and reputation. Therefore, the potential, on the whole, of liminal spaces for empowering both Brick and Big Daddy to resist containment normativity is far less than fully realized. In the incomplete, in-between-ness of liminality, the resistance predicated on such spaces is both delivered and not, ultimately failing to liberate either character from his constraints.

§ Exotic Space and Resisting Containment in *The Night of the Iguana*

Williams's 1961 play, *The Night of the Iguana,* is set in 1941 on the continental margin of the Mexican coast. The action takes place in the confines

[12] Beyond his 2002 article on *Cat* in *Mississippi Quarterly,* Bibler has expanded his argument to consider the plantation's function in Southern Literature vis-à-vis queerness more broadly. For more, see his *Cotton's Queer Relations: Same-Sex Intimacy And The Literature Of The Southern Plantation, 1936-1968*, published in 2009.

of the Costa Verde, a rustic, cliff-side hotel run by the widowed Maxine Faulk. From the outset nearly everything about the place is rendered exotically, from the always damp, verdant vegetation and abundance of fruit and wildlife[13]; to its "rapaciously lusty" proprietor; to her often shirtless, sweaty and attractive young male employees, with whom it is insinuated that she frequently engages sexually (9). The play overwhelmingly figures Mexico generally, and the Costa Verde specifically, as exotic spaces of sexual excess and transgression. Maxine explains that she procured her employees after they were kicked out of another hotel for "being over-attentive to the lady guests there" (24). To cite just one example of how the "boy[s]" are often described, consider when one of them appears "sucking a juicy peeled mango—its juice running down his chin onto his throat" (38). On their reaction to Maxine's curvaceous hips, Maxine comments, "Mexicans like 'em, if I can judge by the pokes and pinches I get in the busses to town" (74).

In addition to implying an innate excess of libido, the play gestures toward a corresponding untrustworthiness, even savagery among the Mexican workers. Especially in the opinion of Maxine, notably an American who commands her authority principally through the presumed superiority of her class and racial identity, the employees must be handled carefully. When another character comments on their "graceful" quality, Maxine replies, "Yeah, they're graceful like cats, and just as dependable" (38). The employees are also the ones who

[13] For an interesting treatment of how the natural setting around the Costa Verde functions in a binary relationship with urban encroachment and the rhetoric of progress, see Rod Phillips "Collecting Evidence: The Natural World in Tennessee Williams' *The Night of the Iguana*."

capture the titular iguana later in the play, a scene that invites the audience to see them as cruel for chaining it up with the intent to fatten it before slaughtering and consuming it. This effect is produced precisely because the meat of the Iguana has an exotic resonance with the American audience since it is not a typical part of their diet, thus serving to exoticize the Mexicans by extension, even suggesting an animal-like sensuality and cruelty by eliciting sympathy for the Iguana and antipathy towards them for their role in its suffering.

Aside from her exploits with her employees, Maxine is also persistent in her aggressive efforts to seduce the embattled Reverend Lawrence T. Shannon, the play's principal character. He calls Maxine "bigger than life and twice as unnatural" (25). Shannon is a disgraced minister who finds himself conducting tours for a low budget travel agency based in Texas after a precipitous fall from grace involving a scandalous affair with a young Sunday school teacher in his congregation. Further, the impetus for Shannon and his current tour's (female faculty members from Baptist Women's College) arrival at the Costa Verde derives from his most recent tryst with a 16-year-old vocal student, Charlotte, who is the ward of her overly-enthusiastic aunt, Ms. Fellowes. Fellowes, who is also Charlotte's vocal coach, is the primary antagonist to Shannon and tries successfully to have Shannon fired from his job with the middling Blake Tour company for this recent indiscretion. The play makes clear that the incident with Charlotte is only one of many like it for Shannon, whose spiritual, psychological, and existential angst are ostensibly Williams's central concerns.

Shannon's attraction to young women[14] and his conquests of many of them are importantly tied to his role as a tour guide of expressly exotic locations. He explains in a confrontation with Fellowes and another representative of the tour company, "I haven't stuck to the schedules of the brochures, and I've always allowed the ones that were willing to see, to *see*!—the underworlds of all places, and if they had the hearts to be touched, feelings to feel with, I gave them a priceless chance to touch and be touched. And none will ever forget it" (94). In an impassioned speech later in the play he revisits this same theme, his "tours of ladies through tropical countries." On the subject of their always having been tours of specifically tropical countries, he asks, "Does that signify something? I Wonder? Maybe. Fast decay is a thing of hot climates, steamy, hot, wet climates, and I run to them like a . . . incomplete sentence." According to Shannon, he is "always seducing a lady or two, or three or four or five ladies in the party, but really ravaging her first by pointing out to her the—what?—the horrors? Yes, horrors!—of the tropical country being conducted a tour through"

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[14] The question of Shannon's conquest of Charlotte and its relationship to pedophilia is complicated one, both now and relative to the times of the play's setting and production. US federal law leaves determining the age of consent to the discretion of individual states, and currently more than half of them set the age at 16 (Charlotte's age), though more than half of the US population resides in states where 17 or 18 is the minimum age. State laws also differ considerably on a number of other variables. To cite just two examples, many determinations hinge on the age of the younger party relative to the older party and the nature and context of the parties' overall relationship. Mexican law federally disallows any sexual contact with those under 12 but leaves things much murkier concerning those 12-18. Again, at the risk of oversimplification and depending on the state, whether or not the seduction of the younger party is deceitful in nature is weighed heavily in whether an offense is prosecuted ("Age of Consent Around The World," "Legal Age of Consent in All 50 States"). Suffice it to say that Shannon's interaction with Charlotte at least stretches the limits of societal and juridical standards both then and now, but perhaps especially now, as notions of the age of consent seem almost universally to have skewed older in the West for at least the last 125 years. This issue will be considered more thoroughly in the analysis of both plays in the chapter's final section.

(122). For Shannon, it is not just the exotic beauty of the tropical locale and its scenic qualities but the very essence of its savagery, or "horrors," as he puts it, that affords it its power to "touch" visitors. For him the space itself is so deeply affecting precisely because of all of this, imbuing the aura of the place on the whole with a paradoxically savage but also deeply and productively moving sort of power. In effect, it tantalizes him with the hope that it might function as a space within which the closeting constraints of sexual norms might be overcome, a place where "deviance" and respite from repression might be possible without the punitive consequences he encountered back home.

As further analysis will show, however, it ultimately delivers to Shannon much less than this hope might promise. Though freer to indulge himself without as immediate and forceful consequences, he still falls far short of finding joyful, guiltless indulgence even in the context of Mexico's exotic space of license. While imprisoned by the constraints of normativity as a clergyman back in the repressive US, he is also both literally and metaphorically bound—even if by fetters of a different sort—at the Costa Verde.

In addition to the oversexed Maxine, her exoticized employees, and the sexually deviant, perhaps even quasi-pedophilic Shannon, Williams also includes as peripheral characters a family of German tourists, the Fahrenkopfs, who are always dressed in "the minimal concession to decency." The entire family is portrayed as "Rubenesque [and] splendidly physical," with the daughter, a recent young bride, romping around "astride an inflated rubber horse [with] an ecstatic

smile and great winking eyes" as she shouts, "horsey, horsey, giddyap" (15). The father is a tank manufacturer from Frankfurt who incessantly listens to a short-wave radio broadcasting news of the Nazi invasion of Great Britain with intense nationalist pride, giddy with excitement over each "new phase of conquest" (67). Frau Fahrenkopf, for her part, is described vivaciously but also grotesquely as "bursting with rich healthy fat" (15). In the same conversation about the Mexican characters having an intense sexual attraction to Maxine's body, Maxine goes on to say, "So do the Germans. Ev'ry time I go near Herr Fahrenkopf he gives me a pinch or a goose" (74).

The group as a whole, which serves a grotesque chorus-like role through its reactions to the play's events, also functions interestingly on the level of geopolitics. One wonders why, for instance, writing in 1961 at the height of the Cold War, Williams chooses to set the play twenty years earlier. While it is possible to argue that this is only a consequence of the fact that Williams himself visited the real-life Costa Verde in 1940, it seems important also to consider whether a characteristic Cold War American myopia is somehow at play in his choice of a nostalgic WWII setting rather than a contemporary one. This latter point is one to which the chapter will return in its concluding section. For extensive critical treatment of the Fahrenkopf's as part of a warning against the dangers of fascism, see Norma Jenckes's "Structures of Feeling in Tennessee Williams's *The Night of the Iguana* and Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance.*" Jenckes rightly recovers the importance of the Fahrenkopfs' inclusion in the play

from the impulse to dismiss them as superfluous comedic relief or ignore them outright, as several influential early critics chose to do. As for the warning tone of their representation, the American characters do seem disturbed by the influx of Nazis to Mexico, perceiving it as a threat to American power. When Shannon laments, "Aw—Nazis. How Come there's so many of them down here," Maxine replies, "Mexico's the front door to South America—and the back door to the States, that's why" (15). This paranoia about containment is directed at Nazi's in the 1941 setting, but it surely had a clear Cold War resonance with early 60's audiences as well. It is also quite possible that Williams means to establish an implicit connection between Nazi and Cold War political cultures.

The aggregation of all of this libidinous affect serves to mark the marginal space of the play's setting as hyper-sexual and transgressive, a place to which American characters like Maxine and Shannon can retreat and find at least some measure of refuge as expatriates from the constraining sexual culture of the US. Even more interesting, however, is the way in which the libidinous surplus that so powerfully characterizes *Iguana* is figured as grotesque. The Fahrenkopfs, for example, are lurid caricatures, as are the Mexican employees of the Costa Verde, and both are notably identified primarily by race and nationality. Maxine is largely unsympathetic, especially insofar as she is the rival of Hannah Jelkes, a competing love interest for Shannon who is Maxine's foil in almost every conceivable way, not least in terms of her repressed sexuality. The way in which Maxine's sexual attraction to Shannon is unreciprocated and her general

forwardness and unapologetically cavalier attitude given her status as a recent widow heighten the sense in which she likely comes across distastefully to the play's intended audience. Whether intended by Williams or not, one might even contend that the extent to which the Fahrenkopf's hypersexual representations mirror those of the American characters serves as a warning in its own right about the potential for sexual liberation alone as a means to deal effectively with political repression, whether American or Nazi.

Yet for all of the sexual excess in the play, there seems an equal amount of sexual containment and repressed desire. A prominent example of this is portrayed through Miss Fellowes, the most readily apparent antagonist who is also *Iguana's* most recognizably queer character. Fellowes's queerness is referenced nearly always in a pejorative manner. She is characterized as a stereotypically overbearing, man-eating, "butch" lesbian, a "bull elephant on a rampage" (18) to punish Shannon for his non-normative sexual inclinations, one presumes, at least in part, as a way of displacing anger about her own sexual frustration, or perhaps even because she sees Shannon as a romantic rival for her as it relates to Charlotte[15]. Shannon says to the tour's bus driver, "Hey Jake, did you know they had lesbians in Texas—without the dikes the plains of Texas would be engulfed by the gulf" (91). He nods at Fellowes as he speaks, provoking her to slap him. His comment is interesting for a number of reasons. In addition to contributing to the persistent, mocking tone used to reference Fellowes's gender presentation, it gestures toward the idea of the US as a place

[15] This latter angle is strongly insinuated in Jon Huston's film adaptation in particular.

that must fortify itself against non-normative sexualities. Playing on the double meaning of the word "dike" and read metaphorically, Shannon's remark insinuates that deeply closeted, repressed homosexuals like Fellowes are in part responsible for maintaining the power and primacy of heteronormativity within mid-twentieth century US culture by working actively to keep the threat of non-normative sexuality contained. Suffice it to say that the play seems determinedly unflattering in how Fellowes is described, and her repressiveness in contrast to most of the aforementioned characters sharply stands out.

Likewise, Hannah Jelkes is clearly a figure of repression. A New Englander and an artist who travels around the globe with her ailing 95-year-old poet grandfather, Hannah is likened to a "Gothic Cathedral image of a medieval saint . . . totally feminine and yet androgynous-looking—almost timeless" (21). As a "spinster" well into middle age and a woman of virtually no sexual experience, she is highly unlike Shannon. Yet in her emotional and spiritual sympathies and her own fragile psychological past, she and Shannon find a deep connection that transcends his typical need for sexual "human contact" (22). While the Costa Verde functions as a place of last resort for those marginalized by their sexualities, it is also the place to which Shannon has returned repeatedly to "crack up," or suffer a psychological breakdown. A tenuous grip on sanity is something Shannon shares with Hannah, and her sympathies for him drive many of the most poignant moments in the play. Further, it is surely noteworthy that insofar as the Costa Verde is a potentially "queer space" in which a broader

sexual license is possible, it is not exclusively open to the sexually marginalized, but also might serve as a kind of "insane space." In certain ways, or for certain characters, at least, these two "problems" overlap and are implicitly related, leaving audiences to infer, whether intended or not, that queer identities and mental instability are connected in problematic ways.

Of course, this line of thinking is in very much in keeping with institutional ideologies of the era. Recall, for example, that the original *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association in 1952 pathologized "homosexuality." It was not removed from the second edition (published in 1968) until 1973[16]. Williams's portrayal would have resonated with the predominant view of mainstream audiences at the time of its production, but in so doing, it also runs the risk of reinforcing rather than challenging what are now commonly understood as deeply troubling associations.

In any case, and to return to Hannah's sexual repression, it is important to consider how her national identity is figured in relation to this repression. She is one of the most fundamentally American characters, and a certain sort of American at that: a contemporary New England Puritan, invoking all that such an identity signifies concerning ideology, class, and sexuality (100). Yet she too, like Shannon, is also an expatriate: a global vagabond and artist who travels the world painting and drawing miniature sketch portraits to support her and her grandfather. The clash between her New-England-regional, American identity

[16] For a more detailed account, see Drescher, Jack. "Out of DSM: Depathologizing Homosexuality."

and her cosmopolitan travel experiences where more permissive attitudes toward sexual license might be found plays on a major theme in American literature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: the ill fit of Americans abroad—in this case, the sexually repressed, prudish American.

It is also true that insofar as characters of repression figure prominently in the play, one has to consider Shannon among this group, even as he also might be counted simultaneously among those who openly practice a non-normative sexuality. Far from free of guilt, as in the manner of Maxine, for example, Shannon is in constant existential agony. His theological anxieties and desperate struggles with depression, alcoholism, and self-loathing are symbolized most clearly in the iguana (a creature which Shannon eventually frees from captivity) and the gold cross necklace from his days as a minister, which he pulls at menacingly in one scene in a fit of rage (96). His repression is further reinforced symbolically in his literal imprisonment in a hammock after he "cracks up." Ostensibly in order to restrain him and prevent him from harming himself, Maxine orders him bound to the hammock, though this action could be seen as equally symbolic of her dominance over the space of the Costa Verde. Maxine commands authoritarian-style control over her guests, employees, and even Shannon to some extent. His freedom from the hammock, made possible by Hannah's kindness, also coincides with the Iguana's liberation: she loosens him so that he might free it, as her sympathies notably extend to each of them.

Shannon's identity as a miscast and disgraced clergyman inclined toward

sexual deviance is compounded even further by reference to incidents of childhood sexual repression. Maxine recalls a conversation she once overheard between Shannon and her deceased husband in which Shannon referred to his mother punishing him for masturbation: "I know your psychological history . . . you practiced the little boy's vice, you amused yourself with yourself . . . she caught you and whaled your backside . . . she had to punish you . . . because it made God mad as much as it did Mama." This sort of armchair psychoanalysis of Shannon's repression ties together several of the major normalizing discursive powers Foucault points out in *The History of Sexuality*: psychoanalysis, religion, and the primacy of the nuclear family—all key ideological apparatuses employed to maintain the hegemonic order of containment culture. Maxine goes on: "She had to punish you for it so God wouldn't punish you for it harder than she did" (86).

On the whole, Williams's unflattering portrayal in *Iguana* of the so-called "sexually liberated" characters alongside his similarly unflattering emphasis on the sexual repression of other characters leaves much room for pessimism about how one should understand the prospect of uncomplicatedly enacting a non-normative sexuality in marginal, exotic spaces. While the of the Costa Verde provides something of a place of retreat from heteronormativity, it is far from a utopian vision of what might be possible in terms of an alternative[17]. Rather, it serves merely as a place to practice a morally resigned type of deviance from

[17] Here again one finds a connection to Burroughs, whose *Junky* portrays the street corner as a liminal place of similar license but also as a precarious and at times untenable space.

normativity, a place where Maxine can settle for her second-rate version of human interaction: “I know the difference between loving someone and just sleeping with someone—even I know that. We’ve both reached a point where we’ve got to settle for something that works for us in our lives—even if it isn’t on the highest kind of level” (86). Shannon seems left to much the same fate, failing to imagine a world in which a relationship with someone like Hannah would be possible and turning instead toward a life with Maxine at the Costa Verde, a corrupted garden of Eden in which he can joylessly indulge in his sexual inclinations as Maxine does, she catering to “the male clientele, the middle aged ones at least, and [him] taking care of the women . . . That’s what you can do; you know that, Shannon,” she explains (126). This is hardly a picture of liberation for either character, even if the constraints at the Costa Verde are distinctly different from the heteronormative ones they have fled. In essence, Maxine is proposing a kind of commercialization of sex offered as tourism, one consistent with containment culture’s disavowal of imperial forms of domination and exploitation at home but tacit endorsement of such practices abroad.

Further, while Maxine in particular might be understood to be exerting distinct forms of privilege and power over the space and its occupants, even she is not entirely freed by her liminal position either. Maxine is providing the escapist, tourist experience of the exotic and perhaps in so doing prolonging her own vacation from containment’s most pernicious restraints, but the tenor of her representation and the manner in which she is both an antagonist of sorts and a

clear foil to Hannah makes it exceedingly difficult to understand her as a figure of agency, happiness, and fulfillment. In *Iguana* overall, Williams explores how Cold War American individuality is invited to excess outside the bounds of the domestic, but his rendering of how this plays out for his characters makes successful resistance seem ultimately as fantastic and romanticized as the posters of exotic retreats to Hawaii or Tahiti one might have seen in the 1950's travel agency: deliciously tempting, but ultimately only a temporary escape and far less fulfilling than the slick advertising seems to promise.

§ Comparing the Plays: The Promise and Perils of Liminal Forms of Resistance

In each of Williams's dramas he takes up the idea that certain spaces afford opportunity for transgressive sex and sexual orientations, but that even in these spaces, constraining forces exert punitive power to the extent that the costs significantly limit the potential for any sort of liberation. Williams's characters occupy or consider occupying liminal spaces to resist containment, but their resistances only carry them so far.

Through Williams's portrayal of Big Daddy he suggests that while a socially-performed, heteronormative identity is required as access to social capital within containment culture, his agency as wealthy Southern Plantation owner (or Brick's as his heir, for that matter) might provide a privileged position from which to engage in a considerable degree of sexual liberty, if done in the right places and so long as one plays the power game well enough to conceal it.

In this way, the empowered plantation space of the "New South" seems to promise potential as a liminal zone for escape from the closeting constraint of containment. Importantly, however, both of the play's endings—which vary famously by version—reveal the [in]feasibility of Big Daddy's notion. They do so through the inevitability of his death before he can go through with his plans for his future as well as the tenor of Brick's final scenes with Maggie. Whether a hopeful and genuine step toward reconciliation between Brick and Maggie or an act of resignation to the inescapability containment's pressures, Brick's implicit or explicit decision to stay in the marriage and produce an heir is certainly not a way of hopefully enacting Big Daddy's carefree attitude to "knocking around," which of course is also only ever fantasy for Big Daddy in the play's present moment, as his grotesque plans to "strip naked and smother with minks and choke with diamonds[18]" (72) the women he has in mind to enjoy himself with never becomes possible.

Williams's original version excludes Big Daddy from Act 3, but the famous Broadway version staged by Elia Kazan notably brings him back. While his death is not as explicit in this latter version as it is in the former, it is still implied to be imminent. His departing words in Act 3 of the Broadway revision are to Brick, his last action to head to the roof to survey his "kingdom" before he gives it

[18] The reference here to "minks and diamonds" bears a striking resonance with the iconic image of Marilyn Monroe as the emblematic, fetishized figure of containment era hetero-masculine desire. In offering this as part of his fantasy, Big Daddy solidly aligns himself with such discourse characterizing the era, but his ultimate inability to realize the fantasy is noteworthy in connection to how space figures centrally in his plans for deviance from normativity. One wonders, for example, why what was possible for the Kennedys was ultimately only an unachievable fantasy for Big Daddy.

up, “twenty-eight thousand acres of th’ richest land this side of the Valley Nile” (154[19]). Though an important focus of *Cat* scholarship aims at thinking carefully about the implications of divergences in the two famous versions (Williams’s original and the Kazan-influenced Broadway version) and their respective revisions, the analysis here chooses essentially to note but not highlight such discourse. While the textual history itself is surely interesting and might crucially impact certain readings of the play, its pertinence for analyzing the drama’s treatment of characters engaging constraining and liberating spaces and the logic of containment culture is minimized, as neither ending substantively changes the fundamental suggestions Williams offers about space, constraint and liberating potential within containment. Within the play itself, neither Brick nor Big Daddy can meaningfully enact the sort of sexual liberty Big Daddy envisions, and at the play’s end(s), there is nothing to suggest that the future will afford either such an opportunity.

In *Iguana,* Williams shifts the setting to a thoroughly exoticized locale outside the U.S. in what might be understood as an exploration of whether such spaces increase the likelihood of more effective and complete forms of resistance. The result is the same, however, as any successful resistance is only liminal, tempered by the limits of its reach in much the same way the domestic spaces explored in Cat are limited. Maxine and Shannon cannot leave the Costa

[19] For clarity’s sake, it is worth reiterating that this quote is from Act 3 of the “Broadway Version” influenced by Kazan. In terms of the page reference, it is to the alternative appended Act 3 from the “Broadway Version” found in the same volume to which all other page references for *Cat* are made. This is the only reference to the appended “Broadway[/Kazan] Version” in the chapter.

