

Historical Metamorphoses in Suzan Parks-Lori Parks' *In the Blood*

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Abstract

The work of art is a sharp medium of enacting immediate human experiences that are lived in a specific historical period. However, authors usually pour a great deal of personal and cultural embodiments behind the lines of their literary work. The purposes, moreover, may vary to produce a literary text and is subject to different interpretations. On the other hand, history shapes the work of art with irresistible details that are imposed to create a special impact in the readers' minds and establish prior judgments that are linked to their actual implication.

Parks, as a contemporary playwright, handled Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and reconstructed most of the narrative's main incidents. This metamorphosis of Hawthorne's plot and hero was intended by Parks to explore the ways in which history can lead to "possession" through and by the artist's work itself. As Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter* was possessed by the surroundings in her world, Parks' Hester La Negrita is possessed entirely by everyone surrounding her except by herself. This paper examines the ways in which Parks metamorphosized Hawthorne's classical text into her postmodern world to serve manifesting the catastrophic realities of her race. It also traces the contribution that Parks had made through this inevitable metamorphosis and necessary modifications of the narrative and its protagonist that best articulates the critical issue of her time.

الملخص

يمثل العمل الفني وسيلة قوية لمقارنة الخبرات الإنسانية الانية التي عاشوها في حقبة تاريخية محددة. على أي حال، يضيف المؤلفون مقدار كبير من التجسيديات الشخصية والثقافية بين أسطر أعمالهم الأدبية. إضافة الى ذلك، تتنوع الغايات لتقديم النص الادبي ويكون خاضعا

لتفسيرات مختلفة. على الجانب الآخر، يغير العمل الفني شكل بتفاصيل لا يمكن انكارها تكون مفروضة لخلق تأثير مميز في اذهان القارئ ويؤسس احكام مسبقة متصلة بتطبيقها الواقعي.

سوزان لوري باركس، ككاتبة مسرحية معاصرة، تناولت رواية هاوثرن "الشارة القرمزية" واعادت بناء معظم احداث القصة الرئيسية. التحول في حبكة وبطل هاوثرن كان متعمداً من قبل باركس لاستكشاف الطرق التي من خلالها يقود التاريخ الى الاستحواذ من خلال عمل الفنان نفسه. كما كانت هيستر برن مملوكة من محيطاتها في عالمها، هيستر لانكريتا عند باركس مملوكة بصورة كاملة من قبل الجميع ما عداها.

يبحث هذا البحث الطرق التي من خلالها مسخت باركس نص هاوثرن التقليدي الى عالم ما بعد الحداثة الخاص بها لكي يوضح الواقع المأساوي لعرقها. كذلك يدرس الاضافة التي عملتها باركس من خلال فكرة المسخ وجميع التحولات الحتمية للقصة وبطلها التي تجلي مشكلة عصرها الحرجة.

Historical Metamorphosis in *In the Blood*

History and remembrance are at the heart of Parks' works and her treatment of historical issues was so explicit. The employment of historical events could reflect her view about the validity of history and the way these historical events are documented. At any stage of life, the most powerful party decides what and how the extracts of history are shaped and delivered to the future generations. The issues in history are more critically felt when the existence of an entire race is in front of its way. Thus, her race felt this existential outcast life which they had to run through and strived to keep a record of its impact. In *The Death of the Last Black Man*, for example, she outspoke directly the major concern that history brings if not challenged and tamed by the weaker party as well. Hence, the character said at the end of the play that: "if you dont write it down then they will come along and tell the future that we did not exist" (Parks, 83).

