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- BERGER Gaston, 1967, *L'homme moderne et son éducation*, Paris, PUF.
- DIAGNE Souleymane Bachir, 2003, « Islam et philosophie. Leçons d'une rencontre », *Diogenes*, 202, p. 145-151.
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DRAMATIZING A MULTICULTURAL AMERICAN SOCIETY IN  
AMIRI BARAKA'S *THE TOILET*

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**Abstract:** Within the realm of black struggle for liberation from racial oppression, Amiri Baraka's *The Toilet* (1967) purports to teach that one must ignore binary oppositions which divide society, to move toward a reconciled community. The scope of this article is to show that to foster and create a harmonious relationship in a given society; people have to go beyond pre-established barriers, represented in *The Toilet* as the gap between the black dialect and the national American language, as well as the hetero and homosexuality divide. *The Toilet* teaches American people of all races to forget the ongoing struggles for a peaceful American society.

**Keywords:** Racial oppression, multicultural society, language, dialect

**Résumé :** Dans la lutte pour la libération de l'oppression raciale des noirs, *The Toilet* (1967) de Amiri Baraka enseigne que l'on doit ignorer les oppositions binaires qui divisent la société afin d'évoluer vers une communauté réconciliée. L'objectif de cet article est de montrer que pour créer et développer une relation harmonieuse dans une société donnée, les individus doivent aller au-delà des barrières préétablies stigmatisées dans *The Toilet* par le fossé entre le dialecte noir et la langue nationale Américaine ainsi qu'entre l'hétérosexualité et l'homosexualité. *The Toilet* montre l'oubli des luttes constantes pour une société Américaine pacifiée.

**Mots-clés :** Oppression raciale, société multiculturelle, langue, dialecte

### Introduction

Through the promotion of an aesthetic of its own, the Black Arts Movement purports to help Blacks gain in dignity and pride, and emphatically eulogizes black unity as a means to promote courage and resoluteness. Its corollary, Black Nationalism is a race-centered, self-deterministic ideology view of black politics. It flourishes in surroundings of sustained marginalization of Blacks by a white power structure, and stipulates that Blacks must split any relations with white people that raise notions of black inferiority and white superiority. Imamu Amiri Baraka is among the most important vocal spokespersons for the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s.

Charismatic founder and leader of the Black Revolutionary Theater, Amiri Baraka is among the most well-known, powerful, and prominent voices of social protest theater in the 1960s and early 1970s. He was not only an artist but also a social activist, cultural theorist, and key player in the social liberation movements of black masses. He is acclaimed as a playwright. Borrowing from the theories of Antonin

Artaud's "Theater of Cruelty," Baraka envisioned an antistructural, confrontational black theater that would push the audience to take action. In his 1965 manifesto of the Black Arts Movement, "The Revolutionary Theater," published in his *Home: Social Essays* (1966) Baraka stubbornly declares: "The revolutionary theater should force change. It should be change." (1966, p. 210) It becomes clear that he makes little to no distinction between the theatrical aesthetic and the social upheaval of the turbulent time of the sixties. His artistic innovation serves to political changes in favor of his people. Amiri Baraka's Black Revolutionary Theater (BRT) during the '60s and '70s offers greatest examples of social protest theater during an important and tumultuous historical moment.

The revolutionary theater needed to be born out of the destruction of former stereotypes created by a system that had destabilized African Americans and their culture. *The Toilet* deals exclusively with the Black male experience in North America. Black English is used in this one-act-play as a way to embrace a distinctly black American identity. First of all, it mentions that Black English obeys a system of grammatical rule, and then reflects Black English style, suggesting the point of view of the masses, their way of looking at life, and a method adapting to their life realities. This article delineates Baraka's *The Toilet* stressing its contribution to reconcile American people. It is entitled: "Dramatizing a Multicultural American Society in Amiri Baraka's *The Toilet*".

