

# Struggle in Arthur Kopit's *Indians*

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### Abstract

This research plans to focus on the struggle in Arthur Kopit's *Indians*. Arthur Kopit (1937) is one of the remarkable American playwrights whose work implies his profound anxiety and compassion for humanity. Kopit's main literary concern is exposing the falsehood of the American history as well as the hypocrisy of the fabricated mythic image of the American hero and America's continuing insistence to create such myths and legends to rationalize its horrible deeds and racial domination of the less powerful and inferior societies. Kopit's *Indians* (1968) is considered as his masterpiece in which he depicts through his characters, America's harshly unjust treatment of Native Americans in the Nineteenth century and admittedly suggests a hint of America brutal involvement in the Vietnam War, its mass killing of the Vietnamese and the troubled period of the Sixties. Buffalo Bill who is the central character of the play fails to create a friendly relationship between the Whites and the Indians; thus he facilitates the course of the American plan to defeat them and control their land. The research also seeks to prove that U.S. government is satisfied with the act of mass extermination of others, by all means possible for the sake of their own benefits.

**Keywords:** Dominance, History, Conflict, Massacre

### Introduction

#### 1. The American Theatre: Struggle and Survival

During 1960s, a stressful political and cultural cloud evaded America's sky with chaos. This stress was, in fact, a continuation of the anxieties of the fifties, which witnessed many major events, such as: the rise of McCarthyism Movement, the Civil Rights Campaign, the sexual revolution, the Youth/ drugs/ generation and specifically the Vietnam War.

The American Theatre of the sixties was also influenced by the turbulent issues of the decade. It suffered from a constant struggle for survival and reflected the major disintegration of the American individual who attempts to gain or regain himself within the rightful cultural and social construction. This attempt became one of the most common and popular thematic motifs.

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In fact, the Theatre, on the one hand, went through a crisis with the loss of its prominent representatives; with Eugene O'Neill's death in 1953, with Arthur Miller's sickness, and with Tennessee Williams' withdrawal from the theatrical world. On the other hand, it witnessed the development of several distinct forms with the proliferation of the experimental drama groups. (Fenn, 1992,p.23). In his notes, Antonin Artaud who is one of the recognized figures of the Twentieth century theatre, predicted the rise of these groups. He believed that the survival of the theatre is done mainly by furnishing the spectators with honest precipitates of dreams. (Roose- Evans, 1989, p.82).

The experimental drama groups were characterized by a rebellious and creative spirit. They tried to open up a new dramatic style, techniques, philosophies, and directions for the evolution of the American theatre, by breaking away from the old and stale traditions. Their Theatre was consequently distinguished by two central perspectives: concerning the subject matter, its main focus was on the social and political anxieties; it formed social criticism and supported the social changes even to the extremes of rebellion and revolution. Concerning the technique, it was introspective: shedding light on the relationship between human consciousness and social realities. (Lifton, 1973, p.67) Moreover, many of their works were preoccupied with the breakdown of psychological realism, investigating the metaphorical aspects of instinct and experience. Such as the works of Edward Albee , Jack Gelber, and Lorraine Hansberry who revived the American Black Theatre with her significant masterpiece "*A Raisin in the Sun*" (1959).

America's involvement in the Vietnam War and the growing awareness of its horrors haunted the American Theatre for a long time. The Vietnam War dated from the immediate post-world war on 1 November 1955, continued to the time which saw France endeavor to reclaim its prewar colony, and effectively ended on 30 April 1975. It attracted the majority of the literary arena, including playwrights, producers, directors, and actors who wanted to rework the nature of the American Theatre and intended to create a clear and direct opposition to America's commitment in the Vietnam War. Or perhaps, as William J. Searle thought, "the Theatre merely viewed "the hot war" as a vehicle for rejuvenating a business in decline". (J. Searle,ed., 1988, p.106).

