

“Common Utopia” Transcending Across Racism: A Select Study of Amiri Baraka’s Poetry

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Abstract: According to Oscar Wilde, “Art not merely reproduces life, but also shapes it.” The poetry of Amiri Baraka expresses not only the true perspectives of Black community, but also reasonably developed humane concerns related to the American Common Utopia. Racial segregation and discrimination on the basis of color have thrashed the American social structure since ages with such strength that a large amount of Afro-American population has become victim of apartheid on the land which the Blacks have nurtured and nourished for centuries to build an outstanding super power America in the twenty first century. The black writers have invented their own cultural verses, styles and tones from blues, jazz and Spirituals to explore the Afro-American experience causing rebirth to the nation from Dystopia to utopia with an outpouring of confidence, expression, creativity and talent to fight the social inequalities and political corruption prevalent in the American utopia/dystopia.

The present study is an attempt to focus on the glimpses of black dystopia into the poetry of Amiri Baraka drawing illustrations in terms of the Black Culture, Black people and Black imagery pouncing back upon the white society for a true American Utopia providing a positive message of humanity and hope of harmony and accord. The methodology adopted would be the formalist approach for entering into the selected text *Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones*. The most influential, revolutionary poet, playwright, essayist, activist, editor and critic, Amiri Baraka (formerly LeRoi Jones) was one of the most dominant and prolific African American writer of the twentieth century to rouse the Black consciousness with “*Self Determination*” to give voice to “*Revolution*” to build a true American/Black Utopia leading to a harmonious Common Utopia.

Keywords: Amiri Baraka, Poetry, Common Utopia

Introduction

Racial segregation and discrimination on the basis of colour and the race prejudice has caused enormous suffering to the African Americans, yet it became a literary blessing to the black writers who invented their own cultural verses, styles and tones from blues, jazz and spirituals bringing in utopia within their dystopia. This paper is an attempt to see the Glimpses of dystopia in Black Life amidst American Utopia in the Poetry of Amiri Baraka. African American literature originated at the time when African slaves were brought to the New World in 1639. In this dystopia they forged a language and literature of their own with vernacular tradition of African Americans. Their Literature can be summarized into five periods: Slavery (1746-1865), Reconstruction and after (1865-1919), Harlem Renaissance (1919-1960), The Black

Arts Movements (1960-1970), and writing after 1970. During the period of Slavery, the chief literary expression of Afro-American Literature was known as slave narrative: a distinct African American genre made up of dystopia narrative accounts written by fugitive slaves like Phillis Wheatley's and Frederick Douglass. President Abraham Lincoln declared Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 which brought the abolition of slavery and involuntary servitude. In 1920s, The New Negro Renaissance or Harlem Renaissance became the first major movement of African American literature bringing in utopia within dystopia. During 1919 at the birth of Harlem Renaissance to 1940, the diversity of African American talent reached a high point along the trail of causing rebirth to their common utopia. There was an outpouring of confidence, expression, creativity and talent amidst their dystopia leading towards aesthetic utopia. This outpouring established a path for cultural expression of black community leading to various social reforms. Harlem became the capital of the African American world no less than the utopia. The well-established and celebrated poets of the period, who paved the way for future generations, were Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Countee Cullen and the others. The civil rights movement of the 1960s brought on yet another phase of African American literature. This phase, the Black Arts Movement, had as its mission to create politically charged expression challenging the then status quo of Blacks. Poets of the black arts movement used their craft as weapons in the campaign to construct a black utopia on the dystopia of Ghettos to liberate Afro- Americans The methodology adopted in the paper would be the formalistic approach for entering into the selected text namely Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones who was born on October 7, 1934, in Newark, New Jersey, USA to Coyette LeRoi Jones, a postal supervisor and a lift operator and Anna Lois Jones, 17 a social worker.

