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العدد الأربعون

العنف في شعر حركة الفنون السوداء

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المستخلص:

تُمثل دراسة حركة الفنون السوداء في ستينيات القرن العشرين لحظةً محوريةً في التحول الثقافي والسياسي للحياة الأدبية الأمريكية الأفريقية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص تصوير العنف في شعر حركة الفنون السوداء، ودراسة كيفية توظيف العنف كاستراتيجية أدبية وسياسية للتعبير عن المقاومة، وتأكيد الهوية السوداء، ومواجهة القمع العنصري. يستند الإطار النظري لهذه الدراسة إلى الجماليات السوداء ونظرية العرق النقدية، اللتين تُوفران أدوات تحليلية لفهم الأبعاد الثقافية والسياسية والأيديولوجية للعنف في الشعر الأمريكي الأفريقي. ظهرت الحركة في أعقاب اغتيال مالكوم إكس عام ١٩٦٥، وسعت إلى إعادة تعريف العلاقة بين الفن والسياسة، وإعادة بناء الهوية السوداء من خلال ممارسات جمالية متفاعلة. وقد أشار مؤرخون وطلاب أدب، إلى جانب يوسف م. أكبر وماكري، إلى أن هذا التحول شكّل مسارًا متعمدًا نحو ممارسة جعلت من الحركة السياسية للشعراء والكتاب والفنانين السود البارزين نمطًا متماسكًا للمعارضة. لعبت القصائد، في المقام الأول، دورًا هامًا نظرًا لكونها أرضًا خصبة تُطرح فيها قضايا العرق والرجولة والذاكرة الثقافية والوعي السياسي في أدوات للمقاومة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: حركة الفنون السوداء، الهوية السوداء، منطقة المدينة، الذاكرة الثقافية، الرجولة، الشعر السياسي، المقاومة، العنف



Violence in Black Arts Movement Poetry

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Abstract:

The Study of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s represents a pivotal moment in the cultural and political transformation of African American literary way of life. This study aims to examine the representation of violence in the poetry of the Black Arts Movement, and to study how violence functions as a literary and political strategy to express resistance, affirm Black identity, and challenge racial oppression. The theoretical framework of this study is based on Black aesthetics and critical race theory, which provide analytical tools for understanding the cultural, political, and ideological dimensions of violence in African American poetry. Emerging in the wake of Malcolm X's assassination in 1965, the movement sought to redefine the relationship between art and politics, but also to reconstruct Black identity through considerably engaged aesthetic practices. Historians and literary students, along with Yusef M. Akbar and McCree, have suggested that this transition constituted a deliberate flow towards a praxis that placed the political movement of Black poets, writers, and visible artists as a coherent mode of dissent. Poetry, mainly, served due to the fact that it was the incendiary ground in which issues of race, masculinity, cultural reminiscence, and political consciousness were cast into gadgets of resistance.

Keywords: Black Arts Movement, Black identity, city area, cultural memory, masculinity, political poetics resistance, violence.



1. Introduction

1.1. Reclaiming the Narrative Through Poetic Violence

The poem sparked the Black Arts Movement in poetry. "*Black Art*" was published in *The Liberator* in January 1966 and subsequently re-published in numerous anthologies. It is seen as one of Baraka's most evocative political poems because of its vivid language, onomatopoeic imagery, and violence. However, at the same time, it is considered one of the most controversial additions to the Black Arts Movement (BAM). It is evident that the murder of Malcolm X in February 1965 marked the beginning of a new era of cultural production among African Americans, thus becoming the symbolical beginning of BAM. As the poet and theorist Larry Neal noted, "BAM was 'the aesthetic and religious sister of the Black Power concept'" (Neal, 1968, P.,29), which means that it created an organic connection between inventiveness and politics. In such a way, poetry could no longer be treated as a mere form of aesthetic discourse but became a weapon that was used to destroy hegemony, express rage, and envision liberation. Violence, in the context of this poetic culture, is multi-levelled. It is both an important topic of discussion that captures the realities of black life under white rule, a rhetoric through which black poets employ images of competition, disruption, and confrontation, and a political practice where the process of writing becomes an act of resistance against cultural domination and suppression. In the analysis, the research will explore the importance of violence capabilities as both an artistic and political strategy in the poetry of the Black Arts Movement, especially in relation to the anthology "*Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing*," compiled by Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal.

