



POLITICAL MUDDLE OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT IN *DANCE NATION* (2018) BY CLARE BARRON

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Abstract

The purpose of this analysis is to expose the issue of the political muddle of American government and to find out how the contribution of fictional elements (character, setting, plot/conflict, and stage direction) in revealing the issue of the political muddle of American government. This analysis is done through text-based and context-based interpretation which is related to the concept of *Power Relation* by Michel Foucault. The results of this analysis shows the kinds of the political muddle of American government on the outside and on the inside of America.

Key words: muddle, power, ambition, American government.

A. INTRODUCTION

America has been known as a superpower country. The government is the reason which makes America has a great power. The power of American government is unbeatable. Farley (2015: 4) states that American government spends most of their money to train and protect the US army to make them being great and create an unbeatable power for the political purpose of the government in controlling other countries. However, most of countries in the world are abide to the power of American government. American government abuses the power which they have to reach their ambition. They want to show their power and then control countries in the world. American government negotiates other countries by making a treaty. Ambition to control the world makes American government in a muddle.

American government also makes the politics in their country in a muddle because of their ambition. The government keeps their secret from citizens. Citizens do not get the explanation about the things which the government does. Transparency is not important for the government. Citizens only follow the rules from the government.

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Foreign policy is a device that is needed by America to be connected with other countries. Foreign policy is related to national interest of a country, such as political, economic, military, and humanitarian concerns. America is known as a superpower country after the collapse of Soviet Union and then takes part in United Nations peacekeeping. However, foreign policy of America also include in covert actions to fall down governments that do not have the same idea with America.

America also needs a device to set its country which is known as domestic policy. Domestic policy concerns with the issues about health, law enforcement, taxation, social welfare, etc. Domestic policy is affected in every aspect of life of citizens. Domestic policy tends to ensure the prosperity of life of citizens. However, citizens of America do not live prosperously in their country. Foreign policy and domestic policy are called as “public policy.”

In Longman Exams Dictionary (2006), politic means sensible and likely to gain an advantage. Politic is used to achieve the ambition of an institution for their importance. Meanwhile, in Oxford Dictionary (2019), muddle means bring into a disordered or confusing state. Muddle happens when a problem cannot be solved in an appropriate way.

The aim of this study is to find out how far the play script *Dance Nation* (2018) by Clare Barron reveals the issue about the political muddle of American government. It is also intended to find out how character, setting, plot (conflict), and stage direction give contribution in revealing the meaning of the political muddle of American government.

The analysis of *Dance Nation* (2018) that focuses on analyzing about the political muddle of American government has not been found yet. However, there are two studies that are related to this analysis that give contribution and inspiration in analyzing this play script. They are the study which is done by Warren G. Rochelle (1999), entitled *The Literary Presidency* and the study by Joseph H. Lane, Jr. (2001), entitled *The Stark Regime and American Democracy: A Political Interpretation of Robert Penn Warren's All the King's Men*.

Both of those studies give contribution to the topic of political muddle of American government. The first study discusses about the abuse of power by the president because of his own interests. The second study discusses about the strategy of politicians to face the American democracy by using the needs of citizens. Unlike the previous studies, this analysis focuses on the problem that happens in the politics of America. American government is really obsessed to show their power to the world. They ignore the sense of humanity. They hide behind the word “peace” in creating a war. They are not transparent to citizens. They do not notice the life of citizens. This analysis uses the fictional devices such as character, setting, plot (conflict), and stage direction in revealing the issue of political muddle of American government. Furthermore, this analysis is based on the concept of power relation by Michel Foucault.

The issue about the political muddle of American government is interesting to be analyzed. Ambition of the government makes America become disorganized on the outside and on the inside of America. They are not consistent with the policy that they have made to reach their ambition. This issue is also

exposed in literary work entitled *Dance Nation* (2018) by Clare Barron. Through this play script, she shows the readers about the political muddle of American government. The writer exposes how the politics of America become disorganized on the outside and on the inside of America.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The analysis of the play script *Dance Nation* (2018) by Clare Barron is done through text-based and context-based interpretation. The play script is analyzed by using fictional devices of drama such as character, plot (conflict), setting, and stage direction. The fictional devices of drama is used to reveal the meaning of the play script. Character is used as the representative of American citizens who realize the political muddle of American government. Plot (conflict) is used to show the problem that happens on the outside and on the inside of America. Setting is used to show the condition that creates the political muddle of American government. Stage direction is used to show the movement of the character and the situation in the play script. This analysis deals with the concept of power relation by Michel Foucault.