Verde and return to the US without conforming to the discursive functions of power inscribing American spaces under containment. And if they choose to remain at the Costa Verde, they must in part forgo national ties and renounce the romantic idealism afforded by containment heteronormativity, choosing instead to enact a kind of dominance over their exotic space that empowers them to engage liberally in non-normative sexual behavior, but always at the expense of warmth, intimacy, and perhaps for Shannon, sanity. Further, while the choice to live as expatriates clearly communicates a desire to distance themselves from the constraints of American sexual culture and forge an independent identity, it remains important to note that their status as Americans is wielded to local advantage in Mexico. In fact, insofar as it enables Maxine and Shannon to provide the tourist experience to other outsiders, it gives them economic and other sorts of power that they—especially Maxine—can effectively exert for their benefit. Consider, for example, the ways in which Maxine is able to use this agency to leverage sexual favors from her employees and enjoy a significant degree of assumed superiority and dominance over them in their interactions. Leveraging imperial forms of dominance afforded by Americanness hardly seems compatible with resisting or avoiding containment's oppressive functions. On the contrary, this possible means of escape seemingly leads right back into the quagmire of oppressive functions from which the characters should seek to extricate themselves.

In considering Shannon's sexuality and the dynamics of power, one would

be remiss not to address the alarming fact of Charlotte's age and potentially predatory aspects of his sexual indulgences, perhaps even suggesting pedophilia. Indeed, this is a troubling feature of the play for many, especially for contemporary audiences and their willingness to see Shannon sympathetically. Some context is important here, both in terms of gauging the general nature of the non-normative aspects of Shannon's sexuality in the play on the whole and the laws and mores of the period. While Charlotte's age is mentioned specifically as a few months shy of seventeen, elsewhere the references to Shannon's exploits are vaguer, using terms like "young" to refer to his partners, one of whom was a Sunday school teacher with whom he admits to "fornication," the event precipitating his departure from the church (22, 58). Another instance uses the terms "lady" or its plural, "ladies" (122). These latter two are, of course, terms most often—though not exclusively—reserved for adult women. They are also used here in the context of emphasizing the overall number of his many encounters with multiple partners rather than focusing on the partners' ages. In fact, nowhere other than the single reference to Charlotte's age is there direct mention or even clear insinuation that Shannon's sexual partners are juvenile by any particular legal definition. When he arrives at the Costa Verde with his tour customers in revolt over his having slept with Charlotte, he explains to Maxine that Fellowes is trying to get him charged with statutory rape. When Maxine asks what that is, he defines it as "when a man is seduced by a girl under twenty," again raising alarm without explicitly marking his behavior as pedophilic (22). It

is important, too, to remember that 16 is and was (depending on exact circumstances and the other complicating factors as mentioned previously) potentially within the bounds of legality concerning consent, both in Mexican and certain U.S. localities.

With all this in mind, Shannon might be generously understood more than anything else as "cracked up" and oversexed—unable to control his libidinous and alcoholic impulses and mind the limits of Cold War heteronormativity (monogamy, intra-marital sex primarily for the purpose reproduction, etc.). Still, even considering changing societal attitudes about age and sexual maturity and the complex variations in precise legalities, Williams seems clearly to be pressing up firmly against-if-not-over the lines of mainstream standards of decency through Shannon's tryst with Charlotte and his predilection for young partners. It would not be a stretch for audience members to understand Shannon as being a pedophile, or at least too dangerously near one to avoid warranting harsh disapproval. Once again, in this respect the play is likely even more scandalous now than then, as mainstream attitudes toward the age of consent and understandings of pedophilia have skewed older and (appropriately) harshened considerably with respect to those in the 16-18 age range. This is notably opposite the considerable laxening in rigid attitudes condemning consensual homosexual sex, which figures importantly in thinking through understandings of *Cat*'s portrayals of queerness.

When analyzing Williams's figurations of resistance to containment

sexuality, it serves one well to consider his characters in light of canonical queer theory, and to the extent that queer theory engages dimensions of spatiality, the notion of the closet as framed by Eve Sedgwick is a logical place to begin. The centrality of space and the scope and reach of the closet are surely important in each play, as the analysis herein has endeavored to demonstrate. Along these lines, the first and most obvious connection is the overwhelming power of the closet in shaping the lives of the characters in each play, as well as the emphasis on the immense difficulty of ever escaping its discursive influence entirely. Sedgwick notes, for instance, how even for gays who have come out, "[the closet] is still the fundamental feature of social life; and there can be few gay people, however courageous and forthright by habit, however fortunate in the support of their immediate communities, in whose lives the closet is not still a shaping presence" (68). Of course, Sedgwick is writing from the perspective of the 1990's and not the containment era, and one must concede that the role of the closet was substantially different in meaningful ways. However, Sedgwick did focus part of her literary scholarship on pre-Stonewall writings by closeted writers, and she and Williams share recognition of the persistent way in which the closet stubbornly resists being disentangled from the lived experiences of people with queer identities, wherever they locate themselves in physical or metaphorical space. Further, Sedgwick acknowledges that the closet shapes not just the experience of homosexuals, but also has a "distinctively indicative relation . . . to wider mappings of secrecy and disclosure . . . private and public,

that were and are critically problematical for the gender, sexual, and economic structures of the heterosexist culture at large[20]" (71). Williams's representations align with such thinking insofar as his treatment of the closet reveals its significant impact not just on overtly homosexual identities (e.g., Skipper's), but even heterosexual identities as well (e.g., Shannon's).

Yet, even as Sedgwick and Williams's preoccupations with the closet place them alongside one another, there are marked differences in the tone of Williams's depictions and the way in which Sedgwick theorizes the closet, and the tonal qualities of the representations might be understood to engender distinct problems, particularly for contemporary audiences. While each play's tragic ending very effectively portrays unjust traumas experienced by characters practicing non-normative sexualities[21], one remains hard pressed to find hope for less difficult alternatives in Williams's models of queerness. All such characters seem tortured, even if tragically sympathetic, and in this way, the plays encounter important limits politically.

This is not to discount their progressiveness in endeavoring to represent queer characters as sympathetic protagonists within containment-era Broadway. In this respect, one should reiterate that Williams's work should be acknowledged and even celebrated. In fact, Donald Pease has gone as far as to suggest that through *Cat's* restoration of the Freudian "primal scene . . . Williams . . .

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[20] This is not to suggest that the discursive function of the closet can be easily and uncomplicatedly detached from its "gay specificity," as Sedgwick is careful to point out. She insists, on the contrary, that all use of such closet-terminology is "indelibly marked with the historical specificity of the homosocial/homosexual definition" (72).

[21] Even the versions of *Cat* that end with an implied recapitulation to normativity can be read as tragic, if not to Cold War era audiences, then surely to most contemporary ones.

intervene[es] in the state fantasy that circulated around homophobia . . . act[ing] on the Real of the state fantasy that undergirded the dominant symbolic order, so as to change the primal fantasmatic scenario that organized and regulated 1950s US culture." Ultimately, Pease contends "that in rendering the impossibly contradictory social logic of this 1950s state fantasy imaginable, Williams's play staged events and transactions that subjected the existing social order to conditions of creative disruption and revision." (35). It is noteworthy too that, in a broader assessment of the scope of Williams's impact, David Savran has called Williams's plays of the 40's and 50's "the most progressive and radical documents of the period in their figuration of homosexuality" (57). Pease is surely right to notice the potent challenge the play poses to Cold War homophobia, and perhaps Savran's high praise for this period of Williams's work is also merited, though others have certainly disagreed with him (Gore Vidal and John M. Clum most notably, according to Savran) (57). But even as one rightly celebrates the progressive, disruptive functions of the plays' challenges to the logics of their time, one must also observe that they are far more politically descriptive than prescriptive in their representations, and descriptive in a certain way, at that. Savran himself articulates this quite clearly:

> Although *Cat on Hot Tin Roof* reveals many of the contradictions inscribed in homophobic ideologies and practices, it simultaneously bears witness to the (at times) painfully oblique discourse that must be spoken in and around the closet during the 1950's. It attests

> distressingly to the level of aggressivity that may be unleashed against its occupants: the violence that dismembers, maims, ravages--and eroticizes--the inhabitants of the empty/not empty room. (84)

The socio-political climate and economic demands of Cold War Broadway must have imposed significant rhetorical constraints that had their own closeting effect on Williams's ability to present positive models of queerness on the stage, just as they did on his personal relationship to the closet[22].

The so-called "Lavender Scare" conflating queer identity with Communist, Anti-American sentiment was an especially potent and pernicious constraining force in this respect. As Elaine Tyler May notes, "To escape the status of pariah, many gay men and lesbians locked themselves in the stifling closet of conformity, hiding their sexual identities and passing as heterosexuals" (13). But in spite of whatever sympathy ought to be afforded to Williams's personal circumstances and literary-rhetorical-economic constraints, for today's audiences, his depictions of queer characters feel rather out-of-date. The broad sense in which his characters are sympathetic, on the one hand, but tortured, on the other, is just one more example of the liminal quality of the political position his work often occupies.

Concerning their political sensibility on the whole, one cannot ignore how

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[22] For more on Williams's personal relationship to the closet, see Savran's "'By Coming Suddenly Into A Room That I Thought Was Empty': Mapping The Closet With Tennessee Williams." and the panel discussion, "Out Of The Closet, Onto The Page: A Discussion Of Williams's Public Coming Out On The David Frost Show In 1970 And His Confessional Writing Of The '70s."

in *Iguana* especially, Williams exhibits a kind of myopia about how anti-colonial struggle was in many ways the dominant global narrative of the 20th century. While much of the rest of the world focused on decolonization during the Cold War era, the U.S. focus was too often trained more narrowly on the Cold War, with decolonization figuring primarily as an impetus for political instability that might make room for the global ascendancy of communist forms of political rule. This was a characteristic problem within US culture of the time, as nearly all of the strategy and discourse concerning international issues was seen through the lens of the threat of global communism, generally, and the rivalry with the Soviet Union particularly. Edwards's *Morocco Bound* speaks persuasively to this issue. Using *Time* magazine editor Henry Luce's famous declaration of the 20th century as "the American Century" as an emblematic example, Edwards describes how "Luce initiated a logic by which Americans might see foreign spaces newly under the dominion or imagined reach of the United States in a particular temporality—an American time—that would in turn undergird a conservative model for imagining the globe" (3). Williams's work offers itself to be read quite readily as symptomatic of this problem. His rather simplistic depiction in *Iguana* of Mexico as an exoticized space ignores the effort of national communities to self-determine their identities independent of the US vs. Soviet Bloc conflict[23], which was an expressed aim of the self-described "Third World" project of the 1950's. In so doing, Williams seizes opportunistically upon the exotic quality of the setting

[23] Here one finds an interesting contrast with Burroughs, for example, whose *Naked Lunch* includes scenes depicting the Moroccan Nationalist movement and the larger issue of colonialism's fragmentation in the post WWII era.

to stage a complicated exploration of ideas about space and sexual license while tacitly reinforcing the exploitative aspects of such exoticization.

Williams no doubt chose Mexico and the Costa Verde as his setting in part because of his own travels there and the experiences and people he encountered, others for whom the locale was also a place of self-imposed exile during turbulent times. It provided him both a space from which to create (it was there he wrote the play *Stars from the Roof*) and a place to which he could retreat, many suspect, from the grief over a failed romantic relationship (Cabello 1). A number of characters in the short story and dramatic versions of *Iguana* appear loosely based on his time there. When writing *Iguana* later on, the veranda of the Costa Verde, perched as it was on the edge of both the sea and jungle, also served a power metaphorical function, as critics like Mercedes Trigos have pointed out. It framed for him a liminal space figuring the push and pull between the raw, primal, instinctual power of one's "natural" sex-drive and the regulating functions of societal constraint and attending forms of self-discipline. It also happens that Mexican law and related social values left more room for ambiguity concerning sexual maturity and the age of consent. Whether this figured consciously in his choice of setting, however, is less clear. With respect to the sexual permissiveness of Mexican culture on the whole there are, of course, many complexities to consider. Traditional understandings of machismo and associations with strong homophobic sentiment could work against understanding the national and cultural qualities of the setting as compatible with

queer identities in any broad sense, yet the degree to which these understandings might have impacted an exile culture of American sexual license rooted in racist exoticization of Mexico could be minimal or even absent.

For its part, *Cat* mostly ignores the rest of the world, but when it does mention foreign spaces they are always rendered exotically and often in orientalist fashion (Morocco, North Africa in general, Spain, etc.). As with Mexico, Williams surely chose the references to Morocco in part because of his own experiences there, and Tangiers was, in fact, widely known to be a haven for well-known queer expatriates—especially artists/intellectuals—during the mid 20th century. In these ways, the choice of these exotic locales cannot be said entirely to hinge on wild orientalist fantasy unanchored to any historical realities or the imprint of personal past experiences in visiting them. Considering the plays and their representations in light of Williams's own history with these places and their contextual-historical frames might therefore mitigate, to some extent, how one might unfavorably judge their politics. Yet from a contemporary socio-historical vantage, there are aspects of both plays which might feel especially discordant to present-day audiences. And though it is beyond the scope of this chapter to delve too deeply into the plays' treatments of race, it should also be noted that *Cat* is conspicuously muted in its treatment of domestic race relations, as it focuses almost exclusively on the white plantation-owning family without thoroughly representing the structures of racism which make that institution

possible[24].

While importantly noting their resistant functions in the context of the containment era, it remains true that Williams's tortured depictions of closeted queers and the compounding problem of the US Cold War-centric lens through which the plays depict the rest of the world warrant skepticism about the progressiveness of their contemporary political resonance. Yet whatever their political utility for contemporary audiences, these plays remain important artifacts of their era, ripe for investigation of how cultural production engaging containment culture logic endeavored both to represent and critique the "queer," the exotic, and the social and individual narratives so powerfully shaped by such discourses. Ultimately the fledgling and at times contradictory qualities of the resistances Williams offers is yet another example of the liminal quality of his work's politics—his characters' resistances are nascent but not yet fully realized, a preview, perhaps, of a more completely developed, politicized version to develop by the end of the containment era that would later flourish in the more radical political winds of the late 1960's.

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[24] To be fair, the play does at least hint symbolically at the potential threat racial injustice and resistant racial others might pose to the hegemonic order of containment through the constant threat of surveillance and penetration of its various contained spaces. John Bak's essay title, itself taken from one of Big Mama's lines, alludes to this in its emphasis on the "sneakin' and spyin'" aspect of the servants' and various family members' intrusions on rooms and conversations throughout the play. David Saverin similarly notes these panoptic elements: "[the closeted space of the bedchamber is one] over which an almost constant surveillance is posted, with spies always lurking just outside its closed doors or always attempting to eavesdrop through the fragile walls." (11) Nonetheless, the engagement with racial injustice is tangential at best; it would certainly be a stretch to call it a primary focus of the drama.

Ch. 2: Challenging Containment Racism: Spatially-informed Resistances in *A Raisin in the Sun* & *Blues for Mister Charlie*

In this chapter the primary focus shifts from exploring spatially-informed tactics for resisting containment sexuality to spatially-informed resistances to race-based containment strategies. While the last chapter's analyses should make clear that containment forces came broadly to bear on people of every race and class, it cannot be overemphasized that unique experiences of containment's forms of constraint were in very important ways particularized along racial lines. In the interest of exploring these dynamics, two major plays are drawn into focus: Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie. Raisin* is directly concerned with the ways in which physical spaces are employed as constraints to justice for racial others, namely the social and political policies concerning housing covenants and the practice of ghettoizing black neighborhoods to contain people of color in specific urban geographical locations. Early white audiences received the play in ways that sought in part to circumvent the political challenge that Hansberry's direct representation of these issues should have made clear, but the broader critical history of the drama has understood such reactions as symptomatic of racist lenses and celebrated Hansberry's success in forcing a confrontation with these issues as the play's central achievement. The nuances of how *Raisin* achieves

this beyond its overt focus on the geographical move in neighborhood as the central plot concern are still somewhat under-appreciated, however. The discussion here aims to explore how, through its preoccupation with spatial tropes and other containment-focused subtleties which work in tandem with the primary plot elements, *Raisin* persuasively exposes the destructive forces of containment culture racism. Similarly, the chapter demonstrates that, counter to much of the reception history of *Blues,* Baldwin uses set design and staging along with other explorations of spatial issues to confront the flimsiness of containment logic and the unjust nature of the forces it employs. Far from a simplistic or unartfully didactic drama, *Blues*, like *Raisin,* effectively provokes resistance by both employing and engaging spatial dynamics in its dramaturgy. Taken together, the dramatization of space and attentiveness to containment-era spatial dynamics in these two dramas help constitute their significant contributions to the forces of resistance which would eventually result in the collapse of containment culture and many of the accompanying racist strategies governing American spaces.

§ Exposing Containment Claustrophobia: Space and Resistance in *A Raisin in the Sun*

The long legacy of systemic inequality in American land and home ownership policies that led to the racialization of space encountered by Hansberry and her characters is well documented, from the Homestead Act of

1862[25] to the 1934 National Housing Act[26]. Housing and lending discrimination, school districting, road and transit design, and racially motivated tax incentivization worked in concert to "racialize space and spatialize race," as George Lipsitz and others have made clear. In spirit with such analyses, this chapter seeks to explore how *Raisin* challenges the toxic conflation of race and space that loomed over the containment era, a form of containment experienced in black communities that James Baldwin in his introduction to *To Be Young, Black and Gifted* called "claustrophobic terror" (xviii).

The most obvious way in which *Raisin*[27] challenges the orthodoxy of domestic containment strategies is through the central plot concern of the play: the Younger family's move from their black urban Chicago neighborhood to the white suburb of Clybourne Park, modeled in part after Hansberry's own family's move to the Washington Park subdivision in west Woodlawn. Hansberry's parents mounted a successful legal challenge to racial housing covenants

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[25] Taken together, The Homestead Acts of 1862 and 1866, though ostensibly designed to provide opportunities for land ownership to all, ultimately precluded many citizens—and poor blacks in particular—from meeting the requirements to take legal possession of land. Such requirements included filing an application, improving upon the land, and filing for a deed. High prices and fees, exclusionary lending practices, the severe consequences of indebtedness, and other factors used to determine satisfaction of the requirements effectively excluded many for whom the legislation was purportedly written.

[26] The National Housing Act was part of FDR's New Deal and created the Federal Housing Administration to stimulate home ownership and the overall economy during the Great Depression. But while it was a boon to predominantly white families borrowing against equity in homes in suburban communities, the FHA's policies discouraged and even prevented borrowing within mostly-black urban communities, essentially inaugurating the unofficial policy now commonly known as redlining.

[27] For the purposes of this analysis, all discussion refers to the extended version of the play first published in 1987 with an introduction by Robert Nemiroff, Hansberry's literary executor. It restores several scenes from Hansberry's original manuscripts that were omitted in the original Broadway production but brought back in 25th anniversary revivals and in the American Playhouse version for television. It is, according to Nemiroff, "the most complete edition of *A Raisin in the Sun* ever published.

culminating in a now widely taught supreme court decision, *Hansberry v. Lee* (1940). In drawing from these experiences and dramatizing the Youngers' courageous decision to relocate in spite of the various challenges both from within the family and from the forces of domestic containment culture, Hansberry offers a compelling representation of a particular struggle experienced by so many Black families at that time. Nevertheless, numerous mainstream critics and Broadway audiences mostly avoided the cultural particularities and crucial located-ness inherent in the drama's portrayal, choosing instead to universalize its messages and largely circumvent core aspects of its most important socio-political themes.

Much of *Raisin*'s initial reception emphasized the play's supposedly broad scope and generalizability, enthusiastically celebrating a transcendence of the "limits" of a racially-located dramatic critique. Gerald Weales's thoughts on the play in a 1959 article in *Commentary* exemplify this common sort of analysis:

> Despite an incredible number of imperfections, *Raisin* is a good play. Its basic strength lies in the character and the problem of Walter Lee, which transcends his being a Negro. If the play were only the Negro-white conflict that crops up when the family's proposed move is about to take place, it would be an editorial, momentarily effective, and nothing more. Walter Lee's difficulty, however, is that he has accepted the American myth of success at its face value, that he is trapped, as Willy Loman was trapped, by a

> false dream. In planting so indigenous an American image at the center of her play, Miss Hansberry has come as close as possible to what she intended—a play about Negroes which is not simply a Negro play.

Brooks Atkinson's ostensibly positive *New York Times* review strikes a similar note: "For *A Raisin in the Sun* is a play about human beings who want, on the one hand, to preserve their family pride and, on the other hand, to break out of the poverty that seems to be their fate. Not having any axe to grind, Miss Hansberry has a wide range of topics to write about—some of them hilarious, some of them painful in the extreme" (12). This notion of "not having an axe to grind," defies, of course, almost everything known about Hansberry's politics. An avid socialist, dedicated to a very particular political ideology, Hansberry has been since recognized precisely for the success with which the play does in fact "grind axes," whether racial, economic, or otherwise, and has been appreciated especially for how it manages to present some of the complex entanglements linking these issues. As Bruce McConachie argues, "*Raisin* is . . . [heavily] indebted to the legacy of Hegelian Marxism current during the Popular Front years" (178). And yet the early critical discourse reveals that *Raisin's* mainstream white audiences, whether consciously or unconsciously, suppressed these elements and chose instead to interpret the play through mostly universalist rather than culturally-located political lenses. "Not surprisingly, the reception of *Raisin* in 1959 ignored Hansberry's socialist history lesson to focus

on what critics took to be the Family of Man values of the play" (190), according to McConachie.