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The War plays were written mostly by returning to those who witnessed the shocking experience of the Vietnam War and had direct involvement in it. Yet, the representation of its horror is done by introducing certain realistic illusions which can be performed successfully by life actors since it is restricted to action that happen on stage; in some marginal cases, like sexual acts, murders, and tricks that serve to deceive the eyes of the audience. Megan Terry's *Viet Rock* (1966) which is considered as one of the first experimental plays that deal with the Vietnam War, conveyed her mass killing and bombing buildings with group pantomime. (M.Alter, 1996, p.115). Some playwrights have also stylized horror by using radio, photographs, newspapers, or certain narratives that intensify the inherent impact on the audience. Others relied on reflecting a "thoughtful/ grasp of an overall poetic "truth" of the war with stress on the central part of that horror must play in it" (Ibid). However, the plays, as Arthur Kopit's "Indians" manifold the "Vietnam War" always existed within its generic stricter.

*Indians* (1968) is unique among Arthur Kopit's early plays in which he has balanced the competing request the American Theatre makes on playwrights to establish works possessing both commercial interest and artistic value. It is an experimental, absurdist play that avoids conventional plot and characterization. Through dramatic and episodic scenes, Kopit depicts the struggle of the American Indians from 1890 to 1966, as they were fighting for their Civil Rights. The play starts with presenting the national hero- myth of Buffalo Bill Cody in the west and ends with the Massacre of the Wounded Knee on Christmas day.

It is important to note that serious literary and artistic exploration of the Native Americans was held in the American Theatre. Some playwrights thought of the Native Americans as generous people living in an Eden garden with great sources of wealth, others viewed them with gloomy and dark outlook of low rife with brutality, ignorance, and cannibalism. Actually, due to philosophical, structural, and theoretical studies, all Native Americans were generalized by one term, "Indians". (Andrew Wiget, ed. 1996, p.386) In terms of Arthur Kopit's *Indians*, he balanced images of Indians and White Men that would not compel to honor any of them. Wittiness and myth are united to reveal America's political and social lies with the metaphoric use of the Vietnam War.

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## 2. Struggle in Arthur Kopit's *Indians*

Born on May 10, 1937, in New York, Arthur Lee Koenig, is one of the contemporary American dramatists whose *Indians* established him a worldwide success. The play was performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company on July 4, 1968, at the Aldwych Theatre, London. It was nominated for a Tony award, and was adapted into a film by the director Robert Altman in 1976 that titled the film, *Buffalo Bill and Indians*, or *Sitting Bull's History Lesson*.

Kopit's early works and especially *Indians* have identified him as a promising absurdist playwright. His use of the Brechtian techniques of treating each scene of *Indians* as self-contained with the cunning theatrical devices use of music, sound effects, and the performance of talented actors, the audience become aware of Kopit's changeable and man-made historical presentation and the social criticism it suggests and sustains. (Auerbach, 1980, p. 92). Kopit divides history into fragments, and then gathers the pieces as scenes into fractures chronology. However, the final form of the play is complex including a decorated scenes and images on the less-developed America of the late nineteenth century.

Kopit takes on the role of being a historian to dramatize historical events in his drama that is concerned with genocide, the myth of the Wild West, and the American brutal involvement in Vietnam. The German dramatist George Buchner, author of *Danton's Death*, which reflects the French Revolution, stresses the importance of the dramatist as a historian who depicts the life of revolutionary ages with the portrayal of timeless characters. (Christian H. Moe, 1992, p.7)

The idea of writing *Indians* came to Kopit while reading a newspaper article made by General Westmoreland –the- commander- in- chief of American forces in Vietnam, who talked about the massacre at My Lai senselessly, as well as listening to Charles Ives' Fourth Symphony. For Kopit, the symphony reflected two contrasted ideas at conflict with each other: one representing American folksongs, the other representing the strong protest of patriots against the war. Kopit thought:

**“No, your hearts don't go out, to the innocent victims of this, because there is something wrong.” And then suddenly I thought of the Indians and the White Man. It was part of a struggle that we had been fighting throughout our history with people we conceived of as being spiritually, morally, economically, socially and intellectually our inferiors.**

(*Indians Unpaginated*, 1971)

