Anna Deavere Smith's Docudrama *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*: Crossing Boundaries or Re-Mythifying the Orient?

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Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 (1994), Anna Deavere Smith's 15th project in her *On the Road* series, is a docudrama that explores American identity through the diverse cultural memories of the 1992 Los Angeles crisis. She works to make the play an open platform where racial minority groups in multicultural America can negotiate and coexist by repeating interviews from various groups who were involved in the L.A. crisis. Despite the many advantages in her docudrama, the genre itself has been criticized, owing to the dubious characteristics of "reality," "truthfulness," and "neutrality" that she emphasizes. This paper examines the characteristics of the docudrama that Smith employs and investigates whether *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* is effective in achieving her aim of shedding light on the diverse layers of American identity. In particular, this paper will focus on "reality," one of the significant traits of the docudrama, and will investigate whether or not this might cause other forms of racial discrimination. Moreover, the researcher will analyze whether Smith's racial representation is balanced so that the play becomes meaningful to minorities and helps them work through their foundational historical trauma, that is, the L.A. crisis, which has already become part of their cultural identity.

Keywords: Anna Deavere Smith, docudrama, Korean American representations, 1992 Los Angeles riots

Introduction

April was the cruelest month for many in Los Angeles in 1992. The crisis that began on the 29th of the month that year, considered "the worst riot of the century in the US" (Safire, 2008, p.127), left the city burning for six days. It resulted in 55 deaths, over 2000 injuries, and roughly 1 billion dollars in monetary damages (Pamer, 2012). The crisis was caused by crowds that immediately gathered in South Central Los Angeles to protest the acquittal from all charges of the four white police officers involved in the Rodney King beating in 1991 (Morris, 2012). This demonstration became even more heated as Korean grocer Du Soon Ja received what was considered a light sentence—a five-year probation and 400 hours of community service—for the shooting death of an African American girl, Latasha Harlins, in the same year (Xia, 2012). The L.A. riots have been referred to as the Rodney King riots, the South Central riots, the 1992 Los Angeles civil disturbance, the 1992 Los Angeles civil unrest, among many other terms (Lee, 2015). For this paper, "crisis" will be used for a more neutral term to describe the event.

There were diverse perspectives regarding this traumatic conflict. For some, this instance of violence was no more than just a riot or mindless violence. But for the progressive and radical, particularly among African Americans, this was an organized insurrection, a rebellion, or even the beginning of a revolution (Abelmann & Lie, 1995). Though the interpretation of the L.A. crisis had been controversial, it is undeniable that there were more underlying factors that led to it than simply the Rodney King verdicts. Lowe (1996) posited that the crisis was "the most vivid eruption of the contradiction between multiculturalism as the representation of liberal state and the material poverty and disenfranchisement that are the conditions of those represented" (p. 91). Thus, this event could be regarded as a visible outcome of the complex multi-layered cultural identity of America, including the long-standing historical trauma of racism in the US and the latent struggles among minority groups.

Anna Deavere Smith, playwright and actor, attempts to capture the complexity of American identity by exploring diverse racial violence in the United States. Through her signature dramaturgy, the docudrama, she tries to blur the traditional distinction between a creator and an interpreter to depict the reality of American history and cultural memory. By giving a vivid account of the scene of the incident, she reveals the social minorities' affect and the trauma stemming from historical violence, and these captivate both audiences and critics. In her lifelong project *On the Road: A Search for American Character*, she tries to interview people who have experienced violent events in their lives and recite, mimic, reiterate, and/or perform excerpts from these interviews verbatim in order to capture the voices of social minorities that other media missed or ignored (Chung, 2007).

Smith's 15th project in her *On the Road* series, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (1994), is a docudrama that explores American identity by focusing on the diverse cultural memories and the trauma caused by the 1992 L.A. crisis. She works to make the play an open platform where racial minority groups in multicultural America can negotiate and coexist by including interviews from various groups who were involved in the L.A. crisis. Considering the 2014 shooting of Dontre Hamilton, a mentally-ill African American in Wisconsin, Milwaukee and the resulting protests, the 2015 Baltimore protests and riots (which occurred after African American Freddie Gray's death due to police brutality) and the 2016 Milwaukee riots (sparked by the fatal shooting of Sylville K. Smith by police) it is quite clear that violence owing to racial conflicts among ethnic groups are not only issues of the past but are also on-going concerns (Madhani, 2014; Grinberg, 2016). And Smith's *Twilight* (1994), which deals with a crisis that happened nearly 25 years ago, still has historiographical significance in terms of racial conflict and violence.