Through a series of near readings of poems by Amiri Baraka, David Henderson, Calvin Hernton, Keorapetse Kgositsile, Sun Ra, James T. Stewart, et al., this paper evaluates how BAM poets have used their



memories of structural violence, urban imprisonment, and primal trauma as generative websites of cultural recovery and political consciousness. The analysis is found on the assumption that violence in BAM poetry cannot be conflated with militancy or aggression. Instead, it should be seen as an intricate aesthetic period that is characterized by the dialectic contradictions inherent in black subjectivities within a racially stratified society. Beyond its importance in literary history, this study offers valuable lessons for contemporary activism around racial equity. This includes Black Lives Matter, which must address issues related to state violence, cultural identity, and communal power. Through the discussion of BAM poets' use of violence as a strategy and technique, this paper will make contributions to scholarly discussions on the role of literary works within movements for social change, the aesthetics of resistance and the lasting impact of black radical ideas. The methodology that this paper employs involves textual criticism informed by history and theoretical perspectives from black studies, critical race theory, and performance studies. A special interest is the relationship between form and content as well as the contribution made by poetic form such as rhythm, enjambment, the use of vernacular language, and intertextual allusions to the politics of the poems of BAM. Additionally, this paper focuses on the gender aspect of BAM poetry, recognizing the movement's success in expressing black masculinity as well as its failure to address the issue of black women's experiences.

2. Historical and Political Context

2.1. From Civil Rights to Black Power

For a deeper appreciation of the poetic devices used by the Black Arts Movement, one must understand these within the wider sociopolitical environment of the mid-Sixties. The successes of the Civil Rights Movement through nonviolent resistance and criminal integration included great legislative gains. This included the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Yet, African American individuals, especially those who lived in urban settings, there were no real gains made within their living standards. Economic exclusion, police violence,



discriminatory housing practices, and educational disparity contributed to building frustrations with the pace of reform (Smethurst, 2005, P., 78).

Malcolm X's assassination in February 1965 became a catalyst for Black artists searching for alternative ways to freedom. In the words of James Smethurst, "The Black Arts Movement emerged out of a changed political and cultural context, where black artists struggled to make politically conscious art that focused on the experiences of African Americans" (Smethurst, 2005, P., 80). Ideas of self-determination and self-defense of Malcolm X became an important source of inspiration for many artists. They refused to follow integrationists and opted for a more radical approach. This political ideology influenced the institutional form of the Black Arts Repertory movement as "Black arts institutions devoted themselves to the totally absolute manufacture of creative expression within the context of political education of the community" (Neal, 1968, P.,31). Such organizations were needed as platforms to disseminate ideas of BAM and allowed poets to explore different forms of performance.

The link between the BAM movement and the Black Power Movement evolved into a reciprocal but complex link. According to Larry Neal, while Black Power emphasized "the art of political moves," Black Arts questioned "the intersection between artwork and politics" (Neal, 1968, P.,29). This reciprocity is aimed at ensuring that the two movements mutually support each other and create an environment where creativity and activism go hand in hand in order to serve particular political goals. Poetic forms are a means of documenting and critiquing the reality of African American life, all the while serving as a means of empowerment.