*The Toilet* provides positive images of black Americans, and offers some solutions to social problems confronting their community. This article construes this play in terms of its representation of and relationship to the political and economic situation of Blacks: a Marxist task with a focus on race. Reacting to a set of thoughts elaborated by a white dominating society against underclass black people, the black masses develop defiant attitudes that bring about change and revolution. The notions of hegemony and class are, therefore, avoided in this play. Subsequently, this article lays emphasis on Marxism to scrutinize *The Toilet*; it is a theory according to which a text reflects the society that has produced it, and sets against the dominance of a high class.

Based on the theories of Karl Heinrich Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marxist criticism views literary works as reflections of the social institutions out of which they are born. This article maps the encounter of Marxism and black radicalism which are two programs for revolutionary change. It is concerned with the race struggle that black activist writers embrace to express their strife in order to overcome white American domination. Of the many kinds of Marxism this article refers to Black Marxism whose concern is black struggle. It, essentially, refers to Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism: The Making of the Radical Tradition*. (2000)

Dramatizing a multicultural American society in *The Toilet*, Baraka suggests the destruction of language barrier, describing two variants of English and Black English as an emblem of reconciliation of languages. Thus, he represents a

heterogeneous American community in which there is a multiplicity of cultures without hierarchy and crossing identity boundaries.

## I. Destruction of language barrier

### I.I. Describing two variants of English

The first section of this article deals with the semiotic exchange occurring within the dramatic world of *The Toilet* as well as the functions of language at large in the drama. In fact, according to Keir Elam's *Semiotics of Theater and Drama* (1980, p. 136): "it is the discourse level of the drama – the dialogic exchange of information-bearing utterances which constitutes, at the same time, a form of interaction in itself – that is most immediately present to the spectator or auditor." *The Toilet* promotes Black Vernacular English as a genuine language recognized as a language in its own right. It is almost written in this dialect of English.

HINES. (To HOLMES) Man, this cat's in here pulling his whatchamacallit.  
HOLMES. (To LOVE) Yeh. Damn, Love, why don't you go get Gloria to do that stuff for you.  
LOVE. She-et. (Grinning.) Huh. I sure don't need your ol' lady to be pullin' on my joint. (Laughs. HOLMES begins to spar with him.) (I.i.38)

This dialog not only shows that Baraka's play is written primarily for a black audience but also allows the white audience, through the use of vernacular language resonant with the rhythms of black speech patterns, to appreciate and learn about the creativity of black culture. This conversation reveals the linguistics competence of the three characters mentioned that is, the mastery of the rules of the Black Vernacular English in question.

The way of speaking of these black characters is informed by their culture. Considering Geneva Smitherman's *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America*, "Black English, then, is a language mixture, adapted to the conditions of slavery and discrimination, a combination of language and style interwoven with and inextricable from Afro-American culture." (1977, p. 3) Black language is not totally different from Standard English since, it is the combination of African and American languages. Given that Blacks share in the consensus language of the American mainstream, a word's meaning is sometimes the same for black and white people. Take the word "bad" in Perry and Ora's statements:

PERRY. Goddamn; that cat's always going for *bad*. (I.i.48)  
.....  
PERRY. That goddamn Big Shot had to show how *bad* he was. (*Toilet* I.i.50)

For black and white peoples, bad refers to negativity, unpleasantness, and distastefulness. Thus, considering semantics, Black English and Standard English are not separated. Barbara F. Grimes's *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, (1996) and



Charles Frederick Voegelin and Florence Marie Voegelin's *Classification and Index of the World's Languages*, (1977) two reference books on the languages of the world, catalogue Black English as a dialect of English. Virtually all the words used in Black English could be clearly identified in Standard English too, and most of the former grammar is the same as that of the latter. (Pullum, 1999, p. 44)