Despite the many advantages in Smith's dramaturgy, the genre docudrama itself is criticized owing to the dubious characteristics of "reality," "truthfulness," and "neutrality" that she emphasizes, which is the central concern of this research. This article will examine the characteristics of docudrama that Smith employs and will investigate the effectiveness of *Twilight* in shedding light on the diverse layers of American identity. Moreover, this paper will explore whether or not reality, as portrayed in the docudrama, causes other forms of racial discrimination. It will then analyze whether Smith's racial representation is balanced in a way that can make the play meaningful for minorities and help them work through their foundational historical trauma, the L.A. crisis in particular, which has become part of their cultural identity.

Blurring Racial Borderlines

Docudrama is a compound word combining documentary and drama, and refers to a type of drama that stages actual events in a realistic, documentary-style manner. A format stemming from the New Journalism or Nonfiction literary movement of the 1960s that strive to voice out the experience of actual participants of a historic event (Ju, 2014), this type of interview-based documentary is built on the premise of authentic representation of interviewees' voices, and the staging process of these narratives aims to convey the factuality of interviewees' accounts. Therefore, when a play is presented as a docudrama, the audience may feel like they are partaking in a one-on-one direct dialogue with the playwright, with "the illusion that they themselves are the interviewers" (p. 15), with the knowledge that they are hearing the words of actual participants, making the experience even more engrossing.

One of the main goals of the docudrama genre is to "obtain the stories of individuals who have not yet been heard" (Speer, 2013, p. 11). Because interview subjects are selected by the playwright, it is possible to capture and listen to voices overlooked by other media such as journalistic reports or other official historical documents, allowing the docudrama to act as a new channel for the culturally marginalized voices of society to gain representation. Therefore, inherent to the genre is the potential for historically silenced, marginalized, and/or ignored minorities to gain a voice, thereby creating ruptures in existing prejudices and stereotypes. Smith fully harnesses this characteristic in *Twilight* by staging the L.A. crisis as factual as possible, and she adopts a neutral perspective made possible by the genre. These traits of the docudrama are reinforced due to the fact that Smith's *Twilight* aims to be closer to reenactment rather than representation, the former referring to a "re-playing or re-doing [of] a precedent event,

artwork, or act" (Schneider, 2011, p. 2) and showing living history that is "more than 'mere' remembering but [is] in fact the ongoing event itself, negotiated through sometimes radically shifting affiliation with the past *as* the present" (p. 32).

Of the many aspects of docudrama, three key ones can be highlighted in Smith's play: liquidity, healing effect, and reality. Smith interviewed 200 people from various racial and socioeconomic groups then organized 45 interviews into monologues (or monodramas) to be performed. By using herself as the conduit, performing diverse roles that transcended the boundaries of race, gender, age, and occupation, she relays these "facts" from the interviews to the audience by embodying male and female, European American, African American, Latino American, or even Korean American characters to show the fluidity of racial identities. Jacqueline O'Connor (2007) pointed out that Smith's play has a markedly strong sense of liquidity relative to other works of drama since it goes beyond simply staging interview content but creates text by selecting the content to be included. And because Smith edits this text through performance, indeterminacy is strengthened. Smith, as seen in *Twilight*, is particularly wary of the binary determination of victim versus attacker along racial lines and emphasizes the performativity of identity by portraying a multitude of characters. Instead, she tries to uncover society's epistemological violence, echoing the relativity of racial identity Fanon (1967) delineated in *Black Skin, White Masks*: "for not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (p. 110).

Smith portrays those who are typically labeled "assailants," such as former Police Commissioner Daryl Gates or the police officers charged with beating Rodney King as the "white aggressor" while Reginald Denny, the European American truck driver attacked by African Americans, and African American mother Elvira Evers, whose unborn baby was shot by a stray bullet, share the position of "victim." But by representing both Rodney King, who was the victim of indiscriminate violence, alongside African American looters who participated in the crisis as aggressors, Smith shows audiences that "identities are not fixed things that you have, but things that you do" and that identity is "not nouns but verbs, actions, self-activation" (Thompson, 2003, p. 133). Smith's representation is also a reminder that the crisis was not triggered only by racial issues and urges discussion on a macro level of historical, structural, and socioeconomic dimensions.

