"Who Tell The Big Lie:" Exposing The Scandal of Jewish terrorism In Amiri Baraka's "Somebody Blew Up America"

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Abstract:

Amiri Baraka is a revolutionary poet whose works explore themes of race, identity, oppression, and social injustice. He is among the few artists who still openly, regularly, and determinedly attack the academic, artistic, and political position quo. However, some of his writings, particularly in the later part of his career, have been criticized for including anti-Semitic content. Historically, Jews have been condemned for global events, and conspiracy philosophies accused them of hidden control over economics, media, and governments. This facet adds complexity to the literary legacy, and provokes debates about the intersection of political radicalism, race, and prejudice in Baraka's poetry. This study deals with "Somebody Blew Up America," Baraka's most controversial and reviled poem, which provokes an outbreak of anti-Semitic allegations; and indicates a more communal role for poets when exaggerated events affect the safety of human living. As a poet, Baraka accesses truths by shedding back a posturing presences for deep values and by giving pure insight into public argumentations in ways that journalists and politicians cannot.

Keywords: Amiri Baraka, anti-Semitism, 11 September attack, "Somebody Blew Up America."

من قال الكذبة الكبرى: الكشف عن فضيحة الإرهاب اليهودي في قصيدة اميري بركة "شخص ما فجر أمريكا"

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الملخص:

كان أمير بركة شاعراً ثورياً استكشفت أعماله موضوعات العرق والهوية والقمع والظلم الاجتماعي. كان بركة أحد الشعراء القلائل الذين ما زالوا يهاجمون الموقف الأكاديمي والفني والسياسي بشكل علني ومنتظم ومصمم. ومع ذلك، فقد تعرضت بعض كتاباته، خاصة في الجزء الأخير من حياته المهنية، لانتقادات بسبب احتوائها على محتوى معاد للسامية. تاريخيًا، تمت إدانة اليهود بسبب أحداث عالمية، واتهمتهم فلسفات المؤامرة بالسيطرة غير المعلنة على الاقتصاد والإعلام والحكومات. يضيف هذا الجانب تعقيدًا إلى الإرث الأدبي، ويثير نقاشات حول تقاطع الراديكالية السياسية والعرق والتحيز في شعر بركة. تتناول هذه الدراسة قصيدة "شخص ما فجر أمريكا"، وهي قصيدة بركة الأكثر إثارة للجدل والمذمومة. لقد حرض على موجة من الاتهامات المعادية للسامية. وتشير إلى دور أكبر للشعراء عندما تمس الأحداث الدرامية الحياة اليومية. كشاعر، يصل بركة إلى الحقائق من خلال تجريد المظاهر السطحية من أجل معانٍ أعمق ومن خلال إعطاء رؤية كاشفة للقضايا العامة بطرق لا يستطيع السياسيون والصحفيون القيام بها .

الكلمات المفتاحية: أمير بركة، "شخص ما فجر أمريكا"، معاداة السامية، هجمات ١١ سبتمبر.

1. Introduction:

"Smile jew. Dance, jew. Tell me you love me, jew. I got something for you ... I got the extermination blues, jewboys. I got the hitler syndrome figured ... So come for the rent, jewboys ... one day, jewboys, we all, even my wig wearing mother gonna put it on you all at once" (from *Black Magic: Collected Poetry 1961-1967*).

Because of his leading cultural and political activities, lmamu Baraka's trajectory to nationalism becomes one of the most remarkable and influential prototypes for self-transformation. The growing radicalism of the Black Arts Movement and the Black Revolt pulls LeRoi Jones from qualified political oblivion in the Beat groups of Greenwich Village, brushes him into the center of the Black Power movement, christens him Imamu Amiri Baraka, and provokes the leading black literary figure into the status of black national political leadership (Kaplan & Bernays 1999, 87). Besides, the generation that produced the Cultural Black Arts Revolution was inspired by Fidel Castro's rebellious image and the early torch of the Cuban Revolution. In his autobiography, Baraka confirms that: "The Cuban trip was a turning point in my life" (Baraka 1984, 163). Harold Cruse writes that "the great transformation in LeRoi Jones was brought on by the Cuban Revolution" (Cruse 1967, 356). During that era, Baraka assumed "the stature of the people's hero and rebellious outlaw," and became, "the symbolic heir to Malcolm, the Malcolm X of 1iteratu1e"(Sollor 1978, 1).