There were major influences on Parks' style and forms in her career as a dramatist. She was mainly influenced by the works of James Baldwin, whom Parks studied under his direct supervision. Moreover, he was the first one who acknowledged her talent and peculiarity. The other major influence on Parks was the Nathaniel Hawthorn's *The Scarlet Letter*, which was the main inspiration for Parks' *In the Blood* and other works. (See Hadia, 106)

Parks' manipulation of Hawthorn's novel is an exploration of "one version of the modern American drama in which the author comes to be obsessed of her subject and even by her subject" (Fraden, 2007:434). The adaptation goes forward toward examining the subject of possession and control that women undergo in the modern age especially at the age where patriarchy took over almost every role which might be handled by women. However, women are seen then as objects that can be owned and switched over for other possessions. The original situation of Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* is exactly the situation that modern women experience except the different treatment. Hawthorn's novel is "shot through with possessiveness – of former lovers of their past, a mother and a daughter, a cuckolded husband of revenge" (Ibid). Although the situation can be seen from two different perspectives, in relation to the readers or the audience and to the author and his characters. Only the audience's perspective is highlighted with the suffering of the characters. However, the author and his character hold an equal responsibility to anyone to address the issue from their own zone and thus pour more possibilities into their expectations. The historical stereotypical issue of possessiveness was the first main source of suffering for Hawthorn as a person. For him, possession was related to every person than to the kind of the person as man or woman because he himself was referring to the idea of being

possessed by the readers or the literary tradition that governed his attitude. On other side, Parks' Hester is more openly exposed to the harsh judgements and blind confrontations with society which played the traditional role in putting her in this unescapable situation. For instance, the definition of honor does not surrender to the common sense of the word anymore. However, the ideology of modern society and culture reshapes the meaning to coincide with the pre-destined prototypes of the public's perceptions.

The feeling of possession started as a source of immediate response to people or life and then turned into an age crisis. The immediacy of the issue imposes further clinging and miniature reactions sometimes on behalf of the author to speak more openly at the tongue of his characters. In this regard, "both Hawthorne and Parks are possessed by the idea of being possessed by that past, a past that they cannot escape even if they wish to" (Ibid). Moreover, in Parks' case, the matter could further address a political phase in the history of her race as they were physically possessed and run pushed unwillingly into issues of racism. The struggle for Hester in both cases is often caused by what Parks described in her essay "Possession" as a "relationship between a possessor and possessed is, like ownership is, multidirectional" (Ibid). Hawthorne's Hester stands still against both an external identification of her personality as a sinner for the mass and yet marked with a scarlet letter, and against overwhelming reverberations inside her soul that she should tame the public to survive.

Hawthorne's problem with history started when he rejected the positions that his ancestors occupied as judges and soldiers, which reflected their powerful representation in culture and politics of their age. Instead, he decided to pursue a different career as an author although with

“artistic marginality” during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. His attitude did not change even when his reputation as an artist flourished toward the middle of the century. Parks, on the other side, can be easily identified and marked as an outsider to the American culture. Hence, in his search for “African Americanness,” she relies only on the tradition of modernism that tolerates heterogeneity and blending of multiple cultural canons. Only then should be able to recognize her native culture and further expands the call for more attention as an insider (See Black, 2012: 31). Therefore, the depiction of Hawthorne’s Hester is allowed in the lens of modernism to be portrayed as a black-skinned yet white-hearted human being.

The nagging concern about history manifests both writers’ awareness of its intensive force. Most of the time, this force is considered an advocate of the weak party in this equation. Consequently, history is seen as another polishing material that softens the thorns of its writers and their owners as well. For those vulnerable slices of society, rarely does history stand as a vindication for their victimizations or an exposure of the atrocities of systems.

In her adaptation of Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, Parks uncovers the curtain about the critical dilemma in history that was apparently not resolved. Like Hawthorne, Parks finds no solace in maintaining this reverence for social and cultural norms and, instead, she brings the matter down to earth as she attempts to reshape the classical sublimity of the text. Thus, she “refashions her sources fiercely and fearlessly; and like all great playwrights, her reverence for her source does not stop her from turning it into something else, perhaps even into, at least in part, into a fucking joke” (Fraden, 435-436). The embodiment of Hester’s recurrent calls for social and moral reformation were cornered

in terms of cultural privileges. Thus, her attempts to escape the custom house are Hawthorne's rejections of these norms. On the other hand, Parks' Hester was revived in a new age to reexamine the same conditions with more complications and restrictions. However, the same concerns for both Hesters are sustained in both texts although in two completely different contexts. By doing so, Parks equates the classical worth of Hawthorne's text to the nightmarish existence of her Hester in the modern age. Moreover, one could look at Parks' adaptation of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* as a way to urge the readers to re-speculate over her Hester in the lens of Hawthorne's plot with a more vigilant heart.