The indeterminacy of identity in *Twilight* surely has a healing effect as it attempts to break the barriers between race, class, and gender, inducing empathy from the audience, which is one of the central features of Smith's drama. Fundamentally, Smith's play shows how these "foundational historical traumas that lie at the center of that group's cultural identity" (Jay, 2007,

p. 120) directly translate into individuals' trauma on an everyday, minute level. Smith reveals the manifestation of this trauma on stage through the interviewees' grief, sense of loss, and melancholy. Jay (2007), in evaluating the affective process Smith's works invokes in readers, stated as follows:

> Smith intends audiences and readers to engage in the same labor of unsettling cross-cultural empathy with loss that she herself performs on stage; if we do, the result complicates our commitments by challenging the identity politics that influence them. In the process we become more accountable to each other's griefs and grievances and thus enter into a difficult negotiation of ethical, social, and political demands. (p. 121)

While agreeing with the positive healing effect that Smith's work has on audiences and readers, the researcher sees it as equally important to consider the healing effect the process of interviewing, producing, and staging the play has had on those that directly experienced the traumatic historical conflict of the L.A. crisis.

As Smith began conducting interviews within a year of the crisis, she inevitably came across criticism that her interviews could not be reliable as interviewees would not yet be able to rationally evaluate their experiences, and that the adoption of docudrama as a genre in this case was questionable (Ju, 2014; Chung, 2007). However, it was clear that Smith's interviews bring survivors face-to-face with their trauma, and the staging of their accounts as objectively as possible aroused repeated re-memory of events. Memory, in particular traumatic memory, distorts itself and interferes with one's ability to effectively work out traumatic experiences (Williams & Poijula, 2002). By providing survivors with the safety of drama in which to objectively face and re-experience their trauma, Smith helped interviewees gain a profound understanding of their own trauma, which could assist in the healing process. Though this process could be emotional and could cause new scars, reliving traumatic scenes within the safe boundaries of drama could also reduce and control the fear interviewees felt, in line with the talking cure in the Freudian psychoanalytic frame of dialogue.

As Eng and Kazanjian (2003) posited in their anthology *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, the problematic of the crisis is not limited to certain ethnic groups but should be "discerned across a spectrum of texts by diverse social or ethno-racial groups wherein the politics of loss, mourning, empathy, and justice is central" (as cited in Jay, 2007, p. 121), and this is what Smith's docudrama effectively brings to the fore. As such, a space is created in which a sense of fellowship and solidarity can be fostered, helping those

who directly and indirectly experienced the L.A. crisis mourn and express the trauma they underwent. This effect is strengthened as Smith includes more than just a snapshot of the interviewees' lives during the crisis. She offers a candid and detailed affective account of the interviewees' identities, which include their traumas arising from the effects of American modernity and the failure of the American dream, their diasporic experience in the face of Western racism, and their longing for their home countries, and engages the audience as a support group for the interviewees. In this sense, it can also be argued that Smith's docudrama is a sort of healing ritual on a cultural level which is completed as interviewees, Smith, readers, and audiences take part in the affect practices of the play, and this participation can encourage a sense of empathy or have a cathartic effect.

Wrestling between Factual and Constructed Reality

The last and most fundamental aspect of Smith's docudrama, which allows Smith to effectively convey her message to audiences and sustain popular interest is the aspect of reality. Similar to the traits of the documentary genre, the docudrama reenacts or represents facts by putting emphasis on actuality and reality, and there is an expectation of truthfulness. Alessandro Portelli, in his work *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (1991), asserted what numerous oral historians and even dramaturgs like Smith believe in: that though historical records may, in general, be unreliable, oral statements are meaningful and relatively more accurate vessels of historical fact. Because of this, audiences expect to feel sincerity and authenticity from the play, and naturally see the scenes as reality. Though docudrama is based on fact, it differs from the medium of journalism, which is supposed to rely only facts (Ju, 2014). Moreover, as docudrama is widely accepted as a postmodern form of representation, Smith is not obliged to portray historic events objectively. However, due to the characteristic of docudrama in which accounts of historic events are conveyed through the living voice of interviewees, it is easy for audiences to accept the contents of docudrama as fact, making truthfulness in representation all the more important.

