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the arts and the black revolution

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ARTS IN SOCIETY

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This issue was designed by
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"Americana"
by Eldzier Cortor

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ARTS IN SOCIETY is dedicated to the augmenting of the arts in society and to the advancement of education in the arts. These publications are to be of interest, therefore, both to professionals and the lay public. **ARTS IN SOCIETY** exists to discuss, interpret, and illustrate the various functions of the arts in contemporary civilization. Its purpose is to present the insights of experience, research and theory in support of educational and organizational efforts to enhance the position of the arts in America. In general, four areas are dealt with: the teaching and learning of the arts; aesthetics and philosophy; social analysis; and significant examples of creative expression in a media which may be served by the printing process.

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Additional copies of this issue may be purchased at $1.50 per copy. Special professional and student discounts are available for bulk rates.

The editors will welcome articles on any subjects which fall within the areas of interest of this journal. Readers both in the United States and abroad are invited to submit manuscripts for consideration for publication. Articles may be written in the contributor's native language. A modest honorarium will be paid for papers accepted for publication.

MANUSCRIPTS should be sent to Edward L. Kamarck, Editor, **ARTS IN SOCIETY,** University Extension, The University of Wisconsin, 606 State Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53706. Books for review should be directed to the same address.

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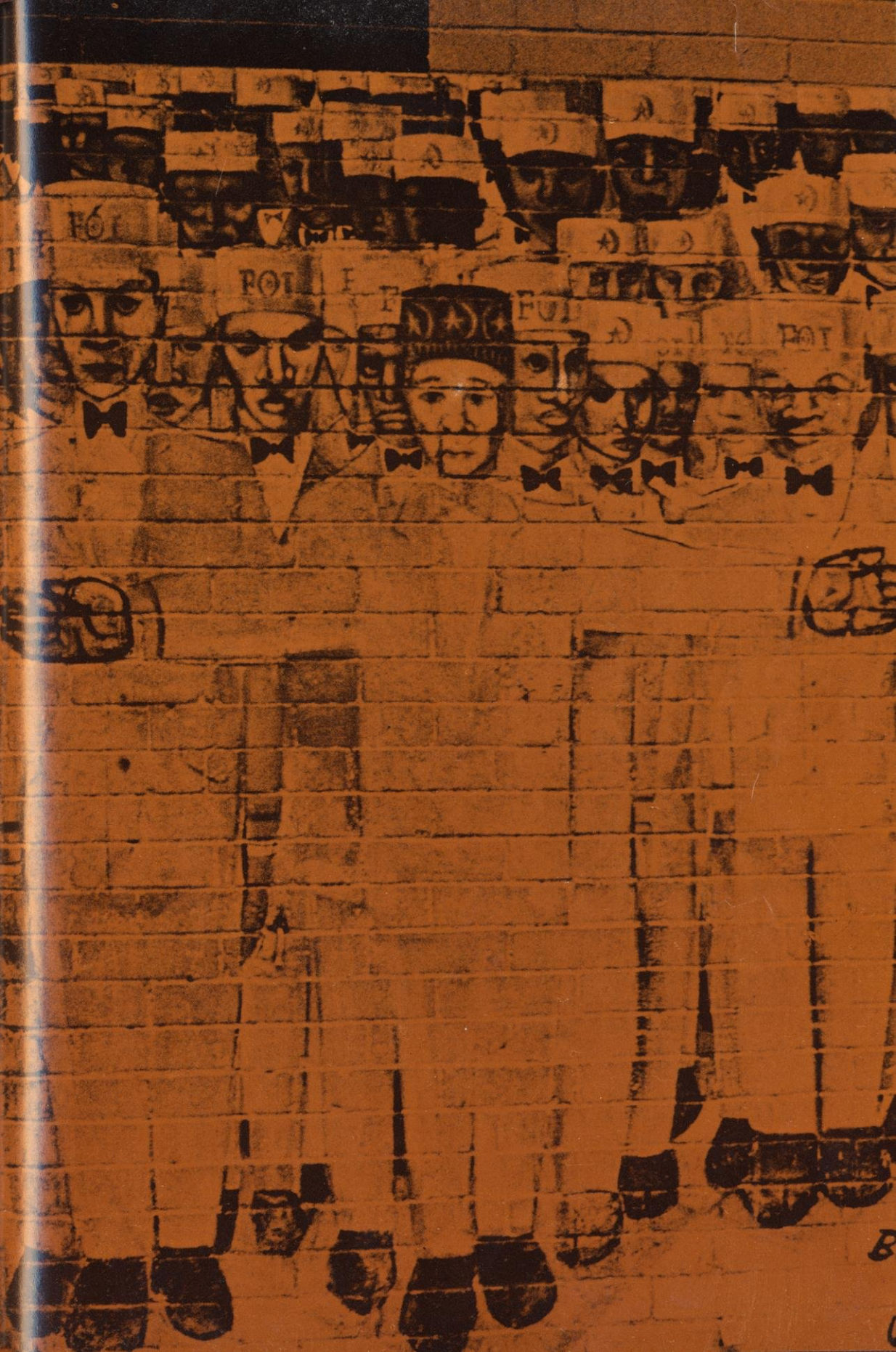

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Romare Bearden's works have been exhibited in numerous one-man and group shows in major museums in the United States, South America and Europe.

Preface

The Black Revolution, the greatest American social upheaval of this century, presses agonizing questions, guilts, and challenges on all segments of our culture. For the poets and artists, black and white, there is the dilemma of commitment: How much? In what manner? How to harmonize the exercise of individual creative talent with the urgency for militant stand? For the educator there is the heartsickening realization of long-time neglect, of misplaced emphases and empty cant, of monumental tasks and miniscule resources. For the art leader there is **mea culpa,** institutional schizophrenia, and the bitter paradox of "trained incapacity" (Thorstein Veblen's apt phrase for that state of affairs whereby an administrator's very skills can function as blindness).

This is the first of several issues devoted to The Arts and the Black Revolution. Our concern is to reflect the conditions and roles of the Negro creative artist in contemporary life, to suggest the special cultural problems of the Negro community, and to delineate strategies and programs which might help to accelerate the abolishment of those forces which isolate and victimize the Negro in our cultural life, and forestall the realization of his talents and creativity.

Interlocked with intensifying struggles on innumerable fronts — economic, social, political — the cultural dimension of the Black Revolution offers an infinitely bright promise: the broad enrichment of the vitality and spirit of American life.

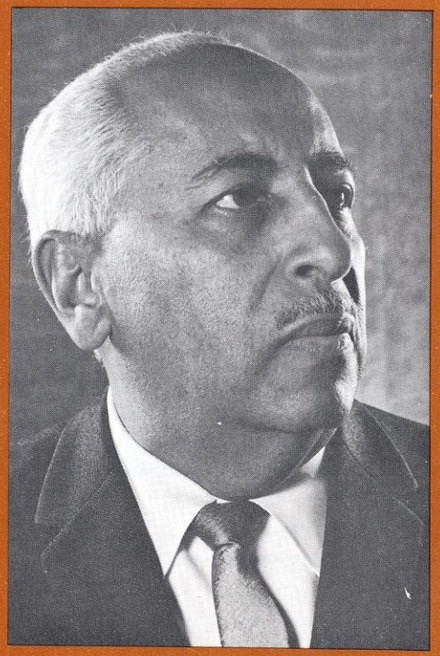
Edward L. Kamarck

the arts and the black revolution

artist in an age of revolution: a symposium

Arna Bontemps

Poet, novelist, playwright, author of a number of books of non-fiction dealing with the Negro in America. Currently is on the faculty of the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle.



Do you think of yourself as a Negro artist or an artist who happens to be a Negro?

I have been trying for more than forty years to figure out the difference. Certainly I am proud to be a Negro by American definition. I leave it to others to say whether or not I am an artist. I write.

Do you personally feel the psychic split that a number of Negro writers describe so graphically: the pull, on the one hand, toward Negro militancy, tradition, and culture, and the pull, on the other hand, to the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies?

As a schoolboy, I began leaning toward the former, perhaps partly in protest against the bad deal Negroes received from the latter in books, movies and other media, and the pull away from white orthodoxies grew stronger as I grew. Ever since I began to write professionally, I have been strongly committed to this source of strength and power.

Does this split necessarily imply an irreconcilable option or is there a tenable position which lies somewhere between?

We are all influenced by the traditions of the language we use as well as by the educational environment to which we were exposed, and my exposure to "white" culture was complete. I was always the only Negro in my class, but I heard and read enough to convince me that there was a sense in which I would have to stand alone in the cultural area. When I went to Harlem in the twenties, I felt let-loose, like a rabbit in a briar patch. I turned my back on much of my "learning" without the slightest regret, and there my re-education began.

Do you think there is a special relationship that the Negro artist has to American society?

Yes. He must try to change it.

Do you think the Negro artist has any degree of responsibility to commit his art to fight for Negro equality? If so, in what way?

I get a cue from Frederick Douglass who said during abolitionist times, 'Let every man fight slavery in the way he can do it best." Or something like that. All a sincere Negro artist needs to do is to be himself. If he is honest, and a good artist, his work will certainly contribute to the good fight. Anyone who is wise enough to tell a writer how he should write would do well to write himself. And any writer who is silly enough to listen will not have our respect very long.

Does the Negro artist have something to offer that no other artist has?

I believe so. Music offers a good indication. There is such a thing as a Negro style, born in the Negro experience in the new world. You can put your finger on it if you catch it early, but often it is so quickly imitated you forget its origin. But there is more originality where that came from, more unique ways of looking, reacting, expressing his view, his experience of life. No other artist can duplicate it unless he is willing to drink from the same cup.

To what degree and in what manner can a successful Negro artist use his success as a weapon or resource to improve the status of the Negro artist in society?

That is less important, I would say, than what he can do for the society as a whole. The success of Negro poetry, for example, helps to stimulate new interest in and appreciation for poetry in general. The Negro artist will benefit too, of course.

Is it a necessary step in the development of an American Negro artist to acknowledge an African heritage?

The African heritage of American Negroes is a fact. To deny it or to be ashamed of it would seem to me to put an artist at a great disadvantage. I would hazard the opinion that every upsurge of Negro creativity in this country (and there have been several) has been preceeded

by a kind of rediscovery, a refreshed awareness, of the African background.

Karl Shapiro, the poet, has said:

"It is not a coherent picture, but one thing is true: the urge is downward, not up. Not up to the elites. The gravity of American creativity is downwards, toward 'the darker bloods,' as Lawrence would put it. Maybe the pale white Anglo-Saxon elite has had it."
Do you think this is to any degree true? please comment.

Interestingly, Langston Hughes, in his *The Big Sea,* speaks of a woman from Park Avenue in the twenties who practically made a career of supporting young artists with her patronage and who made a similar observation about Negroes, American Indians and other "darker" folk. The thesis is at least provocative.
If true, perhaps a blending of the bloods would be restorative.

Is there anything else you would care to say about the particular condition of being a Negro artist in America today?

I am enthusiastic about it. Having had the privilege of a grandstand seat at the cavalcade, I am unable to suppress optimism with respect to what I see as the trend. Despite a generally tragic view of man on the earth, I look upon the struggle of American Negroes for self-expression as a hopeful aspect.

Celebrated composer and conductor.
Creator of the *Afro-American Symphony.*

Do you think of yourself as a Negro artist or an artist who happens to be a Negro?

I think of myself first as an American, then as an artist who happens to be a Negro. After all, I have Indian, Irish, Spanish and Scotch blood in my veins in addition to the African — I don't consider any one of them more important than the other.

Do you personally feel the psychic split that a number of Negro writers describe so graphically: the pull, on the one hand, toward Negro militancy, tradition, and culture, and the pull, on the other hand, to the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies?

I don't recognize this so-called "psychic" split. Instead, I feel a fusion of influences and backgrounds within myself. I compose as I wish to compose: in racial idioms if they serve my

purpose; or abstractly, when and if that seems to be demanded by the specific composition on which I am working. Every creator should express **himself** in his work. If he is himself a fusion of different racial backgrounds, then this will automatically be part of his artistic expression in some manner, whether he is conscious of it or not.

Do you think there is a special relationship that the Negro artist has to American society?

The Negro artist is important in American society because he demonstrates that achievement is possible in our democracy. In music, the Negro artist is particularly important in a public relations sense, since the Negro musical idiom is so widely accepted all over the world as the one most typical of **America.**

Do you think the Negro artist has any degree of responsibility to commit his art to the fight for Negro equality? If so, in what way?

Everyone who lives in these crucial times has a duty to society. But he must pay this debt in his own way and in his own time, without following blindly the courses advocated by outsiders.

Does the Negro artist have something to offer that no other artist has?

In the beginning, the Negro artist was unique, but now his style and his products have been so widely imitated and made so much a part of our lives that many other artists now follow in his footsteps. Someday the line of demarcation may cease to exist.

To what degree and in what manner can a successful Negro artist use his success as a weapon or resource to improve the status of the Negro artist in society?

The successful Negro artist can best serve the cause of other Negro artists and race relations in general by doing his work well and setting a good example. One successful Negro artist automatically opens the door for others — **provided they are qualified.**

Is it a necessary step in the development of an American Negro artist to acknowledge an African heritage?

Our African heritage exists and everyone knows it — usually because of the color of our skins. I think it is a valuable heritage and I am proud of it, but in the final analysis I am an American, by birth, training and inclination, and it is as as American that I wish to express myself.

Karl Shapiro, the poet, has said: "It is not a coherent picture, but one thing is true: the urge is downward, not up. Not up to the elites. The gravity of American creativity is downwards, toward 'the darker bloods,' as Lawrence would put it. Maybe the pale white Anglo-Saxon elite has had it." Do you think this is to any degree true? Please comment.

I disagree with this comment. As a matter of fact, I resent it. It is not true that creativity goes **downward** when darker creators are involved. Mr. Shapiro must be totally unacquainted with the achievements of some of us on serious levels if he really believes what he has said. Furthermore, I don't concede that it is necessary or advisable for white artists to be pushed out of the picture in favor of any other group. There is a need for all of us, and there is certainly room for

everyone. The white Anglo-Saxon elite and the darker elite should be able to co-exist, with mutual respect and sympathy, **sharing** the applause and the rewards of their creativity.

Is there anything else you would care to say about the particular condition of being a Negro artist in America today?

This is a large subject, and its details would probably vary from artist to artist. However, I would like to call to your attention the enclosed reprint from the Australian Musical News and Digest.* Although written almost twenty years ago, it is still timely and still gives an accurate picture.

**The following is an extract from the article:*

There has been one important change in the manner of thinking in America. Formerly people spread the idea that all Negroes were inferior and incapable of advancement, in comparison to the white race which was invariably superior and near human perfection. Today people are apt to go to the other extreme and paint American white people as being wicked persecutors of the Negroes, who form a noble and highly developed group of people. Neither premise is correct. The plain fact is that all these people, white and Negro, have faults and virtues which are peculiar to them as individuals and not as members of any group. Probably the percentage of gifted Negroes is the same as that in any other race in comparison to those who are just average; while there is a far greater percentage of sympathetic white Americans than is generally conceded.

All this must be said as a background for my own statement that, although I have had to undergo certain personal indignities, as a composer I do not believe that I have had to suffer because of being a Negro. There has been opposition in my musical life, but not for racial reasons. During the time I had to earn my living in the world of commercial music, I encountered professional jealousy, from the misguided people who thought that to get ahead they had to push others out. Another form of opposition has come from those who resent the fact I have not cared to use my music to further political ends. Still another problem I have faced is the difficulty any American composer faces in trying to get a hearing for his operas in his own country. The Metropolitan Opera House does not encourage the work of native composers. None of this opposition, in my opinion, had anything to do with race. It was the sort that any American might have to face.

Hale Woodruff

Award-winning painter whose works have been widely exhibited. He is the creator of the mural "The Art of the Negro," at Atlanta University.

Would you care to comment on the psychic split that a number of Negro writers describe so graphically: the pull, on the one hand, toward Negro militancy, tradition, and culture, and the pull, on the other hand, to the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies?

Although I respect the Negro writer, I have yet to observe any concern on his part for Negro involvement in the other arts. (The exception may be in the musical or performing arts.) But he is a purveyor of the culture, the problem. His work, at present, seems to serve more of a social than an artistic purpose. He probably comes closest to communicating the real so-called social (racial) issues of our day with his media.

Does this split described above necessarily imply an irreconcilable option or is there a tenable position which lies somewhere between?

What is a "tenable position?" Do you mean to ask if a Negro artist accepts a position of compromise? I venture to answer no. He creates as he wills. And whatever he produces has to do with American society, with all that this implies.

Do you think there is a special relationship that the Negro artist has to American society?

Everything the Negro artist does has to do with his image of himself and his aspirations. It involves human as well as racial fulfillment. The Negro artist faces all the "artistic," hence, economic and cultural problems all artists face. But for the Negro artist these problems are aggravated by the fact that the "power structure" of the art world is not altogether prepared to accept him as "just another artist," particularly in the visual arts. They still desire, seemingly, a non-white quality (not to say "Negroness") which presents the Negro artist as being unique and therefore different from other artists. Let's not fool ourselves — it is difficult, almost impossible, in our day and time, to separate artistic or creative power from material or political power — at least from an implementary point of view. All history bears this out. Destroy the arts of a people and you destroy the embodiment of his gods and his spirit. The Spaniards in South America knew this. The European who came face to face with the Indian knew it, as well as the European who colonized Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The Indian in America and his art are finished. The Asian artist is on the "bandwagon" (though tenuously) of Western art. The African artist is at a crossroad of artistic expression. He is "up a tree." As for the present-day American Negro artist, his plight is no less confusing, but his outlook seems more realistic.

Karl Shapiro, the poet, has said: "It is not a coherent picture, but one thing is true: the urge is downward, not up. Not up to the elites. The gravity of American creativity is downwards, toward 'the darker bloods,' as Lawrence would put it. Maybe the pale white Anglo-Saxon elite has had it." Do you think this is to any degree true? Please comment.

Perhaps Mr. Shapiro is right, but much more is involved. The artist of color in America is an American. He has dark blood, but is also exposed to the artistic culture of the West. This is the problem. It is not really a question of "dark blood" in art; it is a matter of the power structure of art and its relation to the material, political and **social** power structure. Who knows the answer?

Earle Hyman

Has acted professionally in many plays both here and abroad. In 1966, he opened the Bergen Arts Festival in Norway in an original Norwegian play entitled *The Honeybird and the Leopard,* which was written especially for him.

Do you think of yourself as a Negro artist or an artist who happens to be a Negro?

I think of myself as an actor who happens to be a Negro.

Do you personally feel the psychic split that a number of Negro writers describe so graphically: the pull, on the one hand, toward Negro militancy, tradition, and culture, and the pull, on the other hand, to the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies?

I have never felt this psychic split. African Art moves and inspires me, the Benin bronzes, for example, but so does Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel.

Do you think there is a special relationship that the Negro artist has to American society?

All artists are special people. It is their "specialness" that makes them artists and, consequently, their relationship to society has always been special throughout the ages.

Do you think the Negro artist has any degree of responsibility to commit his art to the fight for Negro equality? If so, in what way?

Only if he wants to.

Does the Negro artist have something to offer that no other artist has?

The individual artist has something to offer that no other artist has, be he Negro or White. An individual is not only the result of his racial heritage, but of his upbringing, his education, his environment; in a word, his experience.

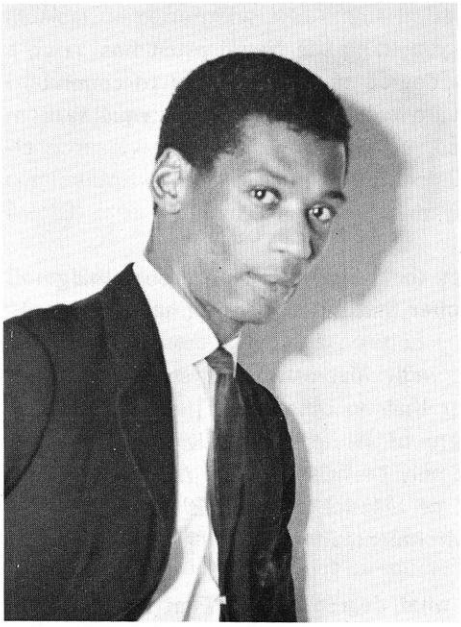
To what degree and in what manner can a successful Negro artist use his success as a weapon or resource to improve the status of the Negro artist in society?

The voice of an artist of repute has a good chance of being heard. I therefore feel that it is an artist's duty and responsibility to speak up for civil and human rights for all mankind and to speak out against bigotry, prejudice, intolerance and oppression.

Is it a necessary step in the development of an American Negro artist to acknowledge an African heritage?

Not necessarily, unless the individual artist considers himself an American Negro first and an artist second.

Norman de Joie
Choreographer and "danseur-soloist" with Les Ballets Modernes de Paris.



Do you think of yourself as a Negro artist or an artist who happens to be a Negro?

The first defines conformity, the second, non-conformity. No matter what I think, I know I conform to some degree. But, I am not conditioned by this. I see myself for the most part as an individual, an artist. Sometimes I become very conscious of the fact that I am a Negro and I find this rewarding. Negro and artist blend well together.

Do you personally feel the psychic split that a number of Negro writers describe so graphically: the pull, on the one hand, toward Negro militancy, tradition, and culture, and the pull, on the other hand, to the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies?

I try to suppress any tendency toward a psychic split and avoid emotional fluctuations of allegiance to different causes. Complexes have become a part of our makeup but we manage to survive and even thrive as long as we use our reason. Reasonably, we would be wrong to reject the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies, which, even though they have alienated us, will eventually benefit everyone and give the Negro more power to obtain the opportunities he wants and deserves.

Does this split necessarily imply an irreconcilable option or is there a tenable position which lies somewhere between?

The split is, I think, due to the guilty feeling that one is in a sense "putting down his own" by involving oneself with white institutions and orthodoxies. We are affected, too, by a curious blend of fear and certainty that no matter how deeply we penetrate into white society, we will always be limited by the whites' uneasy and suspicious mistrust of us. If the tenable position rests with the Negro, then it must be tempered by a white readiness to accept it. I believe that most Negroes use this middle road long before the average white even considers it. The psychic split is a frustrating emotion involving both black and white. A mutual effort toward finding a tenable position is a first necessity.

Do you think there is a special relationship that the Negro artist has to American society?

I would like to see the relationship of the Negro artist to American society lifted out of its special context and viewed in the same light as that of any other artist to the society. This special emphasis has allowed society to represent us as a race of entertainers thereby reducing the value and prestige of our serious artistic endeavors.

Do you think the Negro artist has any degree of responsibility to commit his art to the fight for Negro equality? If so, in what way?

To commit art to a cause tends to create something apart from art. Nietzsche understood this, and spoke of reducing art to "a purely abstract notion of measurable data." This is not art, and I do not agree with that sort of manipulation of it, no matter what the cause. Writing lends itself well to popular protests and other polemics, but I'm not ready to place such written expression in the category of art.

Does the Negro artist have something to offer that no other artist has?

I wish I knew what it was. I've heard it said that all Negroes sing well, but I cannot believe that Leontyne Price, for example, became the great singer that she is because of her color. Ella Fitzgerald, another kind of singer, cannot sing like Miss Price, although several white singers have managed successfully to ape her style, thus suggesting that the elusive and unique "something" accorded the Negro is probably within the range of everyone just as other forms of art are within the range of the Negro.

To what degree and in what manner can a successful Negro artist use his success as a weapon or resource to improve the status of the Negro artist in society?

I vaguely remember a foundation set up at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute by Marian Anderson to aid the careers of gifted young singers. But the fund was not limited to Negro singers, which seems an equally good idea. Perhaps, more individuals of means and influence ought to create cultural foundations devoted to helping the Negro artist in general, but not restricted to the single race.

Is it a necessary step in the development of an American Negro artist to acknowledge an African heritage?

This seems to be purely a matter of individual choice. I have recently read an article devoted to the new "return" to the "natural" or "African" hair styles by American men. Several Negro celebrities who had formerly straightened their hair (visual proof of an attempt to assimilate) were now trying to identify with an Africa to which they owe nothing more than color and an indistinct, rather superfluous racial memory.

In the United States, assimilation has been condemned by several black and some white authors, but I am not convinced that it is wrong to identify with the mass or that it necessarily creates a loss of identity. Certain Negroes would refer to me as one who has been "brainwashed," but I continue to think of Africa as one of many distant lands I'd like to know, if only as a means of enlarging my appreciation of the world culture to which I belong.

Karl Shapiro, the poet, has said: "It is not a coherent picture, but one thing is true: the urge is downward, not up. Not up to the elites. The gravity of American creativity is downwards, toward 'the darker bloods,' as Lawrence would put it. Maybe the pale white Anglo-Saxon elite has had it." Do you think this is to any degree true? Please comment.

Maybe the pale, white Anglo-Saxon has "had it."
On the other hand, the current frenzy

shaking the western world may very well be its final fling before settling down to solve issues that are now being avoided. The Negro's supposed tendency toward "soul" may have prompted Mr. Shapiro's statement. Surely, it often appears that the United States is moving toward the climax in a rather unwholesome love affair; a mass hysterical reaction to the fearful longings which James Baldwin has described so scathingly. But I don't think so. I rather agree with the Polish writer, Leopold Tyrmand, who was astonished at the "naivete" of Baldwin's thesis, that sex-guilt underscores American black-white relations.

The statement seems somewhat typical of the disjointed and often scandalous sensationalism that American creativity suffers from. Let's recognize plain commercialism for what it is and spend our time exploring the truth in art and all things.

Is there anything else you would care to say about the particular condition of being an American Negro artist today?

The Negro has grown weary of the endless clumsy attempts to solve the problem of his condition in society. This may explain his new determination to take his destiny in his own hands. I have just seen a large, half-page ad in the European edition of the New York Herald-Tribune announcing the ambitious first performances of the Negro Ensemble Company, a theatre repertory group of exceptionally good actors under Negro direction. This is a positive act. It may seem separatist; it is. It is prompted by the black's inability to fade into or at least blend with the national landscape. The Negro may want to be an artist who happens to be a Negro, but he is finally, inescapably a Negro artist. All of us are aware of the **visual** disparateness of the black in our midst. All Negroes, and certainly the Negro artist, need to participate in a singular effort of which they can be proud. In the case of the artist, it does not consist of wielding his medium as a weapon, but in constructive achievement in works that can match the best examples of his white peers. Not to be given the chance to compete successfully is largely responsible for the despair of the Negro who has much to contribute. Under the circumstances, it is wrong to **give** to the Negro; what he needs is an opportunity to help himself.

Julius Lester

Writer (non-fiction, fiction, poetry); singer, guitarist, composer, photographer. Serves as Field Secretary for the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), New York Office.

Do you think of yourself as a Negro artist or an artist who happens to be a Negro?

I wonder if this question would have been asked of Sean O'Casey, William Butler Yeats, or James Joyce. They were Irish artists, proud of being Irish, and it never occurred to anyone why James Joyce never wrote about anyone except Irish people. They were Irish nationalists, and would have branded the questioner a swine of an Englishman. I am a black nationalist and in an act of solidarity with my fellow nationalists from Ireland, brand the questioner a swine of an Englishman.

Do you personally feel the psychic split that a number of Negro writers described so graphically: the pull, on the one hand, toward Negro militancy, tradition, and culture, and the pull, on the other hand, to the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies?

Obviously not. White cultural institutions are, in the main, bankrupt, sterile and without feeling. There are exceptions — rock music, for instance, — but I guess that can't be considered a "cultural institution." Western culture has little meaning or relevance for me. I am acclimated to it, but feel no need or desire to be assimilated into it or to use it as my own standard of reference.

Does this split necessarily imply an irreconcilable option or is there a tenable position which lies somewhere between?

I'm not quite sure what is meant by "a tenable position . . . somewhere between?" I am an Afro-American. This implies that I am an amalgam. It is my responsibility to reflect the Afro side of the hyphen. The other side has been too much reflected. Too, no one else can reflect the Afro side except Afro-Americans. Certainly not a cracker from Virginia writing the *Confessions of Nat Turner*.

Do you think there is a special relationship that the Negro artist has to American society?

That relationship is one in which the Negro artist is able to see the society for what it is because blacks have been kept outside it. We know America as no white does. Generally, however, our opinions are unheard and when heard, not believed. That, however, is America's problem.

Do you think the Negro artist has any degree of responsibility to commit his art to the fight for Negro equality? If so, in what way?

If the black artist does not commit his art to the liberation movement (not the fight for Negro equality, as you have it), he is not fulfilling his responsibility. The artist is a privileged person, having the ability to communicate the feelings and thoughts of a group of people. It is his responsibility to do this. At this point in history, the black artist has no other responsibility. For too long have black artists spoken to whites and left their own people to be lied to by whites. No more.

Does the Negro artist have something to offer that no other artist has?

His blackness and all that that implies. (Like James Joyce)

To what degree and in what manner can a successful Negro artist use his success as a weapon or resource to improve the status of the Negro artist in society?

No black artist should be concerned with improving his "status . . . in society." Particularly at a time when that society is in the throes of destruction. The successful black artist can use his prestige and money to best advantage in the black community, where it is needed.

Is it a necessary step in the development of an American Negro artist to acknowledge an African heritage?

A man has to know where he came from before he knows where he is and where he may be going from there.

Karl Shapiro, the poet, has said:

"It is not a coherent picture, but one thing is true: the urge is downward, not up. Not up to the elites. The gravity of American creativity is downwards, toward 'the darker b!oods,' as Lawrence wou!d put it. Maybe the pale white Anglo-Saxon elite has had it."
Do you think this is to any degree true? Please comment.

I refer you to Nikos Kazantzakis' poem, "The Odyssey." He certainly thought so. Look at who's up now. Whites. Look at who's down. "The darker bloods." Look who's fighting to come up. "The darker bloods." Guess who's going to win.

Is there anything else you would care to say about the particular condition of being a Negro artist in America today?

It's beautiful!

Loften Mitchell

Author, playwright. Recently published *Black Drama: The Story of the American Negro in the Theatre,* reviewed on page 327 of this issue of ARTS AND SOCIETY.

Do you think of yourself as a Negro artist or an artist who happens to be a Negro?

I do not know. I am a black artist from Harlem, U.S.A. and that is exactly what I have always wanted to be.

Do you personally feel the psychic split that a number of Negro writers describe so graphically: the pull, on the one hand, toward Negro militancy, tradition, and culture, and the pull, on the other hand, to the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies?

Not that I know of. Personally, I think that so-called split has been overplayed.

Does this split necessarily imply an irreconcilable option or is there a tenable position which lies somewhere between?

I do not know, nor do I care.

Do you think there is a special relationship that the Negro artist has to American society?

There is a special relationship that all artists have to the society in which they live. For the black artist it is certainly very special. This is a society that, after all, was built on the labor of his people, uses the music of his people, the dance and the speech pattern, yet denies him fundamental human rights. Even when he achieves, he has not achieved. He is always "promising," half-starved, or allowed fame but never fortune. The truth of this relationship came to the foreground with the death of Langston Hughes. Despite world-wide acclaim for his many books, he was called on to write only one movie.

Do you think the Negro artist has any degree of responsibility to commit his art to the fight for Negro equality? If so, in what way?

The role of the artist is to protest the human condition, to attempt to bring about changes in this condition. This is true of all artists and certainly true of the black artist.

Does the Negro artist have something to offer that no other artist has?

He certainly has, particularly in this country. For one thing, he knows the White Experience as well as the Black Experience. He can write about both groups and bring a new dimension to American literature. And since Negroes have been the most avid seekers of the American Dream, they retain a degree of hope, energy and rhythm. And since Art goes where there is energy, it becomes obvious that the black artist has something to offer that other artists do not.

To what degree and in what manner can a successful Negro artist use his success as a weapon or resource to improve the status of the Negro artist in society?

The very structure of America is rigged to prevent this. No one can speak the truth as effectively as the black artist. It is a truth White America does not want to hear. Black artists can get works produced but not promoted. They earn fame but no fortune. They cannot, therefore, do what other artists can do, namely, succor and develop young talent. They cannot give a young black artist $100 to keep him going until he reaches a level of success.

The successful black artist should, of course, use his work, his success, his very being as a weapon to improve the status of the black artist in society. He can do this through his work, through his activities, benefit performances and in writing about the plight of the black artist.

Is it a necessary step in the development of an American Negro artist to acknowledge an African heritage?

I think it is. I believe John Vandercook said that a race that doesn't know where it came from doesn't know where it's going. One of the grave problems of black and white America is that neither people really know their own history as well as that of the other. The African heritage is basic to the American black man. From its truthful interpretation the black man can realize the beauty of his heritage and he avoids the "hang-up" of being a poor, unwanted stranger in a land that was built on his varied contributions.

"Karl Shapiro, the poet, has said: It is not a coherent picture, but one thing is true: the urge is downward, not up. Not up to the elites. The gravity of American creativity is downwards, toward 'the darker bloods,' as Lawrence would put it. Maybe the pale white Anglo-Saxon elite has had it. Do you think this is to any degree true? Please comment."

I hate to get into semantics, but Lawrence has a lot of gall to speak of the urge being 'downward, not up." I am annoyed with the business of "American creativity being downwards, toward the darker bloods." No one but a white chauvinist — well meaning though he is — would have written such nonsense. If American music went downward when Gershwin took black music and wrote that nonsense known as *Porgy and Bess,* then he is a bigger cultural thief than I imagined. Marlon Brando did not go downward when he stole the Negro swagger, the hippy-dippy walk, and made millions from it. His finances and his career went upward, indeed. And David Merrick did not go downward financially when he produced a bad show known as *Hello, Dolly,* had Louis Armstrong record it, then had black actors play it. Similarly, a monstrosity known as *Hallejuah Baby* has capitalized on the

use of black people. In fact, capitalizing on black people seems to be a source of considerable revenue and this is anything but downward for white people.

Despite all of this, I agree that the pale white Anglo-Saxon elite has had it. He had it when Columbus sought this land of the setting sun and it became the last frontier for the waste of Europe. I agree that the West now faces the setting sun and the one thing I fear is that it may be too late for the children of Africa to save this crumbling, immoral structure.

Is there anything else you would care to say about the particular condition of being a Negro artist in America today?