The reason why Parks is particularly interested in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* springs from two main reasons. She made a direct reference for the first reason in her "Possession" when she commented on the ridiculing role that a play historically plays emphasizing that "a play is a blueprint of an event: a way of creating and rewriting history through the medium of literature" (Parks, 1995:4). Hence, the act of writing literature for Parks is a way of conjuring up any historical event and poured into it more details than those which were taken for granted. For Parks, history is a way of advocating her race's crisis that she kept long in her texts. She depended on history to immortalize the misfortune of women in general and black women in particular. Based on the power of theatre and its inevitable association with real life, she re-examines history with a skeptic soul in search for establishing a logical line of history for her own race. It is an issue of recognition or identification through recollection and experimentation. Hence, she alludes to history depending on her strong belief that:

Since history is a recorded or remembered event, theatre, for me, is the perfect place to “make” history—that is, because so much of African-American history has been unrecorded, dismembered, washed out, one of my tasks as playwright is to—through literature and the special strange relationship between theatre and real-life—locate the ancestral burial ground, dig for bones, find bones, hear the bones sing, write it down. (Ibid)

A major concern for Parks, in addition to the misremembrance and false identification, was the misleading details that history had imposed on her race. Through theatre, she attempted to rectify most of these concepts primarily through allocating their race in the historical development of the issues themselves.

The issues of the historical metamorphosis were more clearly crystalized toward postmodernism. The revival of historical issues on the stage created an enigmatic sense that history devaluated most critical events. Time is derived from history and problems are mainly with “possession” which is changing over time. Hence, human history is moving through the concept of time that is supposed to be a “record” of their own experiences rather than a measurement of old aging and change. The postmodern theatre approaches “the revision of the concept of history through the questioning of teleological stories and linear patterns” (Radunović, 2008: 447). In other words, the postmodern theatre does not serenely surrender to historical linearity due to the awareness of the era’s authors to a special fact that, in addition to the questionability of a linear development, there is “simultaneous existence of heterogeneous histories” (Ibid). This view suggests the synchronic study of historical events with more emphasis on the events themselves rather than on the historical time in which they were founded. Hence, history is viewed in regard to two different aspects which are “multiplicity” and

“temporality”. The former refers to the fact that history serves as a container for more than one event at a particular time in which a man usually acts in one context. The latter, however, identifies a special synchronic existence of that event in history as one “temporal” independent of other temporals at the same existence. In relation to history, the postmodern theatre is seen as “obverse,” recognizing history against the idea of wholeness and comprehensiveness. On the contrary, it re-enacts the most fundamental historical events and experiments probing strategies for the “historical gaps” with the purpose of minutely examining their impacts on humans’ lives or their descendants.

The employment of historical events usually takes the form of adaptation or adoption of the subject matter with special postmodern reprocessing. It could include a historical text, story, or the re-enactment of a historical figure into a given postmodern text. Parks attempted to employ history as a “serial re-enacting of the Event aiming to elicit, replicate, and authenticate an unrecorded history” (Ibid). The main source of difficulty for her is then the ability to diffuse history into her world and melt the bars between the two worlds. For her, the issues of her world, like those in history, are successfully brought in front of the spectators but further elaborations should be dedicated to the importance and impacts they impose on the lives of people. Hawthorne’s Hester Prynne is not capable of surviving the postmodern world with the naïve reasoning mentality that she always defends as more effective and destructive than the scarlet letter. Hence, she is reformulated with a more compelling personality and resilient soul with sufficient awareness about a world of possession which does not offer her any chance for reconciliation unless she is possessed.