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America was and still the most proud nation in the world, mainly because it carries the seeds of greatness and superiority at its heart. Kopit's main interest is to criticize through his theatre, the American psyche that kept the American Dream, myths, and legends alive, a false dream that looked forward to control and exploit other frontiers specifically after the conquest of the West. In fact, America's continuous and consistent struggle to expand its authority and frontiers is manifested through its involvement in Philippines, Cuba, Korea, and Vietnam. Will Willkinson points out clearly in his book "*Awaking from the American Dream: From Crisis to Consciousness*" that the main reason behind America's superiority and call for war is the greed for power and the rich lands of the inferiors. (Willkinson,2014, 236)

Kopit's anger and revolt grew especially when America's political leaders obfuscate the truth and justify their involvement in wars and the internal affairs of other countries as an attempt to spread peace and democratic ideals. Gerald M. Berkowitz explains that Kopit's play is implicitly about Vietnam, showing "how American myth-making, particularly the need to see ourselves as the good guys; inevitably distorts our perception of other culture" (Gerald M. Berkowitz, 2014, 141). The American psyche and the masked motives of the American history are exposed through Kopit's choice of presenting a real historical figure of William Cody who acquired his nickname of Buffalo Bill after he slaughtered 4.280 of buffalos.

In fact, the great power of *Indians* comes from the fact that the incidents and characters are real, even if the way in which they are presented uses theatrical techniques. According to Rob Kirkpatrick, Kopit's play reinterprets important historical events from the Indian wars of the late 19 century, such as the Black Hill conflict- the dawn of new political treaties, the slaughter of buffalos, the banning of ritual dances, and the killing of chief Sitting Bull who fought for the Indian Rights (Kirkpatrick, 2011, p.240). According to historical accounts, Sitting Bull was a real historical military, spiritual leader of the Hunkpapa Sioux tribe in the mid-nineteenth century. The Sioux were then one of the bravest, wisest, and the most powerful Indian tribes in North America who deeply cherished myths and the legends of their own race.

Sitting Bull and his entire tribe were repeatedly tortured, exploited and finally exterminated by the Whites over the Black Hill struggle. Kopit aims to present this historical struggle in *Indians* in the most trivial way by, as Andy Kempe claims, presenting real characters and real events "in order to

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create a documentary about the destruction of the North American Indian” (Kempe, 2002, 36).

The opening scene of the play starts with the playing of music and the use of three large glass cases lit by spotlights on a seemingly dark stage. The first case symbolically has a “larger- than- life- size” effigy of Buffalo Bill Cody, the second contains an effigy of the Indian leader Sitting Bull, wearing simple buckskin cloth, without head dress, and the third one holds a few items like “ a buffalo skull, blood-stained Indian shirt, and an old rifle”. These theatrical devices give emphasis on the historical presence mostly in the manner of that its legacy is presented through culture. The exploitative presentation of Buffalo Bill’s “Wild West Show” adds a museum- like stage mainly for the audience amusement as well as a clear symbol for the White man’s cruelty and subjugation. Further, Kopit enhances the complexity of the play with the disassociated narrative pattern of time and space sequence. The thirteen scenes are arranged interestingly and changes from one sequence to another, from Buffalo Bill performing with excitement in the present to his remembering of the past. He appears as a showman then shifts his role to be a negotiator between the White men and Indians.

Buffalo Bill is a historical legendary hero of contrasting interests; he is a sympathetic friend to Indians, and a sly middle-aged leader, a showman in the Wild West show, a trapped character between dream and reality struggling to set order, identity, and stability within him. He wishes to help the Indians, yet he played a major role in their misery and decline. In fact, he occupies two different cultures; of the primitivism of the West which was changed rapidly by the pragmatism influence of the East, this obviously sets a class distinction conflict between the White Americans and Indians.

