

DH: Or your current situation that's coming up . . . the legal . . .

AB: No. We're going to be doing a lot of work trying to publicize the case, trying to get the people to come out to the court the sixteenth. We're going to be making that public.

DH: October sixteenth.

AB: October.

DH: Would you like a big . . .

AB: Yes. Oh, yes. We probably will manage. Hopefully we'll manage to get some people there. Although they will probably have a small courtroom, as usual, to keep them out.

DH: Yes. That's the method.

AB: Yes. That's what they do.

DH: Well, I just want to thank you.

AB: O.K.

DH: It really was fascinating.

¹The sentencing stemmed from a June 1979 incident in Greenwich Village in which police interrupted a verbal dispute between the poet and his wife Amina. A conflict ensued between the couple and the police, as Mrs. Baraka went to her husband's defense in the assault upon him by four officers. Baraka was charged with "resisting arrest." Appeals by public and community groups spurred the decision to allow him to serve his ninety-day sentence intermittently. He first reported to the Rikers Island facility at 9:00 a.m. on January 9, 1982, departing at 5:00 the next afternoon—a pattern which is to be repeated for forty-three and a half successive weekends, culminating on November 6.

²Walt Whitman was born in 1819 at West Hills in Huntington, Long Island; he grew up and lived in Brooklyn, New York, and, briefly, in New Orleans. In 1862 he went to Virginia, then Washington, D.C., spending the Civil War years in the Capital as a nurse, later serving with the Department of the Interior. In 1873, he suffered a stroke and recuperated at his brother's house in Camden. Eventually, Whitman bought his own house there in Mickle Street, where he remained until his death in 1892.

³*Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Dial, 1979).

⁴See the introduction and n. 1.

⁵Olson's observation "Pun is rime" occurs in his "Letter to Elaine Feinstein," appended to the essay "Projective Verse," in *Selected Writing of Charles Olson*, ed. Robert Creeley (New York: New Directions, 1966), p. 29.

⁶*Money: A Jazz Opera* (fragments), co-authored with George Gruntz, was produced at the 20th Anniversary of La Mama, in association with the Kool Jazz Festival, July 2-4, 1982.

⁷*Boy and Tarzan Appear in a Clearing!*, with music composed by Hugh Masakela, opened October 9, 1981, at the Henry Street Settlement's New Federal Theatre.

SOUNDING

AMIRI BARAKA

And so the seasons, they tell us
are more important, than ourselves
flies and starlight, all the little
things. Except ourselves. Should you
want one, a self, any way. Detached
from the Death pile of this, the primitive
distortion, still. Prehistoric monsters
cave logic, uncooked stumblings, witchdoctoristic
shit. If you had a self

If you was up under all that pile
If you could still breathe or see
beneath the assault of ancient deadly lies
kept alive by the infinite sucking needles
of white rich craziness, of schizophrenic negro
craziness, the chauvinism of savages, disease
for sale, famous rotting items to be eaten or
smeared in the nose and ears, corpse parts
to paste on the eyes, vomit music, which is
quiet and stinks and full of vague balls
flags made of twilight to wrap around anything
sensitive until it smothers.

(Head smashed through a door
splinters jabbed in the neck
blood is the number to ask for
blind visionaries babbling)

They say everything is more important than a self. The whole group of them. Stashed somewhere between the stars blinking and blue, someone intelligent might find us, very very intelligent. Wizards rattling gourds as your leg is about to drop off. A Muslim appears, A Talmudist, A Christian, A Capitalist economist, the rattling gets stronger and the leg finally drops off gangrenous tootsie roll

No selves, only "eats" and "drinks" and drugs and "fucking." No selves. What about only alone, there is no one else, its ok then, no one can tell. A tree felled in the forest, there's no sound in New York. It doesnt exist then, in Omaha or Heaven. No selves, not together, thinking. Not alive and actually planning in the world to change it. Not no science, no. No selves then, collected, and eyes blinking. None of that. A coffin, lets kill ourselves. Lets get a bomb a big explosive mushroom volcano and drop it on ourselves. No selves. Lets blow up everything. Lets blow up men and women and children and thought and feeling. Lets make it flat and burned. Lets be radioactive and write poems about paths in connecticut. About birdbaths in vermont and wisps of smoke in south hampton. no selves. not even one, except alone. an individual is ok, only alone. not with touching and seeing in it. not with no intimate whispering. Keep bullshit like love out of it. none of that. no selves. only 12 hr barbaric killing of niggers and white ass working class motherfuckers with hard hands.

Bees darting. A cloud. Light dancing. Twiddle dee and tweedle doo and silent bumps. no being and stuff. no wanting except gold vinyl spots. you can want gold vinyl spots. No being more, only being less except you can be more if that is less. Or not real. or dies easy. Or full of shit.