History is a solid background for Lori-Parks' plays by which she re-examines most of the most striking themes in the postmodern world such as gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, traumatic manifestations, and enigmatic human relationships. Throughout the emancipation of Hester figures in plays like *In the Blood* and *Fucking A*, Parks attempted to deconstruct the historical presentation of this character with an ultimate goal of re-examining the spiritual scarlet letter. She created a new postmodern world out of the character's past by dressing her in clothing and language that Hawthorne's Hester would never even dare to experiment. The way Parks' conjured Hester up from the past was not exactly a rebirth, but rather a metamorphic reformulation of the author's handcraftsmanship to equip her heroine with all that it takes to cope with the cruelty of the new concept of patriarchy that dehumanizes the other more. In this regard, Parks breaks the temporal and spatial limits of Hawthorne's Hester and further fragments her into different slices that altogether constitute a female wrecked individuality. Apparently, she intended her, like the other characters in her other plays, to be more "like memory and family and history and the past" (Parks, 1996:310). She is not even located within the scope of life or death, beginning or end, or old and new. The only thing that could relate her to Hawthorne's Hester could be the historical attachment that was once rich in information about Hester's identity. However, the postmodern Hester is abstracted of all these notions of womanhood, motherhood, or even humanity. She is, then, unwillingly metamorphosized into this unwelcoming new world where the past is reduced into echoes that would never be valued in her current life. The most painful part for Hester in the postmodern life is that she is the only one who knows and can hear these echoes of the past. She even lives in more pain due to the harsh reality that she is the only central character among the other characters that gives more than she takes. She

is a single mother of five children of five fathers. The line of possession is various, but it is united in the personality of Hester the lone mother. Almost all realities in the play are questionable starting from the early beginning of the play with the epilogue in which the author tries to add more meaninglessness to Hester's existence in relation to everyone and everything surrounding her.

The historical Hester is only remembered now in terms of the new Hester. Her attributes, associated stances, and personal tales are eternally changed. A new historical line started with Parks' manipulation of Hawthorne's heroine in terms of exalting her potentiality to respond with more personal solidarity and spiritual inclination toward accepting undefined destiny. Therefore, "Hester Prynne," to quote Rena Fraden's exact words, "will be haunted by Parks' Hesters" (436). The idea of creating an updated version of Hester overshadowed the historical hegemony of the classical text of Hawthorne's and further proposed a more nagging reality about the real source of suffering for both Hesters. She was given multiple voices that are associated with two different times; past and present.

In the Blood is one of Parks' early plays which sheds light on the life of a mother of five children living under a bridge. The play reflects both features of the postmodern world that was described by Parks herself as "otherworldly tale" (Parks, 52). It happens nowhere in the present time and yet corresponds to the requirements of the postmodern criteria of the hopeless, miserable, and even fierce women protagonist. The play introduces a shocking portrayal of a physically and spiritually devastated mother. Her adaptation of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* unveils interesting details about Parks' association with literary traditions, her artistic maneuvers regarding meanings, and her personal messages have

personal touches and, at the same time, invite readers to investigate the unrevealed information concerning Hawthorne himself. However, she comments on her reading of *The Scarlet Letter* stating that “I only read the book once, just so I could riff on it (Cited in Smith, 2003). The one-time reading of the text was enough for Parks to re-invent Hester from the bones of Hester Prynne and equip her with the attributes that best characterize her as a postmodern mother. Parks’ Hester is longer suffering from a mark on her body that marks her as adulterous and fights only to protect her daughter who also suffers as a child of sin. The most common feature between them is the way they were treated as outcasts although Hawthorne’s Hester suffers this more. Furthermore, Hester’s struggle was more to regain her self-possession against society which judges her behaviors as rebellious to its norms and values.