*The Toilet* represents Black Vernacular English (BVE) because as a dialect of English it deserves respect and acceptance; it has a set of rules of grammar and pronunciation like any language. It shows that Black English, exactly as Standard English, uses the copula which is according to Geoffrey Keith Pullum's "African American Vernacular English Is Not Standard English with Mistakes", "a technical term for the auxiliary verb that takes the forms: be, been, being, am, is, was, and were." (1999, p. 45) BVE characters use grammatical rules which are not totally different from Standard English at a number of points. To some extent, they are massively similar. According to strict rules, in Black English, the use of the auxiliary verb 'to be' signifies that the event reported in each utterance is recurring. For instance, the copula cannot be dropped as it can be noticed in Foots and Hines' utterances:

FOOTS. Well, what the hell am I gonna do, beat on the guy while he's sprawled on the floor. Damn, Ora *you're* pretty lousy sonofabitch.

HINES. Man, Big Shot'd stomp anybody in any damn condition. He likes it when *they're* knocked out first, especially. (I.i.54)

Foots' sentence, "Damn, Ora *you're* pretty lousy sonofabitch," shows that he calls attention to Ora's frequent awful behavior. The recurrence of his manner justifies Foots' use of the copula. The following dialog exemplifies his assumption:

ORA. (Punches HOLMES who's still being held by LOVE) I'm gonna punch you, you prick. Hold the cocksucker, Love.

LOVE. (Releasing HOLMES immediately) I ain't gonna hold him so you can punch him. (I.i.41)

This dialog shows that Ora is eager to beat his classmate when he is defenseless that is, when the latter is immobilized by someone else. This awful attitude explains the use of the copula in Foot's utterance as well as the information delivered by Hines' speech act. In addition to affirmative sentences, among other rules, the copula is used not only in negative sentences but also, when it is in the past tense, when it is infinitival and has the base form "be":

ORA. How come I'm wrong, huh? You know goddamn well that skinny cocksucka over there (at FARRELL) *ain't* got no business down here. He *ain't* gonna do a damn thing but stand around and look. (I.i.46)

.....  
ORA. No hell. I punched the bastid right in his lip. But *he was* making so much noise we thought somebody'd come out and see us so Knowles and Skippy

took him in the broom closet and I cut down the stairs. The stupid bastid *was* screaming and biting right outside of ol' lady Powell's room.

HOLMES. Did anybody come outta there?

ORA. You think *I was* gonna stay around and see? She and Miss Golden after me anyway. (I.i.41)

.....  
ORA. (Without turning around) Yeh (giggling), this *must be* your momma's house. (I.i.37)

The use of the copula in Black English respects some strict rules which are similar to Standard English. *The Toilet* illustrates that the copula at the end of a phrase is always accented, and so it is always retained at the end of an expression. It is also compulsory when it is first-person singular (am). (Pullum, 1999, p. 46)

FOOTS. I'm pushed! There's no reason to stay here. I can't fight the guy like *he is*. (I.i.54)

.....  
FOOTS. That goddamn Van Ness had me in his office. He said *I'm* a credit to my race. (Laughs and all follow.) He said *I'm* smart-as-a-whip (imitating Van Ness) and should help him to keep all you unsavory (again imitating) elements in line. (I.i.51)

In addition to the use of the copula in black speech, the avoidance of consonant clusters is shared with Standard English. The contraction of Love in the following utterance suggests that Standard English and Black Vernacular English have the tendency to avoid consonant clusters in common:

LOVE. Yeh, what the hell is Perry doing bringing Farrell down here with 'em? Shit. (I.i.44)

Love uses one of the numerous "rules operating throughout BEV [Black English Vernacular] which reduce consonant clusters." In his *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*, the linguist William Labov accurately explains that "standard English and most Indo-European languages" share the avoidance of consonant clusters. (1972, p. 98) In black characters' words, there are contraction acts to reduce sentences and avoid consonant clusters. A superficial glance might suggest that black characters leave consonants off the ends of words inaccurately; but it is not so simple. Voiced stop consonants, which are produced with vocal-cord vibration like *b*, *d*, and *g*, are usually omitted if they are preceded by another consonant of the same voicing. (Pullum, 1999, p. 50) For this reason, voiced stop *d* drops after voiced *l* in 'old' which is pronounced ol' in Love and Hines words:

LOVE. She-et. (Grinning.) Huh. I sure don't need your *ol' lady* to be pulling on my joint. (Laughs....) (I.i.38)

.....