Well aware of the possible pitfalls of docudrama, Smith provides a detailed "General Production Note" and "A Note on Casting," with detailed suggestions on casting and stage settings to ensure that the reality of the play is emphasized. Smith specifically requests that actual footage and historical materials be inserted into the production as much as possible so that audiences are aware that they are witnessing a neutral portrayal of actual events (Smith, 1994). She also states that the play is based on the racial conflict instigated by the outcome of the Rodney King police brutality trials and requires "thorough research about the events" (p. 4) before

production. In addition, Smith argues for the importance of an informed actor, instructing that actors in this play receive abundant research material and, if possible, participate in the pre-production research process. Thus, fully exposed to the facts of the event, producers and actors would then be able to emphasize that this play deals with a real event and uses the actual words of real people in order for the audience to be cognizant that the performance is based on truthfulness. To further promote this understanding, Smith suggests using three visual aids, including the video of the Rodney King beating, to give the audience a background of the events leading up to the crisis. Smith is clear, however, that before any other visual image is presented to the audience, a slide stating that the play "is based on interviews conducted by Anna Deavere Smith" and that the lines performed by the actors "are verbatim from those interviews" (p. 4), be shown to the audience, reiterating the reality of the content.

Along these lines, Smith (1994) asserts that because the play presents only the actual, individual narratives of those directly and indirectly involved in the crisis rather than a particular group's perspective, it is apolitical. As such, she aims to act as a "repeater, a re-iterator," rather than a "mimic or an impersonator" (Stayton, 1993, p. 22). Critic Randy Shulman (1997) praised Smith for being "like a mirror—reflecting us at our best and our worst, and like a mirror, she never passes judgment. That, she leaves up to the audience" (p. 23). Her dedication to maintaining neutrality and an apolitical stance is also apparent in her efforts to keep her personal life private "lest it color people's perception of what she is doing in *Twilight*." (Chung, 2007, p. 438). In this sense, "Robin Bernstein even commented on her surname, which she claims 'represents the ultimate in bland neutrality'" (Chung, 2007, p. 438).

Despite her best efforts to deliver only reality in *Twilight,* however, the playwright's intention is inherently a part of the process of structuring the text of the docudrama, making the statements that she provides with an "apolitical mirror" of reality problematic. First and foremost, the foundation of Smith's claim of objectivity, that is, the interviews she conducted, could not have been objective or neutral. The entire process of selecting interviewees, choosing the questions to ask, editing interview results, and deciding which of the numerous interviews to include and in what order to present them include the playwright's subjective view. Thus, the process of presenting interviews is not one that objectively delivers interviewees' experiences but is a dramatic strategy for showing the audience a version of the accounts uniquely restructured by Smith in order to induce affect. Furthermore, the seemingly disconnected interviews are tied together in a unified theme which would be impossible without intervention from the playwright's own intentions.

According to Tom Cantrell (2013), Smith "interviewed individuals and edited their testimony on audio files, and rehearsed using headphones through which the interview was played," and when she performed on stage, "she worked without the audio, relying on her memory of the recording to recreate speech patterns, accent and emphasis" (p. 140). Although Cantrell explained that Smith takes off her headphones and performs the lines without them and is "able to reproduce the exact idiosyncrasies of an individual's speech patterns" (p. 11), it is unclear whether Smith is able to deliver what the interviewees actually implied as she "relies on her memory," which makes objectivity more difficult. In this sense, it is likely that there is a sizable gap between what is written in the script and how such accents are showcased on stage during Smith's performance. Therefore, the dramatized interviews could be considered influenced by the producer's own interpretation rather than merely being a neutral account of facts.