The constructive political power of Baraka has been approached from Malcolm X who has established a black national awareness and contributes to the flourishing and development of the black freedom movement, and from numerous revolutionaries from many other countries such as Mao Zedong (China) to Sekou Toure (Guinea), and Julius Nyerere (Tanzania). After the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965, Baraka experienced a radical political transmission, leading him to sever ties with the Beats and hold a more confrontational form of Black nationalism. This reform gave birth to some of his most politically charged works, such as *Dutchman* (1964), and *The Slave* (1964) (Watts 2001, 228). Baraka's effect on the political subtleties of national patriotism is both instant and ultimate. In essence, Baraka has an insightful and permanent philosophical impact on all post including Black Arts movement. William Harris argues that he has "turned black art from other-directed to ethnically centered. Thus, the contemporary [African American] artist writes out of his or her own culture and, moreover, is self-consciously an [African American]" (Harris 1988, xvii).

Baraka's poetry developed radically during the 1960s, as he revolved from a more public sense of social estrangement to a vision that was politically revolutionized to express a profound solidarity with black culture (Beach 2003, 132). Baraka's writings during that period were challenging, and unapologetically political, confronting white supremacy and advocating for Black empowerment. His essays, such as "The Revolutionary Theatre" (1965), called a new kind of art that could disturb, inspire, and challenge the repressive structures of society. Principally, the theoretical and political modifications in Baraka's thoughtfulness results in four distinct poetical stages: a 1950's and 1960's contribution to the Greenwich Village Beat scene, an early 1960's involvement in questing for individual identity, a period connected with the Black Arts movement, and a Marxist-Leninist period (Williams 2008,1328). His poetry during these periods reflects his resentment at world-wide racism, imperialism, and economic manipulation (Levine 1977, 152). Harold Cruse (1916-2005) clarifies that the young intellectuals, artists, musicians, writers, and poets of the 1960s were actually coming of age into a great intellectual, political, creative and theoretical vacuity in search of leadership. Learned in such a personal way as to epitomize within himself all the other things his generation learned either empirically or vicariously, LeRoi Jones was one of the most outstanding of them (Cruse 1967, 355).

Baraka was attacked for his output in the 1960s, and his wholly unique conjoining of poetic voice and political countenance. His political potency in an era of amplified persecution and deficiency supposed distressed racism, and anti-Semitism (Hickman 2015, 115). Baraka occasionally equated Jewish people with exploitative capitalism, a stereotype that had long been used to vilify Jewish communities. In "The Revolutionary Theatre," Baraka makes broad, pejorative claims about Jewish involvement in various power structures, which critics have identified as anti-Semitic. Moreover, some critics point to his play "The Slave" (1964) as comprising repressed anti-Semitic content, essentially in the technique that Jewish characters are depicted. Historian, Melani McAlister, argues:

> In the case of Baraka, and in many of the pronouncements of the NOI [Nation of Islam], there is a profound difference, both qualitative and quantitative, in the ways that white ethnicities were targeted. For example, in one well-known poem, Black Arts [originally published in *The Liberator* January 1966], Baraka made offhand remarks about several groups, commenting in the violent rhetoric that was often typical of him, that ideal poems would 'knockoff ... dope selling wops' and suggesting that cops should be killed and have their 'tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland.' But as Baraka himself later admitted [in his piece I was an Anti-Semite published by *The Village Voice* on December 20, 1980, vol. 1], he held a specific animosity for Jews, as

> was apparent in the different intensity and viciousness of his call in the same poem for 'dagger poems' to stab the 'slimy bellies of the owner jews' and for poems that crack 'steel knuckles in a jewlady's mouth' (McAlister 1999, 646).