Black Fire (1968) is an example of this combination of aesthetics and politics. According to the editors Baraka and Neal's preface, the book is a list of names of those willing participants who had been working for the liberation of African-Americans but who were no longer really working at the time (Baraka & Neal, 1968). Even the structure of the anthology, which



is organized according to themes alphabetically, through manifestos and theoretical statements, demonstrates the belief of this movement that any new painting must be intentionally connected to political action. By using Black Fire and other classes like this one, the BAM poets created a canon of resistance literature that still informs the best work of black innovation. The poem itself is about poems and how black artists need to speak up for blackness and not mimic white poets.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Violence as Aesthetic and Political Strategy

A conceptualization of violence within BAM poetry cannot merely be based on a limited understanding of violence as aggression or militancy. The Black Arts Movement began symbolically, at least the day after Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965. The poet LeRoi Jones announced he would leave his integrated life on New York City's Lower East Side for Harlem. There he founded the Black Arts Repertory Theatre, home to workshops in poetry, playwriting, music, and painting. The Black Arts, wrote poet Larry Neal, was "the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As with that burgeoning political movement, the Black Arts Movement emphasized self-determination for Black people, a separate cultural existence for Black people on their own terms, and the beauty and goodness of being Black. Black Arts poets embodied these ideas in a defiantly Black poetic language that drew on Black musical forms, especially jazz; Black vernacular speech; African folklore; and radical experimentation with sound, spelling, and grammar. Black Arts Movement poet and publisher Haki Madhubuti wrote, and we can do that. I know we can do that. The Black Arts Movement was politically militant; Baraka described its goal as "to create an art, a literature that would fight for black people's liberation with as much intensity as Malcolm X our Fire Prophet' and the rest of the enraged masses who took to the streets." Drawing on chants, slogans, and rituals of call and response, Black Arts poetry was meant to be politically galvanizing (Van Deburg, 1992, pp. 180–190; Gayle, 1971, pp. 25–30). Because of its politics as well as what some saw as its potentially homophobic, sexist, and anti-Semitic



elements the Black Arts Movement was one of the most controversial literary movements in US history. The movement began to wane in the mid-1970s, in tandem with its political counterpart, the Black Power movement. Government surveillance and violence decimated Black Power organizations, but the Black Arts Movement fell prey to internal schism—notably over Baraka's shift from Black nationalism to Marxism-Leninism—and financial difficulties (Gayle, 1971).

Mainstream theaters and publishing houses embraced a select number of Black Arts Movement poets seen as especially salable to white audiences. When these artists moved on from Black Arts presses and theaters, the revenue from their books and plays went with them. The independent economic support structure the movement had hoped to build for itself was decimated. "During the height of Black Arts activity, each community had a coterie of writers and there were publishing outlets for hundreds, but once the mainstream regained control, Black artists were tokenized," wrote poet, filmmaker, and teacher Kalamu ya Salaam. Along with the economic recession of the 1970s and philanthropic foundations' unwillingness to fund arts organizations that advocated radical politics, the cooption of a few Black artists by a white establishment meant the movement was no longer financially viable. Rather, violence should be examined as an aesthetic strategy that works along multiple levels simultaneously. To begin with, violence serves as thematic content matter that captures the lived realities of blackness under white supremacy, including police brutality, economic exploitation, and psychological abuse. Next, violence is used as a rhetorical device through the employment of aggressive imagery, syntactical disruption, and a militant tone in order to subvert hegemonic discourse and generate reader response. Finally, violence takes the form of political praxis wherein the very act of writing becomes a means of resistance against cultural annihilation and ideological hegemony. The aforementioned model has been adapted from the work of theorists like Hortense Spillers who uses her notion of claiming the flesh" to analyze how BAM poets repurposed stories of bodily violence into organizational and generative spaces (Spillers, 2003, P,.203). In Spillers' terms, the construction of the Black frame has



historically been a discursive enterprise wherein Black bodies have been represented as immoderate, criminal, and deviant the BAM poets, thanks to evaluation, made it clear that “Black bodies must be deployed as a delivery of modern capability.