Common Utopia

The aim of Black poetry has always been to transform the consciousness of Blacks from discomfited and humiliated dystopia into a proud and brave utopia by the Black combating people. Baraka's poetry echoes not only the struggle, but also the splendour, hope and determination of African American experience during Black Arts Movement. America's largest racial minority has been nominated by the terms African, Colored, Negro and black. The nomenclature has always been in flux since 1619, when first African captivated servants landed at Jamestown. The term black became popular during the Civil Rights Movement to express racial pride, militancy and power. Slogans like "black is beautiful" and "black pride" provided unity within the black community leading to the combination of utopia within dystopia resulting into a common utopia ethically. But in December 1988, Blacks launched a movement to replace "black" with a new term, African American. According to Britannica Encyclopedia, racism is ". . . the theory of idea that there is a casual link between inherited physical traits and certain traits of personality, intellect or culture. Skin colour difference was used by whites as justification for the different illegal treatment of blacks and became a permanent basis to account for the perceived differences in physical, intellectual and artistic temperaments. As a result, African Americans were in dilemma whether to consider themselves as Americans or Africans. They developed a double consciousness leading to 'common utopia' which means the self-estrangement resulting from competing allegiance in racial or ethnic terms. A Revolution is the fundamental change in political Black Poetry inspired by blues and

jazz rhythms spiritually. Jazz is a genre of music originated in African American communities expressing common bond of all African Americans with sounds and rhythms expressing feelings of dance despite living in dystopia or Ghetto's. That is "an area of a city where many people of the same race or background live, separately from the rest of population. Ghettos are often crowded, with bad living conditions" (OALD 242).

Amiri Baraka/Le Roi Jones

Baraka's autobiography brings out the truth that his life had been a story of endless controversies and daring confrontations for speaking out against oppression and fostering hatred among Blacks against the whites. For him, a poem is poet's own breath and intensity of feeling rather than fulfilling traditional expectations. A vast list of Baraka's works includes his volumes of poetry, fiction, drama and essays etc. Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note in 1961; The Dead Lecturer: Poems in 1964; Black Magic in 1969; It's Nation Time 1970; Hard Facts 1975; New Music New Poetry 1980, and Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/Le Roi Jones 1995. His famous plays are Dutchman, The Slave, A Black Mass, Slave Ship and The Motion of History and Other Plays including fiction, The System of Dante's Hell.

"What Baraka anticipates is nothing less than a jihad or holy war of believers against unbelievers, black against white" (Gray 310). Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones incorporates works from the poet's different periods of exceptional literary production. The volume begins with his Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note and includes The Dead Lecturer, Black Magic, Hard Facts, Poetry for the Advanced, Reggae or Not, Am/Trak, Heathens, In the Tradition and Wise, Why's Y's Several Afro-American writers endeavored to denigrate the biased political system of the country, but Baraka was perhaps the first among men of letters whose strident political poetics aimed to question the deep seeded, self-loathing and insecure dystopia of the African American community that endured centuries of slavery, suppression, and segregation. His cultural politics prepared them to defy and attack the evil with a change in black perception. Baraka's dystopia has been an amalgamation of diverse experiences of "... adventure: brutal beatings, literary successes, jail sentences, theatre founding's, bohemian debaucheries, revolutionary activities," (Harris 2). Transbluesency is a wide-ranging selection of Amiri Baraka's poetry over the almost forty years of its writing, and one can find not only the much-emphasized antagonism he has long felt toward the white majority but also the shifts of strategy and relationship in his own life that are his constant preoccupations. Baraka is always ironic, often scornful, with his characteristic quick wit and displacing humour, but what he valued is the collective, the "we" which comes again and again into his poems. His trip to Cuba inspired and instigated him against the Whites. The assassination of Malcolm X was a turning point in his life His autobiography also provides a retrospective explanation for this anti-white hostility: We hated white people so publicly, for one reason, because we had been so publicly tied up with them before...I guess, during this period, I got the reputation for being a snarling, white-hating madman. There was some truth to it, because I was struggling to be born, to break out from the shell I could instinctively sense enveloping my own dash for freedom (Harris xxv). He consciously started transforming white forms into black ones consciously selecting a method (jazz aesthetic), and "he felt obliged to turn the ideas and forms of avant-garde art into black art, taking the avant-garde didactic and

turning it into black didactic, white dada into black dada, avant-garde critiques of the West into black critiques, and avant-garde stereotypes of the blacks into revolutionary black images for blacks,” (Harris 17).