Additionally, Smith's focus on linguistic accuracy as a way of heightening the reality of the play actually erodes the neutrality of the voices performed. Smith considers language to be one of the key indicators of identity during a performance, and she aims to seek out the American character through how people speak (Park, 2011). As such, her instruction is that each word and each syllable are to be expressed with the utmost care. She adds description that "the Play has been written as an extension of research done by the author on the relationship of language of identity. Language in this play creates identity, not from the words themselves, but from the actual arrangement of the words" (Smith, 1994, p.4-5). Smith also proclaims that in performing *Twilight,* the actor is a cultural worker who must be careful not to perpetuate racial prejudices and stereotypes as this performance should contribute to global race discourse (Park, 2011). Paradoxically, she chooses to express age, race, and gender identity by differentiating speech patterns that directly contradict efforts to erase prejudices, especially racial stereotypes.

Re-othering the Racial Minorities

The limitation of Smith's attempt at reality is apparent in her representation of Korean Americans. The problem of Smith's relatively limited description of Korean Americans within her interview-centric dramaturgy is visible. First, the Korean American interviewees were selected from a limited group that did not deeply reflect class differences or the history of Korean Americans in the United States. While African American, Latino American, and European American groups were represented by 40 interviewees with diverse occupations, Korean American interviewees were limited to five liquor store owners and shopkeepers. Because the Latasha Harlins shooting

death in the hands of Du Soon Ja was a significant factor in the L.A. crisis and because this crisis had a large impact on the Korean American community (Lee, 2015), Smith should have included more accounts from Korean Americans if her aim was to present the L.A. crisis in a neutral light. However, African Americans' recordings take up a large portion of *Twilight.* For instance, in representing the African American perspective of the crisis, Smith brings in the voices of African American academics, politicians, the victims' families, singers, laborers, and other diverse members of the community, and builds a multifaceted narrative rooted in African American history. The narrative is multilayered and diverse, touching on issues from the Civil Rights movements and stories of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, to individual struggles with racial discrimination and angst against systemic oppression within various industries.

On the other hand, the Korean Americans depicted are based on the background of her interviewees alone, and all share the common characteristic of speaking English poorly while being relatively affluent, as seen in the items they possessed. In order for one actor to represent different characters, it is important to use speech patterns to distinguish between them. "Applying racially or nationally characteristic speech patterns as is" can even be a necessary mechanism for "a heightened sense of location and tension in drama" (Park, 2011, p. 124). In *Twilight,* however, the minorities' language is set apart in relation to the mainstream white American speech, and all types of Korean speech are simply lumped together under "heavy accent" (Smith, 1994, p. 11). Because Smith does not particularly comment on other ethnic characters' speech patterns in the script but explicitly describes Koreans' speech patterns with terms such as "heavy accent" and "no accent," this implies that she has her own stereotypes of Koreans' speech patterns. Also, this displays that she is relatively less familiar with their speech than other ethnic groups such as African American and Latino/a American. If this were true, this could lead to the performer delivering the words and meanings of Koreans less accurately. Furthermore, even though she tries to find the American character in the ways people speak and puts emphasis on using the language her characters use, her character description casts doubt on the effectiveness of her attempt to mirror people's actual language on stage. This undermines the play's efforts to give a voice to racial minorities and strengthens the stereotype of the immigrant as "foreign" and "un-American" due to poor English.

For instance, standing behind the counter of a liquor shop and wearing a shiny metallic watch, Jay Woong Yahng asserts in broken English that Soon Ja Du deserves sympathy and argues that since most blacks are thieves, they are the enemy (Smith, 1994). Gunshot victim Walter Park laments

about the loneliness of being a storekeeper and, from the comfort of his high-ceilinged living room decorated with European paintings, talks about what Korean or Asian sentiment is like. Walter's wife, Mrs. June Park talks with a heavy accent. However, in the stage direction, she is described as "impeccably, stylishly dressed" and wearing a "European designer suit and shoes" (p. 124), creating an image of affluence. Although all three characters are given the chance to speak of the difficulty they suffered as immigrants, their stereotypical speech patterns inadvertently reinforce racial prejudices, and the allusions to their affluence and the fact that they identify themselves as Korean more than Korean American draw attention to their difference, limiting the possibility for audiences to empathize with them. As such, the Koreans' image is not that of a victim. As the African American interviewee Paul Parker stated, "the Koreans was like the Jews in the day" (Smith, 1994, p. 119). These narratives of Korean Americans' experience overlook Korean Americans who are not wealthy storeowners—those who have blue collar jobs much like other racial minorities and those buried in severe debt that threatens the livelihood of an entire family. In the simplified narrative that *Twilight* provides, only the image of the wealthy Korean American store owner in L.A. who is rude and greedy is left, "amplifying the helplessness felt by Korean Americans as an ethnic minority" (Ki, 2010, p. 43).