HINES. Damn if I know. I think he's still in Miss Powell's class. You know if he missed her class she'd beat his head, and then get his *ol' lady* to beat his head again. (I.i.39)

In these utterances, black characters are endowed with a linguistic competence. Their mastery of the grammatical rules of Black Vernacular English is a fact. As a result, *The Toilet* promotes this dialect as a well-formed set of rules of pronunciation and grammar. It highlights the shared semantics and grammatical rules among other things, the use of the copula and the avoidance of consonant clusters. Thus, it confirms Black Vernacular as a variety of English language which pervades the dramatic world in question in Amiri Baraka's play. It eulogizes this English dialect, showing that it successfully combines African language and a foreign language.

### I.2. Black English: Emblem of Reconciliation of Languages

Amiri Baraka uses Black English to help potential readers to look at it objectively and appreciate its merits so that it can be considered as an emblem of reconciliation of languages. He highlights its close relation to a language of much higher prestige, Standard English. Pullum clearly shows that black communications and Standard English are "two very closely related languages." (1999, p. 41) *The Toilet* shows that Blacks succeed to forge a genuine culture on the basis of two previously different cultures. It displays the interconnection of Black English and Standard English which are two variants of the English language. For instance, the term "*baby*" in Ora's words has a real colored ring. According to Claude Brown in *Manchild in the Promised Land* (2012), this female address used by a black man to identify a male addressee means: "Man, look at me. I've got masculinity to spare." To display the meaning of black masculinity, it has to be said with strength in men's voices. (2012, p. 153)

ORA. (Bending over as if to talk in KAROLIS' ear) Hey, *baby*, why don't you get up? I gotta nice fat sausage here for you. (I.i.50)

.....  
ORA. (Looking over his shoulder...grudgingly having to smile too) I'd rub up against your momma too. (Leaning back to KAROLIS.) Come on, *baby*...I got this fat ass sa-zeech for you! (I.i.51)

.....  
ORA. (To PERRY) Fuck you, tar *baby!* (I.i.52)

Using a female address term with a male, Ora does not add a word in the English vocabulary rather, he gives to a preexistent word a new meaning according to the tone of his voice and this attitude enriches the whole American community. In America, Black English style is situated in African surroundings. From a strictly linguistic standpoint, it is noticed that West African languages are tone languages: speakers rely on the tone with which they utter syllables, sounds, and words to transmit their meaning. Whereas English is relatively limited in its use of the features

of tone to indicate meaning; African languages have a very multifaceted, highly sophisticated classification of tone. American English speakers of African descent are caught between their native African tongue which is a tone language, and the toneless English language they were obliged to adopt. Thus, they apply the abstract African concept of tone to English. (Smitherman, 1977, p. 135)

Black American language has its source in African surroundings. At their arrival in the New World, Africans had their language that they adapt to English in order to communicate with white people and slaves. African slaves brought with them their way of behaving, their languages and their means to exchange information as well. This is what Cedric J. Robinson's *Black Marxism: The Making of the Radical Tradition* suggests, saying that:

The cargoes of laborers also contained African cultures, critical mixes and admixtures of language and thought, of cosmology and metaphysics, of habits, beliefs, and morality. These were the actual terms of their humanity. These cargoes, then did not consist of intellectual isolates or deculturated Blacks – men, women, and children separated from their previous universe. (2000, p. 121)

Cedric Robinson sheds the spotlight on the double consciousness of American people of African descent. He suggests that black culture and black language as well reconciles two previously opposed cultures and languages. To show that black people does not reject Standard English as an oppressive language, George uses it with Black English Vernacular in the same discourse:

GEORGE. Because there wasn't a goddamn reason in the world for you to hit Donald like that. (Going to help FARRELL up.) Damn, Ora, you're a wrong sonofabitch, you know that? (I.i.48)

George alternates Standard English and Black Vernacular English. This quotation lays emphasis on black people's double consciousness and cultural hybridity. The use of black language in Baraka's play shows that black people do not pay attention to the linguistic profiling which disfavors Black Vernacular English rather, they preserve their language. Black characters speak sometimes Standard English to depict that Blacks decide freely to maintain their contacts with white people despite past sufferings:

HINES. Boy, if you kick me, you'll die just like that...with your skinny ass leg up. They'll have to build you a special coffin with a part for your leg.  
HOLMES. (Backing away, and then turning on HINES. Laughing) Let's get this sum'bitch, Willie.  
HINES. (Backing away, now kicking and swinging...but just timing blows so they won't strike anyone) Goddamn, Johnny Boy, you a crooked muthafucka. You cats think you can mess with the kid? (I.i.39-40)

The first Hines' speech act displays his mastery of Standard English, and his last utterances depict black semantics. The struggle against racial domination is transferred in the insistence to preserve Black Communications. This dialog demonstrates that black speakers have their own distinctive and worthy contributions to make to American life and culture. *The Toilet* describes the avoidance of linguistic struggle for the happiness of the whole American society. Far from wishing an amalgamation of different cultures in the United States this play portrays a rich community where languages are interconnected and do not exclude each other. It represents the black cultural reality outlined years ago in Du Bois' "Strivings of the Negro People":

One ever feels his two-ness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He does not wish to bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he believes . . . that Negro blood has yet a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon. (1897, pp. 194-195)

The nationalist feeling of the black American described by Du Bois in his "Strivings of the Negro People" is clearly dramatized in *The Toilet*. Baraka's play is useful and relevant to the lives and daily struggles of black people against racism. Black English is then the sign that black people succeed to go beyond the binary opposition between black and white people to form a reconciled and healthy American society. It suggests the inner strength of the black people who does not reject its language despite the prestige of the national standard language. Consequently, *The Toilet* refers to the American society as a rainbow that is, a community consists of different types of people.

## II. Heterogeneous American community

### II.I. Multiplicity of cultures without hierarchy

American society is constituted by different cultures; *The Toilet* describes a multicultural community which does not disfavor a minority. It does not proclaim some discourse to be the norm nor dismiss alternative ones in order to avoid the "struggle of human discourses" as it is outlined in Kienpointner Shi-xu's *Discourse as Cultural Struggle* (2007, p. 7). *The Toilet* represents an American society in which every individual is free to speak the language of his choice. It describes an American society without the oppression based on the seemingly demeaning difference of black language. As such, this play is the counter-factual interpretation of multiculturalism.

Baraka dramatizes the cherished dream of a heterogeneous United States which encompasses a multiplicity of cultures without hierarchy. According to Molefi Kete Asante's *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance*: "This multiplicity of cultural centers revolving around respect and equality is the only viable future for the United States. In some ways, this could be a model for the world where we know the nearly 2000 ethnic groups will not disappear but could live in a peace where there is mutual respect." (2007, p. 37) Baraka's dramatic work portrays a free society in which black speakers can freely speak standard or nonstandard English without being oppressed or rejected by black or white community. Black students are not offended by their instructor because they are Black Vernacular speakers:

FOOTS. That goddamn Van Ness had me in his office. He said I'm a credit to my race. (Laughs and all follow.) He said I'm smart-as-a-whip (imitating Van Ness) and should help him to keep all you unsavory (again imitating) elements in line. (I.i.52)

