Yardbird Reader

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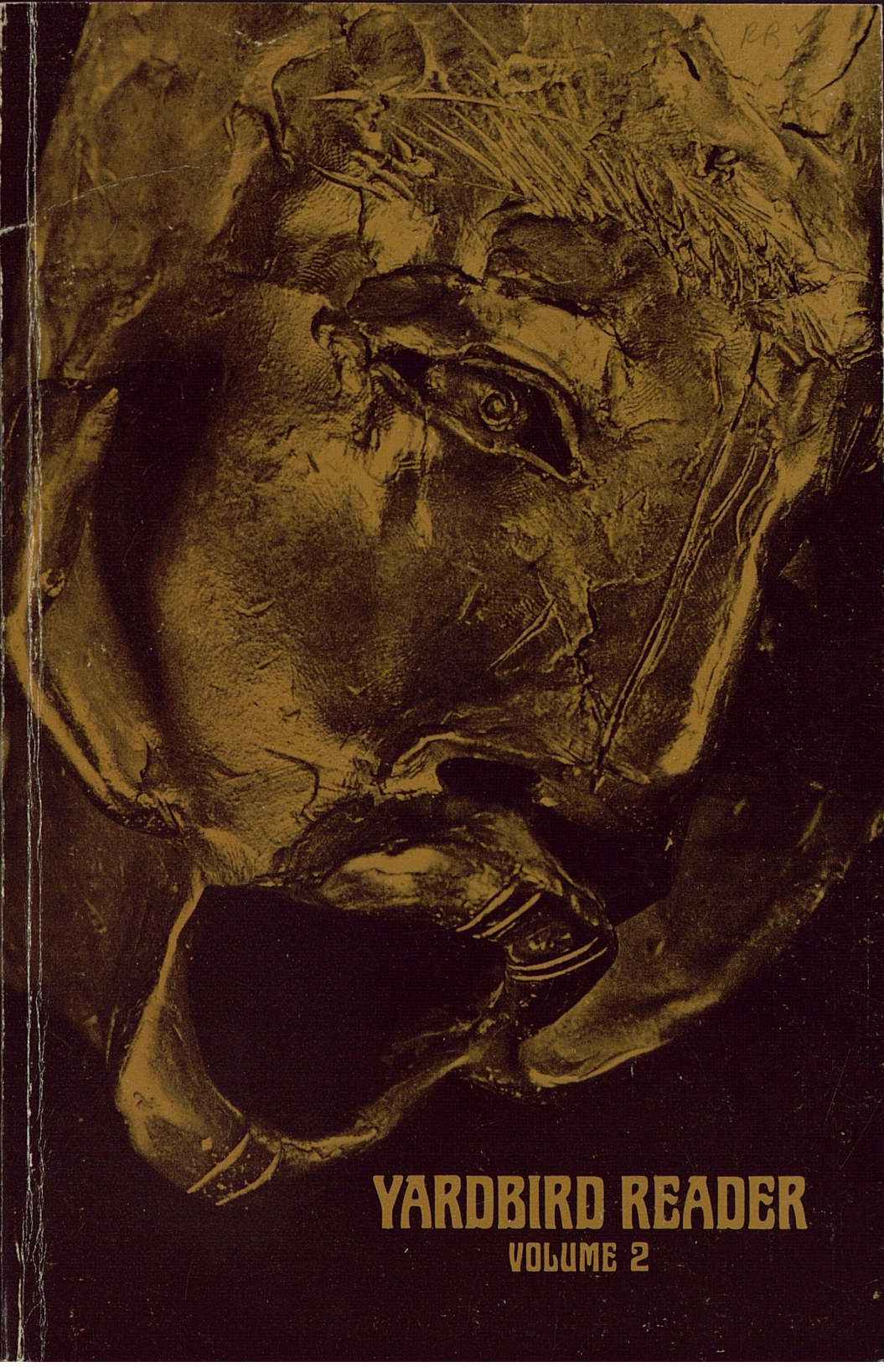

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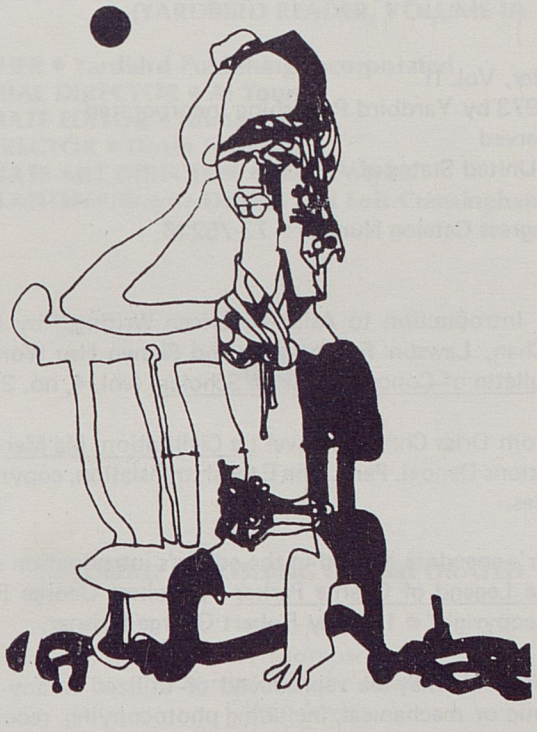
VOLUME II



Published by
YARDBIRD PUBLISHING COOPERATIVE
Berkeley, California

Yardbird Reader, Vol. II
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Printed in the United States of America
First Edition
Library of Congress Catalog Number: 73-75226

Yardbird Reader, Vol. II
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Library of Congress Catalog Number: 73-75226

"Aiieeeee! An Introduction to Asian-American Writing," by Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada and Shawn Hsu Wong originally appeared in Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars (vol. 4, no. 3, Fall 1972).

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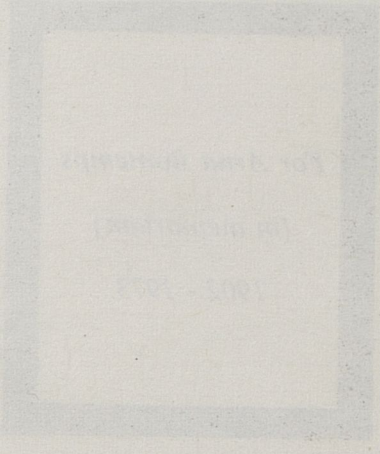
For Arna Bontemps

(in memoriam)

1902 - 1973



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around & around the brilliant yard

Lawson Fusao Inada

INTRODUCTION

During the last few months of his life which ended in 1955, Charlie Parker was daily in the company of Ahmed Basheer, an admirer who also happened to be a devout Ahmediyyan Muslim.

It is Charles Christopher Parker, acknowledged genius and legendary musician, known affectionately and universally as Bird or Yardbird, whose creative spirit and formidable accomplishments inspired the name of this biennial journal.

In Robert Reisner's book, *The Legend of Charlie Parker,* Basheer relates a haunting story about the mythical Bird that still flies around in the skies of many minds.

"One night," he says, "Red Prysock, the tenor player, and Charlie were playing a bowling machine game in the club, and when Red took his turn and did not make a particular brilliant shot, Parker exclaimed, 'Give it here. Let me show you how to play. I'm going to show you how to play this game! I can beat you at anything you want to play!' 'Anything, Charlie?' Red asked. 'Anything!' Bird replied. Red asked, 'Music too?' 'No,' replied Bird, 'that's something else. That's art,' as if to say that each man had his place and stature, that you could not say one was better than the other."

From its inception, *Yardbird Reader* has concerned itself with presenting vital and original work by writers and other artists whose talent, inventiveness and depth of imagination are unmistakably present even though their aesthetic and philosophical outlooks may vary.

Since the 1960s, the majority of active literary publications have tended to promote a particular kind of fiction, a particular kind of poem, essay, interview or book review. Like everything else in American society, the literary scene demands specialization and remains, to a large degree, polarized — Academic vs. Neo-Academic and Non-Academic, Political vs. Art for Art's Sake, Collectivist vs. Socialist, Cultural Nationalist vs. Pan-Africanist, Street vs. Straight, Male vs. Female, Middleclass vs. Everything Else. Bags fit so neatly inside one another that opposing permutations are infinitely listable.

One bag is clear, transparent, plastic. It's almost impossible to

speak seriously or, in any case, simplistically, about the Establishment or Avant Garde anymore. The spectacle of Richard M. Nixon, Chou En-Lai and Mao Tse-Tung uncle tomming up to one another must have been enough to give even the most air-conditioned supermarket Maoist second thoughts about the nature of geopolitical commitment.

Today's radical solution is tomorrow's radical problem.

Certainly all this is nothing new. Artists and intellectuals have never been much different from anyone else — laborers, office workers, Fuller Brushmen, dentists, pop stars, politicians, preachers, executives, gangsters — in their desire to align themselves with some going thing and to muscle a piece of the action.

The scene, like leaves or paper money blowing in a breeze, rearranges itself continuously. In our emerging worldwide commercial civilization, everything is geared to buy and sell. Sausage and auto, idea and cause — they all go the way of straw hats, peewee golf, Mister B shirts, Nehru jackets, the Hucklebuck, bomb shelters, existentialism, orgone boxes, beatniks, the Beatles and hairstyles unless they relate to the essential man or woman in a way that's spiritually timeless.

Art does not progress. Only efficient techniques of reproduction or distribution may be said to improve. Methods of indoctrination may also be included. In this regard, prehistoric cave paintings and contemporary poetry and music are on equal footing insofar as they express what's happening now: the how of who is here telling it.

Being human has always meant finding ways to externalize innermost thoughts, feelings and visions. The human spirit, precisely because it is ultimately indomitable in its quest to soar freely and at random, has always made politicians uneasy.

In preliterate cultures the so-called arts are integrated into every aspect of everyday life. It isn't surprising to find, for example, no word for art or artist in indigenous languages of Africa or America.

Tribal societies tend to view art — whether it takes the form of magic, incantation, poetry, song, dance, ceremony, handicrafts, work or ritual worship — as an integral aspect of the same process: the irreversible fact of being alive.

How can man or woman not sing or dance or fill the world with designs or replicas of their own cosmic vision?

Poet/novelist Ishmael Reed, editor of *Yardbird's* maiden issue,

writes in a recent poem that Duke Ellington may very well be ordered, under some future regime, "to compose more marches." He also speaks of a world in which "the public address system will pound out headaches all day long" and where everyone will be required to wear those same "funny caps" and "funny jackets."

Authoritarianism, even when it bears the rubbery stamp of the People or the Community, is nonetheless authoritarianism. We live at a time when self-appointed Black leaders meet with little resistance in setting up a censorship committee for the purpose of deciding whether or not any given socalled Black film is worthy of being shown to the impressionable audience for which it's presumably intended.

Imagine a similarly empowered White jury disallowing the showing of *Under the Yum-Yum Tree* or *The Godfather.*

Imagine some ad-hoc committee organized legally to prevent, say, comedian Jim Nabors from shuffling and twanging and jaw-rubbing his way through the White House, even pausing to lay a juicy photogenic slob on the President's hair-sprouting cheek. Afterwards he might brag about what a thrill it was to sleep in the Lincoln Room.

Every man must have the freedom to make either martyr or fool of himself.

Volume Two of *Yardbird Reader* features work by men and women from a variety of backgrounds: Afro-American, Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Colombian, Puerto Rican-American, Filipino-American, Franco-American, Anglo-American, North African, Kenyan, Carribean.

The short story writers, novelists, poets, essayists, interviewers, artists, photographers and translators who people these pages all have something meaningful to say. We're delighted that they've chosen to say it here.

The policy of revolving editorship was conceived with the idea of keeping our stream of published material fresh and alive and flowing.

I'm proud to have had a hand in assembling the present number which — like Cecil Brown's forthcoming Expatriate Issue and the Asian-American Issue that novelist-playwright Frank Chin is already editing — will hopefully continue to provide an outlet for the energetic and widely ranging voices and views of gifted artists, many of whom are new to print, in a format deserving of more than national attention.

"All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music," is

the way Walter Pater put it. This says a lot for music and perhaps even more for a 19th Century English novelist, essayist and critic.

Yardbird, striving to keep pace in language and thought with standards of lyricism and inventiveness set by its namesake, is alive and well and fully functioning in the darkening heart of the 20th Century.

— *Al Young*

BOOGIE SUNDAY

by

Al Young

(from the novel "Who Is Angelina?")

She woke up crying. The devil moon had turned into a devil sun and light was hurting her eyes.

Once when she was younger than young, her daddy'd told her that life was both too long and all too short and that she'd be surprised one day to find out what it was really all about. He'd said this seriously, snickering with a Pall Mall glued to his lower lip, parked, as usual when he visited her, in the dorm parking lot at Ann Arbor. He'd never come in. They'd drive around, snack at a drive-in and then sit like captives inside that Buick and talk the time away to curfew. Sunday was his visiting night and Sunday for her had always been the loneliest night of the week.

"Many a night, Angie," he told her, "you're gonna drink your drink and smoke and reach for the phone to call somebody and there wont be nobody to call — unless you ring yourself up." He'd laugh, coughing smoke. "And that's no kinda fun, now is it?"

She thought it peculiar at the time for him to come on that way. All she drank in those days was a lot of Pepsi and a little beer, and she never really smoked except at parties or with smoking friends to make some type of silly impression.

But time, time, time'd made all the difference in the world and, God, she'd grown sick of time and the world. Even sunsets over the Bay were no fun any more. She'd loved them when she first moved to San Francisco and thought they were poetic as hell, but slowly all the poetry in her seemed to be drying up. Sunsets, like most of the people all over the world, grew saddeningly predictable and, worse yet, boring. Once she'd read in a book on how to paint that the best way to paint a sunset was to turn your back on it and paint the objects and scenes that reflected it.

She'd dreamed she was walking alone by the Bay, happy to the blue skies nappy with cloud. But just as she was taking off her sandals to dip her naked feet in, the water vanished, evaporated the

way it does at low tide, and she ended up squishing around, walk hungry, in chilled mud. A male angel who somehow loved her (perhaps it was the ghost of a child she'd lost) flew down and nestled his feathery wings around her so comfortingly that she became aware in the dream that she was dreaming and never wanted to wake up. Feathers, the mud, herself — everything smelled sweet and she wanted it to stay that way forever. A trip was a trip but a voyage was something else again.

She woke up crying with that Sunday pang caught in her throat like a choking tear, Roland Kirk's inflated tear, and intuitively she touched a finger to her eyes. Its OK to cry in your sleep, she thought, so long as there's nobody around to make remarks about it. It wasn't like yesterday, waking up next to sweaty old Curtis.

"What's the matter, sugar?"

"How do you mean?"

"I mean, like, you woke up groaning and carrying on like you were coming up outta some dream about hell or someplace."

"Nothing's the matter."

"Then how come you made all those weird noises coming up outta sleep? I mean, you kinda had me worried there."

"What sort of weird noises did I make?"

"Oh, they were awful!"

"Awful? How?"

"I can't describe them really. I was laying here watching you, thinking about how funny it is to go to bed with somebody and they be one way and turn around and wake up with them and they're completely, well, different, you know."

She'd had enough of that. It was almost sweet to wake up all alone, in private, in her own bed with sunlight gushing through the upper portions of the window where the bamboo curtain didn't reach. Patterns danced on the walls; reflections of quivering tree leaves and passing traffic. She wasn't sweating like yesterday. She wasn't panicked.

Coolly turning her head to one side, she spotted her bra and bikini panties hung neatly over the back of a wooden chair. Where was her long dress? What'd she done with her shoes?

She felt tired but rested. What time was it? Had she been with anyone? Had she thrown up? Was this the Tuesday she had an interview at the department of employment? Hadn't Margo said something about driving down to Big Sur? Or was it up to Mendocino? Rationally, it could've been Saturday she was waking up to or Monday, but in her throat she knew it was Sunday and her whole body grieved for the hours.

Her mouth tasted sour and powdery.

What party had she been to?

What substances had she taken into her system?

What man had she let drag her home to die with and at what hour had he eased up, dressed, and tipped cleanly away?

This is no way to do it, she told herself. I've got to go away somewhere and think it all over again.

For breakfast she turned on the FM, fixed herself boiled eggs and toast with jam, and drank a tall can of beer.

From Scoot's kitchen window, she could look down on her own bedroom windown. Her lights were out and the bamboo shades were drawn but, just the same, she wondered whether he and Tanya had ever stood around in the dark of their place and peered for laughs down into hers. Once when she lived in New York on West 93rd Street, she'd look across the way and check out a middle-aged black couple, not unlike Scoot and Tanya, who fought all the time around the clock, pulling knives on one another, wrestling and screaming. Once or twice she'd gotten frightened enough to think of calling the police as she watched them set about doing one another in. She'd even flashed on the same thought when she'd first moved in next to Scoot and Tanya Harper on Grant Street, Berkeley, and heard them go into their traditional weekend knock-down-drag-em-out —

"Nigger, I know you weak-minded but you aint no good, aint never been no good and aint gon never be no good!" — but by that time Angelina was enjoying the absurdity of it all too much to want to interfere. Besides, the Harpers always made up and drank jubilantly after Tanya fixed a conciliatory meal.

"Baby, you wanna know somethin?" Angelina could hear Scoot grinning. "It aint nobody in the world can throw a meal in me as good as you can. This gumbo, these greens, these biscuits, these black-eyed peas — *mmmMMM!* And this here sweet potato pie! . . ."

Now here she was next door, up in their house, partying with them, the same people she'd always suspected of sniggling about her behind her back. "There go old Angelina Green with her little stuck-up black hincty self. Broad hang out with spooks, japs, chinamens, mexicans, honkies, jews and aint no tellin what all!"

Standing in the kitchen helping Tanya slice ham, she had to strain to forget the times she'd overheard this matronly brownskin lady tell her husband: "Sugar, if you think these here

dumplins is somethin — and this chicken and okry and cornbread and squash and buttermilk — just wait till all this good gin go to seepin on down and we get to boogie-woogin shonuff back up in there on the bed. I been savin it up for you all week, Scoot, and, now, you talk about *ready!*"

Tanya had a daughter by a previous marriage. She lived with them and her name was Etta Jean. As far as Angelina could figure, Etta Jean was in her late twenties and had also been married before but had never had children. Watching her drive up evenings, wearily dragging herself out of her car in her sad uniform, she'd easily pegged Etta Jean for a domestic. She felt sorry for her. She felt sorry for Tanya and for Scoot too. Mother and daughter, when they weren't working — Tanya cooked for a fraternity house — each took turns looking after Mama Lou who was Tanya's mother, an invalid they'd brought up from Louisiana to live out her last days with them. Angelina never saw Mama Lou but had often heard them speak of her and her eccentricities. For one thing Mama Lou got awfully finicky, even downright mean, if she didn't get her double shot of whiskey with sugar stirred in it three times a day. Etta Jean had told her this and it still cracked Angelina up.

"Thank you darlin," Tanya said, easing the ham slices onto a big serving plate with a fork and turning toward the dining room where all the food was laid out. Etta Jean was standing close by, talking with a fat man in mod clothes. Tanya broke in. "Etta Jean, baby, you see how nice Angelina been, helping me slice this meat into thin respectable-looking slices? Child, you better learn how to carve meat."

"I already know how to slice meat, Mama." Etta Jean was a little high and didn't like Tanya interrupting her conversation.

"You can tell me anything, but what if you get hold to a good man and he want you to carve him some meat?"

"What you say?" Etta Jean snickered, baring her teeth. "That aint no big thing, I'll *hunk* it off!"

The whole kitchen laughed.

The fat man Etta Jean'd been talking with laughed hardest of all. He'd been eyeing Angelina all along, giving her stupid blurry-eyed glances and winks. All she really wanted to do was mix herself another rum and coke and get back to her sofa seat in the living room by the window with the breeze and let her mind roll on. There were too many people in the kitchen generating hotness. All during the ham-slicing, this portly drunk got up in a fancy dashiki and an ascot had been getting on her nerves. He made her

think of old movies she'd seen on TV as a kid of Fatty Arbuckle; a black unfunny Fatty Arbuckle gone absurdly native. Maybe Etta Jean dug him but, to Angelina, he looked like a damn fool. Occasional drunk herself though she might be, Angelina didn't like drunks.

Before she could get away, Etta Jean asked her over to introduce her uncool friend whose name was Tolby Crawford. She stood there, like a captive simpleton while he ranted on about nothing — his Elektra 225, how much he spent on clothes, rent, good-timing, his government job. The joker was fifty if he was a day and had the nerve to part his hair down the middle and brag about what a good dancer he was.

Suddenly, spotting Scoot at the refrigerator door, the fool broke out into a number that seemed to even embarrass Etta Jean. "It's just like," he began, clearing his throat, "it's just like Franklin Delano Roosevelt say." Angelina knew he was signifying but she couldn't tell what about or why. She just didn't like being used this way. "If it just so happens you can't stand the heat, then get your nasty, stinky, sweaty, doofus-lookin Afro-American ass from out the kitchen! Aint that right, sweetnin?" Laughing at what he'd just said, the clown stuck his corny hand out for Angelina to shake or to slap. She wasn't sure which. She knew she wouldn't be staying at the party much longer.

Scott, who'd also just about had enough, rushed over and wedged himself in between them and, looking grizzlier than necessary, proceeded to get Tolby Crawford told.

"Look here, chump! Look here, Tolby! In the first place, you doin your act in fronta two young ladies I happens to be quite fond of — my daughter Etta Jean for one, and the other young lady's name aint Sweetnin. She my next door neighbor and we good friends. I believe in treatin my friends right, OK? Her name is Angelina, Angelina Green — Miss Green to you! In the second place, you got the thing ass-backward bout 'If you can't stand the heat, get outta the kitchen!' It wasn't Roosevelt put that out, it was Harry S. Truman and that's *all* he said. He didn't put in all that sneaky shit you slipped in with your signifyin self. Which brings me to the third place, and the third place is you been sloppin round back here layin into all my good Cutty Sark and Johnny Walker Red Label until you can't even walk straight no more — and just cause I ask you to go easy cause it's other folks that like to drink scotch too now here you come with your ass all up round your shoulders signifyin bout me bing stingy and doofus and every other old evil thing you can think of. Well, I don't play

that! I'm a hardworkin man down at the Chevy plant and when I gives a party, I *gives* a party, do you hear me?"

"Now, wait a minute," Tolby shouted.

"Unh-unh, aint no waitin no minute. It's my house you gettin drunk in and I'm doin the talkin. I don't know who in the hell you spose to be. You told me you was a frienda Jug and Patsy's else I'da never let your old whiskey-pootin butt in here in the first place. You treat my friends and relatives with sote type of respect or else take your wino manners back down on Seventh Street in Oakland or Sixth Street in San Francisco or wherever the hell you hang out! I aint nobody's sucker chump. You don't come up in my house insultin my people. Facta business, you owne everybody here a apology."

Angelina, who'd finally mixed her drink while Scoot was sounding off, tried again to break for the living room but this time it was Scoot who held up a hand to stop her.

The kitchen was silent and tense. The whole party, all the guests, at the sound of Scoot's voice, had stopped what they were doing and gathered in or around the kitchen doorway to watch and listen.

"Listen," Tolby Crawford blurted, a little pathetically, slurring his words. "I could go home right now and get my .44 magnum, stand your ass up next to a tree, pull the trigger and blast you *and* the tree away with one bullet and then turn around and organize me a defense committee to see to it I don't do no time."

Scoot laughed in the dude's face. Etta Jean laughed nervously, both eyes on her stepfather. Somebody had to grab Tanya and force a fork out of her hand.

Growing sick to her stomach, Angelina remembered that she'd been drinking rum and coke for a good two hours as though it were only coke. She'd even arrived with a hangover from last night. She couldn't stand this fatuous man who'd drawn so much cheap attention to himself. Her head was pounding.

"You wanna know something?" she told Crawford without so much as stopping to think.

"What's that, baby, you fine, foxy little sophisticated thing you?"

"You're repulsive."

"Repulsive?"

Stupid, sick, jive, bad-mannered, gross, and very corny."

Scoot moved in closer now as if preparing himself for the worst. "Come on, Angelina, I'll talk to the fool if you don't mind, aint no sense in you gettin mixed up in this."

"No, I mean it, Scoot, I mean every word. This is one aggravating corny Negro."

Crawford was trying to keep cool but it wasn't working. "Check yourself, pretty, I aint hit a woman yet but —"

The crowd shrieked, screamed and gasped and then fell silent as Scoot pulled the .32 from his inside jacket pocket. Some wisecracker way in back shouted, "Git down, Scoot, with your bad, bad self!"

Scoot leveled the barrel of the pistol at the dashiki'd belly of Tolby Crawford who, by now, was beside himself.

"I want everybody out the kitchen," Scoot shouted, "except for my wife, my daughter and Miss Angelina Green! Go on out and turn up the record player and keep on drinkin your drinks and eatin the food and enjoyin yourself. We got a little private business back here to take care of. Everybody out!"

Angelina, who'd never seen anything like this before in her life, was aware of a sizeable spurt of adrenalin spreading through her body, connecting with every nerve. Suddenly she felt soberer than she had in weeks. She wished she'd stayed home and read or watched television and turned in early. She wanted to be in San Francisco or New York at a quiet gallery opening, or in Paris chatting with talented Africans or expatriate Afro-Americans, or at sea in Barcelona cashing a Travelers Check at American Express to go out on the town with new-found friends. She wished — and all of this shot through her head in a flash — that she and Larry were together again, avoiding all outside hangups as they stumbled through and improvised a fun romance headed, as it turned out, nowhere.

"I want you to apologize to each of these young ladies personally," Scoot ordered.

Tanya, arms folded, was grinning.

Tolby Crawford, wide-eyed, back to the sink, hands held high in the movie-like air, was still clutching his drink. It was so quiet in the room that Angelina could hear the ice tinkling in his glass as he trembled. "Uhh . . ."

"*Uhh* nothin! I want you to apologize to the ladies and then apologize to *me* and then get your repulsive ass on outta my house quick. And if I ever hear tella you sayin *any*thing to *any*body about *any* of this, I'mo get a contract out on your sorry ass so fast you aint gon never know what hit you. I might joke but I don't play. I know a whole lotta outta-work hired killers from the old school that'll up and off they own mama for a hundred dollars

and a bottle — *bad* niggers, chump! And don't think I won't pay it and don't think they won't do a clean professional job!"

Apologies delivered, much to Angelina's discomfort, the offender was promptly sent packing. Scoot, .32 concealed in his coat pocket, even walked the fool outside to his car and stood watch while he started it up and roared away.

The party continued as though nothing had happened. Angelina wondered what she was doing here. It wasn't her crowd. The vibes were all wrong. Out of politeness, she danced to a couple of 45s with a necktied garbage man mostly to show Scoot and Tanya that she wasn't upset, but inwardly she'd had it.

"What you say your name was, honey?" Garbage Man asked.

He was a dark, wiry man with parted hair in his early 30s who was taking night courses at Berkeley Adult School to broaden himself. He really wanted to break into real estate. He was a good dancer.

"Angelina."

"Well, Angelina, you sure are down, baby. I could dig a smart little college girl like you."

"How you know I'm smart?"

"I can just tell by the way you buck them pretty little eyes. They so sweet and . . . well, I kinda like the way they slant. You got some Indian blood in you back there someplace, don't you?"

"Probably," she said, glad that the record would be over soon.

"Yeah, me too — Blackfoot, what else? — on my daddy's side. Where you from?"

"Michigan."

"Michigan? What part?"

"A little town called Milan, it's about 40 miles outta Detroit — farm country."

"You from Michigan, hunh? Well, I'm scared to tell you where I'm from. Yeah, no lie. But I can tell just by lookin at you you kinda on the smart side."

"Can you tell that I'm sleepy too?"

"Where you live? I'll drive you home?"

"I can . . . I can manage," she lied. "I got my own car." She excused herself, saying something about the bathroom. Once out of his sight, she made her way through the hard-partying crowd of working people to find the Harpers and dutifully thank them for a fun evening.

Tanya Harper gave her a tipsy embrace and said, "Slow down, Angie. Slow down, child. I been watchin you and you don't seem

to be doin so good these days. Tell you, it aint nothin you goin through that I aint already been through and aint nothin worth runnin your poor self into bad health. Slow down, hear?"

"Sorry about that outburst," Scoot told her.

"No big thing," she said, smiling, smiling. She smiled all the way out the front door.

It was her fifth straight night of partying and, for the first time all week, she hadn't ended up with some vague man to hold her close through the terrible night.

Boogie didn't get it.

Drink didn't get it.

Being around a crowd didn't get it.

She still felt that pang.

It was still Sunday in the world and there was nothing she could do about it.

POEM FOR YOU
by June Jordan

the complexity is like your legs
around me
simple
an entanglement
and strong
the ready
curling
hair
the brownskin tones of action
quiet
temporarily
like listening
serene
and
passionate
and
slowly closer
slowly
closer
kissing

inch by inch

LOURDES IS ON MOTT STREET?
By John A. Williams

Briefly stated, acupuncture is used to maintain or restore the Yin-Yang balance of the body; good health is the result of having equal amounts of both. There are twelve paired channels, six on each side of the body, and two midline channels on the front and back, seven of which are Yin and seven Yang. Interspersed along the channels are about 600 points, and the stimulation of any one of them will cause a change in the balance of the two forces. Apparently there has not been found a channel to the brain, so acupuncture has not as yet been utilized against mental illnesses.*

A lot is being written about the use of acupuncture as an anesthetic, but comparatively little about its use as a treatment, although in the People's Republic of China, and perhaps elsewhere, it is widely used for both purposes.

I began to have some interest in acupuncture three years ago when I read a book by Joshua S. Horn, an English surgeon who'd spent fifteen years in China working under the Communist regime. Since I follow the adventures of visitors here from outer space, as cited by various reports, I was struck by the bloodless and beneficial employment of needles inserted into the body. In *Interrupted Journey,* by Fuller, Mr and Mrs Barney Hill told of being examined inside a spacecraft with needles that did them no harm. Dr. Horn, whose book is called *Away With All Pests,* says that Chinese medicine probably got its start with the medical treatise believed to have been written by Huang Ti. Emperor Huang lived between 2698 and 2598 B.C. The paper, the *Nei*

**Editor's Note: According to San Francisco physician, Dr. Donald J. Kublitz, in a U.P.I. dispatch (May 2, 1973), there is a Hong Kong acupuncturist who has successfully treated heroin and opium addiction with the use of electric needles. He is Dr. H.L. Weng.*

Ching, first set forth the principle concepts of Yin — bright, or good, or healthful, and Yang — dark, or bad, or unhealthy.

Other so-called primitive societies long have operated under the philosophy of man's entire being maintaining a balance not only within itself, but with its exterior, nature. To speak of these "primitive" societies is to recall the numerous pieces of African sculpture in which nails line the body, and, as well, the style of body painting used by the Papuans of New Guinea: lines down the front and back of the body, those light lines interspersed with dots.

Putting all this together one could come to the conclusion that the primitives, perhaps with help from outer space, it is declared by a growing body of people, mostly without scientific platforms, used acupuncture for a long time before losing the skills through catastrophes, epidemics and other disruptive forces. Acupuncture has come back into widespread use in Mainland China, and on a much smaller scale elsewhere.

For twenty-one years I've had a disc problem with my back. From time to time the disc, located in the region of the sacro-lumbar, slips out of its appointed place, causing acute distress. I've worn braces (which haven't improved much over the years), taken enough pills for pain, from seconal to codeine and everything in between to have started my own pharmaceutical house. I've had to give myself vitamin B-12 shots as prescribed by a doctor in Spain where the disc slipped one day while I was playing handball. (Doctors didn't give the shots in Spain; you went to a drug store, but I didn't want hepatitis, so I decided that my wife would have to give them to me. She wouldn't. Each day coming back from the clinic where I had traction, heat and massage, the traction being a throwback to the rack of the Inquisition, I took a couple of shots of booze, dabbed my behind with Moustache and gave myself the shot. After I'd hit a nerve that left my buttock quivering like Jello, I quit.)

I have a collection of canes that was begun simply to have something attractive to lean on when my back went out, and I've slept on floors and boards often enough to appreciate being able to get back into a bed.