Buffalo Bill appears from the historical recesses on a white stallion in his Wild West Show, waving his hat proudly and boasting about his fine, heroic actions. He promises to help the Indian leader Sitting Bull whose people are starving to death, by bringing the Great Father to listen to their demands. Yet, the president refuses Buffalo Bill’s request of visiting the Indians. Buffalo Bill knows that the American government intends to betray and avenge the Indians for killing General George Custer who discovered along with his expedition the existence of gold in the Black Hills, so their ill intentions are made clear. Kopit’s President is malicious and cynical; he describes himself as being a great eagle that captures his prey in the right moment. Out of his respect to the heroic patriotism of Buffalo Bill, and to honor his role in the Wild West- Show, the President sends three of the Committee Senators as a

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“gesture” to the Indian reservation were they have been relocated to discuss their predicament. Buffalo Bill, who is struggling to hide the multiple attitudes of the Whites, presumably says that, “He couldn’t come, it’s all my fault... Besides these men are the Great Father’s representatives! Talking to them is like talking to him!” (Kopit, 1970 p. 57).

Senator Logan deceives the Indians by raising false hopes and expectations:

**Indians: Please be assured that this committee has not come to punish you or take away any of your land but only to hear your grievances, determine if they are just. And if so, remedy them. For me, like the Great Father, wish only the best for our Indian children. (Kopit, p.18)**

In fact, Logan’s spoken words reflect President Nixon’s statement in the wake of the Indian revolution in 1968 for their civil rights. The statement supports and raises the Indians’ aspirations during America’s involvement in Vietnam. Nixon describes them as the most deprived and isolated minority group in the nation. He believes that their condition at every aspect of life, including, health, education, income, and employment ranked at the bottom. This Indian suffering condition is in fact a heritage of decades of the American injustice. Yet, what truly matters is the American fulfillment of their selfish interests, through employing their hypocrisy and mastery in choosing the right words for the right political and social situations.

Buffalo Bill wishes to make good relations between the Whites and the Indians. Yet, he is more like a devious participant in the White’s scheme rather than a rescuer and helper. In scene three, Buffalo Bill finds pleasure in killing 100 buffalo with 100 shoots to provide food for the American railroad laborers and in order to get the satisfaction of Grand Duke Alexis of Russia who attends the Wild West Show. Thus, he justifies this action of exterminating the main source of the Indians’ food by claiming that he wants to make them work as farmers and a step he believes, “necessary if they are ever to leave their barbaric ways and enter civilization”(Kopit, p.89). In fact, the construction of the fragmented Indian into a whole became a total irony in the play, because the objective of colonial discourse was to form the colonized as a racially degenerate population to justify rule and conquest. The Grand Duke Alexis kills the innocent Indian scout Spotted Tail, while Buffalo Bill denies his friendship with the latter and identifies him as a dangerous Comanche, merely for the sake of politics and expediency. Moreover, an American novelist and reporter named Ned Buntline, takes a photograph of Spotted Tail’s dead body, announcing that it’s absolutely

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fabulous incident to reveal America's satisfaction no matter what the means it uses to overpower others. His significance is in the essays he writes which justify and even support the White men's racial colonialist tyranny. Consequently, Karl Gross links this particular killing scene to the American mass killing in Vietnam without recognizing the innocent civilians from the Vietcong Guerillas. (Blatanis, 2003 ,145).. Gross connects other manifestations of the scene to Vietnam and the Indian struggle as he criticizes the hidden lies within the American declaration of good intentions. (Ibid, p.95). He suggests that thousands of Vietnamese as well as Indians died because of America's false promises to help them.

Buffalo Bill and his allies; Buntline and Wild Hickok enact a melodrama play within the play, entitled "*Scouts of the Plains*" in scene seven of *Indians*, in front of the President and the First lady at the White House. Buntline is the playwright of this melodrama that depicts a group of Western American heroes saving an Indian virgin who represents the holy land from the torture of a savage Indian chief, and then they take over his land. The latter rises from death to rationalize the American dominance and his murder with an ironical statement of American hero- image:

**[T]he White man is great, the red man nothing. So, if a White man kills a red man, we must forgive him, for God intended man to be as great as possible, and by eliminating the inferior, the great man carries on God's work. (Kopit, p.43).**

Kopit thinks that Indians still believe in the White's vows in spite of their continuous betrayals and desire to dominate their land. As a matter of fact, both races did not have the exact capitalist theories, thus the Indians could not get a harmonious unity into the American national identity. Sitting Bull's ambition to save his people from starvation is widened into a land conflict with the Whites. The Indian struggle to protect their land which is considered as a legal right that they inherited from their ancestors is defeated and useless.

