

# The Deconstruction of Black Absence: A Study on the Postmodernity of Suzan-Lori Parks's Lincoln Plays

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**Abstract:** *In her Lincoln Plays (Topdog/Underdog and the American Play), Parks made a bold attempt: the black protagonists act President Abraham Lincoln in the play, deconstructing and recreating the black and white relationship. The paper examines how Parks highlights the presence of the black in different ways from the perspective of historical writing. Starting from the deconstruction of the grand narrative discourse in the plays, it is found that Parks uses the deconstruction of the "absence" of black people as the basis to name black people with white names and be played by black people. White people deliberately symbolize the emergence of white people, thereby reinterpreting the identity and history of black people, subverting the grand narrative methods in previous literary works and history. It shows that postmodernity in Parks's plays is an important part that cannot be ignored in her works. Parks's innovative attempts at postmodernity in plays are fragmented attempts at racial equality and peace in American society.*

**Keywords:** *Suzan-Lori Parks, Lincoln Plays, Postmodernity, Racial Balance*

## 1. The Whiteness of Blackness

In the Lincoln Plays, Parks uses the image of Abraham Lincoln to reconstruct the image of white people, showing the audience how the black protagonist in the play reshapes the image of white people. Parks's dramatic strategy of using race as a framework in Lincoln Plays hints at the construction of American identity in the continuation of the myths associated with Abraham Lincoln that are produced and propagated in American nationalist and patriotic narratives. In American Plays, Parks uses the beards of Foundling Father to construct and reconstruct racialized positions, revealing the privileges and exemptions of white patriarchy: the Foundling Father carries his collection of beards with him in a box. However, he did not own a natural beard; he secretly bought hair from barbers and arranged it into an artificial beard. The early series of purchases and maintenance took the Foundling Father a lot of time and experience. Gradually, he believed that the beard belonged entirely to him. In other words, the racial identity of the Foundling Father slowly changed with the beard. The transfer of object ownership causes the Foundling Father in the play to transform his identity construction, and the mastery of the beard symbolizes the construction of racial identity. This identity and social status are shaped by social conventions and then reshaped by individual actions.

Hassan agreed that the dramatic form progresses from unresolved tensions to symbolic elusiveness and finally culminates in absurdity. This movement towards antiform is observable not only in drama, but also in Western art in general, despite some noteworthy exceptions throughout history [2]. In the American Play, at first, the Foundling Father attempts to imitate Lincoln's appearance and clothing, but his imitation gradually strays away from this initial intention. The most obvious change was the debasement of President Lincoln's public image. Later in the play, the Foundling Father begins to grow a yellow beard, transforms into a blond Lincoln, and responds to his customers with vulgar and ridiculous remarks. Parks emphasized that significant historical figures can only live in the past and become historical narratives, while the people living now are the actual existence and powerful proof. This absurd parody and spectacle not only further breaks down the boundaries between seriousness and joke, greatness and vulgarity, but also reiterates that the image of a white president has become an entertainment pop culture icon.

At the same time, the grand historical narrative represented by President Lincoln and the image of the great man Lincoln are subverted, and the comic performance of the Foundling Father reduces tragic historical events into absurd farce fragments. In American Play, the Foundling Father indulges himself by impersonating and acting out Lincoln. However, in Topdog/Underdog, Lincoln insists on putting on

white face makeup to maintain his white appearance in order to avoid being fired. He firmly believes he can do the job but wants to avoid wearing shabby suits. The coat, he thought, was for fools. He did not want anyone else to compete with him for the job. In those independent and repeated performances, his brother began to firm up his meticulous imitation of President Lincoln because, in such performances, both performers and participants had the opportunity to have some contact with the stuff of the Greats: Everyone can be Lincoln, with the fake mustache and top hat.