The recurrence of the old injury came about last December 31, 1971, while playing basketball with my four-year old son. I spent New Year's Eve on the floor, clutching a bottle of champagne, and hoping, as I always did, that my back would improve by

morning.

It wasn't bad in the morning, but I knew I'd have to be careful. During the next two weeks, it seemed to improve without benefit of medical consultation. Then it became worse, but the pain was not unbearable, so I waited and moved about gingerly.

The pain came and went for weeks and then, one April morning, I awoke in great distress and when I stood, I was listing at the old forty-five degree angle. I asked my doctor to give me the name of an orthopedist. I was already on my way to acpuncture but didn't know it. Over the years I've had several orthopedists, and none have done as much for me as the passing of time. But one tends to return to the familiar, so I did, begging like a junkie for something to kill the pain which had ballooned in my back.

The orthopedist's office was in the East 70's and the first visit, with X-rays, was $75. (I asked the X-ray tech if she normally gave black people a heavier dosage of roentgens than whites; she said no. For years X-ray techs have subjected blacks to heavier dosages because they were taught that blacks, having darker skin and heavier (?) bones, required them. Cancer rampant was the result.) There were always 20 or 25 people in the doctor's office and you run an hour and a half late as a rule, even though you've made appointments. On that first visit, the wait was so long that I had to lie down on the doctor's office floor. The doctor had one nurse, I learned during the course of many visits, one receptionist, one therapist, one X-ray technician, four or five examination rooms, and two accountants whose office was located in a corner of the complex. His was not an operation to inspire confidence.

However, I took therapy at $15 a crack, saw the doctor at $15 a smile, bought a heating pad, rested, took exercises (which seemed to aggravate the condition, so I stopped them), went back for progress checks, dropping bread all the way, as if it grew on privet hedges. I had no choice then. I couldn't sit at my machine for more than twenty minutes at a time, and it was altogether impossible to sit on anything soft. I slept with a pillow under the arch of my spine or under the backs of my knees. I couldn't drive unless I sat on a board. I was unable to pick up my son. After several visits, the doctor, seeing no sign of progress, ordered me fitted for a brace. That cost another $96. I was reflecting all the while that, in almost a quarter of a century, nothing had improved in the treatment of disc problems; the medication and therapy were exactly the same, and the brace was perhaps five or six ounces lighter. Only the medical fees had changed. They were higher.

Even so, it was not so much the money that sent me in search of

an acupuncturist as it was the realization that, for me, modern medicine was failing modern man. I suppose too, that the final straw was trying to reach the orthopedist for three days to find out how long or often I'd have to wear his brace.

The first doctor who practiced acupuncture did so only for demonstration and then only with old patients of his. Another advised me that acupuncture was useless in the case of bone damage. I was about to give up until I realized that the discs that rest between the vertegrae aren't bone, but cartilage. I persisted until I came up with a name: Huan Lam Ng, at 11 Mott Street.

Wearing my brace and accompanied by a friend who was interested in acupuncture as a possible treatment for bronchial asthma, I went to Huan's herb shop. He performs acupuncture in the back. About 30, Huan's speaking and comprehension of English isn't very good; neither is his wife's. I gave my medical history to his son over the phone and he translated back to his father who made notes in a little book. Huan, the certificates on the wall said, is a graduate of the Hong Kong College of Acupuncture and also is a chiropractor. I don't believe he is a doctor, although I've heard Caucasian patients call him Dr. Ng.

Huan told me to remove my brace and shirt. "Don't wear anymore," he said, pointing at the brace. He took one finger and placed it so precisely on a nerve in my side that it jumped; he did the same to the other side, and I was convinced that he knew his business. If I knew that much about where the nerves are, I'd sure be one helluva lover. Next he took my pulse in both wrists in several different places, for there is more than one or even two located in each wrist, and each pulse tells the acupuncturist something about your Yin-Yang balance. In all, Huan spent about five minutes on each wrist, and when he was finished he described almost precisely the amount of pain I had. He said acupuncture could help me.

Three different times during the course of this first visit, he asked about the regularity of by bowel movements, and each time I assured him that they were almost like clockwork. Then I removed my pants and shoes, and climbed upon his examining table face down. My friend took a chair at the head of the table.

I couldn't see Huan or his needles but, watching my friend's face and his eyes as they watched Huan's movements, I could see that he was impressed. Four needles were inserted, the first into the back and top of my right calf, then in the same place with the left. Two more needles were placed on either side of my spine in the region of the pain, and these I scarcely felt. The most discom-

fort I had, for there is very little and only momentary pain, less, say, than when receiving an injection, was in my right leg According to the orthopedist, that leg was not responding to the taps of his little rubber hammer. Huan manipulated the needles once, then again. Manually. I understand that electrically or electronically manipulated needles are in vogue in some parts of the world. Then he left us to go into the shop for about three minutes. When he returned, he removed the needles, rubbed something over the places where'd they'd been, blew on them. He then pressed the spine and moved out the kinks in the muscles. Treatment was over. Time elapsed, twenty minutes. The cost: $10.

"Touch toes," he said, when I was off the table, and I did. Without pain or strain. I bent backward, closing the vertebrae over the injured disc, squeezing it in a vise. No pain at all. Then I felt a quiet surge, a flowing, of well-being and of looseness. I could've fallen asleep where I stood. "No brace," he said again, "and no sour drink, eat." I stared at him for a moment because I suddenly realized that for months I'd been eating at least one and maybe two candy bars a week, as though my body knew something sweet was required to offset what must've been an overabundance of sour in my system, or, too much Yang.

My friend had leaped to his feet and unbuttoned his shirt, but Huan told him he couldn't help his condition with acupuncture. (The friend found another acupuncturist, this one an M.D. around the corner on Bayard Street, who is now treating him. Fee: $10.)

Huan told me to return a few days later and I went home, sat in soft chairs, lifted my son for the first time in months and handed my wife the brace. I don't know what happened in Huan's back room. Certainly I went to him, hoping for relief, but I also went to the orthopedist hoping for relief. Some friends have suggested that I either underwent some kind of self-hypnosis or Huan hypnotized me. I only know that I returned to Huan with more confidence in him than I'd ever had in the doctors.

The second time there I met another patient, an elderly Irish woman suffering with arthiritis. She too had given up on her doctor in favor of Huan. There were more people on my second visit, one of whom was a Chinese woman. Huan placed his three-to four-inch needles in exactly the same places, but I didn't have that surge of well-being I'd felt with my first treatment, and I must confess some disappointment. But my back continued to feel good and I was cautiously trying to gain normal use of it. He'd never

said that I should go out and do what I normally would. "You take it easy," he'd say.

I was not without twinges or flashes of minor pain during this time, but nothing like the ones I'd had before which kept me stiffened like a board. Huan had said I needed four or five visits at the least.

It was impossible not to notice how many more people were coming to Juan, and the regulars — didn't consider myself one of them — knew each other, joked with Huan and tried to help him with his English while some of them tried to learn Chinese from him. On my third visit, people were standing; the five chairs all occupied. Some of the patients limped or were on crutches; some were crippled with arthritis, some were ex-jockstraps. Some with bad backs were afraid to sit down for fear of being unable to get back up.

Huan opened his shop at 11 in the morning. On my first visit, arriving there at 11 precisely, I had been the first patient. On my second visit, I was third in line, and I had arrived at 11 again. On my third visit, arriving at 11, I was already fifth in line.

This time Huan placed the four needles thusly: two in the backs of my thighs, about midway up, and two in the same region near the spine. As with my first visit, I had the sense of being back in complete health, loose, almost euphoric. I wondered if there were times when he hit the points precisely, and others when he *just* missed them. It was impossible to have an enlightening conversation with Huan;his English just wasn't good enough. When all was going well, I imagined, his needles blocked off nerves coming from the brain on their return trip to the brain. This may be why there was no sensation when the needles were inserted near the spine. Without the pain, presumably being blocked off, the disc, in a short time, could then relax and rest normally between the vertebrae. And yet the mystery remains when you discover that the needles are placed just barely under the skin. Well, the nerves are everywhere.

On my last visit before going away for the summer, his little herb shop now like a Macy's aisle on the main floor at Christmas, Huan placed his needles in the backs of my knees and again near the spine. He discharged me conditionally, saying that I could come back if I was in the neighborhood, but told me to be careful and take it easy with heavy work.

That's easy enough to say. But if you summer in a remodeled 140 year-old house in the Upper Catskills, there are many things

to do, and not all of them light. So, moving ladders, gardening, repairing, lifting sandbags, I wore my brace and then removed it when the chores were done. I had twinges and twitches and sometimes woke up stiff, but there was no constant pain nor did I list to one side. There were days when I knew I did too much, but rather than pain, there was the ordinary stiffness when one does a bit too much.

In mid-July we returned to the city for a few days and I went for another "fix" as I'd come to call my treatments. In just 30 days, Huan's clientele, expanding when I left, seemed to have tripled. People from Down South, Montreal and Connecticut were there. You had to take a number, as you do in a bakery or butcher shop. As always, most of the people were over fifty.

On this day, the temperature in the 90's, I went in and one of the regulars told me to take a number. It seemed that Huan was now handling two people at a time and I wondered how. The back room was so small to begin with. As I waited, I noticed a wheelchair in one corner. About a half hour later an elderly woman came out, walking slowly and carefully, Huan holding one of her hands. The old woman smiled broadly as the regulars stood up and clapped.

She hadn't walked in five years. And she must've been a relatively new patient.

Huan smiled, too, proudly, although he is a modest, unassuming young man. See, he seemed to be thinking, See what I've done?

In the back, he had indeed enlarged his space and there were now two examining tables there, a sheet curtain separating them. His needles, after consulting his little book as usual, were placed behind the knees and near the spine again. There was no euphoria, just an awareness of the steaming, brooking New York heat.

"No much hard work," Huan said.

I said okay and hurried to find an air-conditioned cab.

I feel very good these days, after feeling so bad for so long this year. I work on the farm, lift my son, bend, play ping pong, row a boat, swim. Whatever the explanation, I'm content. Finally, if I can judge by the startling increase in Huan's clientele, people who are unwell are in the process of demanding good treatment, new treatment.

A patient revolution may be underway, and it's about time.

On Labor Day night my friend, Gabriel Motola, who was being treated by an acupuncturist for bronchial asthma, called to

tell me that the practice of acupuncture was about to be banned. He was outraged; I was outraged and, I guessed, thousands of other people as well.

We knew without a doubt that the medical organizations, which had failed so many patients to begin with, would do their utmost to stop the use of acupuncture. When *Newsweek* ran a cover story on acupuncture in August, I knew that banning could not be far behind. But, at that point, our information was still sketchy.

The next morning, Tuesday, September 5, there was a front page story in the New York *Times* which reported that, if the acupuncturists in Chinatown didn't close up their shops in two weeks, they'd face heavy fines. The action was brought by the New York state Department of Education and backed by an American Medical Association. Only two short months before the AMA had indicated that it was interested in a proposed study of acupuncture. This seemed to imply that it might at some point give the practice its guarded blessing.

Featured in the *Times* story was Huan Lam Ng — Dr. Ng as the *Times* reporter called him. He is a doctor, but is not licensed in the United States. The Department of Education considers the practice of acupuncture to be medical.

So, perhaps this ancient technique will have to be discontinued in the United States, at least until enough doctors learn how to do it and can then charge rates which the AMA will be glad to approve. In the meantime, the thousands of patients who were being helped in New York must return to doctors who've been able to do little or nothing for them. I've not heard of a single case where a patient was injured by acupuncture. There were many, of course, who complained that they had not felt 100 per cent better — but they were still hoping to, and still taking treatments.

As for me, I feel completely okay. But should I have trouble with my back again, I'll return to acupuncture. Should the ban stick, the practice of acupuncture may go underground, taking with it thousands of patients resentful of doctors, politics and medicine-as-money-maker.

I think the people in their clumsy, inarticulate way, have spoken for the use of acupuncture. No group or state agency can wish or ban that fact away. Perhaps we now face police raids on acupuncture parlors.

AIIEEEEE! AN INTRODUCTION TO ASIAN-AMERICAN WRITING

by
Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong

In the one hundred and forty year history of Asian America, fewer than ten works of fiction and poetry have been published by American-born Chinese, Japanese and Filipino writers. History suggests that in six generations of Asian-Americans there was no impulse to literary or artistic self-expression. The truth is that Asian-Americans have been writing seriously since the Twenties, and writing well, but haven't been published. America's stereotypes of "Orientals" were sacrosanct and no one, especially a "Chink" or a "Jap," was going to tell them no; that America, not Asia, was their home, that English was their language, and that the white stereotype of the "Oriental," good or bad, was offensive. What America published was, with rare exception, not only offensive to Chinese and Japanese-America, but was *actively inoffensive* to white sensibilities.

World War II signaled the supression of a Japanese-American writing movement that had been active since the late Twenties, and the sudden popularity of Chinese-Americans writing to encourage America to "assimilate her loyal minorities," as the dust cover to Pardee Lowe's *Father and Glorious Descendant,* states. The implied virtue of these first Chinese-Americans to reach mass print and enjoy a degree of popularity was that they were not serious or professional writers, and were therefore more sincere and honest than professionals. They were more manipulatable. The autobiographies of Pardee Lowe and later Jade Snow Wong were treated less as works of art than anthropological discovery. Indeed, the dust jacket to Lowe's book said that Lowe "enlisted in the U.S. Army shortly after delivering the

manuscript of this book," as if this patriotic gesture affected the literary worth of Lowe's book.

Much of Asian-American literary history is a history of a small minority being cast into the role of the good guy to make another American minority look bad. In World War II the Chinese were used against the Japanese. Today, Chinese and Japanese-Americans are used to mouth white racist clichés of the Fifties, as evidenced by a recent *Newsweek* magazine article (June 21, 1971) entitled, "The Japanese-American Success Story: Outwhiting the Whites," and the favorable reception of Daniel K. Okimoto's *American in Disguise,* and Betty Lee Sung's *Mountain of Gold: The Story of the Chinese in America.*

Betty Lee Sung's *Mountain of Gold* (1967) went through two printings of 7500 and in 1971 was issued in a paperback edition under the title *The Story of the Chinese in America.* Her's is the only book by a Chinese-American still in print, and further enjoys the distinction of being cited by scholars (*Forgotten Pages of American Literature,* edited by Gerald Haslam) as an authoritative source, supporting the age-old stereotype of Chinese-Americans being culturally Chinese and only monetarily white.

"There is nothing wrong with autobiography," writes Kai-yu Hsu in his introduction to *Asian-American Authors* (Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1972), "except when one realizes that the perceptions of reality revealed through these works seem to continue to confirm rather than to modify a stereotyped image of the Chinese and their culture." Part One of Virginia Lee's novel, *The House that Tai Ming Built,* consists mostly of the retelling of the legend of "the house that Tai Ming built." This narration is supposed to be from the Chinese point of view, but we find that the point of view is surprisingly white:

> *Grandfather Kwong continued: "To know why Tai Ming wore a queue we must go back in Chinese history, to the time when the Mongol Emperor Kublai Kahn and his successors ruled China for nearly a century in the Tuan Dynasty from the year 1230 until 1368 A.D., when they were driven out of power by the Chinese."*

Virginia Lee is the victim, so completely brainwashed that she sees no discrepancy between an old man from China talking about China in reference to the white Christian calendar. Yet she would be the first to jump up with a protest if John Wayne were to speak about Abraham Lincoln freeing the slaves in the Year of the

Dog. In the early novels, confirming the education of the white reading audience became an obsession to the point where writers like Virginia Lee obviously had to do a lot of research into things Chinese such as Chinese history, Chinese-American history, Chinese art, and Chinese opera — all from the white point of view. And the white point of view being that Chinese were "culturally superior." That the cultural superiority of the Chinese served white supremacy by keeping Chinese in their place is clear in the work of Jade Snow Wong and Virginia Lee. They both respond to racism silently and privately, not with action but with an attitude of a non-communicative cultural superiority that as a response is ineffectual:

The first thing Lin noticed as she stepped into the house of Mrs. Hayes was the wallpaper in the foyer. It was a lovely medallion design in pale yellow. She wondered if Mrs. Hayes knew that the ancient Chinese had invented wallpaper and that it was not until the fourteenth century that wallpaper was introduced into Europe.

This was not a first hand knowledge of Chinese culture, but it was being passed off as first hand knowledge. She paraphrases Chinese history as written by white and Chinese scholars.

Kai-yu Hsu correctly states that, "These largely autobiographical works tend to present the stereotype of Chinese culture as described in the connoisseur's manual of Chinese jade or oolong tea, and the stereotype of the Chinese immigrant who is, or should be, either withdrawn and stays totally Chinese, or quietly assimilated and has become unobtrusively American, exhibiting a model of the American ideal of the melting pot process."

An American-born Asian writing from the world he was born to, raised in, an Asian-American who does not reverberate to gongs struck hundreds of years ago, or snuggle into the doughy clutches of America hot to coddle something ching chong, is looked upon as a freak, an imitator, a liar. The myth is that Asian-Americans have maintained cultural integrity as Asians, that there is some strange continuity between the great high culture of a China that hasn't existed for five hundred years and the American-born Asian. Gerald Haslam in *Forgotten Pages of American Literature* perpetuates this idea:

. . . the average Chinese-American at least knows that China has *produced "great philosophies," and with that knowledge has come a greater sense of ethnic pride. Contrasted, for example with the abject cultural deprivation long foisted upon Afro-Americans, Asian-Americans have an inner resource: The knowledge that their ancestors had created a great and complex civilization when the inhabitants of the British Isles still painted their fannies blue.*

Thus, fourth, fifth and sixth generation Asian-Americans are still looked upon as foreigners because of this dual heritage, or the "concept of dual personality" which suggests that the Asian-American can be broken down into his "American" part and his "Asian" part. This explains Asian assimilation, adaptibility and lack of presence in American culture. This sustaining "inner resource" keeps the Asian-American a stranger in the country he was born in, and he is supposed to feel better off than the Blacks, whose American achievement is the invention of modern American culture. American language, fashions, music, literature, cuisine, graphics, body language, morals, and politics are what they are today, largely because of the Blacks. They have been cultural achievers, in spite of white supremacist culture, whereas, Asian-America's reputation is an achievement of that white culture — a work of racist art.

The overthrow of the Manchus, the Sino-Japanese War, World War II, the success of the Communist Revolution, and the Cultural Revolution are five major events resulting in a China the Chinese of a hundred years ago, the ancestors of fourth, fifth and sixth generation Chinese-Americans never saw and wouldn't understand. These new Chinese are emigrating to America. The assertion of distinctions between Chinese and Chinese-Americans is neither a rejection of Chinese culture nor an expression of contempt for things Chinese, as the whites and the Chinatown establishment would make them out to be. It's calling things by their right names. Change has taken place in China, in American Chinatowns and the world generally, changes that have been ignored and suppressed to preserve the popular racist "truths" that make up the Oriental stereotype.

It is the racist truth that some non-white minorities, notably the Asians, have suffered less and are better off than the other colored minorities. It is generally accepted as fact that Asians are well liked, and accepted in American society, that they have assimi-

lated and acculturated and contributed to the mainstream of American culture. There is racist hate and racist love. That is if the system works, the stereotype assigned to the various races are accepted by the races themselves as reality, as fact, and racist love reigns. The minority's reaction to racist policy is acceptance and apparent satisfaction. Order is kept, the world turns without a peep from any non-white. One measure of the success of white racism is the silence of the minority race and the amount of white energy necessary to maintain or increase that silence. The Chinese-American is told that it's not a matter of being ignored and excluded but of being quiet and foreign. It's only recently that we have come to appreciate the consequences of that awful quiet and set out collecting Chinese-American oral history on tape. There is no recorded Chinese-American history from the Chinese-American point of view. Silence has been a part of the price of the Chinese-American's survival in a country that hated him. That was what was the matter with the language. It was full of hate. Silence was love.

The failure of white racism can be measured by the amount and kind of noise of resistance generated by the race. The truth is that all of the country's attention has been drawn to white racism's failures. Everything that has been done by whites in the politics, government and education in response to the failure of white racism, while supposedly anti-racist, can be seen as an effort to correct the flaws, redesign the instruments and make racism work. White racism has failed to convince the Blacks that they're animals and failed to convince the Indians that they're living fossils. Nightriders, soldier boys on horseback, fat sheriffs and all the clowns of racism did destroy a lot of bodies, mess up some minds and leave among these minorities a legacy of suffering that continues to this day. But they did not destroy their impulse to cultural integrity, stamp out their literary sensibility and produce races of people that would work to enforce white supremacy without having to be supervised or watchdogged.

In terms of the utter lack of cultural distinction in America, the destruction of an organic sense of identity, the complete psychological and cultural subjugation of the Asian-American, the people of Chinese and Japanese ancestry stand out as white racism's only success. The secret lies in the construction of the modern stereotype and the development of new policies of white racism.

The general function of any racial stereotype is to establish and

preserve order between different elements of society, maintain the continuity and growth of western civilization and enforce white supremacy with a minimum of effort, attention, and expense. The ideal racial stereotype is a low maintenance engine of white supremacy whose efficiency increases with age, as it becomes "authenticated" and "historically verified." The stereotype operates as a model of behavior. It conditions the mass society's perceptions and expectations. Society is conditioned to accept the given minority only within the bounds of the stereotype. The subject minority is conditioned to reciprocate by becoming the stereotype, live it, talk it, and measure group and individual worth in its terms and believe it. The stereotype operates most efficiently and economically when the vehicle of the stereotype, the medium of its perpetuation and the subject race to be controlled are all one. When the operation of the stereotype has reached this point, where the subject race itself embodies and perpetuates the white supremacist vision of reality, indifference to the subject race sets in among mass society. The successful operation of the stereotype results in the neutralization of the subject race as a social, creative, and cultural force. The race poses no threat to white supremacy. It is now a guardian of white supremacy, dependent on it and grateful to it. In Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* the operation of the stereotype in the Japanese-American is clearly evident:

> *Although I had opinions, I was so overcome with self-consciousness I could not bring myself to speak. Some people would have explained this as an acute case of adolescence, but I knew it was also because I was Japanese. Almost all the students of Japanese blood sat like rocks during discussion period. Something compellingly Japanese made us feel it was better to seem stupid in a quiet way rather than to make a boner out loud. I began to think of the Japanese as the Silent People, and I envied my fellow students who clamored to be heard. What they said was not always profound or even relevant, but they didn't seem worried about it. Only after a long, agonizing struggle was I able to deliver the simplest statement in class without flaming like a red tomato.*

For the subject to operate efficiently as an instrument of white supremacy, he is conditioned to accept and live in a state of

euphemized self-contempt. This self-contempt itself is nothing more than the subject's acceptance of white standards of objectivity, beauty, behavior, and achievement as being morally absolute, and his acknowledgement of the fact that, because he is not white, he can never fully measure up to white standards. In *American in Disguise* (Weatherhill, Tokyo-New York, 1971), this self-contempt is implicit in Daniel K. Okimoto's assessment of Japanese-American literary potential:

> *. . . it appears unlikely that literary figures of comparable stature to those minorities like the Jews and Blacks will emerge to articulate the Nisei soul. Japanese-Americans will be forced to borrow the voices of James Michener, Jerome Charyn, and other sympathetic novelists to distill their own experience. Even if the Nisei of Bernard Malamud's or James Baldwin's talent did appear, he would no doubt have little to say that John O'Hara has not already said.*

The stereotype within the minority group itself, then, is enforced by individual and collective self-contempt. This gesture of self-contempt and self-destruction, in terms of the stereotype is euphemized as being successful assimilation, adaptation and acculturation.

If the source of this self-contempt is obviously generated from outside the minority, interracial hostility will inevitably result as history has shown us in the cases of the Blacks, Indians and Chicanos. The best self-contempt to condition into the minority has its sources seemingly within the minority group itself. The vehicles of this illusion are education and the publishing establishment. Only five American-born Chinese have published what can be called serious attempts at literature. We have already mentioned Pardee Lowe, Jade Snow Wong, Virginia Lee, and Betty Lee Sung. The fifth, Diana Chang, is the only Chinese-American writer to publish more than one book-length creative work to date. She has published four novels and is a well known poetess. Of these five, Pardee Lowe, Jade Snow Wong, Virginia Lee and Betty Lee Sung believe the popular stereotypes of Chinese-Americans to be true and find Chinese-America repulsive and don't identify with it. They are "exceptions that prove the rule." In an interview taped by Frank Chin in 1970, Virginia Lee said, ". . . so in other words, you want the white population to start thinking of Chinese other than being quiet, unassuming, passive, etcetera, right? That's what you want, huh?"

"I don't want to be measured against the stereotype anymore," answered Frank Chin.

"But," she said, "you've got to admit that what you call the stereotype does make up for the larger majority of Chinese-Americans. Now I've seen that in school (Virginia Lee is a school teacher). I think it behooves all minorities, Blacks, Chinese, what-not, not to feel so insulted so fast. It's almost a reflex action."

Frank asked her if she would continue to write about Chinese-America. She said, "I wouldn't want to go on a Chinese, you know, American conflict like that again. I don't want to do another one."

"Why? he asked. "Was it difficult?"

"It wasn't difficult," she said, "but very candidly now, this might not even . . ." She took a deep breath. "I just don't think it's that interesting."

And Jade Snow Wong on Chinese-America as it exists here: "The American-Chinese I grew up with, in high school, out of forty or fifty . . . none of them went to college. We're not friends now." Jade Snow Wong, Virginia Lee, Pardee Lowe and Betty Lee Sung are all of the first generation to go completely through the public school system. The preceeding generations were barred, by law, from attending public schools. Their parents went to segregated mission schools, if they went to school at all. Diana Chang lived from infancy to her early twenties in China.

Of these five, four were obviously manipulated by white publishers to write to and from the stereotype. Of these four, three do not consider themselves to be serious writers and welcomed the aid of editors, as Jade Snow Wong describes in this interview:

"Elizabeth Lawrence was the one who asked me to write it. And the other one was Alice Cooper, who's dead now. She was my English teacher at City College."

Frank Chin asked her, "What did their help consist of?"

"Oh, Elizabeth Lawrence, you know, she said, 'I want a story,' or something. Then I wrote up maybe three times as long as what finally came out in the book. I sent it to her and she went through it and said, 'ten twenty, thirty pages, this may be necessary for the writer to write, but it's not necessary for the reader to read.' So then she took parts out. And then I took what was left of the manuscript and went to Los Angeles to see Alice Cooper who helped me bind it together again."

"You think this is right? Are you happy with the book?"

"I finally got to read it the second time about two or three years

ago. It reads all right. Some of the things are missing that I would have wanted in, then, you know, it's like selling to Gumps or sending to a museum. Everybody has a purpose in mind, in what they're carrying out. So, you know, you kind of have to work with them. If this is what they want to print, and it's the real thing. I mean they didn't fabricate anything that wasn't so."

This was the talk of a good businesswoman, not a serious or very sensitive writer. Chin asked, "But you feel things were left out?"

She matter-of-factly expressed an acceptance of her inferiority as if it were a virtue. "Oh, maybe they were too personal, you see. I was what? Twenty-six then. And, you know, it takes maturity to be objective about one's self."

The construction of the stereotype began long before Jade Snow Wong, Pardee Lowe, Virginia Lee and Betty Lee Sung were born within it and educated to fulfill it. It began with a basic difference between it and the stereotypes of other races. The white stereotype of the acceptable and unacceptable Asian is utterly without manhood. Good or bad, the stereotypical Asian is nothing as a man. At worst, the Asian-American is contemptible because he is womanly, effeminate, devoid of all the traditionally masculine qualities of originality, daring, physical courage and creativity.

The mere fact that four out of five American-born Chinese-American writers are women reinforces this aspect of the stereotype. The fact that four of these writers, the four autobiographers, completely submerge and all but eradicate all traces of their characters in their books. Sung, by writing almost exclusively about "cases I heard of," and what happened to "an acquaintance of mine," and Wong by writing about herself in the third person, further reinforces the stereotypical unmanly nature of Chinese-Americans. Virginia Lee's novel, *The House that Tai Ming Built,* depicts a Chinese-American girl, for instance, who's just too much for the wishy-washy boys of Chinatown and falls in love with an "American," meaning "white," man.

The Chinatowns of Jade Snow Wong and Virginia Lee and Pardee Lowe differ starkly from the drab, even boring Chinatown described in Louis Chu's novel *Eat a Bowl of Tea.* In *Eat a Bowl of Tea* you have the first Chinese-American novel set against an unexoticized Chinatown, the kind of Chinatown that has been duplicated wherever large numbers of Chinese emigrants settle, basically a bachelor society, replete with prostitutes and gambling, existing as a foreign enclave where the white world

stands at an officially described distance, where Chinatown and its inhabitants are tributaries to a faceless and apathetic authority. Published in 1961, one can imagine the reception of such a work by a public so fully grounded in the machinations of family associations, picture brides and a reminiscence for a China that no longer exists. From Lin YuTang's euphemized portrait of Chinatown to C.Y. Lee's imported apothecary of ginseng and tuberculosis, the white reading audience has been steeped in the saccharine patronage of Chinatown culture.

Chu's portrayal of Chinatown is an irritating one for white audiences. The characters in this book are not reassured by the pervasive influence of the kind of Chinatown that we see in the autobiographies and pseudo-novellas of Wong, Lee and Lin. The kind of Chinatown that the characters are secure in is a Chinatown devoid of whites. It is a Chinatown that we are familiar with — filled with vulgarity and white whores, who make up for the scarcity of Chinese women. In the same way that Chu's Chinatown holds the white reader at a distance, his characters speak a language that is offendingly neither English nor the idealized conception that whites have of a "Chinaman's tongue" — the pseudo-poetry of a Master Wang in *Flower Drum Song* or a Charlie Chan. Witness:

"Go sell your ass, you stinky dead snake," Chong Loo tore into the barber furiously. "Don't say anything like that! If you want to make laughs, talk about something else, you troublemaker. You many-mouthed bird."

The manner and ritual of address and repartee is authentic Chinatown. Chu translates idioms from the Sze Yup dialect and the effect of such expressions on his Chinese-American readers is delight and recognition. Chu's unerring eye and ear avoids the cliché, the superficial veneer and curio-shop expressions. He knows Chinatown people, their foibles and anxieties, and at once can capture their insularity as well as their humanity:

In a homogeneous community like Chinatown, people spent most of their free time in the shops, sipping tea or coffee, just talking with their friends. Each had his own favorite spot. The coffee shop. The corner candy store. The barber shop. The steps in front of the Chinese School. With rent collector Chong Loo, it was the Wah Que Barber shop and Money Come.

"Hey, do you know that Wah Gay's daughter-in-law has a big belly?" Chong Loo announced the next time he showed up at the Wah Que Barber Shop. He eased himself into the first chair.

"You dead man, don't be making up stories now," admonished Ah Mow, his hands temporarily stilled. After a moment, as if by habit, his right hand began manipulating the scissors again, though they were not touching Chong Loo's hair. "Wow, your mother," he continued, "don't go around pulling off your big gun or I'll clip off your ear."

"Wow your mother," retorted Chong Loo. "Go ahead and try if you want to die. Cut if off and see how many pennies per four liang you would make." The scissors kept clipping at the air, close to Chong Loo's ear. "You sonovabitch, what do you know what's going on? All day long you stay here and work on your scissors . . . chop . . . chop . . . chop. If what I say is not the truth do you think I would tell it. Last week I saw her with my own eyes. She was coming out of the grocer's on East Broadway . . ." He paused to peer at himself in the wall mirror. "She looked to me like she has a big belly."

"Wow your mother, maybe she's getting fat," Ah Sing laughed. "But I thought you said the husband is no can do."

"You can go sell your ass. When someone talks about a hammer, you talk about a chisel."

The self-contempt deals in part with the assertion of our manhood. The survival of Chinatown was always threatened because there were few women. To readers familiar with this sensibility, Chu's description is enough to suggest this depressing atmosphere in Chinatown, the loneliness and frustration of men separated from their women. The main concern of course is the perpetuation of the family name. In Chu's novel, Ben Loy must be a man and to practice his manhood, be a husband and father. Chu's Chinatown is a world where the practice of Chinese manhood is constantly frustrated and never satisfying.