Van Ness does not mind the specific language of black students; he does not order them to abandon the language that singularizes their people. He rather cares for the physical violence of Footh's mates. In like manner, Farrell the unique white student of the play understands Blacks' conversation and does not try to correct their presupposed mistakes since he does not have a mistaken assumption about Black Vernacular English. Black characters do not hide their language to Farrell while the latter is not destabilized by this in-group language:

HINES. Donald Farrell? What the hell's he doin' down here? *Where the hell is Fooths?* (I.i.44)

.....  
ORA. How come I'm wrong, huh? You know goddamn well that skinny cocsucka over there (at FARRELL) *ain't got no business down here. He ain't gonna do a damn thing but stand around and look.* (I.i.46)

Although black speakers know Standard English they choose to speak freely and fluently their own language. *The Toilet* dramatizes black people's dream to be in an American community in which Blacks are free to speak the language of their choice. It displays the same idea as Molefi Asante's *Afrocentric Manifesto* according to which to be black is to use the language of black people, "to express the most progressive political, cultural and ethical interests, that, in a racist society, must always be for human liberation and, thus, against all forms of oppression." (2007, p. 154) Black speech has always been seen as different. Traditionally, it is a demeaning difference. Baraka dramatizes Black Vernacular English, restricted formerly to the black masses and unknown or denied by others, to be rediscovered and understood. *The Toilet* depicts the everyday speech of millions of people in mainly segregated black communities. Baraka does not care the fact that white people ways of talking are exalted as standard and does ignore that the language of other ethnic minorities is

mentioned as deviant. (Pullum, 1999, p. 40) His play shows that Black English speakers cross boundaries of the black community first, and of the different American cultures second.

In Western society, individual choice is highly valued. For instance, the United States was founded on the principles of individual liberty, personal privacy, and equality. Such principles ensure that each individual is free to make the most intimate decisions free from governmental interference and discrimination. This is evident in Hazel Rose Markus and Barry Schwartz's "Does Choice Mean Freedom and Well-Being?" (2010). Liberty to have choice is clearly dramatized in *The Toilet* since; black students freely use African American Vernacular English at school. The most interesting element is that Farrell, the unique white character of the play, is not puzzled by this dialect. Inside the black community or else, among black characters, he does not behave as the dominant and superior figure. Obviously his presence does not impede them to speak easily and continuously Black English.

This play maintains that American society cannot be divided by the gap between black and white, or/and the binary opposition between minority and majority. It suggests that difference must not lead to the division of a given society but on the contrary it must lead to enrich society; be it culturally or economically. The dramatization of different languages and sexual orientations represents the overcoming of all antinomies for the common ideal of American peoples. From this vantage point, this article demonstrates that the obvious variances of language and identity which divide the Americans can be resolved within the multicultural American society.

## II.2. Crossing Identity Boundaries

Amiri Baraka's *The Toilet* proposes ways by means of which racism can be overcome. On the whole, it pinpoints a multicultural American society where ideas and competence compete, without alienating a given minority to the profit of a dominant majority. Far from praising minority sexual orientation, such as homosexuality, it mentions the diversity of sexual orientations. It promotes freedom of choice seemingly indispensable for a wealthier society. *The Toilet* leads people to understand and why not accept the life choice of an individual even if, one does not share it. Through homosexuality it dramatizes the concept of freedom cherished in the fight against racism. Seen in this way, this play infers that the survival of the American cultural diversity depends upon forging a new means to build alliances above and beyond petty issues like language interwoven with culture and sexual orientation.

*The Toilet* refers to the collective rationality of black Americans requiring that they pursue peace. It dramatizes the very figures of freedom itself. Beyond the pleasure principle, the issue of freedom identifies the political experience of black masses. Baraka's play insists on Blacks' freedom of choice which is quite central to leading a good and happy life; mentioning that the role of freedom, in helping them

to achieve what they may value, is perspicuous. It sheds light on the conditions for Blacks' free development and activity under their own control; so that the intrinsic importance of their actions is attached to having choices. The characterization of Blacks' freedom is epitomized by homosexuality. The purpose of this sub-section is not to prove whether or not homosexuality is right or wrong, rather it presents the latter as the embodiment of freedom of choice. It pinpoints Baraka's vision of freedom relating to the negation of oppressive authorities.