At the beginning of *Topdog/Underdog*, Lincoln retains his intention and identity, distinguishing his performance of African American identity from his white presidential attire: They say clothes make the man, and he who wore that all day long to imitate whiteness could not make him who he is. The words of Lincoln's brother Booth in the play also support Lincoln's transformation and fusion of black and white identities: You look like the real you[6]. Brother Lincoln thinks that the job of playing the president is easy. He likes that job and can sit back and relax when he has nothing to do. When he gets into role-playing, even though people come in with fake pistols and reenact historical events, he can sit there and let his mind travel. During the performance, Lincoln did not refute that the moment he played Abraham Lincoln, he was also given a position contradictory to his white identity. The current performance changed the image of President Lincoln in history, but it also had some ambiguities. As Jennifer Larson (2012) stated, the typical costumes of historical figures become unique symbols of President Lincoln, and these symbols have a hypnotic effect on those exposed to them, making them believe that the person wearing such clothing is President Lincoln[5]. When his brother Lincoln talks to Booth about his "best customer," Booth's questions suggest that they can only understand each other if they are both African-American. It also made Lincoln rethink the job's meaning: Should the show stop or continue when no one is watching?

Hassan believes that parody can enhance how something is presented. According to this perspective, a copy or representation can be just as valid as the original. This leads to a new idea of tradition, where the past is not simply imitated but expanded upon in the present through a mix of high and low culture, continuity and discontinuity[2]. Brother Lincoln's parody, then, also posed a challenge to his African-American identity, even as it pushed the boundaries of racial discourse and posed a threat to black communities living under white violence and fanaticism. In reality, Lincoln felt that his performance was still mixed with the danger and threat of death. When he describes the process of the game, he categorizes the killer customers according to their costumes. More and more people participate and enter this game, making the whole day full of processes. The clientele ranges from innocent kids in school uniforms to business people who smell like two martinis, housewives who fire off more than once, and tourists who wear theme park T-shirts, all trying to capture in the act to the retracing of history [6]. It was clear that President Lincoln could no longer remain a simple spectator in the performance. Therefore, under the influence of white dominance in history, Brother Lincoln still failed to change the African-American core of his performance identity. At the same time, he was ignored by theme parks and mainstream society.

By participating in various ways in shaping and reshaping the image of white President Lincoln, *Topdog/Underdog* and *The America Play* resist understanding whiteness as the embodiment of ideals and norms and attempt to deconstruct the historical, political, and social context of whiteness. Parks tries to empower the equality of blacks and whites in the plays. In searching for a balance between black and white, Parks took the distribution of roles to an extreme and gradually eliminated the presence of white dominance on stage from the narrative. However, invisible whiteness continues to have an ongoing impact on black communities as a racial force. First, only performances focusing on white identity can allow black people to enter the mainstream of white culture. For example, Brother Lincoln's employment opportunities must be predicated on pretending to be white, and the Foundling Father's tendency to pursue the greatness of the historical cave must be realized through white performances. Secondly, it is the black identity that makes the protagonists in the play suffer from difficulties and long-term racial discrimination. For example, no matter how hard he tries to improve his acting skills, Lincoln's job at the amusement park will eventually be replaced by a wax dummy. Although the Foundling Father has left his hometown and embarked on a dream journey, he still feels like an alien while digging into the historical cave. Thirdly, the confrontation between the two Lincoln imitators and their self-awareness firmly reshaped the image of the great white man, which in turn impacted the audience and readers' sense of white authority and superiority. It also led to reflection on historical and racial issues inside and outside the play.

Parks subverts the unquestionable conventions in the usual writing of black-and-white racial history. White characters are no longer the protagonists of dramatic works. African-American characters and the lives and national culture of African Americans are mentioned in the play. However, reducing the

focus on white mainstream culture does not result in white characters completely losing their dramatic function. Within the social context of historical theatrical performance, white society will continue to linger on the margins of the narrative, which continues to affect the black community and the writing of new black history, constituting a critical issue that needs to be addressed in the narrative. Through her Lincoln plays, Parks attempts to explore a new path to racial peace by looking at black communities and black history through the lens of African American life and reality, and from this premise, attempts to blend black and white racial narratives to further close to the real white community.