Among the old, this frustration is exhibited in self-deprecation, indulging in sexual innuendo, underscoring the hopelessness of their situation. For both the fathers and their sons, there are only white prostitutes, which is humiliating and unsatisfactory. Ben Loy's impotency is more than sexual im-

potency. In a society that views humiliation as an instrument of social control, competition is based on self-contempt. One competes to become better based on the assumption that one is no good to begin with. Ben Loy has won Mei Oi, but in his own mind does not deserve her. This picture of a predominately male Chinatown is unique in Chinese-American literature. Historically. Chinatowns were predominately male. Chinese families like those described in Jade Snow Wong, Virginia Lee and Pardee Lowe's books were rare. In these better known works, the frustrated bachelors of Chinatown comprised the majority of the Chinatown population, are symbolically rejected or totally ignored.

Japanese-American writing has only recently accepted the concept of the dual personality. In Chinese-America, due to the reign of the concept of the dual personality that dictates that culture in this country is white, to write meant becoming white and thus rejecting, and being rejected by the community. Daniel Okimoto's *American in Disguise,* of all the Japanese-American book length works, unquestioningly accepts the concept of the dual personality and makes it central to the work. Significantly, though Lawson Inada also published a book in 1971, one that ignores the concept. Okimoto's book has been favorably reviewed by the nation's press, while Inada's book of poetry, the first book of poetry published by an American-born Japanese-American, has been ignored, and the reviews of his work when submitted to metropolitan newspapers, have been rejected. The works of Japanese-American writers Toshio Mori (1949), John Okada (1957), Mine Okubo (1946), and Lawson Inada (1971) all see through the phoniness of the concept of the dual personality and reject it. Even Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (Atlantic-Little Brown, 1953) rejects this concept in spite of the publisher's blatant attempt to emulate Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (Harpers, 1950) and capitalize on that book's success.

"Although a 'first person singular' book, this story is written in the third person from Chinese habit." Thus Jade Snow Wong, in her Author's Note, immediately gives herself to the concept of the dual personality. George Sessions Perry, on the book's dust jacket, both accepts the concept of the dual personality and accidentally hints at its debilitating effect on the individual, if not its phoniness:

Here is the curious dissonance of a largely Americanized young lady seeing her purely Chinese family from both her and their points of view.

The suggestion is that the "dissonance" arises from her being a "largely" but not completely Americanized "young Chinese girl." The "dissonance" that thrills, bewilders and charms Perry is built into the concept of the dual personality that controls his perception of Asian-America and does not arise naturally from the Asian-American experience is dramatized clearly in Monica Sone writing of her attending public school in the daytime and Japanese school (Nihon Gakko) in the afternoon:

Gradually I yielded to my double dose of schooling. Nihon Gakko was so different from grammar school I found myself switching my personality back and forth daily like a chameleon. At Bailey Gatzert School I was a jumping, screaming, roustabout Yankee, but at the stroke of three when the school bell rang and the doors burst open everywhere, spewing out pupils like jelly beans from a broken bag, I suddenly became a modest, faltering, earnest little Japanese girl with a small, timid voice.

The concept of the dual personality was forced on her from without. Social pressure and education make her both Japanese and American. From her own experience, she is neither:

Mr. Ohashi and Mrs. Matsui thought they could work on me and gradually mold me into an ideal Japanese ojohsan, *a refined young maiden who is quiet, pure in thought, polite, serene, self-controlled. They made little headway, for I was too much the child of Skidrow.*

She declares herself a "child of Skidrow," and a "blending of East and West." For the Nisei authoress, this was a fatal mistake, in terms of sales and popularity. The concept of the dual personality and conflict between the two incompatible parts are central to Wong's work, as it is with the work of all Chinese-Amerianns, except Diana Chang. *Fifth Chinese Daughter* has gone through several paperback editions in the United States and England. It has been published in several languages and is critically and financially the most successful book ever produced by a Chinese American.

Unlike Chinese-America, Japanese-America produced serious writers who came together to form literary-intellectual communities. Through the Thirties and Forties Japanese-American

writers produced their own literary magazines. Even in the internment period, Japanese-American literary journals sprung up in the relocation centers and, during this, one of the most trying and confusing periods of Japanese-American history, their writing flourished. In the pages of TREK and ALL ABOARD, and the magazines and newspapers of camps around the country, Japanese-American English was developed and the symbols of the Japanese-American experienced codified by writers like Toshio Mori, Globularius Schraubi, poet Toyo Suyemoto, artist Mine Okubu, and Asian-America's most accomplished short story writer, as of this writing, Hisaye Yamamoto. In spite of the more highly developed literary sensibility and literary skills of Japanese-America, the general belief is that Chinese-America is more literate. It is true that until very recently after a spate of Japanese-American publications, much of it commissioned by Japanese-American community organizations, more books by Chinese-Americans had been published than by Japanese-Americans.

No-No Boy (Charles Tuttle, 1957) is the first and, unfortunately, the last novel by John Okada. At the time of his death in 1971 he was planning a new novel on the Issei and the immigration from Japan to America. As it stands, this novel is the first Japanese-American novel in this history of American letters and the second book to be produced by a Seattle Nisei in the Fifties (the other was Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* published in 1953). Some scholars of Asian-American literature have said that *No-No Boy* cannot be considered to have any literary value, but is worth reading as a fairly accurate representation of the emotional and psychological climate of Japanese-Americans at a certain period in history. As a social history, these critics say, not as literature, Okada is worth reading.

The distinction between social history and literature is a tricky one, especially when dealing with the literature of an emerging minority sensibility. The subject matter of minority literature is social history, not necessarily be design but by definition. And if the sensibility is a new one that has not been communicated and tried with any frequency before, the terms of that sensibility, the terms of the experience, or the people and the tradition that begat and bred this work are unknown except as manifest in this work. There is no reference, no standard of measure, no criterion.

So by its own terms, Okada's novel invented Japanese-American fiction full blown, was self-begat, arrogantly inventing its

own criterion. There were several criteria, none of them white criteria with their implicit whie supremacist stands, their patronizing, cultural imperialist "universal" that would reduce all non-white writing to a checklist of emotions, situations and pithy saying rendered in quaint and bad English that have analogs in one liners babbled by Christian thinkers and other enunch supremacists.

The minority writer works in a literary environment of which the white writer has no knowledge or understanding. The white writer can get away with writing for himself, knowing full well he lives in a world run by people like himself. At some point the minority writers is asked for whom he is writing and in answering that question must decide who he is. In Okada's case, being Japanese or American would seem the only options, but he rejects both works on defining Nisei in terms of an experience that is neither Japanese nor American. Okada's hero, embodying his vision of the Japanese-American cannot be defined by the concept of the dual personality that would make a whole out of two incompatible parts. The hero of the double and hyphenated "No" is both a restatement of and a rejection of the terms "Japanese-American" — "No" to Japanese and "No" to American.

The question of point of view is only partially stylistic in the case of minority writing. It has immediate and dramatic social and moral implications. As social history, the mere gesture of Japanese-American writing is significant. Then the question of control follows, that is, what forces are operating and influencing the writer and how aware of them is he? Specifically, how does he cope with, and reflect, prevalent white and non-white attitudes of the period? How is he affected by the concept of the dual personality? Christianity? How does he define the relationship between his own race, the other minorities, and the white race? And when dealing with Asian-American writing, a question must be asked of Asian-American writing because so little of it exists; how seriously committed to writing and his point of view is this writer? And if, as is too often the case, the writer is no writer at all, by his own admission, the question of white publisher and editor manipulation is raised, usually after the answer has become obvious.

So the serious Asian-American writer, like any other minority writer, who works with the imperatives and universals of minority experience and applies them to his work, is treated as a quack, a witch doctor bughouse prophet, an entertaining fellow, dancing the heebie jeebies in the street for dimes. Okada wrote his novel in

a period all but devoid of a Japanese-American literary tradition above ground. There were only three predecessors, a book of short stories, Toshio Mori's *Yokohama, California* (1949), an autobiography, *Nisei Daughter* (1953), and the short stories of Hisayie Yamamoto. Okada's novel was an act of immaculate conception, it seemed, producing from nowhere a novel that was by any known criterion of literature so bad that Japanese-American literary critics ignored the book or dumped heavily on it, loaded up again and dumped on it again. An instantly forgotten work, *No-No Boy,* as evidenced by the fact that fifteen years after its publication, the first edition of 1500 copies has not sold out.

The critics have forgotten that the vitality of literature itself stems from its ability to codify and legitimize common experience in the terms of that experience, to celebrate critically life as it's lived. In reading Okada or any other Asian-American writer, the literary establishment, the word-pros putting around the tried and true whiteness, have never considered the fact that a new folk in a strange land would experience the land, come into new sensibility and develop new language out of old words, and that they would grunt up new words in old syntax twisted new to communicate the specifics and nuances and wonders and the stuff of life as it was ordered and made real in the new sensibility. Strangely, the critics accept this as given in science fiction stories of new planets in the future, and even the notion that the cultural clash produced by future overdoses of mass media will make new folks and new languages is accepted, as evidenced by the critical success of Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* in the Sixties, funnytalking Flash Gordon of the funny name in the TV Fifties, Buck Rogers and *The Wizard of Oz* in the Thirties, and, a few years before that, the science fiction of languages, nations and life styles changing for no other reason than that Jesus Christ didn't get along with people in high places.

The critics were wrong in calling Toshio Mori's language "bad English," as William Saroyan did in his introduction to Mori's book, *Yokohama, California:*

> *Of the thousands of unpublished writers in America there are probably no more than three who cannot write better English than Toshio Mori. His stories are full of grammatical errors. His use of English, especially when he is most eager to say something very good, is very bad. Any high school teacher of English would flunk him in grammar and punctuation.*

The critics were also wrong in ignoring or being too embarrassed by Okada's use of language and punctuation to deal with his book at all. The assumption that an ethnic minority writer thinks in, believes he writes in, or has ambitions toward writing, beautiful, correct and well-punctuated English sentences is an expression of white supremacy. The universality of the belief that correct English is the only language of American truth has made language an instrument of cultural imperialism.

The minority experience does not yield itself to accurate or complete expression in the whiteman's language and way of speech, yet the minority writer, specifically the Asian-American writer, is made to feel morally obligated to write in a language produced by an alien and hostile sensibility. His task, in terms of language alone, then is to legitimize his, and by implication, his people's sensibility as white, codify his experience in the form of prior symbols, cliches, linguistic mannerisms, and a sense of humor that appeals to whites because it celebrates Asian-American self-contempt. Or his task is the opposite, namely; to legitimize the language, style, syntax of his people's experience, codify the experiences and sensibility common to his people into symbols, cliches, linguistic mannerisms and a sense of humor that emerge from an organic familiarity with the experience.

The tyranny of language continues even in the instruments designed to inject the minority sensibility into the mainstream. Virtually every anthology of Third World writing containing Asian-American sections confuses Chinese from China with Chinese-Americans, conveniently ignoring the obvious cultural differences, and feature Chinese writers from China, C.Y. Lee and Lin Yutang who, being born and raised in China, are secure in their Chinese culture, and unlike Chinese-Americans, are Chinese who have merely adapted to American ways, and written about Chinese-America as foreigners. Their work inevitably authenticates the concept of the dual personality. However, their being Chinese precludes their ability to communicate the Chinese-American sensibility. The other Chinese-American writers collected in this new splash of anthologies most often include Jade Snow Wong and Pardee Lowe, who also reinforce the stereotype. They were educated by the stereotype to the role. Lowe's book, *Father and Glorious Descendant,* came out in 1943. The dust jacket revealed the racist function of the book, saying that *Father and Glorious Descendant* "is a timely document at a moment when America must learn how to assimilate its loyal minorities."

The deprivation of language in a verbal society like this, for the Chinese and Japanese-American, has contributed to: (1) the lack of a recognized Asian-American cultural integrity (at most, native-born Asian-Americans are "Americanized Chinese or Japanese") and (2) the lack of a recognized style of Asian-American manhood. These two conditions have produced "the house nigger mentality," under which Chinese and Japanese-Americans accept responsibility for, rather than authority over, the state language, accept dependency. A state of dependency encouraged by the teaching of English and the publishing establishment.

John Okada writes from an oral tradition in a verbal language he hears all the time, and talks his writing onto the page. Here is Japanese-American tradition in print. To judge Okada's writing by the white criterion of silent reading of the printed word is wrong. Listen as you read Okada or any other Asian-American writer. Okada changes voices and characters inside his sentences, running off free form but shaping all the time, and these voice changes grate against the white tradition of tonal uniformity and character consistency, but more accurately duplicate the way people talk and carry on: "a bunch of Negroes were horsing around racously in front of a pool parlor." There is a quick change act here between "horsing around" and "raucously" and "pool parlor" that is right. The style itself is an expression of the multivoiced schizophrenia of the Japanese-American compressed into an organic whole. It's crazy but not madness.

John Okada's work is new only because whites aren't literate in the Japanese-American experience, not because Okada has been up late nights inventing Japanese-American culture in his dark laboratory. And though he presents an ugly vision of America in which Japanese-Americans wander stupified with self-contempt, then over-compensates with despairing wails of super-patriotism, his book cannot honestly be dismissed as an operatic cry of self-pity nor a blast of polemic. Yet the book has been ignored if not by whites then by Japanese-Americans fearful of being identified with Okada's work. Charles Tuttle, the publisher of *No-No Boy,* writes in a letter, "At the time we published it, the very people whom we thought would be enthusiastic about it, mainly the Japanese-American community in the United States, were not only disinterested but actually rejected the book."

Depression, despair, death, suicide, listless anger and a general tone of low key hysteria closed inside the grey of a constantly overcast and drizzling Seattle pervade the book. Definitely not

the stuff of a musical. There is at the same time something genuinely uplifting and inspiring about this book — at least for Asian-American readers. The book makes a narrative style of the Japanese-American talk, gives the talk the status of a language, makes it work and styles it, deftly and crudely, and uses it to bring the unglamorous but more commonly lived aspects of Japanese-American experience into the celebration of life. The style and structure of the book alone suggest the Japanese-American way of life of a specific period in history. All in all, there is nothing arcane or mysterious about why this book satisfies, and through all its melodramatic gloom, cheers the blood to running warm. This is a new literature, one for which the experience and the people have already been tried and want nothing but the writing and the reading. This isn't an attempt to appeal to old values, translate life into a dead language, or an attempt to drive whites into paroxysms of limpid guilt, or an effort to destroy the English language.

Ichiro, the *No-No Boy* of the title, is a Nisei who refused to be inducted into the armed forces during the war and chose prison instead. The novel opens with Ichiro's arrival in Seattle, home from two years in prison. He has come home to a mother who's so convinced that Japan has won the war that she refused to send money or goods from the family store to relatives writing from Japan, begging for help. Ichiro's father is an alcoholic, his younger brother, Taro, drops out of high school to join the army to make up for the shame of Ichiro's being a "no-no boy." Other "no-no boys" fade out into easy booze and easy women and out of Ichiro's life. His best friend turns out to be Kenji, a war hero with a medal and without a leg. His heroism has cost Kenji his leg, and by the end of the book his life. Kenji, the admirable war hero, dying of a progressive creeping crud that rejected amputations of his leg have failed to check, seems to have the divinity of the suffering. He gives Ichiro an understanding woman, an abandoned wife whose husband, rather than coming home, reinlists and stays in Europe. Kenji gives Ichiro himself, a symbol of goodness and strength.

Ichiro has come home to a world in which everything he touches and loves dies, is killed or goes mad. All offers of life, the love of a woman, a job by an understanding Mr. Carrick, are refused because he is unworthy, because he must somehow prove himself worthy by himself. He has been spit on, rejected by his brother, lost his good and his bad friends and his parents. Ichiro seems to be a pathological loser. What he does is wrong, and what he doesn't do is wrong. He is full of self-contempt, self-pity and yet is

governed by an innate sense of dignity, if not a coherent sense of humor. He is not Stephan Dedalus out to "forge the unformed conscience of his race in the smithy of his soul," but he is searching for something more than his identity. It is the nature of the language itself, this embryonic Japanese-American English language that can only define the Japanese-American that is neither Japanese nor American, in anything but negative terms that makes every attempt at positive expression an exercise in futility and despair. "Think more deeply and your doubts will disappear," Ichiro's mother says. "You are my son," she says, triggering a spinning running internal monologue and one of the most powerfully moving passages in the book:

No, he said to himself as he watched her part the curtains and start into the store. There was a time when I was your son. There was a time that I no longer remember when you used to smile a mother's smile and tell me stories about gallant and fierce warriors who protected their lords with blades of shining steel and about the old woman who found a peach in the stream and took it home and, when her husband split it in half, a husky little boy tumbled out to fill their hearts with boundless joy. I was that lad in the peach and you were the old woman and we were Japanese with Japanese feelings and Japanese pride and Japanese thoughts because it was all right then to be Japanese and feel and think all the things that Japanese do even if we lived in America. Then there came a time when I was only half Japanese because one is not born in America and raised in America and taught in America and one does not speak and swear and drink and smoke and play and fight and see and hear in America among Americans in American streets and houses without becoming American and loving it. But I did not love enough for you were still half my mother and I was thereby still half Japanese and when the war came and they told me to fight for America, I was not strong enough to fight you and I was not strong enough to fight the bitterness which made the half of me which was bigger than the half of me which was America and really the whole of me that I could not see or feel. Now that I know the truth when it is late and the half of me and the half that remains is enough to know why it was that I could not fight for America and did not strip me of my birthright. But it is not enough to be only half an American and know that it is an empty

half. I am not your son and I am not Japanese and I am not American. I can go someplace and tell people that I've got an inverted stomach and that I am an American, true and blue and Hail Columbia, but the army wouldn't have me because of the stomach. That's easy and I would do it, only I've got to convince myself first and that I cannot do. I wish with all my heart that I were Japanese or that I were American. I am neither and I blame you and I blame myself and I blame the world which is made up of many countries which fight with each other and kill and hate and destroy again and again and again. It is so easy and simple that I cannot understand it at all. And the reason I do not understand it is because I do not understand you who were the half of me that is no more and because I do not understand what it was about the half of me which was American and the half which might have become the whole of me if I had said yes I will go and fight in your army because that is what I believe and want and cherish and love.

This passage is central to the book in suggesting the wholeness that Ichiro contains and is searching for. His whole life is contained in the paragraph, beginning with childhood, and Japan in the form of his family moving from the first "No" through the Samurai defending their lords to Ichiro refusing to defend America and ending on a hypothetical positive chord ringing with "yes" and "cherish and love."

A sign of Ichiro's strength, and his sense of despair, and the truth of his being neither Japanese nor American is the fluid movement into the sick joke about the inverted stomach that simultaneously recalls the stereotype of Japanese being slant-eyed, sideways, doing things backwards, and draft dodger humor. His being not Japanese is subtly underscored by his avoidance of Japanese terms: "gallant and fierce warriors" instead of "samurai."

Okada's *No-No Boy* is an exploration of the universe of racial self-contempt. At one point, through Ichiro, Okada suggests that self-contempt based on your physical and cultural difference from other more favored races, produces a contempt for all who are like you:

. . . I got to thinking that the Japs were wising up, that

they had learned that living in big bunches and talking Jap and feeling Jap and doing Jap was just inviting trouble. But my dad came back . . . I hear there's almost as many in Seattle now as there were before the war. It's a shame, a dirty rotten shame. Pretty soon it'll be just like it was before the war. A bunch of Japs with a fence around them, not the kind you can see, but it'll hurt them just as much. They bitched and hollered when the government put them in camps and put real fences around them, but now they're doing the same damn thing to themselves. They screamed because the government said they were Japs and when they finally got out, they couldn't wait to rush together and prove that they were.

The literature of Japanese-America flourished through the Thirties, into the War years and the camp experience. These were years of tremendous literary and journalistic output, these War years, during which the question of Japanese-American identity, the conflicts between Issei and Nisei, yellow and white relations, black, white and yellow relations and the War were all examined and re-examined, in camp newspapers, literary magazines, diaries and journals. The result of the camp experience was a literate Japanese-America whose sensibility encompassed broad areas of American experience. Highly skilled writers came from camps, like Bill Hosokawa and Larry Tajiri who became editors of the *Denver Post,* and fiction writers and poets like Iwao Kawakami, Hiroshi Kashiwagi, Paul Itaya, Jack Matsuye, Toshio Mori, Toyo Suyemoto and Hisaye Yamamoto. The journalists made it, but the writers of fiction and poetry, all native to their brand of English, with rare exceptions, remain confined to the pages of the Japanese-American Citizen League paper, the *Pacific Citizen,* by an America that has some mysterious investment in the absence of Asian-American culture. To preserve the illusion of our absence, many Asian-American writers have been asked to write under white pseudonyms. C.Y. Lee was told a white pseudonym would enhance his chances for publication. To his credit, he kept his name. Alex Kuo and a Japanese-American poet, acknowledging white supremacy, have taken the non-Asian names Spike Mulligan and Mary Howard Constable to increase their publishability.

The first and perhaps only novel published about the camp experience, was predictably written by a white, non-Japanese woman, Karen Kehoe, *City in the Sun,* (1947). The appearance of

this book led the *Pacific Citizen* to wonder why a Japanese-American had not written a work of fiction or non-fiction about the camp experience. They then went on to speculate that perhaps the experience had been too traumatic. The truth is that the camp experience stimulated rather than depressed artistic output. The Japanese-Americans did write of the camp experience, but weren't published outside.

Blacks, Chicanos, and Jews all write what could be called bad English. Their particular badmouth is recognized as being their own legitimate mother tongue. Only Asian-Americand are driven out of their tongues and expected to be at home in a language they never use and a culture they encounter only in books written in English. This piracy of our native tongues by white culture amounts to the eradication of a recognizable Asian-American culture here. It's ridiculous that a non-Japanese woman should be the one and only novelist of the Japanese-American camp experience. And it's a lie.

As in the work of John Okada, there is nothing quaint about Lawson Inada's poetry, no phony continuity between sigh-inspiring Oriental art and his tough, sometimes vicious language. No one, not even William Saroyan trying hard, can make Inada out to be quaint or treat his work as a high school English paper. "Inada's poem is lean, hard, muscular, and yet for all that it has gentility, humor and love," Saroyan says on the jacket of Inada's first book, *Before the War*. A monster poet from the multi-racial ghetto of West Fresno where he ran with Blacks, grew up speaking their language, playing their music. But his voice is his own, Japanese-American, Sansei voice afraid of nothing. It's as distinct from the Blacks now as country western is from Soul.

In an anthology of Fresno poets, *Down at the Santa Fe Depot* (Giligia Press), Inada wrote of hatreds and fears no Asian-American ever wrote of before. Inada is tough enough to write about self-contempt. He took the names whitefolks called Chinese and Japanese and used them to violate the holy word of the English language. The result is not death but magic and a new American truth:

CHINKS

Ching Chong Chinaman
sitting on a fence
trying to make a dollar
chop-chop all day.

"Eju-kei-shung! Eju-kei-shung!"
that's what they say.

When the War came
they said, "We Chinese!"

When we went away,
they made sukiyaki,
saying, "Yellow all same."

When the war closed,
they stoned the Jap's homes.

Grandma would say:
"Marry a Mexican,
a Nigger, just don't
marry no Chinese."

The Chinese were contemptible for being actively "not Japanese." In *No-No Boy,* Kenji tells Ichiro, essentially, to be not Japanese. "Go someplace where there isn't another Jap within a thousand miles. Marry a white girl or a Negro or an Italian or even a Chinese. Anything but a Japanese. After a few generations of that, you've got the thing beat."

Inada echoes *No-No Boy.* The language, sentiments, and imagery are virtually the same in both books. The similarity is and is not accidental. Inada is bound to Okada by a common sensibility and not by any real knowledge of his predecessor's work. Inada did not learn of the existence of Okada's work until ten years after he had written "West Side Songs." Both articulated the belief common among Japanese-Americans that one remedy for being a contemptible, self-hating Japanese-American is to leave their society, and associate oneself with whiteness of some kind and rise in the world.

As in "Chinks," "Japs" ends with the formal name of the race, and it, not Chinks or Japs is the dirty word.

JAPS

are great imitators
they stole
the Greek's
skewers,

used them
on themselves.
Their sutras
are Face
and Hide.
They hate
everyone else
on the sly.

They play
Dr. Charley's
games — bowling,
raking,
growing forks
on lapels.
Their tongues
are yellow
with "r's"
with "l's."

They hate
themselves
on the sly. *I*
used to be
Japanese.

Inada confronts his own experience, everything in his life is in his deceptively simple and humorous poems that have the feel of having been written in the guts of the juke box. He tears himself apart exposing all the symbols of Asian assimilation — education, the preservation of Oriental culture — as acts of desperation, terrific efforts to buy a little place in the country. It is the fear of America that causes this, not assimilation.

The original title of Inada's book of poetry was *The Great Bassist*. The bassist appears in two poems, heading and tailing the book. These bassist poems deal with an area of Asian-American experience never before explored. It might come as a shock to America that the popular stereotype of the Asian-American as gentle, law-abiding, non-aggressive, meek, artfully inconspicuous servants is insulting. It pictures the Asian-American as being a race of people without manhood, and in America, for a boy, growing up without command of your manly style marks you as nothing, at worst, and the victim, at best.

Language is the medium of culture and the people's sensibility, including the style of manhood. Language coheres the people into a community by organizing and codifying the symbols of the people's common experience. Stunt the tongue and you've lopped off the culture and sensibility. On the simplest level, a man in any culture speaks for himself. Without a language of his own, he no longer is a man. The concept of the dual personality deprives the Chinese-American and Japanese-American of the means to develop his own terms. The tyranny of language has been used by white culture to suppress Chinese-American and Japanese-American culture and exclude the Asian-American sensibility from operation in the mainstream of American consciousness. The first Asian-American writers worked alone within a sense of rejectionand isolation to the extent that it encouraged Asian-America to reject its own literature. John Okada died in obscurity, and Toshio Mori lives in obscurity. In the past, being an Asian-American writer meant that you did not associate with other Asian-American writers. Emulating the whites, we ignored ourselves. Now we seek each other out.

Recently in San Francisco twenty Asian-American writers, representing three generations of writers, gathered together for the first time as Asian-American writers. Attending were Kai-yu Hsu, editor of the first Asian-American anthology of writing, Toshio Mori, the first Asian-American to publish a book length creative work, Lawson Inada, the first Asian-American to publish a book of poetry, Frank Chin, author of the first Asian-American play produced in the history of the American legitimate theater, Victor and Brett Nee, authors of the first Chinese-American history from the Chinese-American point of view, and young Asian-American writers many of whom are included in this book and who represent the first generation of Asian-Americans to be aware of writing within an Asian-American tradition. We know each other now. It should never have been otherwise.

Editor's Note: Jean Wakatsuki, in collaboration with her husband, novelist James D. Houston, has written a moving account of her family's internment at Manzanar, the infamous California "relocation" camp. The book, Farewell to Manzanar, *will be published jointly this Fall by San Francisco Book Co. and Houghton-Mifflin.*

SO THE YOUNG BROTHER
by Lawson Fusao Inada

So the young brother comes up to me and says
he wants to talk to me
about those problems I been having
and how come I don't do anything about them
especially since he doesn't have any
in Yuba City where he's from.

So I think for about a second to just
let him slide
but then decide to really help the dude out

to take him aside and, you know,
really lay it on him.

Like I mean he better stop playing blind.
Like I mean everywhere we go is
Trouble City, man, funny shit
always coming down on us
so we try to forget about it,
scuffling for money on the outskirts of town,

But I mean there's no getting away from it.
You got to face it
and bring it down.
Shit, you take our crazy tribe
with all its sublimations
and put us in this crazy place
and what you just naturally get
is the hyphen between Asian and American —
that skinny bridge we try to balance on,
that makes no real connection.

So come off all that shit about no problems.
Get out behind those slanty eyes
with all them bumpers and shutters
and check out where our people
are really at.
Check it out.
And next time you're walking Main Street
with a date, some white bait and you
cutting into the Rexall for a Coke,
check out those smiles at the counter —
both of you bubbling blind
with two straws in a jumbo soda
and your foreheads touching.

Shit. I bet the people nod and say
"That Kurt and Sandy — they shore do
make a cute couple."
And you puff up and think "Yeah."
figuring you've made it
since the people mistook you for Kurt Schroeder,
local football dude and fastest
dragster in town. "Yeah."

You see where you're at then, man?
Nowhere, Jack. Strictly nowhere.
So give me some skin
and get on with it.
Sayonara, podner . . .

So that was some months ago,
on a warm and wealthy California campus,
but that warmth was with me tonight
as I prepared to go into battle,
getting out my typewriter
in my windy room in the barn,
fog coming down outside, obscuring
the back of the house across the lawn.

The kids were sleeping.
The space heater buzzing.
Janet moving around the kitchen window.

First I'll blow that tune about pounding rice,
then let the koto creak through
a shuttered room in Kyoto.
Then it's a ballroom in truest Havana,
flute and violins over the dancing,
someone scraping the soul
out of a gourd in the corner.
Here comes Max Roach brow-beating
Bud with brushes down a windy
Parisian Thoroughfare, leaves in the gutter,
Curly Russell running with his bass . . .

And with all this over the heater
and the typewriter humming
was a deep-down sound, something from beneath,
forcing its way under the door and window —
a singular rasping
like a giant rat,
the kind that inhabit the darkest
reaches of the barn.

So I cut my sounds
to scare it with silence
but it still went on — rasping, rasping.
And tried to place it and couldn't
and went outside and couldn't
see a damn thing in the fog
under the porchlight
and went and got a flashlight
and followed my ears to the fence
and made out
something moving
and moved in
and jumped
right into the huge face
of a god-damn horse,
looking down his dark nose at me
then going back to gnawing the picket fence
that separates us from his pasture.
A god-damn horse
chewing up the fence
and really doing some of the structure in
and will probably be in our yard before morning.

So I'm really pissed
and start waving the flashlight saying
"Scat! Shoo! Hey! Git!
Go on now, god-damnit! Git!
Hey! Hey, now! Git!
Get the shit out of here! Shoo!"
And I stamp my feet like I'm going to
run him off the premises.

And he takes another bite, blinks,
snorts out a ton of steam and says
"Hey, man, get off that shit.
Who the fuck you think you are?
I mean I been here a long time, Jack,
before your crazy kind.
And I'm just trying to make it, man.
Who the fuck you think you are?
Shit, don't blame me cause the man
don't feed me
and the grass is getting skinny
and I need a little something more substantial
to get my teeth into.
Shit, try this wood.
What the fuck, you think it's good?

"But I'll tell you —
you keep that shit up
and I'll jump this fence
and be on your ass like white on rice.
Shit, who the fuck you think you are? —
standing there like a god-damn
slant-eyed totem pole.
Check these teeth out.
What chu think they're for?
Shit, I'll be on your whole damn house
and bust in on you when you sleeping.
And you keep parking your car by me
and won't you look funny
busting down the street
with no tires and chewed up upholstery.

"Shit, get your ass inside.
And don't be fucking around no barn
like a god-damn yellow-bellied Jap sucker.
Go on inside. Git!
Take care of your own damn business.
hit. Who the fuck you think you are?"

And I'm spinning and stumbling
in a chuck-hole and rise and stumple again
and just before the light
flicks out for the last time
see a huge snort of steam
that engulfs the yard, the town, the valley,
and all the farthest reaches of my mind.

STONE BLOSSOM LANDMARK
by James D. Houston

Ryozo Kado, the stone mason, dips his trowel into the bucket, deftly flicks a blob of cement between two small rocks, and with another flick smooths the surface. Cameras click and whir all around him but he doesn't seem to notice. He is 83, five feet tall, round, and grinning while he works, in his fedora. Like a sumie painter he makes each movement only once, and it is perfect.

He stands back and announces quietly, a little wearily, to the crowd watching, "That's all, right now. I'm through for the time being."

But a newsman rushes up, camera cocked, and urges rather mercilessly, "Work some more."

Mr. Kado makes a joke of the effort required to bend for his trowel. Some watchers laugh with him. He begins to tinker with the stones again, while the cameraman squats up close to get the angle he's been waiting for — rotund Mr. Kado profiled against the snow-laced Sierras, alone with the plaque he has just cemented into place. The near-noon sun slants down across an outlined California bear and the bronze lettering:

In the early part of World War II, 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry were interned in relocation centers by Executive Order 9066, issued on Feb. 19, 1942.