Baraka critiques the political role of Jews in America, aligning Jewish power with the systemic discrimination faced by Black Americans. In his "Confessions of a Former Anti-Semite" (1980), Baraka went over his life history, involving his marriage to Hettie Cohen, who was Jewish. He indicated that after the assassination of Malcolm X he found himself ruminating, "as a Black man married to a white woman, I began to feel estranged from her ... How could someone be married to the enemy?" He ultimately divorced his wife and left her with their two bi-racial daughters. In his essay, he also protected his situation against Israel, saying, "Zionism is a form of racism." He states:

> "We also know that much of the vaunted Jewish support of Black civil rights organizations was in order to use them. Jews, finally, are white, and suffer from the same kind of white chauvinism that separates a great many whites from Black struggle. ... these Jewish intellectuals have been able to pass over into the Promised Land of American privilege" (Hansen, 2002).

In 1992, Baraka was one of the few artists who openly, and determinedly attacked the academic, artistic, and political status quo. Baraka's evolving radicalism sometimes led him to embrace problematic explanations, specifically regarding Jewish people. Some of his poems include explicit criticisms of Jewish participation in capitalism and the depression of Black people, which has been viewed by critics as disseminating anti-Semitic stereotypes. Baraka becomes more controversial than ever with his latest poem "Somebody Blew Up America" on the 9/11 tragedy (Lee 2004, 11). According to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories the responsibility for the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks places on Jews, and Israel endure to advance currency round the world, and contribute to a original form of global anti-Semitism (Chesler 2005, 303).

September 11, 2001 is a day that is evoked throughout the world as the date which traumatized the confidence and image of America as a safe haven from terrorism. It has shaken the practicalities of the free world with its strongest military, and the best defense. The most active democracy, and the assumed most powerful leader in the universe was attacked with viciousness and horror unheeded of in America since the Civil War. Fear and horror are facts that black men must live with white growing up in American society. However, during the

post-slavery and Civil War years, the roots of that horror have been identified, characterized, and almost neutralized by the numerous resources and openings for addressing these evils in the courts, a resource that was always unavailable, and when available, not always just. With the death and destruction on 9/11, Baraka feels that on the horizon is a different enemy, and one that is universally focused (Lee 2004, 119).

2. Jewish terrorism In Amiri Baraka's "Somebody Blew Up America":

Written shortly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, "Somebody Blew Up America" represents Baraka's respond to that event and the resultant uproar that Baraka has in the forefront of dispute once again. "Somebody Blew Up America" is perhaps the most argumentative poem in Baraka's opus. It coveys a sprawling critique of American colonization, racism, and global prejudice. However, within its broad political commentary, Baraka includes lines that accuse Israel and the Jews of collaboration in the attacks. The controversy focussed mostly on the charge in the poem that the Israelis knew about the bombings before they happened. The poem was labelled as anti-Semitic, and Baraka was immediately put on the defensive to refute the charge. In the weeks following the publishing of the poem, radio and television stations, newspapers, news commentators and talk show hosts were discussing the poem, not as poetry, but as newscast, as facts, and as a documentary. Baraka interrogates America's foreign strategies, which have maintained violence and injustice in the world, particularly in the Middle East. The charges of anti-Semitism were heard around the country, but especially in the East (Lee 2004, 119).

What makes Amiri Baraka's "Somebody Blew Up America" so provoking is that the poem traces a trajectory of human atrocity and culpability without accepting the premise, that the lives of certain sets of victims are inherently more valuable than others. In doing so, Baraka requests the arrogant, naive, and precariously reductive rationales commonly used to explain and promote the perpetual U.S. War Against Terrorism. The poem is an attacking impeachment of white greed during history. The most controversies comes from its anti-Semitic interrogations: "Who knew the World Trade Center was gonna get bombed / Who told 4000 Israeli workers at the Twin Towers / To stay home that day," and Baraka's later declaration that the Bush government had a preceding acquaintance of the attacks (Kimmelman 2005, 31). Drawing on a certainty that blacks are the first humans to evolve from prelates, Baraka sees his idealism as a holy contract to "evolve again to civilize the world"

(Snodgrass 2000, 221). Baraka's vitriol involves the functional elimination of the capitalist concept of privileges, especially as it disturbs natural and human property. For the poet, there is a slight adjustment between slaves' ownership and the exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of the rich (Dawdy 2007, 66).