## 2. The Breakdown of Metanarratives

### 2.1. *Defusing the Boundary between Reality and Fiction*

Postmodernism tries to suppress or disperse the romantic ego, which is viewed with suspicion by poststructuralists as a “totalizing principle.” The self loses itself in the play of language and the differences that create reality, and even as death stalks its games, it impersonates its absence. It diffuses itself in depthless styles, refusing interpretation and eluding understanding [2]. In *The American Play*, compared with *The Foundling Father’s* contradictory attitude of both affirmation and doubt towards history, his son Brazil formed a clear understanding of the issue of “history” in the process of searching for his father’s remains. In the second act “*The Hall of Wonders*”, Brazil excavated the *The Great Hole of History* under the guidance of his mother Lucy. They not only planned to hold a decent funeral for the Foundling father but also hoped to find his relics and pass on the family history. During the excavation process, Brazil gradually realized that history is not trustworthy and is full of illusions. Brazil compared the *The Great Hole of History* to the origin of history, regarding *The Foundling Father* as a pioneer in history (*The Foundling Father* and *The Founding Father* are very similar in sound and shape). Brazil suggested that the origin of the world may have resembled the process of cleaning this particular area. Similar to how he was excavating his hole. He agreed it must have been equally disturbed and unjust [7]. Indeed, when the Foundling Father was young, he is suffering all the elements without any friends in the world. The monsters of the jungle took him in. He arrived, grabbed his plot, staked his claim, and attempted to dig Big Hole.

However, from the first day when the Foundling Fathers created a new world, everything about it was false. First of all, the pioneer was an impostor who imitated the appearance of others and opened up his personal history of this new world in a fake way. Secondly, falsification constitutes all the activities of this new world. Finally, the pioneer puts forward his own forged “faux-historical knickknacks when he finally quits this business”, using a bunch of fragmentary knickknacks as historical evidence. Therefore, *The Great Hole of History* is false and artificial from the very beginning.

Brazil had a deep understanding of the deceptions of the Foundling Father. He commented: “Diggin was his livelihood but fakin was his callin” [7]. In his memory of his father, almost all of what Brazil told was about his father’s deceptions, including that his father taught him how to perform various crying gestures at funerals when he was a child, imitating various sad looks, and imagining how his father pretended to be President Lincoln to act, etc. Although in Brazil’s view, the Foundling Father is a complete “faux father”, he still took over the iron grip his mother gave him, which belonged to his father before his death, and claimed that he and his father were the same and decided to “follow in the footsteps of my foe-father” [7].

The simple handover ceremony symbolizes that Brazil will inherit the mission of the Foundling Father, accepting and continuing the illusion of history. In *The Great Hole of History*, Brazil not only unearthed various performance props left behind by his father but also found various documents, medals, and other miscellaneous items, such as wooden dentures of President Washington, early glass beads used for trade exchanges, etc. *The Great Hole of History* suddenly turned into a huge storage warehouse.

Most of these things are scattered, cheap, and small objects that have nothing to do with the “grand history”. They show a humble, marginalized yet different kind of historical landscape, which is just like the playwright’s understanding of history: It’s history that you don’t know what to do with, or history that’s concealed in the shadows, pushed to the limits, or discovered in the edges, gaps, and crevices. It’s not the major narrative; it’s the minor things [9]. As a real material existence, these scraps do carry history; however, as historical heritage, they do not have the effect to prove the magnificent effectiveness of history.

As the successor, Brazil’s first task is to prove and inherit the dignity and glory of the family history,

so what he needs to do is to try to sacralize the Historical hole and all the things left by his father. According to Lucy's suggestion, Brazil dig that object up, brush it off, and put it in a proper position and location [7]. They want to transform the Historical Hole into a Treasure Hall, a respectable historical site. However, clean appearance and orderly placement alone cannot turn those insignificant and cheap items into historical treasures. Brazil followed his own will, allowing his imagination to fabricate a grand historical story for each object, creating a sense of history artificially. For example, he used a piece of something similar to a horse's mouth to fabricate a historical story of a hero riding a horse to save the ordinary ones and even imagined a small piece of animal fat as the fat of a whale, and thus create a virtual world where whales once ruled the ocean.

What needs to be emphasized here is that the method chosen by Brazil is to fabricate history, not to make history. Fabrication is different from fiction, which is based on the existence of social life and reflects social life... while fabrication means that it is constructed based on certain personal historical concepts and ingesting certain historical "elements". From one perspective, Brazil used virtual history to apply a sacred historical halo to ordinary things, turning the Great Hole of History from a messy storage warehouse into a historical site with profound cultural heritage, and fulfilling his mission as a successor.

On the other hand, his highly personal and subjective virtualization will inevitably turn history from an illusion (Historical hole) to another illusion (Treasure Hall). In addition, Brazil was engaged in the mourning industry and was good at pretending to be sad in various ways. He is a veritable impostor. In this way, the inheritance of The Great Hole of History can be understood as the inheritance of a fictional history by one impostor and the successor. What is intriguing is that when Brazil and Lucy find the body of The Foundling Father, they do not hold a decent funeral for their loved ones as promised. Instead, they placed his body in the Treasure Hall and displayed it together with other items. Brazil took advantage of the similarity between his father and Lincoln. It was used as a gimmick, deliberately confusing the real and the fake, and blurring the truth.

