



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Amiri Baraka collection of unpublished poetry

1959-1965

Sc MG 280

Summary

Creator: Baraka, Amiri, 1934-2014

Title: Amiri Baraka collection of unpublished poetry

Date: 1959-1965

Size: .4 linear feet

Source: Purchase, Phoenix Book Shop, 1988

Abstract: Amiri Baraka's Collection of Unpublished Poetry consists of over two hundred poems, which, according to Baraka, were written between 1959 and 1965. With the exception of three poems, all are unpublished. Most items bear holograph corrections, changes and deletions, and most are short poems of one page in length. Included in the collection is a four-page bibliography compiled by the author containing entries not noted in other publications. Additionally, there is a six-page manuscript entitled "Uncle Tom's Cabin: An Alternate Ending."

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Amiri Baraka collection of unpublished poetry, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Imamu Amiri Baraka is a writer whose variety of forms include drama, poetry, music criticism, fiction, autobiography and the essay. As a major and controversial author, his ideas and art - especially, as the primary architect of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960's - have had a profound influence on the direction of subsequent African-American literature.

Baraka was born Everett LeRoi Jones in Newark, New Jersey of working class parents; he attended Rutgers, Howard and Columbia Universities and the New School for Social Research. He has taught at several universities and founded the Black Arts Repertory Theater School in Harlem in 1964. His literary career began in 1958 when he founded "Yugen" magazine and Totem Press. Although Baraka started publishing in the early 1960's, he did not achieve fame until the 1964 publication of his play "Dutchman," later made into a movie. Other important plays he wrote include "The Slave" (1964) and

"Toilet" (1964). A prolific writer, Baraka has published two books of poetry, "Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note" (1961) and "The Dead Lecturer" (1964). The mid 1960's saw the publication of "The System of Dante's Hell," a novel and "Tales," a collection of short stories. Baraka also wrote a major social-aesthetic study of African-American music "Blues People: Negro Music in White America" (1963).

Baraka's career has gone through a series of dramatic stages, from his Beatnik years in the late 1950's through the early 1960's when this apolitical avant garde writer refused to take action in the world to black cultural nationalist, renouncing the white world in the mid-1960's through mid-1970's, to a Marxist-Leninist rejecting monopoly capitalism since the mid-1970's. In 1974, dramatically reversing himself, Baraka rejected black nationalism as racist and became a Third World Socialist. Some critics see Baraka as one of this century's major literary figures who has significantly affected the course of African-American literary culture.

Scope and Content Note

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Key Terms

Subjects

African American poets
Black arts movement
Poetry -- Collections

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Poems

Titles

Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project

Names

Baraka, Amiri, 1934-2014