

**POLITICAL CORRUPTION AND SOCIAL DECAY IN AMIRI BARAKA'S
SELECTED POEMS**

Elaf Muther Muslim

General Directorate of Education of Diwwaniyah- Iraq

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Abstract

This study tends to analyze the theme of political corruption and the decay of society in some of the selected poems of Amiri Baraka and to place this analysis in the context of the theory of power by Michel Foucault. Baraka is a well-known and innovative African-American poet and activist, his poems are generally characterized by the intricate presentation of the prevalent power dynamics in the political context and the decay of the society in order to offer a critical perspective on the state of American society. This study will analyze the poems of Baraka in the light of the main concepts and operations that were explained by Foucault's work. The study ultimately aims to show the mechanisms of power and the resulting social decay in contemporary America.

This study starts out by first establishing the theoretical framework that is going to be used in the analytical framework, this theoretical framework depends basically on Foucault's theory of power, which highlights key concepts, such as power as a pervasive and productive force rather than a repressive one, and the notion of power being dispersed throughout society, exerting influence on all aspects of human life. These theoretical notions will be used in this study as a lens to examine the poems of Baraka. The following step will be to analyze some of Baraka's poems with a particular focus on those aspects and lines that explicitly address political corruption and social decay in the American society. All of the poems that are going to be analyzed in this study share the same premises of criticizing the institutional power dynamics that are prevalent in the designated society, these poems tend to expose the corrupt practices and the resulting decay in various realms such as politics, economics, and culture. The study will also focus on the particular poetic language and the vivid imagery that were used in Baraka's poems in order to detect the consequences of unchecked power and its impact on marginalized communities.

The use of Foucault's theory about power will provide this study with the intended objectives of understanding the detailed interplay between power and social decay in the poems of Baraka. The analysis emphasizes the fact the political corruption and the abuse of power by the people in states of power can gravely contribute to the erosion of the social fabric of the community and consequently results in injustice and marginalization of some groups in the society. Baraka's poems are known to examine the way by which power dynamics can be considered as disciplinary mechanisms that shape and control the actions and thoughts of different people. Additionally, this study will discuss the possibility that the poems of Baraka offer a cry to resist the prevalent power structures. Baraka aims to expose the corrupted political practices that result in the fatal decay of the society and the social relationships and this necessitates the call for collective action and social change, as these poems act as potent tools for raising awareness and mobilizing the people to challenge and transform the existing power dynamics in their respected societies.

The problem that this study aims to address is the presence of political corruption and social decay themes in some poems of Amiri Baraka, this aim will be achieved by examining the poems with the use of Michel Foucault's theory of power. The works of Baraka usually focus on power dynamics and the effects that these dynamics have in the American society. Baraka also tends to offer a critical perspective on the state of affairs that are prevalent in that society. Such an analysis can be important in discovering the causes of the social issues and the consequences that are associated with them and the necessity of enforcing the propersocial change. The political corruption is a well-established fact not only in the American context but also in every other context and society. Given the pervasiveness of political corruption, it is not a surprise that some of the poems of Amiri Baraka probe into this particular problem, but what makes Baraka's approach unique is that he usually tends to expose the corrupt practices in the different political institutions, and he does so by the use of powerful and evocative type of language which portrays the manipulation of power for personal gain and the detriment it inflicts on the marginalized communities. This study will try to understand the mechanisms behind the political corruption and the ways in which this corruption aid in causing the noted decay of the designated society by accurately analyzing the poems of Baraka by the use of the theory of Foucault about power. The theme of social decay is another important issue that is usually analyzed in the poems of Baraka. This analysis is usually done by trying to expose the consequences of the ill power dynamics and the consequences of these dynamics in causing the erosion of the social fabric inside

the American society. The poems reveal the huge gap between the different classes of the society. This gap between the privileged and the marginalized ones is important to reveal the prevalence of inequality and injustice, and the decay of cultural values and norms. The analysis of the aforementioned themes will enable this study to discover the underlying dynamics that cause the decay of the society and to understand the steps that must be taken in order to assure the change of the society towards a better one. All of this will be achieved through the careful analysis of the selected poems with the use of Foucault's theory of power as an analytical tool. Nevertheless, although Baraka tried to present some clear critiques about the political status, the problem of political corruption and social decay remains largely unaddressed, and solutions seem elusive. For this reason, this study is going to clearly present the issues that are dealt with in Baraka's poems by uncovering the root causes of political corruption and social decay and utilizing Foucault's theory to unveil the detailed manner by which the power dynamics come to play within the American society.

As mentioned already, Foucault's theory focuses on power as not just a top-down hierarchical structure imposed by those in authority, but rather as a pervasive force that operates through social institutions and practices. This power is productive in the sense that it shapes and molds individuals and society as a whole (Lynch, 2014, pp. 13-26). It is through this lens that we can examine Baraka's poems. The language itself can be seen as a manifestation of power relations and disciplinary mechanisms. Baraka often employs a confrontational and incendiary style that challenges dominant ideologies and structures. This can be noticed in his use of strong and confrontational imagery, as well as his use of vernacular language and African-American cultural references. By using language in this way, Baraka disrupts established power relations and accentuates the need for transformative change. In his poem "Black Art," he utilizes vivid and intense language so as to assert the power and agency of Black people in reclaiming their identity and challenging oppressive systems. For example, he (1979) writes, "We want a black poem. / And / a / Black World." This evokes a sense of rebellion and defiance, positioning the Black experience as a force that disrupts the existing power subtleties and demands recognition

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