The ambiguous rhetoric and the faked bones can easily mislead the visitors into thinking that they are seeing the remains of President Lincoln. Perhaps Brazil was trying to erase his father's humble identity through this kind of forgery so that his father could continue to pretend to be Lincoln and become a historical figure that attracted attention forever. However, no matter what attempts Brazil has, it is true that everything placed in the Treasure Hall, including the bones of the The Foundling Father, have been stripped of their historical truth, and it is very likely that these things will continue to be misunderstood by visitors. In this way, the historical reality will eventually disappear into nothingness.

Therefore, in American Play, Parks uses the Lincoln Act and The Hall of Wonders to present a postmodern historical landscape. Whether in the game or in the cultural relics exhibition hall, history has been separated from its original meaning, which was represented by various symbols. Faced with the complicated and confusing history, some people in the play try to revise the history and reconstruct the various possibilities of history, such as the Foundling Father. Some fictionalize history purely based on subjective wishes and imagination, such as Brazil. While most are more willing to view history with an entertainment mentality, such as the various "killers" in the Lincoln Act.

As for the play-writer, Parks has no definite answers. She believes that it is the audiences to interpret the play. She once said: "I think I provide the map...it's the map of a piece of land. And what I try to do is say there are 10 roads, 20, 50 roads—take one. I get a kick out of just seeing what people do. I think that the playwright provides the map. But I think a bad play only has a one-way road. Yes, I think the bad play has one road; one idea, one message, one way of doing it. It's so much about one thing. And everybody walks out of the theater going" [4].

The historical narrative of Lincoln Plays is not only a simple revision of the concept of history, but also a challenge and questioning of the definition of history. The two brothers who were abandoned by their parents at an early age and lived a difficult life in Topdog/Underdog are a metaphor for the fact that African Americans in prosperous cities lack care. They are displaced mentally and rejected by mainstream culture while finally losing the warmth of family. The simple stage furnishings show the poor life of the characters and also symbolize the living conditions of the African-American community in the United States, revealing profoundly that the abolitionist movement is just a cloak of romanticism. In the end, the elder brother Lincoln used card games to defraud his parents' inheritance - a shabby room, which is a metaphor for the abolition of slavery by white Americans, and at the same time, illustrates the serious harm it caused to African Americans. At the end of the play, Brother Booth shoots Lincoln. It is a metaphor for the awakening of African Americans, thus completely subverting history. The living conditions of African Americans in the play are revealed, further calling on people to rethink

and pay attention to the relationship between white people and African Americans.

Parks refused to be labeled racist by others and was unwilling to simply portray blacks and whites as pitiful oppressed people and domineering oppressors. She believed that in traditional plays, black plus white equals dramatic conflict. Black drama means redressing the grievances of oppressed black people and new drama conflicts should be black people plus 'X'. The Lincoln plays are Parks's work in the use of "X". Her use of slashes in the title of the play is to emphasize that the relationship between the "topdog" and the "underdog" should be interdependent, neither superior nor inferior, strong or weak. The status of the "topdog" and the "underdog" is temporary, just like Booth and Lincoln have abilities they are proud of. Only mutual respect and trust between the two can bring peace and happiness.

Looking at the traditional relationship between blacks and whites in the United States, the white's monopoly of discourse describes blacks as "weak" and dependent on the "strong", thus setting off the majestic image of the white "strong". But African Americans cannot be ignored in the history and culture of the United States. African Americans and white people fought side by side to win American independence. Blues and jazz derived from black hymns laid the basic framework for the entire American pop music. Parks said that she created a play to "dig the black hole of history", "find the bones of our ancestors", "listen to the voices of the bones", "record these voices", and "use drama to create history". In her opinion, the historical existence, right to speak, and survival of African Americans should be examined and treated fairly and objectively, and black Americans do not need to be appendages and foils to the whites.

The Lincoln plays are a map for understanding history. On this map, Parks provides the audiences with multiple ways to understand history, using the postmodern landscape to connect history with the present, reflect on history, and overturn the macro narrative.

