



TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF BLACK LIFE IN THE POETRY OF AMIRI BARAKA

Jasveer Singh

Businessman

English

Paramount Public School, Cheema (Sangrur) Punjab India

ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore and analyze the Trials and Tribulations of Black Life in the Poetry of James Mercer Langston Hughes popularly known as Langston Hughes and Amiri Baraka (previously known as LeRoi Jones). It also aims to explore in detail, the political, social, psychological and cultural aspects of racism. The African Americans kept tolerating the cruelty and suffering, since there was no one to hear the voice of Africans. But there came a time for them when they started realizing the value of their freedom. They began expressing themselves through Negro spirituals which marked the beginning of the artistic expressions of the black emotion. They began to understand the worth of their life which was not to live for the Whites but for themselves to realize their dreams. They found a pride in their race and colour.

KEY POINTS

Trials and Tribulations, Black Life, Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones)

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to explore and analyze the Trials and Tribulations of Black Life in the Poetry of Langston Hughes and Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones). It also aims to explore in detail, the political, social, psychological and cultural aspects of racism. One of its aims will also be to understand how an oppressed group lifts itself to obtain independence in America. It is an endeavor to comprehend the human predicament in distinct human conditions as reflected in the poems of Langston Hughes and Amiri Baraka. Amiri Baraka's essence as a black poet depends on both the range of his work and the remarkable strength of his Black Nationalist period. During this period, Baraka concentrated on showing the undefined racist dimensions of Euro-American art and developing an substitute "Black Aesthetic." Since he had demonstrated mastery of Euro-American poetic modes, Baraka's Black Nationalist philosophy controlled an extraordinary amount of white concentration. Coming from an unknown poet, his aggressive poetry might well have been discarded as an immature kind of propaganda. In fact, it alienates many of his earlier followers, who came to see him as an embodiment of the civil chaos of the mid-1960. On a more profound level, however, he prompted many to contemplate over the complex logic of his change and to re-evaluate the political implications of their own aesthetic stances. Amiri Baraka's (LeRoi Jones), a replica of the self-made Afro-American national, poet and propagandist has become the most significant supporter of Black Nationalism and secret black talent in America. One of the most controversial authors of America, Baraka founded a new black identity through the codification of a black art. Numerous Afro American artists ventured to condemn the prejudiced political classification of the nation, but Baraka was perhaps the first among all writers of the time whose vociferous political poetics questioned the deep rooted, self-hating and unprotected surroundings of the African American community that tolerated years of bondage, repression, and isolation.

NEED OF THE STUDY

There is always a question why one should study a particular genre. There are positive, 38 precise reasons that encourage the research. Baraka's poetry falls into three distinctive periods, each mirrored as an attempt to find an attitude capable of retaliating adequately to a crooked society. The influence of each period is fashioned in

harmony with a different set of theories relating to the nature of the social dishonesty, the suitable course toward political achievement, and the poet's relationship with his audience. During his early phase, Baraka put up an essentially artistic reply on grounds shared primarily with white poets and scholars. Although Baraka always documented the meaning of his racial and economic heritage, the complex rational voice of the early period sounds highly distinctive in contrast with his later work. During his middle Black Nationalist period, Baraka moved his stress on the racial height of American culture. The associated voice--much more accessible, though not practically so simple as it first appears--reflects Baraka's longing to relate mainly to the African American community. During his third Marxist-Leninist-Maoist period, Baraka assumed a less emotionally charged voice in agreement with his belief as a scientific analyst of capitalist corruption. Baraka's years have been a mixture of diverse experiences of "... adventure: brutal beatings, literary successes, jail sentences, theater foundings, bohemian debaucheries, revolutionary activities." (Harris 2). The volume *Transbluesency* is a wide-ranging collection of Amiri Baraka's poetry over forty years of efforts, and we can see not only a lot emphasized opposition he has long nurtured toward the white mass but also the change of approach and association in his own lives that are his steady preoccupations.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