Manzanar, the first of ten such concentration camps, was bounded by barbed wire and guard towers, confining 10,000 persons, the majority being American citizens.

May the injustices and humiliations suffered here as a result of hysteria, racism and economic exploitation never emerge again.

California Registered Historical Landmark No. 850

Dedication day is April 14, 1973, and Mr. Kado has fixed this plaque to the front of a small gatehouse, a former sentry post, just off U.S. 395, the main road from southern California to the snow country. He helped build the gatehouse too, thirty-one years ago, soon after he was put here for the duration of the war. It is all that can be seen now from the highway, and almost all that remains of what was, in its day, the largest town between Los Angeles and Reno — a mile-square compound, with M.P. quarters, hospital, mess hall, schools, gardens, and over four hundred tar-papered barracks. The original flagstones Mr. Kado faced the gatehouse with are still intact. The shingled, Oriental roof with its pagoda curve seems more incongruous than ever in this high, deserted no-man's land.

On the opposite side of the gatehouse, a flatbed truck is parked, on the old road that once ran from the highway to the far border of the camp. When a young man with long black hair and a yellow band around one arm of his fatigue jacket starts testing the mike, the crowd by the plaque gradually joins a larger group already waiting between the truck and the charter busses lined up as a windbreak.

This dedication coincides with the fifth pilgrimage to Manzanar, a now annual event which originated in 1969. The wind is always vicious in early April, churning up sand and dust, but that is the season the first busloads of evacuees arrived here four months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and the wind is very much a part of what is being memorialized here — the difficulty it symbolizes and the special strength of those who endured it.

Last year seven hundred and fifty people attended. This year there are twice that many, most of them from southern California, 250 miles south, and most of them *Sansei,* third generation Japanese Americans, too young to remember the intern-

ment itself, but committed to preserving its memory or at least eager to learn more about it. This interest often separates them from their parents, the *Nisei,* the second generation, almost all of whom spent years interned. Many Nisei would just as soon not be reminded of the insult and indignities of thirty years ago, the lives disrupted, families broken, homes lost. Everyone is aware, in fact, of how few Nisei have shown up for this ceremony.

Mainly the crowd is a mingling of the young Sansei and several hundred *Issei,* like Mr. Kado, diminutive, elderly Japanese of the first generation, who immigrated to the U.S. before and after the First World War. Ancestral and communal loyalties bring them on this pilgrimage, or memories of friends and relatives who died in one of the camps.

A lean, intense woman moves up to the microphone. She wears sunglasses, and a flared, full-length leather coat buttoned against the wind. Cameras start to click and whir again. She too is profiled against a backdrop of spectacular crags. In this valley you can't avoid it. To the west stands the eastern slope of the Sierras, to the east the blunt, bulky Inyo range. The valley floor is four thousand feet above sea level. On both sides the snow-topped peaks rise six to ten thousand feet higher, with Mount Whitney, south and west, topping all of them. The wind through here is edged with ice, and this woman on the platform, with the high collar and wide lapels and bottom fringe of her leather coat all faced with sheepskin, could be standing in the mountains of Tibet.

She is Sue Kunitomi Embrey. She spent her college years interned here, worked on the camp newspaper. She is a Nisei who believes that Manzanar should not be swept under the rug of history and forgotten.

Three years ago she and a few others organized the Manzanar Project Committee, with the dual aim of helping young Americans of Asian ancestry to understand their own past, and of persuading the state to designate this site a historical landmark. Like all those who helped put the dedication together — the sound crew, the walkie-talkie-bearing traffic guides, the black-robed Buddhist priest — she wears a yellow arm band with a red sun showing through a black-barred fence.

She is not a demagogue, not given to crowd-pleasing display. She never raises her arms or her voice. What she projects is intelligent, tenacity, a quiet, unswerving persistence, as she recounts the work of her committee, reads letters of support from U.S. Senators, Congressmen, the California State Legislature, and introduces delegates from as far away as Chicago and New York City.

She ends this part of the program with a statement supporting the Native American movement, linking that cause to this landmark. And there is a burst of applause when she declares, "Manzanar is our Wounded Knee!"

But the applause is muted, by the wind, and by the awesome, man-dwarfing landscape, and by the overall mood of the crowd, which is reverent, reflective, familial. They aren't looking for a rally. There was unity before the speeches began, a kind of built-in solidarity in the very fact that each person has travelled at least three hundred miles for no other reason than to visit a windswept ruin that is not marked on any map.

From the gatehouse they walk or caravan the mile across the camp site to the old cemetery, where a few graves have been maintained since the 40's, still outlined in the sand, and surrounded by barbed wire to keep back the tumbleweeds and stray cattle. A white, freshly painted obelisk stands nearby, marking a subtle line where the plain begins gradually to slope upward, into the alluvial fan that becomes the base of the mountains. It seems miraculous, as if some block of stone had fallen from the peaks above and landed upright in the brush, chiseled, solitary, twelve feet high.

This too was built by Mr. Kado and his crew. They finished it in 1943. Black Japanese script cut into its face says simply, "A Memorial."

Each visitor has been asked to pick up a stone on his way to the cemetery, and place it near the wide base that supports the column. By the time the priest, with his Buddhist robes flapping, begins his high-pitched, quavering chant, fifteen hundred stones are piled in a low oblong, a kind of spontaneous rock sculpture, and mingled with the stones are a few blossoming apple branches gathered by some of the women on their way across the camp.

Manzanar is a Spanish word meaning apple orchard. Great stretches of this valley were once green with orchards and alfalfa fields. It has been a desert ever since the Los Angeles Power and Water District acquired the land, sometime during the 20's, and began diverting its water to southern California. But a few rows of untended pear and apple trees were still there when the camp opened in 1942, where a shallow water table had kept them green. And some of these trees are still growing, wind-blown and neglected, but stubbornly alive. On dedication day they happen to be in full bloom — white pear and pink apple blossoms rising over the tumbleweed and sagebrush and acres of barren sand. And by the day's end a dozen branches thick with new blossoms are deco-

rating the mound of gathered stones in front of Mr. Kado's seemingly indestructible monument.

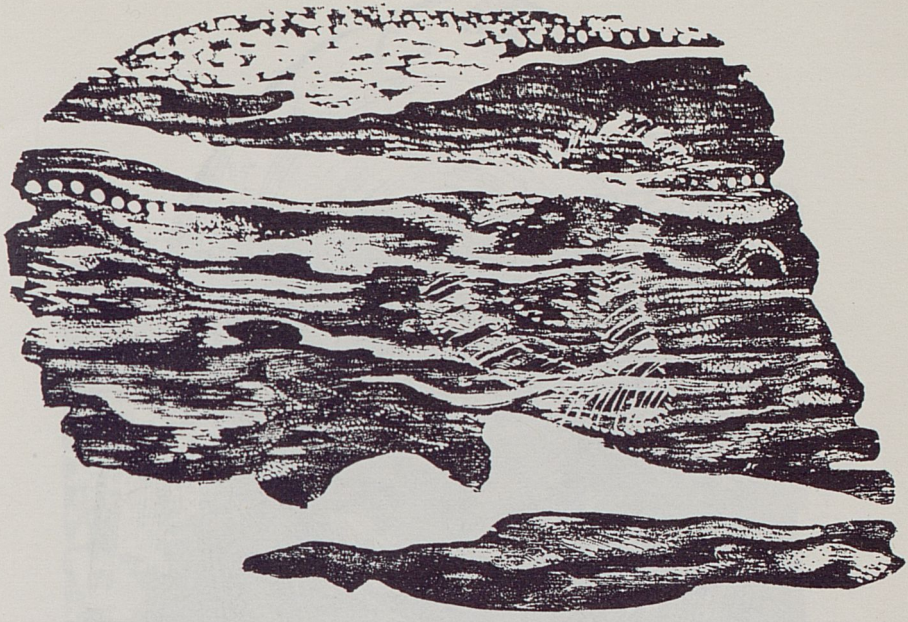
For the Manzanar Project Committee, the speeches and this ceremony culminate three years of focused effort. For Asian Americans it is a peak moment in the wave of new consciousness building for the past several years, stimulated by groups like Mrs. Embrey's, and by books like EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066, by the works of young writers like Lawson Inada and Frank Chin, and courses in Asian American studies on numerous college campuses. During the week before this year's pilgrimage, for example, California State University at Long Beach hosted a five-day program of lectures, seminars, films, plays, readings, etc., called "The Need for Change: Asian Americans in Movement."

For the country, this landmark is the first and in all probability the only time any one of America's ten wartime concentration camps will be officially granted anything approaching their historical significance.

Manaznar's proximity to the west coast has a lot to do with this. Most of the Issei settled in California, Oregon and Washington. The multitude imprisoned during World War II were all removed from the coast to ten inland camps, two in California, others in Utah, Arizona, Wyoming, Idaho, and Arkansas. After the camps closed, following a long-verdue Supreme Court decision in December 1944, declaring that loyal citizens cannot be detained against their will, many internees resettled permanently in the midwest or east. But the largest percentage eventually returned to their former communities.

On the American mainland (that is, not counting Hawaii), there are now roughly 350,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry, and as before the war the largest population is still found in southern California. That's why Manzanar, a few hours north of Los Angeles, is the only camp site regularly visited by former internees. As Mrs. Embrey has pointed out, it is "a symbolic representation of all the ten camps the Japanese were sent to."

As the years pass, Mr. Kado's gatehouse, with its landmark plaque, and his obelisk memorial, which he says he built "to last a long, long time," may well become the only visible reminders on our landscape of the camps, the enormous injustice enacted there, and the tough, admirable spirit of those who bore up under such adversity and survived.



BARRINGTON McLEAN

Painter - Printmaker

POEMAS PODRIDOS
(Putrified Poems)
by Mario Lafont

Mario Lafont has gone to the heart of the Beast. His sensitivity has detected its conflicting flows of energies, his eloquence has spoken to us of it. Now there are many who call themselves poets but few who truly are poets. Mario is a poet to the marrow of his bones — but he speaks to all humanity with the spirit of the Americas inspecting the heart of the invading Beast, that Barbarian who called himself Civilization. As the Barbarian Civilization suffers the agonies of collapse, Mario — the spirit of the Americas — arises.

— Robert Gover, New York, 1971

Mario Lafont ha llegado al corazón mismo de la Bestia. Su sensibilidad ha detectado los conflictivos flujos de energía, su elocuencia ya nos ha hablado de eso. Hoy hay muchos que se llaman a sí mismos poetas pero pocos realmente lo son. Mario es un poeta hasta la medula de los huesos — habla a toda la humanidad con el espíritu del indio americano de antaño. Mario es el espíritu de las Americas inspeccionando el corazón de la Bestia invasora, ese Bárbaro que se llama a sí mismo Civilización. En el momento en que la Civilización Bárbara sufre la agonía de la caída final, Mario — el espíritu de las Americas — se levanta.

In eternity, two children drove
a small boat. I was a traveler.
— Jane Pfunder

I searched for you, love.
During that time I fled earthquakes
and crawled over the lava of erupting volcanoes.
I found myself among savage animals
of all colors and sizes . . .
You could pale primitively
under those primitive skies
or perish in the announcements of the swamps.
I lived in wide morning caves
among the dull cries of nocturnal birds —
among the dreams that covered your tracks.

I walked over the mud and excrement
of prehistoric beasts
and climbed the highest trees and mountains
looking for the slightest sign of your presence —
but, I descended the tree or mountain with my heart
destroyed.

I searched for you, love,
in the birth of idols and rituals.
Then, among Pagan nations
and Christian nations
I consulted the Kabala
for your name . . .
but the prophets remained obstinate —
I looked for you.
On my way I saw the hyenas of disgrace.
devouring the entrails of civilization
and sowing destruction and death.
I asked for you among the dying youth
and the dying aged.
But their answers were trapped
by clamor, confusion and death.

I looked for you.
I knocked on the philosopher's door,
then I descended between desperation and fear.
I traveled the seven roads of the universe,
five arrows carried me to the continents,
two led me to the stars,
I traveled centuries, my love.
I was in the heart of the great epics,

I was present at all the births
and all the martyrdoms
at all the confusion
at all the treaties.
I walked among the victims
of the Bubonic and Coleric plagues,
I looked for you in the flowers
that lovers planted over the belfries,
in the kisses of generations
fed with the interior fire
the Occidental spirit and the Oriental mind.
I asked the priests of the magic arts
and the Sacred texts
and the Saints of the Orient
for you,
and I lived among them,
within the walls of meditation of their temples,
in their sanctuaries and their monasteries.
I looked for you
in all revolutions
in all the disasters and the victories,
among the astronomers and the beggars
among the kings and the merchants
among the artists and the farmers
among the executioners and the children
among the inventors and the paralytics
among the assailants and the preachers
among the artisans and the traitors
among the insane and the philosophers
among the heroes and the monks.
I looked for you
in the complex biology of the mob
and above the twilight of the psychiatrists
in the good-byes
that recall the magic of the maps
that for some strange reason
raised the germ of hope.
I looked for you
in the awakening of the Industrial Revolution
in the cries of Rimbaud
in the strange hallucinations of Lautremont
in the desperate spirit of Artaud
in the nevermore of Poe.

Then I lived with princesses
of the mysterious Tierra del Fuego,
and I slept beneath the bewitched sky of the tropics —
I awoke in 1945,
among the death-rattle and the blood of war,
in the Orient Hiroshima wept
over her burnt flesh.
I looked for you
from the Patagonic genealogy to the Aztec descendants.
I inhabited their villages and cities
under the yolk of their dictators
and the outrages of their bastards.
I observed children over their shadows
with the tragic smile of hunger,
and many women
and many old ones
and many soldiers
and many dead.
I looked for you in the mistaken gunshot
of the Bolivian mestizo —
I looked for you, love.
1969. The feathered nation marched
and pissed over the world,
while the new Babylon
was canonized by the anguish of the present
between the metalic chorus of Industry
the decayed flesh and the tedium . . .
I looked for you.
Infancy grew in Harlem
injected with saxophones, trumpets and Black boxers
and in New York, the New York Times —
and Madison Square Garden with the stomach full
of punches, singers, clowns, ice skaters,
trained heads,
and, over the streets of the city,
from North to South
from East to West
prostitutes, priests, mad men, mathematicians
criminals, sportsmen, poets, assailants
addicts, police, communists, gamblers
magnates, artists, mystics, smugglers
journalists, anarchists, students and secretaries . . .
In the light and the dark of the tumult

I stand . . .
Between reality and myth
Between flesh and spirit.

New York, 1970

— *Translated from the Spanish*
by Marianne Raphael

THE RING
by Glenn D. Godfrey

It begins with Mirna. She was my cousin, or very nearly my cousin. It is so hard to keep up with all the subtleties of relationships in a family as large as ours. We lived in the same yard, in houses so close together they seemed almost to be leaning against each other. We used to romp together a lot with our cousins. There were about thirteen of us in all, counting the children of the family that lived upstairs. We used to play hide-and-seek and cowboys and hop-scotch and a lot of other things. Even when my mother and my Aunt Chenda quarreled, and we were forbidden to go across to the other house, or even to speak to our cousins, we would run away and find a place to play together.

At this time my Aunt Rouena lived in the city. She was very rich, because her husband had died and left her a lot of money. She did not have any children, but was very fond of Mirna, and used to bring her presents every end-of-month when she came to town to check on the grocery store my father used to run for her. One night, just before she left for the city, she looked at my aunt and said, "Mai, you know da time you make that girl come with me."

Aunt Chenda looked surprised.

"Which gal?"

"Why, Mirna. Who else?"

Aunt Chenda smiled to herself with satisfaction. One time when she and my mother had been gossiping through their windows, she had said, "I might not be rich, but I have some loving children. I know Rouena wished she have some children like mine, but she could never. In she wild young days she had to kill too many young babies."

"Look, get she clothes," Aunt Rouena insisted, when Aunt Chenda didn't answer. "I guen take she with me right now."

Aunt Chenda smiled again.

"Well, what happen? You no want give your own daughter a break? You know she no have no future here with you."

Aunt Chenda said with mock seriousness, "You know I always looking out fo' me pickney, Rouena, and I woulda be the first one fi say 'go', but I no think she want go."

"That da lone bullshit, man," Aunt Rouena said, "Call she in here and ask her in front of me."

They called in the girl. Aunt Rouena said, "Child, you no want come to the city with me to live?"

Mirna answered simply, "Yes, Aunt Rouena."

Aunt Chenda stared at her in disbelief. After a while, she said, "Mirna, you want lef' your own ma, gal?"

Mirna hung her head.

Aunt Chenda sent me to the shop for a cardboard box, went into the bedroom and bundled all of Mirna's things into the box. She received Mirna's goodbye kiss without a word, and then Mirna was gone.

We continued playing together, the rest of us. My mother and my Aunt Chenda continued gossiping from their kitchen window. My aunt now said even meaner things about Aunt Rouena. She said Aunt Rouena had poisoned her husband by putting ground glass into his food, and that there were a lot of young men who were having affairs with her. My aunt forbade anyone to call Mirna's name in her presence. Even when she herself was speaking of Mirna, she would call her, "that ungrateful gal." Then she would break down and cry, and say that all her children were ungrateful to her, but that they would all punish for it. God would see to that. When my mother quarreled with my aunt, my mother would say to her, "That's why your own daughter have to lef' you. You no know how fi appreciate people. Imagine, your own daughter lef' you."

My brother fell off a coconut tree and broke his leg, and one of my cousins got pregnant for the boy who lived in the big plantation house up on the hill. Then, about six months after Mirna left, my father died. He was drunk, fell asleep on the tracks, and was run over by the train that left the plantation house punctually every morning at four. The train was the only punctual thing in the town.

My Aunt Rouena came down the day after the accident and immediately took control of everything. My mother was useless at a time like this. When they told her about the accident, she let out a

long shriek that could be heard in the entire town. At the funeral she tried to throw herself into the grave with the coffin. After the funeral Aunt Rouena said to her, "The best thing fo make you do da fi come to the city with me."

My mother made up all kinds of excuses at first. Finally she went.

My Aunt Rouena lived in a fine white house near the sea. I remember the first night I was terrified by the roar of the waves as they hurled themselves at the rocks, but, after that, the sound used to lull me to sleep every night. And in the evening, in the dying blue light, I used to walk by the seashore, and kick at the pebbles with my bare feet. There were very few children in the neighbourhood, and the few I saw didn't seem to want to play very much.

I didn't see Mirna until a month after I came to the city.

"She gone 'way," Aunt Rouena explained very seriously, "visiting relatives." She meant that Mirna was spending time with the family of her late husband who lived on Hanover Ave.

When I did see Mirna, I was shocked. She was so beautiful. She came through the gate with an old man walking behind her carrying two large suitcases. At first I didn't think it was her. Her hair was oiled and neatly combed in piglets. Her skin was not burnt black like when she was in the town. Instead she was a rich gold, the colour of honey. When Aunt Rouena assured me it was Mirna, I could have almost died for joy. I was so happy that she was so beautiful. I wanted to run up to her and hold her hands, and dance like a wild idiot with her. I wanted to pinch her arm, and have her chase me down the street, but I didn't, because my aunt was standing next to her looking very solemn.

I didn't say anything to her then, nor all the next day. Although I kept waiting eagerly for glimpses of her, she scarcely came downstairs. I finally decided to go upstairs and talk to her. I planned the whole conversation out a long time before going up. We would talk about all the wonderful things we used to do together. She would laugh, and then I would tell her that I was sorry for some of the bad things I had done to her.

I waited until Aunt Rouena went out, then I went upstairs. Mirna was knitting. She did not have much practice, and had to concentrate to get the stitches right. She was sweating a little, and kept saying, "Ah shit," under her breath when she made a mistake. She hardly noticed when I entered. I sat a little distance from her and said, "Hello, remember me?"

"Yes," she said, and continued knitting.

For a moment I was lost.

"What you doing?" I said.

"Knitting," she said.

I was quiet a minute. Then I said, "Remember how we used to play together?"

She was concentrating on a stitch and did not answer.

"You no remember?" I insisted.

She looked down at me. "Yes" she said, and went back to her knitting.

Then I was lost completely. Everything that I had planned turned into a wild jumble, and I just sat there. I sat for a couple of minutes saying nothing. Then my mother called up to me, "Boy, haul you rass outta them people house."

I was glad to get away.

"See you later," I said to Mirma, and hurried downstairs.

I could not stop cursing myself for being such an idiot. It had not gone at all the way I had planned it. I should have reminded her about how we used to play together, and tell her some of the jokes we used to laugh at, and soon we would have been laughing together.

That night I dreamed of her. She was a small baby in my arms, and I was feeding her from a bottle.

The next day Aunt Rouena and my mother had a quarrel. My mother was having an affair with a young school teacher. Aunt Rouena lectured my mother for about a half hour. Finally my mother said, "Why the hell you no stop live inna me rass?"

Aunt Rouena said, "Okay, if that da the way you want it," and went upstairs.

Later on Mirna came downstairs wearing a very beautiful ring. She said, "Aunt Alice, Mom say to show you the ring she give me." She used to call Aunt Rouena "Mom".

Every night before falling asleep I would think about Mirna. I liked to imagine her in the middle of a great forest, standing among large tree trunks. She was wearing a large white lace skirt that spread out for five feet around her. I had seen a picture like that on the top of a chocolate tin.

That night, thinking about her, the idea of the ring occured to me. I had not yet been able to talk to her, but I would buy her a ring, perhaps she would understand that. It would be a kind of engagement like, I suppose.

Every Saturday I waxed the floor for Aunt Rouena, and she paid me 10¢. I figured that if I saved for three weeks, I would have 30¢, and there was a store around the corner that sold rings for 25¢ each.

I worked and saved for three weeks. Then, when I had sufficient money, I bought the ring. I spent a full hour in the store looking over the rings they had. There were all kinds of rings. Rings with devils' heads with a red stone between the teeth, rings with bulls and snakes and mermaids. Silver rings and gold-coloured rings. I chose a thin ring with a large blue stone.

I began planning the best possible way to give Mirna the ring. I would have to give it to her some time when Aunt Rouena and my mother were not around because they would not understand. Besides, it would be so much dearer if it were a secret between Mirna and me. I thought maybe if she would come with me for a walk by the beach, then I could give it to her. Finally I decided to wait for her at the bottom of the steps. I sat on an old board box, and waited. Finally she came down. I was nervous, so I turned my head away from her, and waited for her to say hello. But she didn't. She kept on walking, and I followed her.

"Mirna," I called, and it sounded as if someone else had pronounced the magical name. She turned around.

"Yes?"

I hesitated for a while.

"I have something to show you," I said, taking out the ring carefully, and holding it out in front of me.

She looked at it a while.

"You like it?" I ventured.

"Oh," she said, "that da only one a them cheap ring they sell inna Mr. Gomez shop. Where you get it from?"

I was dazed and embarrassed. I felt as if I had suddenly been caught in a large crowd with all my clothes off. I hurried to recover.

"I find it by the gate," I said.

"See the one Mom give me," she said, holding her ring next to mine. Placed next to her ring, mine looked poor indeed, and I hated it for embarrassing me with its cheapness. She took it from me and began to bend it.

"Look how it bend," she said.

"Come," I said, "Make I bend it for you."

And I twisted the flimsy ring until the large rhinestone fell from its socket and into the dust below my feet.

TWO POEMS
by Charlotte Painter

OLMEC WOMAN

He is out there in the field
carving the skyball that fell
on our crop. I wanted him
to stay away from it,
but he has got a fire in him.
They all do, these men,
making faces of the gods
from these giant stones.

They fall by twos and threes.
The first one wrecked
my brother's house and crushed
the baby's skull. We run from our hearth
at the tremor of the ground.
Sometimes we do not find them all
and search the jungle.

His stone is black,
a hundred times his own head size.
He says the black god sent it,
the god of troubles and of travelers,
a god I've always feared.
He changes things. He wants
to be remembered. They all do,
these gods, sending omens
for our men to ponder.
I do not like him in our field,
staring with eyes large as lakes.
Plain, it could mean anything,
a stone out of an open sky.

Now by firelight the men
talk of making cities
to keep the faces in. I rip
the husks from the corn
now he has no time for it.
The grains are like our days,
numbered, golden. What takes a man
when he must build something
or fear to die?

NIÑOS HÉROES

"The whole of the golden valley
we can command from here," thought
Moctezuma, then Maximilian, then
the million faithful generals
of Mexico. A formal elegance refines
the rocky eminence, colonizer's
marble over sacramental stone,
a monument, olé.

Another layer of history was spread
when boy cadets flung themselves
from this parapet, less to defend
the fortress than to show the yanquis
what pure honor is. Like Aztecs
whom the gods forgot, the children
flew to sacrifice, under some divine
instruction of their own.
A new monument, olé.

Today
schoolboys march among
the flowers of Chapultepec.
Two by two, all in white
and navy blue they sing
Las Mañanitas as they climb
up from the carriage house.

There a humorist has placed
another monument. The stalls
once smelling of manure
are full of mirrors, a funhall
for the tourist. Come, inspect
our droll and credulous race.
Olé.

THE REAPER
by Elias Hruska-Cortes

The Reaper reaps
the Reaper reaps
the Reaper reaps his harvest splintered with lives
like rows of broken reeds
Moctezuma grain
White Buffalo remains
fields for exportation reaped
ripe vineyards for Vietnam

Plow them under
Plow them under
Fertilizer
Fertilizer
The Reaper reaps
the Reaper reaps
gold dust in the cavities of a skull
gold dust in the longs of earth
gold dust in the veins of rivers
and in the teeth around a lady's emerald
neck
(plow them under
plow them under
fertilizer
fertilizer)
the Reaper reaps
my brothers sow
the Reaper reaps
my sisters sow
the Reaper reaps

(tumba que te tumba
dale que dale)

the Reaper reaps
the Reaper strips our valleys
and rapes our mountains
the Reaper rips our treaties
and steals our living wealth
leaving wastelands
the Reaper perforates our living vegetation
like a leech sucking
oil and blood
(plow them under
plow them under)

the Reaper reaps
the Reaper reaps
tumba que te tumba
dale que dale

the Reaper reaps
and lily-moused poets sit
and search the winding labyrinth of brain
sipping tea like empty metaphors
while the Reaper reaps his crop of lives
While the Reaper reaps his crop of verse
and his academic poetasters

tumba que te tumba
Dale que Dale
tumba que te tumba
Dale que Dale

look into my eyes Reaper man
dare to look
if you can
rip out my eyes Reaper man
dare to try
dare to try
tumba que te tumba
Dale que Dale

tumba que te tumba
Dale que Dale
look into Our eyes reaper man
Dare to look
Dare to look
rip out Our eyes reaper man
Dare to try
Dare to try
Dare to try
rip our Our eyes
Dare to try
Dare to try
TuMBa Que Te TuMBa
Dale Que Dale
TuMBa QUE TE TuMBa
Dale QUE Dale

TuMBa QUE TE TuMBa

Arriba Chicanos
TuMBa QUE TE TuMBa
Arriba Panteras
TuMBa QUE TE TuMBa
Arriba Indios
TuMBa QUE TE TuMBa
Arriba Chinos
TuMBa QUE TE TuMBa
Arriba Todos
Chicanos
Chicanos
Chicanos
Chicanos
Chicanos
Basta ya de chingar cabrón
Basta ya
Basta ya

TUMBA QUE TE TUMBA
DALE QUE DALE
TUMBA QUE TE TUMBA
DALE QUE DALE

NO MÁS . . . NO MORE

the reaper reaps NO MORE

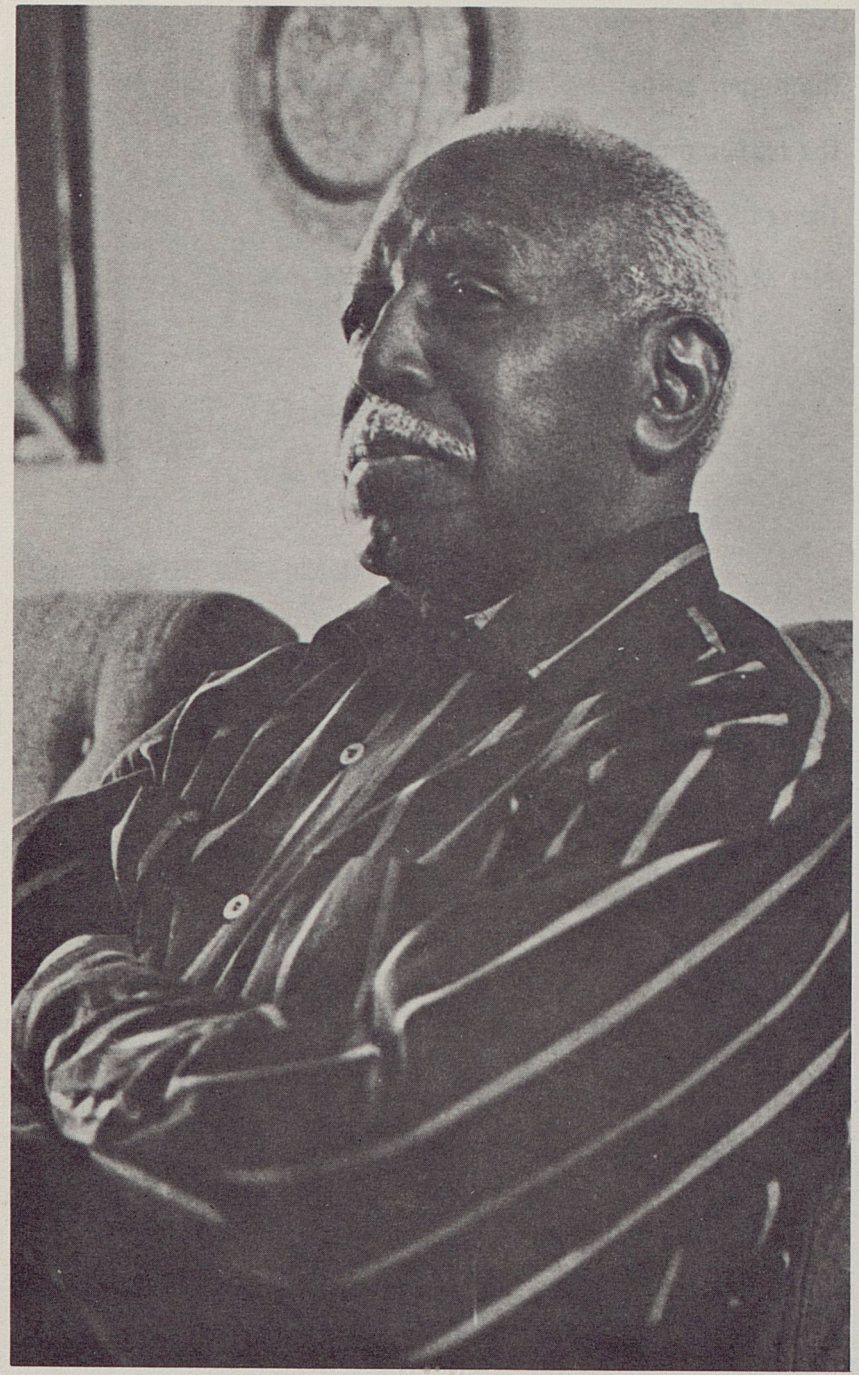
the reaper rapes NO MORE

the reaper rips NO MORE

NO MORE NO MORE

he exists

NO MORE . . .



GEORGE S. SCHUYLER INTERVIEW:
Ishmael Reed and Steve Cannon

George Schuyler, whose career has often inspired bitter controversy, was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1895. He is a distinguished journalist whose work has appeared in *The Messenger, The Pittsburgh Courier, The Crisis, The American Mercury, The World Tomorrow, New Masses, Modern Quarterly, Opportunity* and *The Nation.* He is the author of *Black No More* (1931), the first science fiction novel written by an Afro-American, and whose plot has been widely imitated. He is also the author of *Slaves, Today: A Story of Liberia* (1931), and *Black and Conservative* (1966), his autobiography. Mr. Schuyler is presently the book reviewer for the *New Hampshire Union-Leader.*

Mr. Schuyler discussed his stormy career and other matters with Steve Cannon and me in October of 1972 at his handsomely furnished apartment on Convent Avenue in Manhatten, full of sculpture, paintings, photos of his friends: authors, artists and presidents, and memorabilia concerning his hauntingly beautiful daughter, the late Philippa D. Schuyler. During the course of the interview Mr. Schuyler exhibited some of the spunk and bluntness that once required him to keep a gun next to his typewriter when threatened by some political opponents. When I asked Mr. Schuyler about a 1930s incident in which he was picketed for his comments on Angelo Herndon, a black communist, he looked puzzled, trying to recall the case saying, "I don't know. It's hard to remember. I've been picketed by so many people."