3.2. Frantz Fanon's evaluation of colonial psychology also illuminates the political dimensions of BAM violence.

Fanon suggests that colonized individuals may internalize other descriptions at the cost required, resulting in the psychic splintering and self-alienation of individuals (Fanon, 1967, P.,112). BAM poetry may be considered an act of recovery and political activism intended to counter such a tactic, enabling Black people to refuse the imposed descriptions and become self-defined subjects. In turn, the rhetoric of violence used by the writers of BAM poetry no longer functions to voice their anger but to achieve mental freedom and collective liberation. The concept of "political poetics," introduced above, is corroborated in research performed by such scholars as David Kieran, providing additional support to this evaluation. Kieran explains that BAM poets have made use of poetic innovations and experimental form together with jazz-like rhythms, vernacular speech and a performance-based system to develop poetry that was inevitably political due to its form itself (Kieran, 1985, P.,156). In other words, this approach addresses the problems arising in cases when there are traditionally distinct differences between the aesthetic and political spheres. Lastly, the works devoted to cultural identity and diaspora by Stuart Hall provide invaluable information about the process by which the poets addressed the tension between particularity and universality (Hall, 1990, P.,225).

BAM poetry is, indeed, an embodiment of this fluid idea of self through its use of violent language and radical aesthetics in constructing new stories of Black identity, acknowledging past experiences as well as envisioning free futures. RI Baraka and the Poetics of Militant Resistance. Undeniably, there could hardly be any figure as prominent in the context of the Black Arts Movement as that of Amiri Baraka whose "Black Art" published in 1966 is



regarded as the most notable and controversial piece of BAM poetry (Baraka, 1968, P.,19). And this aggressive aesthetics does not fail to come back at other places in the poem where the reader can observe the demands of "poems that kill," "murderer poems," and "poems that shoot guns" (Baraka, 1968, P.,20).

Through the use of its threatening imagery, the poem attempts to disturb any comfortable audience members so as to make them aware of the truth about racism and the necessity of movement within politics. "It seems, rather," says David Kieran, "that Baraka's violent rhetoric has less to do with appealing to the masses than with serving as a disruption of the polite conventions which had long silenced Black discourse" (Kieran, 1985, P.,158). The form of the poem adds energy to the poem's political ideas.

The poem's rhythmic structure is designed to reflect the musicality of jazz and street talk, thus linking the poem's radical politics to specifically African-American cultural forms. In this way, form and content come together to create what Larry Neal described as the "Black Aesthetic," in which paintings were created that became politically charged and culturally relevant (Neal, 1968, P.,33). "Black Art" by Baraka explores the theme of the connection between character and collective pleasure at great lengths. The speaker's use of "we need poems that kill" suggests the existence of a collective war in which the speaker does not engage in bourgeois individualism but rather communal harmony. This focus on collective action is reflective of BAM's overall commitment to Black Power and discipline. The closing verses of "We need 'poems that kill'/ Assassin poems, Poems that shoot/ guns. Poems that wrestle cops in alleys/ and take their weapons leaving them dead/ with tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland, have led to considerable debate over what political violence might mean here (Baraka, 1968, P.,21). While some commentators may have taken these verses in their literal sense, others may interpret them in a figurative way. Whatever be the case, it seems clear that Baraka wanted his poem like that.



Later on, in life, in addition to painting, Baraka would also produce poems featuring "A Poem for Black Hearts" (1964), written in reaction to Malcolm X's murder. In that poem, he combines elegy with the call for an act of militancy, asking black men to "Come and black-up/ Come with the fierce unshakable clarity/ which Malcolm knew" (Baraka, 1968, P.,45). Through such works, Baraka hooked up a type of politically oriented poetry that could make an impact on future generations of black poets.