It is hell. It is a hell created by the white power structure and aided and abetted by black allies. I said before you can achieve fame without fortune. You are alone, insulted, villified by both friends and family. You hear static about what you ought to do or should have done. You are the victim of endless, futile meetings about the condition of the black artist in society. You are knocked down daily, insulted, spat upon. The only answer is to keep fighting, to keep working, and you know the Man has a sheet on you, that Death is crowding you, but if you give up, you are dead. So — you don't give up. You hang in there and fight. And you scare the daylights out of the opposition because it can't understand why you've been around all these years when it has tried to "waste" you.

Gertrude Rivers Robinson

Composer; pianist; performer of non-western instruments; dancer. She is on the staff of the Institute of Ethnomusicology at the University of California.

Do you think of yourself as a Negro artist or an artist who happens to be a Negro?

I think of myself as an artist who happens to be a Negro.

Do you personally feel the psychic split that a number of Negro writers describe so graphically: the pull, on the one hand, toward Negro militancy, tradition, and culture, and the pull, on the other hand, to the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies?

In recent years, I have become aware (through reading) of the existence of the psychic split phenomenon. I feel a strong pull toward Negro tradition and culture; more so than toward **blatant** Negro militancy. However, having been trained by exposure and experience to value certain aspects of white cultural institutions and orthodoxies, I feel a strong pull in these directions also. In fact, because of my particular

artistic involvement, I feel a strong pull toward the traditions and culture of a number of different ethnic groups.

Does this split necessarily imply an irreconcilable option or is there a tenable position which lies somewhere between?

I do not feel that this split necessarily implies an irreconcilable option.

Do you think there is a special relationship that the Negro artist has to American society?

No more so than any artist has to his society.

Do you think the Negro artist has any degree of responsibility to commit his art to the fight for Negro equality?

Not unless **he** feels this is a vital commitment and that it is natural to **his** artistic demands.

Does the Negro artist have something to offer that no other artist has?

Yes, in the same way that any artist of any particular culture or ethnic group has something to offer in terms of his human uniqueness.

To what degree and in what manner can a successful Negro artist use his success as a weapon or resource to improve the status of the Negro artist in society?

By being sure that he lives up to the demands of his own artistic integrity and allowing his performance to speak for itself. He should seek opportunities to share his perception and craftsmanship with as many young people as possible (students, elementary through college; non-students).

Is it a necessary step in the development of an American Negro artist to acknowledge an African heritage?

No! ! There are many people classified as American Negro who have an extremely small percentage of African blood. In addition, being a part of, or shall I say surrounded by American culture (whatever that "pot pourri" is), makes it mandatory that the artist develop according to his particular background of exposure.

Karl Shapiro, the poet, has said: "It is not a coherent picture, but one thing is true: the urge is downward, not up. Not up to the elites. The gravity of American creativity is downwards, toward 'the darker bloods,' as Lawrence would put it. Maybe the pale white Anglo-Saxon elite has had it. "Do you think this is to any degree true?" Please comment.

I don't like the use of the words "down" or "up." I think the Anglo-Saxon world is being forced to become aware of the creative strength of the darker bloods all over the world. What with World War II, Korea, Vietnam, television, transistor radio, jets, etc., there is a great deal more realization of the fact that the European or Anglo-Saxon centered artistic ethic is not the only ethic, nor the most important ethic, in existence.

Is there anything else you would care to say about the particular condition of being a Negro artist in America today?

I feel that the Negro artist in America today must still insist on being recognized as a contributing force in all areas of artistic endeavor. We have a wealth of undeveloped, unrecognized or unencouraged talent

and sensitivities to artistic expression that never find a way into the mainstream of recognition.

Louis S. Peterson

Has written plays for the theater, motion pictures and television.

Do you think of yourself as a Negro artist or an artist who happens to be a Negro?

I think of myself as a writer who happens to be a Negro. My work has not always embraced Negro themes, but I notice that when any mention is made of Negroes in the arts, my name eventually arises, so despite my thoughts on the matter, I am considered a Negro artist, if you choose to use the word artist regarding either writers or actors. I would use the word craftsman instead.

Do you personally feel the psychic split that a number of Negro writers describe so graphically: the pull, on the one hand, toward Negro militancy, tradition, and culture, and the pull, on the other hand, to the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies?

Let's face it, the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies are here to stay and the majority of the creative work I do is involved with them. I have been angry for a long time also. My militancy dates back to World War II, when it was very lonely on the militant side, so, for me, anyway, there is no psychic split. Good theater is good theater no matter who does it.

Does this split necessarily imply an irreconcilable option or is there a tenable position which lies somewhere between?

I'm very much afraid that there is going to have to be a tenable position, which is basically what I was trying to say in the question above. As an American Negro, I find it a little impossible not to recognize the virtues of both sides, and the vices of both sides. I find some things about the Negro militancy quite admirable and others excessive and the same thing can be said for the white cultural institutions as well. But in this country, neither of them can be ignored. That way lies schizophrenia.

Do you think there is a special relationship that the Negro artist has to American society?

If the Negro artist does not have a special relationship with American society, then I'm very much afraid that he has no relationship at all. I come up against a complete blank wall regarding my African forbears. We can study African culture, but I feel no more relationship with it than I do, say, with Chinese culture. Relationship as a word has more to do with physical contact than it does with a mental exercise and whether I like it or not, my relationship has been with American society.

Do you think the Negro artist has any degree of responsibility to commit his art to the fight for Negro equality? If so, in what way?

Of course I do. As a writer, I don't think that I've written one thing

that did not have as its goal the idea that in understanding other people and things more clearly comes acceptance of other peoples. Understanding is the only way to do away with fear, and fear is what we're confronted with today, coupled with ignorance, and anything the artist can do to combat these things should and must be done, but subtly. The first responsibility of any artist is to entertain, the second to teach. I have no patience with plays like *Blues for Mister Charlie,* for instance. To open someone's head a surgeon uses a scalpel, not a bludgeon.

Does the Negro artist have something to offer that no other artist has?

Every artist has something to offer that no other artist has. If they didn't everyone would listen to Frank Sinatra, and there would be no need for Harry Belafonte or anyone else. However, in the case of the Negro artist, he does have something special to offer and that is his knowledge of himself as a Negro. But then, the same could be said of a Jewish artist, etc.

To what degree and in what manner can a successful Negro artist use his success as a weapon resource to improve the status of the Negro artist in society?

I frankly think that if the Negro people as a whole had improved their status to the extent that the Negro artist has, we would be in great shape. I don't think that there is need for any Negro artist to use success as a weapon to improve the status of another Negro artist because it simply is unnecessary. Sidney Poitier is a box-office smash. Diana Sands is accepted in any part. The important thing here is talent and if you have it, no one need worry about your status as an artist. You will have it.

Karl Shapiro, the poet, has said: "It is not a coherent picture, but one thing is true: the urge is downward, not up. Not up to the elites. The gravity of American creativity is downwards, toward 'the darker bloods,' as Lawrence would put it. Maybe the pale white Anglo-Saxon elite has had it." Do you think this is to any degree true? Please comment.

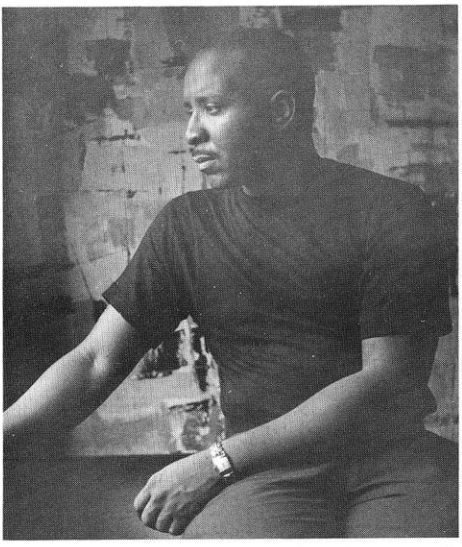
I personally think it is sheer nonsense. No one race has had, or ever will have, a monopoly on creativity.

Is there anything else you would care to say about the particular condition of being a Negro artist in America today?

There are, of course, not the number of Negroes functioning in the arts that I think should be functioning there at this particular time of our lives. It is basically because we are only two generations away from slavery, going into our third generation, and culture is largely a matter that is attended to after a people have passed into a period of prosperity, so, consequently, the Negro artist is only too often willing to settle for less than he should. Too often, the press acclaims, for instance, a Negro performer as a talent when, if the truth be known, the "reporter" is condescending because more consideration is given to the fact that the performer is a Negro who has had to overcome difficulties in his life, than to his actual talent. Often the white artist would be cast aside or ignored for a similar performance.

Alvin C. Hollingsworth

A noted painter of commentaries on city ghettos. He teaches fine art and graphic art at the New York High School of Art and Design.



Do you think of yourself as a Negro artist or an artist who happens to be a Negro?

It is impossible **not** to think of yourself as a Negro, if you are in the least aware of what is happening around you. As a Negro artist, you are automatically involved.

Do you personally feel the psychic split that a number of Negro writers describe so graphically: the pull, on the one hand, toward Negro militancy, tradition, and culture, and the pull, on the other hand, to the white cultural institutions and orthodoxies?

This psychic split again, is automatic. For, although you may feel temporarily "comfortable" economically and socially when you see what happened to Medgar Evers or Meredith during his "near fatal" walk, you cannot help but feel, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

Does this split necessarily imply an irreconcilable option or is there a tenable position which lies somewhere between?

There is a tenable position that lies somewhere between when the Negro attains the social and economic equality that is his birthright and the white man adjusts to the point of compensating for the "unreasonable feelings of resentment" that he has fostered in the Negro.

Do you think there is a special relationship that the Negro artist has to American society?

Yes, he is part and parcel of this society. His hopes and aspirations must find fulfillment **here.** Not Africa, India, Europe, but **here! !**

Do you think the Negro artist has any degree of responsibility to commit his art to the fight for Negro equality? If so, in what way?

Yes, but with reservations. The artist's means of expression is with his media. If he paints abstractly, then his responsibility to commit his art to the fight for Negro equality is not immediately reflected in his art. This is valid. But he should contribute to art shows that reflect a concrete involvement.

Does the Negro artist have something to offer that no other artist has?

Yes. The uniqueness of his history, heritage and experiences. The Negro artist and his ancestors suffered or enjoyed experiences and feelings that only "the Negro" experienced.

To what degree and in what manner can a successful Negro artist use his success as a weapon or resource

to improve the status of the Negro artist in society?

Let Negroes at all levels know that "it can happen here" i.e., success and fulfillment. Contribute in any way to the civil rights movement. Teach both whites and Negroes how to destroy both "old and new" stereotypes.

Is it a necessary step in the development of an American Negro artist to acknowledge an African heritage?

For complete appreciation of "self," **all** American Negroes should acknowledge and appreciate their heritage. In fact, it should have been included, in a positive fashion, in American text books. In this way, all Americans, black and white alike, would have accepted the Negro heritage as part of the American "main stream." Although it is not necessary to all Jews to be "Zionist," the importance of the Holy Land to the Jew is **never denied.**

Karl Shapiro, the poet, has said: It is not a coherent picture, but one thing is true: the urge is downward, not up. Not up to the elites. The gravity of American creativity is downwards, toward 'the darker bloods,' as Lawrence would put it. Maybe the pale white Anglo-Saxon has had it." Do you think this is to any degree true? Please comment.

I don't agree in the main. But it is timely and necessary to recognize the great talent and contributions artists of darker hue have made to the mainstream of American and world culture.

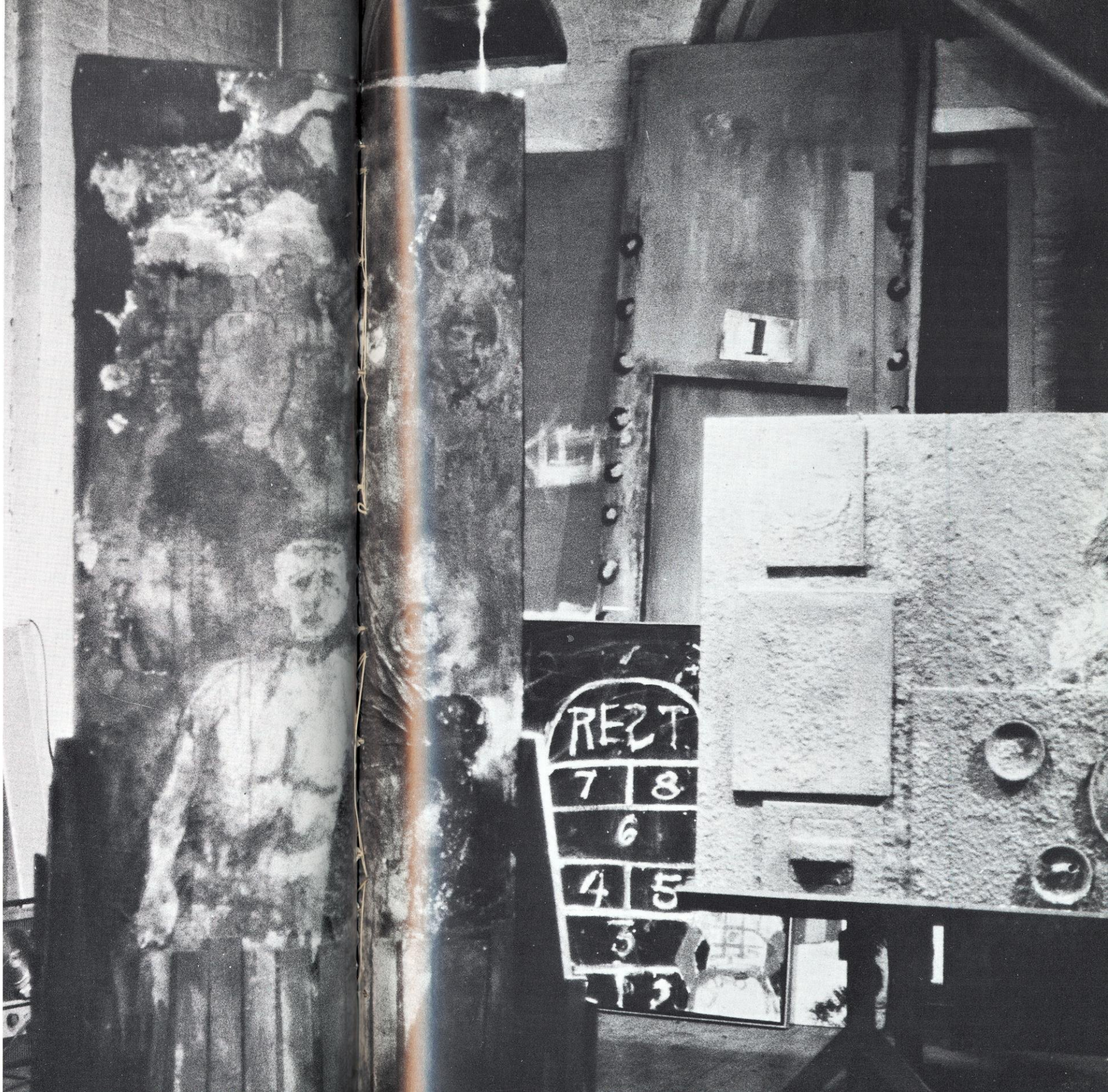
Is there anything else you would care to say about the particular condition of being a Negro artist in America today?

I believe that in art, as in every area of American life, the Negro artist has not been given his due proportionately to the many fine Negro artists that contributed to the society. The hope lies in the acceptance and appreciation of a man for his own merits. This has consistently come first in the creative areas and so it **must be** in the arts.

I have always been intrigued by new barriers being broken in any creative area — especially art.

In getting these paintings together I had the desire to create an environment by overpowering the viewer with the size and forcefulness of each canvas — but as I worked on each 4x8' piece of plywood I realized that I became so involved I wanted the viewer to be trapped — even as I was — by the very scenes or environment that he was observing. Therefore, for the fourth panel I constructed and painted an actual door, folded the other three panels around so that they formed a box, put a top on it and then painted a scene inside with the objective of having the viewer actually see, think and 'become' part of the painting. You walk around and then **into** the painting itself, and close the door behind you.

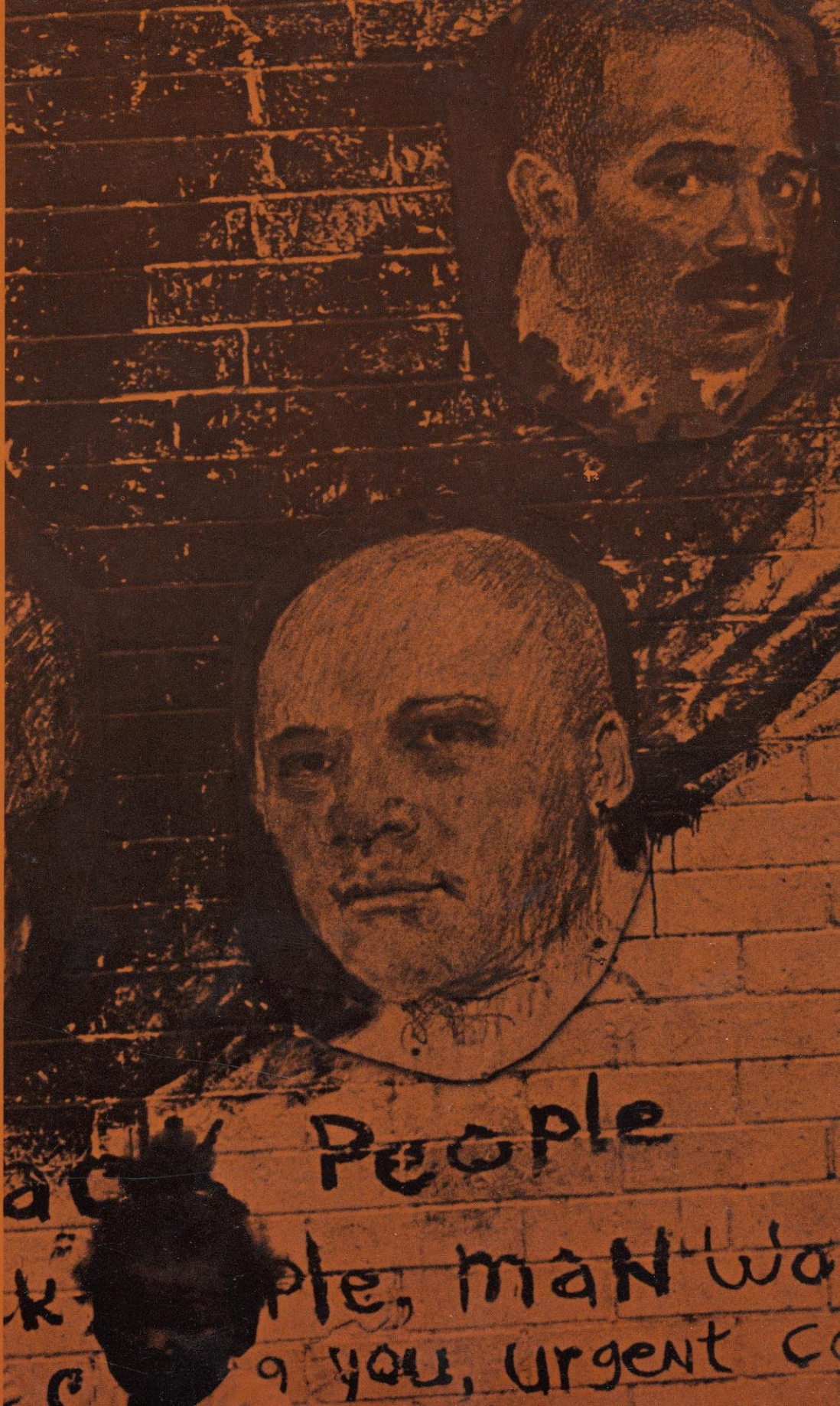
Alvin C. Hollingsworth




WALL OF
RESPECT
THIS WALL WAS CREATED
TO HONOR OUR BLACK
Heroes
PRIMA


THIS WALL WAS CREATED
TO HONOR OUR BLACK
Heroes
and to Beautify our community


WALL OF
RESPECT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THE NEGRO WRITER AND THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

by Herbert Hill

I.

Alfred Kazin once wrote that great literature comes out of a profound confrontation of social facts. Current writing by American Negroes is characterized by social confrontation together with a new concern for technique and style that with rare exceptions was not present in earlier works. The body of literature written by American Negroes evolved in two phases: protest literature which was frequently more protest than literature, and later, a literature of accommodation written to "amuse" white audiences by reinforcing their fantasies about Negroes.

In their own special way both kinds of writing involved not a confrontation of social facts but rather an affirmation of them. Whites were the audience and Negro writers, if they were to survive, were required to entertain them. However, beginning in 1940 with the publication of Richard Wright's *Native Son,* the Negro writer could no longer be thought of as an entertainer. This compelling work was "protest literature" in the traditional sense, that is, in its statement

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This essay is based in part on a paper delivered by Mr. Hill at the seminar series "American Art and Culture: The Negro's Contribution" at the University of California, Los Angeles.

the negro writer and the creative imagination

that Bigger Thomas was driven to crime because of complex social conditions, but it was also a work of art.

Native Son achieved a popular and artistic success at home and abroad never before known to an American Negro writer. The framework for *Native Son* is to be found in its implicit assumption that the social order is directly responsible for the degradation of the Negro and that American society produces conditions that terribly distort and destroy individual human beings who belong to an oppressed racial minority. The character in the book who functions as Wright's spokesman states that Negroes "taken collectively — constitute a separate nation shunted, stripped, and held captive within this nation, devoid of political, social and economic and property rights."

Native Son is basically a novel of protest, but Wright went beyond the attack on environment and racial injustice to a powerful symbolic rendering of the narrative that is a comment on the action described in the story. Wright creates a world of horror and anguish, an atmosphere in which everything is of "the extreme situation." For all of its limitations, *Native Son* was clearly differentiated from the other "problem novels" that preceded it. Later in his autobiographical *Black Boy* (1945), Wright tells us of his struggles against the corrosive effects of the environment and of the varieties of sensitive human responses which made possible his literary creativity and his survival as a man.

With the publication in 1952 of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* there appeared the most significant and original literary imagination in the history of the Negro novel. Here the relevance of ritual and myth to literature was again demonstrated, together with a high sense of style and artistic discipline. In this brilliant novel, the author was boldly experimental, fusing reality and fantasy in a unique and original way. Mr. Ellison has written:

. . . the most surreal fantasies are acted out upon the streets of Harlem. . . Here the grandchildren of those who possess no written literature examine their lives through the eyes of Freud and Marx, Kierkegaard and Kafka, Malraux and Sartre. It explains the nature of a world so fluid and shifting that often within the mind the real and the unreal merge and the marvelous beckons from behind the same sordid reality that denies its existence.

This interweaving of "the real and the unreal" has become a characteristic of works by several Negro writers coming after Wright and Ellison.

The diversity and range in contemporary Negro literature is demonstrated by examining the recent work of some young writers, and suggests that given the differences in sensitivity and uniqueness of style there may no longer be any such thing as a "Negro novel" although there certainly is a Negro response and preoccupation with the racial situation in the United States.

The Catacombs (1965) by William Demby is a most unusual book. Using the techniques of the cinema — the fast imposition of image over image — Demby has attempted to break through the conventional form of the novel to something else. Much of the novel suggests that as Demby ponders the relationship of the "real" to the fictional he is attempting to go beyond the complex riddles posed by the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello in his

famous play, *Six Characters in Search of an Author.* This novel is peppered with headlines from newspaper clippings that Demby juxtaposes for dramatic effects and as a vehicle for his commentary. The headlines demonstrate the meaninglessness of what goes on in the "real" world, in contrast to the fictional world of the novel. But in either territory — fictional or non-fictional — absurdity runs rampant. Which absurdity is real and which has meaning is the question the author keeps asking.

Demby, like others of his generation, is influenced by existentialism, by an awareness of modern man's estrangement from an absurd world and in *The Catacombs* Demby gives further proof of the rich literary imagination indicated in his first novel, *Beetlecreek,* published in 1950. William Demby was in that book, possessed with a powerful idea. The theme and material of *Beetlecreek* is the subject matter of great literature. However, the achievement of *Beetlecreek* lacks, finally, the full resonance of its subject. The material in the work of a mature writer reverberates back through experience so that what is evoked in the reader is more than the dimensions of what is written. What one could call, I suppose, the novel's fourth dimension, the commentary that is always greater than that which is described. Demby, for all of his achievement here, lacks the development to sound out the full potential of his sources. Both the writer and the book remain too close to youth, to promise, to beginning. But, *Beetlecreek,* although ignored by most critics, remains a significant contribution to contemporary American letters (and was recently republished in an Avon Library paperback edition).

The obsession with race and violence and the brutality within American society have long been a major subject for some of America's most important writers, among them William Faulkner. Now young Negro writers, such as LeRoi Jones, in essays and fiction, are exploring these themes. In a short span of years, LeRoi Jones has written poetry, fiction, plays, essays, reviews, a full length study of jazz called *Blues People* (1963), followed by *Black Music* (1967), a series of essays on jazz music.

His autobiographical novel, *The System of Dante's Hell* (1965), together with his collection of random essays collected in the volume entitled *Home* (1966) are perhaps most valuable in revealing his development not only as as writer but also as a spokesman for a generation of Negro youth who are not only bitterly angry at the racism of American society, but have chosen to disaffiliate from it and have also promised to destroy it.

The essays in *Home* written during a five year period from 1960-65 are wide ranging, and although concerned with such disparate subjects as "The Dempsey-Liston Fight," the "Legacy of Malcolm X," "Soul Food" and "Street Protests" they are all bound together by two assumptions: first, that America remains basically a racist society in which little has changed for the great majority of black people, and secondly, that the victims of American racism, the 22 million people of color, have within themselves the potential to change not only their own lives, but also the power to change the whole American civilization. Repeatedly, in these essays, he warns us, however, that if these changes do not take place, and fast, too, there is very likely the possibility of a holocaust. The essays in *Home* demonstrate how the author has moved

from the liberalism of an early article like "Tokenism" to the later radicalism of his essay on "The Revolutionary Theatre" but throughout the book, acting like a binding theme, is a clear cut view of evil. Thus LeRoi Jones has moved from the U.S.A. to a place he calls "Black."

LeRoi Jones' *A System of Dante's Hell* has been called a novel by the publisher. But this is not a novel in the usual sense of the term, because the traditional structure of a novel, its concern with plot and characters, is significantly lacking. One senses that the author is deliberately flaunting the traditional concern of the novelist for narrative, because the story he tells is his own story, his own special, private story, and if he is to communicate it to someone else, he must invoke a chaos that defies conventional means. Thus the experience of *Dante's Hell* must remain somewhat ambiguous. Perhaps all **hell,** whether it be that of LeRoi Jones' private world, or that of Dante himself, or of anyone else's for that matter, remains finally, somewhat inexplicable. Mystery and the demons have often walked hand in hand.

Frequently in the past the tragic hero in novels written by American Negroes was the Negro who in an infinite variety of ways is destroyed as the victim of white society. However, in the most recent work of William Melvin Kelley, *Dem* (1967), the white people, the "oppressors" become the victims of their own fantasies about Negroes. While Kelley suggested this theme in an earlier novel, *A Different Drummer* (1962), and in several short stories, in *Dem* he goes beyond the theme of racial injustice to a powerful indictment of the entire American society. In accordance with his perception of the "social facts" William Melvin Kelley veers off in a new direction. Kelley is not interested in characterization in order to understand and develop "characters" in a novelistic tale but he is very much interested in the representations of character, as a playwright might be; the situation reveals the character, not the character in the situation. It is situation, the decisive circumstance, that interests Kelley and, because of this, he makes the role of *personalities* among the white figures highly stylized in contrast to the individualized Negro characters. This imparts a bitter comic quality to the whites' constant confusion about who is who. How do you tell **them** apart, especially when it becomes crucial to one's own identity to do so.

The whites are drawn with a stereotyped savageness that in the past characterized the way whites wrote about Negroes. But Kelley does not do it merely for propaganda purposes alone; the interplay of the blurred stereotypes with those who are individual personalities suggests possibilities that go far beyond the narrative.

The strong poetic tradition of American Negro literature continues to be alive today although some fine talents live and die in obscurity. One of the most important of these whose work is certain to receive a belated recognition, was Melvin B. Tolson who for more than a quarter of a century wrote some of the richest and most imaginative poetry of our time, and who until his last years (he died in 1966) received little recognition.

In 1953 Tolson's *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia* was published to celebrate the Liberian Centennial. In his Libretto Tolson wrote:

Liberia?
No micro footnote in a bunioned book
Honed by a pedant
With a gelded look
You are
The ladder of survival dawn men saw
In the quicksilver sparrow that slips
the eagle's claw!

This work, recently reissued in a new format, had been originally commissioned by the Liberian Government and received high critical acclaim.

Allen Tate, in his preface, wrote that: "For the first time it seems to me, a Negro poet has assimilated completely the full poetic language of his time and by implication, the Anglo-American poetic tradition."

But, it was not until Karl Shapiro wrote his now famous appreciation of Tolson which appeared during 1965 on the front page of the New York Herald Tribune's *Book Week,* that Tolson began to receive some of the attention he deserved. Shapiro wrote:

A great poet has been living in our midst for decades and is almost totally unknown even by the literati, even by poets. Can this be possible in the age of criticism and of publication unlimited? It is not only possible but highly probable. Poetry today is an established institution which has many of the characteristics of a closed corporation. (One of the rules of the poetic establishments is that Negroes are not admitted to the polite company of the anthology.) Poetry as we know it, remains the most lily white of the arts.

In his 65th year, Tolson's most ambitious work, *Harlem Gallery* was published (1965). This volume subtitled *The Curator, Book I* was regarded by the author as only the first part of a longer, forthcoming epic poem. In this work the poet poses the "phoenix riddle of this allegory of the Harlem Gallery. . . a people's new world odyssey from chattel to *Esquire.*"

This brilliantly structured poem is laid out in 24 sections, the largest being "Harlem Vignettes," a collection of portraits whose characters appear in the dialogues of the poem. Tolson writes:

Where, oh, where is Bessie Smith
with her heart as big as the blues of truth?
Where oh where is Mister Jelly Roll
with his Cadillac and diamond tooth?
Where, oh where is Papa Handy
with his blue notes a-dragging from
bar to bar?
Where, oh, where is bulletproof Leadbelly
with his tall tales and 12 string guitar.

Towards the end of the book, the analytical wit and sensuous humor moves into a high mocking serious criticism of lost causes and hollow beliefs. Thus, Tolson writes:

White Boy,
Black Boy,
the meander of a curator leads him by
the house where illiteracy beds
with ignorance and all her brats.
Should he
skim the milk of culture for the elite
and give the "lesser breeds"
a popular latex brand?
Should he
(to increase digestibility)
break up
the fat globules and vitamins
and casein shreds?
Tonic spasms of wind and wave
assail compass and lamp
in the cabined night?
but the binnacle of imagination
steers the work of art aright —
even if the craftsman gives us

a dash as he cuts
a dash:

Cezanne,
the Zulu of the Brush
Daumier
the anatomist of the lawyer's mouth
Hogarth,
the engraver of harlots for cash.
O Ushas,
I could unweave
a Gobelin arras of irony on
graybeard artists
disoriented like Degas when
forced to leave
the rue Victor Masse — to make again
a new place for new things and men.

Though the Negro world frequently remains their emotional home, today Negro writers in a variety of ways are seeking as Tolson stated: "A new place for new things and new men." And now Negro writers are making the creative act their first consideration. They continue to confront American Society as Negroes, but increasingly without the conflict between social and literary aspirations that marked the work of Negro writers in the past.

Negro authors, in dealing with the reality of American life, have, of course, been unable to escape an awareness of the racial situation, especially one that fundamentally changes so very little. Now, however, this awareness is being transmuted brilliantly and powerfully into literature. Until recently Negro writing was, with a few important exceptions, mainly interesting as sociology, but today the individual artist is asserting his vision and his creative imagination.

Thus, Ralph Ellison, in his collection of essays, *Shadow and Act* (1964) writes:

I recognize no dichotomy between art and protest. Dostoevski's Notes from the Underground is, among other things, a protest against the limitations of nineteenth century rationalism: Don Quixote, Man's Fate, Oedipus Rex, The Trial — all these embody protest even against the limitation of human life itself. If social protest is antithetical to art, what then shall we make of Goya, Dickens, and Twain? One hears a lot of complaints about the so-called Protest Novel, especially when written by Negroes, but it seems to me that the critics could more accurately complain about their lack of craftsmanship and their provincialism.

The literature created by Negroes is not only a protest against the irrational racial situation, not only an attempt to explain the unique status of American Negroes to white society and to the world, but more significantly, the literature of American Negroes is an attempt to explain the racial situation to themselves. "Who am I?" and "Who are they?" and "What are they?" are urgent questions for Negroes. The demand for an answer leads not only to necessary social protest but also to the development of the creative imagination, to the search for reason and to a new concern with art and ideology.

"Negro" and "race" are now frequently used as universal symbols and metaphors for all men who are denied dignity in a senseless world, and there is a new concern with problems of alienation and identity. James Baldwin has explained that in his writing he is concerned with "the depthless alienation from one's self and one's people — this is the sum of the American experience." I would note that perhaps the major characteristic of writing by contemporary American

Negroes is the attempt at self-perception, at self-definition.

This is a major theme in the three novels written by James Baldwin: *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), *Giovanni's Room* (1956), *Another Country* (1962). In his last two novels, Mr. Baldwin attempts to go beyond the factor of race in arriving at a valid perception and tells us that self-definition, that "salvation" in a secular sense requires the most tortuous and complex confrontation with one's own self as well as with the social order. Though he does not fully succeed in realizing his literary vision of the painful journey to "another country," in his novels, Mr. Baldwin does evince a remarkable power in his brilliant essays.