Kopit highlights the cultural distinction of the land perception between the two races in his play. The Indian's own image of the land differs from the White men's, because they consider the land as "mother" or a "virtuous woman". They believe that the total female principle of "gratification-enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, response, and painless and integral satisfaction" (Schwing, 2009, p.4). This imagery became a promotional tract, inviting perspective settlers to explore the possible treasures. Everything on the motherly land like people, plants,

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animals, and water are created by a higher power that is referred to as “God” or “The Great Mystery”, and is highly valued as the ultimate supporter of life (Ibid, p.27). They feel responsible to treasure its beauty and natural resources as it's where Indian religious ceremonies and rituals are held for centuries. The land is “soothing, strengthening, cleansing, and healing” (PorterField and koeke,2009, p.96). They even value wild plants like sage by which they use as food or medicine to heal the sick.

By contrast, The American Whites consider the land as an object of dominance and exploitation. The Americans, as Annette Kolodny suggests, in his book *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor As Experience in American Literature and Letters*, instinctively, have a stubborn insistence upon seeing themselves as the righteous exploiters of the land. (Kolodny,1976,p.8). They prefer to subdue the land rather than living in harmony with its natural resources. Their prejudice comes from the belief that God has ordained them to conquer and rule over the land. They rationalize this by quoting the Bible, Genesis I, Verse 24“God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion” (Ibid, p.97). In this respect, the attitudes of the whites are learned and they do not have spiritual connection with the land, while the Indians are simple minded as they believe without intermediary. Buffalo Bill ironically remarks on this occasion that, “the majority of ‘em, you see, don't understand how land can be owned, since they believe the land was made by Great Spirits for the benefit of everyone” (Kopit, 151).

The struggle between the American Whites and Indians reach a deadly climax when Indians are deprived of their land without being paid for it. This leads them to feel frustrated and disappointed in the American Whites Committee's vows. The ambition of the Sitting Bull to provide his people with gratification and prosperity with the help of Buffalo Bill is destroyed. The latter's attempt of help resulted in more suffering, more conflicts, and more deaths as he realizes himself as an active participant in the process of tormenting the Indians and that, “of gaining the land could only be accomplished by the necessary removal, or subjugation, of the Indians” (Marsden and Browne, 1994, p.149). John Grass, an educated spokesman for the Indians blames Buffalo Bill and argues Senator Dawes, about taking the Black Hills in the treaty, the latter sarcastically responds, “You mean we bought the Black Hills in it” (Kopit, p.35). Grass challenges the dominant American ideology and proves himself as real Indian; by joining the Indian Sun Dance ritual despite Buffalo Bill's warning that the U.S government has

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banned such rituals. Grass rips open his shirt and pierces his chest with the barbs, then commits suicide. The Indian Chief grieves upon their resulted situation of being physically and psychologically tortured and forced to surrender.

Death is brought upon the entire Indian tribe just after the assassination of Sitting Bull at Wounded Knee in 1890. The massacre is ordered by Colonel Forsyth who rationalizes this act as a protection from the ills of the savages. In fact, the echoing rhetoric of General Westmoreland is reflected Colonel Forsyth statement which exposes the American Whites' tyranny is everlasting and surpasses time and place.

Buffalo Bill is reminded by his bloody failure and entrapment in the hero myth vortex as the Indians rise up from their graves and gathered behind him. At the end, he is "alone and is returned to a lifeless form in a glass case, along with Sitting Bull and other Indian artifacts" (Krasner, 2008, p.235).

### 3. The Struggle of the Mythic Hero in *Indians*:

Before discussing the struggle of the mythic hero in *Indians*, it is important to note that Arthur Kopit's early plays tackled America's need to produce myth and mythic characters to satirize the power of these myths that shape its oppression and dominance over others. However, the playwright's own image of myth making has developed throughout his characters.