## ***2.2. Decanonizing History, Power and Narration***

Art performances declare their vulnerability to time, death, audience, and the Other. Theater or plays act as the active principle of a decanonized society, to the edge of terrorism if not really carnalized [3]. Historically, as President of the United States during the Civil War, Lincoln was a resolute defender of the Union. During his administration, he issued a series of bills such as the Emancipation Proclamation, the Homestead Act, and other measures, actively using the power of black slaves to effectively maintain the unity of the United States, and clearing obstacles for the industrialization process of the United States. As a result, the United States became one of the world's most powerful countries. Therefore, over the years, Lincoln was deeply loved and commemorated. Lincoln's image is hung in the center place in the Office of the President of the White House. In Mount Rushmore National Memorial Park, there are statues of the four great presidents of the United States, one of which is President Lincoln. Every year thousands of people come to the Lincoln Memorial to pay their respects to Lincoln and so on. As President Lincoln abolished black slavery, his status and role in American history cannot be doubted, and his great contribution to the United States is obvious to all. While in literature, President Lincoln also showed a very positive image. His own "Gettysburg Address" has become a classic literary textbook. American writers Arthur and Roger co-authored a novel *Lincoln: The Greatest President in American History*. The novel shows the glorious image of President Lincoln's life in a documentary style.

In the play *Topdog/Underdog*, Parks parodies the historical assassination of American President Lincoln and re-constructs Lincoln's decent image as a president who was assassinated for the unification of the United States. However, from Parks's work, people can reflect on the authenticity of the Emancipation Proclamation issued by the white president in history, whether it is for the liberation and freedom of black slaves. Lincoln explained this on many occasions. For the sake of national unity, he would rather sacrifice the interests of black slaves. What Parks wanted to express was that the white President Lincoln was still assassinated by the white Booth to maintain white dominance, which was in contrast to the deeds of black slaves. Therefore, in the minds of white people, the historical image of Lincoln is completely different from black people. The dramatist parodies the Lincoln image in American history, which is not the heroic image in the minds of African Americans.

In *Topdog/Underdog*, Parks replaced all white historical figures with black ones, parodying them as brothers who appeared in the play. They were no longer political figures, but ordinary African-American families, a parody of the plight of African American's economic and social status. It is no longer a direct description of American society and systems, but a parody of the discourse between two African-American brothers. A parody of the black situation in real life replaced the direct reproduction of the black slave era in American history. Parks parodies the official history of the United States, deconstructing the history of white Americans, and reconstructing the history and subjectivity of

African Americans. It all shows that there are different interpretations of American history in this period with different opinions, and it is necessary to review the real history from the perspective of African Americans.

Parks has a unique allusion to the period of American history in *The Lincoln Plays*. For right reading is a stringent and solitary act, requiring...cultural tradition or central syllabus, assuring that density of allusion and range of reference, that interactive power of sympathies [2]. Although Lincoln played a major role in liberating the black slaves, he used the black slaves to achieve his own goals. For President Lincoln, the black slaves were temporary tools. For the black slaves, President Lincoln issued an empty promise. In the plays, more than a hundred years after the abolition of black slavery in the United States, the black brothers, Lincoln and Booth, still live miserably at the bottom of society, relying on deception to survive. From the names Parks gave to the protagonists Lincoln and Boots, the process of American history has always involved the participation and contribution of African Americans, proving that African Americans have always been present in American history, rather than being "absent". American history is not only the history of white Americans but also the history of black Americans; the American dream is not only the dream of white Americans but also the dream of black Americans; the independence and unity of the United States are not only the contributions of white Americans but also the sacrifices of black Americans. However, written American history is almost a history of white people, and African Americans are almost ignored and marginalized. Therefore, in the play, the two black brothers are helpless and rely on deception to make a living. The great life in the United States has nothing to do with them. Their fathers worked hard in this country all their lives, but could only leave them a small house.

Parks uses this huge contrast between history and reality to confirm that American society is still a white society and to express that African Americans are still unable to enjoy the tangible benefits brought by federal unity, and are still unable to truly get rid of the influence of black slavery. At the same time, Parks used literary methods to correct the injustices against African Americans in American history and reality. She also corrected the docile image of Uncle Tom in Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and subverted the stereotypes of African Americans. Booth shot Lincoln in the play, which illustrates the differences and individuality among African Americans.