— *IR*

ISH: Mr. Schuyler, in an essay you wrote called "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and the Negro," you talked about a Negrophobe who exempted his maid from being a Negro. You talked about that as a metaphor for the Jekyll and Hyde nature of race relations in the United States. You said it explains to a large extent how our largest minority "has been able to survive regardless of Nazi-like laws and customs." You talked about the discrepancy between private and public attitudes regarding race relations. Would you like to elaborate on that?

SCHUYLER: When did I write this?

ISH: In the early forties, I believe.

SCHUYLER: I don't recall just what it was.

ISH: How would you feel about that generally? Some people are always talking about a "final solution" for black people in this country. You said that blacks have been able to survive because of a kind of schizophrenic attitude with which White America — the way White Americans regard them. This was an essay that was published in Mr. Sylvestre C. Watkins *Anthology of American Negro Literature,* (1944).

SCHUYLER: I'm trying to recall it. I don't recall it now. However, you can summarize the conclusion I drew and I'll elaborate on that.

ISH: You said that there seemed to be a love-hate relationship between blacks and whites. You talked about the certain paradoxes illustrating this relationship in the South. You mentioned one incident in which black people were standing on a train. A white conductor wanted to give them more space and he broke the custom by allowing them to go into the section of the train usually reserved for whites.

SCHUYLER: There are a lot of peculiar things going on on all sides. That is, the people are not all the same. You have immense differences between individuals, regardless of color. They both love and hate, sometimes at the same time. These things were apparent to me very early. There's really no validity to the generalization that white people or black people per se think a certain way. They don't at all. They think as individuals, unless they are childish, and then they rush to concede the generally accepted thing. But I find so many exceptions to the rule.

ISH: You started off the essay — I'll have to send you a copy of it — by an amusing anecdote about this man suffering from what you called Negrophobia. He hated Paul Robeson and he hated black people. They asked him about his maid, and he said "Oh, Ann, she's not black . . . ."

SCHUYLER: "She's not a Negro." Yes, well, they don't regard people very close to them as Negroes, nor do Negroes regard white people who are very close to and intimate with them as white. That's the last thing they think about. I remember being asked down in Georgia how did it feel being married to a white woman. I said, "I'm not married to a white woman; I'm married to Josephine. That's my wife. It doesn't occur to me; I know that she's white, but it doesn't occur to me except when somebody like you mentions it." I said, "I didn't marry a white woman. I married a certain individual." I think that happens in many parts of life and in human relations, that people don't think about certain individuals being Jewish, for example. Easily, I say, "So what? I don't care about him being a Jew. I'm interested in his character and his manner and whether we get along or not."

STEVE: That's what you were saying in the essay, that in interpersonal relationships judgments are made in relation to the person and not to ethnic background or anything like that. Can I put it that way?

SCHUYLER: Yes, I think you can put it that way. Of course, in recent years we have adopted certain words and have worn them out. "Ethnic background" really doesn't mean a damn thing.

ISH: Can you give some more examples of words you think have been worn out, or have lost their meaning?

SCHUYLER: Well, "black" is one.

STEVE: Back at the turn of the century, that was a negative word for Negroes to use, wasn't it? Or I would say in the 20s.

SCHUYLER: Some Negroes used it, although my recollection is of the struggle to get the word Negro capitalized, and I said at the time that it didn't make a damn bit of difference if it was capitalized or not. I'd just as soon have it an adjective or a noun, because it didn't change his position, it didn't change his character. Then with the Black business going on, it was even less sensible than Negro.

ISH: You use the term Afra-American in this particular essay.

SCHUYLER: Yes, I used it. I think James Weldon Johnson was the first one I knew to use it and I thought it was an accurate term, although even that is not completely accurate. Some colored people are of three or four different derivations. That is, they have Indian . . . .

ISH: You claim in *Black No More* that the real distinction, the real so-called pure African disappeared very early in this country and that most *people* are descended from Caucasians and Indians.

SCHUYLER: Yes, and a lot of whites are descended from Africans and Indians. As a matter of fact, these two anthropologists from John Hopkins University made a long study in Virginia about miscegenation of the white and Indian, and they found that there were no unmixed Indians in the Eastern United States. The only place you find unmixed Indians is in the West and in some remote places in the South where they had a reservation.

ISH: You satirize people like James Weldon Johnson and W.E. DuBois and give them satirical names in *Black No More* — also Garvey. There's always a touch of whimsy about it; it's not really vicious satire.

STEVE: It bordered on how absurd that situation really was.

ISH: The thesis of *Black No More* was that if blacks became whites all of a sudden, the civil rights movement would go broke. You were suggesting that a lot of these civil rights groups really thrive on the misery.

SCHUYLER: They profit on the grief, although since they make a profession of it, they cannot acknowledge that there are others who do not, who do not give a damn. Some of the very masses that they're trying to win over don't care. They're not as frightened as many of the so-called leaders and spokesmen.

ISH: Another thing about *Black No More.* I notice that on page 32 of the paperback edition, (Collier African American Library) when you talk about how this individual Max Fisher becomes a white man, all of this elaborate machinery Dr. Crook has around, reminds me very much of the Paint Factory section in *Invisible Man.*

STEVE: "Pure and White."

ISH: Where the young man, the protagonist, underwent an operation. He was in this hospital and had all this science fiction type apparatus around him. You were the first one to do that in *Black No More.* I would call it a science fiction novel.

SCHUYLER: Yes, it was in the direction of most of the science fiction.

STEVE: But it went inward instead of outward; can I say that?

SCHUYLER: Well, I wouldn't say that.

STEVE: I mean metaphorically, in terms of him going down to Georgia to meet this family as opposed to going to the moon. That's what I meant.

SCHUYLER: That's where a Negro usually goes when he gets a little money.

STEVE: Down South, right?

SCHUYLER: . . . Struts around in his shoes?

ISH: You had a scene where Fisher starts out being black and goes to this cabaret and sees this girl and falls in love with her. A Dr. Crook has the formula for changing black to white. John Howard Griffin did a book like that, *Black Like Me.* They never gave your novel credit for preceding that. I'll bring that up again. What Max Fisher does after becoming white is that he works for the most rabid, racist, organization. Will you make comment on parrallels to Sartre's *The Inauthentic Jew* where the people who really probably hate Jews are their own group. I have just read that the head of Hitler's Luftwaffe was Jewish and so dedicated that the German High Command looked the other way. Were you trying to make that comment in *Black No More?*

SCHUYLER: No telling.

ISH: Why did you have him become an Anti-Negro organizer in this book?

SCHUYLER: Because it was a pretty good plot.

STEVE: I thought so, too. I enjoyed the book.

SCHUYLER: You can get drawn easily into the race nonsense by that device.

ISH: I want to return to that first question. I live on the West Coast and we have a different intellectual environment than in New York. In New York, you hear a lot of the black intellectuals talking about the holocaust . . .

SCHUYLER: What Holocaust?

ISH: The one that's always around the corner, like *The Fire Next Time,* or there's going to be a final solution, like Nixon's going to take everybody to concentration camps. You mentioned in your essay that blacks really stimulate this country.

SCHUYLER: You mean do they make a cultural contribution?

ISH: Yes.

SCHUYLER: Of course they do; they always have. They not only made it in this country; they made it in ancient Rome, and in Greece. This man at Howard University . . .

ISH: *Blacks in Antiquity?* Snowden's book?

SCHUYLER: Yes, he goes into that. The first man to do that, of course, was J.A. Rogers. He preceded all these people and was a better researcher and scholar.

STEVE: Plus he published his own work.

SCHUYLER: Yes, and now MacMillan has put out two volumes of his. What is the name of it . . . *Great Men of African Descent* or something like that. It's well done and they follow the

text almost completely. They leave out some things, those which were convenient to leave out. I was responsible for starting that.

ISH: Is that right?

SCHUYLER: Yes, I was the one who got Rogers to start writing about the Great Men. He'd been talking about them over at the Y.W.C.A. cafeteria and so we sat down and talked about these things. I was the managing editor of *The Messenger* so I got him to start writing it. Then, when *The Messenger* fell and I went to Chicago to edit Ziff's publication — it was a supplement that went into all of the larger Negro weeklies — this supplement — in order to get better advertising notes — was edited in Chicago and published there. The printers just put the names and titles of the papers on as many thousands of copies as they used. So I got Rogers to write for that. I left New York for Chicago because there was a much wider circulation; it took in almost all the country. I think it had about 300,000 circulation combined.

ISH: You mentioned dining with J.A. Rogers. Were you part of a circle in the twenties? A circle of intellectuals, poets and writers?

SCHUYLER: Yes, although the word wasn't in use then.

ISH: "The New Negro," Alain Locke said . . .

SCHUYLER: I had very little association with Alain Locke because Alain Locke was teaching at Howard University and he just came up here on occasion. But I moved around in that circle, because we met at some of the places. At one time, Theophilus Lewis was in that circle, and Wally Thurmond and Langston Hughes — we used to have dinner in Langston's home.

ISH: Did you know Zora Neale Hurston?

SCHUYLER: Sure, I knew her very well. In fact, I published one of the first of her short stories.

ISH: You have very rigorous standards for writing. You wrote an essay called "The Negro Art Hokum" which made everybody mad. Do you still maintain those views?

SCHUYLER: I don't know of any that have changed. I think that such art as Negroes produce will be American art, and all of the rest of this is hokum. Usually it's hokum because they don't know anything about Africa. They're not African. Knowing some African history doesn't make a person an African. Just as knowing Italian history doesn't make someone Italian. That was brought forcefully to mind when I was in Africa. Just being black didn't mean a damn thing.

ISH: So even though an Afro-American may use African themes or African techniques like the young painters and sculp-

tors are doing . . .

SCHUYLER: Painters and sculptors are a different thing. They could sculpt or paint Eskimo, and if they were good artists, they could sculpt or paint good representations of Eskimo.

ISH: So you meant writers?

SCHUYLER: If you're talking about writers, now you're dealing with the culture of the people, and these people here don't know a damn thing about African culture. In fact, there are so many cultures in Africa that one would have to be historian, traveler, philosopher. I visited about twelve different tribes, or nations, as they call themselves — they're more honest than we are — in the back country of Liberia. They all had different hairdos, they had different language, they had an interpreter to talk to, and they stayed in their own areas. In other words, they were just small nations or tribes.

ISH: There's a great deal of fanfare about a long awaited book by Alex Haley, the man who tape recorded the autobiography of Malcolm X. He's doing a new book in which he traces his ancestry back to the Mandingo. But you did that already. You traced your ancestry back to the Mandingo tribe.

SCHUYLER: I traced them back on the maternal side to Madagascar. That's not so far back — a couple of hundred years. Then there were some Indians back there. Of course, there are some Indians in practically every Negro's background.

ISH: I see a thread running through your comments on this which leads me to believe that by not acknowledging Caucasian or Indian ancestry, blacks are not being true to themselves and that maybe much of the politics and culture are based on false premises. Would you say that? Like, a lot of stuff that we hear today about the emphasis on "black pride" and this kind of thing.

SCHUYLER: I think the "black pride" ploy is horsefeathers. Now, people have pride, I mean individual pride. Usually it's based on something, not on nothing, like they make it now. A man has pride because of his family, because of his prowess or his accomplishments — that's what he's proud about. He can even be proud because he's got a small foot or something like that. He boasts that he thinks a lot of himself because of that. But what is there to think about being black or pink or red. So you're that. There's nothing to be proud about; you didn't cause it. If a man caused it, then he could be proud.

ISH: It seems that a lot of our politics that we hear about — and I'll get to that in a minute, because you did a great study on certain liberal newspapers in *Black and Conservative* in which you

talked about the lopsided ideological viewpoint in reference to blacks. It always seems to be the left wing type of viewpoint that's promoted. There seems to be a lot, like today, on the campuses, you have teachers and professors who are pushing this idea of a collective, and the people, and looking out for the group as opposed to the individual. They talk about the "luxury of individualism." Of course, my point of view is that individuals and secret societies have done as much to change history as mass movements. What do you see as the future of the black individual who does want to achieve things on his own terms and wants to express his gifts?

SCHUYLER: Well, I think he can do it. As a matter of fact, most of those who have accomplished something and have some kind of reputation have done it. You can't go into a man's factory or mill and say, "Here, I'm black," — he doesn't want that. He wants to know what you can do. For many years there was a Negro who worked over here at *The Newark News*. He was City Editor, I believe. *The Newark News* is a very prestigious paper in this area. But, you see, he wasn't a race man and therefore only a few people knew about it.

ISH: So he couldn't really go in there and say he's a race man; he has to be qualified as a journalist. And you made the comment: "Those who haven't accomplished something laud those who have."

SCHUYLER: Yes, and they also take credit for it.

ISH: Take credit for it?

SCHUYLER: "Look what *we've* done."

ISH: When they point to someone like Garvey, or DuBois, or yourself, or Wallace Thurman? That's an interesting point. Have you read Professor Nathan Huggin's book, *The Harlem Renaissance?* Did he talk to you? What is your assessment of that book? He said that the movement failed because it depended on white patronage. I never heard of anybody describing a movement of white writers as having failed when there could be individual successes in art, say individual poems. It seems that his idea is that they weren't radical enough for his taste.

SCHUYLER: This "Harlem Renaissance," is pretty much of a fraud. A lot of people connected with it were phonies, and there weren't many connected with it.

ISH: That's Thurman's viewpoint — "the Niggerati."

SCHUYLER: There was a man (Thurman) with a sense of humor and not chained to any racist chariot. He had ability, shown by the fact that even in that early day he was able to get a

job out in Hollywood as a writer.

ISH: We've noticed, Mr. Cannon and I, that those writers who were independent, Rudolph Fisher, yourself, Wallace Thurman, even to an extent Zora Neale Hurston, who although she had patronage did do a lot of work on her own in the South — she recorded folklore and went to New Orleans.

SCHUYLER: And to Haiti.

ISH: And to Haiti. And she wrote the *VooDoo Gods of Haiti,* which you can't find, as you can't find *Infants of the Spring* or others. Why do you think the people who are more in the collectivist-type poetry and "for the people" have a bigger reputation than those who are independents?

SCHUYLER: Because they've been played up and built up.

ISH: Who builds them up?

SCHUYLER: Well, people who are interested in building them up. It's a clique. Who would ever think of Malcolm X as a leader?

STEVE: Really.

SCHUYLER: Lead what?

STEVE: Every time we talk about that, we get shouted down.

ISH: You can't say that. He's a holiday now.

SCHUYLER: This was a man who was so ignorant that, until I informed him, he didn't know that there were more white Moslems than there were black. I had to tell him on the radio. I used to be on this program — "The Editors Speak." He was on there frequently, and I had to tell him about this criticism, this denunciation of the white man — and you say you're a Moslem — that most of the Moslems were white. And moreover, I criticized him because of these people using "X" and "Y" after their names. You take the name Muhammad itself — that's taken from a white man. And these names that the Negroes have in Africa, that is, those that are Moslems, all come down from the white people who conquered them. I just told him, publicly, "You just don't know what you're talking about." And then when he went to Mecca, and saw it himself, it changed his whole outlook on things. Then, Mr. Muhammad fired him and that made him go off independently to be a leader.

ISH: You talked about this clique. Would you describe this clique and how it works?

SCHUYLER: They use the same tactics, or similar tactics, to those they accuse white people of using. Now, you know, at my age and with my experience, I'm not eager to become a member of anything.

ISH: What is your age?

SCHUYLER: I'll be 78 in February. They have various organizations around here, this clique does, which they haven't invited me to join anyhow.

ISH: Why is that?

SCHUYLER: Well, they know I won't. I don't regard them as top flight. I belong to the Author's Guild and things like that that are of some value to me. I belong to ASCAP by virtue of my daughter having belonged to it, and I inherit her interest in it.

STEVE: I was sorry to hear what happened to her. I met her when I was a little kid; I must have been about 16 years old, and she came down to Southern University to play — a very long time ago.

SCHUYLER: (Pointing to poster on the wall) That was her rehearsal at fourteen to play with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra at Lewisohn Stadium, which had never been done before by anyone except Marian Anderson. That was her standard, too.

ISH: You were trying to instill a standard of excellence in your children?

SCHUYLER: Yes. Now, let's see. From whence did we wander?

STEVE: We were talking about the clique organizations, about the "Harlem Renaissance" being a fiasco.

ISH: Langston Hughes was an excellent poet, don't you think? There were individuals within the Harlem Renaissance who were accomplished. Countee Cullen was a fine poet. And Wallace Thurman was excellent; he's considered part of the Harlem Renaissance, for some reason. There were fine musicians, too, isn't that correct, like James Weldon Johnson who wrote lyrics for Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake. You're criticizing the public relations aspect; the title.

SCHUYLER: You can put it in one way and say that there were many people in the '90s and the hundreds, and after that, who were exceptional. If you gather them all together, you could probably call it a renaissance. But some of these people they put in the Harlem Renaissance didn't even live in Harlem.

ISH: Like who?

SCHUYLER: Well, James Weldon Johnson was associated with the NAACP; so was Walter White. They were here by virtue of the NAACP being here. There were others, like Clarence Cameron White, who was a great violinist and composer and had his work played by symphony orchestras.

ISH: What about Claude McKay?

SCHUYLER: Well, Claude McKay was just a transient. In his

late years, he lived in Harlem when he came back from Marseilles. His accomplishments were not particularly in Harlem. I think he wrote "If We Must Die" down in the village somewhere. He was with the Max Eastman crowd. But of course, I know that there are a lot of people who want to claim every Negro in the world.

STEVE: Well, tell me this. During that period when you were up here, in the twenties and thirties, was there much inter-racial intellectual gathering? Fusion of ideas? I'm trying to see if it was integrated on an intellectual level.

ISH: They hung out at the cabarets.

STEVE: Yeah, well, I got that out of *Black No More.*

SCHUYLER: Well, they had cabarets all over New York. There were even some Negro cabarets downtown, but there were also other associations. There were labor union associations, there were forums of all kinds. In fact, there were more forums in the twenties and the thirties than there are now, although there are three or four times as many Negroes as there were then. But I would say that the intellectual standards have fallen, if anything, because I think the people who were trying to be intellectual were aiming at higher standards than they are now.

ISH: You're talking about Harlem?

SCHUYLER: Yes, in Harlem, and, as a matter of fact, you can go outside Harlem!

ISH: You know, we have some pretty good contemporary writers here now. William Melvin Kelley has been compared to you. His book *Dem* has a science fiction plot. And also your idea in *Black No More* of what would happen if all the blacks disappeared, is taken up in *A Different Drummer.* There are a number of good writers. We may say that the standards are better than in the twenties, you know!

SCHUYLER: It just happens that I've gone through this whole period of literature from the mid-twenties on to the present.

ISH: And you think that the standards are lower now than they were in the twenties?

SCHUYLER: I should say that they are, not only for Negroes, but for whites as well.

STEVE: For the whole publishing world, huh?

SCHUYLER: Great art and literature has traditionally come out of and been supported by people of means and education, what is called the upper class. As a matter of fact, Upton Sinclair did a book once on that very theme and showed how all the Greek

art and sculpture had been subsidized by people of means. Where a fraternity or a church has the means to subsidize an artist, they very seldom do it, because they don't understand it. Presumably, you've got to understand what you pay for, and know what it's all about. You can imagine, as in Rome, for example, Ovid and Horace were subsidized by the people who appreciated what they were doing.

ISH: Would you consider Duke Ellington's music great art?

SCHUYLER: No, it's not great art.

STEVE: What's missing from it?

SCHUYLER: Variety, for one thing. Duke, whom I know and respect very much, has cleaned up on this trend. I think that some of the things Duke wrote thirty years ago are more pleasant to me than these growls that he puts out now.

ISH: Do you think that what is called Afro-American music — or what's generically called jazz, ragtime, blues — that this . . .

SCHUYLER: That's a horse of another color. It's original.

ISH: But original doesn't necessarily have to be great.

SCHUYLER: No. You make it great by the addition of artistry.

ISH: *Time* magazine did a review of my book and then compared it to your work and they called you "the black Mencken." Did you know Mencken?

SCHUYLER: Yes, I knew Mencken well. I was his house guest several times. Whenever I passed through Baltimore I would call him up, and if he was not busy, I would go by there for an evening, and try out his cellar. He had a wonderful cellar. There were other people, too, during that period who were prominent in the literary world, even in the South, that I visited and shared their hospitality. And they solicited me. This was especially true after I wrote for *The American Mercury* in 1927. At the same time, in 1927, my first piece came out, and it was the lead piece, too. I came to be known by a lot of people who were writing. I think that other colored people with skill can get the same respect and cooperation. It's being done all the time. It's probably being done more now than it was then, because there are more Negroes now and there are more Negroes of education and training now than there were then. Because, after all, a so-called intellectual, even if he was connected with church or with one of the race-saving organizations, was not much in the labor movement because there weren't many Negroes in the labor movement on a higher scale. Once in a while you'd run across some colored man who was secretary-treasurer of a union, but, you see, Negroes couldn't join

most of the unions at those times.

ISH: There are still some unions they can't join, like the Construction Union in New York they're having difficulty with.

SCHUYLER: Oh, yes. Well, the labor movement started out in this country on Jim Crow. Not on Jim Crow, but on exclusion. The first labor union in the United States was in Boston and that was before the revolution. They specifically put in their constitution that they weren't going to have any men of color, whether they were free or not. At the time of the Civil War, there were only about three unions in the United States that permitted Negroes membership. And so in that field you had very little representation. But the fields in which you did have representation didn't produce so much either. That is, in the field of education.

ISH: There's a controversy now about Black English.

SCHUYLER: Hogwash.

ISH: You said there are no racial or colored dialects, only sectional dialects in *Black No More.* There are really no racial differences, only class differences, you said in *Slaves Today,* 1931. On the other hand, you do seem to hint that there is a unique style of African choreography or music.

SCHUYLER: I wouldn't say African choreography. I would say there's choreography in the dance, because I've seen that, and it was African, too; it wasn't any bogus thing.

I might say to digress, that in 1960 when I was in Nigeria celebrating the first Black Governor General of Nigeria, and we were there for a week and they gave the dance festival which included tribes of people from all parts of Nigeria. When you say that, it makes it international because each one of those big tribes is a nation, you know. They got nothing in common. That's some idea they built up here in Harlem about that. As a matter of fact, half the Negroes in Nigeria enslave the other half. But now there you had marvelous dances and with no influence from anywhere else. It was indigenous. It came out of their lives. Now, as for the music, there's very little to African music. There are some tribes that make beautiful music. Other tribes are just percussion. In fact, I don't know why, as well trained as so many Negro musicians are, in the United States, that they haven't composed more on African themes.

ISH: Still there are a lot of jazz musicians who at least use African titles.

SCHUYLER: Yes, but speaking of orchestral composition . . . they have to embody root music that comes out of the

people that they are writing about. And they they (have to) refine it and make something very artistic out of it. Now they haven't done that. Somebody may have done it. I don't claim to know the history of music, but I know my daughter was the only one who did it. Because she wrote "The Nile" which was premiered in Cairo by the Cairo Symphony Orchestra on — this was 1965, December 10th.

STEVE: Was that ever recorded? Or do you know?

SCHUYLER: Well, it was played here. At her memorial service. They played it here at her memorial service which was held in Town Hall. And that embodied the music, the basic music of Ethiopia, Uganda . . . well, all the four countries that bordered on the Nile, so that was the name of it, "The Nile." It was applauded very highly there by the critics in Cairo. But those are my views about art and literature and all. And . . .

STEVE: Did you and Mencken ever get in heated discussions about American language or was he working on that at the time?

SCHUYLER: I gave him many items for his "American Language." We discussed. We didn't argue about it of course. There wasn't any argument.

STEVE: No, you know what I mean. Just differences of opinion.

SCHUYLER: Just contributions to Americana.

ISH: Are you an optimist about the — this is the kind of question they ask — an optimist about the future of race relations in this country?

SCHUYLER: Well, in a sense I am. But they're not going to continue so good if it's left up to the Negro intellectuals to stir things up and frighten people. It's a very bad thing, you know — to frighten people, especially if you don't have anything. Like I remember a vaudeville skit, you know, and the black-face comedian makes a pass at his back pocket, you know, as if he had something in there, and then later when he got the other man scared. When the other man began to retaliate, he would say, "I was just joking."

STEVE: That means that you knew Bert Williams and George Walker doesn't it?

SCHUYLER: I didn't know them.

STEVE: I mean as far as having seen their performances.

SCHUYLER: *The Messenger* office was just two doors north of where Bert Williams lived on Seventh Avenue.

STEVE: How was their material? I've never seen them. How are they as comedians? Were they very good as compared to what

was happening in the world at the time?

ISH: You're talking about Williams and Walker.

STEVE: Because I think what's his name was just coming on the scene when he was a little boy . . . What's his name? Leon Earl and people like Eddie Cantor — they were very young at that time. Earl was older. He was close to Williams, I think.

SCHUYLER: Well, Earl was better than most of them. You know, one time in one of the Ziegfield Follies, Williams and Earl had a skit together and it was really immense.

ISH: Bert Williams worked with Eddie Cantor.

SCHUYLER: I don't doubt it.

ISH: Yeah, they had a routine. Williams was called Rufus the Red Cap. Of course Williams always upstaged him and you know that W.C. Fields said he was the funniest and saddest man he ever saw perform. But like a lot of the younger Black comedians, with the notable exception of Richard Pryor, who I think is a genius, consider the black comedians of the past to be Uncle Toms.

SCHUYLER: These people were comedians and they were good ones, too. And they took the life around them and made a joke out of it. As a matter of fact, lots to be said for Uncle Toms. I remember he said, you can have my body but you can't have my soul.

ISH: That's interesting that you would say that. Because it seems that Black-Negro-Afro-American behavior is always — always has to be restricted. You have to be angry. There's only one mask that you can wear. I was reading in the *I-Ching* the other night that there is a kind of parallel in Confucious to what we call Uncle Tomism — what they call taking abuse from the outside by preserving your inner light all along.

SCHUYLER: Well, now, how do you think these free Negroes — whose position was very difficult — in this country — how do you think they survived and, in some instances, prospered? And not only in the North.

STEVE: In the South?

SCHUYLER: In the South. Because, as I say it was the individual. And if the individual has it within him then he can go to Harvard, Yale, Chicago and all the other universities. And he'll just be a mediocrity. You run across them every day. Humpback with degrees.

ISH: I notice in the universities, and Steve has too, a lot of the children are really undergoing an emotional, intellectual, psychological crisis because they've been badgered into thinking they have to be — you know —

STEVE: Well, use Mr. Schuyler's words, "race people." They think they have to be race people before they can be individuals.

ISH: And some universities, instead of designing courses, they're like conflicts between those people who . . . really have like a Communist orientation when you come on out with it . . . and, say, those who want to make it within the system or treat Afro-American culture as a serious entity instead of using it as a political rally hall. How do you see us resolving that:

SCHUYLER: What other system is there for them to make it in?

STEVE: No, he means in terms of — let's look at it this way — in terms of Frederick Douglass and those people came up here. I'm going back now to the 19th century. Now, you had an awful lot of free Negroes living up around here. You mentioned one earlier in the conversation. You were talking about Thomas Fortune. Now, how did they react to the rabble-rousing Douglass and what those people were doing? I mean, did it affect their livelihood at all . . . or their "consciousness"? — that's the kind of word they use now.

SCHUYLER: Well, all of them were opposed to slavery of course. But they disagreed with the means which were being advocated. Douglass himself did not follow John Brown. John Brown he gave him hell for not going along with him, but of course Fred Douglass was saying, in a way, in accordance with the old song Bert Williams popularized: "I may be crazy but I ain't no fool." And then you had a long debate among free Negroes in this country from the 1820s on about emigration to Africa.

STEVE: Yeah, right, that so called Colonization Society. And if I remember correctly Douglass came out totally against it.

SCHUYLER: Yes, he was against it, but there were a lot of Negroes who were not against it. There were about ten thousand Negroes who went to Liberia and Captain Paul Cuffee had plans for an organization to carry a lot of them to Sierra Leone.

STEVE: The guy's name — you know who I'm thinking about . . . Delaney. Martin Delaney was another one of them who supported the movement.

ISH: He always came back here though.

SCHUYLER: Well he only went there once.

STEVE: Well, in other words what that whole Garvey thing was was nothing else than echoes and . . . the rounding out of that whole thing that started in the 1820s.

SCHUYLER: Yes. What had been said and done before. Only he could get a strong voice . . .

ISH: Only he could talk louder. Lots of style. Lots of style.

SCHUYLER: Louder . . . .

ISH: How do you think Garvey will be evaluated when all the fuss dies down? Historically.

SCHUYLER: Well, I think he'll be evaluated like others who have had this dream of migrating to Africa. There are many of them who have had it, you know.

STEVE: Well, Chester Himes did a pretty good job of doing parody on that. I don't know if you read that "Cottom Comes To Harlem" which was a parody on that whole Garvey-thing. The movie version wasn't but the book itself was.

ISH: But of course, there are people in the country — leaders — who use African or quasi-African-based philosophies and have success like Elijah Muhammad and Amiri Baraka.

SCHUYLER: Well, now, Elijah Muhammad — he's another hustler. However, he's not bereft of ideas and has much more fruitful ideas than most of those who are pretending to be.

ISH: Like the farms and the businesses?

STEVE: In other words and from what you know about this country, being your age, would you see him as an American phenomenon somewhat similar to the Mormons? Would you be able to draw a parallel to them?

SCHUYLER: No.

STEVE: Because the Mormons are supposed to be an American religion — right?

SCHUYLER: No. Not unless he did as the Mormons did.

STEVE: Going out and getting some state . . .

SCHUYLER: Yes. Some territory. But you see the thing is about Elijah Muhammad's followers, they don't want to go anywhere and they don't even want a segregated state. They just want to be aloof as a sect.

STEVE: That goes back to what we were talking about in that interview you had, Ish. I think in *Changes* you were talking about this other guy who was around in the twenties, you know what I'm thinking about. Where everyone had cards saying they were Asians . . . .

ISH: Abdul Sufi Hamid?

STEVE: Yeah. He was up in Harlem at that time, wasn't he?

SCHUYLER: He was strictly . . .

ISH: No . . . excuse me, I meant Noble Drew.

STEVE: Yes.

ISH: The Moor.

SCHUYLER: The Moor. Well, they were authentic Moslems,

weren't they?

ISH: Well, they called themselves Moors.

STEVE: They had little cards they ran around with.

SCHUYLER: Of course the Moors had only been Moslems since about the seventh or eighth century, before that they had another faith.

ISH: I want to ask you this question. In *Black and Conservative,* you talked about the hassle you had with the Angelo Herndon's people . . . where you had to get a pistol because they were in the South organizing and you pointed out that he was a Communist tool . . . and that they weren't particularly ready for criticism, I guess, so they picketed your house.

SCHUYLER: I don't recall the name . . . I been picketed by so many people. I knew Angelo Herndon. I also know that he turned against the Communists.

ISH: He did, huh?

STEVE: Recently?

SCHUYLER: No, no, he's dead now.

STEVE: I mean was this a long time after his living them . . . what can I call it . . .

SCHUYLER: Well, you see they exploited Angelo Herndon as they do everybody else, only he detected it.

ISH: You feel he parallels today. I'm thinking of Angela Davis, for example. Do you think she's being exploited?

SCHUYLER: Well, undoubtedly . . . she's been exploited and she has swallowed this mob-hokum hook line and sinker and it's unfortunate I think because she seems to be a bright person. But she's gone too far and the thing she's advocating now, most of the intellectual rich gave that up years ago.

STEVE: Back in the thirties.