*The Questioning of Nick* (1957) is Kopit's first one act play in which he depicts the hero image of Nick Carmonatti, a high school arrogant teenager whose fame as one of the five hundred leading basketball players is widespread in the whole country. Nick is overpowered by pride and illusion in a confusing adult world and who is finally humiliated by the police in front of others.

Kopit's satirizes the American flaws as prudishness and stuffiness and calls for rebuilding the ideals of heroism of the society in his farces as *Don Juan in Texas* (1957), *Across the River and into The Jungle* (1958).

In *Chamber Music* (1992), Kopit creates ridiculous ferocious mad women characters, each of whom identify herself as famous historical archetypal in the American history. These women are overpowered by fear of being killed by the inmates of the men's ward in the asylum.

By combining the fearful and the ridiculous, Kopit concentrates on the myth of a supermom in his play *Oh Dad, Poor Dad* (1963). It is a drama of three scenes, presenting Madam Rosepettle who keeps the dead body of her late husband in the old closet, locks her only son in his dark room, and finally astonished by her son's nervous outbreak.

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Kopit's *Road to Nirvana* (1991) a play in two acts was originally inspired by the pop singer Madonna to expose the evils of mythic image of Hollywood on stage as a metaphor for contemporary society (King,2013, p.xvii). Kopit emphasizes that money brings success and fortune.

The personal struggle of Buffalo Bill occupies the whole scene in Kopit's *Indians*. The playwright develops his ideas most powerfully here than in his early dramas as he takes his mythic hero image a step further. His character attempts to keep himself within the mythic hero realm and to restore his own identity which he loses due to his active participation in the barbaric massacre of the Indians.

Kopit's purpose is to uncover the confusion between myth and reality through his characters. John Bush Jones points out a comparison between myth-making to play-making in his article, "*Impersonation and Authenticity: The Theatre as in Kopit's Indians*":

**Like the myth-maker, the playwright may begin by fictionalizing, i.e. dramatizing, what is real, but i.e does not then try to pass off his theatrical creation as real; rather, it remains an artistic re-shaping of its 'parent reality. In this way, then, Kopit can keep separate the damaging confidence game of myth-maker and the legitimate task of a dramatist. (Jones, 1973: 451).**

The characters of the play expose the natural contradiction of the American myth. This contradiction reveals the masked ideology of The American colonists' cruelty, further; it puts Buffalo Bill in the state of identity loss. This character dilemma is clearly portrayed through his hypocritical relationship with the Indians. He is glorified by the White men for his heroic past deeds of serving the American Ideology and at the same time he is overwhelmed by guilt and sorrow for his actions towards the Indians. Thus, he escapes his guilt and widens the gap between his words and actions by justifying the oppression of others for the maintenance of his invented image. Buffalo Bill rationalizes his killing of Buffalos, hence increases the Indians' plight.

Wild Hickok also shares the same struggle of accepting myth as truthful reality; still, they differ in recognizing the confusion between dream and reality. Hickok is a wild self-respecting person of his own values, highly proud of his national deeds. He rejects his role in Buntline's melodrama and describes Buffalo Bill as "[d]umb, dudelickin' FRAUD" (Kopit, p.46). Hickok wants a role that asserts what he really is; "I AM HICKOK! ... If I gotta play Hickok, I'm gonna play Hickok the way Hickok should be played"

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(Kopit, p.46). Wild Hickok anger bursts against Buntline as he kills the latter and rapes an actress performing the Native American lady.