James Baldwin also laments this fact in his introduction to *To Be Young Black and Gifted*, a heartfelt personal tribute and shrewd critical assessment of Hansberry's artistic achievements. He pointedly observes that these misguided receptions likely stem from the very real limits imposed by white America's guilt-ridden state, something he finds far more troubling than the Cold War concerns framed so forcefully in containment era rhetoric:

> I personally feel that it will demand a far less guilty and constricted people than present-day Americans to be able to assess [*Raisin*] at all . . .No curtain under heaven is heavier than that curtain of guilt and lies behind which white Americans hide . . .The curtain may prove to be yet more deadly to the lives of human beings than that Iron Curtain of which we speak so much and know so little. (xvi-xvii)

For Baldwin as for many more recent critics, it was the interpretive failures of audiences to take full notice of the sharp-edged political messages of *Raisin* that led them to celebrate its transcendence over and against its judicious representation of racial and other forms of injustice. It should seem clear now that while the play may be more than an editorial about racist housing covenants, its being so in no way causes it to cease to be a compelling argument about that very subject. Redlining—in this case the systematic process of refusing loans and/or home-owner's insurance based on an area's geographic association with

a particular race—was a rampant practice that warranted dramatic treatment. In fact, these policies were importantly imbricated with many of the challenges facing black families at the time, a reality the play presents quite compellingly. After all, it is not as if a specifically-located critique and any broader aspirations or resonances with audiences must be mutually exclusive rather than part and parcel of one another. For Hansberry herself, the economic, racial, and other injustices she addressed were all united in one way or another under the rubric of her particular understanding of socialist ideologies. Her portrayal of the Younger's plight was not a universalizing allegory but a portrait of systemic oppression as it came to bear on one particular family, and, more hopefully, the various strategies with which that family resisted such oppression in more and less successful ways.

Raisin's concern with the family's movement in geographical space and housing-related containment strategies is the most obvious way in which it asserts a spatially-informed politics of resistance, and though early receptions of the play tried to ignore this central dimension of the drama, the broader trajectory of scholarship seems to recognize it quite clearly. However, often overlooked in such analyses are the perhaps subtler ways in which spatial tropes reverberate throughout the entirety of the play, as well as the myriad number of smaller challenges to various constraining forces of containment logic Hansberry offers. Especially important in this respect is the crippling sense of claustrophobia

engendered through the play's construction of the apartment space in which much of the action takes place.

Recall that "claustrophobic terror" is Baldwin's phrase, and note too that he coined it specifically in reference to *Raisin*'s depiction of urban Black life. To further substantiate the ways in which this sense of claustrophobia is realized, one might begin by attending to how the stage directions painstakingly describe the physical space of the Younger's apartment. Among the most important of the "indestructible contradictions" to seeing the apartment as an otherwise "comfortable" space is its thoroughly worn-down condition, the chief consequence of its having had to "accommodate the living of too many people for too many years." The furnishings are repeatedly described as weary, as in fact, "weariness has won the room . . . [where] all pretenses but living itself have long since vanished" (23-24). As for the physical layout of the space and the rooms' various purposes, here too the feeling of claustrophobia is reinforced. Mama and Beneatha share a bedroom while Walter and Ruth occupy a space "which in the beginning of the life of this apartment was probably a breakfast room" (24). The living area is "not really a room unto itself, though the landlord's lease would make it seem so." It shares its space with a tiny kitchen, and "the single window that has been provided for these 'two' rooms is located in this kitchen area. The sole natural light the family may enjoy in the course of the day is only that which fits its way through this little window" (24). Quite clearly the set design and construction of the apartment space is intended as a symbol for the constraining,

claustrophobic sense of dread and even terror exerted by domestic containment strategies. And yet as important as the cramped, worn-down, and dreary aspects of the description are as symbols, the small window of light and hope she allows is at least as important if not more to understanding the play's hope for resistance.

The fact that the apartment is ill-suited to accommodate the next generation of Youngers is especially noteworthy when interpreted symbolically. Travis, the youngest member of the family, must sleep each night on a couch in the living space, and as Ruth is quick to point out, he is unable to rest well there because that space is so often occupied by others. She laments the frequent intrusion of Walter's friends, "a bunch of crazy good-for-nothing clowns sitting up running their mouths in what is supposed to be [Travis's] bedroom after ten o'clock at night" (27). Both the inhospitable nature of the crowded space and the particular visitors obstructing Travis's healthy and private occupation of it should provoke audience contemplation[28]. Additionally, Ruth's unborn child's impending need for space of his or her own is presumably one of the main factors pushing Mama's urgency to find a new home to accommodate the growing family. Ruth's pregnancy serves as an overarching symbol for the Younger family's future and the future of the next generation of Black Chicagoans by extension. The child's having literally no place of its own produces anxiety and signals an important

[28] This is especially true in connection with Deborah Nelson's work on how changing notions of privacy contributed to what she calls the slow breakdown of containment from 1959 to 1973. 1959 is the year of Raisin's initial production, and 1973 forecasts the beginning of what part 2 of this project will call the era of confinement.

warning in this respect. In a conversation with Ruth about inter-generational connection, Mama expresses concern that she is divided from her children, that something is separating her from them, and she expresses this in spatial terms in the form of a physical barier: "No—there's something come down between me and them that don't let us understand each other, and I don't know what it is" (52). While such a turn of phrase is commonly employed to express division, it takes on a more particular resonance in the context of a drama already so attuned to the nuances of containing spaces and their metaphorical connections to the anxieties of black communal life within containment culture.

In a later conversation between Mama and Ruth in which Ruth is beginning to embrace the idea of actually moving, Ruth becomes overwhelmed with emotion at the prospect of actually escaping the apartment's physical and other restrictions. She "pounds the walls" and decries the "cramped little closet which ain't now or never was no kitchen!" This moment of emotional exuberance is punctuated by "fling[ing] her arms up" and spreading her body out as if breaking free from the claustrophobic curtailing of motion the apartment represents. Most pointedly, she "lets them come down happily, slowly, reflectively, over her abdomen, aware for the first time perhaps that the life therein pulses with happiness and not despair." Mama's subsequent comments are also telling. She speaks of "pushing out" and "do[ing] something bigger," word choices suggesting outward spatial motion but also, simultaneously, the processes of birth and flourishing (94). It is worth noting, too, that one alternative

to birth and flourishing is the termination of the pregnancy, something audience members might logically wonder if Ruth is considering. In this case, any external pressures to terminate her pregnancy exceed a form of claustrophobia and are tantamount to a kind of eugenics insofar as these pressures are mostly unique to non-white women. They might consider, too, the liberating effect of various forms of birth control available to white women at this time alongside the ongoing practices of forced sterilization disproportionately affecting low-income women of color[29].

When Walter is most deeply distraught by the limits imposed by containment forces inhibiting his socio-economic mobility, his reaction, like Ruth's to the apartment space, takes the shape of motion outward. In his case it is even more expansive in physical scope than Ruth's, as he is propelled outward and leaves the city altogether. He sullenly drives on one occasion "way out . . . way past South Chicago," and on another "way, way up to Wisconsin" (105). Only upon hearing this does Mama make her decision to give Walter charge of the life insurance money; his ineffectual journeys outward are the precipitating cause of her relenting to his wishes. Walter's expression of despair at the inability to move away from urban Chicago, the Green Hat, and all that these spaces represent at last provoke Mama to financially empower him in the manner

[29] Federally-funded sterilization programs existed in 32 states during the 20th century, informing immigration and segregation policies aimed at social control. The state of California, for example, accounted for roughly 1/3 of the approximately 20,000 sterilizations that occurred nationwide between 1909 and 1979.

he so desperately desires, even if this does not lead to the emancipation from the socioeconomic forces of containment he envisions[30].

On his trip to Wisconsin, Walter reports having parked and stared at farms, chiming with another important symbol set that recurs in the play and which Hansberry uses to contrast hope and escape from containment with the encroaching, predatory forces it constantly threatens. Hansberry brings natural, organic life onto the stage chiefly in the form of plants, gardens, and yards, on the one hand, and through menacing, vile pests such as roaches and rats on the other. Mama's dream to move, for example, is often related in connection to her desire for a garden (45, 53), and the promise of it is figured in her care and concern for her fledgling house plant in the apartment. The plant's life is fragile and imperiled as it is only fed by the infrequent light from the single window near the kitchen referenced earlier (39-40). When she tells Ruth about the home in Clybourne Park, Mama focuses on the yard and its "little patch of dirt where I could maybe get to grow me a few flowers" (92). All of this is in sharp contrast to

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[30] Walter foolishly invests the money in a failed scheme to open a liquor store. When later confronted with an opportunity to take the money offered by the white neighborhood association and recoup what he lost, he resists the temptation, choosing instead to keep the house—a decision Mama praises as evidence of his manhood. The embrace of the suburbs as expressing a characteristically masculine desire for home is posited as a broadly recurring trope by Catherine Jurca in her analysis of the suburb in 20th century American literature. However, in a footnote referencing Walter, Jurca curiously sees him as an outlier in this respect, arguing his decision is based on a conflation in his mind of property ownership of any kind—not the suburban in particular—with masculine power. In any case, the play constructs Walter's masculinity, or at least Mama's estimation of it, very meaningfully through the ending in connection with his decision to reject the offer and keep the home in Clybourne Park. Whether it is the agency expressed in his decision that marks it masculine, the authority conferred by property ownership, or some combination of the two is a matter of debate. The ways in which containment forces connected to Walter's racial and class circumstances are emasculating are crucial for understanding Hansberry's figuration of Walter's masculinity, a dynamic Jurca seemingly fails to account for in the mapping she offers in her analysis of the (mostly white) suburbs.

the recurrence of roaches and rats, whose threatening, scurrying presence contributes to the claustrophobic terror of the apartment building and surrounding streets (55, 92-93). In one episode, Travis excitedly relates the violent destruction of a rat by a beating from the janitor and a group of neighborhood kids (58-59). This is, interestingly, one of the only incidents where overt violence and brutality arise in the play. Further, in emphasizing Mama's houseplant, garden plans, and Walter's scene of longing and other agricultural/pastoral images, Hansberry also invokes a kind of lament for the empty promise of land ownership and related organic thriving offered in the "40 acres and a mule" that never materialized in the wake of emancipation. Rather, the harsh realities of sharecropping as the alternative played into mass migrations of black families into urban areas. In other words, this undelivered promise was in large part the impetus for the powerful containing space of the rat and roach-infested ghetto in which the Youngers and those like them are now trapped.

In addition to these spatially-preoccupied symbolic expressions which so thoroughly populate Hansberry's dramaturgy, there are numerous other vignettes directly addressing forms of containment culture littered throughout *Raisin*. To cite just two very briefly, note first how Hansberry confronts the containing force of Christian religious institutions and theologies. To borrow language from the Marxist tradition, which influenced Hansberry's own views (though in admittedly complicated ways), these serve as what Althusser calls Ideological State Apparatuses, or what Gramsci might observe as important cultural and

ideological tools within containment culture's hegemonic order. This issue is explored in the play principally through Mama and Beneatha's clash over Beneatha's atheism. In response to Beneatha's pronouncements, Mama insists that "In Mama's house, there is still God" (51). Secondly, to continue with Beneatha's characterization for a moment, note her clash with Asagai, her Nigerian suitor, whose characterization serves as an important vehicle through which to critique aspects of Beneatha's naivety, even as it also reveals her strong expressions of agency. He comments about her hair, which he finds incompatible with her wearing the Yoruba robe he has brought her as a gift. Asagai sees Beneatha's western, straightened hair-style as a "mutilation" (62), an unnatural capitulation to the standards of beauty imposed by the forces of containment ruling the dominant culture. Her hair is literally compressed, its natural tendencies squashed and confined by the various products and processes of manipulation used to style it in a way more consistent with the norms of the white dominant culture. While this notion of hairstyles as an important signifier in these respects is well established from a contemporary point of view, made mainstream by the Soul style that would become popular a decade or more later, its inclusion in a 1959 drama performed for mainstream audiences was surely a more potent provocation. And as these few examples illustrate, alongside the events of the family's relocation and the symbolic exploration of various literal containments and what they might represent, Hansberry's collection of smaller narratives within the overarching framework of

the play reveals in its own ways the various limits containment culture seeks to impose on the black subjects of the drama.

Insofar as this analysis is concerned with attending to the efficacy of resistance strategies explored in the play, thinking carefully about how Hansberry represents the successes and failures of *Raisin*'s characters' forms of dissent is crucial. Kristin Matthews relies heavily on the spatially imagined concept of house and home in her analysis. Matthews points to the play's lack of a central character as a strength, arguing the ensemble of characters becomes the principle vehicle through which a "polyvocal" model of resistance to racial and socioeconomic oppression is posited. For Matthews, this "polyvocal" approach portends the coming threat of fracturing within black resistance efforts (into Black power, non-violent resistance, Pan-Africanism, and other movements, e.g.) whose dis-integration into disparate pieces weakens the force that might have been found in polyvocal unity. As she argues, "Raisin warns that discord and factionalism within the movement can be as dangerous to the end-goal of full enfranchisement as can the physical and ideological threats from without" (557-58). In thinking about the play's engagement with the spatial notions of house and/or home, Matthews mostly metaphorizes the concepts, contending *Raisin* explores multiple "homes": the capitalist upward mobility narrative (figured in different ways by different characters[31]); black nationalism and pan-Africanism

[31] The primary example, of course, is Walter. Systematic efforts at encouraging entrepreneurialism, such as Nixon's Black Capitalism Initiative, were importantly motivated by desires to distract from, disrupt, and ultimately thwart organizing for activist purposes. It was a domestic plan deeply related to his "détente" foreign policy strategy and aimed to contain black

(principally through Beneatha's characterization); the "house" of the Lord," i.e., faith (as seen in Mama's Christianity); and, of course, the more literal sense of home through Mama's designs of moving to Clybourne Park. Ultimately Matthews finds the play suggests none of these on its own is sufficient as a site of resistance, but taken collaboratively, they are better poised for efficacy: "While entrepreneurialism, hard work, black nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and religion alone fail to release the Younger family from their present condition, Walter's pride, Ruth's pragmatism, Beneatha's consciousness, and Lena's faith succeed in fusing the family together" (567). This constitutes the "polyvocality" Matthews celebrates.

In opposition to early receptions minimizing the play's specific political concerns, more recent evaluations like Matthews' tend to focus on and celebrate the play's resistant messages. And though direct links between artistic works and political action are rarely if ever provable, it is hard to miss the striking connection between the play's portrayal of the Youngers' decision to keep the Clybourne house and make a home there and other real protest actions like the ones in Chicago neighborhoods in 1966, such as the Gage Park marches led by Martin Luther King Jr. and similar forms of protest employed that year in Cicero. These actions were, at least in part, the work that paved the way for the Fair

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power by promoting Black Capitalism as an alternative to dissent (Weems and Randolph 66). In her depiction of Walter, Hansberry effectively questions Black Capitalism's efficacy and thus challenges the logic of such efforts.

Housing Act in 1968[32], which went a long way toward combating the evils of redlining in urban, predominantly black neighborhoods. With *Raisin,* Hansberry ultimately succeeded in moving the political needle on many of the issues she wanted to tackle, even if her particular brand of socialist strategy never materialized from audiences' engagement with the play exactly as she might have hoped or envisioned. This success surely rests heavily on the play's direct challenge to racist housing policies through its central concern with the racial geography of neighborhoods, but the subtler ways in which the play confronts the "claustrophobia" of black life in the mid-century should also be more thoroughly recognized. Careful analysis of the spatial dimensions of set design, dialogue, depictions of containment culture's forces in micronarratives, and sensitivity to the symbolic resonances of all these components reveals the compelling if less obvious ways in which *Raisin* mobilizes the rhetoric and logics of space to mount a penetrating critique of containment culture, one paving the way for its eventual weakening, fracturing, and failure roughly a decade after the play's premiere.

§ Staging Resistance: Confronting Containment in *Blues for Mister Charlie*

James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie* is now his best-known drama, but contrary to the status it currently enjoys, its initial reception was on the whole not very positive. Though much of the early appreciation of Hansberry's *Raisin*

[32] This piece of legislation is more officially known as The Civil Rights Act of 1968, a follow up of sorts to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VIII of the 1968 Act focused on ensuring fair housing opportunities by explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on race, religion, or national origin in the sale, rental, or financing of housing.

was misconstrued, it was definitely less hostile than the early critical reception Baldwin found with *Blues.* Phillip Roth, for example, argued that the play suffered from Baldwin's conflicting commitments to too many social causes, commitments among which any artfulness failed to find a place. Blackness was the hero and whiteness the villain of the later acts, an alarmingly simplistic representation of racial dynamics in Roth's assessment. The gist of Roth's complaint is that Baldwin offers little more than thinly veiled propaganda. Robert Brustein's evaluation focuses even more on Baldwin personally, pointing to Baldwin's alleged inability to reconcile his public and private life as the root of the play's failure. As Nicholas Davis notes, even those who wrote less damningly about *Blues* seemed rather reserved and qualified in their praise, often merely noting its value "in relation to external social conditions or by association with the rest of Baldwin's canon" rather than on the merit of its own strengths (31). But surely these early receptions reflect much of the same antipathy towards politically charged dramatic productions that motivated the backhanded praise Hansberry received. Mostly white mainstream critics and audiences protest too much about the propagandistic qualities; that the play was illustrative of social ills and aimed at buoying social causes is exactly what Baldwin set out to accomplish, as his comments in a preface-of-sorts, "Notes for Blues," make clear. Wary of the theater and its commercial interests and reticent to write for the stage at all, he was nonetheless spurred on by the senseless deaths of Emmet Till and Medgar Evans, and writes, "it was then that I resolved that

nothing under heaven would prevent me getting this play done. We are walking in terrible darkness here, and [*Blues*] is one man's attempt to bear witness to the reality and power of the light" (xv).

Perhaps Baldwin's play was perceived with more antipathy than Hansberry's because of the force of his preexisting reputation. Baldwin was a known-entity publicly associated with an identifiable and provocative politics, such that brushing these elements aside in a celebration of the "everyman" aspect of his characters' struggles was not as available an option as it seemed to those early critics of *Raisin.* As Nicholas notes, a bias against *Blues* does still persist, too, even if in lesser intensity, in the ways in which the play is sometimes underappreciated or even omitted in later critical considerations of Baldwin's oeuvre. Yet, as with *Raisin*, so too have more recent assessments of *Blues* taken a more enlightened turn. Nicholas observes that Baldwin's subsequent efforts in the theater, such as *The Amen Corner,* represented a determined shift from the approach of *Blues*, providing a temptation to read this deviation as an acknowledgment of *Blues* inferiority. But what Nicholas most helpfully offers is the hypothesis that maybe "Baldwin struck out in new directions after *Blues for Mister Charlie* because the play had so well articulated his themes that, in this case, reiteration would only have been redundant" (32). In other words, perhaps this resoundingly and confrontationally political play actually succeeds, and does so quite thoroughly, in lashing out convincingly at the insidious forms of containment Baldwin targeted. The analysis here operates from a similar

hypothesis, adding to it the emphasis that Baldwin's success with the play's political efficacy rests heavily on the spatially-informed tactics and strategies of his dramaturgy and the awareness of how spatial signification might inform understandings of and resistances to containment culture.

While *Raisin*'s attention to dramatic space and how it signifies is striking, perhaps no drama other than *Blues* so emphasizes in its physical stage design what Lipsitz calls the spatialization of race and the racialization of space. Among the critics who pan *Blues* as an unsuccessful play and evidence of the inferiority of Baldwin's dramaturgy (especially relative to his successes as a writer of fiction), at least one points specifically to the staging and set design as a primary ingredient in this failure. But quite the contrary is true, in fact. Though Joe Weixlmann condemns the play for these features, essentially deeming them too inelegant, and, what is more, derivative of Eugene O'Neill[33], his argument is ultimately unconvincing. Baldwin's stage directions describe a skeleton set straightforwardly signifying the important social divisions he aims to tackle as they are figured spatially. In the first two acts, the set is the Negro church; in the third, it is the courthouse. While situated in one space or the other, "the audience should always be aware, during the first two acts, of the dome of the courthouse and the American flag," and in the last act, "of the steeple of the church and the cross." The aisle of the church "functions as the division between

[33] Weixlmann suggests that Baldwin's failure is not exclusively because he was aware of and emulating the "staged segregation" pioneered by O'Neill in *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, but his emphasis on this claim and scant discussion of any other reason for the play's supposed deficiencies belies the qualification.

WHITETOWN and BLACKTOWN," and when scenes taking place outside of the church occur in the first two acts, they do so "principally by suggestion," so as not "to obliterate the skeleton, or, perhaps more accurately, the framework, suggested above" (1-2). In the last act, the aisle serves as the dividing line of the segregated courtroom. The literal "gulf' between these spaces signifies, of course, both the expanse of such divisions, whose "enormity" is emphasized spatially, but also the danger they pose to the subordinated subjects they separate or even entrap. The play opens, after all, with Lyle's murder of Richard and the disposal of Richard's body which "falls out sight of the audience, like a stone, into the pit" (2). In carefully designing the set in just this way, Baldwin is able to imbricate the various ways in which the discourses of Christian theology and spirituality, American nationalism, the criminal justice system, and the pitfalls between and within these containment forces work collaboratively to oppress the play's subjects.