In the two collections of his essays, *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) and *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961) as well as *The Fire Next Time* (1963) James Baldwin has used the essay as has no other contemporary American Writer, and has restored the essay as a literary form. Alfred Kazin has written:

The extraordinary thing about these essays is that he can give voice to all his insights and longings and despairs without losing control — indeed, without ever missing his chance to dig in deeper. Speaking now with the moral authority of the future, now with the bitterness of Harlem, now with the sophistication of the perennial American abroad, now with the toughness of the adventurer who knows the slums and messes of Paris, now as the dopester on Gide's marriage, now as the literary celebrity moving in the company of other celebrities, he somehow manages never to enjoy things so well that he will get heedless, never suffers so constantly that he will lose himself. He is bitter yet radiantly intelligent as he seizes the endless implications in the oppression of man by man, of race by race. To be James Baldwin is to touch on so many hidden places in Europe, America, the Negro, the white man — to be forced to understand so much!

II.

Historical and sociological research has repeatedly attempted to establish the salient characteristics of the racial situation in the United States. Usually an effort is made to understand the so-called **Negro problem** within the context of America's social development and what it means for the future of the nation. Although a citizen of Sweden, Gunnar Myrdal typified this approach when he described the *American Dilemma* as a conflict within the dominant white social order. But what is the Negro version of the American society? In terms of history, what may finally be of the greatest importance is the Negro's perception of himself and the responses of his condition. And this is the crucial importance and significance of the literature of the American Negro. Here, the infinite possibilities of creativity are continuously informed by the endless variations of individual experience and personality. Here, the interior meaning of race and caste and class are apprehended and communicated.

In 1903, W. E. B. DuBois in *The Souls of Black Folk* described the feelings of a Negro as he sees himself through the eyes of an alien world:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused

contempt and pity. 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.

Professor Saunders Redding, in his introduction to a recent edition of *The Souls of Black Folk* tells us that the South African Negro writer, Peter Abrahams, "was not alone" when he stated upon first reading *The Souls of Black Folk* that until then he had had no words with which to voice his Negroness. It had, Abrahams wrote, "the impact of a revelation . . . a key to the understanding of my world." Mr. Redding observes that:

The Souls of Black Folk may be seen as fixing that moment in history when the American Negro began to reject the idea of the world's belonging to white people only, and to think of himself, in concert, as a potential force in the organization of society. With its publication, Negroes of training and intelligence, who had hitherto pretended to regard the race problem as of strictly personal concern and who sought individual salvation in a creed of detachment and silence, found a bond in their common grievances and a language through which to express them.

It is within this context that we must understand the special importance of literature for the American Negro community.

For the past quarter of a century, a vast array of historians, sociologists and psychologists among others have studied and to some degree documented the effects of racial segregation and discrimination upon the personality development of American Negroes and some scholars have psychoanalytically studied the consequences of those unconscious feelings that black is inferior, evil and undesirable.

Although research in the social psychology of Negroes continues and the significance and depth of the distortion and damage suffered by those born black in white America is still being intensively studied, we must turn to the literature of American Negroes to discover the means by which survival was secured in spite of the severe psychic traumatization.

What, unfortunately, is less understood, is the Negro's perception of his own role. What of the forces summoned up to secure sanity and survival in an utterly irrational situation and the responses to that situation? Perhaps William Faulkner was right when he suggested that the most important feature of the Negro's experience in America was that "they endure." Indeed, "they" do endure and, moreover, "they" have survived with great vitality. The record of that endurance and survival is to be found in the songs and the dances, the spirituals, the "Blues," the gospel hymns and "holler shouts" the music and, the poetry, in the plays, in the stories, both in the oral tradition as well as in the written, in the novels, the essays and indeed, in all the magnificent works of the creative imagination.

For those concerned with Negro life and thought there is perhaps a special value in the study of this literature, for as Henry James explained, the novel is "felt life" and for the Goncourt Brothers the novelist was regarded as the historian of the present.

Because we live in an age of collective social depravity, in the form of mass murder, genocide, atomic bombs

and concentration camps, the social scientists and the psychiatrists have been examining human behavior in extreme circumstances. But for the Negro in the United States, from the very beginning, life has been lived in the extreme situation. For almost two and a half centuries before 1863 more than 90 percent of all black people living in the United States were forced to live out their lives within a brutal and degrading system of slavery that openly declared that Negroes were not human beings, but merely things, objects, pieces of property. Tragically enough, the period after Emancipation did not represent a fundamental discontinuity in the Negro experience. Over 100 years ago, emancipation from legal slavery was declared, but freedom was not secured for the Negro and it is precisely this lack of freedom then and now which has consistently been the essential characteristic of Negro life in America.

But there was a great freedom in the creative imagination of Negroes, especially in the way Negroes perceived their status and tried to understand their situation. The more than 200 slave revolts required not only courage and bravery but also imagination. In the light of what we now know through the disciplines of sociology and psychology, Negro responses to the extreme situation revealed the vigor and insistence upon survival of a people — a people who not only organized slave rebellion, fled through the night across swamps and forests to cross the Ohio River, who sabotaged the economy of slavery and burned plantations, but who also created a Frederick Douglass, who would later write an enduring American literary classic, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, an American Slave.* Thus it has always been, from Jupiter Hammon whose poetry was published in 1760 to Gwendolyn Brooks and Langston Hughes and LeRoi Jones and the other Negro poets of our time. Thus, it has been since 1827 when *Freedom's Journal,* the first Negro newspaper in the United States began publication.

Thus it has been since 1852 when William Wells Brown wrote *Clotelle,* the first novel published by an American Negro, to Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin of today.

Briefly stated there are several major tendencies in Negro literature. There is the early folk tradition, based mainly upon Southern rural material that has been richly exploited by several generations of Negro writers, such as Daniel Webster Davis, Paul Laurence Dunbar and James Weldon Johnson. Langston Hughes has used the same folk material but in relation to the rural Negro now living in the big cities of the North.

There is the important tradition of racial protest, first during the anti-slavery struggle, including the slave narratives, many of which have genuine literary value, and social protest again in modern times. There are the novels of caste that began with J. McHenry Jones' *Hearts of Gold* in 1896 to the novels of Walter White in the 1920's. At the turn of the century, Charles Waddell Chesnutt in his novels and short stories revealed a fine creative talent and went far beyond the literary fashion and taste of his time. Then the Harlem School and the so-called "Negro Renaissance" whose gifted writers derided the pretensions and genteel style of the older group. There was the rich and varied poetry of Countee Cullen, the picaresque

novels of Claude McKay and Jean Toomer whose *Cane* was published in 1923 and is sure to be rediscovered by future generations. Later there were those involved with the naturalist tradition and the proletarian literature school.

Now there are new forces and talents at work in the Negro literary world. Among the influences upon the work of the contemporary Negro writer is the concept of *Negritude* as found in the writings of Leopold Senghor (the distinguished poet-political leader of Senegal) and the other French-speaking poets of *Negritude* who provide a body of myth that Sartre describes as "anti-racist racism." Senghor writes of *Negritude* as "The sense of communion, the gift of myth making — the ensemble of cultural values of the black world."

One of the interesting characteristics of the current literary creativity among Negroes is the increasing number of Negro women who are developing their talent and emerging as effective writers. In the history of Negro writing in America, several women emerged quite early as important figures, especially as poets. Among these were Phyllis Wheatley whose "Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral" were published in 1773 and Mrs. Frances E. W. Harper who, in addition to poetry, also wrote essays and short stories. Her most famous work, a novel, *Iola Leroy or Shadows Uplifted,* was published in 1892.

One of the most remarkable works in American literature is the fascinating *Journal* of Charlotte Forten, written between the years of 1854 and 1864. Miss Forten was the grand-daughter of the famous Negro abolitionist leader, James Forten, and the *Journal* written with power and literary sensitivity describes the varied reactions and observations of a cultivated young woman of sixteen who left her native Philadelphia in 1854 to travel extensively and to eventually teach in a Negro school in Port Royal, South Carolina, an area held by the Union Army that was to become "the rehearsal for reconstruction."

In the 1920's and 1930's Negro women such as Jessie Fausett in her novels, *This is Confusion, Plumb Bun,* and *The Chinaberry Tree* dealt with the problems of caste and class within Negro society as did Nella Larson in *Quicksand* and *Passing.* Other Negro women who achieved literary reputations during the 1930's and 1940's were Georgia Douglas Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, and Margaret Walker.

One of the most important American poets of our time is the uniquely gifted Gwendolyn Brooks of Chicago. Miss Brooks won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1950 and is the author of four books of poetry, *The Bean Eaters, Annie Allen, Street in Brownsville, Brownsville Boys and Girls,* and a novel, *Maude Martha.* Margaret Danner of Detroit and Gloria Oden of New York City are both original and talented poets and Miss Paule Marshall has indicated in her short stories and novels that she is a writer of great imaginative powers and literary skill who is destined to enrich contemporary American letters.

Two of the most interesting among the younger Negro women novelists are Rosa Guy and Kristin Hunter. The first pages of Mrs. Guy's recently published first novel, *Bird at My Window,* inform the reader that, although the style is at times tentative, here at least is evidence of literary skill that will, it is hoped, be realized in the future.

In 1964, Kristin Hunter's first novel,

God Bless the Child, was published to generally favorable reviews. Now Miss Hunter in her second novel, *The Landlord,* has arrived at a theme which quite naturally lends itself to powerful fantasy and intensity of vision. The theme suggests a surreal world, but Miss Hunter's style is essentially straightforward and realistic. Whatever the limitations of style, Miss Hunter has succeeded in making *The Landlord* into a powerful story that suggests much more than it says on the surface. Miss Hunter has indicated an extraordinary imaginative talent in *The Landlord.*

Among the many talented Negro novelists recently published are William Melvin Kelley, Bryant Rollins, Ernest J. Gaines, Ronald L. Fair and John Killens. Negro playwrights whose works have been produced on or off-Broadway include Lorraine Hansberry, LeRoi Jones, James Baldwin, Ossie Davis and Douglas Turner Ward.

Negro writers are today boldly experimenting and are seeking new means of expression. Thus, they are bringing a new richness and diversity to the literature of our time. Now, Negro writers are using their own special insight, using what Henry James called "the angle of vision" to communicate a critical sensitivity about modern civilization. Of course, this awareness, this "angle of vision" is the result of the Negro's unique social experience, an experience given to no other group in American life.

Today Negro writers are not writing as some did in the past, to please or to titillate white audiences; they are not telling of quaint or amusing colored folks or of exotic sensual Negroes who exist only in the sick fantasies of white people living in a society tragically obsessed by race and color.

Now Negro authors are writing with a new courage and freedom. They have no reluctance in dealing with the absurdities and terrors of the white man's condition and at the same time they are telling the truth about Negroes, the most important truth that America needs to learn.

The unique social experience of the American Negro is the stuff of great literature. It is the material of epic poems, of heroic sagas and vast panoramic novels. It is a story worthy of the greatest writers and these will soon emerge to transform into art that experience which Richard Wright in *Twelve Million Black Voices* has described as follows:

The seasons of the plantation no longer dictate the lives of many of us; hundreds of thousands of us are moving into the sphere of conscious history.

We are with the new tide. We stand at the crossroads. We watch each new procession. The hot wires carry urgent appeals. Print compels us. Voices are speaking. Men are moving!
And we shall be with them.

"Mysteries" by Romare Bearden

AFRO-AMERICAN ART AT FLOODTIDE

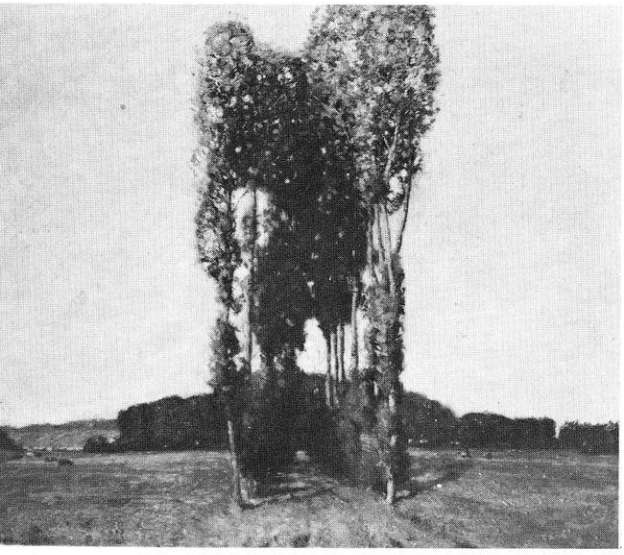
by James A. Porter

When writing about contemporary Afro-American art, I find the temptation to present an array of historical views and events by way of explaining recent developments somewhat hard to resist. Conscious that the inclination to do so may arise from a desire to cure both skepticism and ignorance and not merely from a thirst to justify the present by the past, I am determined to treat it as a fault, and limiting myself to brief retrospective reference, to admit only those events and values which will be regarded as constituent of contemporary Afro-American art. Nevertheless, I shall reserve the right to introduce such historical material as may help to document the points I wish to make.

It is probably a popular assumption that the American Negro has achieved an ineradicable part in American civilization in spite of all past or present attempts to set him apart from the same. But favorable to such an assumption is the solid basis of historical and scientific data so skillfully erected by both Negro and white scholars — anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and the like — who have devoted much or all their professional careers to the task of rediscovering and interpreting the Negro past. More important still for our understanding of the Negro's role in American culture is the realization that much of the flavor of American art derives not simply from local and regional contributions of both Negroes and

"Water Nymphs", 1868, Robert S. Duncanson

"After the Shower", E. M. Bannister



"An Afternoon, Montigny", William H. Harper

whites but also from inter-continental and international transference and persistence of American, African, European and Asian traits of human culture.

As concerns the persistence of African cultural traits in the Americas, that is abundantly evident in the insular communities of the Caribbean and the Antilles as well as in the Southern United States and in Brazil. Scholars like the late Melville J. Herskovits, Carter G. Woodson, Artur Ramos, Gilberto Freyre and Alain LeRoy Locke, have investigated such reciprocal influences between Africa and America in terms of the olden plantation cultures of North and South America as well as of related urban and industrial communities in the same geographical areas. They have found that the Negro artist over the generations has both invented and partaken of artistic styles, especially in music and song. Not only that, they disclose that the talented Negro has also occasionally borrowed from the olden as well as the prevailing currents of style available to him in the cultural baggage of the dominant white group.

The principal distinction to be noted, however, between Afro-American art of the Nineteenth century and that of today is a pervasive sense of malaise and spiritual alienation which turns up vividly in the work of the contemporary artist. This expression of disturbed or distraught feeling is scarcely comparable to the mournful or the melancholy moods of the Negro Spiritual or of the Negro worksong; for it contains strident harmonies and tensions of form, color and feeling which in the plastic arts as well as in music connote the emotions of love, hatred, despair or triumph in such concentrated doses as never burdened the Spirituals. As others have

noted, the dominant pulse of this art suggests an affective sense of world malaise or even of cultural rebellion and spiritual discontent, though there are moments when its backlog of aesthetic estrangement becomes recreated as style.

Leaving aside the anonymous as well as the known Negro handicraftsmen of the Nineteenth century, there remain not more than a dozen or so creative Negro artists of that century whose names are worthy of preservation in the annals of American art. In view, however, of the historical circumstances surrounding the Afro-American artist of that period this may indeed seem a large number of important artists. In any case, it hardly seems necessary at this time to advert to nineteenth century expressions by the Afro-American artist in order to understand contemporary Afro-American art. It may suffice to recall the cultural experience and the work of the first two decades of the present century when the picturesque realism which underlay the artistic interpretations of genre or "lowly life" as well as poetic, religious and various didactic themes had strong appeal for a Henry O. Tanner, a Meta Warrick Fuller and even for that notable poet and storyteller, Paul Laurence Dunbar.

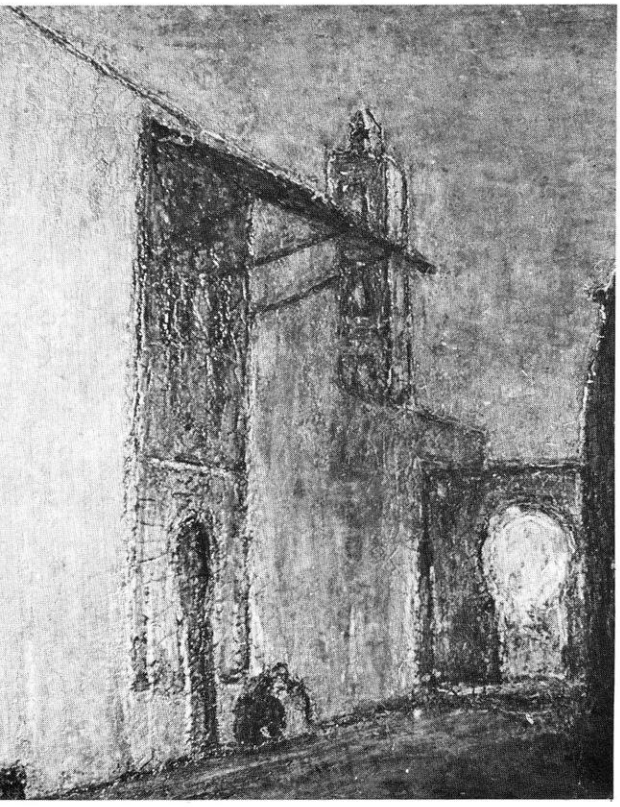
Though a far cry from the romantic-realism of the Midwestern "mulatto artist" Robert S. Duncanson (1817-1872), or the bucolic lyricism of Boston-trained Edward M. Bannister (1828-1901), the early landscape and figure paintings of Tanner possess the flavor of the palpably present rural world of the southern Negro, while his later religious works, like so much of Dunbar's non-dialect verse, exhibit a taste for pious, pathetic, or even romantic sentiment. In both aspects of his art, Tanner was akin to as well as distinct from his first great teacher, the American painter, Thomas Eakins. Yet, the two artists do seem to share the invaluable gift of sagacious insight into human personality.

Tanner was not among those artists who during the first fifteen years of the present century responded to the insistent demand for portraiture of the Negro and for a further elaboration of Negro genre. Yet, his younger contemporaries, W. E. Scott, Laura Wheeler Waring, E. A. Harleston and Archibald Motley delighted in such subjects. Indeed, Scott, Waring, and Harleston all demonstrated a passion for dignified if somewhat sentimental portrayals of Negroes as individuals or as representative types of either the middle or the artisan class; while Meta Warrick Fuller, who returned from her studies in Europe in 1904, William Harper and May Howard Jackson preferred elegant portraits and a variety of thoughtfully objective Negro themes with only occasional excursions into genre. Understandably inspired by Henry O. Tanner's success in Europe they were also keenly aware of a kinship with the then reigning school of American realism (the so-called "Ashcan School"), of which Henri, Sloan, Luks and Glackens were the leaders. They failed, nevertheless, to respond to that challenge which the great Armory Show of 1913 threw out to American artists and to American culture, — a challenge which the second generation of Afro-American artists would not ignore.

Only in the third decade of this century did significant modification of the Afro-American artist's preoccupation with veristic realism arrive. As Margaret Just Butcher in her *The Negro in American Culture* says:

"For the young Negro realists of the

"Suffer Little Children To Come Unto Me",
May Howard Jackson



"The Governor's Palace, Tangier", Henry O. Tanner

twenties, the motive for being racial was art. The increasing tendency was to evolve from the racial substance something technically distinctive, something that as an idiom or style would add to the general resources of art. Much of the flavor of language, flow of phrase, accent of rhythm in prose (and verse and music), and color and tone of imagery that today gives distinction to Negro art was discernible in the work of Negro artists in the twenties. . . ."

As an effect of the impact of "The Negro Renaissance" of which Alain Locke became the principal spokesman, the work of the younger artists acquired not only new themes but also a more aesthetically free expression of subject matter. Stimulus in that direction came from the writings and preachments of articulate Negro leaders like W. E. B. DuBois, Charles S. Johnson and E. Franklin Frazier as well as from the exciting cadences and novel declarations of the poetry and prose of James Weldon Johnson. They were also inspired by the fine creative writings of Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, Sterling Brown, Claude McKay, and Zora Neale Hurston's "folk stories" so full of genuine regional flavor.

Alain Locke, like a professorial gadfly, buzzed about the artists with strong and sometimes shrill counsel toward retrospective communion with what he chose to dub the "ancestral arts" of black Africa. Actually, his counsel drew sanction from the influence of African art on the artistic styles of Cubism and German Expressionism which had emerged in the first fifteen years of the present century. Such precedent, notwithstanding, Locke's preachments on "Negro Art" did have effect in the work of a few artists of the New Negro Movement. The early

paintings of Aaron Douglas and of Hale Woodruff, the graphic art of James L. Wells, and the sculpture of Sargent Johnson disclose a growing familiarity with African forms. Most curiously, Aaron Douglas, in his illustrations, accomplished an interesting transference of exotic shapes to the urban scene, thereby grafting upon his art an improbable enhancement of which Harlem ghetto-dwellers and visitors to Harlem alike were the subjects. From this moment on a definite gravitation towards the use of symbolic rather than purely representational forms was evident in Afro-American art.

Throughout the late 1930's and, in fact, also in the '40's a rival stylistic theme or modality, — more precisely, a divergent phase of European Expressionism — figured prominently in the alternately planar and impressionistic, but always multifaceted forms of Richmond Barthe's sculpture. Likewise, in the emotion-laden and explosively gesticulant figural and genre compositions of Malvin Gray Johnson and in the rollicking landscapes and Soutine-like expressionist canvases by William H. Johnson of Florence, S. C., something like the direct and powerfully sustained yet artistically controlled emotionality of James Weldon Johnson's poetized "Sermons" seemed joined to the blatant pulsations of Jazz.

In both form and facture clearly anticipating the art of the 50's, these variously ecstatic and angry moods of painting scarcely seemed opposed to the more aggressively geometric tendencies of African design which had taken charge of the productions of a few important artists. As a matter of fact, there were among the latter some who worked in both styles.

But further, and in tune with the dance steps or the telling cadences of Negro music then popular, there had begun to appear first in the urban genre paintings by Archibald Motley, and later in those of Jacob Lawrence what must be acknowledged as the visual equivalent of syncopated rhythms such as had long distinguished Afro-American music. In short, a new polarity of form and substance was beginning to find place in Afro-American art independently of any prior sanction of the New York Armory Show. Although race pride had imposed an historicistic tendency in the beginning, the artists were now developing their themes with attention to nature, to design and the realities of culture.

It should be recalled that in the late 1930's the word "regionalism," denoting a resurgence of popular themes in American life and art at both local and regional levels of experience, was applied by critics of art and literature to the creative productions of writers like Julia Peterkin, Erskine Caldwell and Sinclair Lewis, and to the painters Thomas Benton, Grant Wood, and John Stuart Curry and Edward Hopper. These artists represented an artistic trend quite different to those modalities of Cubism, of Non-objective art or Abstraction which had been set going in the art world of America after the 1913 Armory Show. To a large extent, painting and sculpture were caught up in the aims of social realism as interpreted in the works of some of the great Mexican mural painters — Orozco particularly, but also Rivera. Nevertheless, the larger aesthetic values of their so-called regionalism would scarcely have been appreciated had it not been for the fervid apologetics of criticism written by such an admirer of their efforts as was Thomas Craven who wished to stem the tide of modernism breaking upon

our Western shore with a force which carried it all the way to 57th Street and ultimately into the halls of the Museum of Modern Art.

At that very hour, Afro-American artists were acutely aware of special problems of professional opportunity, of recognition and of patronage. They often charged discrimination and aired their views in the *New York Times* and in other journals of wide circulation. They took such action in the interest of securing for themselves the same freedoms and prerogatives as their fellow white artists were already enjoying and which they conceived as a "natural endowment" of their profession. It is interesting to recall even now that the troubled outlook of the Afro-American artist was expressed by the poet Countee Cullen in a remarkable poem entitled "Yet Do I Marvel" which was published in 1925. Perhaps the question Cullen then posed is yet not fully answered:

Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
*To make a poet black and bid him sing.**

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*The complete poem from which these lines are excerpted runs as follows:

I doubt not God is good, well-meaning, kind,
And d:d he stoop to quibble could tell why
The little buried mole continues blind,
Why flesh that mirrors Him must some day die,
Make plain the reason tortured Tantalus
Is baited by the fickle fruit, declare
If merely brute caprice dooms Sisyphus
To struggle up a never-ending stair.
Inscrutable His ways are, and immune
To catechism by a mind too strewn
With petty cares to slightly understand
What awful brain compels His awful hand,
Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
To make a poet black and bid him sing!

Similar problems were actually posed for the Negro painter and sculptor. An article in the New York World in 1930 carried the terse remarks of two Negro painters on the question of the "racial content of art," and each was a categorical denial of the importance of racial content. Malvin Gray Johnson, a painter, registered his viewpoint as follows:

"A noted American etcher has accused Negroes of imitating their white fellow-workers. No doubt this is true. Not so much from the standpoint that they imitate white artists of this or any other country in as much as they are trying to do what artists of all races do — follow the principles of fine arts technically. . . . The distinguished etcher admits most of these things himself, but says: 'While few of the Negro artists used subjects of Negro life the approach is no different than that of the white painters.' How can it be? We Americans of both races know and live the same life, except that the Negro encounters restrictions."

It should not be forgotten that the Amy Spingarn prizes of 1924 and the Harmon Foundation Awards of a few years later were established to give encouragement and recognition to Negro writers as well as artists. Indeed, the Harmon Awards also singled out Negro leaders or intellectuals who had made meritorious contributions in almost any field of endeavor. Perhaps it should be taken as evidence of a wider current appreciation or acceptance of Afro-American art that comparable awards are no longer made available to the Negro artist in America.

In February, 1936, the First American Artists' Congress was held in New York City for the purpose of exposing to the American art world and

"Richard B. Harrison as 'De Lawd' ", M. W. Fuller

to the world in general the plight of the American artist and the critical state of American art. Only one Negro artist was a member of that body of 360 artists who discussed and later published their findings on every issue ranging from museum and government neglect of the arts to the rental and reproduction rights in his art that an artist was bound to protect. Lynd Ward produced a paper on "Race, Nationality, and Art" which linked up with Aaron Douglas's discussion of "The Negro in American Art." It is not known how many Afro-American artists may have learned about the proceedings of the American Artists' Congress and the resolutions passed, or how many may have admitted its salutary influence on their hopes. Yet, in the 1930's and 40's, when the Public Works of Art Projects were being administered, the number of Negroes who became beneficiaries of government provisions for training and for public art commissions was far greater than such indifference to the aims of the Artists' Congress would have allowed us to conjecture.

Out of the welter of artistic and cultural activity of that period emerged the significant work and careers of Charles White and Eldzier Cortor of Chicago, Hughie Lee-Smith of Cleveland, Ernest Crichlow, Charles Alston and Henry Bannarn of New York, and Elton Fax of Baltimore. To many, these artists may have seemed but the continuators of the "New Realism" of the early 1930's. Actually, they were probing much deeper into the emotions of fear, hatred, loneliness, despair, and triumphant joyousness, uncovering a range of feeling hardly suspected by their older colleagues.

Even among this brilliant galaxy, Charles White and Jacob Lawrence loomed gigantic. Lawrence who since his beginnings in the mid-1930's had become the best-known Afro-American artist, was then, and still remains almost exclusively an interpreter of Negro life. Lawrence's simple close-knit harmonies seem to probe the very soul of the Negro; and no other American artist so deftly translates prose narrative into symbolic color.

Charles White, like Lawrence, is also a devoted interpreter of the Negro. Not a color prestidigitator like Lawrence, he relies chiefly on the eloquence of his black-and-white prints and drawings, which sometimes are of great size, to convey his message. He prefers a compositional format which leaves the subject surrounded with a field of white space that works as an implied extension of the forms. With the Negro as subject he consistently strives to build up a vignette of black beauty oozing through a delicate crackle of forms densely or thinly laid. Were there space in which to make a comparison of his work with that of Andrew Wyeth whose artistic approach to the human condition is not dissimilar, it might prove instructive. I believe, however, that by looking at Wyeth one grasps more readily the universal values in White's art. By looking at White and then again at Wyeth the latter's interest in a narrower human world may seem less clinical and more empathic.

Less well known to those who follow the development of the Negro theme in American art are the younger contemporaries of White and Lawrence. Such printmakers as the fine engraver, Norma Morgan, and that maker of excellent woodcuts and wood-engravings, Walter Williams, deserve wider recognition than that which a few important prizes

taken in collective exhibitions has bestowed on them.

It probably surprises no one that the names of dead artists mentioned in the company of the living can stir emotions of regret in those who have known the difficulties encountered by the Negro in the past to live by his art. And, one regrets the comparatively brief careers of the notable self-taught artist Horace Pippin who died in 1946, and the sculptors Augusta Savage, Henry Bannarn and Marion Perkins, for all these were gifted persons who gave promise of uniquely individual achievements. Of the three, only Pippin's art has commanded wide posthumous appreciation both here and abroad.

It is impossible to discuss the work of all these artists at length. All the same, attention must be called to the marvelously poetic paintings of Charles Davis, Harlan Jackson, Charles Sebree, Lucille Roberts and Lois M. Jones. The mark of the mature and fecund artist is on each of them. They have added generously to the themes originated — or discovered — by the Afro-American artist. Their use of color to create or to suggest a mood will well repay the student of such effects. Charles Davis' "Victory at Dawn," an oil painting of 1941, is still for me one of the great paintings of that year or of any year.

Sebree's art shows definite inclination towards the mystical or ineffable in human life. His work, conceived in a mood of contemplation, recalls the glowing purity of Byzantine enamels. By contrast, Lois Jones' usually brilliant pallette has produced some of the most diverting panoramas of Haitian life and landscape.

It is not my intention to write a survey of Afro-American art or to list the many artists who have risen above the level of amateurism or professional mediocrity during the past twenty-five years or so. I must, however, mention by name quite a number of mature artists of the "new generation" without regard to age. Were it possible to review the work of each artist individually I would do so. Just now, it would seem more useful to write of the social impulses, the ideas or the ideologies and opinions which have admittedly given direction to their practice and substance to their works.

First of all, the remarkable staying power demonstrated by some of the earlier artists whose careers began with the onset of the "New Negro Movement," is one of the happier aspects of the progress of "the minority artist." In short, the current artistic activities of men like Hale Woodruff, Charles Alston, Jacob Lawrence, Aaron Douglas and James L. Wells are still fertile and influential. In addition, their willingness to serve as mentors to the young aspiring artists or to place their experience at the service of those persons or institutions which would promote the opportunities of the artist, must be deserving of highest praise. Moreover, older artists like Sargent Johnson, Charles Alston, Hughie Lee-Smith, Margaret Burroughs and Charles McGee have not put aside the race theme altogether, but have expanded its values in keeping with the evolving language of modern art. A sign of this is their use of bolder rhythms and of free association techniques of abstract expression. Such diversity characterizes as well the whole of the present generation: No single simplistic tenor of style or thought prevails. Not even "realism" as formerly understood dominates the minds and techniques of all the artists today.

Nor does "abstraction" of any single aesthetic variety claim all. "Pop" and "Op" and the several types of "hard-edge" painting are not really rejected, but are occasionally resorted to with a caution dictated by the artist's understanding of the language of symbolism or by his own plastic language.

Negro history still has its illustrators among the older artists who occasionally paint murals; but for all their use of documentary imagery, artists like Allan R. Crite, Woodruff, Stallings, Lee-Smith and McNeill have stayed clear of the further multiplication of stereotypes masquerading as racial or social symbols. An impressive number of the new generation have been making abstract forms and color an occasional vehicle of their personal aesthetic impulsions; but occasional use cannot be the same as unreserved adoption that might easily jeopardize the artist's own variety and freshness of concept. In that context the striped, patched or stippled and frequently taped "or floated abstractions of Sam Gilliam and Alma Thomas of Washington, D. C. are both novel and dynamic."

The philosophy and aims of Pan-Africanism translated into the broader concept of "Negritude" is nothing new, seemingly, to the Negro artist. Long ago he endorsed the feelingful necessity to identify with concepts of race or of blackness whether of African or of American origin. Having read DuBois and Locke, Rayford Logan and Langston Hughes and the great books of Richard Wright and James Baldwin, any Negro member of the new generation might be responsive to a culture propaganda that favors identification with the values of race, race culture, and place, including the necessity to reconstruct the "Negro image."

"Sonny", William H. Johnson

Hale Woodruff shows concern for this legacy of the Afro-American artist in his introduction to the Catalogue, "Ten Negro Artists of the United States"*, for therein he poses the following question: "What criteria are appropriate to the valid assessment of the art of a people?" and answers it by saying that "we must probe beyond subject content and aesthetic language to get at our roots . . . [since] "the most valid measure of any art lies in the impact of qualities outside the obvious, that is to say, in the domain of the spirit and the senses, intangible but real . . ."

While I do not agree that what the senses report to the artist is necessarily intangible, I do feel that Mr. Woodruff has touched on at least one sure index to the motivations of the Negro artist; that is, the spirit; or translated into terms that I should prefer, a lively sensibility, the very trunk nerve of the artist's own subjectivity focused and intensified by experience.

Though the artists of whom I am thinking may now and again appear to return to positions still held by the older men, this should be understandable in the context of group loyalty or in terms of the movement of group ideologies within society. Let them link their sensibility, if they will, to the hopes and purposes of their fellows, or to society as a whole, if it be good for society. There is already sufficient evidence to assure that they easily distinguish the realities of art from the mirage of propaganda.

Surprisingly enough, however, one

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*A catalogue-brochure prepared for the American Negro artists exhibition at the World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar, Senegal, April 1966.

finds that within the very group of young artists in New York City which have been associated with the leadership of Hale Woodruff, Romare Bearden and Charles Alston, that is, the "Spiral" group, a sharp division of opinion on this very head has arisen. In *Art News* for September, 1966, an article on the group publishes the following report:

"They have met as a totally divergent group ranging in age from 28 to 65, which includes a court clerk, art dealer, floor waxer, a Ph.D. candidate and restorer of old masters — first meeting three years ago to discuss what they considered a far more vital issue: What should be their attitudes and commitments as Negro artists in the present struggle for Civil Rights . . . Should you participate directly in the activities of the Movement? Do you have special qualities to express as a Negro artist? What is your value as an artist who is both American and Negro? etc. . . . They knew that something set them apart from other painters, but were not sure if that "something" had a tangible form that could be transmitted through art. They referred to this possibility as "the Negro image." . . . Felrat Hines proposed an answer: "There is no Negro image in the 20th century — not in the 1960's. There are only prevailing ideas that influence everyone all over the world. Each person paints out the life he lives."