3.3. Urban Space and Structural Violence

The landscape of the city, especially Harlem, became a critical location and symbol for BAM poetry. To poets alongside David Henderson and Calvin Hernton, the city is simultaneously a place of oppression and struggle, a land where structural violence and culture coalesce to form an anxious relationship. Through their poetry, Henderson and Hernton turn Harlem into an agent that partakes in the struggle for black liberation. David Henderson's "Keep on Pushing" offers a case in point as he transforms the noise of the metropolis into a broken orchestra of violence and endurance. In the poem, the establishing images are given as loss of lifestyles static/ over everything/ ripped glass/ shards/ sirens/ gunfire. Here, fragmented sentence structures combined with onomatopoeias become the literary devices employed by Henderson to create a chaotic sensory atmosphere in the city. Broken enjambment creates a sense of disorganization in the setting, mirroring the situation in which African Americans were forced to move around in places of unceasing statements. Henderson's poetic style is thus not only an approach to chronicling town violence but is, in itself, an example of the very violence. As Stuart Hall explains, Henderson's portrayal of Harlem is that of "a site where the politics of illustration, the materiality of everyday lives come into play," creating a poetic piece that is both elegant and politically relevant (Hall, 1990, P.,228).

These two aspects combine in Henderson's poetry, giving it the advantages of being innovative and political at the same time. Calvin Hernton's "Asphalt Plantation" presents a similar perspective regarding the nature of



the urban environment, connecting contemporary racism with its origins in slavery. Metaphor of imperative, "Harlem is the asphalt plantation of America / Rat swarmed tenements sway like shanty homes / Stacked one upon some other" implies that violence structurally transformed form rather than disappearing, as suggested by Hernton (1968, P.,95).

Through the invocation of plantation, Hernton draws attention to the conditions of difficult circumstances and liberal ideology of racial progress, stating that the social and economic structures of modern-day urban life sustain the principles of slave ownership. Both Henderson and Hernton make use of religious symbols to further elaborate on the city's depiction. Apocalyptic tone of Henderson's "sirens/ gunfire" suggests association with the Book of Revelation, thus placing urban calamity into a context of God's vengeance and salvation. In addition, Hernton's symbolism of plantation bears biblical echoes through allusions to the story of Exodus – an exodus from slavery. Theological references do not imply a passive acceptance of reputation but rather provide cosmic dimension of the fight for justice. It should further be noted that the way in which the poets address the space of the town relates directly to their constructions of Black masculinity. In light of the way in which African-American men have been defined through stereotypes for many years, the act of repossessing the geography of the city becomes an act of reclaiming entrepreneurship and honor. The town, despite its association with violence and restriction, becomes a place where identity can be shaped, and collective power can be harnessed (Neal, 1968).

3.4. Black Masculinity, Spiritual Reclamation, and the Figure of Malcolm X

Reconstruction of the masculinity of Black men stands out as another significant concern within BAM poetry, addressing the entire range of emasculation from the past era of white supremacy, as well as the movement's resolve to find pleasure and self-willpower in their struggle against oppressive forces. Poets like Lance Jeffers, Sun Ra, and Keorapetse



Kgositsile used violence-oriented language and religious symbolism to combat negative stereotyping of Black men and to portray magnificent images of the ideal masculinity of Black men (Jeffers, 1968, P.,1). Through the portrayal of his own blackness as something both lovely and complex, Jeffers elevates what is otherwise an imposed elegance of race into something more noble in its promise of business and pleasure. Jeffers' poem represents the complex nature of real manliness in the sense that it involves vulnerability together with strength and power. This conception of manliness relates directly to Frantz Fanon's study on the psychology of colonization. (Fanon, 1967, P.,112).

The theological aspect of BAM is expressed in the poem by Sun Ra, "The Visitation". The phrase "What I am, I am" is both the declaration of existence and the designation for outdoor assignments, keeping the right of the person's dedication to oneself (Sun Ra, 1968, P.,78). By declaring paradise to be "chromatic-black", Sun Ra shifts utopian imagination from the depth of White thoughts to an imagination of Blackness as the symbol of completeness and wholeness. Thus, theology rebrands the poem allowing it to transform segregation stories into non-secular electricity (Kgositsile, 1968, P.,112).