The struggle between the superior and the inferior relationship is also extended in the play through the use of the Wild West Show. Kopit criticizes the Wild West Show that has enjoyed a place as a national entertainment for over forty years. In fact, the theatrical presentation of the West Show changed and developed from one play to another; however, the content idea remained the same: Indians were brutal and attack innocent Whites, cowboys were heroic with patriotic skills, and great battle scenes delineated the courage of the U.S. leaders who brought civilization and culture to the arena. This archetypal imagery of the West was considered as "truthful" and "authentic" by the majority of the audience. Moreover, they quietly accepted and actively cheered the U.S. mass killing of Native Americans. It has been only in recent years that mythic characters and incidents have been examined with revising earlier misconception. (Marsden and Browne, 1994, p.146) Kopit's Wild West Show takes its worst manifestations as a clever theatrical assessor of the contemporary thoughts, and that he designed his show to strengthen and coincide with the troubles of the 1960s'. Kopit draws Buffalo Bill as a misguided performer interested more in creating his own image rather than on being an image, as starts to distort historical incidents and facts.

Buffalo Bill employs Indians their inferior roles that serve to enhance their ultimate inferior status. David Krasner argues that the Wild West Show exaggerate exploit and trivialize Indian characters, it also becomes a vivid parody of the White's frontier. The Indian character get lost in their in their improvised lines and end up making stereotypical roles of themselves. Further, Krasner explains that Kopit's myth of the American West has been drawn in a museum like-fashion. (Krasner,2008, p.235)

Moreover, the superior- inferior relationship is transferred since the very beginning of the play. The "larger-than-life" effigy, refers to the White's tyranny and to the image of Buffalo Bill as a mythic hero, while the unadorned effigy, blood stained shirt, along with an old rifle signify the "inferior" spirit and the exterminated Indian culture.

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## Conclusion:

Struggle whether on the cultural, social, and political levels brings nothing but destruction and loss of one's identity. The struggle in *Indians* which is analyzed in this paper is of racial discrimination, cultural prejudice, and political dominance. The Indians were seen as mindless savages who stood in the face of prosperity and progress, their culture was fought, banned, and their land was also lost and dominated by the Whites. However, Americans find the result satisfying and valuable to accomplish their benefit.

The play sprung from the playwright's frustration and protest against the American colonial dominance of the less powerful and its commitment in the Vietnam War. Kopit interrogated through his characters, America's ideologies and myth image to expose the contradictory tendencies within it. The crisis of Buffalo Bill centered on his role of being a government agent who seeks to establish a communication with the Indians that he might even not fully acknowledge their predicament. Hence, Kopit shed light upon the fact that the U.S. government must not deny the responsibility of bloodshed over Native Americans and such myth that forms their ideologies must be reexamined.

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## الصراع في مسرحية ارثر كوبت الهنود

م. سها بحر فياض

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### مستخلص البحث:

يروم هذا البحث الى التركيز على الصراع في مسرحية ارثر كوبت الهنود. ارثر كوبت (1937) هو واحد من ابرز الكتاب المسرحيين الامريكان الذي تضمن عمله قلقه الشديد و تعاطفه مع الانسانية. كان الاهتمام الادبي الرئيسي للكاتب يتركز على كشف الزيف في التاريخ الامريكي و النفاق المتضمن في الصورة الاسطورية المصطنعة للبطل الامريكي و أصرار امريكا المستمر لخلق هكذا خرافات و اساطير لتبرير اعمالها الشنيعة و هيمنتها العنصرية للمجتمعات الأدنى و الأقل قوة منها. تعتبر مسرحية الهنود (1968) أحد أعماله الرئيسية التي صور فيها من خلال شخصياته، معاملة أمريكا القاسية و الغير عادلة للسكان الأصليين في القرن التاسع عشر و لا يمكن انكار تلميح الكاتب لتورط امريكا في الحرب الفيتنامية ، قتلها الجماعي للفيتناميين و فترة الستينات المضطربة. يفشل بافلو بيل وهو الشخصية الرئيسية للكاتب في خلق علاقة ودية بين البيض و الهنود و بذلك فهو يسهل سير الخطة الامريكية لهزيمة الهنود و السيطرة على أرضهم الأم. يسعى هذا البحث ايضا لأثبات بأن الحكومة الامريكية مقتنعة بالابادة الجماعية للأخرين و بأستخدام كل الطرق الممكنة فقط من أجل تحقيق مصالحها الشخصية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** السيطرة , التاريخ, النزاع , المجزرة