On some occasions, Hester can be seen as a transitional spirit hovering upon different worlds searching for freedom and self-ownership. She struggles with different experiences in which she finds herself unwillingly indulged. However, she is aware that she must set herself free of the social and cultural restraints if she wants to prove her identity. Hester here is exactly the case of a “male ownership of women’s bodies and reproductive lives, particularly the disproportionate sterilization of female racial minorities” (Black, 39). By doing so, she establishes a new historical line for women breaching into patriarch worlds through experimenting with special capacities of coping mechanisms and resilient endeavors.

In the Blood is not merely an adaptation of a classical work that modern readers admire and greatly appreciate. It serves as minute recollections and representations of historical events that are still at the heart of postmodern culture. Her treatment of history seems to be out of

her belief that history and historical events are questionable and keen to allow further manipulations and modifications. Thus, the idea of metamorphosing history is a personal taste that is built upon immediate advocacy. This enables Parks to accept or reject, emphasize or neglect, and adopt or ignore even the most essential parts of history. Therefore, Hawthorne was a point in history that she finds eligible for further examination although the treatment may be seen as downplaying the classical artistry of his work and reducing it into a silly social dilemma. She decides to trace Hester's encounters with her world and the experiences that women do not usually encounter in the world. Her search in her world is a search for independence against the presupposed moral measurements of her community. Moreover, Hester succeeds in setting herself free even from the authorial possession of Parks in the sense that Parks herself is reluctant to admit any unification the reader could attempt to establish between them.

The play opens with a speech by The Chorus which appears early in the prologue to set forth the details of Hester's journey in the postmodern world. From the early beginning of the play, Parks settles the metamorphic touch upon the classical theatrical techniques with the use of the prologue with this down-to-earth setting of the play under a bridge. The chorus further portrays Hester by directly addressing her with a bitter tongue and harsh realities. These preliminary attributes establish the early anticipated responses of the audience to Hester's coming encounters.

All: THERE SHE IS!
WHO DOES SHE THINK
SHE IS
THE NERVE SOME PEOPLE HAVE
SHOULDNT HAVE IT IF YOU CANT AFFORD
IT AND YOU KNOW SHE CANT
SHE DONT GOT NO SKILLS
CEPT ONE

CANT READ CANT WRITE
SHE MARRIED?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
SHE OUGHTA BE MARRIED
THATS WHY THINGS ARE BAD LIKE THEY ARE
CAUSE OF
GIRLS LIKE THAT
THAT EVER HAPPEN TO ME YOU WOULDNT SEE ME
HAVING IT
YOU WOULDNT SEE THAT HAPPENING TO ME
WHO THE HELL SHE THINK SHE IS
AND NOW WE GOT TO PAY FOR IT
THE NERVE
SOME PEOPLE HAVE
BAD LUCK (*In the Blood*, 5-7. Subsequent quotations from
the text will be taken from the same source)

Hester La Negrita, the illiterate hero of Parks, does not follow the same fate as that of Hawthorne. She is deprived of all skills but only one, a welfare prostitute. The chorus then probably delivers more information about La Negrita than what she already knows about herself. The prologue also prepares the audience to break any possible way of identification whatsoever with more emphasis on the audience's prior impression of her situation. She is reduced to a bare human body with motherly instincts. There is a controversial challenge between Prynne and La Negrita in the sense that the former was confident enough to project the letter "A" in front of her exposure before her community members. However, they both suffered the "guilty pleasures" (Fraden, 443) of having the burden of taking care of illegitimate babies and lusty men. Parks' Hester, however, is far from dwelling on the philosophy of life, neither can she acknowledge her mind in a brooding exuberance of modern life rationalities. On the contrary, she is more concerned with the immediate basic needs of food and protection for herself and her children. Hawthorne's Hester is presented as proud and confident with her reading and writing capacities, while the other is portrayed as naïve and dependent on others to read and write for her. Apparently, Parks' Hester

is intended to be more read by others than she herself reads. Her speculations are merely that of the current responsibility of acting instinctively as a protective mother although she was the main reason for the death of her own child.