C. DISCUSSION

This section analyses the fictional devices of drama such as character, plot (conflict), setting, and stage direction to reveal the issue about the political muddle of American government. The political muddle of American government in this analysis can be seen in two sides; outside of America and inside of America.

1. The Political Muddle on the Outside of America

American government begins the political muddle on the outside of America. American government has an ambition to show their power to the world. They want to reach the highest position in the world. They use their power to reach their goal by ignoring the sense of humanity. They create a war as their way to get into other countries. They hide behind “peace” that they always share to the world.

American government has an ambition to show their power to the world. They want to control the world. They want to change the future. This case is proved in the quotation:

“DANCE TEACHER PAT: We need something different. Something *special*. Something these judges have never seen before. Something that’s gonna kick ‘em in the gut and tell ‘em there’s a revolution coming out of Harrington, Ohio! *THIS IS THE FUTURE! I AM MAKING THE FUTURE!! WE’RE GONNA MAKE THOSE JUDGES FEEL SOMETHING IN THEIR COLD, DEAD, PERNICIOUS HEARTS!!*” (p.16)

The quotation above proves that American government want to show their power to the world. In sentences *We need something different. Something special*, it can be seen that the setting is full of ambition. American government want to change the world in order not to lose their label as a superpower country. They have to reach their ambition by being cruel to make other countries are abide to them. In sentences *This is the future! I am making the future!!*, it can be seen that the setting is also full of ambition. American government want to control all over the world in the future. They have a plan to make the world follow their rules. Their power is unbeatable which makes them can change the future of the world like they want. This case is also proved in another quotation:

“ALL THE GIRLS: If I could change the world through dance
If I could change the world by dancing with my body
If I could dance away my mom’s cancer
And my friend Alyssa’s depression
And the way she won’t stop eating skittles when she’s hungry
Instead of eating proper food
If I could dance away world hunger
And all violence against women
And all pets without a home
And all the sadness
Allll the sadness
All the sadness and the meanness
...” (p. 39)

The quotation above proves that American government precedes their own importance. They ignore the life of others in the world to show their power to the world. In sentences *If I could dance away my mom’s cancer / And my friend Alyssa’s depression / And the way she won’t stop eating skittles when she’s hungry / Instead of eating proper food*, it can be seen from the setting that American government shows their power to the world without noticing the problem that happens in the world. The problem in the world become their object in showing their power. They are too busy to show their power until they forget that there are a lot of problems in the world which are needed to be solved. In sentences *If I could dance away world hunger / And all violence against women / All the sadness and the meanness*, it can be seen from the setting that there are several problems that happen in the world. American government ignores other countries to show their power to the world. They let the world in chaos to pursue their ambition. The chaos of the world makes them more powerful because they can show their superiority. The quotations above is related to Foucault’s concept about governmentality. American government try to extend their power not only in America, but also in other countries. They want to govern the countries in the world.

They want to reach the highest position in the world. They want to take part in every aspect of life. They want to show their superiority. It can be seen in the quotation below:

“**ASHLEE:** ... *I am your god. I am your second coming. I am your mother and I’m smarter than you and more attractive than you and better than you at everything that you love and you’re going to get down on your knee and worship my mind, my mind and my body and I’m gonna be the motherfucking KING of your motherfucking world, I’m going to be the KING OF EVERYBODY’S MOTHERFUCKING WORLD,*” (p. 57)

Based on the quotation above, American government want to occupy the central position in the world. In sentences *I am your god. I am your second coming. I am your mother and I’m smarter than you and more attractive than you and better than you at everything*, it can be seen from the conflict that American government have to be at the top in every aspect of life. They think that they are superior than other countries. They can set other countries in the world by reaching the highest position. They think that nobody can stop their action. In sentences *I’m gonna be the motherfucking king of your motherfucking world, I’m going to be the king of everybody’s motherfucking world*, it can be seen from the conflict that American government has an ambition to control the world. They take part in problems that happen in the world. They want to be the king who is on the top position that can control his people in the world. The quotation above is related to the concept of domination. American government get into a country and tend to be dominant in that country. They want to dominate the world by reaching the highest position.

They hide behind “peace” that they always share to the world. They tell people to love and care each other, but they do not do the same. This case is proved in the quotation:

“ *THE GIRLS all gasp.*

DANCE TEACHER PAT: It’s called *WORLD ON FIRE* and it’s about the legacy of Gandhi. Who can tell me who that is?

THE GIRLS and LUKE look at their feet.

CONNIE and AMINA tentatively raise their hands.

DANCE TEACHER PAT: Yes, Amina?

AMINA: He’s a leader.

DANCE TEACHER PAT: He’s from India.

DANCE TEACHER PAT looks at them, genuinely perplexed.