"Someone blew up America" can be considered an unconventional response to the plight of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. The poem's uncommon title is a contemptuous accusation of America and Israel as demonic, perilous and terrorist. Ii addition, it is an announcement of an inspired war against U.S. dominance and European power. Provocatively, the poem blames white power for putting Eastern European Jews in the ovens, but implicates the State of Israel in attacks on the World Trade Center. "Somebody who blew up America" is not a lament to the deaths of thousands of people, nor is it a call for revenge, rather, it offers a harsh attack against the evils of imperialism and diseases of racism that are the main purposes behind the attacks of 11 September in America. Baraka manifests in a panoramic way the terrorist affairs throughout American history. Generally, acts of racial perception allude to the charge of the white power with their imperialist and racist thoughtfulness over all kinds of violence in America and in the entire world (Williams 2008,1333).

The confrontational poem such as "Somebody Blew Up America" is undoubtedly uncommon in contemporary American poetry. It is one of the most powerful pieces written during a period of lack of expectations with the American political system. The contradiction of the trick in the poem and its (233 lines) change dramatically from many contemporary political poems. Furthermore, in the United States, poetry is considered a "fugitive expression" referring to the advantage of being easily repeated, distributed and performed publicly. They are hard-line petitions of allegations, which distort time contexts (Dawdy 2007, 63-64).

Amiri Baraka's "Somebody Blew Up America," is situated on the burden line between anti-Semitic critique and conspiracy theory. It dramatizes the threats of conspiracy thinking and the use of Web evidence as documentary fact(Metres 2007, 24). The poem is a splenetic anti-imperialist rant, cataloguing the history of crimes of Western empires and, particularly, of the Anglo-American empire. Baraka affirms his complete identification with the poem's rhetoric, arguing that it is the documentary expression of a suppressed but appreciated viewpoint. Such an attitude could be seen as ignoring, prevailing, and intensifying the anti-Semitism, due to its rhetoric in (Metres 2007, 221).

The poem was relayed to the audience on September 20, 2002, at the Dodge Poetry Festival in Waterloo, New Jersey, and caused a spiral of dissent. The opposition focused on hanging the poem on Israel, and its legacy on the genocide of European Jews during the Holocaust. Provocative rhetoric is a fundamental component of many political poems of influential agency and many in the Black Arts Movement, although it is irrational to assign what James Smethurst named as a "great-man theory in which Baraka's work becomes a metonymy for all Black Arts literature" (Smethurst 2003, 261).

Kwame Dawes (1962-) reads the poem as anti-Semitic and assumes Baraka's statements against Jews in previous works. Rather than reading "Somebody Blew up America" as anti-Semitic, Dawes discerns that "one may be better off ...quarreling with the easy Manichaeism and somewhat Uncomplicated look at history" it offers. Baraka evades "mere didacticism" while the unstrapped, syncopated, and forthright language of his poems "make purely literary questions seems mall." As a representative poem, the thrilling rhetoric and images that close it eventually also append it. In the reiteration of "Who's," Baraka instantaneously disdains his poem as inadequate to signify the full imprint of the attacks on human integrity (Gery 2011, 174)

"Somebody Blew Up America" declares the poet's obstruction of terrorist attacks, and puts his obstacle to "domestic" terrorism, indicating the forthcoming attacks on societal power. Baraka defines the links between the image of the American Dream and the harsh realities challenged by its overburdened citizens. He makes a somewhat baffling opponent of his privileges throughout the poem: "They say it's some terrorists." The somewhat vague opponent strangely and appropriately reflects the ambiguity of the identity of the terrorist opponent in the "war on terror". Baraka's criticism of Judaism is political and cultural. He uses his poem to challenge the myth of Jewish exceptionalism and the idea that the United States is an inspiring symbol of democracy and freedom. Although it is difficult to analyze "they" because Baraka ends centuries of global, geopolitical and historical circles in order to assume unbreakable access to the scope of repression:

They say it's some terrorist,

some barbaric

A Rab,

in Afghanistan

It wasn't our American terrorists

It wasn't the Klan or the Skin heads

Or the them that blows up nigger

Churches, or reincarnates us on Death Row

In line such as “they say” who says? Who do saying,” the arc remains open to the whole poem and builds every line that comes later. All, but 44 of the last 207 lines of the poem begin with the word “who.” These lines incorporate items and relative queries that simultaneously enhance the movements and history of “them” while questioning them:

They say (who say?)