SCHUYLER: Well, back in the thirties and forties. I know very few real intellectuals today — I'm not speaking about color now — who swallow Marxism and Stalinism and that sort of thing. That's been discredited, even the Bolsheviks can't make it.

ISH: They're building Pepsi Cola factories now in the Soviet Union, I understand. China wants Coca-Cola.

SCHUYLER: Well, hell, everybody wants Coca-Cola well cooled. But I suppose you saw that comedy that James Cagney starred in — "One, Two, Three" — that was based on the rivalry between Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola to get the Russians to get a contract from the Russians? Oh, it was a classic! And it was laid in Berlin and so they were all trying to get these Russians' contracts and the Russians were trying to get the Coca-Cola and so on.

Well, I mean, that bubble has burst and I hate to see people at this late date you know . . .

STEVE: Come out with archaic ideas.

SCHUYLER: I don't bother now. I don't have anything to say about it at all.

STEVE: Well, let me get back to that question that Ish tried to ask you about the school situation — that's the one I'm fighting. The question was this: Now, you see, what's happening out there in the case of the community college is that you've got some bright kids out there, you've got some who aren't too smart, you got — whatever you have — the school kids. Anyway the whole emphasis on the school is on this whole "blackness" thing.

SCHUYLER: The whole *what?*

STEVE: "Blackness." In your days it would have been "race." It's making it very difficult for some of these kids to go to school because they're there to learn how, you know, to learn technique on what they want to do. They're not too interested in learning to be black because they know that already, you see. So, considering that, what do you think is going to happen at those schools? What's going to happen with that generation when they find out that the country isn't really put together that way?

SCHUYLER: I feel sorry for them.

STEVE: In other words they've got to stop reading Angela Davis and they have to read George Jackson.

ISH: Eldridge Cleaver.

STEVE: Eldridge Cleaver, and things like that instead of . . . .

SCHUYLER: That's an ordeal.

ISH: Instead of *Black No More.* Al Young, my friend, (he's editing the issue in which this interview is going to be), he wrote a novel called *Snakes* and two books of poetry; he's a professor. He taught *Black No More* recently. He said it was real controversial and the kids liked it very much.

SCHUYLER: Well . . . .

ISH: But that's another point of view he exposed them to.

STEVE: Yeah, completely different point of view from most of the stuff they're getting right now, you know.

SCHUYLER: Oh, yes, they can't conceive of laughing at this situation. They actually take this seriously.

ISH: You had a character say in *Black No More* that the solution for Blacks in this country is either to get out, get white, or get along.

SCHUYLER: Yes, that came from Kelly Moore. Kelly Moore

was professor of mathematics and later Dean at Howard University, and he wrote a lot of sound stuff. And during the war, he wrote an open letter to Woodrow Wilson on the disgrace of democracy. Now it sounds like some of these people just wrote it yesterday. But that was fifty-odd years ago and another thing Kelly Moore said. His definition of a Negro radical was an over-educated West Indian without a job. Now, another very capable man that came up here during that period was Dean Pickens who was one of the officials of the NAACP. That man had a tremendous sense of humor and many a Saturday afternoon we sat up in *The Messenger* office and discussed things, what they call rap sessions here now. And then there was another man here, you hardly ever hear his name mentioned, Hubert Harrison. He was what you'd call an over-educated West Indian. But he used to speak on corners here and he had a very brilliant delivery and all. That's one thing they didn't do during the Renaissance . . . they didn't attempt to speak any black English.

STEVE: How did Julian fit into all that? Was he just a showman? Or what? You know who I'm talking about — Black Eagle.

SCHUYLER: I know . . . Black Eagle. And I been knowing him since those days. He came here by way of Canada. He was West Indian of course, claiming to be aviator. He wore puttees that you could shave by and fine uniform but I don't think he got a student's license to fly until he'd been here about ten or fifteen years. But he got in dutch with Garvey because Garvey was talking about *sailing* back to Africa and he was talking about *flying* there. And so he and Garvey fell out. But I must say that Julian's been a good hustler.

STEVE: He's still around, isn't he? He doesn't make his home here, does he?

SCHUYLER: In the islands. See he got in with these munitions sellers, and that's a very lucrative field. He even sold munitions to the Finns and to the Guatemalans. He was trying to sell munitions to the Congo but that didn't make it. They were getting munitions, but not from Julian.

STEVE: Well, was Jack Johnson a big thing in New York at that time? Or would he just come through?

SCHUYLER: Part of the time. He lived here for a long time. He used to live next door to me when I lived up here at 321 Edgecomb Avenue.

STEVE: Bert Williams was living right down the street from you.

SCHUYLER: I told you Bert Williams lived two doors from

The Messenger office. *The Messenger* office was first at 2305 and then at 2311 Seventh Avenue, and a lot of notable people lived along there as they did along Edgecomb Avenue, what they called Sugar Hill.

ISH: DuBois lived up there.

SCHUYLER: I think he did. I don't know whether he lived up there or not. I know Walter White did. Roy Wilkins did when he got here.

STEVE: The Johnson brothers probably did too.

ISH: James Weldon and Rosamond Johnson. How did you get along with DuBois:

SCHUYLER: Oh, I got along all right, except in the thirties — around about '34 or '35, when he came out for segregation, you see, after being for integration all those years. And of course I took exception to that. He said that, in effect, Negroes should cut their communications and associations with whites as much as possible. Of course I said that was ridiculous because Negroes wouldn't have any jobs then. They couldn't live without working and who had all the jobs? And who had all the government? But staying aloof — you can't stay aloof from a thing you're living in the midst of. However, I had high respect for DuBois but not for some of his opinions which I think were too far fetched and which, if adopted, would just have the Negro worrying himself to death. He's got enough worries as it is. No, there are a lot of people that I've crossed their path, among Negroes, I mean, for whom I have great respect and in many instances admiration as individuals. For example I knew a man in Charleston, West Virginia — Mr. James. Now this man had a wholesale fruit and vegetable business and he had agents — this was back in the twenties — who went around and bought up crops from the farmers and all and he had a big warehouse, and a spur on the railroad coming in there. And I don't think you could find his name on anything in any of these Negro histories but this was an important thing. It made some Negroes ambitious to do likewise. And if anybody said they couldn't do it they could point to him.

STEVE: They had a model there.

ISH: Schuyler, what are you working on now?

SCHUYLER: Well, I work on films and books.

ISH: What do you think of the current wave of black films that are out? Have you seen any of them? *Superfly?*

SCHUYLER: Most of them that I've seen are terrible. Of course the boys are hustling and making money and they taught the Jews how to do the same thing, you know. I've seen very few of

any merit.

ISH: Which ones would you say had merit?

SCHUYLER: That's a tough question.

ISH: A lot of people are talking about *Sounder* right now.

SCHUYLER: *Sounder*'s just an ordinary film but it's better than most of them and I thought it was pretty well done.

ISH: What are you working on now?

SCHUYLER: Oh I just review films, generally. For the *Review of the News,* Belmont, Mass., a weekly news magazine. And then of course books — I've been fooling around books since 1923. Sometimes I don't want to see any more books. Although I just finished a very good novel last night — but, that novel *Augustus,* (by John Williams) is very well done and in a different way. That is to say, its story is told through a series of diaries and letters and other communications of that kind, one character with another. And it's very effective.

ISH: Who are the younger writers you read? You don't have to mention us. Have you read any of James MacPherson's work.

SCHUYLER: No.

ISH: *Hue and Cry,* or Barry Beckham, Ernest Gaines, author of *Bloodline,* and *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman . . . .*

SCHUYLER: No.

ISH: Cecil Brown? *Life and Loves of Mr. Jiveass Nigger.*

SCHUYLER: No. I didn't read them.

ISH: Do you see any plays?

SCHUYLER: Sometimes. When I have the time. You know, I have very little time because in the first place, except for this boy (John, his assistant) here there's nobody comes here. I do everything myself. Well, I guess my bar's not far. It's around the corner.

STEVE: Do you see any old timers over there — guys you knew back in the thirties and forties?

SCHUYLER: No.

STEVE: But they all know you over there, though.

SCHUYLER: Oh yes. Frank's is closed, you know, and there are bars where I'm known and if I happen to be in the neighborhood I drop in and take a spot.

STEVE, ISH: Thank you, Mr. Schuyler.

or, if you want it cannon, reed:

CANNON, REED: Thank you, Mr. Schuyler.

THE BODY
by Jay Wright

I
(man)

All day we charge
the sun toward its tomb.
I canter after you,
a buck myself,
placed by your coat and flaming hair,
in the green darkness around us.
Up ahead, we hear
the crack and spit of rifles,
the momentary whistle of trees,
a branch split
and then the silence.
All these antlered heads we track
sprout like bushes or ferns,
trying pitifully
to withdraw into the earth,
hoping their silence and stillness
will take us past and off
to an enemy,
moving fiercely, tangled
in the labyrinth
we make by moving ourselves.
With the rifle, you lead;
I follow with a knife,
feeling myself too well-armed,
shy at its touch,
like a shameless girl's,
against my leg.
We stalk these hills
for my childhood,
and the solitary, crooked cook
who could not kill,

our penance to prove
that nothing is right
but blood and the memory of it.
So I know
there will be no return
until we have drained the sun
of all its light.
Still, smoothly,
you push ahead, and circle,
and move as though the measure
had been set by God,
or some forgotten brother.
Perhaps it is memory.
Perhaps it is this presence
of the palpable deer
within me,
the breath, heart level and unafraid,
eyes the light of a movement,
the search
that will not end in death alone.
We wait in the silence now
for the one that has chosen us.
This, now, is the limit of our movement,
a point in the restless plane
of bushes and ferns,
dead trees, one body
moving toward this closed space.
And this is the point
of a remembered space,
focus of feeling,
focus of the steps concerned,
the mask with which I dress your face.
So, with all these poles
and definitions set,
I see you settle in the darkness.
Alone, I listen
for an unfamiliar step,
and know it cannot come.

2
(woman)

Pinched, at the peak of summer,
between two rivers,
I stroll to this corner,
and wait for you.
You know the telling time,
and come just at the right time,
walking from the other store,
along 125th
your robe so white
the lights defile it,
your hair hidden under a veil,
a Magdalene, or conjure woman,
smelling of snake root oil.
No one knows from where you come,
but we hear your first step,
feel the deliberate sternness of your dress,
moving toward us.
No one would take your corner.
No one would move within that field,
at that hour; no one
would move from it.
You come,
and even the snap of dice subsides;
cars, bars, lights and we ourselves
move without sound.
We pass and pass,
as though we were linked to you,
linked to your voice,
linked again to the rhythm of your body,
the set and ground of all movement,
the point and measure
that serve this source and ground
on which you move.
Say I wait and come here,
bearing the weight of a city
without measure,
to nestle under your left eye.
Say I snuggle here
in the cuddle of a crowd

you caress and scorn,
trying to measure its light,
trying to determine what form I take,
or lose, in its brief regard.

Often, you descend the box,
and chalk at a circle and cross,
another eye, at our feet.
You chant and scream in another tongue,
and stop and listen for echoes,
knowing we will not speak,
needing the tense presence of our bodies
to filter the sound,
to filter the light,
to touch and recognize
the achievement of your voice
— that other god,
taking his deliberate measure
of a city that will not fit.
Night after night,
you stand at this corner,
and beg us not to be afraid.
You turn and step along a line
in each direction,
as though you were dancing,
as though the dance
would establish some living point,
design a body,
rising at that point
to enter and shake you
until you were changed
or our eyes admitted it so.
This is a gathering of Baptist boys,
Rollers, witches and saints,
a choir of the fallen
who have not been released,
who would grovel under the lash
of your tongue,
to return, in the heat of your eye,
to a presence we may not remember,
but know.

3
(the man's soul)

Fishermen out there in the dark — O you
Who rake the waves or chase their wake —
Weave for him a shadow out of your laughter
For a dumb child to hide his nakedness . . .
— Christopher Okigbo, Lament of the Drums, III

Long before dawn,
the fishermen wake
in the season,
take their three-tiered
lunch buckets,
their straw hats
and quexquemetls,
and wind,
barefoot and secretive,
through the maze and stillness
of this rough-grained town,
down to the lake.
All night,
I have lain,
crutched in an old cockleshell,
crushing sand crabs
that dart after the searchlight,
their hint of sun,
listening to the late serenades
tuck the lovers into yesterday.
I watch the fishermen
take their small boats,
load them with nets
and push off for the deep
part of the lake.
Slowly, one by one,
they row away, and move
until they are strung
along the water
like dark and silent birds
nesting on the surface.
At this hour,
the water seems to accept

their movement and their stillness
like a spider web at ease
in its own corner,
or a cave that welcomes a boy
with the right amount of light.
I return and turn to them
again each morning,
and wait for that moment
between the movement and the stillness
when the men, stretched out,
seem to be praying,
listening and testing the depths
for a murmur of discontent.
They do not turn to each other,
or call, or gesture,
but rise like one body awaking,
and drop their nets,
looking into the water,
listening again,
taking the task step by step,
fixing the morning
with these real movements and signs.
Each day, the movements
are only shadows of themselves.
The men, clothed just so,
are memories of themselves.
They take the water, and return,
and do not know, or care,
that I watch and work
my own order.
They have their own,
and float back into the light,
to wind their ropes around their waists,
and dance their nets and fish
into the hungry arms of the women,
come from the maze and stillness of the town,
waiting on the shore.

4
(the woman's soul)

You sit on your stool,
at the head of your rug,
dip, palm and rake these beans,
and pick the stones and burrs away.
With the right touch of sun,
the right angle and measure
of your touch, these brown
and melancholy sprouts
are cowries, shells,
sea-tinged pearls,
the infinite eye of God.
At dawn,
you clap your children
into dun brown coats,
as though you would disguise them,
and send them along the roads,
over moss-covered fences,
into any corner and cave
that will yield a bean.
You wash your rug,
and brush your dress,
and shake and brush your hair.
You move in the early light,
singing, and plotting the place
where each bean will fall,
each color lit by the space
it will take,
each space lit
by the presence of the bean.
You enter the market,
and sit erect, waiting
for the boys' return,
the brown and threadbare sacks
to be set just at your right hand.
This is little enough to start
your singing again,
little enough to have you call
and welcome the timid foragers

close to the circle and sparkle
of your rug, the plucked seeds,
spread out and radiating now
like stars.
Pulled from the earth,
they show their signs,
until you pinch
their vestiges of navels.
Cleaned now,
they take their final form
upon your rug,
dipped, palmed and raked into light,
their skins already beginning to wrinkle
and break away from your love.

A SPECIAL, SELFISH JOY
by Robert Garner

It was a sunny October morning in San Francisco and although I was a bit uncomfortable wearing a suit and necktie, I felt fresh again that morning. I was going out to the Bay Area Urban League office and hoping that they could "place" me.

It was 1966. My buddy, Glenn Bliss, had given me a ride from Chicago. We had found a place to live in the Mission district among the Mexicans, Chinese, and Retired-elderlies. I took the wrong trolley from the Mission, got off downtown on Market Street, and began walking. Gilded *objets d'art* beside soiled lace in the windows of import houses; Variety and Novelty stores with ancient GOING OUT OF BUSINESS signs; small grimy movie houses; and Arcades and Magazine stores with pornography and "Art" movies in their darkened rear recesses. Executives and salesmen, shoppers, secretaries, homosexuals, models, prostitutes, blindmen with tin cups — none of these city-folk met my eyes with the slightest recognition.

As I walked with the people on Market Street, a clear feeling of my separation from home, family, and order came to me. Being without anything to do tends to make me feel useless and out of place. Fear that I wouldn't be able to find work nagged me, irritated the lining of my stomach. I had no skills, only three and a half night-school semesters in Architectural Engineering at Roosevelt University. And a pregnant girl waiting in Chicago for me to send for and marry her. I had that going for me.

I turned off Market Street through the fringe of the downtown area. A young black man in tight sky-blue trousers switched past and gave me a coy glance; and a grocer stood in the doorway to his store watching the young man through hard, narrow eyes. The grocer's eyes met mine and he turned away, wiping his hands on his greasy, blood-stained apron and puffing a wet cigar stub.

Up a long greyshadowed San Francisco hill. Townhouses built to sit level on the sloping streets. Sutter Street: quiet, residential, a whiff of genteel San Francisco. Apartment buildings with French mirrors and marble lobbies.

I trudged the sidewalks, upward, downward, bent from the hip, hands in my pockets. My head erect and rigid with a burden of purpose. I had been laid off my job as an apprentice technical illustrator, and then Janice got herself pregnant. She was over three months by now. Beneath my foot! I jerked sideways; danced around a parking meter. I had almost stepped on a white-White pigeon, smooth feathered and snowy breasted; lying dead on the incline of a hill on quiet Bush Street beneath the bay window of an apartment where tea was served in antiques. It was the window of a salon containing Austrian-red sofas, freshly dampened plants, and heriloom china encased in plate glass cupboards. At my feet, below that window, lay a dead white pigeon.

Half an hour later, and I was in the Fillmore district. Black faces sprayed through the ghetto. Young men laughing in front of the Booker Washington Hotel. Black and honey colored women in tight dresses, swinging their purses to the music blaring from the record store. . . . . Boys dashing and shouting between parked cars. Old men playing checkers in cafes and barber shops. Sullen men leaning against falling buildings and slouching in doorways papered and repapered with old posters. Recognition from bundled matrons carrying brown paper bags and from gaunt men driving Thunderbirds.

The Urban League office was on a quiet, desolate street. The building was one of many old Victorian-style buildings with cracking facades and peeling paint. A desert-like street of sun, and silence, and want. I entered the building and mounted the stairway to the office.

As I entered the office, I was facing an Information window across the room. Through his window I could see a desk and telephone, and a bulletin board on the wall. The anteroom where I stood was decorated in drab "outer-office" with a five-foot fern potted in the center of the room. Beside this wilting plant, a young, Caucasian scholar in tie and blazer jacket stood and smoothed his full red beard with his hand.

A girl-woman was bending over the desk behind the window; she had close-cropped hair and wore tinted glasses and a Peck and Peck-ish suit. Her natural complexion was as creamed coffee.

The chic girl-woman turned the corner from behind the Information window and went into a room in the back. "Be with you in a minute" she said on her bouncy way through.

"Fine" I replied, feeling easy and optimistic: here was a generous and cordial oasis. I looked at the bearded prep-school graduate and smiled. But he looked toward me for a moment wondering if he could or should see me, then turned his back.

I relaxed on the couch and then the girl came back into the anteroom. Before I could stand up from the couch, she was linking her arm under beard-boy's and dragging him out the door. He let himself be led out without a struggle, but his face smiling down at her tousled head of hair looked uncertain.

But me! She had been talking to him when she said "Be with you in a minute". I lit a cigarette and exhaled a stream of smoke toward the fern.

A thin, black girl wearing severe glasses came to the Information window. She asked if I had an appointment and gave me a card to fill out when I said no. Name, marital status, dependents, employment experience, police record, social security number, parents (divorced or deceased), education, and other items — all on a 4 by 6 inch card.

When she saw that I had circled college, she was nicer; "You've *had* college, I see". They could interview me in two weeks, "Our interviewers are all booked up," she sniffed.

Turning, I almost walked over a fragrant pink flower fresh from the garden of high school. Hair straightened and curled, stocking seams straight, she was waiting to hand in her application for interview.

"Excuse me." Her glistening eyes begged me for help even as her lips forgave me. I slipped away from Information. At the door, I looked back to see the girl in pink standing straight, ripe, and trusting in front of Black, Thin, Glasses behind the Information window.

Outside the office, I lingered and smoked, hoping to strike up something with the girl in pink when she came out. But some social worker types came in conversing and cajoling and took over the stairway; so I walked down by the bare bannister and out the heavy door. I'll probably be an old married man soon anyway.

When I reached the end of the block and crossed at the light, little Miss Pink Flower was walking away in the other direction,

her petals drooping. Maybe she hadn't circled "college"; maybe it would be three weeks or a month before her interview. I told myself that she would be in full bloom again before nightfall.

Began to search the neighborhood for Buchanan Street and a Job Training Center I had heard mentioned. Came down a long, shadowed block like some surrealist painting I could not remember. Beside me a huge, grey-tan building stretched the length of the block; it hid the sun and cast a huge shadow on the four-lane highway through the ghetto. A long, eternal street and its geometrical shadow. The pavement extended a lifetime to the corner of the building and the end of the block.

There at the end approaching my steps out of some dream, a woman leaned against the corner of the building. She was dressed in a brown jersey skirt and a white sweater, and her hair flowed onto her shoulders. I would ask her, "Could you please tell me how to get to Buchanan Street."

Her face turned, looked at some invisible shield between us, and leaned sideways, cheek against the grey-tan building. She was looking at some painful memory down that block I had just walked. Her face was pocked, ugly, caked in a whitish powder; her eyebrows had been shaved off and some inky substance was sketched in their place.

"Excuse me, Miss . . ."

"Don't ask me nothing. I don't know nothing." She raised her hand, warding me off. Her upturned palm pressed against the invisible shield between us as if she was suffocating. The hand dropped, the shield closed in; her lips were sealed and her eyes went hard and blank. God help her.

I turned the corner — a bright white sun in a white desert sky blinded me. Into a barber shop. An old man, wearing a Giant's baseball cap above his black, leathery face, sat across the domino board from the barber; I mumbled my question.

"Do I know Buchanan?" the barber, a bald man in a white smock, looking up from his domino game, asked in reply.

"No, no. Buchanan *Street*."

"Aw yeah, two blocks down", pointing with his hand.

The old man's eyes beneath the baseball cap followed me as I left the shop. The eyes seemed to hold a smile or a question, as though I were behaving strangely.

As I walked out of the Fillmore, minutes later and still no job, I almost stepped in a pile of shit. I began to laugh quietly. At myself, and the pigeon, and the pile of shit. Gradually, my laughter grew up in circles ever wider and louder above my head. I remember watching the pealing laughter rise from my face skyward. And soon the cyclone of laughter whirled me about in a dance before the pile of shit.

Tears dropped rapidly as rain from my eyes to the contorted corners of my lips and dribbled off my chin. My hands fluttered before my stomach, my chest; they were raised to the heavens in helpless, wordless prayer.

Then my delirious paroxysms felled me, and brought me to my knees on the pavement where I was confronted by that pile of dog's turd.

I sniffled; wiped my eyes with the back of my hand to stem the tears. Soberly, I was forced to examine the brown-black shit piled and hardening in the sun; green flies burrowed under and over its decaying ridges. I leaned back on my heels, hands on my knees on the pavement, my head up and away; I peered down at the shit with the dignified disdain of a shit connoiseur.

A lady passed and looked down at me wondrously. What a sight I must have made: kneeling before waste, judging its contour and odor to determine its merit and meaning.

I came to a decision. Purposefully, I looked about until I found a piece of cardboard and a paper sack in the litter on the street. I used the cardboard to scoop up every single turd and dumped it all into the sack.

Carrying my sack, I walked further on. Soon I came to a vacant lot and there buried the sack in loose, sandy dirt among high, browning weeds.

Continuing my journey, I moved hurriedly. There was still time to try places downtown. That night, I would write to Janice and tell her I loved her, and I needed her, and I would adore our child, whether son or daughter, and to not worry.

My heart, my body, was kindled with first, new stirrings of special, selfish joy in bearing my responsibilities; and I looked sharply about me now for any old lady crossing the streets, who might need help.

NEW AND OLD GOSPEL
by Nate Mackey

The pillows wet our faces with
the sweat of soft
leaves. And ragmen pick
the city like
sores. The gummed
hush of watered
  grasses fondles our
unrest, and as
outside the approach
of autumn whispers all our
unkept secrets
  random winds unkink what hints your
hair lets fall. And
bits of rainbow wet the
floor and voices
punish what was silence.
As stars walk the
  backs of our
heads our heads
turn waking,

  while
we press for what at last
will be our lives
to be so,
  soon.

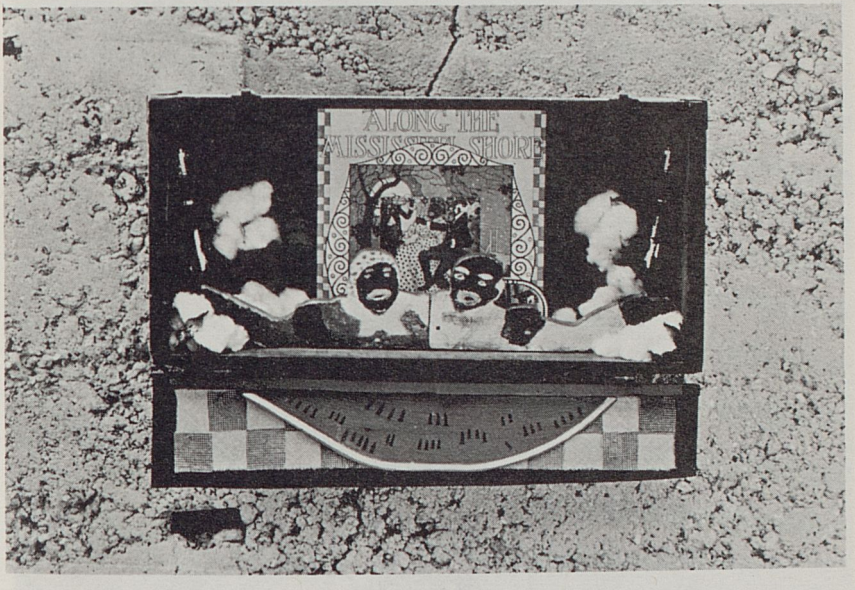
"ART IS A WINDOW, A WAY OF SHARING."
Henri Matisse

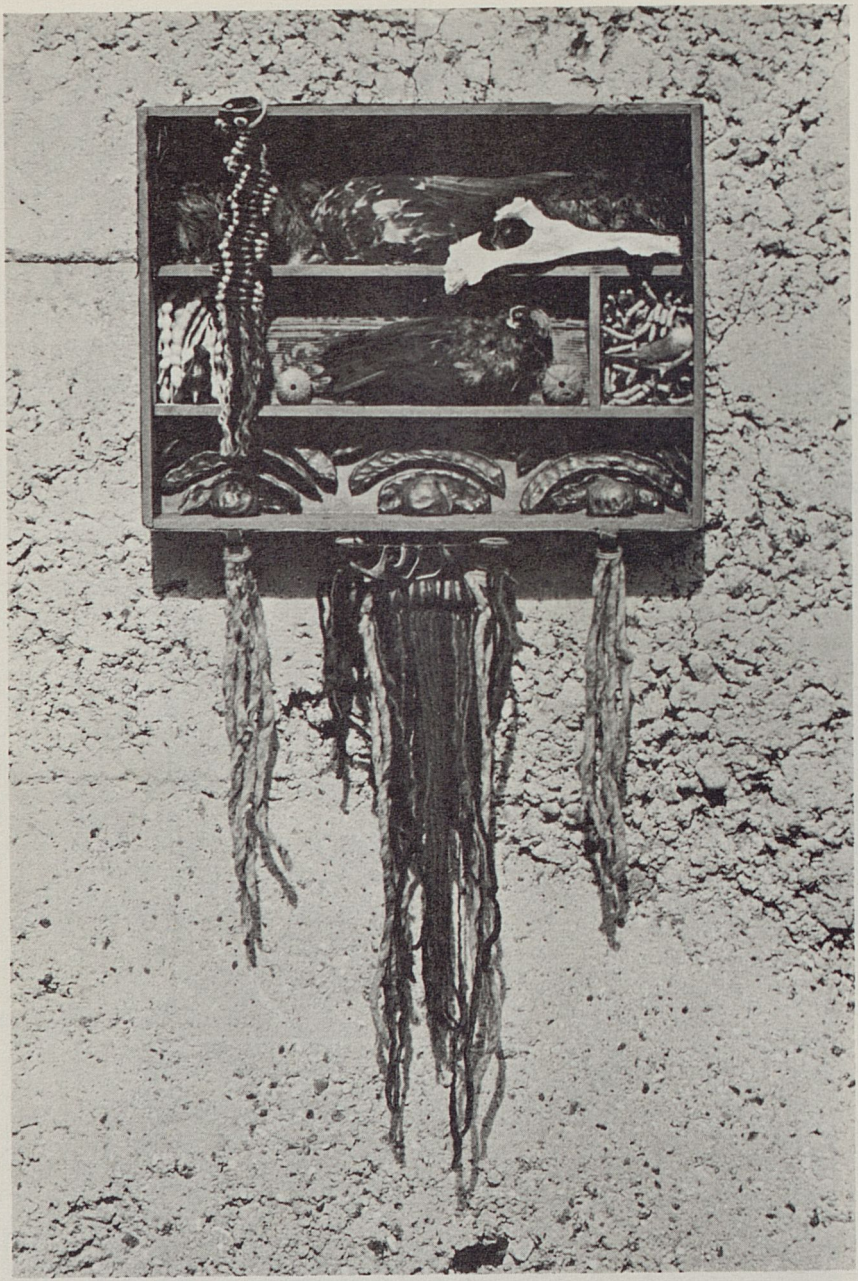
At this time of my life, my art has become my commitment. There is something inside me that wants out. Art is the vehicle. Sometimes the something is the mystery, the secrets of Africa, Egypt, Oceania. The limbo of before birth and after death. Sometimes the something is the anger of the plight of the Black; the humiliation of derogatory images, the pain of lynching. I have collected derogatory Black images for several years. Many are so hurtful, I knew I could not avoid the pain, so it became part of my art.

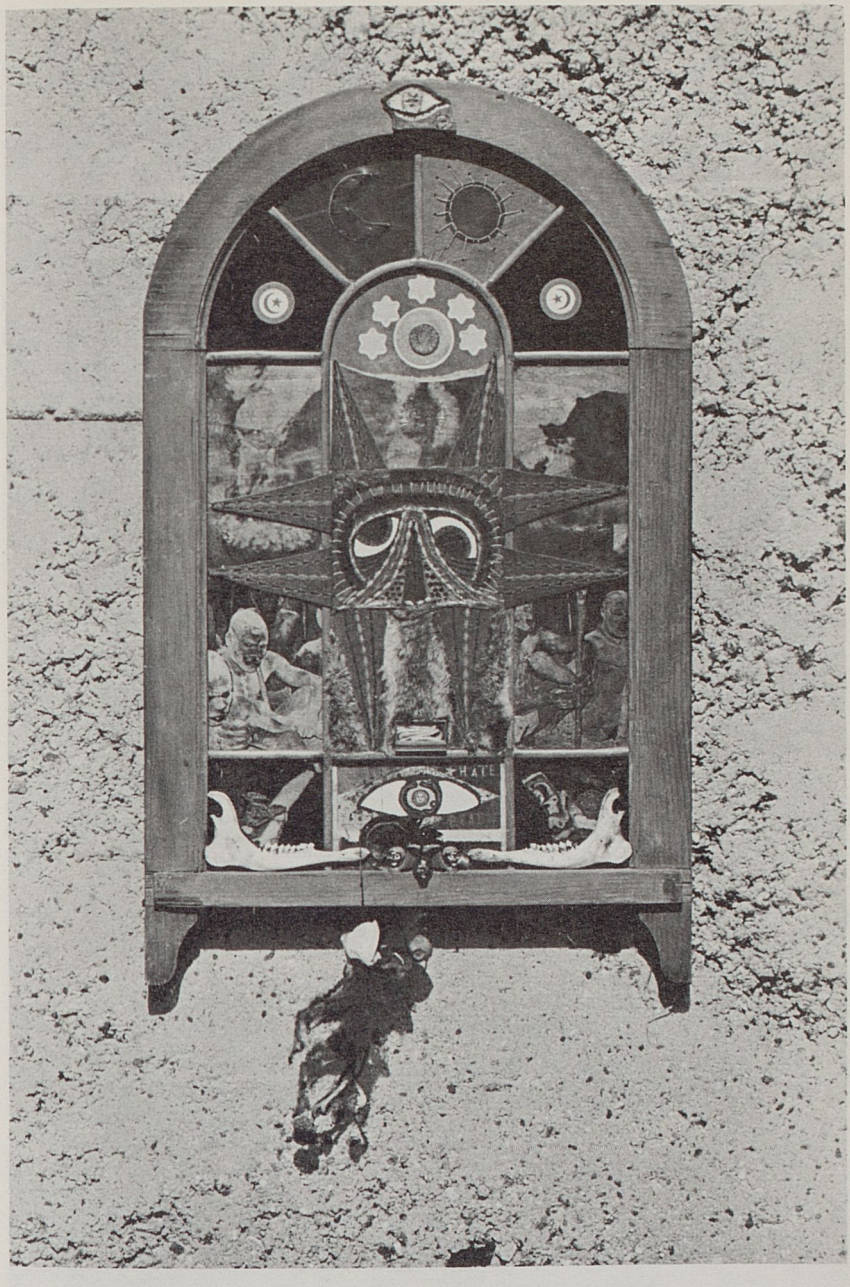
The series "Exploding the Myth", is not only a reminder of the pain but also an explanation of todays anger and bitterness. The derogatory images are still shackles on the Black. In my work, I strive to expose and explode the myths surrounding Blacks. As a Black woman, as an artist, I am working toward "The Liberation of Aunt Jemima".