Black Dystopia

In the poem, *Audubon Drafted*, Baraka associates the hard facts of his existence in dystopia: “The world is the/one thing that will not move. It is/made of stone, round and very ugly” (BSP 94). The American utopia is full of evil, and the poet is disappointed with the malice that people have for another race. The poem, *Symphony Sid*, presents a colossus of mountain:

. . . The mountain,
largest of our
landscape. From
a dark hall at
the bottom, the shapes
a shadow, without
hardness, or that
ugly smell
of blackening flesh. (BSP 36)

The poet observes the mountain and its shadow and wonders that the shadow is not hard like the mountains. He must be comparing the new generation of whites who would not be cruel and prejudiced like their ancestors. These new white folks, like mountain shadow, would interact and behave harmoniously with the Blacks which would definitely yield to common utopia. But he is also apprehensive about them to be more callous like the “ugly smell of blackening flesh. Baraka is not always a hard-hearted man. He has feelings of love and care for all—men, trees, birds and other creatures. He is sad when he sees the lovely trees suffering without rain in the poem, *Return of the Native*:

The trees blink naked, being
so few...
The sky sits awake
over us. Screaming
at us. No rain.
Sun, hot cleaning sun
drives us under it. (BSP 140)

The hot sun has caused the suffering to all—the poet, the women and the trees as they suffer in American illuminating utopia which is no less than the sun to the blacks. In The poem, *A Guerrilla Handbook*, trees are presented as “socialists”. In their rightness/the tree trunks are socialists (BSP 101). The trees trunks hide the leaves and protect them from dangers of storms and blizzards similar to the common utopia in America. In the poem, *Hymn for Lanie Poo*, Baraka warns his men from the “evil sun”: “Beware the evil sun... /turn your back/turn your

hair/crawl your eyeballs/rot your teeth” (BSP 6-7). He alleges the sun to be harsh and cruel to his poor blacks. In the same poem, the sun is compared with the prejudiced white society:

the huge &loveless
white-anglo sun
of
benevolent step
mother America (BSP 14)

The poet is disappointed with the sun for being friend with whites. “inventing this traditional life-giving symbol (the sun), Jones practices a strategy common to the black perspective: reversing the destructive meanings and values projected by the white world in order to buffer the besieged black psyche” (Harris 19). The poet is also fascinated by the beauty of stars in the poem, *A Poem Welcoming Jonas Mekas to America*:

This night’s first star, hung
high up over a factory. From any window,
a smile held my poetry in. A tower, where I work
and drink, vomit, and spoil myself for casual life. (BSP 119)

The star pacifies Baraka’ anger and inspires him to be benevolent. Factories are suggestive of the exploitation of the Afro-American workers who do not have fixed working hours. The African Americans escaped the widespread racism of the South and sought the employment opportunities in the urban environments and live in the dystopia of ghettos as visible in the poem *Das Kapital*:

These old houses
Crumble, the unemployed stumble by us straining, ashy fingered,
harassed. The air is cold
winter heaps above us consolidation in degrees. We need a aspirin
or something, and
pull our jackets close.
...
The streets too
will soon be empty, after the church goers go on home having been saved
again, from the
Maniac ...
shivers through you, looking for traces of the maniac’s life. (BSP 153-154)

In such dystopia of insecurity, the poet finds that white terrorists can kill the Black women’s son for fun. Their sons are unemployed, exhausted and tortured. Living in roofless houses, they are tormented again by the heaps of cold air. Their masters exploit them by giving fewer wages than that they owe. In the evening, the ghetto streets are found empty due to the fear of white

maniacs. The poem, *Wise 4*, presents Baraka's personal experience of racial violence in a ghetto dystopia:

I has never got nothing
but a head full of blood
my scar, my missing teeth.
I has never got nothing but
killer frustration/yes dark
was the night
cold was the ground. (BSP 225)

The poet is reminded of a tragic incident of violence against Blacks through "scar" and "missing teeth." His head was broken in the incident. The poet finds that such incidents gave him only "frustration" which kills him every time and reminds him the cruelty of white dystopia. He says in his Autobiography: "When I started working down that area, I used to carry a lead pipe in a manila envelope, the envelope under my arm is like a good messenger, not intimidate but nevertheless ready" (Autobiography 133). The poet is also reminded of the race riots when he remembers once his "big house" was set on fire by the white maniac. Another poem, *History – Wise # 22* brings another image of race riot in mind:

Whoooooooooooo Whoooooooooooo
Whoooooooooooo Whoooooooooooo Whoooooooooooo
is its real
sound
from way up under
the ground
Way
Down
Whoooooweeeeee Whooooeooooeeoooo
Whooooeeooooeeoooo
...
that night
that whistle cries
& is moans Whyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy' ssssss. (BSP 236-237)

The sounds "Whoooooooooooo Whoooooooooooo" create an image of police vehicles and ambulances making sirens at the site of tragic incidents. For whites, death of a black is justified as in the poem *Y's 18*:

Only reality
say
Where we will
go
It's tethers

It's chains
It's sick pricks
inventing
crushing
for our lives
a decoration
of horror
they cd define
& understand
they cd justify
our deaths
& torture. (BSP 229)

The “tethers,” “chains” and “sick pricks” are the torturing agents of whites that crush and crash them. In *A Poem for Democrats*, the death is caused when he crosses a colour line:

City, is wicked. Not
this one, where I am, where they
still move, go to, out of
(transporting your loved one
across the line is death (BSP 77)
Death by lynching is another example of white callousness as depicted in the *poem Das Kapital*:
Strangling women in the suburban bush
they bodies laid around rotting while martins are drunk
... Two of them strangled by
the maniac. (BSP 153)

The white terrorists like Ku Klux Klan strangle the women and girls and their dead bodies are lying down in the streets without cremation. The poem, *A Poem for Willie Best*, reveals such an incident:

where
ever,
he has gone, who ever
mourns
or sits silent
...
'The house burned. The
old man killed.' (BSP 65)

An old man is found missing in the Black ghetto and it is quite evident that he must have been killed by the white racists in Ghettos in cities like New York, Chicago, Detroit and

Philadelphia. The poem, *Three Modes of History and Culture*, reveals the dystopia in the plantations of the South:

From heavy beginnings. Plantations,
learning
America, as speech, and a common emptiness. Songs knocking
inside old women's faces. Knocking through cardboard trunks.
Trains
learning north, catching hellfire in windows, passing through
the first ignoble cities of Missouri, to Illinois, and the panting
Chicago. (BSP 117)

The women working in the fields are no more singing songs during harvest. The community has been paralyzed politically, socially and economically. The poem, *There was Something I wanted to Tell/You (33) Why?* preaches the racism as a collective traditional enemy of humanity resulting into dystopia within utopia:

The world is complex
its reality materially
simple
It is dying of the life
...
The rot, the lie, the opposite
Will always, if there is ever
That, exist. As if means death
And hot cold. Darkness lights'
Closest companions. (BSP 249-250)

In the racially segregated America, which for them is dystopia rather than a utopia, Baraka fears that Black history and culture would be thrown as "toxic waste" in the "toilet bowl," and the whites will claim that Afro-Americans do not have any past, and then black community will perish. In the poem, *Y's 18*, the poet calls whites as "heathens":

That one day the heathens
wd actually come on the real
Side—that they wd take our
Hearts as funny valentines
That they wd stick our lives and history
In the toilet bowl
(toxic waste)
& claim our
Past
& future. (BSP 233)

The segregation, discrimination and exploitation still exist in most of the states in America. The poet is quite conscious and critical of the evil of discrimination and calls white rulers as witches, devils and hobgoblins. Ironically, for Baraka, Heathen Civilization is represented as Fascism: “Heathens Think Fascism is Civilization/And that they are superior to humans & that/ Humanity is metaphysical” (BSP 216). In the *poem Y’ 18*, Baraka calls Racist whites as “American Nazis”:

 Their smiles even
 chill us
 mad poseur
 posing as
 the mad doctor
 who is the original
 American
 Nazi
 The southern Himmlers
 & Goebbels, baked
 in our dying. (BSP 230)

In *Ostriches and Grandmothers*, the poet describes America as a “den of inconstant moralities”: “All meet here with us, finally: the/uptown way-west, den of inconstant moralities” (BSP 25S), being a Black Nationalist, Baraka finds it difficult to accept the whites as his friends or well-wishers and condemns the past and present of racial discrimination.