Moreover, the suffering of American-Koreans during the L.A. crisis is depicted in connection with monetary loss, which does not encourage audience to consider their affect. Smith's focus on these three Koreans may simply be due to the fact that they were the most vocal in representing the hard-hit Korean American community, and they were selected to gain the closest vantage point to reality. But in order for the audience to put these interviews into context, Smith could have inserted the narrative of other Korean Americans from diverse backgrounds to provide the audience with the chance to understand the crisis from the vantage point of the wider Korean American community.

Though it is true that the majority of the Korean Americans residing in Los Angeles's Koreatown are business owners who have been able to gain a measure of affluence, the Korean American community, which began to take root in the area in the 1970s, has become internally diverse. With the stratification of classes within the community, discrimination and internal tension have begun to grow. The multi-ethnic space of Los Angeles in the 1990s again divided into a "dual city," delineated by class in which residential segregation based on economic status transformed the city's ethnic enclaves to class enclaves (Abelmann & Lie, 1995). South Central L.A. was occupied by economically disenfranchised Latinos and African Americans, and Koreatown was occupied by diverse Koreans, both working

class and business owners (Abelmann & Lie, 1995). The Korean American community was also divided along generation lines, depending on when they immigrated to the US (Abelmann & Lie, 1995). The earlier immigrants took a superior stance, believing they "were better—better educated and well mannered" (p. 108). This generational discrimination, coupled with class discrimination, created a rift in the community that eroded the sense of solidarity amongst Korean Americans in the 1990s as their identity became "a complex transnational play of class and status" (p. 118).

However, the image of Korean Americans as depicted by mainstream media was flat. The standing stereotype of Korean Americans was that of ruthless money-crazed exploiters or gun-toting vigilantes (Chung, 2007). This type of generalization effaced the internal complexity of the Korean American community such as the significant difference in income and education. The strong chauvinistic and nationalistic self-identification they had as Koreans was their survival strategy as a minority group, but it has also helped perpetuate their one-dimensional representation in the media. Owing to the internal diversity within the Korean American community, responses to the L.A. crisis were equally as diverse. For instance, class tensions within the Korean American community were apparent even during the fund raising campaign for victims of the L.A. crisis, with those directly impacted by the crisis arguing that the funds should be used to rebuild the community while wealthier, elitist Korean Americans argued for a more symbolic gesture (Abelmann & Lie, 1995). However, the mainstream American media did not pay attention to the difference in class, generation, or gender nor to the corresponding affective responses to the crisis following the events of April 1992. Though Smith aimed to shed light on the perspectives overlooked by mainstream media, she had a blind spot as well.

The limited representation of "real" Korean Americans in *Twilight* becomes more apparent when it is compared with the documentary *Sa-I-Gu: From Korean Women's Perspective* (Choy, Kim, & Kim-Gibson, 1993) produced by a group of Korean American academics. The name *Sa-I-Gu* is Korean for "4/29," the date the L.A. crisis began. This is in the Korean tradition of naming historically significant events after the date they occurred. In *Sa-I-Gu*, the producers clearly stated that they intend to deconstruct existing stereotypes of Korean Americans, thus allowing audiences to view the work as a cultural product and accept it as a "creative treatment of actuality," which as John Grierson (1966) defined as the "interpretation of reality." The documentary shifts the focus from militant shop owners to the more universally relatable narrative of a mother's love by opening and closing the documentary with an interview of Jung-hee Lee talking about the death

of her son. Lee's son, 18-year-old Korean American Jae-sung Edward Lee, was shot and killed by a fellow Korean American grocer after being mistaken for a looter. The irony in his tragic death intensifies the powerful sense of loss felt by the Korean American community. In the documentary, interviewers focus on the voice of Korean American women to show how American society has categorized Korean Americans not as Koreans or even Korean Americans, but simply as "un-American." As Kim (1993) noted, the documentary repetitively shows the community's recognition that the LA crisis is a wake-up call for them to recognize that they are "Korean Americans," though they have not been accepted by white American society even though they have been labeled "a model minority."