Just death. Call it open up and live. Call it mystery man. Music. Call it hey hey hey eureka and freaka, say, ART! Let it rain fire but it wont because it cdnt in the birdbath martini fingertip silences, pages can be turned but have silly shit in em. quiet death. Cheever in cold. in sides of stuff with no outsides. no connect. no heat except from furnaces if you got oil. no warm—no warm—no meaning. Ashes! Ashes! White people Academy Awards. Ashes! Niggers in dinner jackets! Ashes. Fat nigger with comments. Niggers with pulitzer prize cover story schizophrenia is ok. be an indian. be anonymous. but dont be no indian like brown and off somewhere hurting. be an indian if you aint an indian. if you really an indian be something else. Ashes. Relics. Lets be relics, but not too much of a relic. Not way back to black relics. no black relics. vanished. lied. Stolen. Not like the shit the pope got hid in his museum. something without blood. without sweat. without words passing through ears. Ashes. & no selves. Bombs are cool. Beatniks like bombs. Bombs are cool. Ashes.

Death. Racism. Lies. Chauvinism. Oppression. Exploitation. Frustration. White movies. TV with only Nell Carter and the nigger midget. And Benson. Fake families. Artificial. Be artificial. Be Oscar Wilde. But dont try to fuck. Be cute. but no fucking. Stop fucking. Freaky fucking is ok in a newspaper or rolled up in a window shade. or in a book. No fucking. No babies. No real shit. No cold except cold as nothing nothing out there. Ashes. Let bombs fall. Let killing be everything then nothing. Conan the barbarian. Reagan the Conan. Ashes. Fighting shd be over, peace. not peace where people are happy. but peace of death. death peace. peace of death. silence and ice death ashes. fire is over. traces of fire is ok but no fire in nothing. no heart or eye fire. no fire for food, except if cooked by silent nigger, or laughing nigger, or different kinds of colored darkies, who can be called names.

But no selves, hear? No breathing. No dancing. Except if you bounce. No rhythm. Either be on the wall or off the wall. But be against people having intelligence without degrees. No intelligence without degrees. Be for Norman Podhoretz dream of a world of ashes in which Reagan is crowned Lord God of Barbarians. Uphold Barbarians. Uphold Tarzan. Be Boy. Appoint Cheetah as Civil Rights Commissioner.

Uphold blackface but kill black faces. Darkies are great. Guys who can get along, and Gals. Uphold Gals. Pat em on the ass if it wiggles. Big ass Gals. And ashes. And bouncing. Be for bouncing. Bounce. And Death. Be for death. Death from the skies. Death as a result of barbarian economies. Greed Death. Stupid Death. Hail to Stupid Death & Bouncing. Hail to Awkward Dumb shit. And death. And sky death. And Gestapoes and Nazis. Be for preachers who want to burn books. and Ashes. And bouncing. And death. No selves. No collections of them. Kill collections of selves. Alone is ok. solipsism. greed. individualism. and death. And ashes. And cold sand instead of warmth, or vibrance or rhythms, or intelligence loose in the world. Dead art. Art with feathers. Denying art. Schizophrenic art. Ruler Art. Museum Art. No artists who want information or the world in it.

silence any art with the world in it or close to it or talking or thinking. kill light and heat that is among us. kill us. there is no us. only blindness and ice ages. no science. no love. no reason. no family. no communities of intelligence. no development. no loving human peace. Ashes. Stanley. Living ston. Sky death. No selves. dumbness. dull poems. bouncing. assassinations. klan sympathies. and ashes. and imperialist war. yes, that finally, and everything thing thing thing that supports or justifies it. stupid exclusive national chauvinism and RU (what) and sidekicks and ashes and bouncing atomic war thats what we need atomic war we gonna get it theres no we, us i's is gonna, aint no us/es no no no only death and ashes and bouncing, no selves, fuck you kill you niggers, anythings, nothing just atomic death from rich people there is only ashes and bouncing thats all no love no selves no peace only atomic war and death and ashes thats all no no no self no no no no selves no no no no world no no no no no no

—Written for, and first read at, "Poetry Against The End Of The World," Town Hall, New York City, 26 May 1982.

POEMS

AMINA BARAKA (sylvia jones)

SOMETIMIE WOMAN

i'm a sometimie woman

sometimes i'm good
sometimes i'm bad
sometimes i'm blue
sometimes i'm red

& i'm always black

sometimes i sing
sometimes i cry

& i always hate imperialism

sometimes i read
sometimes i write

& i always dance

sometimes i laugh
sometimes i smile

& i'm always in pain

sometimes i'm open
sometimes i'm closed

& i'm always lookin for freedom

cause i'm sometime woman

always lookin to be free