Who do the saying

Who is them paying

Who tell the lies

Who in disguise

Some of Baraka’s inquiries are very definite, such as “Who genocides Indians,” “Who invaded Grenada,” and others are overall, such as “Who blew up the Maine,” Who tell the lies,” “Who the biggest executioner,” and “Who make money from war.” It is important not to read each “who” either as an interrogation or as a relative pronoun presenting a subject item. The pool of both do brightly at once, identifying “them” and asking “them.” The repetition of “who” clauses constitutes a voice of a night owl, that is impersonated to monitors events. Thus, Baraka's voice, as a live voice, aims to expose prejudices in his reign. The first stanza begins with Baraka’s quest to discover the new heart attack either outside or within America, or both. In fact, it’s not so much an attempt of discovery as an attempt of detection. For him, what should be revealed is hypocrites (Lee 2004,122):

Who had the slaves

Who got the bux out the Bucks

Who got fat from plantations

Who genocided Indians

Tried to waste the Black nation

By recounting the atrocities caused or ignored by the US government, Baraka demands the moral powder America claims to adapt to. The recurring “who” signifies historical figures who were involved in civil rights movements, leftist liberty battles, activists, eliminated leaders, and those who repressed

them. The poem's peculiar consistency of historical discrimination is reflected in its vast names of heroes and adversaries (LIano 2006, 9).

"Somebody Blew Up America" fills both poles to a large extent. Strategically, the various historical and political perspectives are undeniable to demonstrate the global reach and influence of American supremacy. Baraka reveals how American society exploits, marginalizes, and disenfranchises Blacks, propagating their suppression. The disguised text of the poem advocates that the world's tragic events over the last century implies American patterns. The speaker immediately questions "who killed Malcolm X, Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Salvador Allende, Laurent Kabila, Patrice Lumumba, Steve Picco, Huey Newton, Midgar Evers." Rosa seems such a conspiracy theory query, and a white capitalist global power structure ends progressive advertising. Baraka can't publicly accuse the CIA of the assassinations of these rebels, but he can confirm that American policy, encouragement, and fingerprints were on the weapons that killed them (Dowdy, 64-66)

In its repeat of "Who's", the poem is done with a crazy gothic comedy bird pointing to the libidinal surplus that conspiracy theorizing carries with it. Thus, Baraka's poem thus put forward the dangers of the slippery rational of conspiracy theories (Metres 2007, 222). Lines such as "Who own the oil," "Who own the soil," "Who own the air/ Who own the water," and "Who own the ocean" submit a cruel intent to create the very materials that save life, and to control citizen's fundamental ability to breathe and eat. Moreover, lines such as "Who define art / Who define science," "Who own this city," and "Who make the laws" indicate that American commercial controls the organizations that delimit the world and manage right from wrong. Additionally, "they" "make money from war" and "want the world" to be "ruled by imperialism and national / oppression and terror / violence, and hunger and poverty." These lines inspect Baraka's ploy to challenge official public dissertation in a war on terrorism that America is fighting to bring democracy, freedom and peace to the overburdened places of the world. Instead of the "war on terror" and the 'war on poverty," Baraka claims that there are wars to support terrorism, repression, poverty, shortcomings and wide-ranging discrimination that enable them. Three lines near the end of the poem show the speaker mocking prominent conservatives for their support of these imperial power organizations (Dowdy, 2007, 65).