DANCE TEACHER PAT: Why don’t you girls know this? He went on a hunger strike and stopped eating.” (p. 17)

The quotation above proves that American government uses peace to build self-image. In sentence *It’s called WORLD ON FIRE and it’s about the legacy of Gandhi*, it can be seen from the setting that there is no the real peace in the world. American government pretends to be a peacekeeper to maintain their power. They create a muddle and then act like a savior for others. Gandhi is a leader who teach people about the meaning of peace but American government ruins that meaning for their importance. In sentences *Why don’t you girls know this? He went on a hunger strike and stopped eating*, it can be seen from the setting that American

government shares peace and teaches about loving each other. However, they use peace as their shield to conquer the world. They use peace as their political tools to reach their goal. This case is also proved in another quotation:

*“They dance.
Except it’s not really like Gandhi
It’s more like baby sexy robots. Bloodsucking robots who want
to destroy the world and then fuck it after it’s dead.
They are barely wearing any clothes. They are touching their
bodies. They are gnashing their teeth - all of them have fangs
now. Sharp, pointy teeth.”* (p. 52)

The quotation above shows that they want to be Gandhi who shares peace in the world, but their action does not look like what Gandhi does. In sentences *Except it’s not really like Gandhi / It’s more like baby sexy robots. Bloodsucking robots who want to destroy the world and then fuck it after it’s dead*, it can be seen from the stage direction that the action of American government does not related to what they tell to others. They share peace to the world, but in the other hand they also destroy the peace itself for their important. They do not work like a peacekeeper does. The quotations above is related to the concept of negotiation. American government try to strengthen their power by attracting the attention from other countries. They want to show their power by pretending as a kind institution.

2. The Political Muddle on the Inside of America

American government creates the muddle on the inside of America. The citizens of America realize that their country has been played by the officials. The government is not transparent to citizens. They hold down the life of citizens. They utilize citizens to reach their ambition. Women and children are not protected. There is no unity in social life of citizens.

The citizens of America realize that their country has been played by the officials. The government is powerful who cannot be fought by citizens. It can be seen in the quotation below:

“AMINA: What are we going to do???????
ASHLEE (*Quietly*): ...
We’re going to destroy them
CONNIE: But the judges are partial to-
ASHLEE: We have to destroy them
CONNIE: But dancing boys are-
AMINA: She’s right. Dancing boys are unbeatable.” (p. 85)

Based on the quotation above, it can be seen that American citizens do not want to life under control of the government. They know the cunning that the government does in their country. In sentence *We’re going to destroy them*, it can be seen from

the character as the representative of citizens want to do a movement for a better life. They cannot just silent to watch their country is being played by the government. They have their own life and it is not based on the government. In sentence *Dancing boys are unbeatable*, it can be seen from the conflict that the government abuse their power. Citizens cannot fight them because they do not as strong as the government. Citizens realize that the government can set all of the country by using their power. It is also can be seen in another quotation:

“ASHLEE: ...
“Wahhhh I’m bad at math”
Shut the fuck up and stop whining and just think about the
problem for a minute
It’s not that hard
It’s not like you have to write a fucking poem
There are like *rules*
There’s like *an answer*
I don’t even have parents who can help me and I *still* ace it
Because I’m not a moron” (p. 55)

Based on the quotation above, it can be seen that citizens notice the problem that happens in their country. In sentence *Shut the fuck up and stop whining and just think about the problem for a minute*, it can be seen from the conflict that the situation in their country is unstable. Citizens realize that they do not have to wait for a long time to do a movement. They have to save their country and their life from the cunning of the government. In sentences *There are like rules / There’s like an answer*, it can be seen from the conflict that citizens are aware with the rules which are created by the government. Citizens need an answer for the situation that happens. The rules make citizens realize that there is a secret in the government. The quotations above is related to the concept of disciplinary power. American government create the rules for citizens in order to set the life of citizens. However, citizens have knowledge to get their freedom from the government.

The government is not transparent to citizens. They hide their cunning from citizens. Citizens do not get the explanation about the action of the government. That phenomena can be seen in the quotation:

“SOFIA: If you take a sip, you pledge your eternal allegiance
to czalmsa [z-alm-sah]
CONNIE: Zalm-wahhhh?
SOFIA: Our group! Connie, Zuzu, Ashlee, Luke, Maeve, Sofia
and Amina. (*Sounding it out.*) C-Z-A-L-M-S-A
CONNIE: But there’s no “c” in ZALMSA!
SOFIA: The “c” is silent. Like in czar
CONNIE: Oh.
ASHLEE: We could be Zalm-sakkkkkkk
SOFIA: CZALMSA’s cooler

CONNIE: ...