While this schismatic development within "Spiral" need not cause the rest of us to take sides, I must point out that it does re-emphasize the Negro artist's subscription to social philosophies as well as to aesthetic ones. More interestingly still, it reveals his concern with his own artistic drives or his uncertainty about the same. Clearly, in a few cases, he is caught upon the horns of the old dilemma, that is, *the conceptual versus the real* in modern art. But in this instance, one observes that not even the powerful example of Romare Bearden's wonderful cubist-surrealist collages — his "Projections" of the Negro image in American society — could galvanize the group into one homogeneous unit from the side of ideology of which I am writing. Instead, one notes an impressive range of tendencies has emerged, all the way from the cryptically symbolic to posteresque "Op", and from the minimal image to collage or montage of found objects — signifying not so much a Negro mystique as a kaleidoscope of mixed emotions of pain, restlessness, frustration, anger, protest, but rarely love. In short, nowhere does one find general adherence to a plausible common denominator of form or to the "good gestalt" as raised or suggested in Mr. Woodruff's introductory piece already referred to.

To some of us the recent artistic movement in Watts, Los Angeles may seem an answer to the non-unity of the Spiral group. It may well be; but I very much doubt that it could be. Not that aesthetic differences on such a grand scale as seen in modern art do by their effect make that art eclectic in the derogatory sense usually applied. On the other hand, there is no way of predicting what kind of artistic response artists will make to such an affecting social and racial crisis as occurred in Watts; but it is reassuring or should be to all that they have responded constructively, and that the majority of those who have done so are Negro. Their response has been uniform only in the sense of having adopted a slogan or title for their first exhibition. The title — "66 Signs of Neon" has for my ear a strangely cryptic fascination. Educationally and socially, these artists have assumed

common goals; artistically, they have adhered to individual ways of expressing their sincere self-consciousness about Watts. Believing in "the art of communication as a creative act" they have made up their own appraisal of Watts as a subject of art:

The ultimate purpose of this effort, as we conceived it, was to demonstrate to the community of Watts, to Los Angeles and to the world at large, that education through creativity is the only way left for a person to find himself in this materialistic world.

Junk was chosen as the medium for a variety of reasons, in addition to its obvious impact as the artifacts of tragedy . . . On another level, the assemblage of junk illustrated for the artists the imposition of order on disorder, the creation of beauty from ugliness. Its analog was the essence of communication, for the placing of unrelated objects in a pattern conceived by intellect and emotion made them speak coherently . . . It is evident that it is a utilization of the August 11th event, but that it transcends it, and rises above social protest. It seems to be saying that there is some uncertainty about our direction. That we all take equal responsibility for the Wattses of the world, and that only we can prevent their happening again.

Depending largely on the techniques of "assemblage," which are not entirely new in the world, the Watts group has ennobled the half-destroyed and sometimes fire-transformed materials taken from the ruins of Watts to become the matrix of their sculpture. Indeed, nearly all their work is sculpture, although a few lithographs have also been devoted to their purposes. In the domain of assemblage we have the purely fantastic as well as the more plastically abstract; and artists like Noah Purifoy and Judson Powell are bringing to the idiom a certain uniqueness of subject as well as feeling. Should this tendency persist it may enlist the energies of other Negro artists and ultimately bring into modern American art a vast new range of subjects with accompanying moods and aesthetic ideas of striking novelty and elaboration.

The possibilities of this surmise were anticipated to a surprisingly large degree in the October 1966 "Negro in American Art" show held in the Galleries of the University of California at Los Angeles. There one saw as part of a total chronological spread of American Negro art of about one hundred years, the best work by some of the most talented of the younger Negro artists. Though their works manifested varying degrees of skill, the suitability of the medium chosen by the artist could not in any case have been challenged. Among painters, the contributions of Alvin Hollingsworth, Mavis Pusey, Raymond Saunders, Daniel Johnson, David Driskell, Sam Gilliam and Wilbur Hayney were most outstanding. John Rhoden of New York, one of the most inventive of the young sculptors, was conspicuous by his absence from the show, but the morbidly Baudelairean fantasies in steel forged by that adept technician in metal, Richard Hunt, could easily have made a moving altarpiece to "Saint Robot" along with the "Sir Watts" by Noah Purifoy and "A Necessary Angle" by Melvin Edwards. And the presence there of other sculptural assemblages by the young Todd Williams and by John Stevens only made one wonder what difference the inclusion of some major bronzes by Harold Cousins and his great compatriot, Barbara Chase, might have made in the total qualitative impact of the sculpture section.

I began this essay by remarking the differences in emotion and contemplation between the Afro-American art of the present and that of the Nineteenth century. In the Los Angeles show one felt that the violins of racial strife or bitterness were a little muted; nevertheless, the sense of racial alienation on the one hand and of artistic withdrawal into fantasy and other realms of inner consciousness on the other was inescapably present. The compartmentalized cosmos of Bettye Saar's "Astrologer's Window" and the fractured tonal beauty of Marvin Harden's larva-like "Melancholia #25" were like songs of despair or apostrophizing odes to a new spirit of resignation, if not of defiance. Like Purifoy's "Sir Watts" and Melvin Edward's "A Necessary Angle" these works are an astonishing mixture of the banal and the implausible, and by their poignancy of feeling recall the satirical paintings and sculpture of the now extinct German school of *Neuesachlichkeit* out of which came the artists Otto Dix, Max Beckmann, and George Grosz.

Yet, it is unlikely that we shall ever have a truly great Afro-American artist among us until American society completely accepts the Negro and his valid interpreters. This wished for relationship is still far from arriving although it is so much desired by all who love America and hope that she will fulfill the democratic promise of equality. Present social conditions indicate the need to establish a greater cultural purpose in the heart of this nation. This must be accomplished, not merely for the sake of culture but for peace and human salvation. The present militancy of the Negro relative to this necessity has been interpreted as the actual conscience of America pricking her towards goals of social justice and moral action. This, in fact, is a cultural upsurge of crucial importance, and it offers the artist and the writer unprecedented opportunities for the development of mobility and independence of creative thought and imagery.

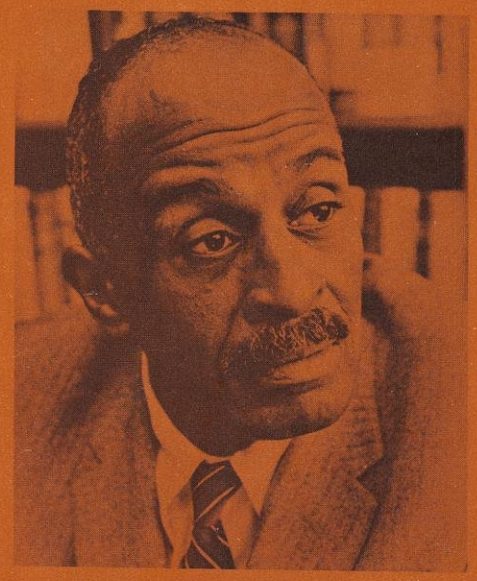
The question is, will the Afro-American artist continue to exploit his present opportunities in the realization that such an engagement is more than a test of sheer tenacity? It is a challenge to his whole capability, even though the answer to the query actually rests with the Negro people and not, specifically, with their interpreters. Afro-American art since the middle of the nineteenth century has been an index or reflection of the black man's struggle for freedom. Therefore, only the as yet unspent social and cultural drives of black Americans can unfailingly sustain the Afro-American artist as he embraces the broader opportunities of the future.

"The Card Players", Hale Woodruff

"The Wall", Prof. D. Gibson Byrd

Saunders Redding

Director of the Division of Research and Publication, National Endowment for the Humanities.



Do you feel that at the present time the effort to encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts should have high or low priority in the fight for Negro equality? Why?

High priority, not only to encourage the Negro artist's participation in the cultural mainstream, but to make the general public, which is almost totally ignorant of Negro American life, aware of the Negro artist.

What factors have chiefly been responsible for the alienation of the Negro community from the arts in contemporary America?

The same factors that, until recently, led historians to neglect the Negro in American history — ignorance, indifference and contempt. The slaveholding South — partly as a salve to a sorely abraded conscience — created and successfully propagated the image of the Negro

programs for change: a symposium

as sub-human totally lacking those attributes that would make him a contributing member of society and lacking, too, those finer sensibilities that produce art.

Is it desirable for existing and developing, wholly white, upper middle class cultural institutions (such as performing arts centers, arts councils, regional professional theatres and symphony orchestras) to draw in Negro leadership, participation, and interest? Is it, in fact, possible for them to do so? And, if so, how?

Yes, it is possible and desirable. Projects such as this one undertaken by **ARTS IN SOCIETY** annually, or biannually, or even triannually, and multiplied a score of times in a score of places would help turn the trick.

What kind of new institutional arrangements should be created to assist and encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts?

There are probably enough "institutional arrangements" already. Now the job is to welcome Negroes to profit from those arrangements, and to help keep them going.

Robert A. Dentler

Director of the Center for Urban Education, New York City.

All areas of our social system should be pressed to open for the Negro. This, therefore includes, participation and interest in the arts. There are areas, however, which are more vital to the Negro and to the development of a pluralistic society, such as economics (jobs and education).

Rather than working on new institutional arrangements in the arts which may or may not be of value, concerted efforts should be made to open wide the doors of existing institutions to the Negro artist in various fields. All types of techniques, be they short range, intermediate or long range, should be employed.

Charles Abrams

Chairman of the Division of Urban Planning at Columbia University in New York.

I feel that Negro participation in the arts will follow naturally when Negroes have achieved full participation in the economic and political life of the Nation. If all Negro children receive from their earliest years an education that helps them express all their potentials, there will certainly be some who will express themselves in the arts. As a direct response, I suppose the priority of this need would fall in the middle level, but I think that one can't assign priorities, but simply direct a full battery of forms of invitations and encouragements.

What factors have chiefly been

responsible for the alienation of the Negro community from the arts in contemporary America?

The same factors that have alienated the Negro community in all other ways — social discrimination, economic handicaps, and the psychological factors that force people to label and limit themselves as they are labelled by the broader community. However, when one thinks to what a large extent Americans in general are alienated from the arts, the basic premises of this whole questionnaire become dubious.

Is it desirable for existing and developing, wholly white, upper middle class cultural institutions (such as performing arts centers, arts councils, regional professional theatres and symphony orchestras) to draw in Negro leadership, participation, and interest? Is it, in fact, possible for them to do so? And, if so, how?

I don't know, but it is worth trying. Some ways would be by a conscious effort to exhibit or give a platform to work by the best of individual Negro artists; to make programs that in some way relate directly to the roles (both high and low) of the Negro in American history, etc. The Negro middle class that is the logical one to approach for backing and participation may be a small one, but there is such a group, and not all of them are so alienated from the poorer and even more alienated members that they would not provide some bridge to this largest group of "cultural drop-outs."

Eventually Negro participation should be asked for not as Negro participation but as the participation of Americans. I don't feel there should be an institutional arrangement set up for Negroes alone — it should be aimed at all victims of the "culture of poverty."

Hoyt W. Fuller

Managing Editor of *Negro Digest.*

I feel that "the effort to encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts" should have **high** priority at this time; however, ALL depends upon who is doing the encouraging and to what purpose. In any case, the emerging leadership in the Negro community already is insuring that interest in the arts has **high** priority in the fight for equality.

What factors have chiefly been responsible for the alienation of the Negro community from the arts in contemporary America?

The simple fact that the grand gurus of the arts in America have sought to impose upon Negro Americans a pre-packaged artistic mold which not only did not contain the essential elements of the Negro experience but also were expressly hostile to a recognition of the nature and validity of that experience. The white guardians

of the arts, in effect, say to Negroes that, to be worth considering, the artistic expression of Negroes must be essentially patterned on, and reflective of, the values of the white community. This, of course, is unacceptable to any Negro artist with any integrity and dignity.

Is it desirable for existing and developing, wholly white, upper middle class cultural institutions (such as performing arts centers, arts councils, regional professional theatres and symphony orchestras) to draw in Negro leadership, participation, and interest? Is it, in fact, possible for them to do so? And, if so, how?

There will always be some Negro "leaders" who can be drawn into otherwise "wholly white, upper middle class cultural institutions," but there is reason to suspect that these "leaders" increasingly will be serving primarily their own interests. Arts councils and foundations may be instrumental in assisting the expansion of interest and participation in the arts in the Negro community, but only by providing the funds in the same manner that such funds are provided for similar purposes in the white community. In other words, the Negro community will not accept direction and evaluation from the white community; not any more. This does not mean that qualified Negro performers will not expect to be considered on a basis of talent for positions in regional professional theaters and symphony orchestras, for example. By seeking such positions, these Negroes will be saying, in effect, that they are willing to be judged by prevailing white standards. Due to the segregated nature of the American society, there are millions of Negroes who are able to think and act and perform "white" while retaining, at the same time, the values and the *mystique* of the Negro community.

What kind of new institutional arrangements should be created to assist and encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts?

Institutions such as the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, and the National Endowment for the Arts, can "encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts" by providing financial support for those organizations and individuals in the Negro community which already are involved in developing and expanding participation and interest in the arts.

Assuming that it is highly desirable to develop more and better educational opportunities in the arts on all levels for Negroes, what particular efforts do you feel should have highest priority?

Funds should be made available to some of the cultural groups which are struggling to become financially stable in the Negro community. In every major population center, there exists at least **one** theater group, for example, which desperately needs to be assisted in establishing a theater base and in launching a community campaign to attract audiences. Subsidies are needed because the Negro community is not traditionally a theater-going community, and there is general reluctance among the people who need most to be reached to spend from their meager funds for unfamiliar entertainment. The Negro theater groups also need subsidizing while they explore the methods by which they can best attract the people into the theaters.

Do you think there should be a concerted attempt, as Ralph Ellison

suggests, to develop a leadership corps of Negro artists, critics, scholars, and intellectuals who would be equipped to evaluate and guide the Negro art experience from the inside? If so, how might this best be done?

I was not aware that Ralph Ellison had ever suggested any such thing, but I'm delighted to learn that he has, since white leaders of the art world are inclined to listen to him. However, again, ALL depends on just who is going to do the developing of the "leadership corps of Negro artists, critics, scholars and intellectuals who would be equipped to evaluate and guide the Negro art experience from the inside." If this means, as I suspect it does, that some governmental or "artistic" agency is going to decide on which Negroes are to be admitted into this "leadership corps," then forget it. Young Negroes are having none of it, and they are going to reject "acceptable" Negroes who are chosen for them, thank God. No, the movement is already well advanced within the Negro community to develop Negro artists, critics, scholars and intellectuals, and a bright new school of writers is already about the business of setting up criteria by which Negro art is to be evaluated from the inside.

Everett C. Hughes

Professor of Sociology at Brandeis University.

It is only lately that even an Othello could be a Negro — as Paul Robeson was in Chicago perhaps 20 years ago — on the stage. Even make-believe love making across the race gulf was tabu. I don't know how much better things are now. I don't know what is possible. The only way to find out is to try, aggressively, but always with an eye to high quality of the art and always with an eye to succes. I would not — if it were my doing — ever to try an interacial artistic experiment (theatre is of course the touchy art) in the spirit of a 'demonstration'; that is, a political demonstration. (Although I can well understand that some group including both races might well do one.)

We are in a phase in which a Negro artist might well be denounced by other Negroes for participation in any enterprise in which whites have a hand, especially a leading hand. However, that is no reason for failing to seek Negro participation. Whatever the temporary solutions may be, in the long run the American experiment of having people of all races who have come here work and play together must be carried on to its conclusion. If I invite a Negro to my house, I hope he will be free to come; that neither Negro nor white pressure will prevent him from coming, nor me from inviting.

The aim of art should be to exploit race whenever it enhances art — whenever it gives us some new light on man or nature, some new enjoyment, some new expression. To pay no attention to it when it is irrelevant — to pick the cast for fitness for the part and ability to play it. If the theme is race itself, to avoid any sort of censoring to soften the impact, or any false casting — which is a kind of censoring.

Having written this manifesto — rather than to answer your individual questions

in some perfunctory way — I must add that I can well imagine that in art, as in education, it takes some special effort to draw the races closer together in the arts. But it may be a question of which race it is that needs the help in some of the arts.

What I really have to say is that I believe in intelligent and vigorous experimenting on the racial front in art as in all spheres of life; art is certainly one of the most crucial fronts.

St. Clair Drake

Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Roosevelt University in Chicago.

Do you feel that at the present time the effort to encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts shou'd have high or low priority in the fight for Negro equality? Why?

High priority. Not, as in the 1920's to prove a "thing," but to encourage "black consciousness" to express itself at all levels and in all media. Afro-Americans are trying to find themselves and their place in the American social order. Art is an important aspect of the quest.

What factors have chiefly been responsible for the alienation of the Negro community from the arts in contemporary America?

By and large it does not reflect **their** experience of reality except for small emancipated or alienated groups whose real identity is no longer "Negro." And, for them, this is as it should be, but, for most, **can't** be.

Is it desirable for existing and developing, wholly white, upper middle class cultural institutions (such as performing arts centers, arts councils, regional professional theatres and symphony orchestras) to draw in Negro leadership, participation, and interest? Is it, in fact, possible for them to do so? And, if so, how?

Certainly they should. Afro-Americans are learning how to participate in "two worlds," as they must unless they are to be stunted, encysted citizens. They are both **Afro and** American, just as Yehudi Menuhin is **Jewish and** American, or Leonard Berstein. Possible? Yes! If whites who haven't yet done so will accept individuals on their merit. Or, is this possible in America? How? Study the numerous cases where it has been done and emulate them.

Assuming that it is highly desirable to develop more and better educational opportunities in the arts on all levels for Negroes, what particular efforts do you feel should have highest priority?

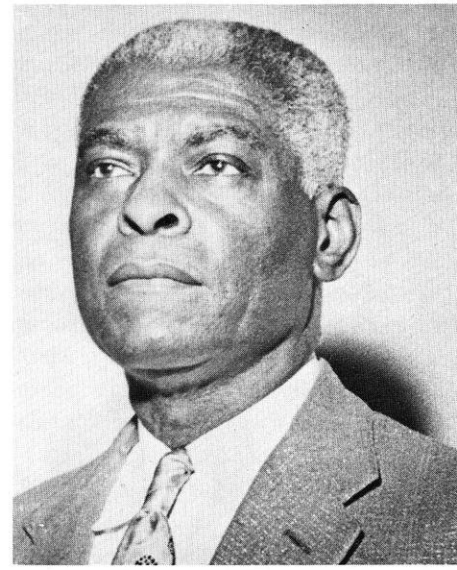
Better art teaching in all ghetto schools including exposure of the kids to all that's being produced.

Talent scouting in Negro schools and churches, North and South.

Dissemination of information about scholarships for the gifted, and provision of special scholarships, preferably by the "black bourgeoisie" and "black" institutions. It would be good for them as well as the recipients.

Benjamin E. Mays

President Emeritus of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia.



Do you think there should be a concerted attempt, as Ralph Ellison suggests, to develop a leadership corps of Negro artists, critics, scholars, and intellectuals who would be equipped to evaluate and guide the Negro art experience from the inside? If so, how might this best be done?

I am for "evaluating," and for "releasing latent talent" rather than "guiding" anybody. We don't need any black cultural commisars. If the artists and critics, scholars and intellectuals, will produce and publish in magazines and journals widely read by Negro Americans, take some time to visit ghetto schools, clubs, and settlement houses, convene conferences, workshops, and seminars, and write **for** black people as well as for white readers, I think they would be a "leadership corps."

Any other recommendations or comments?

The Afro-American experience is not just American, but also African and West Indian, if viewed in a larger time-space frame. Colloquia and conferences bringing talented West Indian and African novelists and poets together with Afro-Americans would be mutually beneficial. The problem, today, is not to impress white people with "Negro capacity," but to help the black masses and the black-brown-sepia intellectuals to discover who and what they are, and who and what they want to be. I'm sure they will welcome white collaborators in the process, but who, and under what terms, Negroes, themselves, have the right to decide. The Black Revolution has just begun, for everywhere, black people are still "powerless" and at the bottom of the socio-economic heap. The role of the artist is rooted in this fact — or should be — if it is not to be individual escapism.

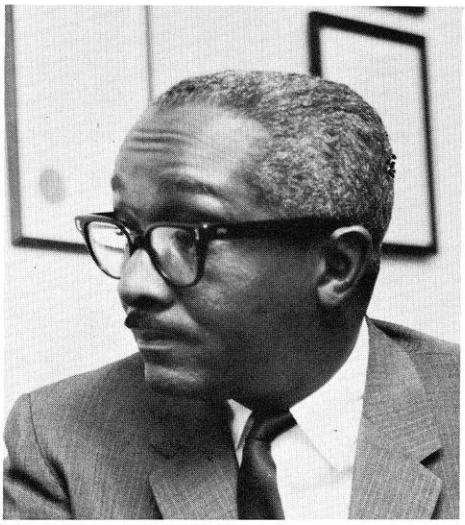
The effort to encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts should have high priority. Since the struggle for equality on the part of Negroes is a major struggle, every means should be used to further equality for all Americans.

To invite Negro leadership and solicit their interest and participation in upper middle class cultural institutions is what must be done if we are serious about desegregating America from top to bottom. Negro leadership would have quite a bit to contribute.

I don't believe you will need special institutional arrangements except to give the predominantly Negro colleges and universities the same kind of treatment that you give other institutions. The main thing is for the white leadership to really be sure that it wants Negro participation and not go about it in a haphazard way.

Howard B. Woods

Editor-in-Chief of Sengstacke Publications, the largest chain of Negro-oriented newspapers in the United States, located in Chicago, Illinois.



Do you feel that at the present time the effort to encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts should have high or low priority in the fight for Negro equality? Why?

I feel that it should have an effort, no greater or no less, than similar interests. I certainly feel strongly about its inclusion because of the importance of the arts in structuring behavioral patterns.

What factors have chiefly been responsible for the alienation of the Negro community from the arts in contemporary America?

Subtle racism as practiced by "honorable" men. This is the worst sort because it is not readily definable, nor do its perpretrators feel any sense of guilt for their actions.

Is it desirable for existing and developing, wholly white, upper middle class cultural institutions (such as performing arts centers, arts councils, regional professional theatres and symphony orchestras) to draw in Negro leadership, participation, and interest?

I think that it is highly desirable. I think that the leadership should be the peers of existing members, and not the local "civil rights" leader. It is not too difficult to isolate and identify Negroes with competence and interests in this field. Any leadership corps of Negro artists, critics, scholars and intellectuals equipped to evaluate the Negro art experience should also come from this group.

Leroy C. Weaver

Associate Professor of Art Education at Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College in Texas.

The arts should have high priority in the fight for Negro equality.

It is imperative for existing and developing, wholly white, upper middle class cultural institutions to draw in more Negro participation. In the sixties we have had "crash" programs to stimulate interest and participation in the fine arts to all people regardless of income, race or creed.

Certain foundations, through their large and small supplementary grants, would warrant these institutions to do so. Then, too, recent enactments in our Congress of Federal support in the arts would make it desirable to draw in Negro leadership, participation and interest.

Darwin T. Turner

Dean of the Graduate School at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. He has published a book of poems and numerous articles and reviews on literature by Negroes.

The fact is not that Negroes have failed to interest themselves in the arts. Instead, they have been excluded. They have been denied opportunity to practice the arts, and their achievements have been minimized. Despite the increasing numbers of Negro actors and actresses who are employed, Negroes are not given equal opportunity in professional dramas. A few years ago, when America wanted to publicize its achievements in jazz, it sent abroad a band headed by a white conductor, even though jazz was originated, developed, and perfected by Negro musicians. Although minstrels blackened their faces and imitated Negroes, Negroes were not even permitted to be part of the first professional minstrel shows. Negroes were not even permitted to sing love songs in professional shows until the twentieth century.

If Negroes will participate, all cultural institutions will be much richer than they are presently. I cannot understand, for instance, how an arts council can even pretend to examine American music unless it includes Negro musicians and music educators.

Many Negroes would be willing to help arts councils and regional professional theatres. There is no problem in finding the Negroes. All anyone needs to do is inquire at any local Negro educational institution, or in any Negro group. The leading local artists are known. They have never been hidden, except from a white society which closes its eyes to them.

Sidney Poitier, for example, is no freak spawned by the Caribbean. He is merely a Negro, fortunate to have been given the opportunity without the reputation in sports or music which generally has been a prerequisite. Canada Lee, Cab Calloway, Jimmy Brown, Archie Moore — these were not and are not the most talented actors. But they have starred on stage and screen because their fame, earned elsewhere, unlocked the door.

It is not necessary to ask whether a leadership core of Negro artists, intellectuals, and critics should be developed. Such a core already exists. Its critics make their voices heard in the newspapers and magazines published by Negroes. The voices are not heard elsewhere because of the prevailing assumption that a judgment about Negroes is more responsible if it is made by a white man than if it is made by a Negro. Negro intellectuals are horrified by the instant scholars who have posed as authorities on the literature and the arts of Negroes, but these instant scholars are the ones quoted nationally.

The College Language Association is only one of several groups that can supply within twenty-four hours a complete list of leaders desired. The editor of *Negro Digest* can supply a list. Saunders Redding of the National Humanities Foundation can supply such a list. Even with less knowledge and fewer resources, I can supply such a list in thirty-six hours.

Roland Braithwaite

Chairman of the Humanities Division and Associate Professor of Music at Talladega College, Talladega, Alabama.

The effort to encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts should have high priority in the fight for equality. The worst feature of segregation and one of the chief flaws in the current separatist philosophies is the resulting exclusion from the cultural mainstream. No group can develop its own contribution to the arts to the fullest without being in contact with the main effort.

Secondly, remember that it is in the area of the arts, or more generally, the humanities that young Negroes have been given the poorest preparation. This stems from the past denial of admission to segregated theatres, galleries and halls, limited economic circumstances, poorly equipped high schools and, in some cases, rural isolation. Without a high priority, the compensatory education necessary to correct the deficiencies may not be sufficiently emphasized.

Is it desirable for all cultural institutions to draw in Negro leadership.

If cultural institutions wish to include a complete picture of the art of today they must draw in Negroes — but not so much for the sake of drawing in Negroes but simply because the institution has to draw in any highly qualified person. Such institutions should reflect the true picture and should include Negroes if Negroes are a part of that picture.

Of course it is possible to draw Negro leadership in. How? Ask **sincerely** — not for the sake of token integration or to have a Negro on display to prove liberality, but because the asking reflects the desire to include all qualified artists in a completely natural association based only on accomplishment.

Do you think there should be a concerted attempt, as Ralph Ellison suggests, to develop a leadership corps of Negro artists, critics, scholars, and intellectuals who would be equipped to evaluate and guide the Negro art experience from the inside? If so, how might this best be done?

I am wary of manipulation and guidance by any who set themselves up as being superior enough to decide what is best for others in art. Certain artists, thinkers and writers will become leaders naturally through the force of their personalities or the attractiveness of their ideas. For leadership to develop in any other way would be unthinkable in art. In the arts one has to present his works for all to see and judge. Everyone has a vote in deciding who is superior. Those who are judged best by the majority will be followed.

William H. Hale

President of Langston University,
Langston, Oklahoma.

The efforts to encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts should have high priority. These are the experiences which lift man above the level of the animal and help make him "human."

It is very desirable for upper middle class cultural institutions to draw in Negro participation of the groups in question. Given a receptive attitude, all that is needed is a genuine invitation and a real opportunity to participate.

The traditionally Negro college will, for some time to come, be the strongest and most effective aid in assisting and encouraging Negro participation and interest in the arts.

If the material resources and professional assistance necessary for planning, development and implementation of effective programs, could be made available to these institutions, the effect would, in my opinion, be significant.

G. M. Sawyer

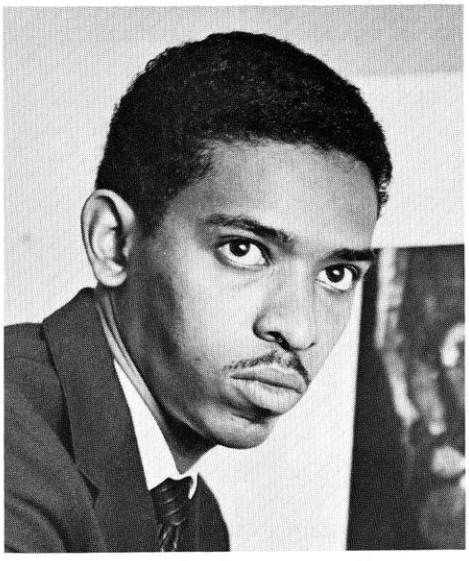
Executive Assistant to the President
at Tennessee State University.

Every effort should be made to encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts; the exact priority for this effort in the overall quest for equality of opportunity must give quarter to more fundamental matters such as employment, housing, and health. Participation and interest in the arts should not wait until all other matters are completely satisfied; but should go along with other aspects of the struggle in proper relationship to obvious need.

It would seem highly desirable to have Negro leadership and participation in programs of performing art centers, art councils, etc. It is indeed possible for such leadership to participate in these activities, and no special arrangement appears to be needed. They should be invited to participate on the basis of their interests and the sphere of previous exposure to the arts. Race should not be a factor.

John T. Scott

Instructor in the Art Department at Xavier University of Louisiana.



The effort to encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts should have high priority. The arts expand vision and understanding of self. A person and a people grow in respect for themselves when they can **express themselves** and have that expression **accepted by others.**

The Negro has been "The Invisible Man" in the arts — very rarely is his work shown in the galleries.

Because of no education in art (or very poor education that functions **negatively**), the lower-income bracket Negro is visually illiterate. Images by some Negro artists imitate African images — which is distasteful to most Negroes who would desire images of Americans who happen to be Negroes.

What kind of new institutional arrangements should be created to assist and encourage Negro participation and interest in the arts?

A fine example is that of the Free Southern Theatre — referring especially to its total structure: All people are accepted and welcome, though mostly lower-income bracket Negroes come. They come because the want to; it is their own. They are very serious about it. They write their own plays, and these are performed. They work out lighting, sets, etc. and bring in all the arts. There is total participation. To my mind, it is particularly the underlying structure and the attitude that make the Free Southern Theatre a workable thing.

Albert W. Dent

President of Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana.

I think there should be greater emphasis on the arts in elementary and secondary schools. There should be greater financial assistance for promising students in the arts provided by colleges and universities or educational foundations. There should be more art exhibitions, lectures, and lyceums, and publicizing of Negroes who are contributing significantly to the contemporary arts in America. Libraries in predominately Negro institutions should have more volumes on Negro contributions to the arts in America. Better efforts and facilities should be provided to present the work that is presently being done in the arts in Negro colleges and universities to their respective communities. Other predominately white institutions should encourage Negro participation.

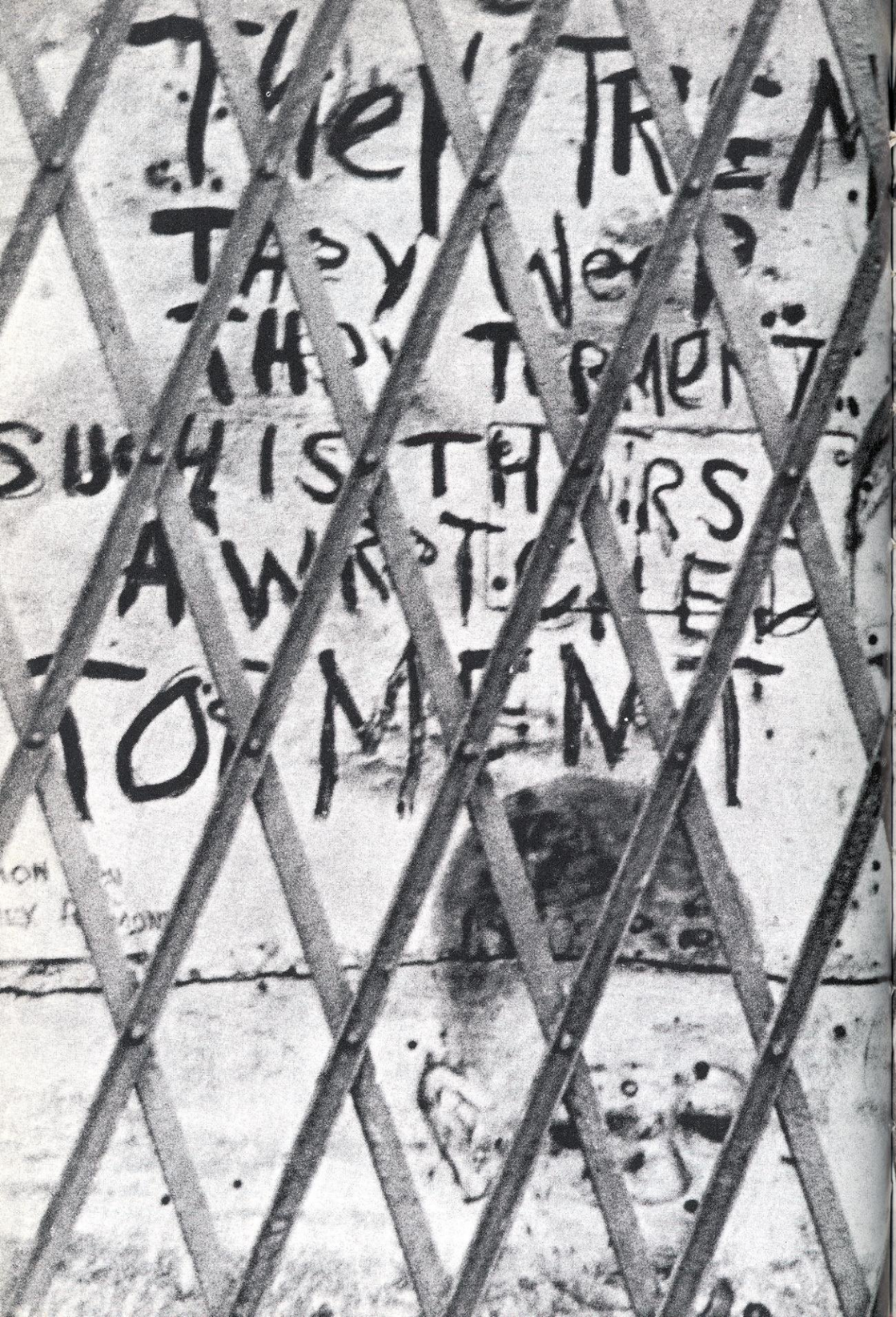
I think there should be a greater effort in the roles that Negro artists, critics, scholars, and intellectuals are now playing to encourage worthwhile Negro contributions to the arts. It would be beneficial if these persons could exchange ideas, suggestions, etc. through correspondence, articles, etc. but the idea of a leadership corps of Negroes seems unworkable and altogether too confining, unless it serves to advise government commissions of the arts, national art associations, magazines, and organizations working toward the advancement of the arts in America. The cause of the contemporary arts and artists in America will be promoted if contributions of Negroes are judged as works of Americans who happen to be Negro rather than as works done by Negroes.