The twenty-six-line movement of "Somebody Blew Up America" instantly followed the four lines listing the 4,000 Israeli workers voiced "to stay home that day" and the cunning line about Ariel Sharon incites such debate. As

in the introductory lines of the poem, Baraka explicitly declares “they,” before turning back to the more religious questioning of who is responsible for evil and who is the owl itself. “Somebody Blew Up America” dramatizes the weakness and temptation in a totalizing critique of empire. The most controversial passage reads: “Who told 4000 Israeli workers at the Twin Towers / To stay home that day / Why did Sharon stay away?” These lines refer to a widely debunked conspiracy theory suggesting that Israeli or Jewish workers were forewarned of the 9/11 attacks. By invoking this narrative, Baraka is criticized for perpetuating an anti-Semitic trope, as it insinuates Jewish complicity in global tragedy, echoing a long history of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that show Jewish people as shadowy manipulators of world events. Baraka defended the poem as a critique of American and Israeli foreign policy, arguing that his intention was to question imperialist actions and promote anti-Semitism. However, the inclusion of such lines clearly tapped into anti-Semitic themes, which marred the reception of the poem. The backlash led to Baraka being stripped of his title as New Jersey’s Poet Laureate in 2003, and the position itself was ultimately abolished. Among the disputations in Baraka’s poetry is the sustained power of his poems, that is profound and deeply rooted as a stirring durable responses, despite their evident substance in specific historical perspectives (Kimmelman 2005, 31).

Baraka obliterates cultural, historical, and geopolitical alterations and speaks of happenings about which he has deep knowledge to construct a comprehensive condemnation of American transgressions. His authority comes in part from his participation as a member of a marginalized group. However, it is the product of his denial of negotiation or fear of retaliation. Basically, his voice shows great expectations in his role as a populist manifestation, capable of identifying people's experiences and events that characterize them :

Who knew the World Trade Center was gonna get bombed

Who told 4000 Israeli workers at the Twin Towers

To stay home that day

Why did Sharon stay away ?

Who, Who, Who?

These lines can be cited as an indication of Baraka's anti-Semitism, which will lead entirely to requests to abolish his job. Along with the lines concerning Sharon and the staff of Israel's World Trade Centre, he uses a variety of radical conclusions and prepares the reader to determine the assistance of the same and all of them. The pool applies all these images as a peak rather than initially

engaging its readers in order to turn their perception into a larger conclusion. Scientists presented various conclusions of anti-Semitism in Baraka's poetry. Some view it as an indicator of his comprehensive political radicalism, which led him to embrace conspiratorial thinking as he sought for systemic explanations for oppression. Others argue that Baraka's anti-Semitism reflects a deeper problem within certain strands of Black nationalist assumption, which now and again framed Jewish people as symbolic of white capitalist corruption.

3- Conclusion

The September 11, 2001 attacks inspired numerous poems, reflecting the political, and communal impact of the event on individuals and the public consciousness. Amiri Baraka's "Somebody Blew Up America" is a complex and multifaceted poem, producing his lifelong commitment to social justice and his evolving radicalism. However, the poem is also marked by moments of anti-Semitism, which sparked widespread controversy. While Baraka's intentions may have been to critique imperialism and oppression, his use of anti-Semitic tropes has marred his legacy, forcing readers and scholars to deal with the intersection of radical politics, race, and prejudice in his work. Ultimately, any literary research into Baraka's poetry must contend with the duality of his legacy: his powerful critiques of racism and capitalism alongside the presence of anti-Semitic themes in some of his writings. The stiffness between these elements continues to incite debate, making Baraka a deeply significant, if controversial, figure in American literary and political history. Baraka's poem criticizes Israeli strategies, and the U.S.- Israel relationship. Additionally, the poem is a broad critique of America's role in global violence and historical discrimination. Baraka's use of the rhetorical device "Who?" is intended to incite belief about obscured power organisations, though the orientations to Israel have elaborated this message. However, the poem raises interrogations about who was responsible for the attacks, leading to allegations of anti-Semitism. "Somebody Blew Up America" serves as a powerful archetypal of protest poetry, depending on Baraka's long-standing undertaking to challenge the political and social prejudices confronted by oppressed peoples worldwide. Baraka's critique of American policies, Jewish power, and imperialist strategies can be approved as part of a broad motivation for a revolutionary renovation of society.

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