Amiri Baraka typifies the progressive view of homosexuality. He indicates that "it is a normal variant in the human condition and that homosexual behavior is natural." (*The World Book of Encyclopedia*, 1990, p. 293) This progressive view of homosexuality is reinforced by a psychiatric analysis that Nathaniel S. Lehrman's "Homosexuality: Some Neglected Considerations":

In the United States, homosexuality was considered an illness or perversion until 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association decided to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders, without morally judging it as sin or crime. Thus, homosexuality could be seen as an acceptable alternate lifestyle. The definitional change helped to make homosexuality, once a felony, respectable. (2005, p. 80)

The homosexuality of Karolis is suggested by the following speech acts; the first alludes to fellatio, the second refers to sodomy while the third directs attention to the public expression of gay sexual orientation:

ORA. (Bending over as if to talk in KAROLIS's ear) Hey, baby, why don't you get up? I *gotta nice fat sausage here for you.* (I.i.50)

ORA... (Leaning back to KAROLIS) Come on, baby... I *got this fat ass sa-zeech for you!* (I.i.51)

PERRY. (Laughing) *The letter Karolis sent Foots telling him he thought he was "beautiful" ... and that he wanted to blow him.* (I.i.56)

The sausage is a phallic food related to male sexual powers. Ora's masculinity coupled with his proposal of a "nice fat sausage" to his male friend undermines his reference to the homosexuality of his addressee Karolis. (I.i.50) His words allude to the devouring of sausage meat and obviously to oral sex. His obscene offer of "fat ass" (I.i.51) draws the attention to anal sex enjoyed by gay people. Given that Footh and Karolis are both men, the content of the letter sent to Footh shows that Karolis is attracted to him and undeniably has a homosexual orientation. (I.i.56)

The assumed homosexuality of Karolis (I.i.56) dramatizes the Utopian notion according to which "we all love to be flattered and to please ourselves with our own notions." (Thomas More, *Utopia* I2) This attitude represents the black community as a people made up of persons who admire themselves. Karolis' homosexuality



suggests that the first experience of Blacks with white people had been negative so they tend to turn to their own culture to preserve it and avoid amalgamation. As a matter of fact from a behaviorist's explanation for homosexuality, delivered in Joanna Barnecka, Kinga Karp, and Mie Lollike's typescript *Homosexuality*, if the first sexual experience had been negative the person would tend to turn to the opposite sex. (2005, p. 10) Under the veil of a revolutionary dramatic fiction, the talk in *The Toilet* is intensely earnest and abounds in practical suggestion.

Homosexuality portrays Blacks' freedom of choice which favors their well-being. It portrays a convenient way of living to escape the danger and tension of an insupportable life. It describes a free black nation. To move from the state of nature, the black homosexual character lives upon what belongs to him without wronging others. Homosexuals cross barriers which confine them within a frame that sometimes makes them unhappy. The black homosexual character, Karolis, lives as he will. In social relations, the issue of homosexuality is generally avoided, and if not, there is an atmosphere of indignation and revulsion around it. (Barnecka, Karp, and Lollike, 2005, p. 46) Individuals in advance take for granted that all the people around them are heterosexuals, so *The Toilet* characterizes homosexuality to depict the diversity of sexual orientations.