Lyman B. Brooks

Provost at Norfolk Division of Virginia State College.

The most pressing demands for equality rest in educational and economic pursuits; as many other forms of participation are contingent upon a certain level of attainment in these areas. To some extent, artistic values are of this additive nature. However, concommitant development in all aspects of the good life are necessary. The Negro's achievement in the arts is contingent partly upon equality of opportunity — to observe, to learn, to participate. It is vitally important that these opportunities be available from early childhood; hence, greater emphasis on developing artistic values must be given during elementary and secondary school training. The important thing to bear in mind here is that the Negro needs the unrestricted opportunity to participate in all artistic endeavors from the kindergarten or elementary level of his formal education. Whereas conscious effort needs to be exerted to stimulate interest in the arts, the order of priority is of nebulous significance. If a choice had to be made, the arts would probably fall below educational, economic and political goals.

The Negro's achievement in the arts in all forms have permeated his history in America. The Negro has excelled in areas where he has been permitted to participate. However, there is need for greater acceptance and appreciation of artistic works by the Negro. Early exposure to all art forms combined with the knowledge that participation is encouraged will do much to unify the cultures of the various segments of our society.



THE PAINT BOX

by Ruth Milofsky

Hillside is a ghetto within a ghetto, as isolated from the rest of Milwaukee as a fortress surrounded by moats. The northern boundary is the rubble of Walnut Street — no longer a service area, not yet redeveloped. To the south are the smokestacks of industry, the city hall and the jail. The children of Hillside cross Sixth Street to the east by an overpass to the Fourth Street school. On the west is the gaping canyon of the developing North-South Expressway. Within this enclave live two thousand children under the age of eighteen with their mothers and some of their fathers. All are poor. Only the poor can live in the Hillside Terrace housing project.

A strong unifying element in Hillside is Northcott House, sponsored by the Methodist Women's Society of Christian Service, an agency dedicated to the development of community leadership. The people in the community are excellent raw material for Northcott's goals. Because the neighborhood is relatively stable, many people having lived there for years, there is a solidarity of sorts. The spartan parents produce independent, stoic and creative children. The creativity of many of the children and some adults has been encouraged by the Paint Box Art Center, a university project in cooperation with Northcott House.

The Paint Box Art Center is located

the paint box

the paint box

in a small room in the basement of a Hillside apartment unit. On a typical day it is crowded with Negro children cutting and pasting. The ceiling and walls of the tiny room are plastered with brilliantly colored paintings by the students. Next door, the halls and office used by Northcott House are continually filled with people.

The Paint Box has now been in operation for over two years. With the support and encouragement of the University of Wisconsin, inner core people and volunteers, it grew from a dream to the reality of this small room filled with art supplies and painting, regularly attended classes for children and adults, and a Title One grant. People who know me as a sculptor often ask how it started. Most of life has an element of accident: one meets people, events occur and one responds. It was that way with the Paint Box. I had no intention of starting an art center when in 1962 my departing colleague, Harold Altmen, painter and printer, suggested that I sublet his studio at Hubbard and Center. The ceiling in the Hubbard Street studio was high, the light good, the rent reasonable and the floor terrazzo — so I rented it. I moved in with my torch, steel, clay and plaster and was soon at work.

Every time I went to the studio to work, neighborhood children crowded around, at first curious to see what I was doing and then fascinated and interested in the producing of the art work. This made me wonder why the University could not set up a successful art program in the area. There was a real need for a place where my new Hubbard Street friends could pursue their artistic interests in a more effective manner. In the spring of 1964, I asked my colleague, Jim Schinneller, director of art education at University Extension, to advise me. He knew of no art classes for children or adults in the whole core area. I had no idea then how engrossing the project of starting one would be.

In the initial stages of planning the Paint Box, I had two fortunate experiences to draw upon: the attraction of the Hubbard Street people to my studio and my participation that summer in the Urban League's Youth Incentive program. Jim Schinneller had volunteered both of our services to Annette Ahlman, project director. Along with other Milwaukee artists, we met three mornings a week at St. Matthew's Methodist church and provided art experiences for a group of junior high school youth, their friends and siblings. The Youth Incentive project was attempting to demonstrate the effect of encouragement and cultural enrichment on a group of "under achieving" ninth grade students. I watched the students develop from an initial stage where they clowned and joked about their efforts to the final week of the summer when they had developed confidence and worked freely.

I realized that these students had come to the Youth Incentive class because they trusted Annette Ahlman and the Urban League. The people in my Hubbard neighborhood had come to my studio because I was often there and welcomed visitors. Mutual trust was an essential first step; black and white people share initial fears, shyness and distrust. Art classes offered by white people in the core had not always been successful. In the Paint Box, I wanted to combine the successful elements of these initial experiences. I wanted the staff to become a group of friendly neighbors and I assumed the ice-breaking time would be shorter if an established inner-city

group introduced us.

Unfortunately, the gap between wanting an art center and getting one was wide. Jim Schinneller and I met with representatives of the Urban League, the Milwaukee Art Center, the Milwaukee Public Schools, the Puppeteers, the Council of Jewish Women, and the Institute of Human Relations. After nearly a year, we abandoned hope. It was impossible to get agreement among all the institutions about the structure of the projected program. Once we spent an entire afternoon working on one paragraph of the "objectives." Because I liked all of these people and knew we had a common goal, I was even more frustrated by a winter of talk that had not enabled a single child to wield a paint brush.

It was difficult to give up my dream and so, in a "last ditch" attempt, I called on the Reverend Lucius Walker, director of Northcott House, who had been recommended by many people. As I wandered around Seventh Street through the slush of an April day, I looked for an impressive building, something similar to the Educational Alliance or Greenwich House in New York. I finally noticed a worn wooden sign and found Northcott House — four small rooms in a basement at the Hillside Terrace Housing Project (Northcott now has a new and more impressive office). The Reverend Walker was sitting behind a desk that nearly filled the closet he used for an office. I sat opposite him and asked directly, "Will Northcott House cooperate with the University in starting an art center?" "Sure," said Lucius Walker.

I later learned that Walker had his own dreams of an art center in a settlement house. He had seen Karamu House in Cleveland and admired it. The "friendly neighbor" idea I had fitted easily into his social group-work frame. Not only did he promise cooperation in the new venture, but he offered to lend part of his new Hillside basement space. With these promises in hand and summer support salary and money for art materials from the university's School of Fine Arts and University Extension, I was suddenly, after all the talk and delay, charged with founding an art center in Hillside. Because the project was jointly sponsored by the University School of Fine Arts and University Extension, I was committed both to educating University students and to serving adults in the community. Two student teachers, Mary Lou King and Peter Dahlke, joined me in the first summer's adventure and education.

We faced enormous problems: the remodeling of an empty, unpainted basement room; the providing of storage space, furniture and equipment; the establishment of neighborhood contact; and the recruitment of Hillside art students. All three of us were ignorant of the neighborhood and the people who lived there. My most immediate problem, however, was placing the young people who had only the summer for their student teaching. I was able to involve them immediately in the Northcott Day Camp. One of the advantages of the camp situation was its natural and immediate integration. There was an admired Negro authority figure in Lucius Walker and an attractive racially mixed staff. Also, the camp situation gave us our first close look at a "poverty" situation. We were astounded at the lack of physical facilities, trained personnel, equipment and cash. There was no camp building, car, nurse, athletic equipment, and no trained specialists except in the fields of social work and art. As always, there was an abundance of children.

The two student teachers encountered difficulties in the camp situation which were to prove typical of the problems faced by other student teachers and staff in the Hillside center. The children in the camp were less docile, dependent and responsive to adult authority than the children we had known in other settings. The children in Hillside tended to ignore a student teacher until the "peer group" accepted the newcomer. There was no captive audience in the Paint Box or in the Northcott Camp. The teacher had to find quickly a means of establishing interest and order. An elementary student teacher usually has initial problems trying to find a suitable vocabulary. Faced with poor Negro children who had different vocabularies and dialects, the teachers learned to speak more briefly, clearly, slowly and dramatically and often used a nonverbal means of stimulation. Peter Dahlke got good ball playing and rope skipping pictures by bouncing a ball and skipping a rope in class. Mary Lou King, whose soft voice went easily unheard, learned to command attention by singing the roll call.

During the summer camp, we began building the art center which we named the Paint Box, a title we thought was catchy and had visual connotations. We now had some identity: a name, a space, a sign, a small budget, and a paid director; but as yet there was no student population, no staff, no procedure for recruitment or registration and no method of maintaining registration. Also there was no advisory group, no janitor, no money to pay labor for altering the "Box," and no capital equipment. Most of the people interested in the success of the project had little concept of the realities of Hillside and those aware of the realities were not yet convinced of the value of our project.

In the beginning, the immediate problems of painting, furniture and storage occupied our time. Our work crew consisted largely of volunteers who slowly created the semblance of an art room. Two doors were built to lock up the supplies and small equipment needed in an art project. The shelves continued upward. It was impossible to expand the floor space, so vertical building was substituted in an effort to pack as much as possible into the Box.

The space problem was partially solved, but there was still no permanent staff and no students. In the fall, I would have to train four new student teachers.

At the end of the summer, fortunately, I acquired a paid colleague. The Institute of Human Relations assigned Paul Francis, a University artist and student, to work at the Paint Box under the Work-Study Program. Inner core friends suggested that a group be gathered immediately to canvass the neighborhood. Unsure, I asked Lucius Walker, "Who should do the canvassing?" He answered quietly, "I don't see why you can't do it yourself." He assured me that the neighborhood was not dangerous.

I went back to my worn address book, with the names of friends and potential volunteers, and soon had a canvassing staff composed of artists, University wives, a woman from the Urban League and myself. We mimeographed flyers advertising the various classes we hoped to offer. Walker let us use the Northcott Headstart and Day Camp mailing lists.

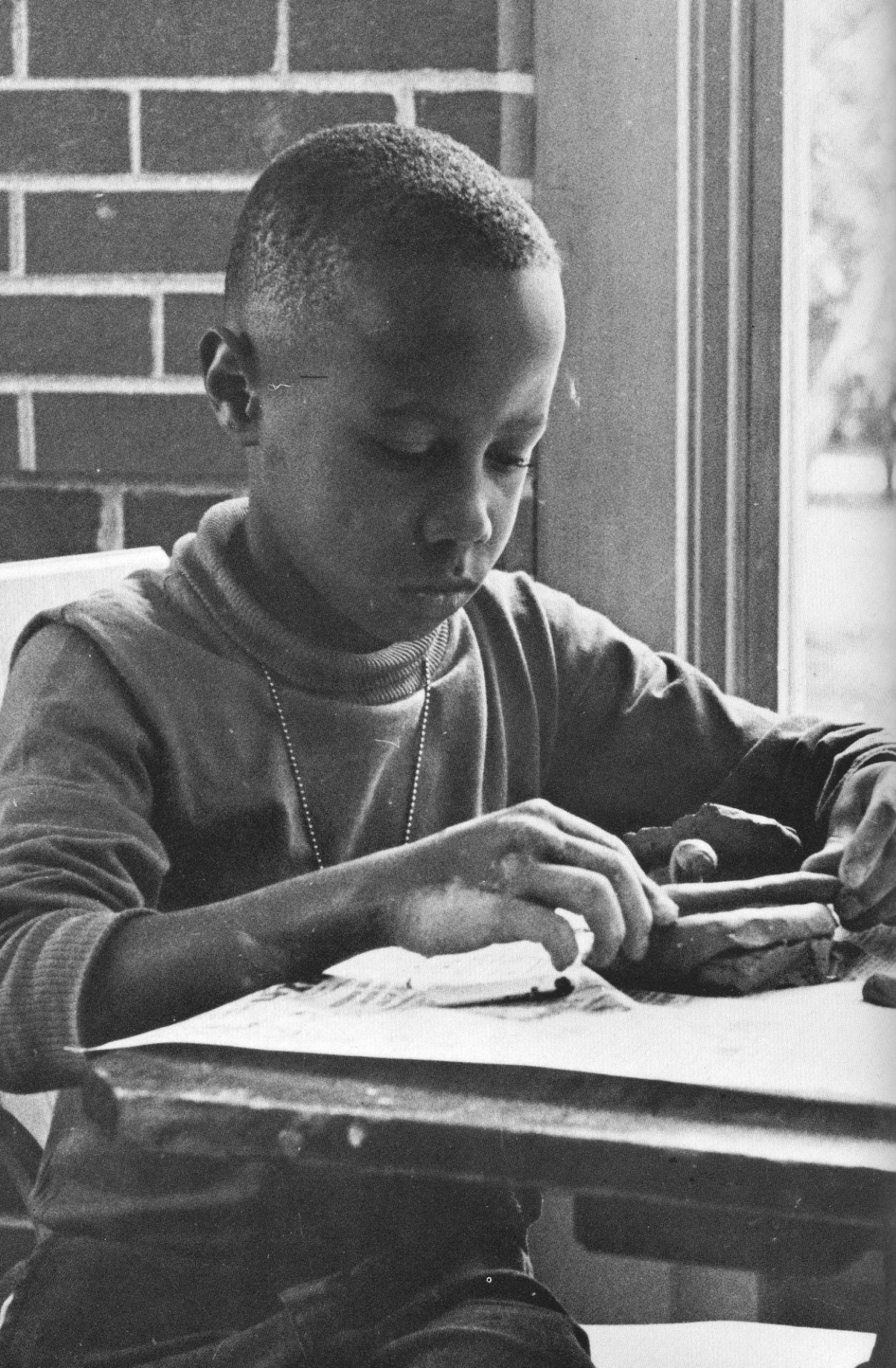
The neighborhood canvass turned out to be a pleasant experience and an important part of my education. I knew

a child behind nearly every door. No other experience could have given me the "feel" of Hillside so quickly. I am sure that Lucius Walker knew this.

At this time we offered a Friday afternoon art workshop for elementary school children (boys and girls, six to twelve), two pre-school art groups and an adult class on Monday evenings. When we discussed the adult class during the canvass, we discovered a diversity of art interests; so we decided to offer a variety of art experiences. All of the families we canvassed agreed to attend our program, but people experienced in the neighborhood were skeptical about the success of an adult class. It seemed unlikely that people who had never been offered an art program would support one.

There was no problem in recruiting children for the Friday class. The enrollment the first semester was one hundred fifty, with a mixture of ages and sexes that produced chaos. Since Paul Francis and I could not deal with the large number of children, we asked for volunteers. Four student teachers were being trained that fall — one for each day of the week — which was a poor arrangement. The Hillside children never got to know their teachers and the teachers had no real opportunity to become acquainted in the neighborhood. Only Paul Francis and I provided some continuity. Because of this, we had trouble in the beginning controlling the children. We did not know their names. They hid from us behind doors and under tables. Our only appropriate method of discipline was lifting them bodily and depositing them outside.

Lucius Walker and I found the first semester's chaotic situation unsatisfactory.



It frustrated my desire to produce a free creative situation in art. The huge enrollment was out of keeping with Walker's policy of limiting group membership to ten children. The second semester we recruited a children's workshop membership of fifty, inviting those who had attended most regularly during the fall. We divided the fifty into four groups; younger girls, six to eight; older girls, eight to twelve; and younger and older boys. In each group we placed an art specialist and several volunteers; and we have maintained that policy since. There has never been adequate space, people or time to serve the neighborhood in the depth that I would prefer, but the procedure is continually being altered to pursue our ideal of individual attention, quality instruction, and that balance of control and freedom required for productive creativity.

The Saturday pre-school groups became my special joy. That fall, thirty children from the summer Headstart project joined three classes of ten children. Thirty children between the ages of three and five came the first Saturday, sat down at tables and produced paintings. Only two of them cried. Accustomed to the tears and the slow adjustment of middle-class children in similar situations, I was amazed at the strong-minded mothers and the independent children of Hillside. I had assumed that pre-school children would have an interest span of fifteen minutes. The pre-schoolers at the Paint Box left their work reluctantly at the end of an hour.

I approached the first adult group with some anxiety, wondering as I sometimes do before a party, whether any of those invited would actually come. Eight people came to the first class meeting.

Enrollment fluctuated that first term in the adult class between the top attendance of twenty-five and the sad night of a blizzard when I sat in the Paint Box alone. But I soon found that if I missed a class, I was reproached by several people the next day. After that I turned up despite snow, rain, boycotts, riots and marches. Only the mayor's curfew closed the Paint Box for a day.

After the first term of adult class I asked the members for suggestions and criticisms. The group evolved an ambitious and well-structured plan introducing a number of art materials and fields. We mimeographed a printed schedule and distributed it to present and prospective members. University faculty artists were invited to Hillside to discuss their own fields. They quickly recognized that the residents of Hillside did not consider art recreation; they approached their work with intensity and seriousness.

I had now been in the neighborhood long enough to share a portion of the frustration and isolation of the Hillside people. I had to find temporary transportation because my car had been damaged in an accident. The bus trip took one hour and a half of my day so I resorted to taxis. I could easily get a taxi from the University to Hillside, but when I called for a taxi and gave a Hillside address, it was unlikely that one would show up. I bought an old car which constantly needed repairs, and found that service stations were no more eager to serve the area than taxi companies. Often trapped in the neighborhood, I would search for a place to buy food. There were no restaurants for blocks and no supermarkets — just a kind of general store which stocked groceries and drugs. I could seldom find the kind of cheese I liked and

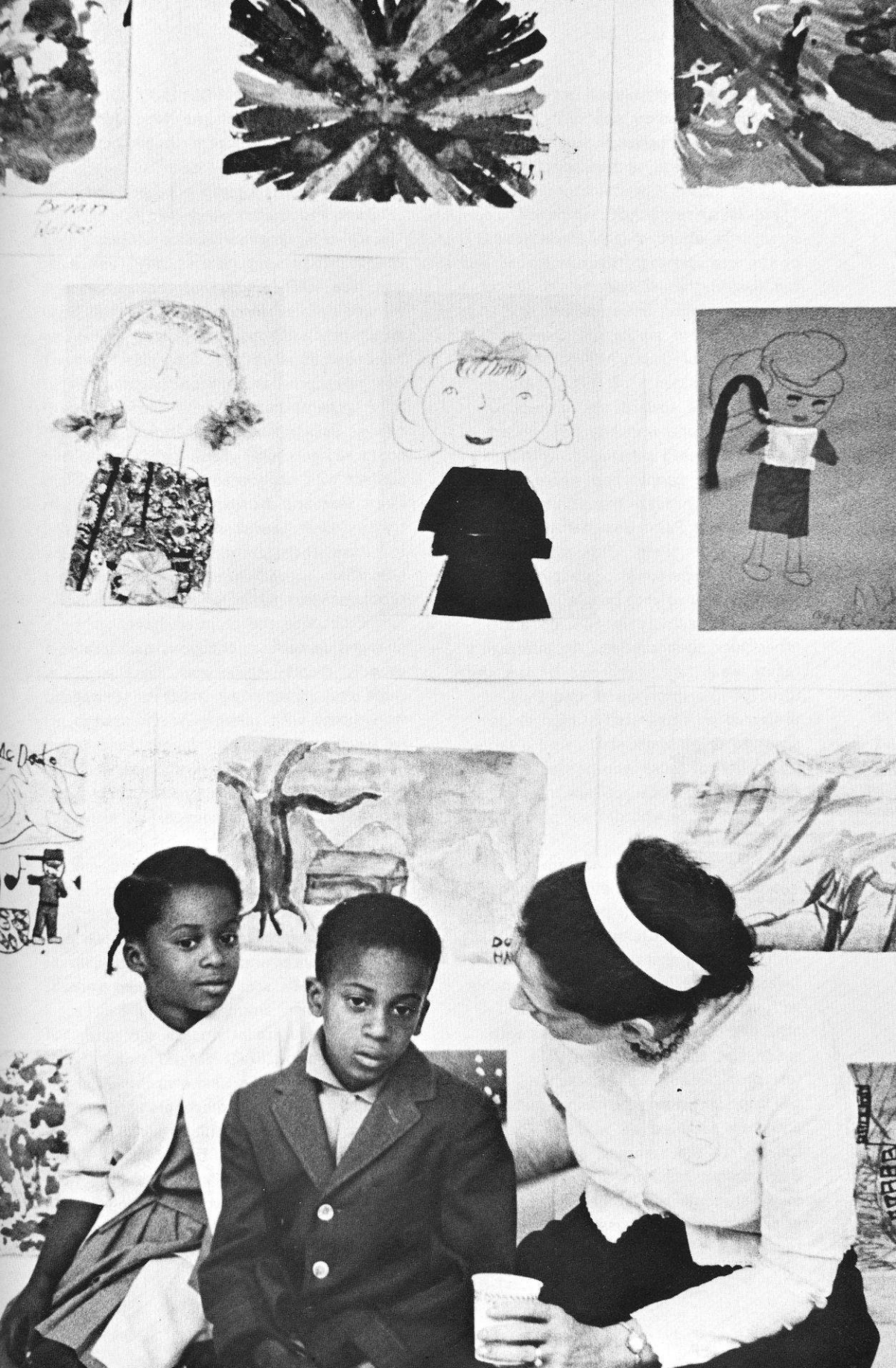
there was little choice of fruit. One night someone broke into my car and I called the police. They never came. Waiting in this neglected area, with unshoveled snow, garbage collecting around incinerators, b-b holes in windows, broken glass, dirty words on walls — and all within view of the urban towers of downtown Milwaukee — I had the curious feeling of being on some frontier. No one official seemed to care.

Our first year of operation at the Paint Box had the same pioneer and frontier aspect. We had been supported on a strictly temporary basis by University Extension and the University School of Fine Arts. A more adequate financial base had to be found if the center was to continue and improve. It was obvious that a part-time director alone could not administer the project, seek funds, make contacts in the neighborhood, recruit classes, and volunteers, take care of the physical plant, supervise student teachers and teach the adult class. Paul Francis and I did this the first year, but it was too rigorous a task to face indefinitely. More financial support and paid help had to be found.

In the spring of 1965 the Paint Box applied for and was granted fifteen thousand dollars under Title One of the Higher Education Act. University Extension contributed matching funds to the federal grant. The proposal explained that our project wished to demonstrate a way in which University services could be made accessible to a population that had been shown by community studies to be nearly oblivious of the existence of the institution. We also wished to introduce University personnel and students to the people and home conditions in a poor neighborhood, in the hope that the resulting understanding would help the University group to serve better such areas as educators and classroom teachers. A third objective was the development of an advisory board which could eventually make policy and find financial support for the project. A procedure for evaluating the objectives was included in the proposal.

Because of the Title One grant, I was able to work full-time on the project from June 1966 to August 1967. The grant also meant the addition of Work-Study students to the payroll: a returned Vista volunteer, several art students, a student who lived in the Lapham project, four summer student teachers, and a former student teacher who returned as a volunteer. With Paul Francis, we finally had a happy and effective staff. The same summer also saw the birth of the Paint Box Advisory Board. Two of the people who had advised about canvassing the neighborhood in 1965 and six students from the adult class joined the board. A qualified social worker and experienced community organizer, was elected temporary chairman. The board now numbers twenty-two persons and more than sixty percent of the members live in the core area. This year two graduate students took over the supervision of the workshop, and the Title One grant has been continued for 1968. Meanwhile, a fund raising group — the Friends of the Paint Box — has been organized.

All of this is a measure of the project's success. Perhaps the simplest way of evaluating effect is by counting the number of people who have been involved. It was surprising to discover this fall, while preparing a report for the Title One administrator, that, so far, approximately 2,098 people have participated in the project. The total effect on all these participants can never be accurately evaluated. There are



intangible ripples caused by each effort which may become apparent years later when the original causative factor is a thing of the past.

There is some tangible evidence about the effect of the Paint Box on the attitudes of participating families in the Hillside neighborhood. During the "long hot summer" of 1967, a Negro student in the Department of Urban Affairs interviewed thirty-two residents of Hillside about their attitude toward the project. Nearly everyone who knew of the art center expressed satisfaction with it. Most of the people had heard about the project through their children or because a Paint Box staff member had called on them. This reinforced our opinion that personal contact is the best way of involving people in an educational activity in Hillside and other poor communities. An interesting factor was that twenty-five of the thirty-three people interviewed said they preferred an integrated staff over an all-white or all-black staff. And a larger proportion of those who participated expressed approval of an integrated staff than those who did not participate.

We were also able to acquire some "hard" data about the effect of the experience on student personnel by pre- and post-testing the staff with the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Investory, one hundred fifty statements with responses that compare the attitudes of prospective teachers with successful teachers in the field. The test predicts how well a teacher will cope with the classroom situation and how satisfied he will be. By the end of the summer, seven Paint Box student teachers and work study students had gained an average of fifteen points, as assured by the test. One student gained fifty points!

Another tangible effect of the Paint Box program and of the Northcott group-work program with which it had cooperated can be seen in the growing maturity of the neighborhood children and their creative work. The Hillside neighborhood contains young artists as gifted as any I have met; the total product of their work is without parallel for its freedom, intensity, originality and creative range. But what emotional effect does the Paint Box have on the children? Does their general conduct and performance change as a result of our efforts? Who could say for sure? Each child has contact with many members of the Paint Box and Northcott staff. We all try to follow Lucius Walker's advice to "love them, limit them, and help them grow." We now have few problems keeping order in our classes, either because the children have changed or we have changed. Children proudly display their work on the walls and increasingly insist on taking work home with them. The children we have worked with the longest and most intensively — nine-year olds and younger — approach their art with zest and confidence.

It was not always so. I shall never forget Adrian, one of the trouble makers of the six-year old group. He was the son of a twenty-two year old mother and had never known his father. He would draw for five minutes, turn around and hit someone, pour paint on the table, or tear up his picture. He did small cramped, black-line drawings in which all of the figures marched along the bottom margin of the picture. One day in the midst of one of his rages I put a hand on his shoulder. "I'm not going to let you make me like you!" he screamed. He has not become an outstanding artist, but he

must "like" us for he comes to class, no longer has tantrums, and cooperates fairly well with everyone.

The day after one hundred teenage Hillside boys had pelted the police and firemen with bottles and many of the boys had been struck with night sticks and arrested, seven-year old Billy, one of our most gifted and creative children, was tense, hostile and unproductive. The art teacher helped him make a paper house but he crumpled it up, threw it on the floor and glared at her. She put an arm around him, gave him white paper and a black magic marker. He covered several pages with guns and bullets shooting people. Then, spontaneously, he got some pink paper, constructed a red heart, pasted it on pink paper and lettered carefully, "God is Love."

Troubled fourteen-year old Rodney is a problem to his mother, his family, his school and the neighborhood. He draws extremely well, but always pictures of dingy city streets, bulging garbage cans, "slingers," angry dogs and fast cars. One night the Paint Box Executive Board, meeting in the small office, heard a sound from the art room. Rodney and his friend, Collum, had pried open a window, shinnied down to the basement floor and were sitting at a table, quietly drawing. Soon after, Rodney served a term in Wales for stealing cars. Now he is back in class.

The morning after the city curfew was lifted in August 1967, I went anxiously down to the Paint Box. I felt divided and upset. The Paint Box was unharmed and I went to the back door. Three little children rushed up and clung to me. Taking them by the hand, I walked over to the Hillside playground and sat down on a bench. As I sat there, holding one child by the hand and with another in my lap, two white people walked across the playground: a policeman in riot helmet guarded by a National Guardsman with drawn bayonet. It was the most bizarre moment of a bizarre week. Again, I shared some of the isolation, fear and frustration that is felt by people living on a frontier that exists in the middle of a prosperous city.

As the deadline for this issue descends, news of LeRoi Jones' imprisonment for alleged involvement in the Newark riots reaches us. Jones is unquestionably one of the outstanding black poets in America. Born in 1934, he received degrees from Howard University and the New School for Social Research and a John Hay Whitney Fellowship in 1961. He has published two powerful books of poetry *(Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note* and *The Dead Lecturer), Blues People* (a book on jazz), *The System of Dante's Hell* (a novel), *Home: Social Essays,* and a number of plays which have been produced and filmed.

His voice cannot be imprisoned as it continues to probe the American conscience.

He has written (in *The System of Dante's Hell,* Grove Press, 1966): "if we can bring back on ourselves the absolute pain our people must have felt when they came onto this shore, we are more ourselves again, and can begin to put history back in our menu, and forget the propaganda of devils that they are not devils."

The "absolute pain" of millions not only before the Civil War but at this very moment in Newark, Watts, Mississippi, and Milwaukee's Inner Core underlies the theme of this issue of ARTS IN SOCIETY. The following poets, black and white, have offered imaginative responses to that theme, as well as to concomitant aspects of inhumanity, such as poverty, alienation, and war.

"Soul Sister" by Calvin Burnett

Her poems in this issue will appear in her forthcoming book, published in the Heritage Series, Paul Breman Ltd., London. "Where Have You Gone" appeared in Langston Hughes' *New Negro Poets.* Her work has also been published in Germany, Holland and England, broadcast, used in university workshops, in National Educational Television's "History of the Negro," and in the Broadway production of "A Hand is on the Gate."

Here — Hold My Hand

Here
hold my hand
let me touch you
there is
nothing
we can
say . . . your
soul
eludes me
when I reach
out
your eyes
resent
my need to know
you

here
hold my hand,
since
there is nothing
we can
say

Princeling

swing sweet rhythm
charcoal toes
swing sweet rhythm
blooddripped knees
swing sweet rhythm
exorcised penis
swing sweet rhythm
My God — my son!

I Who Would Encompass Millions

I
who would encompass
millions
am adrift on
this
my single
bed

Where Have You Gone

Where have you gone

with your confident
walk with
your crooked smile

why did you leave
me
when you took your
laughter
and departed

are you aware that
with you
went the sun
all light
and what few stars
there were?
where have you gone
with your confident
walk your
crooked smile the
rent money
in one pocket and
my heart
in another . . .

She is a poet currently living in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

To John Coltrane

More an attitude towards
Than a being in
Love.
Yet more a being
Than any other tongues could tell
Of what you are
Still a power
A strength of muscular soul pulling
Ripping the very gut of the chain.
Attacks to the heart your specialty.
If strain to snap were enough
  you would have bought the whole scene.
Creating by expulsion.
The only answer a loud painful yes
Still. Black mettle
Shining with deepness of love.
And the thick, choked anger
  only it can prick.
One mistake, that I, in wanting
Should mistake you for what I seek,
Missing the common inner curve.
Your sound catches in a corner.
The paper flames.
And the lights burn blue.

Her poems have appeared in *Poetry, The Massachusetts Review, The Quarterly Review of Literature* and *Antioch Review.*

In this strange time,

making love under a hush,
nerves filed down,
every move knows it —

someone watching
more than sees.

The baby is dancing between us
in his first strength
and
loving, we make him
again
again
again.

Not To Know

Stifled with guilt not hers,
Desdemona fell back breathless,
pleading for air,

for someone to bless her with the whole
story, to let her sleep again
without dreams.

She did not die into a white light,
only woke to the darkness
of not knowing.

Hedwig the wild duck,
her breast shattered,
lay down in rank straw waiting
for her father

to soothe her with reasons,
who could not be
wise himself till it was —
all at once — too late.

So many others harden their hearts
before the truth is turned up, tossed
like undersoil, to light . . .

Some nights I lie beside you straining
to hear impossible sounds
in the live air,

words behind your casual dreaming eyes —
to hear all that I might die
and never know.

With Thanks and Apologies All Around

Marilyn's mother's father
was spared the inconvenience of
the Czar's army
by falling from a horse who
was glad to oblige,
speaking, as he did, a similar language
at home in Vilna Giberniya.
At home now, the master cynic
of Jacksonville, Fla.,
he flays the air beneath his hands
with amiable anger —
Bolsheviks, Zionists, Americans,
grandchildren!
Let each spit on the other!

Lucia found the town where her ancestors
still walk to the black oven in the square,
and wash their black clothes
between the rocks
when the river is there.
Avigeiano lies like a pebble in a crack,
on the margin of her map,
where her homely cousins
succeed each other reliably,
choiceless, she says, and free.

Arverna, knowing less, conjectures
her family must have been found,
and taken,
among the taller West African tribes,
and has had no instance of dilution,
except among certain cousins,
the Littlejohns, whose noses
keep them from passing.

Our fathers, their fathers,
dragged their futures by the tail
to neutral ground, a hell of questions
others would answer,
and bought admission for a stern price.
With thanks and apologies all around,
we're selling it back at a loss.

Coming to This

My mother's mother began
her worldly progress
slow as a great ship,
ballasted with children.
The first to say Ekaterinislav
gave no farewell parades,
still, she would add,
she studied it from
the outskirts long and hard.
At his own intervals, Grandfather sent
money from Baltimore,
which got them scant
herring and heels of bread.
Moored in a single place
months at a time,
Grandmother peddled lace
to ladies, bone buttons to gentlemen,
till, fresh with impatience
and some coins, again
they'd forge the sea of the continent,
island to island;
were fruitlessly robbed;
left the baby buried
in a shroud of yard-end lace
at a quiet roadside.

It took two years and
one long lurch of a crossing
to land them here, (where myth
would call them strengthened)
pared, whittled to a point, drier than wood,
two sons marooned,
my grandmother's hair half white.
She slept a full three days
in her cousin's bed
in Baltimore, saying that she could wait
to see the land, whose promises would keep
if they were real. And she awakened
to see them all,
like cups, casually broken.