SOFIA: Trust me, Connie. It's cool to be the silent "c"

CONNIE: Yeah...

SOFIA: You're like our secret weapon

CONNIE: I think I'm just tired of being a secret ...

SOFIA: How are you a secret?

ASHLEE: No!

CONNIE: I don't know. I just feel like I am

ASHLEE: You're not a / secret" (p. 132-133)

The quotation above shows that American government has planned their ambition and act like they do not do anything to citizens. In sentences *Our group! Connie, Zuzu, Ashlee, Luke, Maeve, Sofia and Amina. (Sounding it out.) C-Z-A-L-M-S-A / But there's no "c" in ZALMSA / The "c" is silent. Like in czar*, it can be seen from the setting and stage direction that American government has a plan behind their words. They do not tell their goal explicitly and there is a hidden purpose behind it. They act like they are transparent to citizens, but there is a secret behind their words. In sentences *Trust me, Connie. It's cool to be the silent "c" / You're like our secret weapon*, it can be seen from the setting that the government has prepared a crime to do when it is needed. Citizens do not get the explanation about the things that they had done. The secret is something meaningful for them rather than the transparency to citizens. Their secret make them easier to reach their goal. The quotation above is related to the concept of negotiation. American government want to negotiate their power to citizens. They take the different action to strengthen their power.

There is no unity in social life of citizens. The government fail to unite citizens. They do not think about the future of America. That phenomena can be seen in the quotation:

"ASHLEE: ...

If you just study

It's the most "study-able" section

So I guess you didn't study

That doesn't make you cool

That just makes you lazy and shortsighted about your future

Seriously people, it's not that hard to be good at math if you frickin try

Are you even trying people???

... " (p. 55)

The quotation above shows that citizens do not live in unity in their country. In sentences *If you just study / It's the most "study-able" section / So I guess you didn't study / That doesn't make you cool*, it can be seen from the setting that citizens live their own life without respecting to each other. This is the failure of the government to create the unity in their country. They do not want to learn about the life of citizens. They just focus on their ambition until they ignore

citizens. In sentences *That just makes you lazy and shortsighted about your future / Seriously people, it's not that hard to be good at math if you frickin try / Are you even trying people???*, it can be seen from the setting that American government do not concern to their citizens. They do not think about the future life of America. They do not care to the phenomena that happens in the life of citizens. That phenomena also can be seen in another quotation:

“ALL THE GIRLS: ...

If I could dance and nobody would ever want to kill another
person again
Or be racist again
Or feel alone at night again
Or abandon their pets without a home again
That's what I would do
That's what I would do
That's what I want to do with my LIFE” (p. 39)

The quotation above shows that the government do not ensure that citizens live in harmony to each other. In sentences *If I could dance and nobody would ever want to kill another person again / Or be racist again / Or feel alone at night again*, it can be seen from the setting that citizens do not care to their neighbourhood. The law which is created by the government is not enough to make citizens respect to each other. The government do not supervise the life of citizens. Citizens still live under the chaos that makes them are difficult to be united because of the lack of attention from the government. The quotations above is related to the concept of negotiation. American government try to negotiate their relation with citizens. They try to make citizens become abide to their power.

In summary, the whole play reflects the political muddle of American government which can be seen on the outside and on the inside of America. The muddle is started with their foreign policy of America. American government do not want to lose their label as a superpower country. They want to show their superiority. They break the law of human right. They use peace as political tools to reach their goal. It affects the domestic policy of America. Citizens do not live in a good situation in their country. The government do not give the explanation about their action to citizens. They set the life of citizens. Their law do not work appropriately in protecting citizens.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The play *Dance Nation* (2018) by Clare Barron reflects the issue about the political muddle of American government. The political muddle in this analysis refers to how the politics of America becomes disorganized on the outside and on the inside of America. This analysis is done through text-based and context-based interpretation by focusing on fictional devices such as character, setting, plot (conflict), and stage direction. This analysis deals with the concept of power relation by Michel Foucault. American government is really obsessed to show

their power to the world by creating war in other countries. Their ambition to control the world also affects their country. They ignore the life of citizens to pursue their ambition. The political muddle of American government in this analysis can be seen in two sides; outside of America and inside of America.

The whole play shows that the political muddle of American government is related to the concept of power relation by Michel Foucault. Foucault shows that there is a relation in a country from the government to citizens. American government is not consistent with the policy that they have made because they try to dominate other countries and America. They take different action from their policy to do domination by using the disciplinary power. There is a negotiation that the government does to keep their power to dominate that makes them in a muddle.

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