Karolis is not influenced by the disapproval of other characters about his sexuality. Homosexuality is then his identity. Despite threat and even physical violence, Karolis, the main male homosexual of the play does not change his mind; he is not just convinced of his choice but he is also ready to defend it. He is ready to fight for his sexual orientation "using only this caution that no pleasure ought to be pursued that should draw a great deal of pain after it" (Thomas More, 2017, p. 62):

KAROLIS. Yeh. That's what I'm going to do Ray. I'm going to fight you.  
We're here to fight. About that note, right? The one that said I wanted to  
take you into my mouth... (I.i.59)

It is important to realize that the point here is not to praise same sex desire as the rightful sexual orientation; rather this sub-section presents homosexuality as a free choice independent from the general tendency of heterosexuality. Karolis then, successfully bans conformism and lives the way he wants rather than following the choice of the dominant heterosexual majority. Homosexuality portrays that construing an action as a choice is a mechanism by which Blacks realize their sense of independence and freedom, working at their happiness. Referred to as a choice, same sex desire is depicted as essential in enabling people to have the opportunity to live the kinds of lives they want. Homosexuality is discussed in this article as convenient choice for the ease and recovery of the black Americans sickened by the evils of racism.

Through homosexuality, *The Toilet* maintains that Blacks' choices enable them to control their destinies and to come close to getting exactly what they want out of any situation. Given that, choice is indispensable to autonomy, which is basic to well-being; it is what enables black people to tell the world, who they are and what

they care about. Every choice they make is a testimony to their autonomy since; they act according to their inclinations. Baraka's work consequently, portrays that "Americans live in a political, social, and historical context that values personal freedom and choice above all else, an emphasis that has been amplified by contemporary psychology." (Hazel Rose Markus and Barry Schwartz, 2010, p. 344) The idea that Blacks are in control of and responsible for their own actions is pervasive and very highly valued since, people are understood to be free individuals who are or at least should try to be liberated from the confinements of history, other people, and society.

Love between people of the same sex is something taboo; it is represented in *The Toilet* to stress the freedom of choice by means of which the oppressed homosexual minority overcomes the persecution inflicted upon them by the dominant heterosexual society.

Characterizing homosexuality, *Toilet* represents loving blackness as political resistance to amalgamation.

#### Conclusion

This article shows that Amiri Baraka's one-act-play entitled *The Toilet* first performed in 1964 dramatizes a hypothetical multicultural American society in which language and identity boundaries are crossed. My point is that people have to go beyond pre-established barriers to fill the gaps in societies, to avoid or stop struggles of minorities represented by black characters and homosexuality. Its focus is on language and sexual orientation. Obviously, there is no reconciliation without prior struggle. To solve the problem of discrimination about race, this play depicts Black English as a means to reconcile black and white people. This language shows that black masses do not entertain constant struggle against white domination. It is not typically an African language totally different from American English.

Blacks share in the consensus language of the American mainstream. A word's meaning is either the same for black and white people, or changes according to the abstract rules of tones they brought from Africa. Displaying black language and homosexuality, Baraka represents the end of clashes in America, as well as some means to avoid barriers and internal and external confinement. He depicts then Blacks' freedom of choice inside and outside their own community. He moves people to not be offended by the life choice of others but rather to respect it. Above all, he portrays the creativity of the masses that merge African language and American language to form a genuine language which deserve respect. Thanks to this combination the United States constitutes a cosmopolitan society.

Amiri Baraka displays a Black Aesthetic whose revolutionary ideology serves as a means of effecting political and social change and aspires to the more monumental and idealistic task of affecting the masses of black people with a new sense of identity. This article interprets *The Toilet* in terms of its representation of the cultural reality of Blacks and its relationship to the political and economic situation of Blacks: a

Marxist task with a focus on race. Of the many kinds of Marxism this article refers to Black Marxism whose concern is black struggle against racial subjugation. This theory is stressed in Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism: The Making of the Radical Tradition*. (2000)

*The Toilet* is a fictional work that has to be distinguished from reality; it describes a remotely possible world. The necessity of studying Baraka's play is sound since, it displays ways by means of which people can go beyond pre-established barriers to fill the gaps in societies. He depicts a counter-factual relationship between dominant groups and minorities that respects the personal freedom of each individual. He reminds the audience of such boundaries within societies shaped by gender, ethnicity, class, life-style etc., which have to be crossed.

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