### ***2.3. Deconstructing the Binary of Blacks and Whites***

As the French philosopher Foucault said, the history of mankind is a history of power and discourse. Whether in American history or real life, African Americans continue to make their voices heard and pursue their rights for the sake of survival. It is through *The Lincoln Plays* that Parks presents a life and inner picture of the marginalized African American in the United States, which is in sharp contrast with the dominant white society, strengthening the previous binary opposition model and way of thinking. In the plays, the whites were absent. The free conversations between the black brothers Lincoln and Boots were presented. No other ethnic group in American history has experienced the pain that African Americans have experienced. Since the day black slaves were sold to the North American continent, many American black slaves have not survived, and those who survived have been oppressed and have only one breath left, let alone any human dignity [10]. Therefore, African Americans in white society have no dignity of survival. They are just tools for white people to make money and to some extent became their property. With detailed legal support, although each colony may be different, they all gave white slave owners complete and absolute control over black slaves. White slave owners had the power to do whatever they wanted with black slaves" [8]. Rice said that Blacks are aliens, and their dark skin has been given a series of symbolic meanings indicating inferiority. This is the portrayal of the social status of African Americans in American history. America of today is still dominated by white people, and African Americans are still on the margins of society. This status quo of black and white remains.

In the *Lincoln Plays*, Lincoln found a new job, and his younger brother Booth asked what kind of job it was. Lincoln replied: "Security work" [6]. At this time, Boots also comforted: "Brother, go and take this medicine with you. You need it more than me. You know, I have love, love Keep me warm" [6]. The elder brother has a security job, but his younger brother is envious of him. In American history, white people were slave owners and African Americans were slaves, more than a hundred years later, this master-slave relationship continues. Franklin pointed out that if African Americans neither conspired to rebel nor help the French or Indians, no one would notice the living conditions of African Americans [1].

The history of African Americans is the history of the struggle of African Americans in the United States. White Americans will not take the initiative to grant equal status to African Americans, let alone various rights. In *History of the African American Struggle*, Grant combed through the evolution of the African American struggle from 1619 to the 1970s, fully proving that it was African Americans who obtained various rights through their efforts, not through charity from white people. African Americans

pursue freedom of body, economic and spiritual through the civil rights movement which in turn enhance African American's sense of identity and pride in their own identity.

From another perspective, *The Lincoln Plays* explains the struggle, living conditions, and inner evolution of African Americans, striving to enjoy the right to survival and equal development with white people. Parks made use of the historical truths and facts that people have already learned in the history book of the United States, but she added the perspective, feelings, and thinking of African Americans, redefining and evaluating relevant issues in American history. White people appear to be the stronger ones, while history will have its judgment. With the assassination of President Lincoln, the new interpretation of history gave way to petty narratives rather than grand narratives.

From the title of *Topdog/Underdog*, it seems to be a binary way of thinking, the strong and the weak are incompatible. In fact, "top" and "under" are just relative terms, as the black and white. Parks used a parody to depict Lincoln, the great white president that the United States has always been proud of, as a black man, who became a brother to his assassin Booth. Parks showed that American history owes African Americans the opportunity to tell their own stories, implying that African Americans should enjoy various rights and interests equally with white people: not only the inheritance and interpretation of American history but also the freedom of survival and development of the whole nation.

### 3. Conclusions

In *Lincoln Plays*, Parks resurrects the history of President Lincoln and then accompanies those characters in her demanding journey toward empowerment, inviting readers and audiences to join them. Parks refused to see history as a fixed and total narrative. Thus, through writing her play, she attempts to recontextualize and rehistoricize history to reject a totalizing view of history while creating awareness that history is a discourse and not an absolute truth. Recontextualizing and rehistoricizing Lincoln and Booth's history provides the ground for Parks to incorporate some mini-narratives within the context of history. This allows her to create an independent space for thought free from the hegemony of meta-narratives, making room for mini-narratives—which raise difference, heterogeneity, and multiplicity. Under these circumstances, Parks's play is dynamic, ceaselessly oscillating between two poles of making and unmaking, presentation and representation. The movements between these poles help scholars expand their realms of insight, and embrace the plurality of narratives, readings, and interpretations. Thus, Parks breaks down the historical and scientific meta-narratives into pieces to bring peace to people of African descent as well as to readers and audiences.

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