Furthermore, this is the meaningful point that has resonance to not only the Korean American community but on a wider level: by opening and ending the documentary with the sober voice of Jung-hee Lee, the producers allot a significant amount of time to describe the moment Lee's body is identified, as photos of his blood-drenched body are shown. This reminds viewers of the violence of the crisis while it calls out to their sense of humanism. Song (2005) observed how the universality of grief portrayed in the documentary moves the viewer's regardless of race. Placing the Korean American experience in this universality of grief opens the possibility for Korean Americans to share in the affect and trauma experienced by other immigrant groups and thus gain sympathy. Furthermore, it creates the possibility for this affect to be universally transferred and applied to the struggles of Latinos and African Americans as well. Considering the implications of Lee's death and its influence on both Korean American community and a broader multicultural, American society, Smith's limitation to represent this case in her narrative makes it difficult to judge her representation of the Korean American community as neutral and reminds us that the "reality" she yearns to present to audiences may not be the whole truth.

Conclusion

Smith (1993) asserts that identity is not "there"—it has "always being negotiated," (p. xxxiii), and she is on the road searching for that multilayered and heterogeneous American character through her docudrama. In *Twilight* where she stages 45 out of nearly 200 interviews of real people, Smith revisits the L.A. crisis from a macro-perspective, showing audiences that the events of April 1992 are more than just a racial conflict between African Americans and Korean Americans. According to Ki (2010), Smith shows us that "fundamentally, the Riots were caused by economic, social and political circumstances in Los Angeles's poorest communities, including South Central Los Angeles" (p. 34), and helps the audience understand

the multifaceted history and memories of the L.A. crisis. Furthermore, Smith's dramatized reenactments of actual monumental historical trauma communicate the notion of identity as a fluid concept that can be performed in terms of social, political, or economic circumstances. Therefore, her attempts open the platform for reconsidering the binaries of racial identity and blurring racial boundaries as she single-handedly performs the voices of interviewees from a wide-range of backgrounds.

Owing to her dramaturgy, Smith gives voice to traditionally marginalized social minorities by using actual witness accounts and building a shared sense of loss that goes beyond social and racial binaries for a seemingly balanced expression of the complex voices composing this singular historical site of violence. This offers the possibility of reconciliation between ethnic minorities as it shows the trauma experienced by other ethnic groups. This healing effect is made possible by Smith's outstanding performance as a repeater and also by the strength of her dramaturgy that deconstructs existing prejudices to make audiences or readers focus on the stories of individuals who have not yet been heard. Therefore, her docudrama is an effective medium to capture the variable nature of American identity.

However, the limitation of her pursuit of reality, neutrality, and truthfulness is apparent in *Twilight*'s interviews with Korean Americans. Smith's docudrama actually inversely reshapes racism in the process of trying to dismantle it, for it re-orientalizes images of Korean Americans. Of course, because the history of Korean community in the US is much shorter than other ethnic groups, interviewing many Koreans in diverse social positions may simply have been impossible, and it is necessary to acknowledge Smith's contribution to adding more voices to the race discourse which has traditionally been a battle between "black" and "white" only. Nevertheless, the limited representations of Korean Americans and their experience during the crisis show that Smith does not fully achieve her goal of showing audiences what mainstream media has missed out on, at least with regards to the Korean American community. For the researcher, this hinders Smith from completely achieving her goal of searching for a multitudinous American identity through *Twilight.*

Twilight is meaningful as a monodrama, even only for its aspect of liquidity and its healing effect. However, when evaluating the play's reality, it is important to note how Roland Barthes (1984) described historical products containing meanings or predictions rather than only notations as conveying a "reality effect" rather than "reality" (p. 148). As such, Smith's docudrama, as it directly or indirectly includes the writer's intentions, can also be regarded as "referential illusion" rather than authentic truth. *Twilight* reveals that the dialectics of Smith's docudrama may help recuperate the

minorities' trauma but may also inversely reshape orientalism because Smith's "reality" cannot reflect reality as a whole, and her selected reenactment shapes viewers' perspective of events within the framework she created. Thus, it is important to maintain a critical perspective when interpreting Smith's version of events, and *Twilight* should be read as a reproduction of a discursive practice or the effect of reality, rather than as actual historical record, raw historical fact, or reality.

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