Black Assimilation

The Blacks found an opportunity for social mobility with their assimilation into mainstream white utopia. A staunch believer of Black Nationalism, Amiri Baraka is critical of Black assimilation into white culture. Arnold Rose, in his Sociology book: *The Study of Human Relations*, defines assimilation as “the adoption by a person or a group of the culture of another social group to such complete extent that the person or group no longer has any characteristics identifying him with his former culture” (Rose 557). In the poem, *Hymn for Lanie Poo*, the poet denigrates his own sister for her assumed white personality:

 my sister doesn’t like to teach in Newark
 because there are too many colored
 in her classes
 my sister hates loud shades
 my sister’s boyfriend is a faggot music teacher. (BSP 13)

The sister is presented as a self-hating Black who is entrapped in the worship of whiteness as she keeps a distance from her “colored” students and “loud shades. Baraka finds it painful that the Blacks of middle-class social groups allow themselves to be led by the white image and ultimately, they respect white power. Another picture of black bourgeoisie is presented with sheer critical comments in the poem, *History on Wheels*:

Civil Rights
included Nathan
and the rest
of them, who got in America
big shooting off the agony
a class of blue Bloods, ...
... a class of exploiters,
in black face. (BSP 151)

The poet condemns Afro-Americans adopting the ways of whites and call this a hypocrisy of the blacks and asks them to renounce or give up the habit and join him in his mission of freedom as presented in the poem, *Reggae or Not!*
niggers riding alligators ...

...
Revolution Self Determination
We no be fool
for alligator. (BSP 183)

The poet wishes to awaken his men to see the value in their culture and ultimately come and join him with “Self Determination” to give voice to Revolution. The poems find Baraka living in the white utopia which he despises for inequality and exploitation. He cannot live in such dystopia where he senses the killing and lynching of his ancestors and other fellow blacks. He wants to avenge for the wrongs done to his community. The poem, *In the Tradition*, explores Baraka’s heart that needs to “fight” to bring honour and dignity to his race:

“Not a White Shadow
But Black People Will is Victorious....”
...
The tradition says plainly to us fight plainly to us
fight, that’s in it, clearly, we are not meant to be slaves
it is a detour we have gone through and about to come out
in the tradition of gorgeous Africa blackness
says to us fight. (BSP 209-210)

The poems trace the evolution of Baraka’s poetry which is an ardent reaction upon the cultural, political, and aesthetic establishments of his time.

Black Power

“Black Power” is associated with separation of Blacks from racist American domination. Larry Neal explains black power as “a synthesis of all of nationalistic ideas embedded within the double consciousness of black America. But it has no one specific meaning. It is rather a kind of feeling—a kind of emotional response to one’s history” (Robinson 73). According to Julius Lester, black power is “the ideology for confrontation. Baraka himself started following the

path paved by Malcolm—the path of self-determination, self-respect and self-defense. The poem *Reggae or Not!* Reflects Malcolm’s teachings to the black community:

Our terror ... AHEEESSSSHHHHHHHHHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

...

(This was before they complained about
OPEC for they complained about baraka being rude
Before Malcolm set Kenneth Clark on fire. (BSP 176)

According to Baraka, America, the country of minstrels has become a “plague ridden mansion” for the black community. The poem *Three Modes of History and Culture* presents the African Americans as baffled people living with insane hope on the American utopia:

The party of insane
Hope. I’ve come from there too. Where the dead told lies
about clever social justice. Burning coffins voted
and staggered through cold white streets listening
to Willkie or Wallace or Dewey through the dead face
of Lincoln. Come from there, and belched it out. (BSP 118)

Blacks need to be audacious for their credit as human beings as explained in the poem *To a Publisher ... Cut Out*:

Grandeur in boldness. Big & stupid as the wind.

...

“what do you want to be when you grow up?” &
Day in, day out, you just kept belching. (BSP 23-24)

This splendour of courage may be big and foolish, yet has to be understood by all Americans to construct a true common utopia the poem, *When We’ll Worship Jesus*, the poet appeals to restore their cultural identity:

we worship the strength in us
we worship our selves
we worship the light in us
we worship the warmth in us

...

sing about life, not jesus
sing about revolution, not no jesus
stop singing about jesus,
sing about, creation, our creation.