Focusing on what she calls Baldwin's theory of performance, Koritha Mitchell contends he is acutely aware of how the stage affords opportunities that force audiences into confrontations with the physical realities it relies upon. For Baldwin, Mitchell argues, the actual bodies of black actors, their physical presence's materiality and corporeality, "hold the imagination accountable" to reality. This avoids forms of fantasy or escapism that might more easily allow other literary-textual audiences to write off the social disjunctures presented as mostly illusory or imaginative. If Mitchell is right about Baldwin's strategy, it

seems likely he envisioned the material representations inherent in the set design to work similarly to provoke such confrontations. Surely the views of the flag, dome, steeple, and cross which loom over scenes occurring elsewhere are meant forcibly to keep them from receding from consciousness as the audience engages with the various scenes taking place. As Davis argues, "the uniformity of the stage setting . . . is just as conspicuous as the sharp sense of difference registered by the yawning gulf down the middle: the physical world of *Blues for Mister* Charlie is, confusingly, always the same even when it is different and internally differentiated even when it is the same" (36). And if such staging and set-design tactics seem derivative, inelegant, or too obvious to critics like Weixlmann, consider that Hansberry's play, one transparently about the racial geography of Chicago and the plight of a black family amidst those circumstances, was initially celebrated as one that "transcended" the supposed limits of directly challenging those very issues. In other words, perhaps Baldwin recognized that subtlety—while the preferred aesthetic of many—only registers when audiences are appropriately savvy and sensitized to see what is subtly rendered. As Hansberry's white audiences had already demonstrated, in matters of race and space on stage they were not always up to the task.

Even still, with all this in mind, if it were only the set design and staging that imbued *Blues* with the force of its critiques, perhaps the pronouncements of its simplicity and inelegance would have some merit. But alongside these elements, Baldwin makes use of other spatially-informed tactics to explore

modes of resisting containment. In a way different but not entirely dissimilar from how Tennessee Williams uses geographical spaces to explore counterexamples of more permissive and progressive cultural ideologies than American containment culture allows, Baldwin looks to dialectical juxtapositions between North and South, urban and rural, and foreign and domestic to point out contrasts. This emerges early in the play through Richard's conversation with Mother Henry about New York. Richard forcibly resists the idea that northern urban spaces offer true respite from the constrictions of containment:

> I convinced Daddy that I'd be better off in New York—and Edna, she convinced him too, she said it wasn't as tight for a black man up there as it is down here. Well, that's a crock, Grandmama, believe me when I tell you. At first I thought it was true, hell, I was just a green country boy and they ain't got no signs up, dig, saying you can't go here or you can't go there. No, you got to find that out all by your lonesome. (20)

Richard's travels north, which end with his returning home to escape drug addiction and the other perils of a less overt but still very real oppression, disabuse him of any naïve notions about what the northern cities might provide in terms of escape from race-based containment forces. There are discernible differences between north and south, but these differences are revealed to be far less substantive in quality than a naïve juxtaposition of the two might promise.

In another revealing scene, this time involving three white characters (Parnell, Lyle, and Jo), Baldwin raises the idea of "foreign" national spaces and their potential as zones beyond the reach of containment (58-59). In the context of a conversation about the opportunities available for Lyle and Jo's white child's future, Lyle mentions the prospect of sending him to Switzerland to be educated like Parnell was. Jo's cautioning reply is that it was there that Parnell cultivated his progressive "wild ideas." Parnell says he encountered African Princes studying too, and further notes that they were as bright and harder working than he. When he comments provocatively that perhaps they even imagined themselves superior to him and that "the Swiss girls certainly thought so," Jo responds anxiously, failing to imagine why these sorts of interracial entanglements would have been desirable, especially to the European and American women[34]. After Lyle expresses that he would never send a daughter to Switzerland but would a son, strongly gendered containment taboos concerning interracial sex are revealed. Lyle would not worry about his son being with an African woman "as long as he leaves her over there" (59). The two men proceed to disagree with Jo about whether such prohibitions should be exclusive to women. Lyle credits it to the relative strengths and weaknesses of men and women, while Parnell suggests that even if it is not fair, "that's the way it's always been" (60).

[34] It is important to point out, too, that Parnell implicates not just the Swiss women but Danish, English, French, Finnish, Russian, and—crucially—American women. In other words, it implies that a relocation to this more liberal Swiss space makes such interactions increasingly available not just to native Swiss but to other white visitors too, especially Americans.

This scene is especially important not just for how it demonstrates the precarious entanglement of racial, sexual, and gender-based containment ideologies and their fundamental inequities. It also manages to suggest that at least some measure of escape from containment forces is more available—especially for white American women—outside of domestic space[35]. Like Williams's figurations addressed in the last chapter, there remains an element of liminality about such prospects. The time spent abroad is temporary and somewhat touristic in nature. The Bitten's son decidedly could not bring his African princess home, for example. And yet it is unlike Williams's figuration in that the permissive international space is not exoticized. In choosing Switzerland the connotations are markedly different, invoking notions of neutrality, progressivism and other similarly positive conceptions. One must consider that these are exclusively white characters in this scene. Such optimism about touristic escape might not have been present among any of the black characters, though Baldwin's own time abroad and reluctance to come home to the US is worth noting in this respect. Perhaps, then, it is class privilege that plays the central role rather than race alone. In any case, what one finds here is still a significant departure from the tone and tenor of how the foreign spaces in Williams's dramas signify.

Finally, in addition to the set design and staging of *Blues* and its treatments of various geographical spaces, Baldwin also shows how the

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[35] This phrase is used in a double sense here to suggest both "foreign" spaces and ones beyond the domestic roles prescribed for women during the containment era, since the Swiss context discussed is not only non-American but also a collegiate one.

presence of differently raced bodies within a racialized space can transform the space's signification and limit what may or may not happen there. In other words, he portrays how the presence of racialized bodies works to construct containing spaces. Lyle Bitten is the most obvious example of a character whose racial presence reverberates spatially. When Richard first hears about Lyle from Pete, Pete claims that in spite of Lyle's economic dependence on black patronage in his store, he "still expects [blacks] to step off the sidewalk when he comes along" (25). Even more tellingly, when Bitten enters Papa D's juke joint and goes to the counter Baldwin's directions note, "his appearance causes a change in the atmosphere." Juanita points him out to Richard who says aloud, "I wonder what he'd do if I walked into a white place" (30), emphasizing how this form of racially denoted spatial privilege works only in one direction. Though Parnell's presence in the black space of the church in other scenes seemingly causes less of an alteration than Lyle's does in the juke joint, it nevertheless has an effect too. In both of the scenes in which Parnell enters he does so right after most of the other black characters in the space have left, first to speak with Meridian, who is alone, and later as Richard's funeral is ending and the procession is filing out. Only he and Juanita are left there to converse. In both exchanges the subject of conversation turns inevitably to Parnell's inability to bridge the racial divide between him and the respective other characters, and this in spite of his problematic but seemingly earnest desire to sympathize and to forge meaningful connections. Parnell's failure to connect stands in stark

contrast, in each case, with the sense of community punctuating the prior scenes. The reasons for Parnell's inability to fully relate to either Meridian or Juanita are complex and myriad, but in this context, the disconnect itself is important insofar as it both reinforces and is reinforced by the sense in which the racial dynamics of the church space and Parnell's presence in it are incompatible.

On the whole, the critical reception of *Blues* has been rather mixed. Those early reactions characterized by negative assessment of the play as too heavy-handed and artless are tempered considerably by subsequent evaluations that have been more favorable. Still, *Blues* has not enjoyed anything like the widespread praise heaped on *Raisin* over the last half century or more. But those evaluations attentive to the urgency animating Baldwin's dramaturgy seem best to understand the play's significance. As Koritha Mitchell notes, "Only by facing reality, Baldwin maintained, could Americans grapple with the injustice of social hierarchies and thereby recognize their connection to one another. As he made a mission of deconstructing false consciousness, he wrote . . . drama . . . refusing to confine himself or his vision" (33). Likewise, Davis contends that in *Blues,* Baldwin leans into the possibility of the stage itself as a most promising site for resistance: "Since Baldwin trusts neither the church nor the courtroom to regulate, organize, or expose these depths of human experience, he has found a last remaining public space in which to present the dialectical complexities and intricate paradoxes of American life: the theater" (39). Pointing to the classical

role of the theater as not “art in the modern sense” but rather a cultural institution whose purpose was to help cultivate a more enlightened forms of civic participation, Davis contends that if one holds the American stage to “a similar standard of municipal accountability,” critics could “no longer attest that the play’s manifest denunciations of racism serve to countermand, rather than to strengthen, its dramatic power” (40). Such an emphasis on the rhetorico-political function of the stage rather than a more narrowly defined aesthetic one is convincing indeed, and a forceful counterpoint to the early receptions detailed previously. It acknowledges the important distinctions in how blacks and whites were impacted by and therefore reacted to the forces of containment in markedly different ways. White critics who positioned aesthetic merit over and against political directness were themselves participating in the exertion of a containing force on Black artists and intellectuals.

Taken together, Baldwin’s stage directions, treatment of how foreign space might signify in resisting containment, and attentiveness to the ways in which racial bodies inform how spaces might signify and constrain constitute a powerful challenge to containment logic. One could even argue that the direct way in which these qualities of the drama provoke audiences is the play’s strength rather than its weakness. If such an acknowledgment seems to prioritize the drama’s rhetorical force over its aesthetic merits, so be it, as Baldwin’s obvious political goals and commitments should in fact resonate more meaningfully when considering the play’s success relative to the events and

injustices provoking its creation. Put another way, given its rhetorical aims, the drama's aesthetic choices should be understood to enhance rather than detract from *Blues*'s impact on audiences.

§ From Containment to Confinement

The early critical responses to each of these dramas reinforce the ways in which racial factors influenced receptions of each play's critique of containment forces. More pointedly, in many cases these predominantly white critical responses effectively served as containing forces themselves. The shifting critical tides surrounding each drama have, however, culminated in a sea change in overall perceptions of the plays' politics since, a development that corresponds to the weakening of containment logic and the various constraining forces associated with it, one ultimately resulting in containment's demise. At the risk of repeating some claims made in the introduction, this subject requires some attention in the interest of clarity as the project proceeds Part II.

To highlight a spatially-oriented historical marker as an endpoint for containment, consider The Fair Housing Act of 1968, which effectively made redlining an illegal practice. Though this surely did not put an immediate end to all discriminatory practices related to housing, it was a massive victory nonetheless. It therefore serves as a complementary bookend to the 1948 Shelley vs. Kramer decision, and for the purposes of this project these two major developments in the history of race-related housing discrimination nicely frame

the containment era chronologically (1948-1968). Notably, Deborah Nelson describes her work on privacy as "tracing the slow breakdown of containment from 1959 to 1973", extending the rule of containment roughly five years beyond the 1968 endpoint (xii). Recall, however, that 1973 serves as the starting point for this project's analysis of confinement, a date chosen because of the sharp increase in incarceration rates that began in that year. The point in emphasizing these date ranges, it should be stressed, is not to provide rigidly separate categories or to quibble too ponderously over the choice of specific dates and events. Rather, it is to offer some touchpoints for framing how these two related periods of spatially constraining emphasis roughly sit relative to one another chronologically.

Further, confinement in this context is conceived as somewhat complicatedly both a break from and a continuation of containment—as the successes of the social and political reforms of the 1960's threatened and ultimately doomed containment culture as the dominant spatially constraining metaphor/strategy, such impulses morphed into a new if not entirely dissimilar form. This should best be understood as a continuation/mutation of containment that presented itself on the one hand as less systemically overt and ostensibly narrower in scope, but at the same time more openly hostile and punitive in many of its manifestations. The most common strategy in this respect was to criminalize and thereby punish forms of dissent in a narrower frame of contexts but to do so quite severely. COINTELPRO, various FBI actions against Native

Americans, the political and legislative origins of Mass Incarceration, and other related efforts serve as just a few examples.

It is useful, too, to re-emphasize that these two periods should be thought of as loose at the margins and potentially overlapping. To draw too neat and clean a distinction between any certain policy or using any particular hard dates invites mostly unproductive disagreement. A gesture toward Raymond Williams's concepts of the "dominant, emergent, and residual" strands of overlapping cultural movements is as instructive here as in any case of accounting for the complexity of periodizing concepts. One ought to envision containment and confinement as sequential cultural dominants alongside of which exist residual elements of the former periods and emergent elements of those to come. In other words, in marking the transition from containment to confinement, one should not discount these forms of overlapping and their effects on how one ought to theorize the two periods and their relationship. With that in mind, the proceeding section of this project aims to address dramas attuned to representing and critiquing confinement, and in so doing, to follow the thread of resisting constraint pioneered by playwrights of the containment era.

Preface to Part 2: A Brief Word on the Shift Toward Confinement

In a now-famous 1963 interview with Kenneth Clark, James Baldwin addressed the issue of urban renewal, a project ostensibly aimed at revitalizing urban spaces and thus improving the quality of life of their inhabitants. This, of course, was not the reality for so many of the often impoverished and mostly black communities actually living in urban neighborhoods. The essence of Baldwin's message was clear: "urban renewal is black removal." Just as families like Lorraine Hansberry's and the fictional Youngers were attempting to escape urban areas and to integrate suburban ones, forces were at work to displace other black families from the urban homes they did have, however containing and claustrophobic they might have been. Somewhat paradoxically, both containing and removing forces worked in concert even as the Containment-era came to a close, evidence of how in spite of the successes of Civil Rights-era reform, systematic forces regulating space in America continued to operate then as they still continue today. But in important ways, a significant shift does seem to have taken place around the late 1960's and into the early 1970's. Broad and openly sanctioned containment practices largely receded as a new form of constraint identified here as confinement emerged. Recall that following Raymond Williams's conception for theorizing periodization in general and especially the shifts between periods, any new cultural dominant is intended to be thought of as running alongside residual elements of the former period and emergent elements of the one to follow. This certainly applies to the sea change in modes of

constraint shifting from containment to confinement. Bearing this in mind, examining plays representing and contesting the emerging period of confinement constitutes the subject of the second part of this project. More particularly, the focus is on the ways in which select dramas of Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka and Hanay Geigomah were especially prescient and potent in their response to the very early development of the confinement era.

Though, as acknowledged earlier, strict chronological beginning and endpoints are not of primary concern, it might be helpful to think of the 1968 Fair Housing Act as a symbolic marker of containment's decline and the 1973 spike in incarceration rates in the US as especially indicative of confinement's ascendancy. 1968 was indeed a crucial turning point in the politics of resistance in the west. It saw the Tet offensive and height of US casualties in the Vietnam war, the unpopularity of which almost unseated President Lyndon Johnson in the democratic primary early that year; the infamous assassinations of political figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy; and massive student protests, like those at Columbia University and the protests in Paris, which led Charles de Gaulle to dissolve the National Assembly, call for immediate elections, and invoke the possibility of military intervention to quell dissent. Protests at the Chicago Democratic convention and the summer Olympics in Mexico City were also meaningful evidence of the fact that civil unrest was reaching a boiling point by 1968. Around this same time, cultural theory was beginning to see what has come to be known as the poststructural or

postmodern turn, an effort to move away from older intellectual modes of understanding and engaging politically. And yet, the revolutionary promise of the late 60's ironically engendered the ascendancy of neo-liberalism, as confinement practices were brought squarely and aggressively to bear on forms of resistance, preparing the way for increasingly more efficient globalized forms of capitalism that might help safeguard the influence of the already powerful.

For the purpose of analysis, the dawning era of confinement might loosely be characterized by two key hallmarks: 1) even more overt and punitive hostility towards dissent, and 2) such hostilities projected in a narrower and often more concentrated frame. Among the best examples of confinement forces in the US are law enforcement efforts such as COINTELPRO and penal system policies effected through mid-late 20th century criminal justice reforms, policies whose consequences disproportionately affected minority subjects generally and dissenting voices particularly. As the two chapters in the confinement section explore directly, African American and Native American communities—especially those advocating most radically for reform and even revolution—were among the chief targets of these earliest confinement tactics, and Baraka and Geiogamah's plays serve as instructive texts for analyzing how the stage was used to represent and thereby resist these developments.

Ch. 3: Contesting Confinement on Stage: Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* & *The Slave*

When considering the most formidable accounts of and challenges to confinement on stage, Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka's[36] plays are a natural starting point. These works vividly present the anger and energy of black resistance to confinement-era injustices. In particular, his 1964[37] dramas *Dutchman* and *The Slave* embody this vociferous response to racism and racial oppression. A close analysis of these works reveals how spatial themes and sensitivities in Baraka's dramaturgy urge an emphasis on remembering the confinement of slavery as a primary vehicle through which to represent and critique emerging forms of racialized confinement in contemporary American life. Alongside this larger focus on remembering slavery, Baraka thoroughly exposes a specific emerging confinement-era tactic of authorities inciting blacks to violence in order more easily to justify their own violent retaliations and aggressive penal practices, as the analysis here will go on to detail. Further still, the plays present Baraka's particular aesthetic vision of the theater he hoped would best point it toward certain political ends in the climate of their times: a bold and confrontational revolutionary theater to challenge the growing force of confinement. In its

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[36] Each of the plays discussed in this chapter were initially written and produced under the name Leroi Jones. However, in deference to his own determination in 1965 to go by Amiri Baraka for both personal and political reasons, the remainder of the chapter will refer to him by that name.

[37] While acknowledging that 1964 precedes the dates and events offered as indicative of the shift toward confinement, this claim as to the plays' status as key confinement-era texts leans on their marked difference from the previous examples explored in Part 1. This chapter aims to provide sufficient evidence of their prescience and status as emergent texts reacting to what would soon become the dominant form of constraint.

examination of these issues, this chapter first addresses how each play explores the connection between memory of enslavement and confinement realities. Next, it analyzes the means by which Baraka represents the particular tactic of strategically provoking actions which might then be used to justify a confining response. Finally, it explores the aesthetic philosophy which underpins Baraka's dramaturgy, noting the ways in which his critical expressions and the dramas themselves formulate a theory of aesthetics and resistance that would come to the fore more broadly as a characteristic approach of the black arts/black power era of resistance. As William Van Deburg argues, "The Black Power movement was not exclusively cultural, but it was essentially cultural. It was a revolt in and of culture . . . manifested in a variety of forms and intensities . . . [making 'black power'] a broad, adaptive cultural term serving to connect and illuminate the differing ideological orientations of the movement's supporters" (9-10). This link between culture and politics is indeed indispensable for understanding how the black power paradigm emerged, and Baraka's theater played no less than a crucial role in this development.

§ Contesting Confinement by Remembering Enslavement: Space, Memory, and Resistance in *Dutchman* and *The Slave*

From the perspective of this project's comparative study of space and resistance on stage, perhaps the most prominent of Baraka's techniques in each play concerns using and referring to space both to recall enslavement and

challenge confinement. In so doing, he relies on spatial figurations and other forms of allusion and direct reference to connect nascent forms of confinement constraint with the memory and power of slavery and, importantly, the history of various empowering resistances to it.

To begin, consider the opening of *Dutchman*, Baraka's controversial 1964 play dramatizing what he calls in his autobiography "a confrontation between a slightly nutty (and wholly dangerous) white female bohemian and a young naïve black intellectual" (275). *Dutchman*'s initial scene includes a conversation between Clay and Lula about staring (5-7), immediately invoking the presence of surveillance as an integral quality of the space. Further discussion in a subsequent section will focus in greater depth on this interaction, but suffice it to say here that this presence of surveillance recalls the watchful eye of the plantation overseer while alluding also to the surveilled status of black life and dissent so deeply embedded into the fabric of confinement-era social regulation. By literally beginning the play with intense focus on the gaze of Lula, Baraka makes certain that audiences confront the specter of surveillance which hangs so palpably over the lives of black citizens in general and black activists in particular.

Another of the major concerns to which one should attend in thinking through *Dutchman* and its relationship to space is the allusive reference in the title to the legend of The Flying Dutchman, a ship doomed to sail endlessly without ever arriving at a destination. In Sir Walter Scott's version of the

Dutchman legend, a plague breaks out on the ship, ostensibly the cursed punishment for a murder committed on board. The plague leaves the ship unwelcome in any harbor, fear of its passengers' infectiousness dooming it to sail interminably. In Richard Wagner's libretto *Der Fliegende Holländer* the fabled ship is also cursed, though in this case because of the Captain's egotistical swearing of an oath to round the cape even if it takes an eternity to do so. The curse is only lifted when a woman sacrifices herself out of love for him to prove her faithfulness. As Hugh Nelson and others point out, in addition to the title, the initial stage directions in *Dutchman* preparing the opening scene reference the subway as the "*flying* underbelly" of the city, "heaped in modern myth" (3, emphasis added). This symbolic connection of the modern subway setting with the *Flying Dutchman* legend prompts associations with these and other versions of the Dutchman legend, signaling a doomed futility and raising the specter of murder and death which will materialize by the play's end.

Attending to the subway as the main setting, connected as it is to the legend, Nelson emphasizes its subterranean quality and Baraka's use of the word "underbelly" to read it symbolically as a reference for "the mysterious depths of mind, body, and society." He notes other symbolic implications concerning digestion and the excretory process and the manner by which the subway, like the physical body under duress, serves as a threatening, melting-pot-like cauldron working constantly to draw its cargo in and then throw it back out again (54). As Lula puts it, they are "smashing along through the city's

entrails" (21), offering a textual anchoring point for exploring this anthropomorphized symbolism. Further, the ceaseless travel of the subway cars, like that of the Flying Dutchman legend, is a mechanized, modern version of the cursed ship, a vehicle through which contemporary society is transported endlessly but ineffectually[38]. In Nelson's reading either Clay or Lula might be considered the Dutchman figure in the Wagnerian reference, but he settles on Lula as a more compelling case. While readers might expect Clay, as the black figure, to be the one cursed as a victim of the cyclical violence of white oppression (Lula kills him only to confront her next victim at the play's end), Nelson argues Lula is a better Dutchman figure insofar as she is the character seemingly most in need of escape or release, the one who acts aggressively and even compulsively in their interaction. Ultimately, he contends, "[Baraka] has used the 'Dutchman' metaphor both as an imaginative reference for his subway setting and also as an indication of the doomed fatality of the situation and of the characters who live through it" (58). In this respect, the Flying Dutchman reference illustrates the ways in which confinement means the perpetuation of these ineffectual cycles of ritualized violence, the notion that both Clay and Lula are incapable of realizing escape.