IT WONT END WELL FOR HER
BAD NEWS IN HER BLOOD
PLAIN AS DAY
FOR ANYONE WITH EYES
THIS IS HOW IT WILL GO (9-11)

Her fate is set forth by the chorus as a foreshadowing element through a direct comparison with Hester Prynne who was able to sustain a good line of possibilities in life. On the other side, La Negrita's state is pushed to the extreme simply because of the lack of promising personal potential which enables her to make decisions on her own.

The first scene immediately hints at a conflict inside Hester about the engraved words on the wall of the bridge behind them. It begins with a question to her son, Jabber, who is taking charge of educating his mother. Her motherly disposition is challenged here by her son's intellect who, in addition to the audience, can easily read and recognize the word. The only one who is incapable of understanding the word is Hester although it describes her.

HESTER: ZIT UH GOOD WORD OR A BAD WORD?
JABBER
JABBER
HESTER: AINT LIKE YOU TO HAVE YR MOUTH SHUT,
JABBER. SAY IT TO ME AND WE CAN FIGURE OUT THE
MEANING TOGETHER.

However, there is still a good deal of doubt whether knowing the meaning of this word would make any difference to Hester or cause any change in her fate. However, it is not clear why Hester is furiously interested in understanding the meaning. Jabber seems to be more aware

that it would be better to keep his mother away from the word. This is also because he himself is in denial about being recognized as a son of a slut. Thus, he always tries to shift his mother's attention toward learning the alphabet until she succeeds in writing "A" in the dirt. Although she is proud of her writing skill development, it immediately brings her back to the enigmatic existence of the word on the wall.

HESTER: I PRACTICED. IN MY HEAD. IN THE AIR. IN THE DIRT UNDERFOOT.

JABBER: LETS SEE.

With great difficulty Hester makes an "a" in the dirt.

HESTER: THE LETTER A.

JABBER: ALMOST.

HESTER: YOU GONNA DISPARAGE ME I AINT GONNA PRACTICE . . . READ THAT WORD OUT TO ME, HUH? I LIKE IT WHEN YOU READ TO ME.

JABBER: DONT WANNA READ IT.

HESTER: CANT OR WONT?

JABBER: __CANT.

HESTER

JABBER

HESTER: GO SCRUB IT OFF, THEN. I LIKE MY PLACE CLEAN.

Jabber dutifully scrubs the wall.

Unlike Hawthorne's, the letter "A" is brought down on earth in the case of Parks' Hester. It is more related to the identification of Hester whenever she is encountered. Unlike Prynne whose "A" is supposed to be recognizable to people confronting her, La Negrita's "A" is a hidden one that haunts her spirit more than her body. She engraves it anywhere she settles, and, on most occasions, no one can even see her engraving but her. In addition, she is engaged in an overwhelming struggle to know herself, although the speech is supposed to be directed to her child, Jabber, just to determine if words hurt or not. Sometimes, it is hard for her to accept her reality and her way of living under a bridge with five children. Whether for herself or her children, she maintains a high tone

when comparing her children to other children around her who, according to Hester, are the reason behind writing the word and ruining their home.

Hester: We know who writ it up there. It was them bad boys writing on my home. And in my practice place. Do they write on they own homes? I dont think so. They come under the bridge and write things they dont write nowhere else. A mean ugly word, I'll bet. A word to hurt our feelings. And because we aint lucky we gotta live with it. 5 children I got. 5 treasures. 5 joys. But we aint got our leg up, just yet. So we gotta live with mean words and hurt feelings.

JABBER: WORDS DONT HURT MY FEELINGS, MAMMA.

HESTER: DONT DISAGREE WITH ME.

JABBER: STICKS AND STONES, MAMMA.