Associate Book Review Editor of
The Journal of Ecumenical Studies.
He is Chairman of the Department of
History at Mount Mercy College,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

the grey children were pretending to
Play hide and seek
when the street light came
on.
the street light watched them till
each child was alone.
then
He made them into separate shoulders,
Bending their
Loneliness
Longer, larger
than remembering.
They were watching their shadows
when her light came
on.
Black Rose was at Her window.
like night She was stretching
Her long, lineless limbs for
the street light's white fingering.
She led the light
over Her sweet sad soil, the
Grey children pressed their eyes
deep, but not too deep,
in a higher place, around
Her waist they looked,
higher still they watched
Her shoulders blush so
low Her breasts closed together.
the grey children crowded
against each other as they
Began their crossed-eyed clapping.
Black Rose only cried.
the grey children looked at their hands,
Couldn't open their
Hands.
They stared at their hands,
They stared at each other
till a fist reached
up and pounded the
Night shouting:
Black Rose's been raped by the street light,
He even stole a breast.
the first fist became two,
three, three hundred, and
more, more, more, more fists than
Could be counted pounded the
Night in search of the
breast of the Black Rose.

Author of *Land of Roseberries, Translations from Scorpius, Some Deaths* and *To an Imaginary Daughter.* Editor of *Walt Whitman's Civil War, Where is Vietnam* and *Poets of Today.*

Postscript for Lillian

Just a note to let you know
that everything down here is bleeding.
  The piano is leaking, the sun is asleep.
We have caught fire. It's one of
those mines that has to be sealed.
  Our conflagration is so far below surface
it can't be reached by radar.
  Now with cement closing
  the face of the shaft
not a whisper is heard.
  But in the carboniferous depths
  where our love affair begins
the final curtain is just going up.

Epitaph for My Punctuation

Not the absurd, not the inconsequential,
just the comma of being alive
among milk bottles & constellations,
in love with the parenthesis of passage
between Andromeda and Peekskill
where the world's apostrophes collapse
into the oneness of all ditto marks
& galaxies
including lovers doing the hyphen
along the mountain folding
question mark of Palisades Parkway.

For A. J. Muste
(Adapted from Petrarch, Canzione 128)

Today (he said) gives us always
new reasons to live in others
even those with bird seed for hearts
who don't want to live
and don't know how to love.
Nothing can keep them too from arriving
when the sky opens
and the sun lands
full of tomorrow's peace
everyone is waiting to kiss
after their napalmed yesterdays.
Meanwhile (he said)
With our deeds we are waking you
asking you don't stay asleep:
don't turn your backs on the truth:
Listen to us: hear us:
how can we stop being afraid?
Out of my heart I'm telling you
calling on you
pleading with you
hear us: O peace
peace
peace.

Author of *A Cycle for Mother Cabrini,* he is poet-in-residence at the State University of New York at Buffalo and editor of *Choice*. His *Thirteen Preludes for Pioneer Square* circulated in a campus magazine at Eastern Washington University before appearing in ARTS IN SOCIETY and it will appear in his forthcoming book.

Thirteen Preludes for Pioneer Square

1. At the aged
Pittsburgh under the street
(it's open only during the day)
the ragged pioneers get more meat
for their money.
A coat and tie gets hardly any.

2. Cigarettes die in
salmon tin
trays of gold and silver
and you pour your sugar
from a mason jar glint-
ing in the morning sun.

3. Moe's loan
keeps the pioneers in wine.
There's a trail of blood in the alley behind.

4. In the Florence Family Theatre
through the triple feature
the oldsters sit and cough.
Or they sleep it off
stretched across three seats:
they laugh and speak
loudly
out of their dreamed up movie.
Some wake and go to the john,
where they solicit the young.

5. In the Six Fourteen the queers
think **they** are the pioneers.
When they dance they bleed and swallow
trying to decide who should lead
and who follow.

6. Next door the highly dressed men
with their highly dressed women
go
into the Blue Banjo.

7. Indifferent or reckless
(male and female)
two pioneers hail
and meet.
Near the street
in a stairway
they make it, their way.

8. One aged fellow, smashed
at a corner of the square
sits against the wall
(he doesn't stand)
and feeling the need
hauls it out and pees,
no longer a man.

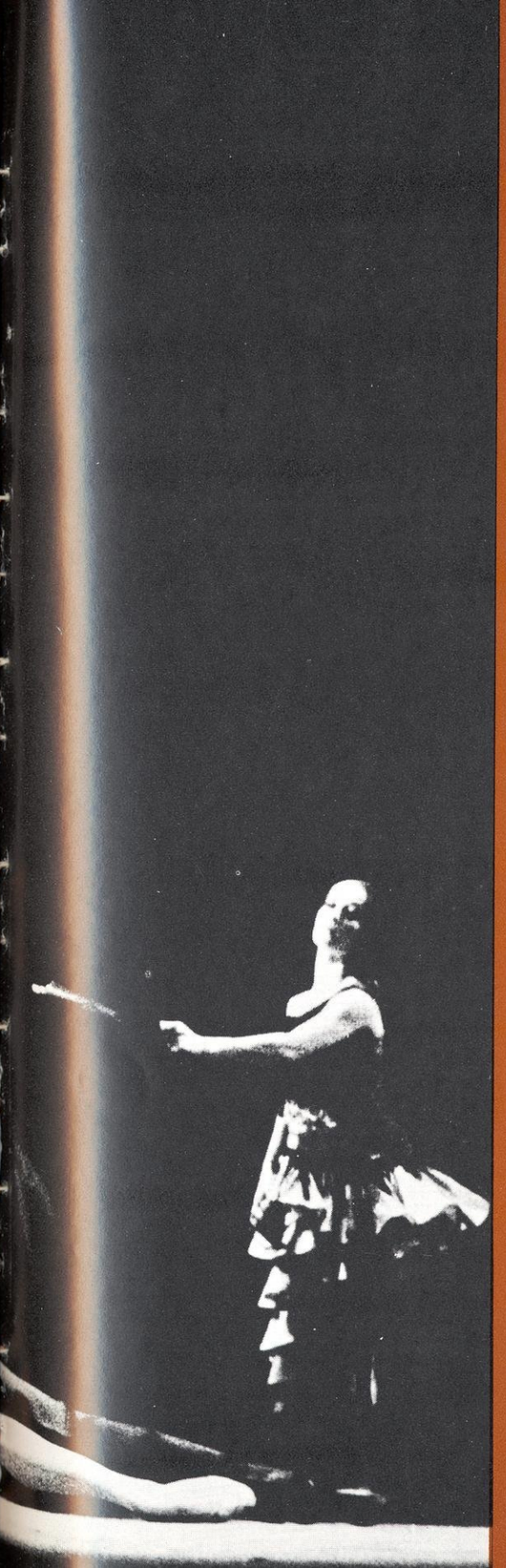
9. The tall American totem
in this triangular square
scowls with its mask upon mask
at the Victorian shelter near.

10. The Square's mixed light
part aged gas part mercury unites
the drunk and beaten, swollen
Lady Indian
and beau a block from Brittania Bar,
the negro weaving home from the B and R,
and the white man who can't
quite make it out
of the lounge at Rudy's Restaurant.

11. The great garish
painted concrete parking garage
fills in
across the street from the ancient building
where Bartleby worked and grew wary.
Its ruined lower halls have
formed a marble quarry.
The upper floors are rich with pigeon shit,
and on a kitchen shelf still squats
the hunched up skeleton of a cat.

12. The oldest pioneer
still reigns not far from the Square
among tops, totem poles
on sale, little ash tray toilet bowls,
lemon soap,
cups and knicknacks in the shop.
A real wooden Indian still stands
petrified at dying in the desert sand.
Six odd feet of bone
and tanned skin,
a purple cloth across his drained
loins (a little dry blood
is brown about the arrowhole above).
"Look Dad a real live dead
man," said a kid
and tiptoe, tweaked
the king's mustache, which is red.

13. In the basements under the bars
about the square
you can see bits of ancient stores
before the street was raised up in the air.
Pioneer Square
alone survived both water and fire.
Now the freeway named Aurora
soars higher
and Seattle's ghosts settle
in another layer.



loses the terrible starkness of Lorca

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

The Harkness Ballet's first New York season: November 1-19, 1967

by Marcia B. Siegel

You can do practically anything with enough money. Ask anyone in ballet — without it your company is behind the eight-ball. There is, of course, the question of talent, taste, innovation, good will. But American dance has these resources in ample supply. What artists need is the money to bring them together in stable producing organizations, and the story of dance in the sixties is largely the story of who found enough money, and how, and what use was made of it.

For at least five years Rebekah Harkness, a lady with enough money, has been seeking to make a major ballet company. Entrenched as I am on the side of democracy, bootstraps, and the integrity of the starving artist, I might enjoy reporting that Mrs. Harkness's millions have only furthered the cause of Mrs. Harkness, but this is not so. By any standard which we have for the excellence of a ballet company, the Harkness Ballet succeeds. The dancing is first-rate at all times, and often superior; the choreography is occasionally interesting, and the productions are lavish.

I doubt if any ballet in modern times has received the kind of patronage Mrs. Harkness provides. The great state ballets of Europe and the tradition-laden companies of Asia have considerable resources at their disposal. But this support comes from government and is subject, presumably, to the bureaucratic influence that is tied to any state control.

noblesse obli ge: the harkness ballet

In this country, although the government has given partial assistance to some arts organizations, most theatres, dance companies and orchestras subsist on a uniquely American combination of contributions from a wide diversity of sources: national, state and local government, foundations, industry, individual donations, and the box office, with variations on the scheme ranging as far as the imagination can travel. This makes for a seemingly random pattern of operation, particularly among institutions in the dance field. What is often overlooked, however, is that those institutions which do survive have a remarkable vitality and organic sense of purpose. Their reasons for existence are strengthened because of their need to find congenial supporters, and their artistic goals can seldom be eroded by outside pressures. With the Harkness, there is only one patron, and she is also the final artistic arbiter and the propelling force behind the company. She has provided handsomely for the organization, and it lacks nothing — except, perhaps, the nagging drive to create. There is a subtle difference between this company and the many other groups which struggle along because of somebody's unbearable need to say something. The Harkness Ballet exists because Mrs. Harkness wants it to exist, and for that reason it has a precarious quality; the patron giveth and the patron can take away. She is the only person with any equity in the organization.

The Harkness Ballet was founded only three years ago. Before that Mrs. Harkness attempted to act as benefactress to an already existing company, the Robert Joffrey Ballet. But she reckoned without the tenacity of Robert Joffrey, who considered himself equally qualified to make artistic decisions. After two years of unspeakable luxury — salaries for his dancers, fully commissioned new works, important tours and performances — Joffrey felt his authority was threatened, and the relationship ended. Inevitably, it was a messy breakup. For some time Joffrey was in desperate circumstances, but he has fortunately survived and now has a major ballet, with financial headaches.

Although Joffrey came out of the debacle with his soul intact and the sympathy of a great many people who later helped him, Mrs. Harkness also retained what she needed. Most of Joffrey's dancers had been under contract to the Harkness Foundation, and since Joffrey could offer them nothing at the time, all but a few stayed put. Ballets which had been commissioned for Joffrey belonged to Harkness, and Mrs. Harkness kept all of those except the ones created by Joffrey himself and his chief choreographer, Gerald Arpino. Simultaneously with the announcement of the split, Mrs. Harkness pledged an initial one million dollars to the creation of a new company in her name, a company which had, before the ink dried on the papers, all three essential ingredients: dancers, repertory and money.

A few months later, with the glamour and fanfare that accompanies everything she does, Mrs. Harkness opened another namesake, Harkness House for Ballet Arts. As a symbol of her grandiose intentions Harkness House serves perhaps even better than the theatre she has not yet invested in, because no matter how opulent a theatre may be out front, backstage, where the artists live, it is always bare, efficient, and made for sweaty service. Harkness House, on the other hand, is a showplace, a plush paddock for the grooming of thoroughbred dancers, and surely dancers have not been so pampered since the court of Louis XIV.

Nothing is too good for the Harkness dancers. Their rehearsal studios are decorated with cut-velvet walls, gilt-framed mirrors and crystal chandeliers. They have classes with famous ballerinas, their sore muscles are treated to massages and whirlpool baths, and they are surrounded with books and paintings for the uplift of the mind. They summer in the healthy sea air of Mrs. Harkness's Watch Hill estate, and in spring they go to Cannes. When they perform they play decent engagements in decent theatres, and they travel first class. The care and attention that has been lavished on them shows.

Nowadays excellent technique is expected from American dancers. The Harkness dancers are, in addition, well-fed and confident. They are not subjected to the physical strain of constant touring and homelessness, as is Ballet Theatre. Unlike the Joffreys they do not have to fit their program into an assortment of projects contrived at least in part to meet their own payroll. They are not, like the New York City Ballet, cloistered from artistic infancy with one dominating genius; their range covers many styles and periods — they are sophisticated performers. On opening night it was a great pleasure to watch the aristocratic bravura of Finis Jhung and Helgi Tomasson partnering the fragile Lone Isaksen in "Zealous Variations," the dramatic intensity of Lawrence Rhodes and Brunilda Ruiz in "Sebastian," and the stylized brilliance of Elisabeth Carroll and the feline charm of Annette av Paul in "Firebird." These are actors as well as dancers. They are not only with it and in it, but they are giving it as well. This quality of being not merely secure in a role but so confident in it as to be able to give it away I find consistently in only one other company: Martha Graham's.

In these seven soloists lies the real strength of the Harkness Ballet. I cannot say much about the corps because it seems to have no "personality." The choreography is built around the soloists. Secondary roles are non-existent or so negligible as to offer few opportunities for outstanding performances. The corps as a supporting organism is ill-used — disguised in unattractive costumes, moving in the dark periphery of the main action, or, most often, dancing as a unit in imitation of the movements of the principals. Ruiz, Carroll, Isaksen, Paul, Rhodes, Tomasson and Jhung are superb, each with his or her own distinctive qualities. They are delightful to look at, but the requirements of the repertory place a great responsibility and perhaps an undue strain on their talents.

* * * * *

In a recent New Yorker column Winthrop Sargent described Igor Stravinsky as a "pre-eminent leader of musical fashion." I take this to mean that Stravinsky's pre-eminence has been based not upon innovation but upon his ability to fashion popular works that were based on the innovations of others. In the field of dance many ballet companies are bringing into wider use the revolutionary ideas of not so long ago. If you use mixed media in the City Center, as Robert Joffrey's "Astarte" did this fall, you can generate a good deal of excitement; the place and the focus are right for launching into the mainstream what has previously resided only in the obscure province of the avant-garde.

Ballet companies of every type nowadays recognize the important contributions of modern dance to choreography, and are reviving modern dance works to supplement the rather anemic output of classically trained choreographers. One choreographer described the

phenomenon to me this way: "The management may not always appreciate my work, but I'm good for their repertory. I feel like some sort of special medicine." Pieces like Merce Cunningham's "Summerspace" and Anna Sokolow's "Rooms" have been revived more or less intact by big ballet companies. The Harkness, however, disdains to sanction anything as impure as real modern dance, and therefore has engaged a number of modern choreographers to create new "ballets." These works illustrate what Clive Barnes calls the Third Stream, the true and hopeful reconciliation of the two dance forms. Contrary to Barnes's theory, I think these pieces usually do not work; they borrow styles from everywhere and have the blurred quality of double exposure. They are popularized modern dance; the bite and individuality of the real article have been refined out. Norman Walker's pointless exercise in the medium, "Night Sing," is just such a bastardized mélange, lacking in any sort of choreographic distinction.

Alvin Ailey's "Feast of Ashes," based on Lorca's "House of Bernarda Alba," is likewise caught between two disciplines, but instead of attempting to synthesize the styles, Ailey uses the resources of both alternately. By training and instinct a modern dancer would be economical, choosing only the essence of the dramatic theme to illuminate with movement. But ballet is not inclined to be so terse; it is not anxious to throw away opportunities for virtuoso dancing. Reiteration of an idea seems preferable to understatement. "Feast of Ashes" is encumbered with much that need not be there — much running back and forth, mass entrances and exits to signify changes of scene, a cliché "trap" scene — victim runs toward exit, finds a pursuer blocking the way, runs to another exit, another pursuer, etc.

Ruiz and Rhodes: actors as well as dancers.

(This scene appeared in three of the four ballets one night.) Ailey's free-swinging gestures and fast-traveling turns, while effective in his spirituals and blues dances, are not entirely appropriate for Lorca's repressed aristocrats.

In working out a dance based on a play, the choreographer can either abstract the themes and emotional conflicts of the original to make a completely new entity, or strip the original down to its plot outline and produce a story in dance form. Ailey has chosen the latter course, and I think has thereby lost much of Lorca's meaning. The story of "Bernarda Alba" is rather commonplace: a willful girl rebels against her family's wishes and brings destruction upon herself and shame to the house. But this is really a play about an angry nest of females, and its power lies in Lorca's delineation of the characters — the proud and cruel mother, the jealous sisters, the cynical servants — and the stifling atmosphere of a house dominated by death and tradition. Ailey's introduction of men, who never appear in the play, and of prostitutes, creates opportunities for a more interesting production visually, but almost entirely eliminates the terrible starkness of Lorca's tragedy.

Stuart Hodes's "Abyss" is another dramatic dance, based on a story by Andreyev, but in this case the story is reduced to its barest essentials, with the sole purpose of involving the audience in the emotions of the two central characters. Two happy young lovers, full of wonder and innocence, are set upon by thugs who drag the girl away and rape her. When she returns, dazed and unable to respond to the boy, he is at first bewildered; then, in a growing hysteria of sorrow and frustration, he realizes that she has become a carnal object for desires he has never realized

in himself, and in the climactic moment, he falls on her. The simple intensity of the theme, and the fine performances of Lawrence Rhodes and Lone Isaksen as the two lovers who fall from innocence, make "Abyss" the most effective piece of theatre in the Harkness repertory.

John Butler, a most successful third-streamer, according to Clive Barnes, works now in the modern idiom, now in ballet, producing a huge quantity of amorphous pieces none of which makes a unique statement. Butler's work often has a sentimental, androgynous quality that takes the edge off the human conflicts it purports to examine. Whatever credibility it has is supplied by brilliant performances, such as that of Ruiz and Rhodes in "Sebastian." "Sebastian" is big, well-made theatre, with some of the ceremonial sweep of Butler's "Carmina Burana." But it becomes painfully melodramatic in the death scenes, which is when you realize that it has only been another performance, like an expert Hollywood movie. Butler's "After Eden" is a skillful treatment of a familiar theme, the same theme, as a matter of fact, as the more interesting "Abyss," and with the same stunning principals. (I was unable to see Butler's "A Season in Hell," or Rudy Van Danzig's "Monument for a Dead Boy," or the one comic piece in the repertory, Agnes de Mille's "Golden Age.")

"Cain," a first work by company member Vicente Nebrada, is conceptually modeled after Martha Graham's abstract dramas. Its sculptural set by Robert Davison is reminiscent of a Graham set. Its program is episodic, with dream sequences and flashbacks. It has a chorus that is meant to comment on the action without actually being involved. Its intent is to show the psychological motives of a crime. Helgi Tomasson as Cain is given some striking solos, but they might as well be solos in a divertissement for all they have to do with the other people in the story. Without Graham's genius for theatre, her ability to employ movement and dynamics, or her integral use of all the elements in a dance toward one whole purpose, Nebrada's piece is merely a frantic Freudian jungle.

* * * * *

Besides the narrative ballets, Harkness has a number of plotless pieces in its repertory. Brian Macdonald's "Tchaikovsky" is the kind of ballet that ought to have an exclamation point after its title. This would tell more about it than reams of critical analysis. Its choreography is high-Tsarist muddied by modern quirks such as flexed feet where they should be pointed, turn-ins where there should be turnouts. The scenery and costumes, by Raoul Pene du Bois, are overdone and unbecoming in sickly shades of pink and green. The music is from the bottom of the barrel; I understand some of it was taken from scores even the composer wanted to throw away.

"Variations for Four plus Four" is another work in the classical vein, by Anton Dolin. This is more successful because it is cleaner in style and simpler in construction, a show-off ballet, with fat, cheer-jerking parts for everyone. It has a curious fragmentary quality, however. The music (arranged from Verdi and M. Keogh) stops, starts and changes key abruptly, and so does the action. This may result from the fact that "Variations" is a kind of pastiche that Dolin put together from some of his other dances.

"Zealous Variations," by Macdonald, was a delightful, straightforward classical

trio when it was shown on opening night. Later an entirely different "Zealous Variations" was given, and it developed that the two pieces were originally one ballet, which had been split because the entire work was too long to fit on one program. If this ballet had been a genuine artistic unity, I don't see how its creator could allow it to be dealt with in such a way. It would be like sawing the Venus de Milo in half for a traveling exhibit because the crate was too small to ship it in one piece. But I think many of the works in the Harkness repertory are not genuine — they seem often to be made to measure, and hence are fair game for any amount of tampering.

Richard Wagner's "Youth" is a lovely but slight little duet that one is inclined to pass off as a better-than-average student composition, until one learns that "Youth" is only a section of a larger work. New York never saw the whole piece, but no explanation was given to the public that only a portion of the choreographer's talents was being seen.

"Canto Indio" of Brian Macdonald, a pas de deux for Elisabeth Carroll and Helgi Tomasson, is entirely successful — a classic showpiece with a few modern surprises, a suggestion of Mexican costuming, and Carlos Chavez's exciting and familiar 1935 score, "Sinfonia India." This is a dancers' piece. No overblown costumes or decor, no pompous music gets in their way. They can show off their most amazing tricks; they look as if they love it, and the audience always does too.

John Butler's abstract group work, "Landscape for Lovers," once again reaches for a synthesis of the ballet and modern idioms and attains confusion. Butler uses erotic gesture, which would be taboo in classical ballet, in the same stylized way that ballet uses its own movement conventions. The girl will rub her buttocks against the boy's thigh, or he will clasp her breasts in the same cool, studied manner as if they were going through the rituals of a classical adagio. It has about as much relationship to passion, desire, or any genuine sexual response as the classical routine. The difference is that the classical convention is beautiful. Butler's stylized eroticism is ugly, and, because it is unsupported by any dramatic motivation or sequential kinesthetic logic, it looks campy and somewhat obscene. Butler further complicates the matter by continually switching his male protagonist's role from that of the danseur noble — erect torso, sweeping arm and hand gestures, solicitous, elegant support of the girl — to modern partner with emotional expressiveness and distorted movements.

There is a disturbing thread of violence in the emotional content of much of the Harkness repertory. This is perhaps best summed up in Brian Macdonald's "Time Out of Mind." From the first entrance of three boys leapfrogging each other in competitive urgency to the final exit of the last girl, still vibrating with desire, this dance is an orgy. Its terrific pace slackens once, without a release of tension, as the principal couple stalk each other, mentally squaring off for the next round; and once more before the final coda, when the couple are momentarily sated with their animalistic love-making and are almost able to feel disgust and pity before succumbing again to lust. Within the limits imposed by his one-dynamic idea, Macdonald has done some interesting things — the sexual tension that finds its outlet in vibrating hands and feet, the offensive, but

consistent, lascivious postures and lifts, the boys' group with its energy widely extended into space as opposed to the contained, on-pointe fluttering of the girls.

Considered alone I think "Time Out of Mind" would be quite an effective dance, but within the context of the total Harkness repertory it becomes only the most capable delineation of an often-heard theme. The dramatic works of Harkness are, almost without exception, destructive, lustful, perverted, and pessimistic about the redeeming possibilities of human love. Speaking for the positive side is "Youth," a vignette of lost adolescent idealism; the last moment of "After Eden," where understanding is darkened by resignation and regret; and the opening scene of idyllic innocence in "Abyss," which we know in advance will be destroyed. Everything else is either violence or fairy-tale. I'm sure Mrs. Harkness did not commission her choreographers' viewpoints to order, and there is a lot to be depressed about in the world today. But there are still dances to be made about joy, delight, and the celebration of sex without resorting to Pollyanna clichés or escapism. I think "Landscape for Lovers" and "Night Song" were attempts to do this, but their movement ambiguities reduced the idea to a parody.

In the October issue of Dance Magazine Harkness artistic director Brian Macdonald reported that Jack Cole's "Requiem for Jimmy Dean" was not finished, but that everyone was proceeding in true show biz fashion on the assumption that it would somehow be ready for the season. A few weeks later Cole sued Mrs. Harkness in an effort to stop the production because, indeed, it was not finished. Mrs. Harkness prevailed, and sections of the piece were shown on the season as a "work in progress." Clive Barnes thereupon reviewed it along with the rest of the repertory.

This sad little pyramid of indiscretion indicates a certain disregard for the artist's rights and a rigid attitude toward the creative act that is not in keeping with the realities of the theatre. Production of the piece, in the face of Cole's problems and the nasty publicity of a lawsuit, does an injustice not only to Cole but to the dancers and the company as a whole. New York, which was seeing the company and most of its repertory for the first time, would never have missed "Requiem" if it had been quietly withdrawn before opening night. Choreographers are not commodities, to be ostentatiously placed on the menu and gobbled up raw. Sometimes a new piece does not work or internal differences prevent its coming to fruition. Showing an incomplete work proves nothing, except that Mrs. Harkness owns it and can show it if she likes.

* * * * *

Rumor has it that each costume for Act II of Brian Macdonald's "Firebird" (which lasts about four minutes) cost $1,000. At that rate the price of the production alone for this extravaganza would probably support a good-size modern dance company or even a modest ballet group for a year. Mrs. Harkness, of course, can do as she likes with her money, but in times like these I consider "Firebird" a kind of social sin, like giving an elaborate coming-out party during wartime. I would gladly accept Mrs. Harkness's word for it that she could produce the world's most expensive ugly ballet, if only she had not made me a party to her theory of conspicuous consumption.

Firebird: some companies could live for a year on the cost of this production

Although "Firebird" is the most flagrant example, many of the Harkness ballets are tastelessly overproduced, to the detriment not only of their visual attractiveness but sometimes even of their choreographic concepts. American dance is simply not accustomed to opulent productions, and over the years the financial exigencies that prevented us from using elaborate decor have actually worked to the advantage of our choreography. Without sets and costumes American dance has had to be doubly effective with its movement, themes and performance. We have also developed some important substitutes for expensive decor.

As its alternative to florid romanticism, Harkness reverts to Spartan austerity. The inscrutable set pieces with which Rouben Ter-Arutunian has embellished "After Eden" look like objets trouvés from a giant's auto-parts store. These sculptures reminded me of the same designer's big eggshell fragments for Glen Tetley's "Ricercare," except that the dancers in "Ricercare" use the set as a kind of cocoon in which they curl up, climb around and do other acrobatics. The sculptures in "After Eden" are purely decorative, although not pretty. You can almost hear someone saying, "We can't have a duet on that big bare stage!" This is just the kind of inappropriate thinking that minimizes some of Harkness's best assets. With Lawrence Rhodes and Lone Isaksen giving beautiful performances, no special decoration is needed. This kind of dancing can elevate a familiar theme and a merely competent score to the level of art, but it has to work hard to overcome a gratuitous scenic concept.

Modern dance has been much more imaginative in its use of design. In fact, I believe it was Martha Graham who first used the sculptural set for dance, in the thirties. But her designs are always a part of the dance, not merely decoration, and not merely serviceable props either. I cannot think of a more stunning, yet simple and integral set for dance than Noguchi's tubular brass design for "Seraphic Dialogue." Another point to be made here is that the moderns use light much more efficiently, so that it becomes an element of design, often compensating for minimal sets and costumes. Apart from economic considerations, dance lighting has a valid artistic rationale: it complements the dance's own spatial and dynamic qualities because its intensity, color and position are variable. Harkness does not list a lighting designer among its personnel, although Jennifer Tipton was engaged to light some of the ballets. Throughout the New York performances there were dead spots in the lighting, misplaced cues, unmasked instruments, ominous noises during scene changes. All this could have been avoided by having some skilled technicians backstage accustomed to running dance productions flawlessly.

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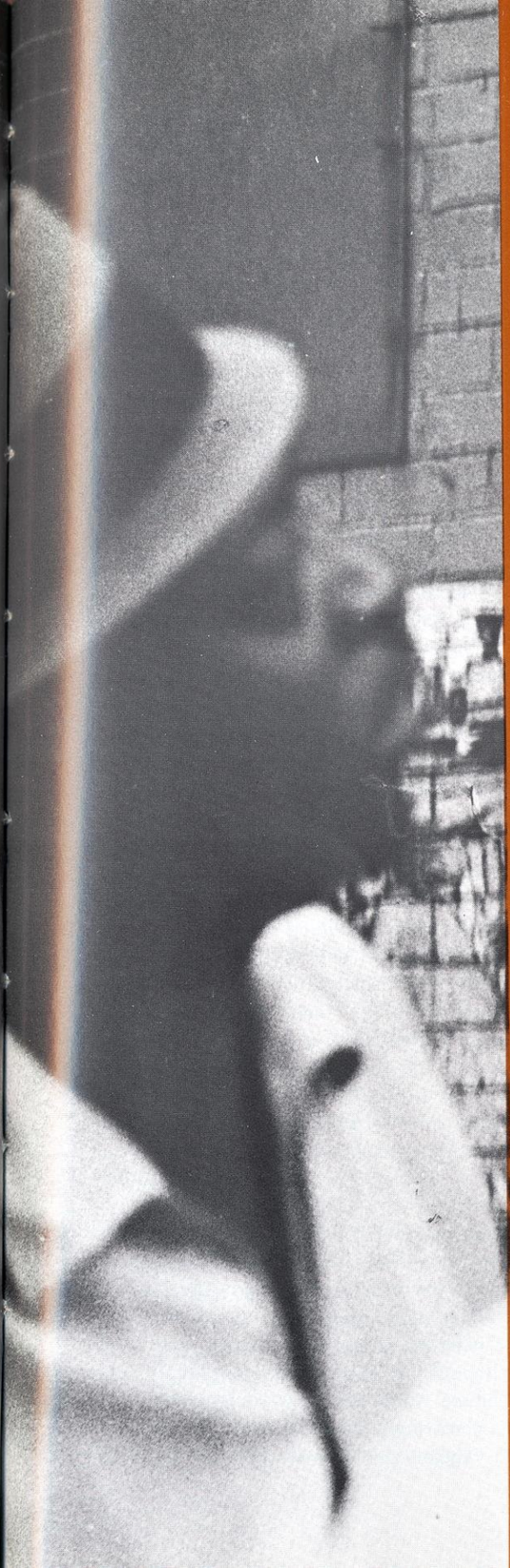
Opening night in New York was truly a glittering affair. The audience was filled with long evening gowns, jewels and black ties. My escort remarked that we should have dressed, and I answered, "But I did." The dressiest thing in my closet was a nice wool print. I suspect a lot of the dance world finds itself in a similar state of déshabille, which is why the Harkness Ballet may be a little incongruous and hard to take.

According to Brian Macdonald, its artistic director since early 1967, the company has the best of intentions. It wants to be a workshop for new

ballets of many styles, to give choreographers their every wish in casting, rehearsal time, and production. As a matter of policy, the company seems to oppose revivals in preference to mounting new works. But at the same time, Harkness presents itself to the world with all the trappings of a major company, and it is not unreasonable for the world to expect it will present major works. Since becoming director, Macdonald has purged the repertory of some of its excesses; he needs to exercise even stronger control. To encourage new works is one thing, but to present them with full expensive productions in a big New York theatre exposes their creators to the toughest public scrutiny. Even if a piece is later withdrawn because it was not successful, the damage has been done. The Harkness Foundation is a kind of fairy godmother of dance. Not only does it endow the Harkness Ballet and associated choreographers, composers and designers, but it maintains the Harkness Ballet School, supports the current Hunter College Dance Series and the annual free dance performances at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park, and helps various other worthy projects in small ways. It could also afford to present truly experimental works in modest tryout conditions, and to restore to the repertory some of the authentic lost treasures of American dance.

Not content with its immense wealth, the Harkness Ballet also wants to be loved. The Foundation distributed a questionnaire at the New York performances asking what the audience liked and did not like about its programs. The questionnaire seemed to indicate that if enough people voted for it, the Harkness would prepare a ballet with spoken or sung narration, with more elaborate sets and costumes, with emphasis on plot rather than performance, or with bagpipes and an animal act if we so desired. Unless it is a tremendous put-on, the questionnaire reveals a cardinal weakness in the company's philosophy. Art simply cannot be made to the order of a patron, an audience, or a critic. It must come first from the guts and vision of an artist, and this is the one factor to which the Harkness has yet to commit its fortune.



REVISING AN IMAGE

By Jonathan Curvin

Loften Mitchell, *Black Drama: The Story of the American Negro in the Theatre.* New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1967. $5.95

Looking back in anger at what he believes has been a 200-year-old conspiracy against the Negro in the American theatre, Loften Mitchell calls for an artistic revolution. The time has come, he says, for the Negro dramatist, actor and producer to "strike out for themselves." He visualizes a black theatre, independent from the white power structure. He is convinced that "the black American is going to have to do for himself in theatre and outside of it."

It would appear that the revolution has begun. The *New York Times* (Nov. 24, 1967) has reported that Robert Macbeth has established a professional all-Negro company at the Lafayette Theatre in Mitchell's native Harlem, and quotes Macbeth as saying: "I want to create a theatre in the black community where the work of the artist can re-orient itself to the life of the black community. . . ." Downtown in New York the Negro Ensemble Company has launched its first season to high critical acclaim. "This theatre," according to artistic director Douglas Turner Ward, "is happening because it has become obvious to us that Negroes will have to provide more of their own forums." Meanwhile, the Free Southern Theatre tours to benighted communities

revising an image

and performs to audiences that have never seen a play, fulfilling the mission of the group's director, John O'Neal. "What we're trying to do," he says, "is to promote the growth and self-knowledge of a black audience. We want our people, and others, to see the black experience portrayed for them in a way that is honest and hasn't been done before in the South."

Black Drama offers plenty of evidence from American theatrical history to show that our stage has not only misrepresented the Negro experience, but that it also stands guilty of particularly insidious discriminatory practices. Mr. Mitchell's passionate resentment marks his every page.

Of all art forms that of the theatre (including the film) has the greatest power to set and reinforce images which the unthinking general public will accept as true. Sometimes the consequences are amusing, as when the small boy actually believes the impossible deeds of derring-do which cowboys perform in the mythical West he sees on the movie or television screen. It is less amusing, it is frightening, when that same boy conceives a race of man in multiples of a freakish distortion. Moreover, we know that adult theatre audiences can be quite as childishly gullible. Professing to "suspend disbelief" for the duration of a "show," they have been known to emerge from this happy state with some appalling misconceptions.