Of course, the play's title refers not only to the legend, but also to the original Dutch slave ships sailing between Africa and America. "Dutchman"

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[38] *Dutchman*'s subway setting is also another liminal, transient space, not unlike some of Williams's highlighted in the first chapter. Nor is it unlike those of Burroughs, an interesting connection to Jones/Baraka's earlier beatnik phase. But importantly, the transient space here is not one of license and escape from the closet, prudish social attitudes about sex or drug use, or from racial oppression. Rather, it is a curse.

might also be understood as an ironic name for a black person, since the Dutch were among the first to settle Harlem (Weisgram 217). In these and other allusions to slavery and blackness, Baraka sets up a compelling analogy for the contemporary circumstances of confinement. The claustrophobic setting of the underground, crowded subway is analogous to the cramped confines of the enslaved aboard ships during the middle passage. The subway also connotes danger and even hellishness in several archetypal binary oppositions: under-ground/above-ground and light/dark, each of which is also often connected to experiences of imprisonment.

In thinking further about how space is configured, consider too that the play begins with Clay alone in the train car. The stage directions make clear that "only his seat visible" (5), evoking a solitary, almost cell-like framing of his subjectivity and prompting visual associations with confinement as incarceration. By the beginning of Scene II, however, there are others aboard the car (22), and by the climactic moment of his death, the growing group is complicit in his murder by getting up just as he is stabbed and then helping to drag off his body. After killing Clay, they leave Lula alone again in the car awaiting another young black man who will presumably become her next victim in a recurring cycle[39] (37-38). The escalating number of passengers in the space signals a growing feeling of claustrophobia building towards his death, as his confinement intensifies and

[39] This racialized ritual cycle is explored in a number of other cultural texts, including very recent ones such as Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017).

propels him toward fatal violence only for the cycle to begin again with another victim.

The frenzied momentum and communal aspect of the entire scene recalls mob lynchings, and the clear connections between the constraining spaces of both the underground and the subway car anticipate the worsening circumstances of confinement, on the one hand, while recalling the terrors of slavery on the other. As the number of passengers grows, they "star[e] at [Lula and Clay] with uncertain interest," prompting Lula to ask Clay if he fears them. Puzzled, he asks why would he, to which she replies, "Cause you're an escaped nigger" (29). Aside from being another direct reference to escaping the confinement of slavery, this moment is also intriguingly connected to the holocaust when Lula mentions Clay crawling through wire to reach her. Clay is again puzzled, pointing out that plantations did not have wire, and that she must be a Jew if that is all she can think about (29). The connection to white supremacy, forced incarceration and extermination, and to the wire itself—evocative of contemporary prison construction—work together to bridge the historical associations of slavery and more recent and contemporary forms of race-based confinement.

This reference also must be considered alongside other aspects of Baraka's problematic antisemitism, which revealed itself in his poetry and public comments. Without minimizing the difficulty of these views in any way, it might help to try and understand their likely motivations. His dissatisfaction with the

political apathy toward black injustice of some his early beatnik Jewish acquaintances in the Village is likely at play here, as well as a perceived indignity in the way the Holocaust was remembered and publicly acknowledged as an atrocity while the slave trade, with its quantitatively larger number of victims, was largely overlooked. Again, the point here is not to engage in victim-baiting or in any way to validate Baraka's anti-Semitism; rather it is to better theorize the likely motivations for such elements in his thought and work, acknowledging all the while the ways in which Baraka's reputation and legacy are significantly tarnished by them.

To return to the overall tactic of very deliberately and provocatively remembering the confinement of slavery through purposeful renderings of space and spatial metaphors, and of doing so in order to depict and thereby challenge confinement, it is one which only intensifies in another of Baraka's dramas, *The Slave.* The prologue opens the play with Walker dressed as an old field slave delivering a soliloquy to the audience, "seemingly uncertain of [their] reception." He obliquely philosophizes and addresses the audience about "An ignorance. A stupidity. A stupid longing not to know," (43) while growing increasingly anxious and conventionally inarticulate as he continues. At one point he claims, "I am much older than I look . . . or maybe much younger" (44). This explicit effort to frame the play (Walker turns back into the slave in the final moments) with Walker-as-slave is even more deliberate than *Dutchman* in its attempts directly to

recall slavery in order to present and challenge contemporary conditions of confinement.

Just as in *Dutchman, The Slave* at times relies on forms of spatial signification and reference to heighten feelings of confinement. Space in *The Slave* is concretely tied to conquest. Physical spaces are an integral part of what is contested in the dramatized revolution, just as geographical space has been and continues to be an essential component in almost any modern conflict. Walker breaks into the Easley's home and lies in wait, violating and invading their private domestic space of white privilege. Further, the flashes and sounds of shells which persist throughout the drama are a constant reminder of the encroachment of the revolutionaries and the growing threat of their seizing that space. Walker says to Grace and Easley at one point: "You see and hear those shells beating this town flat . . . we'll probably be here in masse in about a week. Why don't I just camp here and wait for my brothers to get here and liberate the whole place?" (58). Notably, the end of the act 1 is punctuated by the aforementioned explosions, which also precede the curtain rising in act 2. Act 1 ends visually, however, with Easley crouching and closing in on Walker as he drinks and reclines on the sofa. Easley stalks toward Walker while the approach of the revolutionaries closing in on the apartment is signified simultaneously by the explosions. The play ends with Grace, Easley, and Grace and Walker's children, Catherine and Elizabeth, dead, while more sounds of explosions continue "for some time" (88) even after the curtain is drawn. The last image on

stage is that of Walker-as-slave. This image alongside the sounds of explosions points backward and forward at once, as if emphatically to confront the audience once more with the potent connection between enslavement and confinement, a relation or even conflation of past-present-and-future.

Leaning heavily on slavery and its memory as a symbol would become a characteristic element of the revolutionary theater Baraka helped initiate, and it is crucial to understand that recalling slavery was not only about remembering its pains, shames, and injustices as a form of lament for past and present. As Olga Barrios notes: "The Art and Theater Movement of the 1960s attempted to confront and analyze African American history and, if in prior years African Americans associated slavery with a past that they did not want to be related to, slavery [for Baraka and others] acquired a new perspective and meaning" (53). This altered meaning draws importantly on the historic power of resistance to slavery in the form of revolt and other efforts to undermine the oppressor. As Barrios argues, "In Baraka's play, the figure of the slave connotes a double-meaning. Thus, slavery literally means the enslavement of people, but in African American history it also conveys the meaning of slave rebellions in their struggle for freedom—not a passive acceptance of such a condition" (54). Larry Neal's analysis of the Black Arts movement also observes this as an important tactic for resistance: "The revolutionary army has taken one of the most hated symbols of the Afro-American past [the caricatured black slave] and radically altered its meaning. This is the supreme act of freedom, available only to those who have

liberated themselves psychically" (35). Cindy Gabrielle's work even further corroborates this notion of recalling slavery as a way to make stereotypes re-signify resistantly. Building on other critics' claims about the function of history and memory in African American culture, Gabrielle offers Baraka's work as a prime example of how black artists can "re-member the clichés," decolonizing history and reclaiming the memory of figures which, after all, "rightly belong to the past of black people" (146). *Dutchman* and *The Slave* are exemplary in their insistence on re-presenting slavery in these connections, and from the perspective of this project's analysis of how space is made to signify on stage relative to constraining social and political forces, each play helps signal a new mode of representing and thereby resisting the dawning of the confinement era.

§ 2. Inciting Dissent to Justify Confinement: Exposing a Primary Tactic of Confinement Constraint

Unable to operate quite so brazenly as before in their efforts to squash dissent, confinement-era authorities, in the wake of containment-era successes in social and political change, often looked to incite blacks to violence to enact and justify violent retaliation and forms of punitive confinement. The general history of COINTELPRO bears this out repeatedly, as does consideration of the numerous allegations of harassment, incarceration, and even murder of various individual black revolutionary figures like Assata Shakur, Eldridge Cleaver, Fred

Hampton, and Malcolm X[40]. Hampton, for example, was targeted by the FBI in 1967. In addition to spreading misinformation to disrupt BPP activities, the FBI inserted counterintelligence operatives within the group in order to provoke and thereby justify violent confrontation. In late 1969, a raid was carried out on the Chicago headquarters culminating in a firefight during which Hampton and fellow Panther Mark Clark were both killed and four others were wounded. Law enforcement officials were uninjured, and reports claim the exchange of fire amounted to 90-99 shots fired by law enforcement but only one shotgun blast from the raid's targets, a shot Clark fired that is believed to have come only after having been fatally wounded himself (Thornton). After a 12-year legal battle in civil and appellate courts alleging Civil Rights violations, the victims of the raid's families received a 1.85 million dollar settlement in 1982. This provocation leading to justification for extreme punitive and even lethal force might be considered a hallmark of confinement-era strategy and is a major focus of Baraka's *Dutchman*, marking his astute portrayal of it as even further evidence of his early identification or even premonition of confinement as the emerging cultural dominant.

As referenced earlier, Lula's gaze at Clay through the window at the beginning of the play is a form of surveillance, which, though certainly not a new tactic, would come to the fore as a primary feature of early confinement-era policing of dissent. The best example of such surveillance is COINTELPRO, the

[40] For more detail, see Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, Shakur's *Assata*, Willaim Van DeBurg's *A New Day in Babylon*, and other historical accounts of the governmental response to black dissent during this period.

FBI effort aimed at surveilling, infiltrating, discrediting, and ultimately thwarting groups aimed at domestic political dissent. The following excerpt from the final report of the Church Committee[41], a 1975 US Senate Select Committee for investigating COINTELPRO, is illuminating in its broad assessment of the scale, scope, and the extent of abuse of power involved:

> Too many people have been spied upon by too many Government agencies and too much information has been illegally collected. The Government has often undertaken the secret surveillance of citizens on the basis of their political beliefs, even when those beliefs posed no threat of violence or illegal acts on behalf of a hostile foreign power. The Government, operating primarily through secret and biased informants, but also using other intrusive techniques such as wiretaps, microphone "bugs", surreptitious mail opening, and break-ins, has swept in vast amounts of information about the personal lives, views, and associations of American citizens. Investigations of groups deemed potentially dangerous—and even of groups suspected of associating with potentially dangerous organizations—have continued for decades, despite the fact that those groups did not engage in unlawful activity. Groups and individuals have been assaulted, repressed, harassed and

[41] The report's full title is *INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES AND THE RIGHTS OF AMERICANS BOOK II: FINAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE TO STUDY GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS WITH RESPECT TO INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES.*

> disrupted because of their political views, social beliefs and their lifestyles. Investigations have been based upon vague standards whose breadth made excessive collection inevitable. Unsavory, harmful and vicious tactics have been employed—including anonymous attempts to break up marriages, disrupt meetings, ostracize persons from their professions, and provoke target groups into rivalries that might result in deaths. Intelligence agencies have served the political and personal objectives of presidents and other high officials. While the agencies often committed excesses in response to pressure from high officials in the Executive branch and Congress, they also occasionally initiated improper activities and then concealed them from officials whom they had a duty to inform. (5)

Surely aware to some extent of the reality of such surveillance and tactics for disruption, Baraka takes aim at these issues in *Ducthman* right from the outset.

As the play begins, Lula asks Clay, “Weren’t you staring at me through the window?” (6). He responds by asking rather incredulously what she means, to which she replies evasively with a question as to whether he knows what staring means. Clay protests that he saw her, but that he is not sure that amounts to staring. On the contrary, he contends she was staring at him. The stage directions make clear from the outset that she is “waiting for him to notice her” (5), that the entire encounter is part of a seductive effort initiated on her part, a

clever way of representing how confinement powers incite action to justify surveillance, disruption, and eventually punitive violence and even death. This also presents an important challenge to the assumed racial and gender dynamics of who is an aggressor and who is vulnerable by upending the racist notion of the sexually aggressive and violent black male as a threat to white female virtue and fragility. Baraka very purposefully and effectively deconstructs the traditional binary by suspending and then inverting it.

This seduction-leading-to-murder narrative also symbolizes and exposes the kind of baiting, entrapping strategy used to lure black leaders to their own demise, a devious way of being the aggressor while displacing the blame for aggression through a justifying narrative shifting culpability. As Dianne Weisgram argues, "Clay, the conformist, buttoned-up behind white conventions to keep from wreaking vengeance, and Lula, his beautiful seductress, are, as Jones makes unmistakably clear, emblems of black and white America." In this figuration, "The Whites premeditatedly tantalize the Blacks in order to arouse Black aggression and justify White violence" (219). Lula is the Eve-like white temptress, goading Clay, the black Adam, toward his demise.

The suggestions of Lula-as-Eve are far from subtle. She begins the drama "eating an apple, very daintily. Coming down the car toward CLAY" (5). Later she offers him one and he accepts, after which she comments, "Eating apples together is always the first step" (11). At the peak of her sexual seduction as she grabs his thigh "up near his crotch" (17), she dramatically throws the

apple core through the train car window, an action freighted with symbolic connections to castration, penetration, and other implications. Clay's name might also be read in consideration of the Biblical Adam being made of clay in the Genesis account, furthering the basis for such interpretation. In characterizing the entire seduction narrative Weisgram writes, "The old American ritual of seduction and death has merely assumed a new version: the miscegenated primal scene takes place pscyho-politically—white people tease the Negro[42] into asserting his identity, into demanding justice (for Jones, the only justice is genocidal revenge), and then murder him, using his demands as justification" (221). From the perspective of the dominant culture, integration and the collapse of Jim Crow segregation, while defeats in many respects, also served in certain ways as strategic concessions to stave off a more thorough and radical revolution threatening white power. They also paved the way for the confinement-era tactic of more narrowly executed aggressions of even greater intensity, aggressions emboldened by the justification various forms of incitement ostensibly provided. Perhaps nowhere is this better dramatized symbolically than in the ritual cycle of Clay and Lula's violent seductive encounter in *Dutchman*.

§ Baraka's Vision of Aesthetics and Politics

Any thorough analysis of Baraka's dramas—particularly the two plays considered here, each of which was published in 1964—should take into account

[42] The problematic use of this term is likely an artifact of the article's 1972 publication date.

his rather infamous 1965[43] essay "The Revolutionary Theater." In the space of no more than a few pages, Baraka lays out his vision for a theater that "must Accuse and Attack anything that can be accused and attacked. 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" (1). For Baraka, the political must not be made the enemy of the aesthetic, and never should ethical commitments be subordinate in importance to aesthetic concerns. In his figuration, subordinating the political for fear of its aesthetic effect is tantamount to a cowardly form of complicity in the injustices to which artistic and political action should be addressed. Indeed, the ethical dimension of the political is for Baraka inseparable from aesthetics: "Art is method. And art, 'like any ashtray or senator' remains in the world. Wittgenstein said ethics and aesthetics are one. I believe this." (2). Baraka's famous poem "Black Art" furthers this sentiment in its many expressions of poetry as an instrument of violent resistance: "We want poems / like fists" (12-13) . . . "Assassin poems, Poems that shoot / guns. Poems that wrestle cops into alleys / and take their weapons leaving them dead" (20-22). The poem is both a manifesto-of-sorts for the Black Arts aesthetic and a performance of that very aesthetic at the same time. Its emphasis on overtly violent tropes mirrors the increasingly more overt use of violence by Confinement-era law enforcement and

[43] Though published in 1965, it was actually written originally in December of 1964 after being commissioned by *The New York Times.* However, they rejected the essay on the basis that they "couldn't understand it" (1), just as *Village Voice* would after them before it was finally published in July of 1965 in *Black Dialogue.*

also reflects the general shift to greater acceptance of the legitimacy of violent resistance during the Black Power era, an important development given the significant emphasis on a non-violent ethos espoused by many Containment-era Civil Rights leaders, the most notable of which, of course, was Martin Luther King Jr.

As Jochen Achilles points out, many other "theorists of [The Black Arts] such as Larry Neal and Addison Gayle, Jr. demand the fusion of black aesthetics and black politics, the instrumentalization of art in the service of the expression of anger, aggression, and the desire for emancipation" (201). And yet, this seeming consensus is complicated by the fact that such demands "are much more varied, differentiated, and ambivalent in works of art than in political essays and manifestos" (202). This distinction is especially clear when you hold Baraka's plays up against another work like *Blues for Mister Charlie*, for example[44]. While both are provocative and quite radical in their political orientation, Baldwin's play is much more traditional and not nearly so avant-garde or experimental as Baraka's. While artistic differences surely account for much of the aesthetic differentiation, perhaps another aspect reflected here is the idea that containment

[44] For all their differences Baraka did, however, love *Blues for Mister Charlie.* In his autobiography he calls seeing it "one of the great theater experiences of my life . . . a deeply touching, 'dangerous' play for Jimmy." (275-6). He goes on, "As critical as I had been before of what I perceived of [Baldwin's] stance of avoiding reality and confrontation, now I was elated and almost raised up off the ground by this powerful play" (276). This suggests that at least in some respect, Baraka left room for aesthetic differentiation so long as the ethico-political commitments of the drama and its aesthetic were consonant and not at odds. The political simply could not be subordinated to the aesthetic, it seems, rather than insisting on a certain prescribed aesthetic for politically effective drama.

and confinement demanded different aesthetic sensibilities and tonal/rhetorical postures.

Baraka's reference to Antonin Artaud's theater of cruelty in the essay is instructive for further differentiating his particular aesthetic vision, one in which aggression, shock, and the radical reversal of the normal dynamics of power incites, terrorizes, and thrills various constituencies in the audience. The deaths of Grace and Easley in *The Slave*, "wiggly Liberals dying under blasts of concrete," as Baraka refers to them in the essay, serve as just such provocations. Olga Barrios understands the connection between Artaud and Baraka this way: "Like in Artaud's, Baraka's attempt is to find a spiritual basis for meaning through theater, as a public genre that includes an audience. This ritual becomes a ceremony more than a spectacle, where the audience—which for Baraka and Artaud is a collective—is essential to the expression of the event (51). A return to *Dutchman* and *The Slave* makes this point even more clearly.

In each of the plays, characters have direct dialogue about the nature of art in relation to politics. In *Dutchman*, Lula makes a reference to "Jewish poets from Yonkers, who leave their mothers looking for other mothers, or others' mothers, on whose baggy tits they lay their fumbling heads. Their poems are always funny, and all about sex" (28). This seems a sure reference to Joel Oppenheimer, whose collections of poems Baraka's Totem Press had published in 1961 and 1962. Oppenheimer represents the type of "downtown figure" with whom Baraka had previously been closely acquainted but whom he felt

compelled to distance himself from by the early 1960's. In his essay "The Black Arts Movement," he explains: "For many of us who lived in the 'village' . . . the political dimensions of the times were always muted by the petty bourgeois anarchy of the largely white soi disant arts community we lived in." This frustration and the friction it caused ultimately alienated Baraka and others like him from their former associates: "As the whole society heated up with struggle and rebellion and revolution, I suppose the most politically sensitive of us began to pull away from the bourgeois rubric that art and politics were separate and exclusive entities" (495). These lines from Lula taken together with her repeated jabs at Clay's whiteness and frail masculinity serve as a pointed critique of the influence of aesthetes in potentially stifling radical political change. As the more revolutionary ethos best suited to the confinement era emerged, certain allegiances and the privileging of aesthetic concerns over political ones became increasingly intolerable for Baraka and those like him.

In the long rant to which Lula has provoked him right before she kills him, the one which ostensibly justifies his death at her and the others' hands, Clay addresses the issue of murderous rage over injustice being sublimated into art, a prime example of the political rendered inert by the aesthetic. Talking about Charlie Parker, Clay claims, "Bird would've played not a note of music if he just walked up to East Sixty-seventh Street and killed the first ten white people he saw. Not a note!" (35). He argues the same is true of Bessie Smith, himself as a poet, and by implication all black artists. Clay's point is not that art is a

productive tool in this respect but a restrictive one, that aesthetic concerns are at least capable of neutralizing necessary political energy by expending it on aesthetic expression that is politically ineffectual. Clearly Baraka does not believe this about all black artistic expression, but Clay's anguished complaint provides an opportunity to warn the dawning Black Arts movement—and all politicized art for that matter—of a real danger for the artist at the beginning of the era of confinement.

For its part, *The Slave* addresses the relationship of aesthetics and politics in as direct and an even more pointed way. Walker and Easley are former colleagues as poets and academics, and the references to that history litter their dialogue, much of which focuses on their split over the relationship of art to politics. Walker tells Easley, "You never did anything to avoid what's going on now . . . Your high aesthetic disapproval of the political. Letting the sick ghosts of the thirties strangle whatever chance we had" (74). Walker claims the "aesthete came long after the things that really formed me. It was the easiest weight to shed" (75). He argues that Easley and his other friends lived far from reality in "some lifeless cocoon of pretended intellectual and emotional achievement" writing "tired elliptical little descriptions of what [they] could see out the window" (76). Such dialogue is a strong challenge to apathy, political neutrality, and a retreat into the ivory tower and elevated notions of aesthetic values in art. It serves as a meta-textual moment in which Baraka makes his case to the

audience for the politicization of the theater in which *Dutchman*, *The Slave*, and other works like them effort to engage.