The materials I use are found objects, discards, and organic objects such as shells, feathers, bones, etc. I find that I am somewhat hypnotized by my work. I may work on several pieces at once . . . going from one to another selecting-rejecting objects, images, symbols, as if in a trance. But it works, the pieces fit, the message is revealed and again the magic happens. Dat ol' Black Magic!

— *Betye Saar*
1973







10 o'clock at Ninilekih

27 road-runner camper,
tandem wheels, self-contained

I have an Indian friend
who lives in Happy Valley

He trains horses for hunting
in the Kenai Mountains

He was afraid to take
them alone

four packhorses, five
to ride

four rivers start,
head waters of north
fork: Anehar, Nivileheh,
Deep Creek, Kosolif.

LOVE LETTERS:
THE CARIBOU HILLS, THE MOOSE RANGE
by Michael S. Harper

White frost every night
ice quarter inch thick
two weeks gone to bring
my moose out; in my trailer
home on Labor Day
I left at 4 a.m.
to make the mail run
to *four corners*
in the Caribou Hills
on the edge of the Moose Range.

Motor rigs stop on
its edge; on horseback
and foot, the grass tall
as a horse, the range
of the moose and brown bear
and the Indian guide named Jim Wilson.

Four men from Colorado
never seen moose
or brown bear; "you've got
to help me", Jim Wilson said.
Forty years since I rode,
bear country, infra-red
sight, four fevered men
that might be handled
and the high grass of the moose.

"I'll handle the horses;
got to have your rifle;
they're paying me well;
got to make sure we come back out."

D-2 cat, long trailer
to haul moose left:
afoot or horseback

Got to have you
and your rifle

7 mm magnum,
no close quarter bear gun

mode camp; broke ice
to water horses

Left *four forners* at 4 a.m.
twenty mile ride
in the grass of the moose;
camped, heaviness
of the brown bear,
the horse grass, the grass
of the moose we sat
on the moose range
still in the timber,
the horses uneasy,
black bear in the camp
in my sight, hobbled
horses, freezing rain
high grass of the moose
and the brown bear on the moose range.

Loaded guns half asleep,
ten miles on our way, horses
at the creek, four men and their
own cook, east orange sky,
brown bear on the moose range,
moose and high grass and the range
or heaviness from *four corners.*

Single file men forced
to unload rifles in scabbards
we rode ahead in the tall grass,
Jim at head left of the hill,
my horse at the rear,
me, my gun out
to fall with the gun
when thrown; horses act up
and we dismount
except Jim;
in the saddle above the high
grass, the heaviness of moose
the range of brown bear,
grass so tall couldn't see
the moose, Jim Wilson
spotted five brown bear
coming right at us.

we ate well;
they brought their cook:
hot biscuits, ham & eggs

hunters wanted to see bear;
can't hold horses,
afoot in tall grass
sure death —

a mile downwind
in shorter grass

Partly wooded valley
over the mountain;
moose getting up —
bear getting up —
to stare:

Four men from Colorado
wanted their shots,
the high grass, the horses
up on the moose range,
the brown bear,
"If you don't put
up your guns in the scabbards
we're going home" —
Sight twenty feet,
the tall grass and the range
of the moose, brown bear
coming right at us.

Around the hill the grass
two feet tall, horses calm,
bear on the trail in the high
grass on the moose range;
up the hill in new snow
moose tracks, 16" tracks of bear;
four men took pictures:
"didn't know there was this
kind of animal in North America" —
"glad to see so much faith
in your helper";
"tell us what to do,
there'll be no questions."

Cold, wind up,
cook, coffee and cold
sandwiches; glasses over
part timbered valley,
head waters of the fox,
south fork of the Anchor River:
four spots, moose, brown,
bear at the top of the hill;
horses slid their hinds
down to timber line.

Most men never
see their faith

Buffalo hunt, to ride
alongside and shoot
on the run

two horses end
over end this
first quarter mile,
couldn't see men
in the high grass

I counted 68
moose with racks
unreal

The tall grass of the moose range;
grass up to horsebits,
huge bull moose got up
to look, stand, look:
and four men decided a buffalo
hunt, to pick out a moose
and run him down, to
shoot him off the horse
on the dead run
in the tall grass
on the moose range.

Twenty-seven bull moose,
horned hay stakes,
and Jim Wilson watched the killing:
quarter mile chase,
two horses down with hunters,
dead hunter lighter than moose,
1200 lbs of bull moose
in the tall grass of the moose range.

One not fit to eat with five
shots, run to death,
moose looked on, stood
looking on, in the tall grass,
the hay stakes, the heaviness
of brown bear, the horsebit grass,
the range of moose
in the tall grass of the moose range.

Icy trails, half a moose,
horse slipping with hunter,
the moose, the grass
high as a horse, the heaviness
of the brown bear, the dark
of lit campsite,
in the tall grass of the moose range

Most men never see

Two bruised men,
a broken rifle

Three days hauling
moose out, last night
the night of bear:
thought the horses
wanted moose —
he was going to kill them

Everyone got
their moose;
the bear ran
in a circle
of bullet wounds

From the tall grass of the moose range
the brown bear killed two hobbled
horses with swat of hay rake,
half a moose a large bale
in the horsebit grass,
the heaviness of the moose range,
the sight in the dark,
men on the moose range
running in the tall grass of the brown bear.

Start with breaking legs
to slow them down, the shoulder
in the rain and snow,
night at thirty yards,
tall grass of the horsebit,
moose range
and the tall grass of the brown bear.

To break shoulders
legs of brown bear
to aim for the neck
in dark at thirty
yards, in tall grass
the moose range above
timber line Jim Wilson
half sick with old Indian
in the fire
of the tall grass of the moose range.

In the tall grass
of the brown bear
above timber line on moose range
four men from Colorado
understood why Jim Wilson
spent two days at Bishop's
cafe, at the trailer
of the *four corners*
on the mail run,
at the timber line
where cats, motor rigs
parked, the hill

Green hunters/horses:
poor combination

While they skinned bear
we hunted broken
horses with a plane:
no luck

In a locker in Kenai —

We think the horses
are dead; they couldn't
see

of the high grass
on the moose range and brown bear;
to pay money, all you want,
to visit Colorado free,
as long as you want, stay,
to promise it won't cost
a cent, from the tall grass
the brown bear and range
of moose in the tall grass:
settle down with Jim Wilson:
"didn't know there was this kind
of animal in North America" —

On the way back, along the timber
line, in the tall grass
the brown bear, the iced rain
snow on the range of moose
in the tall grass of brown bear,
600 lbs of meat
hung to be cut and wrapped;

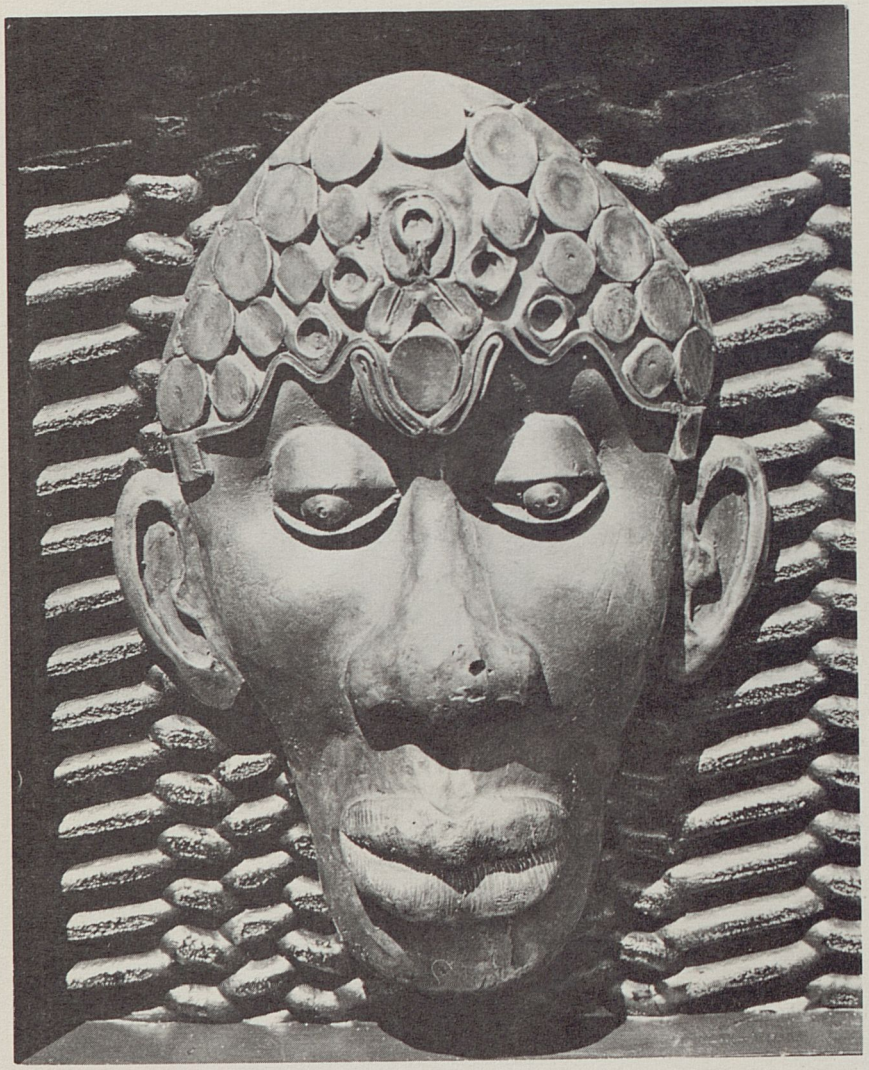
from Seward, to *four corners,*
to the end of the oil well road,
the walk back to *four corners,*
to help four men get a moose,
to make a rug of brown bear,
the last cutting of hay,
and the quarter inch ice,
Jim Wilson, the grass high as bits
of horses, of brown bear,
of moose in tall grass,
on moose range, a hay rake
at timber line
at creek at *four corners*
four men from North America
if you ever stop in Colorado,
in the high grass,
in the saddle, in the heaviness
of brown bear, in the grass
of the moose range,

I hold moral convictions top priority in people

these *four corners,* in the horse
bit, the western range
of the moose, the brown bear
of this kind of animal
in North America,
his bloody hands, with scabbard
his bloody hands, finally, at salty sea.

JOSEPH GERAIS JR.

Painter - Sculptor



FALL OF THE CAT
by
Billy Wandera

Okesa Kuduoli was a remarkable man in many ways. Tall with broad shoulders, he had muscular arms and a large head chipped flat on the sides and at the top. His eyes were sharp and piercing; his thick nose drooped over a wide mouth. He moved in a swaggering manner to emphasize that it suited his dignity. Okesa always dressed in old khaki shorts and shirts donated by relatives. He might be obscure in his clothes but his name had a magic effect. Children called themselves Okesa; bulls were named after Okesa; brave dogs were identified with Okesa. He was the famous wrestler of Bunyala, a man of reputable strength. Okesa had knocked down every opponent as far back as anybody could remember. He did not hesitate to inform anyone that he could throw him down in the time interval it takes an eye to blink. When provoked to prove it he knocked down an opponent instantly. Fear of the man was just as deep as the honor for his name. Nobody dared incur his wrath. He roamed the village showing off his strength and aggressing any man he met. He had a big mouth, always ready to chide the weak and challenge the strong.

Okesa swaggered towards the home in which, he had heard, there was a beer party.

"Anybody home?" he shouted.

He turned his head in the direction of the euphobia fence and, near the grass-thatched house, he saw a goat, some fowls, broken pots and a nude child.

"Anybody home?" he shouted again.

The nude child pointed at a tree behind the house.

"Can't you speak out, you little fool. When did you become dumb?"

He clicked and walked to the tree. In the shade he found men seated around a big beer pot from which long, bamboo drinking

straws emerged to everyone.

"We are here, Okesa," the owner of the home said. "You boy, *a chair!*"

While he stood waiting for the chair, Okesa noticed the group of women who sat a short distance away.

"How are you, my wives?" Okesa said.

"We are fine," some of the women replied.

"Look at that fool," one elderly woman said then chuckled. "Go and bring a he-goat, now. How dare you include me among your wives? Don't you know I am your mother-in-law?"

"So it is you," Okesa said. He was not impressed. "My apologies. You know, nobody worries about he-goats these days."

"You are right," an old man said. "The world has changed a lot. During my youth men hid from their mothers-in-law. See what they do these days? Young men dance with their mothers-in-law."

"They do?" a woman remarked. "God!"

Okesa drew his chair close to the group.

"Welcome, welcome," they murmured. They shrank in his presence and suspended the conversation which had been in progress. Meanwhile Okesa remained silent until he had thirstily sucked in two straw-fulls of beer. He nodded and complimented the hand of the brewer.

"It is a shame that a person like him drinks where men are," Okesa said pointing at a bearded man who sheepishly looked aside. "He does not own a cow. He cannot buy food for his wife!"

"Okesa, you are as poor as I am, anyway," the taunted man replied with composure. "What do you have to be proud of?"

"My wife!" Okesa retorted. "I may be poor but I work hard to get food for my family. I keep my wife in my grip. She does not run away like yours did the other day."

"A man who does not buy his own clothes should not open his mouth in public," somebody said.

Okesa looked around slowly to find out where the statement originated His eyes fell on a small man.

"You are not worth fighting," Okesa said shaking his head in scorn. "I can just squash you in my hand like this . . . ." He demonstrated how to squash a human being in another human being's hand.

"Countrymen, drink beer in peace," an old man said. "This is not the time to laugh at other people's poverty and bad luck. Aren't we all poor? Who owns a bicycle among us?"

"We are just having fun," Okesa said. "I hope nobody is hurt by this light talk."

The drinking had been going on for a long time when one woman's voice rent the air.

"I hear you, sister-in-law," Okesa said. "You sing like the daughter of Bunyala."

Flattered by this remark, the woman sprung up and tugged the arms of two of her neighbours. "Come, sisters," she said, "let us sing for my brother-in-law."

The women jogged in the compound, waving imaginary fly-whisks. They stopped, wriggled their shoulders and hips then promptly turned around. Okesa's sister-in-law took the lead in the chanting.

Hear my song, hear my praise,
Music for you spreads to the whole world
Okesa!
You bring us meat from the wild pigs,
You ride the men; weaklings they are.
Okesa!
You rode Osama, the elephant
You rode Otemo, the leopard,
Men the whole world could not beat.
You are the hero.
Okesa!
The hero of Bunyala.

"Well done, well done," the men said. They clapped.

"Sister!" Okesa shouted, "your beauty and voice do me much credit. I am proud I shivered that gloomy night in Bulwani, waiting to abduct you."

"You know," one man said, "she forgot to mention the Luo who styles himself 'the snake has no waist'."

"Sure," Okesa said. He nodded. "He has knocked down every opponent in his country so his foolish head led him to Bunyala. They advised him to fight the juniors but he insisted on meeting me, the Cat. I taught him a lesson, didn't I?"

He looked at the group and waited for approval.

"Quite right," the men grunted in between mouth-fulls of beer.

Okesa continued, "I knocked him down hard, so hard that he broke the wind aloud, booomm!"

He poked the beer with his drinking straw. "You know, I understand his wife ran away when she heard what he did. Women are strange. Sometimes they desert their husbands for very trivial reasons." He looked at the bearded man and said,

"Take my friend here. His wife ran away because he could not buy her sugar . . . . "

"Listen," one old man said, "you should not talk about people's domestic troubles, especially at a beer party."

"Not when the troubles have escaped through the roof," Okesa insisted. "Any secret that leaks from a man's house is for the whole world."

"Who is this man who shouts where people drink beer and talks about others as though he is the husband of all men?" somebody asked in a deep voice. He addressed no particular individual but it was obvious he meant Okesa.

Okesa calmly searched the crowd for the speaker. He saw a neat young man with a moustache. The young man had a body that looked tough and taut; everything about him was lean except for his thick, muscular arms. From the length of his legs he might be a tall one.

A man sitting next to the young man, sensing that the statement might annoy Okesa, turned to him and whispered, "Be careful. You are talking to Okesa Koduoli. We would not want to see him maul you. Quite a tough guy he is, you know in the whole of Bunyala."

"I see," the stranger uttered through clenched teeth.

"Don't you know me?" Okesa demanded.

"I have heard you are Okesa Koduoli."

"You say. I am Okesa Koduoli, a caterpillar which is used to frighten children. All you need say is, 'Here comes a caterpillar' and the crying child becomes dumb. Where I go men shut their mouths in fear."

"Those must be cowards," the young man replied.

"Cowards?" Okesa said. "Men like Otemo the Leopard have flinched in my presence. You play with the Cat. I am Okesa the Cat which never falls on its ribs no matter how fast you hurl it down. I am gentle and neat . . . ." (which he was not) " . . . but no one will ever put me down on the ground. The ribs of Namulembo shall never lie on soil while a man squats over me. That is what we call impossible, besides I am not a woman!"

The young man laughed slowly and sarcastically.

"Some of you have never been out of Bunyala," he said. "You think wrestlers only live here. Go to Rwanda, my friend. Go to Rwanda. You will find giants of men who can toss you down like a feather. I tell you go to Rwanda."

"I am a match for *anybody* on earth," the Cat said thumping his chest. He shouted, "Anybody!"

"Except me, that is," the young man said calmly.

Impulsively the others raised their heads and gazed at the person who dared challenge the Cat. A man on the other side roared with laughter then remarked that either the young man must be very foolish or he had one straw-full too much.

"I have surveyed you from head to toe," Okesa said. He paused and twitched his nose. ". . . with my two eyes. I see nothing . . . and I say *nothing* . . . worth challenging."

"How can you say that?" the young man burst. "Do you know me? Let me tell you that I am Obudo son of Okwaro son of Nasinyama."

"There is no gallant Nasinyama," Okesa interrupted. He spat on the ground. "They are all weaklings."

"Some people are intoxicated on their so-called strength," Obudo said. "The Cat obviously does not know who I am. Let me introduce myself. I am the tip of a dog's nose that never dries up even during drought. I am Obudo the Mosquito. Although it looks small and delicate, its leg does break the mighty axe. Tactics, gentlemen, tactics. Place the leg of a mosquito on rails and give it a mighty blow with an axe. In pieces shall the axe fly. I look delicate," He observed himself this way and that. "But I can bring down the strong, including the so-called Cat."

"Here! Here!" the people shouted. "This is an open challenge."

"Such a challenge could not be ignored during my youth," a grey-haired man said.

"I feel too ashamed to accept the challenge," Okesa said, squinting at the mosquito. "Somebody ought to advise my friend here."

"We want to drink beer," someone pointed out. "Those who want to wrestle might be pleased to hear that there is a contest next week, in the open. Let the Cat and the Mosquito meet there."

It was too late. The Cat had plucked a tuft of grass and scattered it on the head of the Mosquito. The Mosquito brushed off the rubbish and removed his shirt. The Cat got rid of his rags. Everyone stood up.

The owner of the home asked anxiously, "I hope this is not a fight?"

"You can be sure there will be no bloodshed," the Mosquito assured him. This is just a light friendly match."

"That's the spirit, Nasinyama," the observers told him.

The Cat and the Mosquito approached each other at the speed of a snail as they observed each other's moves. They stooped with

their arms projecting out like the wings of birds preparing to fly. The distance between them reduced to inches. They came to a stop and stared at each other. Suddenly, they plunged forward, grabbed each other's back and jerked. The Cat had the Mosquito in his hold and it seemed as if he would break the latter's body in two. He swung him to the right, just lifting him off the ground, swung him more violently to the left and at an opportune moment released his hand. With a thud, the Mosquito was prostrate on the ground.

The women spectators ran to the Cat, raised his arms and showered praises on him.

"The fellow on the ground is mad," a spectator remarked. "We warned him."

"Gentlemen, is it worth watching another humiliation?" the Cat asked.

"Obviously not!"

"A fair play is at least two games," said the Mosquito standing up.

"All right."

The contestants approached and grabbed one another as before. The Cat tried a similar trick but it failed — the Mosquito was agile this time. They panted as sweat dripped down their backs. They pushed and pulled, jerked and swayed. Then the Mosquito thrust his right leg forward to form a pivot, forced the Cat against it and, in a flash, the incredible happened. The Cat lay flat on the ground with the Mosquito squatting on him.

"Do you see what I see?" one old man asked another. The second old man nodded.

The first old man continued, "My eyes are weak but I think I see Okesa Koduoli, the Cat, on the ground."

The other man nodded again.

"Stand up and shut your big mouth," the Mosquito ordered.

"It is not over," the Cat spat. "It is not over! I will teach you a lesson."

The Cat sprung up, grabbed the Mosquito and drove him around in fury. The muscles of his neck stood out in exertion. His face was a river of sweat. He heaved and pivoted, twisted and wrung but he could not overcome the Mosquito. For a minute they just chained each other helplessly and were uncertain of the next move. Then revived the heaving, groaning, stumping and panting. The Mosquito now had the Cat awkwardly pinioned on his back. He heaved. The cat could not be lifted an inch. There was applause. But anxiety soon took over as the Mosquito heaved

with all his strength and swung his haunch deftly. The Cat rolled over his opponent's back and head and fell on the ground from where he groaned.

"How old is this Cat?" the Mosquito remarked pointing at the vanquished. The mouths of the spectators were held agape. Nobody believed that the impossible had happened: twice the Cat had fallen on his ribs.

The Cat brushed off the dust of shame before he said, "You are a man." He extended his hand towards the Mosquito. "I had underestimated you. This, however, is not the real thing. Meet me in the wrestling arena next week."

"Any time," the Mosquito replied, accepting the handshake.

"Things will be different," the Cat said.

"Different?" the Mosquito asked. "No."

The Cat offered the Mosquito a pot of beer. For a long time he did not miaow.

RETURN TO AFRICA THROUGH WEST AFRICAN LITERATURE

by Dennis Bonner

In spite of the fact that traditional Africa was not famous for its written art-literature, narrowly defined, old Africa was not devoid of its equivalent of literature. In fact, traditional African societies are renowned for their folk tales, their proverbs and aphorisms, and the various forms of chants and incantations that are featured at social and religious ceremonies.

The art of storytelling was socially important and remains so in African societies, and its knowledge and adeptness in the uses of proverbs is still prevalent, particularly among educated Africans who have largely become emancipated from these gems of the traditional culture.

Even if we consider such oral elements of literature to be merely ornamental, that is, only peripheral to the core of literary work, we find that African "literature" was far enough advanced (if it is indeed an evidence of advancement) that it did admit peripheral adornments.

For comparison, witness the arrangements of the verses in a poem, the visual aesthetics, and then the voice modulation in the African chant-auditory aesthetics. In both cases, the most important element is the content of the work, but in one case, since the content must first be scanned by the eye before it is transmitted to the brain, some bonus is included for the eye. In the other case, since the ear is the agent, it is given a bonus likewise through vocal variations. The arrangement of the verses of poetry and the modulations of the voice in the recitation of a chant very often serve other purposes such as emphasizing and coloring the message, but then this only shows that the artists in both instances have succeeded in integrating all aspects of the material. The bonus, in either case, is beautiful as well as useful.

The expert in the oral art of traditional African society was respected and well rewarded. The services of an expert chanter were very much in demand. Consider Camara Laye's account in *African Child* of the method women used to get his father to make their gold earrings and necklaces for them. They employed an official praise-singer who lauded the goldsmith and his ancestors in chants accompanied by the strumming of his cora.

When a bride is being led to her husband's house among the Yoruba, an expert chants the *rara* continuously to remind her of her forebears and what is expected of her, and to generally give her some "pepping up." In the traditional ceremony of the installation of a new Alafin of Oyo, five separate days are set aside for visitations by the Alafin-elect to the important shrines of Oyo. During these days, he is not yet allowed to take residence in the palace. The final ceremony he must perform before he enters the palace and becomes, in effect, the oba, is to sit and listen to the *Ologbo* who recites to him the history of Oyo from the beginning of time. He also recites, in order, and without mistake or hesitation, the names of all the Alafins before the one being installed. A whole day is set aside for this impressive ceremony, and the final day at that; evidence of the importance attached to the *Ologbo's* function.

What we are concerned with here, however, is not a product of the same class of people, or even of the same aesthetic tradition, as in the case of the evolved traditional literature. Present-day West African literature is a product of an elite class. It is born of a class of people that has been more or less detribalized, assimilated into an alien culture, and educated in an alien aesthetic tradition. From the point of view of African culture, it is not literature of the insiders but of some sort of outsiders looking in at people who have suffered the trauma of alienation from their roots and are now groping to find them.

One of the best known features of colonialism was the rigorous suppression of native culture, sometimes conducted through "indirect rule." This included literature of course. The Christian missionaries who condemned the bearing of native names, the beating of native drums, traditional naming ceremonies, and traditional marriage ceremonies, among others, could not have been expected to leave traditional chants unmolested as these usually accompanied the very ceremonies that were condemned as dangerously heathen. Nor could they have been expected to look benignly on the telling of folk stories since these were usually based on "superstitious" beliefs. Riddles and proverbs are relatively in-

nocuous and so, even though they, too, have suffered some decline because the social structure that fostered them has been overthrown. They have not suffered as much as have the chants, the incantations, and the myths that call for specialized training and constant practice.

The acquisition of Western religion and education, for which many West Africans are reputed to have an avid taste, has meant the rejection of much that is irrational, and defined as unscientific, and superstitious. It has also meant the substitution of some Western irrationality. These beliefs formed the cornerstones of traditional African folklore which is irrevocably dead if there are no ghosts, if there are no reincarnations, if the forests are not peopled by invisible and capricious or inscrutable spirits; if there are no gods or principalities besides the Christian God or Muslim Allah, if animals do not sometimes take on human form and characteristics. If all of these go, then the bottom has been knocked out from the system of beliefs that give rise to African folklore and its many aspects.

I am not saying that literature cannot be based on such phenomena unless the author is also implying an implicit belief in them. I am saying, however, that for a long time, the rejection of these beliefs by writers was total, even to their use in fiction. The first few generations of Christian converts and aspirants to European civilization would not dabble in them, even in jest, lest they be seen by their European mentors as either potential or actual renegades. Thus, among the well educated, few of them wrote in the same vein as D.O. Fagunwa (in his Yoruba novels such as *Ogboju Ode Nin Igbo Irunmale*). Recently, however, we have had Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* and J.P. Clark's *Ozidi*. But these do not have Fagunwa's atmosphere of actuality, of a real existent world. Somehow, they manage to suggest to the reader that the characters and events are not meant to be seen as probable or even possible.

The development of West African literature was insignificantly affected by the general stirrings that led to the general independence movements of the 1950's and 1960's. These stirrings date back to before the turn of the century and resulted in such far-reaching occurences as the renewal of interest in African tradition in the late 1800's (e.g., Ayandele's *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*), the formation of secessionist African churches, and, in the sphere of literature, the growth of folk opera and concert parties in Nigeria and Ghana. Perhaps most importantly, they hastened, the advent of the *negritude* poets. With the advent

of independence, and the attendant re-discovery of old Africa by the *élite*, it became fashionable to cast off borrowed European plumes and don African habits. Politicians climbed out of their European suits and put on traditional African dress and even decreed that henceforth only African dress would be permitted in offices. European names became sources of embarassment to their bearers and people dropped them for African names. Even countries threw off the names they were given by their European masters and dug into the archives for more becoming African names. African culture acquired new and vigorous defenders.

It is against this background that one should see the African assertion that is represented in *negritude* literature. The underlying purpose is the justification of Africa and its tradition to the world at large and thus to ourselves, and, finally, the staking of a claim to respectability among the peoples of the world.

Some, like Wole Soyinka, make fun of the movement. He even wrot a long and tedious play to ridicule the concept of *negritude — A Dance of the Forest*. However, Soyinka's strictures are not so much against the resuscitation of racial dignity as against a fanatical and unqualified approbation of tradition. There are good and bad elements in every people's tradition, he says, and we should not allow over-sentimentality to lead us into a puerile admiration of infallible ancestors and irreproachable traditions. Yet, *negritude* had a valid function for if, as Soyinka says, a tiger does not need to go around proclaiming its tigritude, then, perhaps no animal is going aroudn saying that the tiger is no animal.

My main concern here will be to show the different ways in which modern West African authors seek to rehabilitate old Africa and its ways. I will confine myself to the writers in European languages and even then, I will be very selective. There are a number of general works on African literature and I do not intend to paraphrase them here. The authros and the works I will cite are not necessarily the best in terms of aesthetic judgment. I feel it is necessary to make this point because publishers have been most obliging to almost any African who can hold a pen; one might almost say they have been very patronizing in their acceptance for publication of any African material, good, bad, and indifferent.

In the novel *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe dramatizes the way of life of a traditional society, highlighting the qualities that are esteemed by individuals and society, the forces that regulate and sanctify them (the various social institutions that keep the society functioning in harmony) and, finally, the disruption caused in the traditional society by the advent of the white man. In this novel, I

believe, a judgment of the white man's unhappy influence is implied. The white man came determined to supplant the traditional ways with his own ways. He made no effort to learn about the workings of the society, or the reasons why Ibo society was unified and stable. He could not even speak their language. He wanted no such understanding because his certainty about his own God and system was all-important. His was the only true way and it must be imposed by force.

One can extend Achebe's implied judgment into subsequent novels insofar as they can be regarded as a continuous story. In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi Okonkwo is steeped in the European way that he has adopted; he has even gone to the white man's country, returned to a city created by the white man, and works at the white man's job. His fate there, however, is unhappy. Yet, in the same city reside members of the Umuofia Union, mostly in lowly positions; they do not ride cars; they do not live in European quarters, but still they are happier than he is. What little they earn is enough for them to live on with satisfaction and they can even extend charity toward Obi Okonkwo and other Umuofia children.

By contrast, Obi's position weighs him down with problems that eventually lead him to jail. He must own a car, must pay taxes and for car insurance. Above all, his acquired culture makes him too much of an individual with the result that the traditional cultural dictum which bans marriage to an *osu* (clara) means nothing to him, and he sets himself against his roots. In the end, the acquired culture with its attendant vice-corruption lands him in jail.

Continuing in this vein, let us look at Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy*. It is the story of the houseboy, Joseph, serving his master without guile, and to the best of his ability; of the inhuman treatment meted out by whites to Africans, even when the whites are clerics; the kicks that the houseboy regards now as part of the job; the heel grinding into his fingers that he bears stoically. It also tells of the human dignity of a lowly houseboy.

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There is also a moral judgment implicit in the prison chief's treatment of suspects; his sleeping with the new woman, the commandant's wife, and the unmanly way in which the commandant accepts his wife's infidelity and still grovels toward her. Contrast the human worth of the African policeman, Mendim, who recognizes the injustices being done to the houseboy and tries to help him even though he suffers for it himself; and the uncomplaining and dignified manner in which the housebou submits to death without al--lowing the white man's whips and kicks to break his spirit.

From *Houseboy*, let us turn to Clarence in Camara Laye's *The Radiance of the King* where the black/white role is reversed. The image of the white man in Africa is usually that of the dominant and domineering master; an all-wise, all-powerful demigod. The black man is the god-ordained servant, drawer of water and hewer of trees for the master.