The Negro has been a notable victim of misconceptions shaped in the theatre. His agony calls to mind Marcel Marceau's celebrated pantomine of the man straining to tear from his face a grotesque mask. What may be most important about the history of the Negro in the American theatre is not contained in the records of plays or performances or dates on calendars, but rather in his struggle to change his image.

In the eighteenth century began the tradition of using the stage Negro as an object of laughter. The white man's laughter. He appeared as the ignorant primitive, cheerful despite his lack of genteel manners and the niceties of correct grammar. He was the happy slave: "Mungo," in a play entitled *The Padlock,* which Lewis Hallam staged in 1769; a year later as "Sambo," in *The Triumphs of Love,* by James Murdock. He appeared under various facetious names up to 1845, when Anna Cora Mowatt used him as "Zeke," a farcical ingredient of her social comedy, *Fashion.* By mid-century our playwrights had successfully conditioned audiences to respond to nearly every appearance of Negro "characters" with a condescending guffaw.

At the same time, in that curious ritual entertainment, the minstrel show, the clownish end men, Tambo and Bones, were beginning to sing and dance and chortle over innane jokes at the expense of "Mr. Interlocutor." Needless to say, their comedic license was restricted. They were permitted only to indulge in harmless gags, devoid of satiric thrust or bearing on life. These minstrel caricatures were reassuring. For how could the Negro be a "problem," since he so obviously had not a care in the world? When, after the Civil War, the best minstrel companies were composed of all-Negro casts, the falseface of what had been a "white masquerade" was simply transferred to the Negro performers. Although the Georgia Minstrels, the Colored Hamtown Singers and the Famous Negro Minstrels opened the door to regular employment and training

for gifted Negroes, they did not overstep the established boundaries that divided stereotype from reality.

The highly respected star comedian, Bert Williams, was obliged to follow in the minstrel tradition. He created his famous "Jonah Man," who was an exaggeration of the ignorant Southern Negro. The shows in which Williams appeared with his partner, Ernest Hogan, broke down the formal structure of the oldtime minstrels, but retained the standard characterizations. A thoughtful and sensitive man, Bert Williams was well aware of his dilemma. W. C. Fields has left this description of him: "the funniest man I ever saw; the saddest man I ever knew."

Yet another image of the Negro was fostered in the serious drama and melodrama of the nineteenth century. Archetypically he is Uncle Tom in George L. Aiken's adaptation of Mrs. Stowe's novel. This gentle creature, whose name has become so infamous among Negroes today, induced tears rather than laughter, and provided yet another solace to audiences. When Simon Legree knocks him down with the butt of his whip, Uncle Tom utters his consoling line, "I forgive you with all my soul." Tom's female counterpart, who likewise bears her burden of sorrow with patient submission, is the beautiful Zoe, in Dion Boucicault's meretricious *The Octoroon.*

For all their good intentions, white dramatists of the twentieth century, in Mitchell's opinion, have proved incapable of portraying the Negro justly. They have succeeded only in creating what he calls a "neostereotype." In 1917, the production on Broadway of Ridgely Torrence's *Three Plays for a Negro Theatre* was thought to represent a highly significant advance toward truth; but in 1967 Mitchell disparages these plays. Their themes appear to him "remote from the actual experience of black people on this continent." Similarly, Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* he finds "ludicrous." Paul Green's *In Abraham's Bosom* "seems to have little relationship to the plight of the Negro," while both *The Green Pastures* and *Porgy and* Bess malign the Negro with their spurious "folk" treatments.

Mitchell recognizes and applauds the totally different image in certain plays of contemporary dramatists like Langston Hughes, Theodore Ward, Alice Childress, Louis Peterson, James Baldwin, Ossie Davis and LeRoi Jones. He concludes that only the Negro can have the deep insight, born of his **being** a Negro, to create a valid Negro drama.

When the long roll of distinguished Negro performers is called, from Ira Aldridge to Sidney Poitier, the impulse is to say, "See how many Negroes have 'made it' on the American stage? Talent always wins. Color is no barrier." We are misled, however, and take the exceptions for the rule, overlooking the price the Negro has too often paid for stardom in the white theatre. He has been at home there on the white man's terms. The Negro drama of the future holds promise of allowing him to realize himself as never before.

Mr. Mitchell is most convincing when he describes from firsthand experience the temper of Negro artists today. He communicates their fervor. He shares their determination to erase the false images of the past, and to draw the Negro accurately. It must be said that his final chapters have an

authority lacking in the early ones, where he has resorted to lifting without acknowledgement whole passages from Sterling Brown's essay, "The Negro in the American Theatre," which appears in the *Oxford Companion to the Theatre.*

One anecdote neatly expresses the theme of Mr. Mitchell's study. During the 1920's, Jules Bledsoe was performing the title role of *The Emperor Jones* in a Harlem theatre. The audience resented the play's atavistic implications, and the spectacle of Jones wandering lost in the jungle. A shout went up from the house: "Man, you come on outa that jungle! This is Harlem!"

That shout echoes today in the Negro's militant demand for his right to be seen in the American theatre as he truly is. When he wins — and the prospects now are bright that he will — both he and our theatre will gain a new dignity.

EHRENBURG IN STALIN'S RUSSIA

by Alfred Erich Senn

Ilya Ehrenburg, *Post-War Years: 1945-1954.* Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1967. $6.50.

This, the sixth and last part of Ehrenburg's memoirs, carries his reminiscences up to the spring of 1954, when he published his novel *The Thaw.* Although the author insisted that as he came closer to the present, he "should lift the curtain of the confessional less and less frequently," this is undoubtedly the most interesting part of the memoirs. (On the earlier volumes, see *ARTS IN SOCIETY,* Vol. 3, No. 2, 279-281, and No. 4, 614-615.) Ehrenburg here maintained the style of the earlier parts, eschewing a strictly chronological approach in favor of presenting a series of vignettes depicting individuals or events. What is unique in this volume is his readiness at last to discuss the problems of intellectuals in Stalinist Russia. Still unconvincing, however, are his disingenuous avowals that at the time he had understood little of the nature of Stalin's rule — this in contrast to his easy generalizations about the politics of other countries.

Throughout the work, Ehrenburg reasserted his belief in the Soviet system; he limited some of his comments because "the Soviet people, whose concepts I cherish, has enemies in plenty . . . the battle is still being waged (p. 108)." He cited some of the most ridiculous anti-Soviet statements

of the western press as if they were typical of western thought, while at the same time he dismissed — although he did mention — some of the wilder Soviet statements of Stalin's time as unrepresentative. Whether he was playing a game with Soviet censorship in even mentioning, for instance, western fears of Soviet foreign policy is impossible to say.

To a certain extent, Ehrenburg here continued the tone of his earlier volumes; whole sections read like cocktail party exhibitionism, replete with name dropping. The book offers no revelations about Soviet politics. Yet at the same time, Ehrenburg himself emerges from these pages far more clearly than before.

Interesting above all else was Ehrenburg's account of his own relationship as a writer to the Stalinist system. In his volume on World War II, he had complained of official attacks in the Soviet Union on his own anti-German writings. In this volume he continued to complain of official restrictions. Phrases in his novel *The Storm* which might be considered critical of life in the Soviet Union were cut in publication (pp. 42-43); for a period of several months in 1949 he was forbidden to publish anything in the Soviet press (p. 132); he was criticized for using "non-Russian" names in his works.

Ehrenburg's most precarious moments seem to have come during the wave of anti-Semitism in 1949 and again at the time of the "doctors' plot" on the eve of Stalin's death in 1953. Asserting that he himself had "never concealed my origin," he went on to explain,

There were times when I did not give it a thought, and others when I said wherever I could: 'I am a Jew,' for to my mind solidarity with the persecuted is the first principle of humanitarianism (p. 127).

In the speech I made on my seventieth birthday I told my listeners that so long as there is a single anti-Semite in the world, I shall declare with pride that I am a Jew (p. 131).

He declared that he himself was not a Zionist, but he explained that Zionism arose from anti-Semitism. At the same time, he resented speculation in the West as to just how he himself had managed to survive in 1949.

Under the circumstances, writing and travelling were for him obviously an escape:

So long as I was writing The Storm the work helped me. But once it was finished I felt compelled to resort to the old drug: trains shrieking through the night, rough pitted roads, nights spent anywhere, confidences at wayside halts, unfinished conversation, faces lost in the fog, the kaleidoscope of travel (p. 112).

Similarly, Ehrenburg's work in the international peace movements of the early 1950's seem to have served the same function:

In 1950 I started writing The Ninth Wave; I wrote a lot but without any inner glow. The peace movement was my salvation: here was a good, live cause, espoused by good people (p. 195).

Perhaps here also lies the answer to a question which this reviewer raised earlier (*ARTS IN SOCIETY*, Vol. 3, 280) as to why Ehrenburg became a foreign correspondent for *Izvestiia* in 1932. This position allowed Ehrenburg

to live in the West while still remaining a loyal Soviet citizen.

In contrast to some characterizations of Ehrenburg, he denied having ever met Stalin. His only personal contact was "one telephone conversation on the eve of the war" (p. 302). His portrayal of the dictator is consistent with what he had written in earlier parts of the memoirs. In a concluding judgment, he praised Khrushchev for having raised the public discussion of the "cult of personality" and he characterized Stalin as an echo of the despots of the Italian Renaissance.

During these last years of Stalin's life, however, Ehrenburg was still able to travel extensively in the West. Oddly, in all the discussions and interviews held during his wanderings, it would appear from these memoirs that he was only embarrassed when he was called upon to discuss Stalin's attitude toward modern art. (According to this Volume, Ehrenburg opposed Zhdanov even in 1947.)

Ehrenburg's vignettes of various Soviet writers are generally far more substantial than his earlier accounts. Although he declared his intention to drop "the curtain of the whole theatre on whose stage the tragedy of my friends, my contemporaries and my compatriots was being played," he nevertheless offered sensitive, enlightening accounts of the careers — and deaths — of such men as M. R. Galaktionov and A. Fadeyev. (In this regard his concerns about the motives for suicide, mentioned in an earlier review, take on a new perspective, especially when one notes his consideration in this volume of the problem of suicides in Sweden.)

Of special interest to an American reader are Ehrenburg's impressions of his visit to the United States in 1946 and his bitter criticisms of race relations in this country. All Ehrenburg's subsequent judgments of the United States seem to have been based on the experiences of this visit. But beyond the social problems of this country, he went on to criticize the manners. He considered the Americans immature: "How young they are, I used to think to myself, sometimes with a shade of tenderness and sometimes with irritation." He objected to the informality of American manners, to the lack of ceremony.

America had been developed by immigrants, the kind of people "who are the first to break out of a theatre on fire and the last to leave a gambling den." The Americans, in his opinion — even in 1946 — were incredibly mobile; they lived and loved in cars. Everything in America was on "an extravagant scale," but in Ehrenburg's opinion the life and the products lacked taste and content. American intellectuals he called confused. "On the whole," he concluded, the Americans "are a peaceful people but far too excitable" (p. 87).

This reviewer had great reservations about the earlier volumes of these reminiscences. Some of the criticisms of those earlier volumes might also be applied to this one: Ehrenburg can be charged with misrepresenting some things, with omitting things, with blatant distortions. Nevertheless, this volume offers fascinating reading; it constitutes a valuable source for Russian intellectual history.

THE QUESTION OF "STASIS"

by Peter Yates

Leonard B. Meyer, *Music, the Arts, and Ideas, Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Culture;* The University of Chicago Press, 1967
Richard Kostelanetz, editor, *The New American Arts;* Collier Books, 1967
John Cage, *A Year from Monday, New Lectures and Writings;* Wesleyan University Press, 1967.

Each of these new books spreads over the entire field of the contemporary arts, but in two the emphasis is on music: for this review, which is quite long enough, I have chosen to disregard, except peripherally, the other arts. This does no justice to the authors who discourse on Film, Theatre, Painting, Poetry, Dance, and Fiction in the Kostelanetz collection. For this I am sorry.

Professor Meyer writes well and is replete with ideas, which in sequence compound a critical confusion shot through with brilliant perceptions. Though more readable than Marshall McLuhan, he uses the same method of dumping on the reader a mass of ideas, explanatory theories, and quotations, then resolving the confusion by a recurrent chant of his objective, what he believes he has proved or is about to prove. His objective in this book is to prove that the period of rapid progressive change in arts, economy, science, society nears its end, that contemporary culture and the arts have reached or will soon reach "stasis", a fluctuating persistence of similar alternatives. He makes many good points, but I am more concerned to argue with his central thesis.

Meyer's new book follows a previous volume, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (The University of Chicago Press, 1956). I have chosen to start with a quotation from that earlier book, to exemplify the gaps and theoretical misrepresentation which betray the argument of his new book.

(P. 289) "Nor is it difficult to account for the fact that the dissonance norm has constantly risen in Western culture. For it seems likely that when a vertical combination of sound has been heard often enough as a unit, it achieves the status of an independent, unified Gestalt, complete in itself. It becomes a norm and ceases to perform its affective aesthetic function adequately. Therefore, the composer, seeking for aesthetic effect and expression and wishing to explore less common paths, will tend to treat what was formerly a deviant as a norm and use that which was formerly unused or forbidden as a deviant."

Professor Meyer misses almost nothing in the critical literature and, like some other theoretical scholars, having mastered the documents he has two contrary methods of dealing with the gaps. The first is to treat any handy speculation as a theory and then take the theory more or less for granted as if it were a fact: "an independent, unified Gestalt, complete in itself." The second is to avoid looking at the gap: for lack of documentation; because one doesn't see it or believes it isn't really there; because it has been so thoroughly filled in by a tradition of false history that the falsity seems factual; or by pretending that the facts are not

as they seem. The one questionable gambit, because it may lead to a dangerously subjective response, is to listen to the music.[1]

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[1]Music of our culture does not begin with the visual or analytic disposition of the notes; as with harmony, the disposition of the notes starts from the actual sound and intervallic variance of the tones.

European musical theory is founded on a scale of just intonation derived from the overtone series; a scale of just intonation is made up of unequal intervals. Our equal temperament is an arbitrary theoretical creation, disregarding any real acoustical basis for its intonation. In the medieval Pythagorean scale, which gradually came to include 12 tones and seems to have persisted in English keyboard music, with slight tempering at the extreme of the tuning cycle, until the end of the 17th century, the 5th is a just interval and the major 3rds, with a few exceptions, are wide. By measurement, the difference between a just and an equal-tempered 5th is slight; acoustically and esthetically it is immense.

In meantone, which persisted roughly 1600-1800, longer than the vogue of equal temperament, the 5th is very discordantly narrow and the major 3rd is just — being widened as some composers sought a "well-tempered" solution. Well-tempered, as we are able to reconstruct it, was tuned by a very slight, progressive narrowing of the 5ths to mid-cycle with a corresponding return. Each of these tunings was normally from C, therefore the acceptable keys during the meantone period do not go beyond three sharps or three flats: the 9th key depending on altering the last tone of the cycle, which may be tuned G# or Ab (never enharmonic). Various devices, still almost unexplored, were used for getting beyond the limiting 9 keys: e.g., the **accord** which solves the multiple short modulations in J. S. Bach's F# minor Toccata by flooding them with changing harmonic color. The changing coloration is in the tuning, not obtained by the gross modern fashion of fooling with the stops.

Each of these tunings was unequal. Well-tempered may have persisted through Mozart and early Beethoven but was of no use for orchestral intonation. It seems likely that equal temperament began coming into general use around 1800. Only a few Viennese composers seem to have known or mastered the well-tempered tuning. which is even today the most satisfactory tuning for a keyboard instrument.

It is preposterous to suppose that European tuning changed from meantone to equal temperament when Bach published his *Well-Tempered Clavier;* if Bach's influence had been so great, the first change would have been to well-tempered, as seems indeed to have been the case, among a few composers in the Bach-admiring group around Baron Von Swieten. Yet the whole of modern musicological literature, history and theory, has been content to presume that equal temperament suddenly replaced meantone, at no known time, for no authoritative good reason and with no evident musical consequence; that this change somehow coincided with the appearance of the *Well-Tempered Clavier:* ergo! well-tempered was in fact equal temperament.

Referring to the above quotation: the rise of the "dissonance norm" is intimately linked to the rise of the clavier as a solo instrument (organ, harpsichord, clavichord, piano), which would not permit mutable tones, so that the choice had to be made between a just 5th and a wide 3rd or a just 3rd and a discordantly narrow 5th. The latter choice prevailed, though the harmony is more dissonant than with the former; meantone music became a distinctively new art of strongly opposed concordant and discordant intervals.

For reasons beyond my kenning this evolutionary change of intonation between 1600-1800 has been left unexamined. There is no documentation. Study of the several theorists who recorded their experimental turnings is irrelevant to the main issue. J. Murray Barbour chose to end his useful *Tuning and Temperament* at the year 1750, resolutely refusing, as he reiterated in correspondence, to consider which tuning was dominant for what music during the period 1750-1800. For example, when Mozart improvised at a clavier away from home he would expect a meantone tuning and think meantone harmony; on his own instrument it is likely that he tuned and thought well-tempered; but what happened when he composed a Serenade for 13 instruments in the extreme flat key, C minor? Were the fixed-pitch winds still tuned to meantone or had they changed already to equal temperament: if so, when and in what circumstances? Notice also that composers generally still preferred to write in the meantone keys for orchestra until well into the 19th century. Mahler, in conversation with Schoenberg, spoke of the great loss music had suffered by the change from meantone to equal temperament.

Few musicians, historians or theorists, have heard meantone music correctly performed in that tuning, or considered the solutions of unusual variants by meantone *accords,* or given more than passing thought to the close relation between ornamentation and the avoidance of "Wolf" tones (unacceptable dissonances and discords). Therefore a massive body of fiction has been compiled to explain by theoretical means, to nobody's real satisfaction, the affective and emotional meanings of music, all of this literature growing from the mountainous fallacy that equal temperament has been at all times the only "real" and preferred tuning for European music, which composers would have chosen to use sooner, if they had known it: the fact is, they did know and didn't choose. What scholar, though he will quarrel over a wrong note in a madrigal, complains when he hears music of these disparate periods performed in the wrong tuning!

During the high polyphonic period of vocal music, roughly the two centuries before 1600, the intonation was just, mutable tones being altered when needful to preserve correct vertical concordance. Thus Gesualdo, a master of tricky concordances, has been described in histories of music as a master of dissonance.

Since the nine meantone keys had each its distinctive harmonic color and this in turn its affective designation (heroic, pathetic, etc. — which lingered on, unexplained, to recent years), any study of emotion and meaning in music, certainly since the meantone keyboard compositions by Frescobaldi (1583-1643), cannot simply ignore knowledge of meantone but must start with such knowledge.

With equal temperament only the octave remained just, the slightly narrow 5th and severely wide major 3rd being

equally defined as "consonant". Therefore the color-change of modulation and the consonant-dissonant clash which created the distinctive forms of fugue and sonata disappeared; to replace them composers extended the range of permissible dissonance to the full chromatic scale: hence the "emancipated dissonance" proceeding to the music "emancipated from its notes" of John Cage's compositions for prepared piano.

So much for Professor Meyer's elaborate dialectic about the reasons for stylistic change. In the music most pertinent to our discussion stylistic change was built into the evolving structure of the scale, which changed in accordance with the changing predominance of certain instruments, voice, keyboard, orchestra, and will change again now that the computer enables composers to explore every acoustical cranny of the field of sound: with the consequence that noise, the totally random mingling of sounds, becomes a musical means as significant as just intonation, and equal temperament, except as an historical bypass, may go the way of meantone.

This argument should give some estimate of the length and effort which would be necessary, if one wished to controvert some of the other ideas Professor Meyer offers. I do not wish this to be interpreted as saying that all the ideas are bad, misdirected, or irrelevant: by no means! But to discriminate the good from the bad, the real evidence from the assumed, the theoretical fancy from the observable fact would be an heroic task.
For example, he writes:

"In the area of tonal relationships, an aspect of music which has heretofore been central to major changes in style [though he hasn't explained why this is so], the possibility of significant change also seems doubtful. For not only will new or radically modified notation schemes have to be both devised *and* accepted if a new tonal system is to replace the present equal-tempered scale, but new instruments will have to be invented, manufactured, and sold and a new performance tradition developed, taught, and mastered." [Further on he doubts that "a really new symbolic notation, even if invented, would be accepted and flourish." This is in line with the old musicological notion that 17th century composers went on unhappily trying to invent modern harmony but failed to do so until J. S. Bach came along. Composers today are forcing on performers all sorts of new notations, to the despair of theorists. Gardner Read's exhibits for his new lecture on current notation more resemble a gallery of abstract graphic art than musical scores. Computer and electronic composers speed up the revolution by dispensing entirely with notation. Professor Meyer, when he gives evidence against his general thesis, proceeds to argue as if this evidence can be done away with.] "Moreover . . . change in the tonal structure of styles has generally moved in the direction of filling in gaps in the repertory of tones already in the system — a tendency toward equidistant scale steps." [I have already shown that equal steps are not the norm but the exception in the history of Western music. But, if "filling the gaps" is what counts, then the 31-tone equal temperament invented by Christian Huygens and reimplemented today by Adriaan Fokker does just that. It is a meantone filled in to the degree where both the major third and the 5th becomes acoustically, though not precisely, just.
If equal intervals are not what is wanted, there are the "filled in" scales of just intonation used by Harry Partch and, more recently, Eivind Groven, both 43 tones in the octave.[2] Each of these systems both adapts traditional

instruments and has been provided with new instruments; Fokker and Groven have built organs with practical keyboards. Quite a few composers today are composing with different degrees of just intonation, and the interest is growing. In contradiction to Professor Meyer, I am convinced that music of the future will employ the entire field of sound opened to us by electronic means and the computer: just and consonant intonation mixed with discord and noise will provide the texture and dramatic contrast, a method of composition exemplified in much music by Charles Ives. Thus we dispose of Professor Meyer's next sentence.] "Since the equal-tempered scale is **already** uniform, however, change, if it is to come at all, must be invented and imposed from outside the tonal system." [I have shown that this is simply not true.] *(Music, the Arts, and Ideas,* p 124. All subsequent quotations by Professor Meyer are from this book).

Eric Salzman tells us in the *Music* article of *The New American Arts* (p 248): "There can be no doubt of the impact of tape and electronics on performed music; but the results, far from hinging on a kind of spurious negativism, have helped to bring into being a whole new repertoire of live music of great vitality." And he writes elsewhere (p 246): "This is not, it should be pointed out, music composed by machines, nor is there any implication that electronic music will 'replace' live music or live musicians. The simplest isolated 'live' sound is so rich and complex that efforts to duplicate it electronically, even when successful, are not worth the time and effort involved." And continuing to read his article backwards (pp 240-241): "The significance of electronic music . . . cannot be overemphasized; for whatever range of possibility had been previously imagined, it was only the development of electronic and tape techniques that established two of the determining characteristics of recent musical thought: total possibility of aural resources and perfect control. Furthermore, electronic developments, by the mere fact of their existence, — the reality, so to speak, of the potential, rather than any specific artistic achievement — have suggested new and useful distinctions between recorded and live performance and, thus, by a kind of negative influence, have had an enormous effect on performed music, producing new kinds of composer-performer-listener relationships.

"The new performed music has tended to grow out of the conditions and possibilities of the live performance situation: new types of control and flexibility, a new virtuosity and new improvisatory techniques [Don't forget that both our classic music and jazz grew out of new improvisatory

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[2]A record of examples played by Eivind Groven on his 43-tone organ can be obtained from Norsk Phonogram a/s, Kirkeveien 64, Oslo 3, Norway. Groven's present organ "was completed in 1965 and is now installed in Valerengen Church in Oslo. It has 43 pitches to every octave and 33 stops, and is provided with 2 manuals and a pedal-keyboard. The replacing mechanism (the computer) is operated by transistors . ." By the replacing mechanism "the requisite groups of notes are 'brought in' according to the demands of the harmonic progressions." Thus the Fokker organ uses a specially designed keyboard for its one-fifth tones, while the Groven organ, using a conventional keyboard, electronically provides the correct just harmonies.

techniques.], the exploration of the outer physical limits of performer [one should add, and instrumental] possibility, the projection of instrumental and vocal sound in actual physical space and so forth."

Salzman is not as a whole so well represented by this article, written several years ago, as by his new book in the spatially cramped Prentice-Hall History of Music Series, *Twentieth Century Music: An Introduction* (1967), which contains some of the best writing to date about the music of the present century, by a composer-critic who is in my opinion the most knowledgeable writer in this field.

Consider next another aspect of what is happening in music at the present time. Salzman writes (p 241): "It is interesting to note that the very first 'totally organized' music was written by Milton Babbitt in 1948. [John Cage's three *Constructions* for percussive sound-producers (1939, 1940, 1941) are totally organized around rhythmic structures determined by a numerical system, but the organization does not, like the systems of Babbitt and Olivier Messiaen, proceed from the tone-row. The point can be argued, depending on what one chooses to mean by "total organization." If, as seems likely, the whole of Ives's *Concord Sonata* is derived from a single figure, of which the first four notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony are one variation, would that be, in effect, "total organization"?] "By the early years of the fifties, the Columbia University electronic studio was in operation and John Cage had created his *Music for 12 Radios.* All of these developments were virtually simultaneous: a series of expanding techniques and new perceptive forms, curiously parallel and mutually exclusive; carefully nourished bits of aural experience rigorously pushed on to their logical and physical extremes, much in the manner of experimental investigation.

"At a certain point, the cumulative result was a new awareness which made the old narrow kinds of exclusiveness seem no longer necessary. The creative process was reversed; it became analytic, so to speak, instead of synthetic, growing out of this new discovery and acceptance of the totality of possible experience. In the earlier new music, the materials and means of the work of art were formed by rigorous selection, often defined negatively by a strenuous, precompositional exclusion of possibility; in the comparable developments of the last few years, the entire range of possible experience is represented by a portion of it . . . organized, not through precompositional assumptions, but through musical and psychological structures established uniquely by each work itself."

On this subject Professor Meyer is as prolix as on most others; his summary statements are as questionable: "Finally, the fact that there seems to be little inclination to change the fundamental repertory of pitches makes it at least doubtful that major style changes are in prospect." (p 125) He struggles at length with the question of why a major art work, when determined to be a forgery, loses its esthetic value. The answer is quite simple. The "esthetic" is what we think about a work of art; when we know a work of art to be a forgery, we cease to think about it — except as a forgery. There is, of course, the question whether we **should** think about it and perhaps on the same terms as we thought of it before, and this is exactly the same question which is constantly being hurled by defenders of the

currently established modes against any who offer what is, measured by their habituated tastes, false art. Some current artists and critics try to defend themselves against assault by calling their new works "non-art" and denying any interest in esthetic value; at the same time they furiously resent the practical corollary that, if it isn't art, the viewers or auditor can, reasonably, dismiss it from notice.

Cage and Sister Corita believe that any accumulation of events has instant and unique value, that any event is equally esthetic with any prepared work of art. Meditatively this may be so, but it is not for this reason that Zen monks weed and rake their gravel oceans or carefully place rocks [Cage says this isn't so.] to create the illusion of mountains or distant islands. The **koan** is not any question nor satisfied by any answer but by the sweat of withdrawal from discursive thought. Art is not waiting in a place while anything happens. Art summons attention and directs esthetic response. I have yet to learn of any composition by Cage which does not summon attention, even when it works to dissipate esthetic response. Cage's slogan, "purposeful purposelessness," is not helpful. When Cage spoke of this in conversation with Jasper Johns and myself, Jasper answered him, "John, you are the most highly organized seeker of chaos one can imagine." Cage's compositions are invariably purposeful and invite esthetic thought, even when that is not their purpose and one disagrees completely with the procedure and its outcome. He himself is not the best estimator of what he has done: for example, he believes that during the silent piece, **4' 33",** the audience should listen to whatever sound occurs; in fact, the audience **watches,** with an anxiety of frustrated expectation which, at least while the piece was still unknown, could cause hysteria. The idea is so potent that I have many times been furiously affronted by reasonably intelligent persons demanding explanation who have only heard of it — and who will not, in some instances, be content with any explanation. Elbert Hubbard's book of blank pages, called *Silence,* did not outrage its audience with the explosive resonance of *4' 33"* — the *Sonata appassionata* of its epoch.

Professor Meyer disowns "progress" in its meaning of "onward and upward", yet, like most of us, he thinks progress in the sense of "after this, what next?" When he recognizes that certain directions in art have gone as far as they can go, he assumes that that is where they must stop, to be succeeded by an indefinite stasis. But an artist is not bound by his esthetic philosophy, unless he insists on being bound: a good example would be the composer Kaikhosru Sorabji, who for forty years has refused to permit performance of his immense compositions. With Cage's records of *Cartridge Music* and *Variations IV,* both consisting of aimless sound without comprehensible activity or direction, it might be thought that Cage had reached the end of his philosophical road or spiritual rope. But not so. He is working, I read in *Newsweek,* December 25, 1967, a handy source for information about Cage and Sister Corita, on a harpsichord composition "that will range over a gamut of 50 different scales and be played on 50 separate tape recorders" . . the compositional decisions being referred to a computer. So the road bends. Exciting as discovering a new landscape, a new Beethoven opus.

Professor Meyer's problem comes to this (p 171): "The present seems to be aberrant, uncertain, and baffling

because the prevalent view of style change — involving notions of progress and teleology ["teleology" is a favorite windmill], *Zeitgeist* and cultural coherence, necessity and organic development, or some combination of these — posits the eventual establishment of a single style in each, or even in all, of the arts. As a result, composers as well as critics and historians have come to expect that one dominant style would emerge in the arts — whether as the result of radically new developments, an accommodation of prevailing styles to one another, or the 'triumph' of some existing style." He quotes Winthrop Sargeant, that "none of the revolutions has been definitive." [In some 30 years as a music critic, for *Time* and *The New Yorker,* Mr. Sargeant has repeatedly asserted his inability to come to terms with what has been happening in 20th century music. Last time I read him he gave up without trying on Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles.*] Meyer also quotes Pierre Boulez: "Anyone who has not felt . . the necessity of the 12-tone language is superfluous. For everything he writes will fall short of the imperatives of our time." In the opinion of Boulez, Schoenberg himself fell short.

"Perhaps none of the 'revolutions' will be definitive," Professor Meyer comments (p 171) . . Suppose, too, that there are no 'imperatives' of the sort that Boulez assumes . . Suppose, in short, that the present pluralism of coexisting styles (each with its peculiar premises and attendant ideology) represents not an anomalous, transient state of affairs, but a relatively stable and enduring one." Well, we'd look back and see Babbitt, Cage, Britten, Salzman, etc., circling in their orbits, just as now we look back and see Rossini, Beethoven, Dussek, the young Liszt circling in their orbits. So what!

His argument has reached culmination. Professor Meyer believes that culture, including art, is approaching "stasis"; the persisting crisis of cultural change will be succeeded by a fluctuating persistence of similar alternatives; artists instead of being ambitious to create unique masterpieces will prefer carving anonymous gargoyles. (pp 157-158) "Though the search for novelty still seems to persist, it is in most cases an anachronistic, paradoxical one — incongruous with the ahistorical constructivism and the objective impersonality which characterize the new ideology." (p 173) "Though a spectrum of styles will coexist in what is essentially a steady state, this does not mean that in a given art all methods and idioms will be equally favored at a particular time." (p 173) "Such a succession of wavelike fluctuations may make it appear as though one style has followed or replaced another. But what will in fact have happened is that one style — or perhaps a group of related styles — will, so to speak, have 'crested', becoming for a time particularly conspicuous. And at the very time most composers are riding the crest of the stylistic wave, others will have continued to follow ways and procedures temporarily less popular."

Spread your "stasis" broadly enough and it can include the utmost activity; in mid-ocean the height of a tidal wave is a few feet.

In my cherished, inherited 1906 *Grove's* I found a clipping from the *New York Times,* 1927. My chance is real chance, not Cage's prepared chance. Olin Downs describes at great length a London performance of *A Soldier's*

Tale. My *Grove's* is unaware of Stravinsky, whose first public performance came in 1907. Twenty years later, after columns of enthusiasm for the staging, dancing, acting, Downs wrote: "The music by itself . . is virtually worthless, but in biting, mordant humor and grotesqueness, and the power to make you laugh" etc . . "Stravinsky, despite a complete lack of real thematic invention, excels himself. *L'Histoire du Soldat* appeared after he had ceased to be creative as a composer — strangely ceased, just as he was conquering the world." Forty years later I listened in awe to Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles,* written in his 85th year.

Salzman writes (p 259): "Whether or not Cage can be considered as a composer or as a creator of works of art in the ordinary sense, (he has, of course, done a great deal to change that 'ordinary sense'), there is no question that he has been the most influential personality in the avant-garde arts since the war."

The truth is, Cage prefers to "compose" everything he does in public appearance, as he told me when I took him in 1963 to lecture, without preparation, for Sister Magdalen Mary's Art Department at Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, the source of Sister Corita. He talked freely for more than an hour and a half, as lucid and complete an exposition of his ideas as any he has written. I have the talk on tape. The basement room was stuffed with people, on creaking chairs, tables, the windows open to voices and traffic, a sonic background that, recorded through a directional mike following his pacing, musically swells and recedes.