...

unless that’s the name of the army we building to force the land
finally, to

change hands. (BSP 160-161)

The poet advises his people to remember the great emancipators like Dred Scott, born in slavery but never accepted his conditions and launched a legal battle to free him. Another Negro, Henry Bibb, being a slave fought and became an abolitionist. Baraka appeals his men not to be ashamed of their color but feel blessed for being strong. With such strength, Blacks have created a big impression all over the world as he reminds in the poem, *In the Tradition*:

What is this tradition Based on, we Blue Black Wards struggling
against a Big White Fog, Africa people, our fingerprints are
everywhere
on you america, our fingerprints our everywhere,
...
a wide pan african
world. (BSP 203)

Here, the poet recollects the past of the Afro-American when they fought against a “Big White Fog”, the cruel slave masters and Ku Klux Klan who disrupted black life in America. Further in the poem, black culture is presented positively:

in the african american
tradition
open us
...
let all that is positive
...
ours is one particular
one tradition
of love and suffering truth over lies
and now we find ourselves in chains. (BSP 208-209)

Black Nationalism

Black Nationalism is the advocacy of the national civil rights of black people in America. The hostility and Black Nationalism became a collective effort of Blacks to protect their social, economic and political rights. It becomes their search for identity in the nation that had degraded and insulted their ancestral and cultural legacies and devoid them of complete membership in the politics of the country. So, nationalism is an “ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy and individuality for a social group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential nation” (Woodard 9). Amiri Baraka has been a staunch advocate of Black Nationalism in America and in the poem *Are Their Blues Singers in Russia*, demands a new space for Blacks:

We stand for tragic emblems when we return to the pro and cons
of the world. The shielding, for nothing. God’s contradictions we

...
speak about as if we knew something, or could feel pas what we
describe, and enter the new forms of being.

...
So much, so much, to prepare a proper
place, to not exist in. (BSP 146)

The poet needs his people to move to cities of the newer nation as he says: “While white Americans created the conditions of struggle, black Americans, responding to the challenges of manhood and citizenship, ranged the gamut from integration to separation in quest of an identity that offered more than merely technical physical freedom” (Robinson 74). so that the Blacks could march. However, the white people did not want to create a separate nation for the African Americans. The white leaders planned a national unity without bifurcation of the country. They promised equality and fraternity in all respects, yet were sure of further exploitation of them as ascertained in the poem, *Real Life*:

...
ford says the plan, was national
unity, the new money
...
southern friends.... (BSP 155-156)

The poem presents a conversation Gerald Ford (the thirty-eighth President of America) with his predecessor, Richard Nixon and his wife, Pat Nixon in front of the vice-president, Nelson Rockefeller. The conversation is about the stopping of the making of Black Nation. Their discussion reveals their secret plan of continuing of making wealth out of Negro exploitation. The idea of making of Black nation is clear to the poet, but he is still unable to understand its map. He warns them against going “Back to Africa” where they will be thrown away for their cowardice. If they want to make their presence felt in America, they must rise above their inferiority complex and battle bravely against adverse forces. In the poem *Short Speech to My Friends*, Baraka could see a better life for black children: “There would be someone/who would understand, for whatever/fancy reason. Dead, lying, Roi, as your children/came up, would also rise. As George Armstrong Custer/these hundred years, has never made/a mistake” (BSP 73).

For Baraka, a place should be meant exclusively for Blacks. He could see this place like ancient “Egypt” with lasting legacy. He imagines the new world with all love and harmony, a true utopia. The poem, *The Success*, depicts the beauty of new America which the poet wants to create:

...
The proportion of Magic
has seeped so low.
For the Ist person plural
America, then, Atlantis,
in blind overdose.” (BSP 126)

For American Nazis, whom the poet calls “Ist person plural”, see America as Atlantis (a beautiful island full of wealth). For African Americans, their new nation is like Atlantis which is lost but they can travel into it and inhabit it with their collective effort. His ferocious stand and support to his community in literature paved the ways for millions of subjugated Blacks to raise their voice for the emancipation and provide them the status they deserved.