His early day's experiences with the white community frightened the child of their simple visions as he says in his *The Autobiography*:

My terror was white, and racists (who I knew since the Elephant House and Augie's slaps and Birmingham's rolling eyes, etc. and tales my grandmother told. And when I was thirteen I read *Black Boy*, the alternate selection of Book-of-the-Month Club, and I feared for R. W.'s life and wondered how he dared say such things and still walk around. Yeh, I knew in my young life about "crackers" as my grandfather called them) yes, they were white, and scrunched up dudes and ugly ladies arguing with my mother in buses and Fanny Farmers candy stores. They were most assuredly white. And the unknown monsters my grandmother told me had cut off young boys "privates" near Dothan, stuck 'em in his mouth, then gathered the young black girls to see, so a lesson would be taught. They were definitely white. (Baraka 62)

Not only had the prejudiced social construction upset the young poet but the fanatical education system of the time also left marks of detestation on him as he says: "They were teachers, interesting that they were all rec teachers, who were white and who were real enough to talk to. They would even throw me out of the playground for "cursing." (Baraka 62). Baraka's fight becomes an unbending state of both Baraka's world and his writing. In spite of his special relation to white writers such as John Wieners, Gary Snyder, and Michael McClure, he finds himself confined by their world.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Baraka's poetry shows a powerful retort against the white society. *Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones* records the works from different periods of his outstanding literary creation. It 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*. The poems draw the evolution of Baraka's poetry which is a passionate reaction upon the cultural, political, and artistic institutions of his time. In the poetry of this stern and ideologically dedicated black performer, one can find his profound bitterness with the white majority. Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note rooted Baraka as a well-known literary figure of the Beat Generation. The poems echo his contempt for the established literary, ethical and cultural standards. . In *For Crow Jane*, he assaults the vices of the society. "...blankness in every space/flesh thought to be. (First light,/is dawn/Cold stuff/to tempt a lover/old lady of Flaking eyes. Moon lady/of useless lights.." (SP 87). Racial issues and situations to the black society emphasize the harmony of his art with the political realization. The poems of *The Dead Lecturer* reveal the gloomy plight of the Blacks as a result of racial discrimination. The volumes, *Hard Facts*, *Poetry for the Advanced*, *Reggae or Not*, *Am/Trak*, and *Why's Y's* represent the harsh assault on the artistic and political standards enjoying the African American music. In *In the Tradition*, the poet talks about slavery, "Not a White Shadow / But Black People Will be Victorious...." (BSP 199).

SOURCES

PRIMARY SOURCES

Vangelisti, Paul, Ed. *Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones*. New York: Marsilio, 1995. Print. (Quoted as BSP in the thesis)

SECONDARY SOURCES

Frazier, Franklin E. *Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class*. New York: The Free P, 1957. Print.

Harris, William J. *The Poetry and poetics of Amiri Baraka: The Jazz Aesthetic*. Columbia: U of Missouri P. 1985. Print.

Hornby, Albert S, Anthony P. Cowie, and Jack W. Lewis. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. London: OUP, 1974. Print. (Quoted as OALD)

Lacey, Henry C. *To Raise Destroy and Create: The Poetry, Drama, and Fiction of Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones)*. Troy, NY: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1981. Print.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to the Almighty to give me strength to complete this research and I really thank my family and with my University, my Guide to encourage me. This study focuses on African American relations. Since when the Blacks were brought to America from the land of Africa, whites have been creating the racial barriers to suppress and oppress the. Racial segregation, discrimination and exploitation are the ways of contact between the whites and the blacks. Various institutions and social organizations have opposed the entrance of Blacks to clarify that fact that institutional racism is firmly rooted in white American society. Through slavery, the whites have been sympathetically oppressing and exploiting the underprivileged class of Blacks. Baraka's revolutionary poems also imply that through successful use of violence the political order of a nation could be transformed to a better state.