And yet all of these challenges to privileging the aesthetic over the political do not circumvent the fact that these very plays have their own recognizable aesthetic qualities. As mentioned before, Baraka's own comparison to Artaud is instructive, as are the plays' contrast to others from the same year even with similarly provocative political messages about race, like *Blues for Mister Charlie.* Achilles's assessment analyzes *The Slave* alongside Baldwin's play and Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, and is careful to point out the significant differences in their aesthetic approaches to overtly politicized content. Formally speaking, *Blues for Mister Charlie* is the most "traditional," according to Achilles, while *The Slave* "represents new departures in its attempts to capture this problematic in terms of psychological surrealism and political allegorization" (202). This rings true, and is especially interesting relative to the famous debates involving Lukacs and Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno, and others. In his autobiography, Baraka acknowledges a connection between his growing political dissatisfaction and his developing attraction to writing drama instead of poetry during this time in particular:

> I can see now that the dramatic form began to interest me because I wanted to go 'beyond' poetry. I wanted some kind of action literature, and the most pretentious of all literary forms is drama, because there one has to imitate life, to put characters on a stage

> and pretend to actual life. I read a few years ago in some analysis of poetry that drama is a form that proliferates during periods of social upsurge, for those very same reasons. It is an action form, plus it is a much more popular form than poetry. It reaches more people and its most mass form today is of course television, and, secondarily, film. (275)

This preoccupation with drama and its relationship to "actual life" and mass audiences has interesting connections with emphases on aspects of social realism as politically effective, even as the actual aesthetic features of the dramas Baraka writes feel quite experimental in their aesthetic, for reasons outlined above. Important debates about modernism, social realism, and the more general arguments about formalism and realism and their political efficacies continue, of course, and Baraka's plays' aesthetics are an interesting study in this respect. His pronouncements about aesthetic philosophy and the aesthetics of the plays themselves fail to fit too neatly within prescribed categories. Both boldly direct in addressing political content and aesthetically experimental in form (this latter point seems especially true of *Dutchman*), Baraka initiates a vision of the revolutionary theater whose influence would significantly shape perceptions of the broad aesthetic sensibility of the Black Arts movement. The extent to which his dramas succeed as meaningful acts of and provocations toward resistance is therefore an exceedingly important question.

§ Evaluating the Plays' Political Efficacy: Does Baraka Successfully Represent and Contest Confinement on Stage?

As one might expect, critics have sharply disagreed as to what extent these plays do the meaningful work of confronting injustice. Their initial reception was certainly mixed, though in the case of *Dutchman* in particular, an undeniable buzz and energy was created by the lightning-rod-effect of its production, catapulting Baraka to a new level of notoriety and starting important conversations about the issues and ferocious energy the dramas presented. As he reports in his autobiography: "When the magazines and electronic media coverage of [*Dutchman*] and local word got out, I could see that not only was the play an artistic success, despite my being called 'foul-mouthed,' 'full of hatred,' 'furious, angry,' I could tell that the play had made its mark, that it would not quietly fade away" (276). He further connects its impact to the Harlem Rebellion in 1964: "It bore out what Malcolm had said at the beginning of the year. It made *Blues for Mister Charlie* and *Dutchman* seem dangerously prophetic" (283).

Achilles's evaluation, coming from the perspective of comparing the formal qualities of the three plays mentioned above, is not positive: "In view of [their] significant formal differences, it is surprising that all three plays converge in rather bleak and pessimistic assessments of black emancipation and the chances of interracial reconciliation and appeasement in the turbulent decade of the sixties (202). About Baraka's play in particular Achilles writes, "Treated as a personal conflict in *The Slave*, the black rebellion of the sixties is subverted

rather than justified" (215). Olga Barrios arrives at a very different conclusion. Acknowledging the potential for interpreting *The Slave* as pessimistic in the ways Achilles points out, Barrios nonetheless points to the ways in which illustrating certain ritual cycles is a way of exposing the deep inequity of the futility represented: "The structure of *The Slave* is circular, like the seasons cycle, like the sun and the moon. This circular ending may seemingly imply that no change has occurred, and yet there has been a change, i.e., the achievement of consciousness; in this case, a recovery of a hidden and painful identity (51). Here Barrios's assessment resonates with Baraka's own aims as he presents them in "The Revolutionary Theater," namely that it "must take dreams and give them a reality. It must isolate the ritual and historical cycles of reality" (2), presenting itself as a "theater of victims" which "moves the victims to look at the strength in their minds and their bodies" (1). As Barrios points out, this repetition is one of the important elements of ritual and an essential component of the African American musical and folk traditions (51).

Ultimately Achilles's argument that all three plays are similar in their "bleak and pessimistic assessments" is not incorrect. However, in merely pointing out this pessimism, Achilles fails fully to acknowledge the potency of a convincingly rendered diagnosis of the challenges facing black activism, especially insofar as this diagnosis is carefully attuned to the spatial dynamics of racial oppression and forcefully provocative in its confrontation. In addition to the enactment of ritual cycles Barrios highlights, each of these dramas, through spatial sensitivity

in their dramaturgy and symbolism, manages quite convincingly to portray the true nature of forms of constraint as primary obstacles to justice. The use of the memory of enslavement as a means to render and critique confinement, the particular sensitivity to the confinement-era tactic of inciting and then punishing dissent, and the commitment to aesthetics and politics insistent on not subjugating the ethico-political to the aesthetic all point toward a body of work that, while not unproblematic in its complicated representations of misogyny, homophobia, and the prospect of successful interracial romance and marriage, manages powerfully to foreshadow and address many of the central features of the confinement era, its strategies, nuances, and injustices. In this respect and others, Baraka would be even more correct now than he was in 1964 to call his dramas “prophetic.”

Ch. 4: Confronting Native Confinement: Hanay Geiogamah's *Foghorn* & *49*

Issues of space and place have been pivotal in the history of Native Americans' relations with outsiders since the earliest days of European contact. Exploration, colonization and engagement with the American federal government from its beginnings have, for Natives, focused especially on issues related to land and its connection to power. Too often these spatially concerned disputes have resulted in forms of constraint of Indigenous peoples, from the forced migration of removal to the confines of reservations in the 1830's, to subsequent policies of termination and relocation to urban ghettos a little more than 100 years later. In the context of confinement as conceived in this project, several key incidents help characterize the general climate that pervaded the era from Native perspectives. If for African Americans the containment-confinement shift marked a change from Jim Crow segregation and the politics of containing neighborhoods to confinement-era law enforcement tactics aimed at thwarting Black Power resistance, in the Native context broad policies of termination and relocation developed into more direct forms of law enforcement confrontation with activist organizations like AIM in events such as the Alcatraz occupation, the standoff at Wounded Knee, and the BIA occupation in Washington D.C., each of which will be addressed in more detail in this chapter.

In the burgeoning scene of Native theater that developed alongside of or even in concert with these events, the contributions of Kiowa/Delaware playwright Hanay Geiogamah were fundamental. For the purposes of this

analysis, careful considerations of his plays *Foghorn* and *'49* aim to demonstrate how Geiogamah's dramas both critiqued and participated in Native resistances to confinement through spatially sensitive dramaturgy alongside direct representation of contests between Natives and various confinement-era law enforcement entities. Geiogamah's dramas heavily engage space and place in myriad ways, employing humor and challenging the physical confines of the theatrical space itself in order both to represent and to enact resistance on stage.

§ Confining Native Resistance: Three Important Confrontations

Paul Chatt Smith and Robert Warrior's *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* chronicles in detail the turbulent events of confinement-era Native resistance. Notably, it turns to three significant events to frame that narrative: the dramatic take-over of Alcatraz island in 1969, the seizure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs building on the eve of Nixon's re-election in 1972, and the occupation of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation (Oglala Sioux) in 1973. While disparate in the details of their leadership, specific aims and motivations, and the various smaller events and struggles which came to characterize them, at least one common thread emerges which is crucial from the perspective of this analysis: each event, while not limited to a symbolic action, nevertheless functioned significantly as a symbol of spatial reclamation and reorientation, and these symbolic actions engendered

meaningful change in the perception of and response to Native concerns by the dominant culture and its structures of governmental power.

Alcatraz is particularly noteworthy in this regard, as its former status as a federal prison signaled a re-appropriation of a space marked by incarceration and confinement that was now being deployed as a site of resistance to confinement constraints. As early as 1962, the year the federal government closed the island's prison, Native activists took interest in Alcatraz as a target of reclamation under treaty provisions promising surplus or abandoned federal property to Native tribes. The *Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868* granted the Sioux, specifically, these rights. On March 8, 1964, a group of 40 sailed to the island where Allen Cottier, a descendant of Crazy Horse, read a statement offering to purchase the land from the government at a rate of forty-seven cents per acre. This was the same price the state of California was offering at that time to tribes for land claims. Smith and Warrior note that "[activists], frankly, saw the action as a publicity stunt, and never thought of a long-term occupation. They likely knew the treaty claim was tenuous in its specifics, but they were quite serious about the central point: treaties were not irrelevant and Indians had not forgotten about them" (10-11). This initial event, while not widely influential nationally, did "electrif[y] many Bay Area Indians" (11) and became the seed of an idea that took fuller root in the 1969 occupation, which aimed more seriously and permanently to claim the space for Native people. Galvanized by the burning of the San Francisco Indian center and spurred to urgency by a well-connected

businessman's competing plans to redevelop Alcatraz, a group of occupiers coalesced and traveled to the island in late November (including a powerfully symbolic Thanksgiving Day event) to much media attention and a considerable amount of public goodwill and support, at least in the occupation's early days.

The Alcatraz Proclamation, as it came to be known, reclaimed the island, in words rife with irony, "by right of discovery" (28). It made deliberate efforts to connect the reclamation with historical injustices through the purchase price, the creation of land set aside to be held in trust by a "Bureau of Caucasian Affairs", and the notion that the island was "more than suitable for an Indian reservation, as determined by the white man's own standards" (29), a claim supported by a laundry list of its dilapidated qualities (no running water; inadequate educational, health and sanitation facilities; nonproductive soil; etc.). Significantly, the Alcatraz occupation failed to realize many of its later expressed aims, chief among them to continue to possess the island and use it for the construction and operation of a cultural center for all tribes. Nevertheless, it marked the first in a series of similar events which changed the course of the federal government's relations with Natives. As for its symbolic import, Smith and Warrior note, "Indians held a brilliant, astonishing metaphor—a defiant, isolated rock surrounded by foreboding seas, a reservation-like piece of real estate with stark conditions, and a prison that represented the incarcerated spirit of Indian people everywhere" (34).

In the fall of 1972 not long after the June 11, 1971 eviction of the last 15 Alcatraz occupiers, The Trail of Broken Treaties, a caravan-style cross-country protest comprising eight sponsoring Native American and First Nations organizations, made its way from the North American west coast to Washington D.C. Their goal was to present a Twenty-Point Position Paper to the Nixon administration and force renegotiation of a number of items concerning federal relations with Native peoples. When the group arrived in Washington, a series of blunders and a general mismanagement by federal officials of what should have been a peaceful protest and negotiation led to police confrontation with protestors at the BIA headquarters. These protestors were awaiting access to promised short-term accommodations at a nearby auditorium at the Department of Labor when a miscommunication of strategy led a contingent of police officers to try forcibly to evict the protestors. The provocation erupted into a full-blown violent confrontation and the subsequent occupation by protestors of the Department of the Interior building which housed the BIA. A banner was unfurled outside the structure proclaiming it the NATIVE AMERICAN EMBASSY, and a tipi was erected on the front lawn. As the occupiers engaged in tense negotiations and stewed in anger and fear of impending raids from law enforcement, they acted out in vandalism, destroying and/or looting property—particularly the BIA documents which represented a legacy of injustices they had hoped to see redressed.

On the whole, the occupation of the building was a chaotic, unplanned event and not at all the climactic negotiation the Trail had intended to realize. Smith and Warrior write, “Confusion, missed cues, bungled orders, and ineptitude were the occupation’s hallmark” (157). Though not dismissive of its overall import, they are also clear that it failed to live up to the protestor’s expectations. “The occupation had been a bold strike against colonialism, an attack on the very building where the BIA developed its hated policies. Yet the target was not chosen for its strategic importance” (165), but rather as a mostly accidental consequence of bungled planning and communications about lodging in Washington. Smith and Warrior argue, “It was the most important act of Indian resistance since the defeat of Custer at Little Big Horn, yet after all the vows of victory or death, everyone agreed to leave in exchange for gas money home” (165). While the protestors did indeed resolve to leave after securing only a vague promise of amnesty and the funds to return to their homes, they also managed to exact some other concessions from the government, namely to create a task force to study the Trail’s proposals and various grievances and to provide formal responses to each of the twenty points. In the context of this project’s analysis of constraining forces in confrontation with Native resistance, the BIA occupation serves alongside Alcatraz as a meaningful example of Native resistance actions and the Confinement-era response to such actions, an important part of the backdrop against which Geiogamah’s dramas and their own preoccupations with space and constraint might be considered.

February 27, 1973 marked the beginning of a third important event characterizing the climate of Confinement-era confrontations for Natives. The Wounded Knee Incident was a 71 day occupation of the South Dakota town by AIM followers and 200 of the Oglala Lakota in protest of both the controversial tribal leadership of President Richard Wilson and the U.S. government's failure to honor treaty obligations. The symbolic significance of Wounded Knee in connection to the 1890 massacre of Lakota men, women, and children by US Army soldiers led to the choice of location for the resistance action. US Marshalls, FBI agents, and other law enforcement officials surrounded the area and cordoned it off with various road blocks and checkpoints. During the course of the stand-off, snipers, helicopters, armored vehicles, and .50 caliber weapons were reportedly employed by the federal government as the two sides exchanged fire at varying points, resulting in injury and deaths among the combatants (Record and Hocker 3). While specific details of the weaponry employed and the details of discrete skirmishes are disputed, scholarly, AIM, and federal government sources corroborate the intense violence that characterized these conflicts (Smith and Warrior, USmarshalls.gov). Fully unpacking the details of the event is beyond the scope of this analysis, but suffice it to say that Wounded Knee represents the most bitter and violent qualities of the overall climate of confinement-era confrontation between Native resistance groups and the federal government[45]. As such, it serves as a crucial example of confinement

[45] As this event and others demonstrate, many of the same tactics used by COINTELPRO to thwart Black Power were also leveled at Native resistance groups such as the American Indian

resistance, the response to such resistance, and the ways in which space and constraint were so starkly and violently literalized in material ways during such confrontations.

§ 2. Native Drama and Theories of Place: Geiogamah's Work in Literary and Critical Context

While oral performance is well known to have been an important and rich tradition throughout the history of nearly all North American Native tribes, the relationship of such performance to what one might think of now from an Anglo perspective as the modern theater, with its ostensible roots in the classical dramas of Greece and Rome, is a more complex issue. It would be patently untrue to suggest that contemporary forms of Native theater that more easily conform to the shape of this Anglo conception developed only during the 20th century and in isolation from earlier forms of Native performance. Nevertheless, it is not untrue to suggest that plays offered in this mode that were written, staged, and performed by Native people about native life are a fairly recent and growing phenomenon, one whose beginnings coincide chronologically with the Confinement era and the culture of resistance actions during that time.

To be clear, the purpose of this project is not to trace exhaustively or definitively the history of Native theater, nor is it to intervene substantively in debates about its parameters or origins. But to help contextualize some of the

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Movement.

unique features of Native theater, it is useful to note what others in whose work these issues is more central suggest about the particularities of the field, especially insofar as Geiogamah's role has helped to shape critical understandings of its development. Jeffery Hunstman, in his introduction to *New Native American Drama: Three Plays by Hanay Geiogamah*, approaches the subject in this way: "As the first plays published by a Native American, Hanay Geiogamah's dramas represent a newly emerging theatrical impulse from a group of Americans who have already found moving artistic expression in song, poetry, prose, painting, and sculpture" (Huntsman ix). While Hunstman does later reference the history of "[Native peoples'] inclination to theatricality and performance" and champions the plays' unique abilities to speak to Native audiences largely because of this legacy (x), his claims about Geiogamah's "first[s]" and the novelty of Native theater (ix), made in 1980, feel slightly hyperbolic and rather out of tune with more recent and more nuanced understandings of Native theater's origins.

Christy Stanlake's 2009 *Native American Drama: A Critical Perspective,* for example, is more measured in approaching such issues, and it begins by tracing the history of early 20th century versions of Native theatrical performance. Geiogamah ultimately plays an important role in this narrative, to be sure, and Stanlake is careful to emphasize the significance of the Red Power era of activism on the whole as having a catalytic impact on the burgeoning role of Native writers, performers, and directors within the theatrical establishment. But

Stanlake positions Geiogamah as a major contributor in this respect rather than the more absolute progenitor Hunstman seemingly hails him to be. Birgit Dawes's essay on Native North American performance and drama in *The Routledge Companion to Native American Literature* strikes a similar tone, placing Geiogamah in a legacy that begins with the oldest forms of oral performance and culminates in Native people taking up the stages afforded by mainstream theater with greater and greater frequency through a series of important developments in the twentieth century (423-24).

Ultimately, while these shades of distinction are interesting, for the purposes of this analysis, the extent to which Geiogamah's work represents any "first[s]" or should be hailed as a novelty is not a primary concern. It is worth considering from this vantage, however, that any sense of novelty associated with Geiogamah in particular and the era in general closely coincides chronologically with the beginning of the confinement era. Ultimately, it is these critics' characterizations of the emergence of contemporary Native theater and its co-incidence with resisting confinement that is most important when analyzing how Geiogamah's plays contest confinement through engaging space on stage. In this respect, Stanlake contributes a very useful formulation of the role of space/place in Native drama and its connection to resistance. To accomplish this, she draws heavily on Una Chaudhuri's work in *Staging Place*, which she argues "provides an important example of theatrical platial theory that uses theoretical discourse of place to develop a critical theory intended for the analysis

of both mainstream and marginal drama from the nineteenth century forward." Chaudhuri herself defines platiality as "a recognition of the signifying power and political potential of *specific places*" (5). Stanlake argues that such a recognition is critical for understanding the role of space and place in Native theater. In so doing, however, Stanlake acknowledges that "while Chaudhuri's platial methodology deals with what she calls the 'painful politics of location,' her theory does not develop platial concepts that are particular to Native American dramaturgy" (40). In Stanlake's view, this particularity is crucial because of what she argues is especially distinctive about place in Native contexts:

> The difference between figurative and literal connections between people and homelands is the primary difference between Native and non-Native theories of place . . . Place is what results when people experience a location, physically, and come to understand that location through both body and mind . . . The notion that places, specific landscapes, are endowed with value, which can only be fully realized through physical interaction with the land, underpins many Native American writings about the relationships between people and places. (41)

Forthcoming analysis of Geiogamah's work rests importantly on these understandings of both the political potential of specific spaces and the uniquely important connection in many Native contexts between platiality and literalized, physical connections to the land.

Dawes's work also offers important contributions for theorizing Native theater one should consider when analyzing Geiogamah's work. First, Dawes acknowledges and champions the theater's role in promoting and enacting resistance: "Increasingly visible and internationally successful, contemporary Indigenous North American drama radically resists processes of cultural appropriation, replaces hegemonic forms of representation with original voices, and redefines the American stage from the vantage points of its oldest origins" (423). For Dawes, this is accomplished through how these works engage in deeply political ways with issues of memory and history and often include spiritual and metaphysical elements. She points to non-linear and ritualized or cyclical elements as noteworthy features in this regard, but most importantly for this analysis, she also emphasizes the role of "radically inclusive understandings of space, which often merge geographical settings with spiritual, non-material, or 'mythic' spaces (427). This merging to which Dawes refers is best understood in connection to Stanlake's theory of the unique forms of platiality often at work in Native theater. The particularly literalized and physical aspects of Native platiality and the radically inclusive merging of the literal/geographical with the non-material or mythic each find rich expression in Geiogamah's work.

§ Resisting Confinement in *Foghorn*

Perhaps Geiogamah's best known play, *Foghorn* was first performed by the Native American Theater Ensemble (NATE, earlier known as the American

Indian Theater Ensemble)[46]. Its initial performance was in West Berlin, Germany, on October 18, 1973, a perhaps unexpected first audience and location for a play that would concern itself so significantly with platiality and the politics of confinement-era confrontation between the US federal government and Native Americans. When turning to such issues, any consideration of space in *Foghorn* might profitably begin with the script's opening discussion of the set design: "decorated to reflect a mixture of the prison yard on Alcatraz Island during the 1969-71 occupation; the terrain around Wounded Knee, South Dakota, during the 1973 incident; a composite Indian reservation; and various national monuments across the United States, such as Mount Rushmore and the Jefferson Memorial" (49).

This "mixture" immediately stages a spatial contest between emblems of Native resistance to confinement and emblems of Federal government power. Even as the "Author's Note" foregrounds the tone of the play as one with "stereotypes pushed to the point of absurdity . . . playful mockery . . . aim[ing] at a light, frivolous effect," the set design simultaneously invokes the more sobering resonances of these highly politicized spaces. And while Geiogamah warns against heavy handedness in delivery, he does so precisely in order to allow the

[46] NATE was a theater troupe organized by Geiogamah with the help of Ellen Stewart, a director of La Mama Experimental Theater Club in New York City. Stewart secured funding from the NEA and the Ford and Rockefeller foundations with which Geiogamah was able to assemble a 16-member, inter-tribal troupe. In addition to touring the US, they also played for a month and a half at the Reichskabaret in Berlin. Huntsman reports that "Everywhere their reception by critics was sympathetic and generally good, even if the reviews often revealed the critics to be puzzled by the plays and ignorant of Indian traditions, values, and aesthetics" (xii-xiii).

"basic seriousness of the play [to] emerge all the more effectively" (49). In other words, Geiogamah intends for productions to lean heavily on comic irony counterposed at least in part by the platial political signification of the backdrops. Of further note, Geiogamah makes clear "it is not important if the audience can see offstage into the wings or if other elements of the production are exposed. The actors should pay no attention to this informality and take any accidents that may occur in stride" (50). This rather postmodern form of meta-textual reference, reminding the audience of the play's own constructed-ness, emphasizes the ways in which spaces can be socially produced, framed and imbued with politicized meanings. Calling attention to this invites the audience to consider the ways in which confining spaces are willed impositions, constructs used coercively by oppressors. It also prompts consideration of how spatial constructs might be used resistantly by the marginalized, something the play goes on to suggest quite forcefully.