The estimate of Cage as an uncreative non-composer who functions in some mysterious way to stimulate successive generations of artists and composers, whose influence has not weakened under a critical attack comparable to that directed against Schoenberg until his death, has given way exactly where one might have expected the most resistance, in the popular prints. *Newsweek,* December 25, 1967: "For nearly three decades, John Cage has been the most fertile, influential and controversial composer of the avant garde." In *Look,* January 9, 1968, Richard Kostelanetz, youthful editor of *The New American Arts,* fired a salvo in praise of Cage, The Mothers of Invention, the Jefferson Airplane, the Beatles, and the younger post-Cage composers, LaMonte Young and Terry Riley. As a matter of fact, Cage has had the knack of being newsworthy since his first percussion concerts around San Francisco in the later 1930s. He has also been, over thirty years, a more productive composer than most of his well-known contemporaries. His complete list of compositions is currently available from a single publisher. Because he saw the future of music clearly — witness *The Future of Music: Credo,* written in 1937, in his first collection of writings and lectures, *Silence* (Wesleyan University Press, 1961) — he has remained consistently ahead of the creative pack, which bays at him for each new act of creative leadership and eventually follows him. Many persons who can't bear Cage's music read his writings with delight, as poetry, prophecy, philosophy, fun. Robert Craft wrote me: "Stravinsky is the one man I know who has read every word of *Silence.*"

One might think that Cage would be above sniping at his chief recent predecessors, especially those to whom

he owes some obligation, but this is not so. Throughout the years his attacks on Schoenberg, with whom he studied, Stravinsky, Ives, Varèse, his condescension toward compositional procedures outside those of his immediate circle have been embarrassing to read. Schoenberg spoke to me of Cage as "an inventor of genius." Cage was proud to hear it, yet in his new book, *A Year from Monday,* he includes a review, written in 1965, of Schoenberg's published *Letters,* which is cruel and distorted, the more so when compared with Stravinsky's beautiful and eloquent review. (Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Themes and Episodes).*
In 1959 Cage dismissed Ives: "His meters and rhythms are no longer any more important for us than curiosities of the past like the patterns one finds in Stravinsky." In 1966 Cage was gratified when, by establishing communication, I enabled him to meet Stravinsky. Cage told me in 1966 that he had changed his mind about Ives and had written two statements to prove it. In the new book the two statements are reproduced in his own handwriting. Cage said to me as we were bouncing through the woods to his home near Stony Point, New York: "You won't agree with what I have to say about Ives, that what I like best in his music is the mud." I replied: "You have been unfortunate. When you hear this music properly performed there is no mud." The mud is still in the statement. And Cage writes: "I don't so much admire the way Ives treated his music socially (separating it from his insurance business): it made his life too safe economically and it is in living dangerously economically that one shows 'bravery' socially."
Compare this statement in Cage's *Lecture on Commitment:* " . . I myself feel more committed the more diverse and multiplied my interests and actions become."

Cage has been always generous and helpful to younger composers, some of whom afterwards repudiated him, a treatment he appears to accept without resentment. When a couple of years ago he proposed to Boulez that they publish their correspondence of the later 1940s, Boulez replied that he had destroyed the letters.

There is also a feeling of strain, of personal tension insecurely resolved, in much of Cage's praising. He has a habit of turning to certain men as oracles, at present Duchamp, Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan, N O Brown. Recall his statement that Varèse "is an artist of the past. Rather than dealing with sounds as sound, he deals with them as Varèse." One cannot help but observe the prevalence of the "I" throughout this latest book.
In the expression of thought Cage is intensely subjective: everything he knows is what he thinks about it. When I asked what he thought about Bartók — "All tonic and dominant!" But in the work of his craft, composing, laying out a score, cutting and assembling a complex tape, designing a book, organizing any of the several money-raising projects for his Performance Arts Foundation, he is calmly and discriminatively objective, unhesitant, fearlessly efficient. When he needs money for a cause he can ask for it and get it.

He has distilled his life into hundreds of anecdotes, the feedback of his observations, experiences, and friendships. When he reads aloud these stories, which are scattered through the two books, each story is stretched or hurried to fill exactly one minute. His

meter has been chronological time, measured by the stopwatch. Latterly he has been trying to rid himself of time entirely.

Thus the ways of thought which make up his writings — he disdains the term, philosophy — and his craftsmanship go separate paths. As a craftsman he works step by step; each composition a step forward from the last. As a thinker he bounds from enthusiasm to enthusiasm and can forget completely the enthusiasm of an earlier season.

So in his best writing he projects each sentence as a direct statement, seldom with inversion, as he learned from Gertrude Stein, while soaring among the clouds — mushrooms to Zen to Meister Eckhart — of his personal empyrean. Claiming to rely on chance for many of his compositions, music, lecture, writing, he prepares carefully the material with which chance must work. His best writings belong with the poets. When he strains to write, he ornaments, goes wrong. His ear for sounds and words is wonderful, in the real meaning of that word, though he claims he has not the ear of a musician. I have heard him, surprised by the rich shriek of a table leg scraping floor and by a Couperin Saraband played on a meantone-tuned harpsichord, cry out in pleasure. The easy control and modulation of his voice when lecturing or performing should be a model for poets. Reading him one enters not the austerity verging on asceticism in which he lives but the universe of unbounded discovery, wonder, and excitement he urges on all mankind.

Addenda: Returning for a moment to *The New American Arts,* which I have neglected: the chief purpose of these critics seems to be to tell what is going on. One of the principal duties of a critic, from time to time, is to beat the hell out of what is going on. Any critic should refuse to be a patsy for the current.

> They have to talk about
> all these people;
> but a poem's made, not for the public.
> Too many words, too many images:
> words, images, metaphors of poetry.

The information about temperament and tuning in this article was learned during many years of association with the late Wesley Kuhnle, whose *History of Tuning,* recorded on tape with a multitude of comparative examples, will I hope soon be published as a text with records. Complete sets of these tapes are at the University of Illinois, Urbana, and Washington University, St. Louis, (original version) and Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, and Long Beach State College, Long Beach, California (final version). Apart from improved levels, the differences between the two sets are not great.

by Richard Hoover

Richard Eells, *The Corporation and the Arts.* New York: The Free Press (Macmillan Company) 1967. $7.95.

"Usufruct" is among the words in the scholarly work by Richard Eells which sent me to the dictionary. It was worth the effort to discover that our language contains an eight-letter word which means: The right of using the property of another and of drawing the profits it produces without wasting its substance.

Professor Eells in *The Corporation and the Arts* to some extent discussed "usufruct" in the sense of using funds of corporations to subsidize artistic ventures, but, at the outset, it must be clearly understood that Professor Eells does not think that corporations are likely to undertake any substantial part of artistic deficit financing in the foreseeable future.

The Corporation and the Arts must take its place on the shelf along with Baumol and Bowen's *The Performing Arts: An Economic Dilemma* and the Rockefeller Brothers' *Report on the Performing Arts.* It is full of useful quotable material for the fund raiser.

In his preface, Professor Eells says that his message is directed mainly to students of the world of business and to corporations' executive management, and in the early portion of the book, he endeavors to interpret art's role and function for the benefit of better corporate understanding. But he also does a very good job of explaining corporations and their responsibilities and, in this respect, his book can be of value to those artists who might be inclined to think of corporations simply as entities with vast quantities of money which should be channeled into creative good works.

The questions, "What is art?" and "What is quality art — or supportable art?" are tackled head on. Professor Eells does not offer specific guidelines but argues in some considerable detail that "safe" art projects are a sometime thing. He says, "Nature does not always elect the eminently respectable and orthodox as vehicles for the revelation of religious, scientific, and esthetic truths."

He further points out that existing recognized forms may not necessarily be the beginning and end and he refers to the language of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 which, in listing all of the arts that come quickly to mind, goes on to imply that the intent of the bill is not necessarily limited to those named. Throughout, Professor Eells urges open-mindedness about form and media.

He makes a point of the fact that the Arts and Humanities Act states that, "The encouragement and support of national progress and scholarship in the humanities and the arts is primarily a matter for private and local initiative," and then goes on to state his strong belief that the corporation has a viable role in this context. The chapter, "The Corporate Reach for New Values," which explains elemental or basic large-company operations, should be known

by heart by any art group that is intending to apply to corporations for funds. The following chapter, "The Dialogue and Dilemma of Social Responsibility," also contains material which I consider to be of great value to those who would look to corporations for financial help.

There is no question that a primary responsibility of corporations' management is to turn a profit for the stockholders. Neither is there any doubt that many stockholders would prefer that management have no other interests. A very conservative viewpoint would be that a corporation serves the community best by sticking to its knitting and providing maximum employment through profitable operations. But as Professor Eells points out, the corporations historically began taking an interest in affairs other than those related to the operations of the company during the First World War and have expanded their support and interest in education, medical and other welfare problems of their respective communities with increasing vigor in the recent years. This sense of responsibility for the world around them has only recently extended into the world of arts in terms of support for projects not directly related to promotional or public relations operations.

Professor Eells says emphatically and frequently that the relationship between corporations and the arts should not be conceived as a one-way street. There is a tendency in our society to minimize the corporation's role in giving, in the sense that it is usually thought of as one in which the corporation simply reacts favorably or unfavorably to a proposal, and, if the former, it hands over the money without further ado. The fact is that this kind of cut-and-dried relationship is not likely to be very productive or viable. Certainly some funds will be made available on a charitable basis because of the personal interest of a corporate officer or for some other reason that makes it expedient to think in terms of outright donations. But the healthiest relationship is one wherein the corporation comes to view the artistic goals of the donee as contributing to its own larger goal of stimulating an expansion of thought, understanding, and cultural development.

A criticism of Professor Eell's work might be that he makes too few specific suggestions. He writes in broad generalities, few of which are arguable, but the practical problems are largely ignored. To anyone who has had experience in the corporation-arts relationship, the path to corporate support often seems very much like an obstacle course.

The author hints at some of the problems, though he points out that enabling legislation has been passed which removes most of the legal barriers which in times past might have prevented or discouraged such associations. About as specific as he gets is in referring to the corporation as "a user of the arts, a promoter of talent, and employer of the resources of art institutions."

In spite of the lack of specific suggestions, Professor Eell's work undoubtedly has great value simply in helping to weight future conversations on art with the business community. In summary he says, " . . . today arts, science, humanistics and business are sitting around the same table — and they are actually enjoying the experience."

Editorial Note:

It is pertinent to note that, under the

leadership of David Rockefeller, a national advisory organization involving about 80 top corporate officers, has been formed to spur increased business support to the arts. Called the Business Committee of the Arts, this organization, in operation since January 1968, is being chaired by Douglas Dillon, former secretary of the Treasury and present President of the United States and Foreign Securities Corporation.

The committee serves in a strictly advisory capacity; it suggests ways in which corporations can assist the arts but it is not a grant-giving organization itself. Five working objectives of the committee are:

"to research information on support of the arts for the business community."

"to counsel corporations interested in aiding the arts."

"to develop a nationwide public information program to inform corporations of new opportunities for support of the arts and to inform the artistic community of what corporations are doing in the field."

"to assist cultural organizations in presentations to corporations and encourage participation by business men in arts groups."

"to represent business in cooperative endeavors with arts organizations and governmental arts agencies."

The committee's headquarters are at 1270 Avenue of the Americas, New York City.

FILM AND THE BLACK CULTURAL REVOLUTION

by Larry Neal

We are talking about a New Way.
We are talking about making "new gods."
One of the problems of the movement for human rights has been its inability to project new and more powerful symbols. Failing to project a unique cultural point-of-view, the movement, until recently, floundered in a white haze of contradictions. The most important contradiction was in the movement's tendency to hope that the establishment communications media would present a truthful picture of Afro-American reality. It is ironic that the integrationist leaders of the movement deeply believed in the sincerity of the white news media. Lacking a unique cultural attitude these leaders honestly believed that the media would truthfully transmit the complexity of the Afro-American situation to the dominant white society. What they failed to understand is that much of the racism in American society is directly related to the cultural sphere of television, radio, theatre, and the movies.

For years the Black man's image was exploited and distorted in white America's cultural expression. White performers painted their faces black and satirized Afro-American characters and life styles. White minstrels made millions acting out the racist assumptions of the dominant white society, while Black people were prohibited from performing on the American stage. When they were finally allowed to perform onstage, they were relegated to stereotyped roles created in the minstrel period.

The movie industry's emergence on the American cultural scene must be seen in this context. From its very beginning, the movie has distorted the humanity of Black America. Griffith started it with the *Birth of a Nation,* a film oozing with racist propaganda. Griffith's film must be seen against the pervasive backdrop of American racism. Based on a cheap novel by Thomas Dixon entiled *The Clansman,* it was transformed by Griffith into a film whose main thrust justified the systematic terror of the Ku Klux Klan.

Griffith's film, therefore, has its historical roots in the racist psyche of American culture. In this culture the Black man and the Indian rarely have been honestly portrayed. The Indian's culture was systematically destroyed. The African's culture was also substantially destroyed, but the Black man survived to construct a "neo-African" culture. It was this "neo-African" culture that was co-opted by white entertainers such as Daddy Rice, Paul Whitman, and Al Jolson. Guided by these kinds of cultural imperatives, the film industry would have to be racist in character.

Even serious attempts to deal with Black people as human beings would have to be marred by the latent racism of white America's cultural continuum. It is the responsibility of the Black creative artist to correct this situation:

The Negro creative intellectual must also take action against the film-producing conspiracy in the United States, where a "one star" system has been manufactured around Sidney Poitier. He is supposed to represent the cultural presence, the aspirations, and the social pyschology of the largest minority in the United States, a minority whose population is considerably larger

*than many independent nations in the world. The Negro creative intellectuals cannot make peace with a cultural apparatus that will not take Invisible Man, or any other representative novel, and film it. Whether such works are good, bad or excellent is academic, in view of the millions of dollars wasted annually in filming trash for the movie market. . . . However, any advanced nation that has allowed its inner cultural expression to be so debased and corrupted, deserves nothing less than governmental investigation, correction and control.**

Cruse is correct, but he is pursuing a chimera. The creative artist should only partially direct his efforts toward changing the Hollywood attitude. The main effort should be directed toward developing an independent group of black film companies, and an independent way of distributing their films. Unless Black people are themselves able to control the total production of a particular film, Cruse's approach will fail.

We have already seen the failure of white liberal attitudes to accurately depict Afro-American reality in film production. Here I refer to films like *Imitation of Life, Pinky, Green Pastures,* and *Home of the Brave.* The same tendency to distort the Afro-American reality and personality mars such films as *The Defiant Ones,* and *Lillies of the Field.* To be specific, the problems posed by these films are essentially connected with the white man's sensibilities and not the Black man's. Hence, the black audience and the white audience alike are confronted with a glib, guilt-ridden characterization of Afro-American life.

On the basis of this analysis, it is impossible to expect an honest and meaningful approach to the filmic presentation of Afro-American life until Black people themselves begin making films. Essentially, we have been allowing an alien sensibility to dominate our view of the world. This domination not only goes for film; it extends into all areas of Afro-American cultural expression. If the civil rights movement had understood the nature of cultural imperialism, it would probably have developed an independent media that would challenge the racist and unrealistic thrust of the communications establishment.

Our film, *Revolution in Black America,* will probably be one of the first films dominated by the sensibility of black creative artists. We intend to make a semi-documentary film on the rise of "Black Consciousness." The film will be produced by American Documentary Films which recently won first prize at the Leipzig Film Festival for the anti-Vietnam war film, *Sons and Daughters.* It is our intention to document the powerful upsurge in cultural and political awareness on the part of Black America. How did the current Black Revolution come into existence? What are its components, and what kind of dynamic guides it? Who are its spokesmen, both known and unknown? Where is it all going? These are some of the questions we intend to examine filmically. We must show by carefully integrating the filmic elements, how people move from one stage of consciousness to another. This kind of film naturally encounters certain technical problems. The most important of these are transitional. In some cases, we will be forced to use news footage. This footage must be integrated in a manner that is natural and organic to the other elements of the film.

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*Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual,* New York, Morrow, 1967, page 111.

Instead of employing a narrative device, we intend to watch events unfold naturally. This approach poses problems of tone and texture and it influences the quality of the transitions from scene to scene.

All films previous to this one have failed to incorporate the unique and varied styles of Afro-American life. Notable exceptions are *Cool World, Black Orpheus,* and *Nothing But A Man.* But even these did not fully exploit the Black man's vision of the world because the directors did not understand that the writing and the camera must be integral to the subject matter being examined. The eye of the camera, or the mind informing it, must be intimately acquainted with the subjects of the film. The camera is merely an object, but the director's sensibilities are an important factor in **what** and **how** the camera sees. Because of racism, very few white directors and camera men have learned to see Black people. Hence, most films that deal with Afro-American life appear unnatural; the chararters never seem whole. They are figments of some white man's imagination. This is why a film about black people must be informed with a black aesthetic — the pulsing rhythms of contemporary blues, the shattering sounds of John Coltrane and Sun Ra. The film must be infused with a sense of soul, the entire world-view of the film must be black. Only a film diffused with these elements would present a revolutionary response to the cultural imperialism of the white communications media and bring a new set of creative ideas into American cultural expression.

Black America must begin to develop an independent cultural apparatus. It must teach its young people how to use film as a means of propagating ideas and fostering group consciousness. It is folly to expect anyone else to give them full support. The power and the beauty of Afro-American culture have never been fully exploited, especially in the interests of B!ack America. It is the Black creative film maker's job to document and express the point-of-view of Black America. Film is one of the most powerful medias of communication. The failure of Black artists to develop an independent cultural apparatus in this sector has furthered the alienation between the Black Community and the Black creative artist. This alienation can only lead to a negative projection of Afro-American life. The Black artist must understand this. There are Black people. There are Black attitudes about the nature of the world. We must present our people and their myriad points-of-view in the most truthful and the most dynamic manner possible.

MIGUEL ANGEL ASTURIAS ON LITERATURE

This is the text of an interview between Miguel Angel Asturias, the Guatamalan poet and novelist who won the 1967 Nobel Prize for Literature, and Jean Michel Fossey, editor of the magazine *Margen.**

JMF

What has been the period of greatest achievement in Latin American literature?

MAA

Latin American literature, like all other literatures, has experienced moments which one might call golden. Our first period begins with the first work to be written by a mestizo, a mixture of Indian and Spaniard, the Inca Gardilaso de la Vega; and we can also fix this period with the appearance in Bologna, Italy of the *Rusticario Mejicano* by the Guatemalan poet Rafael Landivar.

In this work — written in Latin — of more than 4000 hexameters, Landivar celebrates in the year 1700 the beauty of the tropics, its riches, its splendours; what is more important is that here already is a work with what might be called a social slant, which defends the Indian from accusations of being vicious and indolent; Landivar dwells

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*This interview first appeared in *Poesie Vivante,* an international poetry magazine published in Geneva, Switzerland and is reproduced with the kind permission of Poesie Vivante and M. Fossey. The English translation is by John La Rose, the West Indian poet and journalist.

in his hexameters on the ways of the Indian as artisan, farmer, fisherman and artist. Then there is a second period which stretches from 1810 to 1860. At this time the writers and poets appear who will be in at the foundation of our nationality. Here we have a poet like Olmedo, who chants the Bolivarian epic, and the Argentianian, Echevarria, who, apart from giving us a poem of social insight, *La Cautiva,* leaves behind a number of social reforms. The Argentinian legislature was to be inspired by his preoccupations. In this period too, the Venezuelan, Andres Bello, who in his famous *Silva* directs his muse to the richness of the tropics. With Bello one is always offered the contrast between the validity of American being or its potential, and the misery of its inhabitants. During the Romantic epoch, Jose Marmol, the Argentinian poet and author of the famous novel *Amalia* reaches a certain peak in our literature. One could mention as well the work of Rojas in Argentina, and above all the work of Sarmiento, whose novel *Facundo* is fundamental to an understanding of Latin America. Sarmiento offers the contrast between Barbarism and Civilization, and perhaps reflects on many of our problems as they are today.

And so we come to the figure of Jose Marti in the final years of the nineteenth century and who is projected into the twentieth century through his vision and sacrifice. Then comes Modernism, which is another of the golden moments in our literature, with Ruben Dario at its fountainhead; the centenary of his birth was celebrated in January 1967. Ruben Dario transforms the poetry of the Spanish language, revolutionises it, makes it live anew. Accepted Spanish poetry in Spain and America was a litany of rhetoric, disconcerting and overwhelming. Dario shakes up the language, imparts a new freshness to its poetics and method, and, apart from this, launches the Modernist movement which we place between 1880 and 1920. All over America the poets make brilliant headway; Lugones in Argentina, Silva in Columbia; and in this period one has to think of Jose Enrique Rodo as a sort of guide, Americanist, almost Greek in his thinking, and of great human authenticity. Then we come to 1920, the end of the First World War and it is here that we ought to place the end of the nineteenth century in our literature. The twentieth century begins in 1920 when the writers abandon the traditional poetic forms and begin to express themselves in prose, and there apears what we call the Contemporary Latin American Novel.

JMF

Is Latin American literature passing through an exceptional period or is it just a period of extraordinary achievement in the work of two or three writers.

MAA

It is not a question of an exceptional moment, it is rather the result of a whole poetic and literary movement. It began by imitating, as usual, the masters of European literature and only since 1920 has it been seeking to discover its own means of expression in the novel and in the short story. Latin American literature is characterised by the landscape, by the idiom, by the situation. The character is different in the European novel because our novel is more

landscape, more nature than man. Man is a miniscule element lost in the great folds of nature, in the pampas, in the Andes, in the giant rivers and immense lakes. The character in the Latin American novel does not dominate nature, it is not like the character in the European novel who has already dominated it. The idiom, reflecting the thousand and one ways of speaking Spanish in America, has not only enriched the language but has also changed Castillian syntax. Through the influence of migratory currents the speech habits of the Africans, the Italians, the French and the English have enriched our culture. In the Latin American idiom the word has acquired its own peculiar value in accord with the traditions of the indigenous languages. For the Indian the word is a musical element; and in our novel the situations differ from the situations in the European novel because they are almost always a living document. It is not a gratuitous novel but responds to a profound sentiment of the author, almost like a mandate which the author has received.

On the other hand, the Latin American novel, written by men who originate from all the latitudes and climes and all races and mixtures and from every social class, offers an infinite gamut of sentiments, beliefs, ways of behaviour, of thinking and living of the Latin American man, all this creates in our novel situations which Europeans often do not understand; nevertheless the human message comes through; at this moment the Latin American novel occupies a place which at one time the North American novel occupied.

JMF

What is the meaning of the myth in modern literature? It is said that you are the poet of indigenous onomatopeyas. Do you feel Spanish in any way?

MAA

As far as my own work is concerned there are already elements which distinguish it: the mythology or that which relates it to the onamatopeyas. Other Latin American writers show this characteristic. With me it springs from my Maya origins, from my studies at the Sorbonne under such distinguished professors as Georges Renaud and Paul Rivet. I respond to an animist necessity to express myself on the basis of that grand synthesis which is the myth. As regards onomatopeyas, the indigenes generally multiplied syllables to reinforce their thoughts. Augmentatives were spawned augmenting syllables. They sought with their language to imitate the sounds in nature, the singing of the birds. Without intending it, as a product of my subconscious, these onomatopeyic forms come to me when I write and give a certain character to my way of expressing myself. With regard to the myth, these are not dead beliefs which I try to revive but beliefs existing today among the Guatemalan indigenes. I use these myths therefore and this expressive onomatopoesis, not with any deliberate intention but as part of my way of being.

JMF

After receiving the Lenin Peace prize do you believe that peace can be achieved through violence?

MAA

The Lenin Peace Prize was awarded

for what my poetry and literary work can contribute to the dialogue among men. I believe and I have argued that the way to avoid a violent solution among human beings and peoples is by way of dialogue. That's why I admire John XXIII who opened the dialogue among peoples of different religions. To hold a dialogue is to make peace. The U.N. works in this direction and herein lies its value and the need to support it. Meetings between writers, artists, teachers and students ought to go on increasing if they wish to preserve peace. Now they have the means of transport, which, without being cheap, are easy and quick.

The terror of the atomic bomb and the resulting dialogue will avoid a total catastrophe which is what a new war would be. Feeling very honored on the occasion of receiving the Lenin prize I ventured to suggest a revision of the sentence passed recently on two Soviet writers.

JMF

I do not like asking a writer of your stature a question about another writer but Cesar Vallejo died here in Paris in misery and is virtually unknown by the French public. What is your opinion of him?

MAA

I knew Cesar Vallejo in Paris between the years 1924 and 1930, a period when we saw each other in the cafes of Montparnasse. The memory I preserve of him is that of a tranquil man, quiet, immobile, who would, on the contrary, acquire an enormous mobility and outpouring and a jollity when he had downed a few 'pernods' (a french drink: JLR.) His death in Paris, which as many have said was painful, found me in America. According to what I have heard said his situation was not only that of a Peruvian poet, but that of the majority of Frenchmen in that difficult time. I consider Vallejo one of the great poets of America, a poet of deep perception, and I have the impression when I remember him of a man whose frame was not of bones but a millenia of stones.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALBERTO DAVILA

by Hugh Fox

The interview took place in Davila's studio on the Jiron Arico in Lima. Davila is a prosperous-looking forty, wears sports clothes, is thin, trim, self-confident. His studio was comfortable, two rooms, the "studio" proper where he does his painting and a little anteroom with a sofa and a few chairs.

I remarked on his affluence.

"Oh, I've done alright," he replies, "when I exhibited in Miami last year I sold my entire collection."

I asked him to what he attributed this kind of popularity.

"I'm safe. I already have a fairly decent reputation and my style isn't that far out." He picked up a canvas off a table in his workroom, held it up to the thin grey Lima light, "You see, it's not really OP, almost, but still identifiable as Cubistic. Now if I moved all the way over in Op, Pop or — even further — into psychedelic, I might be in trouble. After all, it's not the younger set that's buying my work."

I noticed — in the dark reds, browns, greens — a touch of the kind of thing that the "Indiginists" are doing in Ecuador and Bolivia.

"Any relation to people like Guayasamin or Gil Imana?"

"Not directly," he answered with a grin, "but the influence is there. I really began as a landscape painter. (He picked up a book off the table: *Pintura Peruana*. Opened it) Listen to what Juan Acha has to say about me here: 'In his first paintings characters taken from coastal life are stylized and the landscapes composed of huge geometrical planes.' "

"True?"

"More or less. It's kind of Abstract Indigenousness. . . . which essentially means Cubism combined, synthesized with pre-Colombian colorations and general 'flavor,' but now . . . . you know I teach at the School of Fine Arts, I go to New York once a year . . . . nowadays what influence doesn't an artist feel? I've been everything from abstract expressionist to op artist — yes, I've tried it, but haven't stuck with it! — to abstract constructionist, to an informalist . . . . you name it, I've felt its influence. My biggest problem, I suppose, is not to be engulfed by everything that I touch, to preserve my own unity, my own selfhood. That's the danger, isn't it, of a supersaturation of 'contacts' and 'communication,' so that you as an individual artist become 'drowned.' "

I wasn't familiar with some of the terms he had used, so I asked him about "Informalism" and his use of "Abstract Constructionism."

He picked up another canvas, a canvas that I would have classified as neo-Cubist, and explained with a clarity born of a long teaching experience:

"Informalism means simply without a form imposed consciously by the painter. What I tried to do — and this especially in 1962-3 — was to let the media itself find its own voice. In my case anyhow it came out very much like Cubism, a kind of Action Painting

Cubism, but at times you can't define a "movement," a tendency, an "Ism" so much in terms of its results and have to consider it in terms of the artist's intention . . . . in recent years more and more I've been interested in 'fractioning,' breaking up colors. I'm not as interested now as I was in textures. I suppose I'm going toward OP, have been since 1966, but at my own speed and in my own way. That's the only way it's legitimate, I think, if I arrive at it myself. You know that Verdi never listened to Wagner, avoided him at all costs, not because he though he wouldn't **like** Wagner, but because he was afraid he'd like him too much, that he'd fall under his spell. But still, he arrived at some Wagnerian grandeur himself didn't he — think of Othello, Falstaff . . . . Of course Latin American art has been absorbed by abstractionism in the last few years. Look at Tamayo, I try to avoid too much sophistication, try to keep concentrating on 'feeling,' on the directness of emotion . . . for me that's the only way I can guarantee my own sincerity and 'purity' of expression . . . ."

"But always with an eye on the 'market,' " I said with a smile.

His answer was a little bitter. Not much, he had it under control, but the bitterness was there.

"With the Sol devaluated and the cost of living rising at 15% a month I suppose you have to keep an eye on the market just to survive."

A Statement by Douglas M. Davis

The impasse we have now reached as critics goes much deeper than terminology. The dissatisfaction expressed on every hand by artists, younger critics, and the audience is symptomatic of more than cultural lag, though lag there is. In a time when art is ready to deny even that it is art, criticism retreats into itself. In a time when art opens out to embrace a universe beyond logic, criticism retreats to formal rhetoric. The best we seem able to do is play games with structures and viewpoints proper to the machine and not the computer age. The worst we do is indulge the childish needs of a society still hungry for judgments: the paradox of our time is that as we learn to soften the rigid categories of morality and legality, we harden our esthetics.

But there are clues to a new attitude in the making. Clues telling us that criticism must invade art as art is invading life. *"I am not interested in passing out grades to works of art,"* writes Susan Sontag. *In work like this,* pleads Dick Higgins, in behalf of Benjamin Patterson, Philip Corner, Allison Knowles, and Tomas Schmidt, *"where the technical skills required to do the best of the work are frankly replaced by skill in embodying ideas, is it asking too much that the people who will criticise this kind of work be, like the artist, at least somewhat skilled in handling these kinds of ideas?"* Here are the ideals that can start us

afresh. What we must do with this start is follow it relentlessly to its end.

Let the critic then not concern himself with judgment. As the artist has left content to the viewer, let us leave judgment. Let us no longer respond to these who ask us to play God. That is false flattery. The task of the critic is not to supply grades to what is essentially ungradable. One day we will see as clearly into this as we are beginning to see into experience itself. I would not hire a guide to follow me along the street and tell me whether this man is bad or that good. And yet this is exactly what the reader now asks the critic to do with works of art.

The task of the critic is to become art, as that of art is to become life. This insight in hand, all inhibitions, all habits forced upon us by the past vanish. The critic applies himself to that which interests him, not that which is Art. The critic applies himself to gas pumps, to airports, to high-rise apartment projects, to ghettos. Explain the ghetto and you explain me. Explain Rembrandt and you explain him.

Better yet, define the ghetto. To define that which the work **is** approaches art. Definition takes us out of the self into experience, whereas conclusion returns us into darkness. Formalist criticism had only this recommendation: it fixes on the outside, however misguided its motive for so doing. "If criticism is to exist at all," Cleanth Brooks writes then, "it must make judgments between good and bad." What Brooks supposes to be a clean, tough, scientific stance is the worst kind of romanticism. Its appeal to the critic is vicious. Fools imagine the making of judgments to be difficult, just as they imagine anything mechanical, like playing the piano, to be difficult.

In fact nothing is easier. My generation has been trained in the schools; we know how easy it is to act and to abide by a standard. What one generation imagines to be difficult, the other manages with a turn of the dial. Brooks insisted on making distinctions between this and that; we come to show that both are the same. I say definition is art. Judgment is nothing to me. I give it away, like Frost dispensed equality, on either hand.

And in this definition, no limit. Limitation — that is to say, the refusal to consider what is beyond art history — makes criticism laughable now. The critic laughs even at himself, turns sour and peevish, because he knows his method at base is fraudulent. We fear the critic at best, do not love or respect him. His status in our culture reflects old structures, an old sense of how the universe is made. He bows to the machine by specializing. But the computer has freed us all from specialization, freed us to know whatever we need to know. I contain my politics and my country beyond Leonardo. Let me not shut out what I know in the work of art for fear of violating the limits of tradition. The campus talks of the global village and makes itself into a little Europe. The critic cannot feed such tyrannies.

Let him speak, too, in the language right for the hour. There is no magic in words like *physicality, perception, autonomy, violence,* no evil in *funk, skin, grok.* Neither set admits precise definition; one is rich with contemporary connations, yes, the other not. I read Lucy Lippard on erotic art and her diction reflects *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity.* There is more than cultural lag here; there is a kind of fear.

The critic now must be art as art is life. To take that step is to begin building a sensibility. Everything he says is judgment. Let us leave judgment to the head as the artist has left content to the viewer.

A Note from Francis V. O'Conner, Director of Federal Support for the Visual Arts: The New Deal and Now.

For a research project designed to ascertain the cultural and economic effectiveness of New Deal patronage of the visual arts between 1933 and 1943, I would like to contact artists and administrators who worked in New York City and State on any of the government art projects. These p-ojects were: The Public Works of Art Project (P.W.A.P., 1933-34), The Treasury Section (1934-43), The Treasury Relief Art Project (T.R.A.P., 1935-39), and the W.P.A. Federal Art Project (1935-43). I am especially interested in corresponding with those who kept detailed records, diaries or letters which would provide specific data concerning the day to day operation of the projects and in any and all material and recollections which would throw light in the relationship between government and artist during the thirties.

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Madrid September 26, 1967 On the charge of writing against the state, Senor Arrabal told the court that his inscription did not include obscenities against "la patria" but against "la patra" a nickname for his cat, Cleopatra. The prosecutor, who asked for a sentence of 16 months' imprisonment, accepted that he had written "la patra" but claimed that he intended to imply "la patria". Arrabal is the founder of a surrealist theatrical movement known as *"El Panico"* and dedicated to *Pan.* He said: 'The book-signing ceremony was a *Panic* ceremony I was selling a *Panic* book dedicated to the god *Pan.*" Five *Panic* stories by ARRABAL, appear in the current issue 26 of TRANS-ATLANTIC REVIEW, together with erotica by PAUL ABLEMAN, fictions by THOMAS DISCH, LEONARD MICHAELS, MICHAEL GOLDSTEIN and ISHMAEL co-founder of the Orgasmic, Synergetic, and Geodesic community: DROP CITY, and many many more.

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ARTS IN SOCIETY is indexed in the *Annual International Bibliography* of the Modern Language Association of America, the June issue of *PMLA*.

The Wall of Respect

Appearing on the cover and throughout this issue are photographs of the Wall of Respect. It was created in the summer of 1967 as one of Chicago's newest landmarks by a group of black men and women, painters and photographers from the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC). The side wall of a slum building on the corner of 43rd Street and Langley Avenue became a mural honoring such blacks as W. E. B. DuBois, Muhammed Ali, Nina Simone, Theolonius Monk, John Oliver Killens, Malcolm X and many other Afro-American folk heroes loved and respected by the black community.

According to Lenore Bennet Jr., "the Wall marks a significant breakthrough in terms of black people instead of white people legitimizing black culture and black history."

The "Wall" appears to have succeeded in achieving the objective of its originators — to become a symbol linking black cultural leaders to the masses of black people.

The photographs were taken by KARIN DENISSEN