

**The Black Resistance in the Form of Verbal Expression:  
A Reading on Amiri Baraka's Poem "Black Art"**

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In arts and literature there is an assumption of universality, but some new emerging pockets, beyond the so-called universal countries are trying to break such a concept of universality. There are some small groups inside the nation, America. In the second half of twentieth century there emerged different ethnic groups in America. The small pockets like African- American, Spanish- American and Japanese- American are codified to the mass American culture. Thus American culture can be considered as the melting pot of culture.

Black literature seems to be a quite interesting diversion from all other modes of literature. The actual inhabitance of America, the Black being racially subjugated by the White uses the medium of expression in a sense that they are entrapped and enslaved on the basis of

colour. Amiri Baraka's concern investigates all possible ways of interpreting this sense of oppression. Baraka, one of the most respected and most widely published Black writers of his generation felt that America made room for only White obfuscators, not Black ones. He wrote revolutionary poetry and it became more controversial. A poem such as "Black Art" expresses his need to commit the violence required to establish a Black world. "Black Art" quickly became the major poetic manifesto of the Black Art literary Movement and in it, Baraka declaims "we want poems that kill" (19), which coincides with the rise of armed self-defense and slogans such as "Arm yourself or harm yourself" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amiri\\_Baraka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amiri_Baraka)) that promoted confrontation with the white power structure. Rather than using poetry as an escapist mechanism, Baraka sees poetry as a weapon of action. His poetry demands violence against those he felt were responsible for an unjust society. Baraka articulates the words against the White Americans.

The poet raises his voice against the racial discrimination. The poem "Black Art" by Amiri Baraka interconnects art with racial identity. The poem speaks of the issue of racism among black Americans. The dominating white has reached in a realm where they could establish all fields as their own. Art and literature, two different scenarios interconnected are believed to be their areas. "Black Art" represents the protest of the black against this pseudo concept which is idealized by the White. The burden should not be always shared by the White instead the Black too has got the efficiency to be creative.

“Black Art” demands a venomous language which is obviously fit to the context. The poem is one of Baraka’s nationalist poems, which is an expression of his Black aesthetic striking for its rhetorical violence. The abstract sounds in the poem turned into the actual sounds which try to kill the enemies. The poem itself is to commit the violence which the poet considers necessary for the establishment of the Black world. Baraka declares that the poems are bullshit and the Black poem had to be a vehicle of escape into their own world. The sudden launching of the poem, in first reading strikes as self- criticizing:

Poems are bullshit unless they are  
Teeth or trees or lemons piled  
Or black ladies dying. On a step  
Of Men leaving nickel hearts  
Fuck Poems.

(“Black Art” 1-5)

But the reader is slowly informed that the indication goes further to the White’s notion of poetry. Just similar to the rage of Lakdasa Wikkramasinha in “Don’t Talk to Me About Mattise”, Baraka gets angry with the universal notion of the White being the master of arts.

Wole Soyinka’s treatment in the “Telephone Conversation” also is to be read along with this experience. The white lady, abused and severely criticized by her cultural rival is reminded

here: “Foolishly, madam -by sitting down, has turned/ My bottom raven black-” (“Telephone Conversation” 31-32).

The White and the creations of the White are marginalized to be secondary by the Black writers. The primary concern is given to the Black and black literature. The use of the words like “pissing ... hip world” (“Black Art” 9-10) are denoted as the rebellious attitude of the poet’s pen contradictory to the much refined and the polished linguistic expression of the White. The urge of the poet invites the reader to the world of primitivism. His suggestion can be shocking, rather thrilling:

“Poems that kill” We want! Whores  
Poems that shoot, Assassin poems  
Poems that wrestle cops into alleys. Guns  
D take their weapons leaving them deadan  
Knock off.

(“Black Art” 19-23)

Sweeping all the romantic and nostalgic notions of poetry away to the dust bin Baraka introduces a stunning definition of poetry which no white poet has ever been experienced: “Dagger poems in the slimy bellies/ Black poems to” (“Black Art” 14-15).

The need for a genuine ethnic creation makes the poet speak so. He and the society in which he is included are starving without the freedom of expression meanwhile the White fills the belly of everyone with the imposed knowledge. The poem employs suggestions not only of the poem as a plain attacking the enemy but also the death of that enemy. Poetry is not separate from violent struggles of the people and must be a weapon in the struggle. Poems must be daggers and poisonous gas. They are the weapons of those who will accomplish the destruction which will bring in a new world. The poet wishes to strip the Whiteman naked: “Stumbles across the room.../ Strip him naked” (“Black Art” 37-38).

The black identity must lead to the black creative art. It is not the mere imitation of the dominant and monotonous imagination of the White. Poetry must take birth from the womb of fire and it should never be let to rest in the tomb of exploitation:

And a. We want a black poem

Black World

Let the World be a Black poem.

And Let All Black people speak This Poem

Silently

Or LOUD

(“Black Art” 50-55)

The language is that of the Black community is highly shocking. Baraka's use of language is quite striking and shocking for many readers. The alienated self is no longer a site for nostalgic thoughts but becomes a source and justification of their violence and resistance central to the new life, new world.

### **Works Cited**

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