What follows is a summary-analysis of the thread of spatial concerns engaged throughout the play's narrative development. It is designed to demonstrate how Geiogamah employs space and spatial tropes resistantly. The action begins with the ensemble cast crossing the stage carrying bundles and pulling carts. Stage directions indicate that the costuming and motion "should suggest a forced journey, such as the Trail of Tears, spanning the centuries from 1492 to the present and stretching geographically from the West Indies to Alcatraz Island" (51). The space and time encompassed here are noteworthy,

introducing the scope of the play's concerns and literally foregrounding them by laying out specific spatio-temporal parameters. The landing of Columbus is portrayed first, including statements of intent to "force [Natives] off the land" (52) and to constrain them on "reservations generously set aside for them" to remove impediments to "our great American Manifest Destiny" (53). This short scene is immediately countered with the landing of the occupiers on Alcatraz. In the middle of the Scene 2 narrative, "A gigantic map of the United States, blank except for delineations of the Indian reservations" (54) is projected briefly before the group sets out across the bay toward the island, even more overtly to emphasize the spatial dimensions of both oppressive confinement and Native resistance.

Scene 3 depicts a Catholic Nun flanked by a Native altar boy carrying a cross covered in paper money. The nun berates an indigenous audience for their savagery and rails on about their good fortune to be evangelized. The end of the scene is punctuated by what becomes a recurring device ending many of the subsequent scenes: Native characters attacking their oppressors accompanied by sharp drilling noises, flashing lights, and "action visuals of giant chunks of earth flying through space" (58). These visuals in particular are important in connection to spatial signification. While not specifically located spaces, these abstract chunks of earth adrift in outer space could signify the spatial dislocation accompanying assimilation and persecution. In connection with the drilling noises, they might also refer to the ways in which dispossession of land and

environmental exploitation through the pilfering of natural resources becomes a central part of the legacy of colonization[47].

Scene 4 shifts to a classroom in which an Anglo teacher treats the children in a manner similar to that of the nun in the previous scene. Whereas the first emphasizes the institutionalized constraint of religious missionary influences, this one focuses on educational assimilation, particularly the discouraging of Native language use and insistence instead on English acquisition. In terms of confinement, one particular exchange is especially noteworthy. After a young girl makes what is presumably a sign-language gesture, the teacher "*shakes the child violently . . . [and] pours [castor oil] down the struggling child's mouth*" (60-61). She tells her, "It's the dark room for you. (*She pushes the child into a dark closet space.*) You will stay in here all day. No food! No water! And no toilet!" (61). This treatment immediately evokes the general conditions of incarceration and especially of punitive solitary confinement. The scene ends much as the previous one did, with an attack on the teacher: "The pupils form into a tight group, fists clenched, close in on her, and attack. The lights fade on the drilling sound, earth visuals" (62). The image of a tight group closing in on the teacher is also a confining one, but this time the dynamic is reversed as an aggressive act of resistance. These recurring

[47] In an interview with Kenneth Lincoln, Geiogamah describes an earlier version of the play calling for a recurring transition at the end of scenes involving a blackout with a projection of a "huge head, the big mouth-like thing open" on which a lobotomy was being performed. He ultimately abandoned this idea because it "was such a cockamamy device" (70). Instead, he decided to sequence the play with the beginning juxtaposing Columbus's arrival and the landing on Alcatraz moving toward an ending at the Wounded Knee occupation. He also seems to have substituted the earth visuals and drilling sounds for the original lobotomy idea as the visual substance of the recurring transitions between scenes.

depictions of retaliatory violence are a subject to which the analysis will return in more depth in the concluding section.

Scene 5 farcically refigures part of the Pocahontas/John Smith story as one of failed sexual intimacy wherein it is strongly implied that Smith either loses his erection or prematurely ejaculates. While it does not end in overt violence as in scenes 3 and 4, the kind of emasculation or even metaphorical castration portrayed is symbolically or at least tonally of a piece with those other scenes. It too ends with earth visuals and drilling sounds (65). Scene 6 focuses on the Lone Ranger and Tonto, mocking the Lone Ranger's repeated need for Tonto to save him from danger and how this too is unheroic and emasculating. When the Lone Ranger proposes to Tonto an episode in which he heroically tries but is unable to save Tonto from a gunshot wound, a scene designed to reverse the "problematic" dynamic of Tonto as hero, Tonto responds by slitting the Lone Ranger's throat. His action is immediately followed by more drilling and earth visuals (68).

Each of these scenes is a variation on the theme of Native revenge introduced already, as are scenes 7 and 8. Scene 7 involves the dedication of a National Park on reservation land by the First Lady. She becomes the victim at scene's end. Scene 8 introduces a spy plot with a bumbling, corrupt federal agent communicating with White House handlers. It references a plot to blow up the BIA building, alludes rather directly to the kind of surveillance efforts that characterized COINTELPRO, spoofs corrupt Federal officials' handling of

negotiations with protestors and elements of the Watergate scandal, and ends with the bought off spy being showered in money amid more drilling sounds and earth visuals (74). One should note how Scene 7 directly addresses issues of space and land reclamation, while Scene 8 represents corrupt and abusive confinement-era power in the forms of law enforcement and political bureaucracy.

Scene 9 comprises a musical number during which a long list of Treaties is read from a toilet paper roll by a "pretty girl in pigtails" (75). In between parts of the list, a chorus sings lines from "Pass That Peace Pipe", a duet written in the 1940's for Fred Astaire and Gene Kelley[48]. The entire number satirizes the legacy of broken treaties and failed efforts at diplomacy between tribes and the federal government. After every named treaty—some are historical, others made up for comedic effect—an actor in a bull's head standing next to the girl wipes himself with a piece of toilet paper, a rather crude but humorous visual pun on the status of each of the treaties as "bullshit". The scene ends, as the others, with the same sounds and visuals.

The next scene depicts a Wild West Show promising "A STIRRING TABLEUAX, INTENSELY AND ACCURATELY ILLUSTRATIVE OF INDIAN

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[48] The song was written in 1943 by Roger Edens, Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane for the MGM field *Ziegfeld Follies* (1946) but didn't actually appear in the film. It was later performed by Joan McCracken in *Good News* (1947) and received an Oscar nomination for Best Song (lyricsondemand). By including it in farcical context, Geiogamah cleverly re-appropriates cultural stereotypes for resistant purposes, a primary tactic he employs throughout the play in general.

MODES AND CUSTOMS" (77). In it, a "Lovely White Maiden" is pursued and scalped, but it ends with a "*loud drumbeat for shotgun blast*" that leaves all "*the Indians dead on stage floor*" (78). This is followed by more intense than usual earth slides and drilling sounds that "*in an instant . . . change to rifle fire and vistas of the terrain around Wounded Knee*" (79). The next visual is of a US Marshall peering through a rifle scope aimed at the Natives and audience, perhaps the strongest visual representation of confinement power being trained ominously on Native bodies through surveillance and the threat of impending lethal violence.

The Marshall's voice begins the final scene, announcing that he and 500 other federal officers "have the entire area surrounded. You cannot escape" (80). In this announcement, the audience encounters a message literally about confinement offered directly from the mouth of a Federal law enforcement agent. In its march through history, the play's narrative progress seemingly builds toward this climactic moment. Shortly thereafter, "*A series of visuals show[s] the hands of the performing group members being handcuffed . . . as they file off. Then, one by one, they return to the stage, handcuffed"* (81). The scene shifts to a courtroom. Interspersed between short declarations from the arrested Natives announcing their tribal identity, the narrator explains, "We move on . . . Back to our homes, our people . . . To the land . . . To the sky." An apparition of a Native face appears and moves around slowly as the voice of the Spanish sailor from Scene 1 repeats his announcement in Spanish to the Captain about spotting "Los

indios!" The narrator then says, "(*very compassionately)* I am . . . NOT GUILTY!" (81-82).

These closing images of incarceration and confrontation with the criminal justice system in the forms of both law enforcement and the judicial system literalize confinement on the stage, and they do so in a way that illustrates for the audience the integral relationship between Confinement-era confrontation and resistance and earlier forms of oppressive power and assimilation, many with pronounced spatial dynamics. Huntsman sees, for example, the parade of arrested occupiers at the end as paralleling the march of nineteenth-century victims of the Trail of Tears (xix). This climactic literalization of confinement power at the play's end mirrors the tactic Geiogamah uses in his later play *49*, as the following section aims to reveal. After examining that play closely, a concluding section will address the strategies of both plays in connection to representing and resisting confinement.

§ Space, Confinement, and Resistance in *49*

Geiogamah's *49* was first performed in January of 1975 at Oklahoma City University by the Native American Theater Ensemble (NATE). The play takes its name from the 49[49] celebration, which Geiogamah describes in an "Author's

[49] The 49 reportedly takes its name from association with traveling festivals or carnivals in the American southwest during the early 20th century. "49" is a reference to 1849, the year of the California Gold Rush. One origin story claims that a group of Kiowa and Comanche youth wanted to attend a Gold Rush themed side show in Anadarko, OK but did not have money for admission, so they staged their own event out of which grew the 49 celebration. Of particular note here is the way in which the 49 is associated with the carnivalesque and the performative, imbuing it with much of its subversive potential (Perea).

Note" preceding the script as a social and cultural event typically following a powwow celebration. He explains that these 49s start very late in the evening and continue in some cases until sunrise or later. Predominantly young people gather for singing, dancing, and "fringe activities[50]." According to Geiogamah, who offers a "typical timetable" for a 49 in his note, the music and dancing are usually accompanied by traffic jams, fights, and eventually, police raids, before finally thinning out as participants gradually disperse. He reports having offered actors the following comments about 49 celebrations prior to beginning rehearsals:

> -While taking part in a 49, young Indians are in an extremely heightened state of awareness of their "Indianness."
>
> -They achieve, with amazing rapidity and with a minimum of friction, a group conviviality that is intertribal.
>
> -They flirt with the dangers of police harassment and arrest, jailing, automobile accidents, and injuries from fighting.
>
> -They sing and dance their own versions of Indian songs with more earnestness, sensitivity, and good humor than they do at any other time (some do not sing and dance at all except during 49s). (87-88)

Geiogamah is careful to articulate that 49s provide young Natives a precious and scarce opportunity to participate in an important cultural practice affording them

[50] In interesting ways, certain qualities of the space of the 49 described in the "Author's Note" and represented in the play itself find connection with the temporary, transient, and transgressive spaces employed by writers like Burroughs and Williams when resisting the era of confinement examined in Part 1 of this project.

means of expression, as “difficult circumstances often prevent so many Indians from taking any meaningful part in tribal ceremonies.” The 49 thus offers “emotional release but also a means of expressing thoughts and attitudes difficult to articulate under less stimulating conditions” (88). The intertribal nature of the event is important. It is also worth emphasizing the ways in which the 49 serves as a performance-within-a-performance, its own small postcolonial carnival of embodied, spatialized resistance. Jaye Darby makes a similar argument about the purpose and function of the 49 in the play, furthering understandings of Geiogamah’s vision for how the 49 might be understood:

> Those of the present, denied their rich legacies by repressive federal policies designed to strip Plains communities of their spiritual, cultural, linguistic, and governance practices, are culturally dispossessed and unaware of tribal responsibilities. They turn to the 49, a free-for-all post-powwow event and party for Native young people in Oklahoma, as one of the few cultural remnants left in their lives, which are increasingly marred by danger and encroached on by police. (164)

The play’s action revolves in part around exchanges between the 49 participants and Night Walker, a shaman-like figure who transcends time inter-generationally and communicates solemnly yet always hopefully about the circumstances of the people, even if he is “probably a little disappointed that nothing more serious than a 49 has emerged for the young Indians.” Geiogamah describes Night Walker’s

role in the text as "always optimistic . . . a combination of restraint and release, turbulence and repose" (88). It is clear that the legacy of the 49, as understood by both Geiogamah and Darby, is a powerful—even if less-than-culturally-ideal—occasion during which meaningful resistance and communal participation is possible for native youth[51].

For the purposes of this analysis, it is important to hone in on how the play turns to issues of literal space and spatial metaphors to describe or envision platially-informed modes of resistance to confinement power. In order to do so, this section, like the previous one, will trace the thread of spatial signification in the play following the sequence of narrative progress. In Scene 2, as the audience is introduced to the disembodied police voices on a patrol radio whose commentary provides the antagonistic threat throughout the play, their discussion immediately turns to their respective locations in physical space: "I'm sitting three miles west, two miles north of the Apache Y" (92). Such references liberally pepper the entirety of their dialogue throughout the play, as if repeatedly to emphasize the spatial/geographical dimensions of the conflict that unfolds through the patrollers' pre-occupations with their positions. Further, Patrol Voice 2 refers to the physical location of the 49 and its relationship to police vs. Native authority: "They claim that lil' dance ground out there's Indian property and that no law officers can trespass or arrest an Indian there." The other Patrol Voice responds, "Trespass my ass," and laughs (93). Their dialogue clearly reveals a

[51] This mixture of restraint and release, embodied by Night Walker, is also consistent with the way the carnivalesque is often employed in other cultural contexts, like certain Caribbean and South American festivals, for example.

disregard for tribal jurisdiction and the autonomy provided by sovereignty in connection to geography, dramatizing a direct example of spatial confrontation between Natives and Confinement-era authorities.

In addition to this preoccupation with geographic spaces, the expressed aim of jailing the participants is also discussed, as well as information on how many Natives are already physically detained: “Got sixty-five of ‘em in the county jail and all filled up in the city. Every damn one of ‘em’s under age. Can’t pay their fines. We’ll get us a bunch more of ‘em tonight, I betcha” (92-93). In this respect, just as contests over literal geographic space are a primary representational concern, so too is the reference to the constant threat of confinement through jailing or incarceration. In *49* perhaps more than any other play in this study, confinement is an overwhelmingly present subject in the most literal ways possible. This comports with Stanlake’s insistence that Native forms of platiality often have a uniquely literalized element of physicality in the ways in which they imagine spaces and make them to signify.

Yet it is not only these direct and literal representations of confinement power with which the play contends. Geiogamah’s drama also includes forms of metaphorical engagement with spatial notions in order to contest the logics and power of confinement. For example, the disembodied, almost spectral presence of the patrollers is mediated only through the sound of the voices on the crackling radio and the occasional presence of flashing patrol car lights on the stage. The patrollers’ physical absence yet audibly present voices and lights serve to

heighten the audience's sense of how surveillance and its constant threat might disrupt and even demand self-discipline from those being surveilled in a Foucauldian fashion. As the patrollers begin to pursue a car of 49 attendees on their way to the event, the balladeer follows the car's movements while chanting a 49 song, and his song lyrics directly address this threat and its accompanying confusion and frustration: "They don't know why those damned patrols won't leave 'em alone …. They want to take 'em all to jail …. Lock 'em up" (94).

After those being pursued by the patrol car eventually are able to hide under brush to escape detection, Scene 3 begins with Night Walker's reemergence. He prays, burns sage, and offers quasi-prophetic commentary on the history and future of tribal peoples, expressing both grave concern at the state of the community and also hopeful anticipation of a better future. After his disappearance, the 49 group slowly emerges from their hiding and begins the 49 drumming and singing in scenes 4 and 5, the latter ending, however, with Patrol Voice 1 resuming his surveillance of the activities and alerting numerous other units as to the position of the 49 and those approaching it.

Scene 6 jumps in time to Night Walker addressing a tribal gathering of people "*Costumed for an earlier era*" who "*conduct themselves in the manner of students of Night Walker*" (102). Night Walker warns them of "all that is coming . . . a loss that will be like death to our people" (103). He describes this loss as a form of spatial relocation threatening cultural and communal cohesion:

> Soon, we will live in a different land. I cannot see this place. Soon, we will be forced from our arbor . . . Soon we will not have the things that make our way the way we know. Soon, all our hearts will feel this pain. Soon, the tribe, our people, will be told that we cannot do anything they do not want us to do. Soon, we will sit in the grass and wonder where we are going . . . You will ask yourselves who you are." (103)

The young people respond at length with forms of commitments to follow Night Walker and take up his charge to lead their people during this relocation and through the impending time of suffering to a better one. In one noteworthy portion of a chant, they name all four cardinal directions –"WALKING TO THE EAST … WALKING TO THE WEST … WALKING TO THE NORTH … WALKING TO THE SOUTH". Interspersed between each naming is the declaration that "EVERYTHING IS BEAUTIFUL" (107). This ceremonial emphasis on all four directions has precedent in certain tribal histories and spiritual traditions[52], yet it takes a particularly important added dimension with respect to the threats of constraining powers. The outward trajectory in each direction poses a strong opposition to the narrowing and limiting impetus of historical forces of constraint, whether in forms of being displaced by removal and being forced to live within the limits of reservations, or other means.

By placing the chant/prayer in a flashback to the past and in the space under the arbor, and by also locating the resistant spirit in the younger

[52] This is especially true, for example, in Navajo/Dine and Lakota cultures (Carey) (Zeilinger).

generation, Geiogamah sets a precedent for the youth in the later generation involved in the 49 to enact their own resistance to the injustices of the confinement era, such as being forcibly restrained through incarceration or through relocation to constricting spaces in the urban ghettoes of large US cities. Recall Dawes's suggestion that many Native texts rely on "radically inclusive understandings of space, which often merge geographical settings with spiritual, non-material, or 'mythic' spaces (427). The merging of the spiritual, non-material nature of Night Walker's presence in the play with the forms of engaging literalized spaces already highlighted serves as evidence of how both Stanlake's Native version of platiality and Dawes's suggestions about alternative notions of time and metaphysics find connection in important aspects of *49*. Ultimately, the flashback scene ends much as Scene 5 did: a shift in focus back to literal/geographic space from the perspective of the Patrol Voices as they identify their geographical locations and report what they observe. They surveil the growing 49 and begin plotting to move in and disrupt it (110).

The next scene is very brief and portrays a group at the 49 but focuses on a young male. According to the stage directions he is about 17 or 18 years old. He and the others are in a playful mood, marveling at the size of the crowd and planning which song to sing. The scene highlights aspects of the 49's significance in ways that reinforce Geiogamah's description of how the 49 functions culturally in the "Author's Note." Scene 8 returns to Night Walker at the same tribal gathering. As before, it leaves the impression of being set in an

unspecified past, likely pre-contact. The focus is on the transmission of cultural knowledge through song and weaving; the tone is positive and hopeful. Once more, it ends with the patrol voices maintaining their positions. This recurring device is reminiscent of the drilling sounds and earth visuals in *Foghorn*, only here it seems more suspenseful as the narrative builds in tension cohesively rather than jumping between separate vignettes as in *Foghorn.* Also, while the emphasis in connection to space in *Foghorn* is to nebulous outer space, here it is always to the precise geographical locations of the patrol cars.

The following scene (9) depicts a group of young people on their way to the 49. They are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and the driver ends up wrecking their vehicle as they arrive, killing a passenger. It provides a kind of cautionary tale about the dangers and excesses of the 49. The next, Scene 10, tempers this, however. It returns to Night Walker and the tribe in the past. He tells a story, parable-like in nature, about a woman, an outsider, who seduces the young children of the tribe away from their people. Many of the older people grieve and fear the children are lost forever, but a wise man insists they are alive inside the woman's tipi and only seem to be gone. When the rest of the tribe threatens to burn the tipi to kill the woman, he protects it by announcing that he would die before allowing them to burn it. He notices that the fire inside the tipi, which has been steadily burning, is about to go out, and he goes inside to tend to it. When he does, the people outside begin to hear the voices of the children coming from inside the tipi. The wise man leads them out, and a young boy

announces that they were safe inside all along, thriving even, but that they could not come out until those outside believed they were inside. All rejoice at the reconciliation.

The parable seems clearly intended as a warning against losing hope for the future and despairing over the young people in the face of something like an assimilationist influence and its threat to communal survival[53]. In terms of thinking about space and confinement, the scene also serves as a powerful symbol of how hope and faith in the young people is a means of overcoming confinement power, as that is what releases the young people from their confinement in the tipi. While it does not undo the tragedy of the car wreck in the previous scene, it cautions against allowing such events to stifle hope in the power of the younger generation to overcome the oppression they face and its consequences in the form of social problems and waning cultural vitality. This scene predictably ends with patrol voices discussing their positions and plan to constrict and converge on the 49: "Don't let any of 'em through, not a car. We'll bottle ever damned one of 'em up in there" (125).

In the penultimate scene, the balladeer's song comments on a fight between two young men at the 49. Just as the fight breaks up, the patrol cars arrive. Once again, their presence is signaled only by the flashing lights and the

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[53] This idea resonates with aspects of prominent theories of what survival-as-resistance means in a Native context. Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor, for example, describes his concept of *survivance* as "an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (vii). Relatedly, Acoma poet and theorist Simon Ortiz offers what he calls *continuance*, advocating a theory wherein resistant acts themselves, even if not directly rooted in pre-existing tribal practices, convey a measure of Native authenticity by helping to ensure ongoing cultural vitality ("Toward)".

sound of their voices. A standoff begins as the 49 participants form a line of defense and refuse to back down. A Patrol Voice threatens: "We got you from both ends. Ain't a one of you can get out!" (128). This confrontation between the confining movements of the patrollers and the resistance of the 49 participants merges literal and symbolic forms of spatial resistance. Even as the patrollers escalate their threats, move closer, and constrict their surrounding circle more tightly, the group remains resolute. Night Walker emerges "as a vision" and comments on the scene: "I see a path not walked on, I hear a song not yet sung. I smell the cedar. I see the colors strong and shining. There's a circle, round and perfect. A beautiful bird is flying" (129). While his overall message reflects a strengthening of resistance, the mention of the circle seems especially important, and the 49 participants form a barricade and a circle "*to a powerful drumbeat and in gymnastic movements"* (129). They successfully repel the patrol cars, whose lights fade one at a time as they pull away. A rattle sound ends the scene.