HESTER: YEAH, I GUESS. (9-12)

Hester's comment on the impact of words here is highly questionable since she exposes an aggressive reaction toward Jabber himself when she hears the word directly from him. Hence, even when she attempts to establish a personal philosophy, she does not keep it. In fact, the power of words was partly the reason for her miserable life. The ambiguous experiences and secrets that Prynne has been through have entirely rejected her in terms of a thorough manifestation of feelings and emotions. Prynne's actions were judged according to passion, love, adultery, and even paternity at the end of the novel. La Negrita, on the other hand, tries only to initiate an intensive summons regarding the absence of love in her life. Her powerlessness, however, makes her an easy target for men's lust and manipulation. Thus, she was exploited on the stage by men who, she knows, will not maintain a durable relationship or keep promises. Presenting them in this way, Parks again breaks from any possibility that Hawthorne dedicated to men in his novel as "moral anguish" (Fraden, 444). The least number of morals and preparedness to hold responsibility for man's mistakes in *The Scarlet Letter*, are reduced in Park's play into hypocrites. However, La Negrita mostly looks at the near future and comments on the instant problems of life. In her speech about these problems, she usually addresses other children surrounding

her and, at the same time, flirts with her children as “5 treasures” or “5 joys” regardless of their fathers who never support their children.

Parks brings Hester’s suffering more clearly and directly to the stage. She is no longer challenged regarding moral or social adequacies. Unlike Prynne, La Negrita has responded well to the demands of her age by not caring anymore even about the names of her children’s fathers. Moreover, Prynne seems to suffer an additional internal conflict because the reader may expect to find concealed details of a lost husband or a hidden love. In addition, she is more identifiable and independent and, also, able to maintain relative privacy of her own. On the contrary, Parks’ Hester is put in direct confrontation with society. She is experiencing a double sense of exposure; in the way men treated her as an object possessed or dispossessed, and in the setting of the play which does not offer any kind of protection or privacy under a bridge.

All the characters of the play are simple concerning the way they treat each other or the way they interact with the rest of the community members. This is intended by Parks herself as she stated in her essay “Elements of Style.” The characters are tangled with an inability to properly explain their emotions when they are engaged in an enigmatic situation. Hence, Parks stated that:

This is a place where the figures experience their pure true simple state. While no “action” or “stage business” is necessary, directors should fill this moment as they best see fit. The feeling: look at a daguerreotype; or: the planets are aligning and as they move we hear the music of their spheres. A spell is a place of great (unspoken) emotion. It’s also a place for an emotional transition. (Parks, 1995: 16-17)

The text of *In the Blood* is full of pauses, the word “rest”, or even re-typing the name of the character more than once in a row. This break with the dramatic convention of the classical manifestation of a moment of

meditation through pauses was also intended by Parks to reflect more on the unique world of her characters.

Another aspect of further contemplation in Park's play is the controversial character of Reverend Dimmesdale. When he was looking at the sky, he believed he saw the letter "A" which is also a reference to the sin that he concealed from his community. Hester, moreover, describes the eclipse to him as another indication of her fate and the fate of other characters in their world. In addition to the acting roles of the characters, they are presented as preachers addressing the audience directly. La Negrita, depending on her simple vocabulary and naïve imagination, tries to revive the feelings she had when looking at the eclipse. Her vision of the eclipse is more related to her conception of fate.

HESTER: I WAS CROSSING THE STREET WITH THE KIDS. WE HAD A WALK SIGN. WHITE IS WALK AND RED IS DON'T WALK. I KNOW WHITE FROM RED. AINT COLORBLIND, RIGHT? AND WE WAS CROSSING. AND A SHADOW FEU OVER, EVERYTHING STARTED GOING DARK AND, SHOOT I HAD TO LOOK UP. THEY SAY WHEN THERES UN E CLIPSE YOU SHOULDN'T LOOK UP CAUSE THEN YOU GO BLIND AND AUS I NEED IS TO GO BLIND, THANK YOU. BUT I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF. AND SO I STOPPED RIGHT THERE IN THE STREET AND LOOKED UP. NEVER SEEN NOTHING LIKE IT.

(REST)

I DONT KNOW WHAT I EXPECTED TO SEE BUT.

(REST)

IT WAS A BIG DARK THING. BLOCKING THE SUN OUT. LIKE THE HAND OF FATE. THE HAND OF FATE WITH ITS 5 FINGERS COMING DOWN ON ME.