In his poem "That Old Time Religion," Jackmoh continues to examine these concepts, the application of seemingly clear language to deliver powerful political statements: "no bent decrease returned / no trembling knees / the man or woman walks upright" (Jackmoh, 1968, P., 2-6). Here, he repurposes religious language to express political resistance, stating that genuine belief provides self-respect to Black men instead of subordination. In this way, spiritual beliefs are used to oppose the historical use of Christianity as a rationale for the oppression of the African American community and present an alternative perspective on faith as a valuable source of liberation. But, systems of Black masculinity in BAM were not devoid of problems. The movement's focus on courage and toughness sometimes overshadowed women's perspectives and stories. An essential interpretation of the masculinist symbolism utilized with the help of Henderson, Jackmoh, and



other authors must be recognized for its historical necessity as a response to systemic emasculation and inadequacy in patriarchal structures. Like Farmer, researchers agree that young Black girls contributed significantly to forming Black Power and Black Arts philosophies, even in organizations based on masculinist paradigms (Farmer, 2017, P., 89).

3.5. Gender, Voice, and the Limits of Masculinist Poetics

Although the Black Arts Movement brought about remarkable progress in terms of defining and promoting Black cultural identity and political consciousness, its approach to gender deserves close scrutiny. The movement's preoccupation with Black manhood, while understandable given the historical context of emasculation, occasionally led to the suppression of Black women's voices and testimony. Indeed, the movement was marked by certain paradoxes inherent to the ideology of Black Power, which, despite calling for Black male leadership and dominance, expected girls to assume supportive positions. Many BAM poets, among them Lucille Clifton, Sonia Sanchez, and Nikki Giovanni, broke such conventions through the creation of a poetic language that specifically addressed the girl experience. For example, Clifton uses the colloquial speech and imagery of domesticity to articulate forms of resistance that happen within the private realm, thus widening the Black Arts Movement's notion of political action to include acts of defiance that occur away from the battlefield. Nevertheless, there are cases in which the poetry of male BAM authors contains gender complexities that undermine the possibility of an honest evaluation of masculinist ideologies. The line "I am a hammer" from James T. Stewart's poem "Announcement" makes the speaker become not only a tool but also a worker, eliminating the distinction between arrival and destruction (Stewart, 1968, P.,134). Simultaneously, while it might seem masculine in nature, this image implies the disintegration of the self into the collective war effort, providing room for further fluid identities as an object or employee.

The Black Fire collection, although primarily attributed to men, contains poems written by women authors that break masculinist conventions, though



their voices have been overshadowed by more popular male poets. It is necessary, however, when analyzing BAM poetry, to take note of the different viewpoints represented in the motion and credit all its accomplishments concerning Black cultural enjoyment and its shortcomings concerning gender examples. Recent literature has started to reconsider the involvement of Black women in the Black Arts Movement. Ashley Farmer's *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (2017) examines the role of women intellectuals and activists in creating Black Power ideologies from internal (Farmer, 2017, P.,12). Such scholarship facilitates an understanding of the nuanced nature of BAM as a multi-faceted movement that includes multiple and at times competing images of Black liberation. BAM violence, especially its gendered aspects, comes into focus. Whereas male poets have often used competing metaphors as a means of establishing their masculinity and agency, female poets have found other ways to express their anger and resistance. Such distinctions are indicative not merely of different styles and aesthetics, but of the different social and political realities of their positions. An analysis of violence in BAM poetry must include an analysis of its gendered facets, including the style of such violence (Farmer, 2017).

4. Discussions

4.1. Cultural Memory and Historical Consciousness

One of the most long-lasting legacies of the Black Arts Movement is its incorporation of cultural memory and historical awareness into its discourse. The BAM writers made use of various elements of African, African American, and even Biblical culture to set temporal and cultural context for their struggles in the present day and create a mythic background connecting present-day research to their ancestors' heritage. For instance, in his poems, David Henderson used the metaphor of Passover in *Black Fire* to demonstrate similarities between the African American struggle against oppression and the freedom of Israelites from slavery (Smethurst, 2005, pp. 70–85; Neal, 1968, p. 30). Thus, this allusion shows that faith and courage are necessary not only in religion