Revolution through Violence

Violence and aggression are vital aspects in the phenomenon of revolution. Stuart R. Schram, in *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, defines the revolution: “A revolution ... cannot be anything so refined, so calm and gentle, or so mild, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is ... an act of violence whereby one class overthrows the authority of another” (Schram 54). Baraka further supports violence to bring about a big transformation in the life of Negroes as in the poem, *The Burning General*:

Is sense to be lost, all of it, so that
...
Violence and repression. Silly Nigger hatred for the
silk band of misery. They are right, those farty doctors. Perhaps
it is best to ease into kill-heaven than have no heaven at all. (BSP 129)

In the poem, *When We'll Worship Jesus*, Baraka tells the Negroes to live in the world of their reality:

. . . let's call that people's army, or
wapenduzi or
simba
wachanga, but we not gon call it jesus, and not gon worship
jesus, throw
jesus our yr mind. Build the new world out of reality, and new
vision
we come to find out what there is of the world
to understand what there is here in the world!
to visualize change, and force it.
we worship revolution. (BSP 161-162)

Baraka is adamant to throw everything away that he feels dangerous and threatening to his mission. They need to create a new cult of their own by escaping from the worship of Jesus. To bring about the change, they have to gather an army of people—“wapenduzi” to put an end to the prevailing religion. The angry poet devises “concentration camps” for white genocide in the poem, *1929: Y you ask* (26):

The living dying wind
adhesive against wet w/blood top hats
souls w/bullet holes. ...

Finally, we know, half superiorly,
All these guests
will die of the Plague. The Black Death!
The Red Death! The Plague!
Horror movie statistical murders.
Dead in old houses
& under cars. In chain gang Gulags
& under cars. In chain gang Gulags
& share cropper concentration camps. (BSP 238-239)

Baraka adds to this point in his Autobiography: "I guess, during this period, I got the reputation of being a snarling, white-hating madman. There was some truth to it, because I was struggling to be born, to break out from the shell I could instinctively sense surrounded my own dash for freedom. I was in a frenzy, trying to get my feet solidly on the ground, of reality" (Autobiography 194). The determined and furious poet feels the need of sacrifice for the noble cause of freedom as presented in the poem, *There was something I wanted to Tell You*. (33) *Why?*

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Ho
Fidel, Nkrumah
Martin, Sandino
& Malcolm X
Have all been
betrayed
All revolutions bear their own
Betrayal, & betrayers. (BSP 249)

The poet knows it well that all revolutions in the past had their traitors and betrayals, and is apprehensive about his mission. But he is optimistic about his unwavering niggers who would follow their revolutionary prophets like Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Fidel, Nkrumah, and Malcolm X. The poet has never got much fruitful from his aggressive writing, but his talk about rebellion and revenge always kept him warm as explained in the poem *Wise 4*: "I has never got nothing, and talk/of rebellion/warmed me" (BSP 225). His resistance to the hegemony of white culture by the use of African literary allusions and verbal patterns of black speech has created a distinct literary form in the Afro-American literature.

Conclusion

In a sense, Baraka writes his poems for poor, illiterate Negroes who want to change things in their life to see a better world. His poems are for workers and peasants who remained ignorant and uncultured due to biased system of whites and black bourgeoisie class. Like Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou, Baraka not only underlines injustice but also suggests the way to fight it. More than any other black poet, Baraka taught younger black poets of the generation past how to respond poetically to their lived experience, rather than to depend as artists on preserved reputations and old-fashioned rhetorical strategies derived from a culture often substantially different from their own. His poetic subjects range from the common pleasures of people in the

lap of nature to the highly revolutionized concerns of Black Pride, Black Nationalism and Black Revolution to thwart the prevalent hostile white culture. His condemnation and rejection of Black assimilation into white ways of living states his firmness to create a Black Nationalistic nation in America. Various aspects of his poetry such as economic, social, political, ideological and psychological. For him, poetry is not an art form only, separate from the violent struggles of the people; it is and must be a weapon in that struggle:

. . . We want live
Words of the hip world live flesh &
Coursing blood. Hearts Brains
Souls splintering fire.
. . .
Poems that wrestle cops into alleys
and take their weapons leaving them dead. (BSP 142)

Baraka's poetry has been a battle between the "colored" and "colorless" aesthetics. Baraka's writing in Black language found genuine expression of ideas and needs of black community. Baraka served as the second Poet Laureate of New Jersey as a contemporary of John Coltrane, Toni Morrison, Ralf Ellison and Norman Mailer. "Like Ezra Pound, Baraka has dared to bring radical politics into the world of literature and to deliver his explosive ideas in an inflammatory style" (William xviii). Baraka published his books only with black press. He shifted his residence from New York's Greenwich Village to predominantly black Harlem, his utopia, which indicates that he was resolute to write for the black readers and audience. He had always been disappointed with the social and political standards of the great nation, America which acted as his dystopia in spite of the utopia for world.

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