(REST)

(REST)

AND THEN THE TRUMPETS STARTED BLARING.

(REST)

AND THEN THERE WAS JABBER SAYING "COME ON MOMMIE, COME ON!" THE TRUMPETS WAS THE TAXI CABS. WANTING TO RUN ME OVER. GET OUT THE ROAD. (76-77)

Heading toward the end of the play, Parks presented the most striking difference between Hawthorne's and Parks' Hesters. The former takes all

agonies and manages at the end to protect her own child. While the latter kills her own child with her own hands because he keeps provoking her by calling her “slut”. Hence, Parks’ Hester, unlike Hawthorne’s, is left with this scene of her child’s blood on her hand. The blood adds redness to the letter she engraved in the dirt at the beginning of the play. Therefore, Parks traces even the end of *The Scarlet Letter* and imposes further metamorphosis on its ending.

HESTER: I SAID I DONT WANNA HEAR THAT WORD. HOW SLOW ARE YOU? SLOMO.

JABBER: SLUT.

HESTER: YOU NEED TO CLOSE YR MOUTH, JABBER.

JABBER: I KNOW WHAT IT MEANS. SLUT.

HESTER: (SHUT UP.)

JABBER: SLUT HESTER: (I SAID SHUT UP, NOW.)

JABBER: I KNOW WHAT IT MEANS.

HESTER: (AND I SAID SHUT UP! SHUT UP.)

(REST)

(REST)

JABBER: SLUT. SORRY.

THE WORD JUST POPPED OUT, A CHILDS JOKE. HE COVERS HIS MOUTH, SHEEPISHLY. THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

HESTER

JABBER

HESTER

JABBER

HESTER QUICKLY RAISES HER CLUB AND HITS HIM ONCE. BRUTALLY. HE CRIES OUT AND FALLS DOWN DEAD. . . .

HESTER BEATS JABBERS BODY AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN.... HESTER LOOKS UP FROM HER DEED TO SEE BEAUTY WHO RUNS OFF. HESTER STANDS THERE ALONE? WET WITH HER SONS BLOOD. GRIEF-STRICKEN, SHE CRADLES HIS BODY. HER HANDS WET WITH BLOOD, SHE WRITES AN “A” ON THE GROUND.

HESTER: LOOKS GOOD, JABBER, DONT IT? DONT IT HUH? (103-106)

The seriousness of the scene could suggest further speculations on whether Jabber actually meant the description he gave to his mother. One may also recall the opening of the play when Hester was trying to know the meaning of the word on the wall. This incident projects more about

the psychological impact of this word on Hester although she was trying hard to conceal it.

Parks' *In the Blood* legitimates the reconsideration of the relationship between history and possession. In the case of Hesters, the authors outspoke their nightmarish concerns about being one of the races and, consequently, being possessed. Parks re-examination of Hawthorne's Hester could also be seen as a way to challenge most of the ready-made judgments that history is usually allowed to pass through generations without essentially touching upon its main details.

Conclusion

Hester represents a revolution in the way readers read the original or her postmodern version of the story. Park's version, for instance, reveals more details about presenting herself as one whole against the five fragments of patriarchy that she had encountered in her life. She is portrayed by the author as a piece of narrative told on a stage that accepts all kinds of questions and doubts. However, these doubts are not, and will not be, attached to her decisions in life. On some occasions, she sounds more reasonable than her male oppressors.

Moreover, the play is a set of new social and moral codes. The circle in which Hester is acting consists of many parties that altogether take part in her fate. However, she shows little resistance to these new rules while all other players in her plot manifest an aggressive state of denial.

The play also further questions the well-established concepts of faith, paternity, friendship, or even life in general. These concepts, for Parks' Hester, are in her blood and written in her own blood.

Nevertheless, she tackles them in the postmodern world with considerable doubt and, instead, she creates her own line of blood that is built upon accepting what is coming and, more importantly, being prepared for it in an ever-changing world.

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