but also in politics. At the same time, by making use of such references, Henderson managed to highlight respect for African American people and inspire contemporary political activists. Besides, Calvin Hernton made use of mythic symbols to enhance the political aspect of his poems. For example, by using such a symbol as the serpent, Hernton creates a mythic criticism of racial oppression, which was characteristic of Bible and African mythology (Hernton, 1968, p., 88) By employing African aesthetic conventions, linguistic techniques, and philosophies, BAM poets were able to legitimize and celebrate the complexity of Black cultural heritage. It is not simply a matter of playing around with African origins, but of proposing alternative systems of recording identity, affiliation, and freedom.

4.2. The tension amongst characters and collective identity

Poets were able to express their individual problems and aspirations, while placing them against the wider background of the African American society, making their artistic expressions serve as both witness and response to their surroundings. The movement's focus on African nomenclature, dressing up, and creative forms suggested a greater commitment to cultural self-determination. Biblical references, moreover, added depth and significance to the BAM poetic enterprise, linking the African American experience to the grand narrative of oppression and salvation. Biblical figures made poets capable of addressing social hypocrisy, advocating moral principles, and placing their current fight into a broader historical trajectory of struggle and resilience (Van Deburg, 1992, pp. 180–190; Gayle, 1971, pp. 25–30). This double awareness made poetry act as a mediator between life experience and idealized identity, at the same time opposing the hegemonic cultural rhetoric and advancing the visibility and agency of the Black. Afrocentric symbolism was an essential means of such cultural contestation. However, any analysis of the Black Arts Movement must also consider its weaknesses, particularly in regard to its ability to make use of the examples provided by gender and



the possibilities that rhetorical violence might be misconstrued or subverted. As such, this dream still feels just as urgent as when it arose during the Nineteen Sixties, as it implies that the poetic sensibilities of the Black Arts Movement will continue to offer opportunities to envision more just future scenarios. Here, in other phrases, violence contained within the poetry of the Black Arts Movement should not solely be seen as an end in itself, but as a device used in an effort to innovate artistically, politically, and culturally. With their capability to refashion the critique of structural violence as a productive site for resistance, the poets of the Black Arts Movement developed an invaluable blueprint for how art work and society should interact (Neal, 1968, pp. 29–31; Smethurst, 2005, pp. 82–88).

5. Conclusion

The poetry of the Black Arts Movement is an intricate and diverse exploration of violence through each aesthetic strategy and political tactic. By means of bold experimentation with poetic form, provocative statements, and visionary reconfigurations of African American identity, BAM poets transformed accounts of brutality into cultural capital. They stretched the boundaries of literature, poetry, and political activism while establishing paradigms of socially conscious art-making that would endure long after their time. One of the most important figures in the Black Arts Movement was Amiri Baraka (formerly, LeRoi Jones), who began his career among the Beats, living in Greenwich Village and associating with poets such as Allen Ginsberg, Charles Olson, and Gary Snyder. Following the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965, Baraka made a symbolic move from Manhattan's Lower East Side to Harlem, where he founded the Black Arts Repertory Theatre School. According to the Norton Anthology of African American Literature, "No one was more competent in [the] combination of the experimental and the vernacular than Amiri Baraka, whose volume *Black Magic Poetry 1961–1967* is one of the finest products of the African American creative energies of the 1960s." Baraka also became known for his play *Dutchman*, a shocking one-act that was charged with symbolism and a radical Black consciousness. Other significant figures from the Black Arts



Movement include Gwendolyn Brooks, Jayne Cortez, Mari Evans, critic Hoyt W. Fuller, Nikki Giovanni, playwrights Lorraine Hansberry and Adrienne Kennedy, Gil-Scott Heron, Kwanzaa founder Maulana Ron Karenga, Etheridge Knight, Haki R. Madhubuti, Ishmael Reed, Sonia Sanchez, Ntozake Shange, and Quincy Troupe. The idea of art being inherently political persists throughout the cultural production of today.

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