In the final scene, the participants' circle turns from outward facing to inward, and Night Walker stands in the center. He performs an incantation and "*creates the effect of a violent storm*," proclaiming hope, strength, and cultural vitality (132). As he does this, one at a time the participants are propelled to the center of the circle with him. As the incantation concludes and the storm effect subsides to a calm, the young people move back outward to the edges of the circle. The young people disperse while singing. They repeat the ceremonial refrain from earlier in the play, set in the past, about walking in each of the

cardinal directions. These lines are again interspersed with the phrase "EVERYTHING IS BEAUTIFUL". Night Walker is left alone in the dance circle, faces the audience, and then walks off as he entered while the sounds of the chant continue. Notably, the final stage direction specifies: "*No curtain*" (133). One might rather easily be tempted to read the overt symbolism here as clumsily heavy handed, but it bears keeping in mind the ways in which dramatic performance in the Native tradition is deeply connected to ceremony, storytelling, and ritual. This may account in part for the ways in which Stanlake's emphasis on the literalization of platial meaning and Dawes's on the merging of the physical and metaphysical each find such powerful expression in *49.* The repetition of the ceremonial chant also serves as an example of the ritual cycles Dawes notes as another distinguishing feature of Native Drama.

The final short section of this chapter, built on the strength of the previous two sections' extended close readings, aims at broader analysis of both plays in tandem in order to comment on Geiogamah's general strategies for resistance and particularly platial strategies for contesting confinement. In so doing, it comments on Geiogamah's professed aims for his work, the relationship of his strategies to those of Baraka (as analyzed in the previous chapter), and also situates this approach relative to well-known non-Native theories of enacting resistance on stage.

§ Concluding Thoughts: Characterizing Resistance in Geiogamah's Plays

There are a number of issues to consider when assessing how Geiogamah's work engages in resistance to confinement. One logical place to start is with his own statements of intent, and the author's note to *49* is very useful in this respect. For that play in particular, a major part of his concern centers on hopefulness, especially directed toward youth and the future: "More than anything else I wanted the young people to be affirmative in the face of despair and unreasoning force. I had an instinct to minimize the negative and sought to do this even though much of the action is essentially negative" (88). This tone of hopefulness and positivity is indeed one of the crucial features of Geiogamah's voice in general, something which distinguishes it importantly from that of other playwrights resisting confinement on stage like Amiri Baraka.

Certainly there are important parallels between the two figures, as many have noted since the plays' initial productions, but key differences are also pronounced. Hunstman addresses the subject early on in his 1980 "Introduction" to the volume containing *Foghorn, Body Indian,* and *49*:

> Comparisons with the black theater of the 1960s, made by several reviewers across the country, are simply not apt. In its political aspect Geiogamah's call is not Baraka's shout for mayhem and revolution; it is rather the alarm of Thoreau's Chanticleer (or the warning blast of a foghorn), designed to stimulate Indian people to think about their lives of quiet or confirmed desperation.

> Consequently, he is interested more in survival and self-knowledge than in reproach and confrontation. (xi)

Vera Stading, in the context of examining how *Foghorn* "re-figures stereotypes," argues similarly that the play "seeks to renegotiate the relationship between whites and Native Americans. However, it does so by critical reflection and not a statement of militancy" (208). But while these assessments acknowledge an important tonal difference between Geiogamah's and Baraka's works, in certain ways they also elide necessary consideration of the genuinely confrontational nature of plays like *Foghorn* and *49*. Consider, for example, the depictions of Native retaliatory violence that form the recurring transitional device in so many of the scenes in *Foghorn*. While not inclusive of dialog from Native characters filled with the same vitriol and passion one finds in Baraka's characters' voices, these attacks certainly rise to the level of confrontation, even if the violence itself may seem more surreal or symbolic. Geiogamah himself in a 1988 interview with Lincoln claims about *Foghorn*, "We wanted it to be a statement of militancy, an expression of 'We know what you snake-eyes think of us'" (69).

Perhaps a more nuanced but accurate observation is that the violent and confrontational aspects of the resistance represented in Geiogamah's work are more emotionally restrained and measured in their delivery, tempered in no small part by extensive reliance on sly comic humor and satirical wit. Huntsman addresses Geiogamah's strategic reliance on attacking and deconstructing stereotypes: "This purpose he accomplishes with unflagging good humor,

classically exposing absurdity with teasing caricature" (xi). This sort of satirical re-appropriation of stereotypes is what *Foghorn* especially has come to be known for. As Lincoln argues, "Its joking taps a deep historical resentment and cauterizes a contemporary wound that festers in social ills . . . [the] humor lies in recognition, in truth-telling, in 'playing' out the hurt . . . [Geiogamah] purges the anguish and celebrates what it means to be alive today in Indian America" (96). To suggest that Geiogamah's work avoids confrontation or militancy, however, is to miss the point of the joke[s] and to ignore the potency and sophistication of his tone and rhetorical strategy. K. Elango gets nearest to the truth when concluding an article emphasizing the simultaneously "Funny and Fierce" voice of Geiogamah:

> The voice that emerges out of [his] plays is not a vituperative or a malignant or melancholic voice but an affirmative, optimistic and all-embracing voice. It is not a shout or a scream or a shriek but a studied, restrained and matured voice. And it is certainly not a lamenting or denouncing or obsequious voice but an intimate, persuasive and appreciative voice seeking a metamorphosis for, by, and of the Native Americans" (35).

Geiogamah's tone is indeed unlike Baraka's, but his work's challenges to confinement power hardly seem tamer or less forceful, much in the same way the Black Power and Red Power movements have discrete histories and elements of cultural distinction even as they are indelibly linked in time and spirit as powerful

forces for resistance. Surely it is this shared force that invites comparison between the figures, even as tonal aspects of the expression of such force are meaningfully different. Finally, from the perspective of this analysis, one of the most important—and largely ignored—aspects these playwrights share in common is their extensive reliance on and sensitivity to spatial dynamics, both in their representations of confinement power and in the plays' theorizations of resistance to that power.

Another common critical observation with respect to Geiogamah's plays' aesthetics and approach to resistance notes certain Brechtian connections, especially in *Foghorn*. Hunstman, for example, writes, "It premiered in Berlin - an appropriate happenstance for this outrageous Brechtian confrontation with Indian stereotypes ranging in time from Columbus to the 1973 incident at Wounded Knee" (xvii). In his 1988 interview with Lincoln, Geiogamah acknowledges having read Martin Esslin's book on Brecht, having visited the Berliner ensemble while in Germany in 1973, and having engaged with German theater figures who immediately saw Brechtian elements in his dramaturgy. The directions for a light effect from which basic seriousness should emerge in *Foghorn*, for example, have an undeniably Brechtian quality to them. But while he acknowledges this influence, especially in what he calls the "attitude" of Brecht's work, he also claims he was not well enough versed or initiated into Brechtian theory even to "have that kind of dialogue" with the "ultra-sophisticated, Brechtian actor, ensemble people" he met with in Berlin. He also claims, in a somewhat

dismissive and cavalier tone, “everything that constituted that alienation thing seemed corny to me” (70-71).

Expressions of authorial intent and commentary aside, critics have delved more deeply into the details of Brechtian influence or compatibility with Geiogamah’s approach. Caroline De Wagter writes, “Indeed, Geiogamah’s experimental drama resorts to fragmentation, parody, and mimicry in order to challenge and subvert traditional modes of dramatic exposition. In this regard, *Foghorn* displays a number of Brecthian qualities”. She goes on to say, “These Brechtian techniques de-inscribe Western stereotypes of Native Americans, while contributing to a denunciation of American neo-imperialism” (De Wagter 88). However, De Wagter also points out that while the Brecthian qualities of Geiogamah’s work call attention away from the fantasy of realistic illusion, Geiogamah deviates from the Brechtian mode of alienating the audience from emotional empathy with the characters and their social realities. In this respect, she argues, his work is more in keeping with what she calls the tradition of American social protest theater (Baraka and others), and thus is indebted both to Brecht’s epic drama and this other tradition (90). Such a middle ground seems more on target. Another crucial element in Brechtian connection is the way in which Geiogamah breaks down the theatrical space of the theater as a means for resistance. The exposed and visible wings of the stage in *Foghorn* and the lack of a curtain at 49’s end are the most obvious examples of how Geiogamah literally opens the stage as a way of resisting confinement. In these and other

techniques, he finds one more point of overlap with Brecht's epic theater of resistance.

Once again, while considerations of Geiogamah in relation to other playwrights and well-known theorists of resistance on stage are interesting and fruitful, from the perspective of this study, it is ultimately the plays' extensive engagements with spatiality which stand out. In this respect Stanlake's and Dawes's claims about distinctive features of Native theater in connection to its own version of platiality are of primary importance. Geiogamah is uniquely attuned to the spatial qualities of the legacy of Native oppression; the importance of space and place in the challenges of the confinement moment in particular; and the potential for engaging with space and place, both literally and symbolically, to enact resistance on stage. In this respect, his dramatic contributions position themselves in an important legacy of playwrights from myriad cultural and political vantages who tap the potential of representing and challenging constraint on the post-1945 American stage, using space, place, and humor to politically engage in a project of resistance and ongoing cultural survival.

Epilogue

In its focus on texts ranging in publication from 1955-1973, the argument laid out in this project has aimed at analyzing dramatic representations of and challenges to constraint in the forms of containment and the early stages of transition to confinement. This quite naturally raises questions as to where this line of inquiry might go next, and the first and most obvious answer is in querying the ways in which later texts engage space further into the chronological development of the confinement era, particularly as mass incarceration becomes the master narrative of confinement in the years that follow. It also raises the challenge of determining what form or forms of constraint might be understood to have emerged subsequent to confinement, or if in fact the era of confinement persists to the present. While fully answering such questions is beyond the scope of what is possible here, this brief epilogue intends to address them in provisional terms, suggesting that understanding the particular features of the literalization of confinement as incarceration from 1973 onward is one of the most important issues to which one should attend. Opening a conversation for the analysis of these developments while also identifying potentially rich dramatic texts for exploration in these connections is the primary aim of the epilogue, after which addressing where and whether one can mark confinement's end will make up the project's final thoughts.

§ The Emblematic Narrative of Confinement: Mass Incarceration's Rise in the US and Cultural Texts Ripe for Analysis in this Connection

In exploring the ways in which mass incarceration has come increasingly to define what this project frames as the era of confinement, it is important to wade briefly but carefully into the major issues for analysis animating such discourse, and the first significant debate with which anyone engaging the rising rate of incarceration must contend concerns identification of its major causes. The predominant explanation for some time now has been what John Pfaff calls the "standard story." It refers to a line of thought popular among the left and perhaps made most persuasively by scholars like Michele Alexander, whose *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* points at the criminal justice system's aggressive policing and sentencing of low-level drug offenders as a primary culprit. More or less in tune with Alexander's analysis, filmmaker Ava DuVernay's popular Netflix documentary *13th* offers a historical narrative tracing the legacy of the 13th amendment's abolition of slavery through the practice of convict leasing, to Jim Crow segregation, right up to what Alexander has named "the new Jim Crow." What follows is a brief and admittedly simplistic attempt to rehearse the basic thrust of this train of thought, specifically as it pertains to the '73-forward rise in incarceration that has become both the symbol and substance of the era of confinement.

The "war on drugs," unveiled in 1971, and its attendant criminalization of crack vs. cocaine under the Controlled Substances Act—which, according to

DuVernay's film, Nixon-era cabinet members have since confessed to devising with intent to disparately punish the associated user populations—is typically offered as a primary piece of evidence. Wildly disproportionate punishments for the possession, sale, and distribution of the two very similar substances wrought havoc especially on the predominantly black, lower-income population of crack users and skewed both this population's rate of incarceration and the overall incarceration rate dramatically. The aggressive efforts of federal law enforcement to quell radical dissent, most notable among minority populations, were also ongoing and worked in concert with sentencing guidelines and strategies of enforcing drug laws, as the chapters in Part 2 addressing revelations about programs such as the FBI's COINTELPRO explored more fully. Further work connecting early Confinement-era dramatic texts to theoretical work and the writings of activists challenging incarceration like Angela Davis and George Jackson would be a natural extension of the work begun here. In the 1980's, the wave of anti-crime rhetoric only intensified, as epitomized in events like the Central Park Jogger Case of 1989, the anger over the repeat offense of convicted rapist and murderer Willie Horton, and other key events. Many even credit the influence of the Horton case with turning the tide for George Bush's 1988 defeat of Michael Dukakis in the presidential election.

As a direct result of the political utility of such rhetoric, the 1990's saw even further amplification of "tough on crime" sentiment, even among democrats. The "3 strikes rule," tougher mandatory sentencing guidelines, and the curtailing

of parole ushered in by Clinton-era legislation quite obviously had intensifying effects on incarceration rates, as did the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, more commonly known as the Federal Crime Bill. The bill provided a massive increase in funding for law enforcement, the prison system, and related efforts, and has resulted directly or indirectly, according to the "standard story," in a profound militarization of the police force at all levels of government. In light of this legacy of constraint through confinement, identifying and analyzing plays from and/or set in the 1980's and 1990's that use figurations of space and overarching spatial metaphors to address constraint is a logical extension of the work begun in this dissertation. Possible examples in this respect are surely too numerous to exhaustively list, but they range from mainstream Broadway productions to various kinds of smaller, experimental theater houses, many associated with non-profits and universities. They might also include works directly about incarceration or ones that engage with related forms of confinement constraint more obliquely but no less forcefully.

To cite just a few examples covering such range, consider first August Wilson's 1985 play *Fences*, which is set firmly in the containment era of the 1950's but might also be understood as reacting to the confinement era circumstances of its own day. As its title suggests, spatial organization and constraint figure importantly in the play's major themes. Consider too works produced by lesser-known projects such as the New WORLD Theater (NWT) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, a theater founded in 1979 whose

mission was “to nurture and present high-quality works by artists of color; to empower a diverse, broad-based audience; to communicate across geographic, generational, ethnic, and racial divides; and to foster a creative network of professional and community participants.” NWT explored “big issues like apartheid, mass incarceration, AIDS, and racial inequality” (Mendez Berry 2). In a similar vein, there are Native American plays from the 1990’s like Gerald Vizenor’s *Ishi and the Wood Ducks* which also provocatively treat and critique forms of constraint. Just as with larger Broadway productions, there is ample room for analyzing and appreciating the work of these texts to contest confinement by engaging the dynamics of space on stage.

In the more recent decades of the new millennium, the efforts of privately funded lobbying groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and their influence on criminal law and other policies related to incarceration have come under growing scholarly and public scrutiny. Further, the rise of private prisons and the number and scale of private enterprises which service prison institutions has led to additional focus on the economics of the so-called “prison-industrial complex.” Recent and contemporary representations of prison life increasingly treat these issues, sometimes even in collaboration with inmates through storytelling seminars and acting classes conducted for the incarcerated. Particular critical attention is being paid to organizations like the Corrections Corporations of America (CCA), now known as CoreCivic, which has worked actively to promote the expansion of policies such as 3 strikes sentencing,

mandatory sentencing guidelines, and other policies fueling incarceration rates. A number of recent dramatic texts are ripe for analysis in this connection, including a surprising number of television shows.

This raises another interesting question for exploration, namely whether a partial shift has occurred away from the stage and toward film and/or television as the most commonly and effectively employed media for engaging spatially with confinement constraints. Recall Amiri Baraka's observation in his autobiography, when emphasizing drama as an "action form" perhaps best poised among literary modes for political resistance, that "[Drama] reaches more people, and its most mass form today is of course television, and, secondarily, film" (275). Surely there is room for nuance and debate concerning Baraka's claims, but they seem to correctly anticipate the growing influence and importance of these other media in resisting confinement. Further questions arise: if such a shift can be identified, what could be motivating it, and what might this reveal?

Examining the engagement with space in shows like *Oz* (1997-2003), *The Wire* (2002-2008), and *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019), for example, might be especially fruitful, particularly as increased scholarly attention is being paid to the most recent iteration of the so-called "Golden Age of television" that overlaps with these shows' eras of production. Such analysis would be consistent with the pop-critical acclaim afforded to many of the serialized shows now produced by premium cable networks like HBO. Each of these examples meaningfully

engages with the racial dynamics of incarceration as well as issues related to prison sexuality, and *OITNB* in particular offers a female-centered counter example to the often male-focused genre of prison-set cultural narratives. Each series also engages with major issues fundamental to the analysis of mass incarceration that have already been mentioned, such as the economics of privatization in prisons and the industries that service them.

In returning to the issue of the so-called "standard story," it is also important to note powerful challenges and emerging appendices offered to this narrative in recent books by scholars such as John Pfaff and James Forman Jr. Pfaff's *Locked In* acknowledges the legacy of the aforementioned legislative and political forces on the incarceration rate, but it also challenges in particular the notion that most of the prisoner increase is accounted for by non-violent, low-level drug offenders. Without disputing the perniciousness of the racist legislative and policing tactics detailed by Alexander and others, Pfaff suggests that the rising incarceration rate is it at least in part due to an actual increase in the number of crimes committed, particularly violent ones and especially those at the state level, where, as he points out, 87% of the prison population in the U.S. is incarcerated (13). As he contends, "over half of all state inmates are in prison for violent crimes, and the incarceration of people who have been convicted of violent offenses explains almost two thirds of the growth in prison populations since 1990" (11). For Pfaff, understanding these realities, which run counter at least to the general emphases of the "standard story" and its focus on non-violent

low-level drug offenders, is crucial for diagnosing the pertinent factors driving incarceration in this country. It is likewise essential for theorizing effective criminal justice reform to address related injustices. Cultural analysis from scholars engaging how plays and perhaps films and television shows can help represent and provoke meaningful reform on these fronts in light of Pfaff's revelations could also be a natural extension of the work begun in this project.

In James Forman Jr.'s recent book, *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in America*, Forman examines the role of the black community itself in the overall story of rising incarceration rates and the rate of incarceration among blacks in particular. Forman cites rising crime and the natural desire within black communities to protect especially vulnerable black bodies from violent crime as a central factor. Further, he points out how calls from the black community for increased aggressiveness in enforcement strategies and punitive measures were paired alongside calls for social programs to address racial inequalities, though the latter were most often neglected while the former were appropriated to further the tough-on-crime and war-on-drugs agendas. Foreman also examines how intra-racial class differences and the political allegiances of black leaders often led to political endorsements of policies that were ultimately harmful for the black community at large. Finally, he contends that the incremental, piecemeal nature of how the war on crime was waged has engendered a diffuse, "absurdly disaggregated and uncoordinated criminal justice system" (14), one that becomes increasingly difficult to address on a

systemic level. Like Pfaff's and others, Foreman's contributions to identifying causality and theorizing resistance to the injustices of mass incarceration could be meaningfully brought to bear in scholarship aimed at texts that might be understood to engage these dynamics, especially in connection to how the texts employ space vis-a-vis these issues. This is a project surely best suited for a cultural insider in which she or he would have the cultural capital and appropriate positionality to speak persuasively and responsibly about intracultural issues. It is also one that could be meaningfully enriched by engaging with how these issues are explored in cultural texts of various eras in connection to the staging of space and reliance on spatial issues and metaphors.

§ Where Are We Now?: Confinement's Tenure as the Dominant Form of Constraint

As mentioned already, another of the very important questions raised by this project centers on when and where confinement's status as the dominant form of constraint in the US ends. This one is likely the most difficult to address. While on the one hand there seems to be more popular momentum than ever before behind prison reform aimed at curbing incarceration rates, the rates themselves are still alarmingly high. Incarceration in the US seems to have peaked in 2008, but the small drop since then has been far from precipitous (sentencingproject.org). Meanwhile, according to the National Association of State Budget Officers, state spending on corrections has risen from 42.3 billion in

2005, to 51.4 billion in 2010, to 59.8 billion by 2017. Further, certain portions of the population being most adversely affected seem not just slower to change but for the most part to have continued trending in the wrong direction. The number of women, for example, in state and federal prisons was 107,518 in 2005, 112,867 in 2010, and 111,360 in 2017 according to Bureau of Justice Statistics[54]. Nevertheless, if recent drafting of legislation and campaign rhetoric can be understood as possible indicators, the general public's appetite for criminal justice reform seems to be growing, so it will be most interesting to follow whether and how this might lead to more substantive change. Relatedly, it opens up possibilities for engaging with all sorts of recent and contemporary texts from the stage and screen that might be understood to engage space in their interventions in the political and social landscape of changing policies and attitudes toward incarceration. Consider, for example, recent theatrical productions like Kate Tempest's *Hopelessly Devoted* (2013) and Liza Jessie Peterson's one person show *The Peculiar Patriot* (2017) alongside recent mainstream films like Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017) or Destin Daniel Cretton's *Just Mercy* (2019) based on the 2014 memoir of Bryan Stevenson. While these texts are importantly different in how they approach confinement as both a symbolic concept and a marker of specific material conditions like incarceration, each seemingly contributes to a chorus of cultural texts trying to wrestle with the realities of contemporary forms of constraint. And finally, all of these

[54] For clarification, these spending figures and female incarceration statistics derive from the sources mentioned above but are reported in the *Fact Sheet: Trends in US Corrections* from sentencingproject.org.

considerations also open the door for more careful theorization of a possible emerging form of constraint set to replace confinement, a new spatial category that might be understood to continue the troubling legacy of leveraging space for the exploitative and punitive exercise of power and control.

Constraint in its myriad forms has contributed immeasurably to the shape of power in America and wrought widespread consequences for the social and material realities of its citizens. These consequences have been costliest for those for whom their "otherness," whether in the form of racial difference, sexual alterity, or other factors has made them vulnerable. Containment and confinement as conceived in this project were malignant, damaging forces in the lives of many, but the work of writers, artists, and activists to expose these malignancies and challenge them through careful attention to and employment of space on the stage forms a rich counternarrative worthy of recognition and ongoing scholarly consideration.

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