In Clarence we see a different picture of the white man down and out, a failure, a gambler, a loser. He sees the young African king and feels his only hope is to secure employment in the service of the king. Devoid as he is of any qualification to recommend him, he is full of the white man's conceit, believing that, since he is white, the king cannot fail to offer him employment any employment. He will even agree to be a drummer. For him drumming is a lowly profession, but the beggar who agress to intercede with the king on his behalf makes him realize that this profession he regards as lowly is so noble and dignified that it is beyond him.

Clarence is subsequently dragged, figuratively, in the mud before a sham judge, made a fool of, and sold by a beggar to a village chief in return for a miserable horse and a mistress. He becomes a stud for the chief's harem, descending to such a low state that his life is no better than a dog's, begging for crumbs at the chief's table, stripping himself naked in public in order to secure

clothes. Not until his degradation is complete is he offered redemption and acceptance into the heart of the king.

The story is allegorical: the author is saying, among other things, that for the white man harried by all his materialistic encumbrances, rest, serenity, and peaceful fulfillment cannot be found until, after a long and tedious pilgrimage, he has learned to divest himself of the hallmarks of his civilization — money, arrogance, and clothing — and he has learned to embrace human simplicity at the heart of Africa.

So far, I have referred to the "white man" as the African's opposite. I believe it will be more correct to substitute "foreigner" for "white man," but then that term itself will need some definition. We can take it to mean any non-African. I mention this because, in certain instances, the representative of the "white" or European culture has not been white, as in Christina Ama Ata Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and in Soyinka's 2The Interpreters, where they have been Afro-Americans, and, in fact-also in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, where he is an African who has assumed the white man's ways.

In the *Dilemma of a Ghost*, the Afro-American woman, Eulallic, married to a Ghanaian, Ato Yawson, is so much of a "stick-in-the-mud," and so insensitive to the feelings of her African relatives (in-laws) that even though they make an effort to override their objections to their son's marriage to a non-Ghanaian, she incenses them with her blatant lack of consideration. Apart from her carelessness of appearance and her incessant public smoking and drinking, she openly expresses disgust when her mother-in-law brings her snails to ear by throwing them out even before the benefactor departs.

In *The Interpreters* we have Joe Golder, the one-fourth black professor of African Histry who gets on the nerves of a Nigerian who, being fully black, sees no reason to be sentimental, proud or sorry that he is black. It does not even occur to him to think in terms of color pigmentation. Joe Golder, though he is only one-fourth black and passes unnoticeably for white, is resentful of the white blood in him and wishes he had been born jet black. Sagoe, the Nigerian, does not like him because of his attitude of superiority toward Africans (gathered from his experiences with a houseboy), his characteristic American bumptiousness, and his homosexuality. Sagoe's remark that he, coming from a comparatively healthry society, is not in the habit of going around on guard against homosexulas, lumps Joe Golder with his connotations of societies "where every possible perversion is practiced,"

therby placing "healthy" African Society against "perverted" Western society.

In Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, the representative of Western ways is an African school teacher in a little village. Lakunle, the only literate man in the village is so affected in his Western dress, Western mannerisms, and bombastic language that he becomes known as the village nut. He is in competition with the old, illiterate, but worldly-wise, chief Baroka for the body of Sidi, the village belle. Lakunle's Western habits of kissing revolts the girl. His ideas of transforming the village into a modern city with paved roads and electricity enhance his reputation as a madman, and his enlightened condemnation of the habit of paying bride-price dowry loses him the girl. Baroka's earthy cunning, his great store of traditional aphoristic wisdon, and, aobe all, his infatigable virility in bed, win him the girl. Western sophisticated youth cannot really stand up to a seasoned African sage!

By no means is it a consistent feature of African writing by which the African way and the "new" way are opposed, so that the African way wins out. In the considered works of Achebe, for example, Western encroachment is inexorable, but it is in application of a humanistic yardstick that the author makes the judgment that Western technology, Western power, and, in time Western civilization have developed at the expense of the human soul. So, even in such a play as *Kongi's Harvest*, we see the disgrace and destruction of Danlola and the traditional kingship system he represents, by Kongi, the modern totalitarian dictator. We see that in Danlola's camp, what remains of it is the *joie de vivre* that is lacking in the austere harried court of the epileptic dictator.

One can also cite the example of Clement Agunwa's *More Than once* which is, in effect, an argument in favor of the whole man's magic, specifically his education, and the adoption of his values. The man, Nweke Nwakor, excels in native know-how and becomes something of a success as a result of his industry. But becuase he lacks education, he loses his business, having squandered ihis money in procuring for his father the Ozo title that every Ibo man aspires to. In the end, a playmate of his, Mr. Obi, who has returned from Britain with a degree in Economics and a car, delivers a lecture to him, tell-ing him how he has ruined himself by not sticking to Western education. Finally, he drives off leaving the pedestrian Nwakor to eat the dust blown up by his retreating exhaust pipe. Agunwa is firmly on the side of the ac-

quired Western way, perhaps predictably, because as a career school teacher, it is his business to sell the alien way.

I mentioned earlier the discrediting of the unscientific, the non-rational and the superstitious, as a feature of the civilizing process. All these elements are admitted in the African scheme of things, and I do not mean in the same way as the Western world admits the irrationality of its science fiction stories, for example, in *The Invaders* or *Night Gallery*. In the African world, there are spirits, there are ghosts, there is a physical after-world where the dead live and from which they watch over our own world and intervene from time to time.

The demonstration of such a belief in serious, realistic literature would have been unthinkable before things African began to return to respectability. It does not matter that some Europenas believe in ghosts and witches, that a "European" wrote *The Turn of the Screw* and that Dennis Wheatly wrote any number of works on dark forces. For the early African writer to do the same would have been regarded by the African himself as an exposure of an embarrassing side of his cultural background. The Greeks whom Westerners admire so much were unabashed in their belief in the constant interference of gods in the affairs of men, even on the physical plane. Sahkespeare introduced ghosts into *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, and witches into the latter play without recognizing the need to explain that these manifestations were results of the mental and psychologi--cal needs of those who saw them.

Some early West African writers studiously stayed away from lapses into the non-rational world even though, as I remarked earlier, it forms an important part of the African world and traditional African literature. Yet today we see that this part of African life is being retrieved.

To mention only a few instances, and only briefly, consider Camara Laye's ascription of psychic powers to his mother in a novel that is frankly autobiographical and in which everything is meant to be taken at tis face value. Consider his description of those powers (*African Child*, page 58), especially the author's power to make a horse obey her command after its owners had failed. Another instance is the treatment of the clairvoyant, Kioki, in the same author's book *Radiance of the King*. Calrence goes to her to find out when the king will arrive in Aziana and she causes him to see the vision revealing the king's actual approach. The vision turns out to be true.

Finally, in Aluko's *Kinsman* and *Foreman* (pp. 139-144), the engineer, Titus Oti, decides to sleep in a haunted guest house at

Igbetti where an Englishman had died maysteriously at night many years before on a certain July 14th, the same date Titus is planning to sleep there. Against all the entreaties of the Igbetti people and the chief, he goes to sleep there, dismiss--ing their ghost talk as silly naive superstition. But, sure enough, at night he first smells tobacco smoke, then hears the whistling of old English songs, and, finally, he has a physical encounter with a ghost and spends many delirious days in a hospital.

Examples of a return to traditional African features and methods by West African authors can be multiplied. I do not intend to do so here-since to cite every instance might prove too long and too boring. Before I am finished however, I will briefly mention two aspects of African literature that have delighted or intrigued foreigners. One appeals to the social anthropologist, and the other to those who love the noble savage.

One of the most attractive features of Achebe's writings is the way in which he makes the traditional African way live for the reader: the traditional practice of hospitality, the presentation and breaking of kola, the method of settling disputes in the community. In fact, the various intricacies of personal and social relationships are documented in such a way as to show how efficacious they have been in maintaining order and harmony within the society. So successful and popular has such documentation proved that many novels now err on the side of tedium because of the dead weight of anthropological data crammed into them.

For all that, Camara Laye's accounts of the circumcision ceremony and the magic of jewel making, both described in *African* child, Dipoko's description of an evening story-telling session in *Because of Women,* Cyprian Ekwensi's festival of Sharro in *Burning Grass,* bespeak the author's nostalgic recall of things that used to be in a world that has either passed, or is passing, beyond their reach. Civilization and modernization have condemned these customs as out of mode, but they live in stories immortal because they are part of Africa.

I believe it is interesting that such is the concern of writers in providing graphic descriptions of African ways that one meets the same things in works of different authors. Take the Ijaw method of greeting colleagues that one finds in the works of two Ijaw authors, John P. Clark and Gabriel Okara.

The following passage is from Clark's *Ozidi* (p. 8).

Ozidi: (rise) Ofe, your praise name?
Ofe: (beating his chest) I am Ofe — begbulumane, Ofe

the short, so they call me.

Ozidi: Ofe the short, I greet you.

Ofe: That is my name. And yours?

Ozidi: Ozidi.

Ofe: Ozidi, then I greet you too.

Ozidi: Thank you. Azezabife, your own?

Azezabife: I am the Skeleton Man — Azezabife — that's the name in full.

Ozidi: Azezabife, our Skeleton Man, I salute you.

Azezabife: I greet you also. And you own?

Ozidi: Ozidi. Now, you Oguaran, how shall I greet you in this august gathering?

Oguaran: Oguaran buo-asi bra-asi, of course. That means a man possessed with twenty toes and twenty fingers, call me that!

Ozidi: Man of twenty toes. And twenty fingers, I greet you then.

Oguaran: I give you back your greetings, Ozidi.

Ozidi: And you Agbogidi, your name?

Agbogidi: Agbogidi patu-patu, that is, The Warrior in the Nude, you follow. And yours is Ozidi, the latest born in town know that.

Ozidi: (pacing up and down) I greet you all, I greet your call of the Council of Orua . . .

The following passage, for comparison, is from Okara's *The Voice* (pp. 98-100). "The Elders came one by one to Izongo's house and when they had sat in a semi-circle facing Izongo, Izongo called them each by their praise names as it is usually done at gatherings when some thing is to be discussed.

Izongo: 'One-man-one-face!"

First Elder: 'Yes! No two persons have the same face, and no two persons have the same inside. What is yours?'

Izongo: 'You are asking me? I am Lightning!

First Elder? 'Lightning!'

Izongo: Yes. 'I am lightning. *Nothing stand before* lightning. *What is yours?'*

Second Elder: 'You are asking me? I am water.'

Izongo: 'Water!'

Second Elder: 'Yes! I am water. *Water is the softest and the strongest thing be. What is yours?'*

Izongo: 'What you say is correct. You are asking me? I am he-who-keeps-my-head-under-water.'

Second Elder? 'He-who-keeps-my-head-under-water!'

Izongo: 'Yes! His cloth will also touch water.'

All Elders: 'Correct! Correct!'

Izongo: 'What is yours?'

Third Elder: 'You are asking me? I am fire!'

Izongo: 'Fire!'

Third Elder: 'Yes! He who touches me his finger will burn! What is yours?'

Izongo: 'You are asking me? I am pepper.'

Third Elder: 'Pepper!'

Izongo: 'Yes; I am pepper. *Pepper hurts but without it food is tasteless. And what is yours?'*

Fourth Elder: 'I am bad waterside.'

Izongo: 'Bad Waterside!'

Fourth Elder: 'I am! You will roll down if you are not careful. And yours?'

Izongo: 'You are asking me? I am ant.'

Fourth Elder: 'Ant!

Izongo: 'Many ants gather together and crumb bigger than themselves they carry.'

All Elders: 'Correct! Correct!'

Izongo: 'If only one person in this thing be, Okolo could have everything spoiled.'

All Elders: 'Yes! Yes!'

Izongo: 'And yours?'

Fifth Elder: 'You are asking me? I am if-it-were-me.'

Izongo: 'If-it-were-me!'

Fifth Elder: 'Never say so. Wait until what has to be happened to you. What is yours?'

Izongo: 'You are asking me? I am unless-you-provoke-me.'

Fifth Elder: 'Unless-you-provoke me!'

Izongo: 'I will not provoke you if you don't provoke me. And yours?'

So Izongo called and answered praise names. He called them one by one until the last Elder was called and gave the wise meaning behind the names."

These two excerpts, apart from illustrating consistency from author to author, in recording, and thus preserving a way of life, also portray a feature of traditional life which, in a modern, "edu-

cated" setting, is likely to be discouraged as a gross waste of time.

Finally, nudity and semi-nudity go hand in hand with brash and frank references to, and practices of, sexual and biological human functions in the white man's idea of Africa. These are opposed to the white man's puritanical restraint, feigned social correctness, and apparent abstention from these functions in public. For a long time the Africans accepted the European notion that these traits in the African were outward evidences of moral debasement.

The climate that makes it necessary for Europeans to wrap themselves in clothes almost all of the time is different from that of West Africa where most of the year, it is quite comfortable, even often more comfortable, to go without much clothing. Climatic and cultural considerations lie at the root of the present European propensity to regard the human body and the exposure of it and its functions as dirty. This attitude was learned by the African, but in the works of some authors, such as Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana,* the healthy African attitude is breaking through again. When it does, after the initial shock, which very often is the sole intention of the author, the reader feels gratified because, unlike pornography, such frank depiction of man-woman relationships (as, for example, in Yambo Olugeum's *Bound to Violence* or Dipoko's *Because of Women*) are evidences of the simple honesty, the frank dealing, the lack of prevarication that were important aspects of African life; that made African societies such easy prey to the European scramblers. I will not give explicit examples of these, but they will be found in plenty of West African works, especially the works of Wole Soyinka, Ama Ata Aidoo, John Pepper Clark, Mbella Sonne Dipoko, Cyprian Ekwenski, Elechi Amadi, and others.

The foregoing has been the discussion of one feature, an important one, of modern West African literature. It is not necessarily the most important, and by no means are all writers interested in it. I do believe, however, that it is one of the most salutary features of African Literature, today.

FOUR POEMS
by
Joyce Carol Thomas

CHURCH POEM

The smell of sage
Mingles with burnt hair
And mama prepares Sunday dinner
On Saturday night
Chicken and dressing
Whisper promises
In the ear you hold
  with one hand
So your edges will be straight
As she does your hair

"Bend your head so you
  won't get burnt"
If you bend your head
on Saturday evening
Is it the same God
You bend to on Sunday morning?

Mama, how long do you
  beat the cake
Until your arms get too sore
  to beat some more
But Betty Crocker says 4 minutes
This ain' no white folks cake
  I aim to bake

Now line up with lye soap
and bath towel, pajamas,
Slippers and robes
Sink into the hot tin tub
Scrub off a week's worth
of dirt
Grease down in cold cream
And warm your backside
By bubbling fire

On the Sabbath morning
The organ begins its descent
Choir comes rocking
Down the aisle
Like so many black notes
Stroking the carpet floor
And rising til rested by
Elsa's wanded finger
Sister Elsa's First Sunday
Sermon in song
Holding a phrase
Kneading it like new dough
Turning it round
in her head
Singing it different
everytime
You can hear her shout
"Take me to the water"
Then adding in a whisper
"I know I got religion"
"I been baptized"

Did you feel the water
Riding over your feet
Sucking up the white garment
Kissing the breath
From your mouth
When she moaned
"I been baptized"

I saw a silent man leap
Straight up in the air
Sit down, then go striding
Across the room
To sit again
Understanding
The Disciplined Notes
in Undisciplined song
The unofficial concert

When does the melody end
And where does it begin?
YPWW, BYU, Bible Drill
In shiny legs
and velvet ribbons

Testimony service
And Brother Jackson shouted
Then danced the pewed benches
Front row to back
Because I held my breath
He never missed a step

It is the same God
You bend to now on Sunday morning
When does the melody end
And where does it begin?

/HERE IS THE BLACK COMMUNITY?

Where is the Black community?
holding down the corner
where 3rd street meets B

sitting in the second pew
at Double Rock Baptist Church

Where is the Black community?
at Bob's Barber Shop
busting jokes about the man

at the Delta sisters
fashioning J. Magnin and new hairdos

Where is the Black community?
Scrubbing chitlin grease
off a kitchen stove eye

and hawking Muhammad Speaks
on a Stanford campus

Where is the Black community?
transplanting kidneys
in a university hospital

and plowing cotton
in a Mississippi dawn

Where is the Black community?
teaching English
at Duke and Purdue

and arranging 4 kids
in a twin sized bed

Where is the Black community?
living in two story houses
on Poplar Street Drive

and swilling Old Crow
out of a crystal flask.

POEM FOR OTIS REDDING

Listening to the man
straight from
the Georgia woods
sitting on the Dock of the Bay
claiming Nobody Knows You When
You're Down and Out

I get high every time
he starts to climb
that sweet soul mountain
dusting the air
with steep gotta gotta gottas
and craggy uh uh uhs

Weeping some slow fast
rhymes of love
measuring out
the blues he's a lover
in lyrical madness

Hearing the guitar
screaming
way back inside of me
stirring, jumping
all over my mind
then clinging
to the very last summit
doing the Hucklebuck

THE MJQ

Solemn pastors
Majestic ministers in navy blue
Running up and down the
elevators
Of my passion
Can you count the mysteries
Of the MJQ?

They're stopping
Between floors
What is that chord?

Riding down to the cellar
With Django sounds
I know I'll never
Rise again
Then Delicate pasticios
Say Travel a little higher

THE ACT OF SURRENDER
by Charles Wright

The warmth of their long awaited reunion, the deep laughter of down home nostalgia had faded. It was seven o'clock on a Saturday night and raining. They had finished the scotch an hour before and were now reduced to drinking beer which they drank rapidly like a tonic to give them strength for the final goodbye and to oil their collective tight-rope emotions.

Sarah Green leaned back in the plastic covered chair and deliberately dropped a cigarette ash on the large scatter rug. It was a provocative gesture like a warning signal.

James De Moss II, the deceased doctor's son, lowered his heavily lidded eyes, then looked up, smiling.

"Cool, baby. Cool."

Sarah laughed too. She sounded exhausted. "So this is Harlem. So this is where you live."

"My pad, mama," James said. "My penthouse " He paused and lifted his large arms as if to bless the one room kitchenette that he had cleaned the night before.

"What you see — — "

"You don't have to pretend," Sarah told him. It don't make a damn bit of difference to me."

James forced himself to say: "Okay, mama."

"It's a long way from Birmingham."

"And, you've got the return ticket," James snapped, then added: "'Right? And if you haven't got the fare

"Oh! Shut up," Sarah screamed like the proverbial little pigtailed girl who not only refused collard greens and hamhock but candied yams as well.

"James was pleading. "Honey, honey. Remember when I used to call you, honey?"

"But that was long ago."

"But that was long ago," James signed. "The late, great, Miss Dinah Washington."

"Even I know that. Fool."

"You're into something else, baby. My radar can't locate you."

"Tough luck, *baby,*" Sarah said. "Are there any cigarettes on the premises?"

Swiftly, stiffly, James went over to the old fashioned wardrobe which was roomy but cumbersome like a science fiction monster with four flat feet. He reached up on the top shelf and got a carton of Marlboros and walked over to Sarah.

"Oh. Gee, thanks. You remember. I was getting a little sick of Lucky Strikes."

Endings are like bad weather, like the first and last child of death. A legacy to those that are still alive, clinging tenaciously, not so much to hope as to the idea of breathing easier and going a little farther down the road.

There's the door, Sarah thought. Ruth and Addie and their friends are waiting for you. In a tall building on Riverside Drive. They will take you to Chinatown. You must, must see Chinatown before returning to Birmingham. It will be an evening to remember, they have promised you. Party favors. Won Ton soup. Sweet and sour pork. Already, the chef has beaten the batter of two dozen fortune cookies and, with his small delicate hands, shaped a cake like a fat buddha. A multicolored toy rocket will shoot out from his doughy belly, and as Nancy Wilson said — "You will, forget this affair."

Sarah bolted up as if frightened. Without looking at James, she said, "Excuse me," and rushed into the bathroom.

In the pristine bathroom, the pale pink walls were peeling; you could see gaps of plaster. Checkerboard mini-tiles, like yellowed, fake antiques. An oblong, opaque window had a hole in it, the size of a doughnut. Pine disinfectant wafted into Sarah's nostrils. But the scent was pleasant, refreshing.

The twenty-five-year-old, full-fledged nurse, faced the mirror of the medicine cabinet that James had bought the week before on 125th Street. She looked into the cabinet, then back at the mirror and could not cry. Even an inexpensive, slightly flawed mirror, could only reflect what she already knew: black female in limbo. Sarah Green had a dark oval face. Her eyes were large and brown, promising, never delivering. After the sculptured nose, the thick lips at first glance were a surprise. But on the second glance you saw a sensual mouth, verging on a smile that always seemed to vanish like smoke. Then: a beautiful, young Black woman who would say: Yes, yes. My God, yes to the West Indian lawyer, prac-

ticing in Birmingham, who despite severe British mannersims, had a sense of humor, was kind and worshipped her.

And one rich southern honky, Sarah remembered. Always back there. Somewhere. A mildewed ghost that refuses to give up. "I'll marry you," he had twanged. Pause. "If that's what you want." Bastard. Bastard son of bastards. I could take you to the cleaners and you wouldn't even know what happened to you. Boasting bastard! Telling me you've had all kinds of women. White, yellow, red, brown and black ones in that snot-nosed, superior voice all of you use as if you had just breathed through your mama's drawers. I'm hip, hick. Aware. You can't afford me. Wiring me flowers. From out of town. I smashed the face on the wristwatch that you sent me. Then carefully, ever so carefully, resealed the package and wrote on it in big, bold, black letters: "ADDRESSEE UNKNOWN". You honky mother. Lust and suffer.

Don't laugh. Cry. Shed tears like a benediction. Tears should precede a together-cool. Then, it will be goodbye. Sarah Green and James De Moss II. A high school romance, creeping on blindly, stupidly. After all, both of them were intelligent and honest to the degree that lovers are capable of in the act of surrender. Yet, she couldn't get the first time she saw him out of her mind. It was a weight she'd been unable to let go of.

Slowly, Sarah ran the tip of her tongue across her lips, remembering. He had been leaning against his birthday present, a dark blue Ford convertible. Parked on a corner, one late August afternoon in Birmingham. She had arrived the day before, nervously excited about attending high school, boarding with her widowed aunt, a part time maid. It was her aunt who had secured the after school job with James's father. That good, dead man!

Sarah couldn't cry. Stalling, she opened the medicine cabinet again. Afro dip. Band-aids. A small bottle of A&P aspirins. Super Gillette razor blades, unopened. Jade East cologne fronted a half a joint of marijuana. She opened the cologne and inhaled. Memory was somehow cold, painful. The tragedy of a black family splattered against the wall by the father's shot gun suicide ("Even niggers do it," James had remarked).

Mrs. Flora De Moss, an attractive, likable, tea time and bridge club lady, immediately sold the house and other real estate. It was already common knowledge in Birmingham and came as no surprise when she left for Chicago with a curly haired, bearded taxi driver named Moo-Moo Said.

"Poor Jim-Jim", Sarah said aloud, using his nickname for the first time. But she could not cry.

He had left the university, Birmingham, drifted to New York and had apparently floundered. He had been in the "city" for two years now and, from the looks of it, the future was on Mars. Stuck in a rut, while the rain poured down. Sloshing like a fool in big, muddy puddles of water. They would never do the do. Not any more.

Sarah Green stepped back from the mirror, sad-eyed and weak. But she would be cool, a diplomat in the simple beige dress she had bought at Macy's. She would be a lady, as her mother always advised like a broken record. "Be a lady and keep your skirt down. Men have no respect for easy women."

And with that knowledge, permanently laced in her brain, she swung around and went back into the long, narrow room.

"Drink J and B and see," James grinned, brandishing a bottle of scotch.

Sarah gave him a fake, surprise expression. "Thought I heard the bell. But can you afford it? I mean, you've been spending like crazy these past two days. I've got money. Vacation pay, sick leave and overtime."

"You'll have to drink it without ice," James said. He had his back to her and when he spoke again, his voice was bitter. "We're out of ice and I forgot to tell the boy."

"Oh. That's all right."

James poured two heavy, iceless scotch and sodas. "Here", he said. "At least we're still drinking."

"Thanks," Sarah muttered. She could not look up because he was standing in front of her. She'd be damned if she'd go through another male power play.

James did not move. Looking at the top of her head, he said, in even, bitter tones: "If you wanna give me money, that's boss. It's your thing, woman. Wanna gig at Bellevue? I think I can swing it. I'll be around on the second Thursday — if that's your scene now. I could put you on the block. You're not the first one to hit on me."

"Jim-Jim."

"Shut up. When I first came up here I was living with a forty-year-old woman with mixed gray hair. Now, she's got her own shop in Elmhurst. I still see her from time to time. She was pretty damn nice to me. She was doing all right and helped me. I've got my head straightened out. It's your ball-game, Sarah."

"If you'll just get out of my face," Sarah screamed.

"Sorry."

Silence engulfed them. Pale street lights filtered through the double windows like uncertain shadows. The rain continued. The phonograph had stopped and both of them wre acutely aware of their own breathing, the noises that drifted up from the street.

Finally, Sarah said: "It's all right, Jim-Jim."

"Okay?" James smiled.

Sarah Green returned the smile and held his eyes. "If you say so," she replied. "Don't move unless you're going to take this drink out of my hand."

Veracruz,
Mexico
August 10, 1972

TWO POEMS
by Jim Marks

WHERE JAZZ GOES

Yes, I added a little jazz
  To my distance.
Jazz blew through the thin trees
  Of the expensive forest.

I ran to tell the world
  As this music drove deep wedges
Into my flesh.
  Sounds screaming over the blue horizon
Where birds go.

Where girds go, music goes,
  Motion and flesh, where texture is born.
Blues and butterfingers,
  Birds and peacocks.
The streetlamps burn dim
  Over the rented earth.

Sunday mornings after the gigs,
  The town is quiet.
Music and morning blues,
  Come back, jazz. Add more
Distance to my world.
  Stay in my bleeding space.

EULOGY FOR DEWEY

And oh, I remembered
Voices drifting,
Then echoing like birds singing.
Shaped in blues and jazz.
Clutching time . . . .
Rhythm freeing bodies
From magic and moon.

Oh, and spiritual minds
Living in blues.
Jazz lovers living in mushroom clouds,
Dreaming of sleeping, dark skies,
Miles away from grinding stars.
When bebop memories and sadass poets
Become yesterday's world.

We may read new poems,
Poems of wisdom,
New as Miles' protruding wisdom
Of Bird and Lester.
Beyond this planet, they blew love,
And voices into the earth.
I remembered Bird,
And Moody and Diz knew him.
As many fainting substances took him.
And a million mornings went along.

And, oh, Dewey!
You, too, are with the Kings and Queens
Of jazz and inventions.
And Billie Holiday mourned
Memories of music and morning blues.

Nights blowing, and shooting smack.
I knew all of it, Dewey.
The moans and screams,
Waiting for the white ghost,
Shaped like a real person.

As your room becomes a jungle.
Oh, and the secret love songs of unchained fire,
Casting dark shadows, smokey paintings
Of jazz on the walls.
And oh, the Goddamn rent!

Oh, I tried, Dewey,
But it was too late for you.
It was the last fix, Dewey,
The last fix that did it.
Or maybe the fix before that.

We had long conversations only
Two days before it happened.
Remember, Dewey?
We rapped about dirty needles
And Billy. We rapped about O.D.'s,
Yeah, O.D.'s, Dewey.
The aching truth,
The yelling upstairs,
The greasy spoons,
And dirty floors.
The unwiped tables,
The smell after the rain.

And, oh, the bitch who wouldn't surrender
The night we both wanted sex.
The murderer killed.
I hope they catch him, Dewey,
Before he kills again.

Oh, yes, Archie kicked.
You remember Archie?
The pale nights looking for smack.
He lived down the hall. We sure played some
Wild sounds together. You and me.
Everything is so essential now, Dewey.
Life is everything.
Everything is everything.
Life-giving stories, and
Stories giving life.
Oh, yes, Dewey — I kicked.

ROOM 306
by Melvin Dixon

there you lie
white against white
against white
bleeding
medicinal odors into the air.

my eyes search the
corridors for your beauty,
but there you lie
shrouded in whiteness.

perhaps you have died
without my knowing —
my still presence calls
silently into the deep
of your solitude,
yet, how still you sleep:
unaware that I am watching you,
unaware that I am wanting you.

I won't disturb
your peace by shouting hello,
but I will leave my soul
to greet your awake.

for S.C.
Middletown, Ct.

SHADE

by Charles Lynch

(for Gayle)

Baby, depend upon it:
Somehow everything beneath the sun
inhabits inhibition to a fault:

yellow tulips smile in the air (you walk)
  but fade down in the mouth
of the Mason jar on your window sill:

As earthward my face peeling
grafted reflections from memory's flowering mirror:

"he have . . . gray-green eyes . . .
sorta light-skin . . . real keen features . . ."

"high yella . . . redbone"

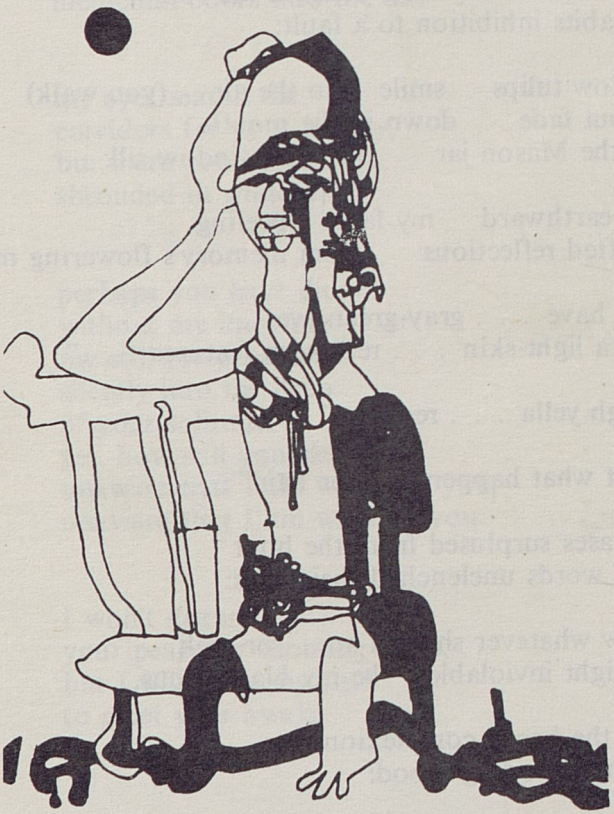
"but what happen to your hair?":

Phrases surplused from the hour
real words unclenched their jaws:

Now whatever shade I am or seek
let light inviolable be my black focus,

not the hocus complexion
in my brooding blood:

We reach out touch
  All love



From: BRAIN DAMAGE (A Novel)
by Bob Fox

One thing I've learned is that time is nonlinear. Calendars and chronologies are inventions of the mercantile imagination. To move in only one direction, temporally speaking, is the lot of the straight, who marches with blinders on his psyche and only the clinking of silver to lead him on. To see the whole world is to laugh it all off. Dashing around the bend you confront yourself coming the other way. Tip your hat and keep on going: change places with your past, with your future. It's all a merry-go-round, a moebius strip, a hopscotch of possibilities.

Dont expect to begin where you left off.

Space is an infinity of drawers. All of them are empty. All of them are crammed with delights. Keep looking till you find what you want. You've got time on your hands.

Dont expect to finish what you've begun.

Standing over my grandfather, his emaciated body looking so brittle that for a long time I was afraid to touch it lest it crumble like a dry leaf, my one thought was that death had made him so unreal, turned him into such an imperfect copy of all that he'd been in life, that I scarcely recognized him. He had not simply returned to clay, he'd become a fiction. Slowly, hesitantly, my hand sought his own and touched it at last, just for an instant. But he'd already vanished . . .

* *

It's funky in paradise: fine future here.

The walls are the color of thick cream, the windows pale violet. On one sill there's a young avocado plant; on another, a trailing vine. A fly cuttles across a patch of shadow. A dove coos on the roof. The windows are twisted out of shape because the house is settling slowly. The room begins to resemble a set for an expressionist film: caligariesque.

I'm counting squares of sunlight on the floor, watching as the sun's subtle shift transforms them into trapezoids. Imperfections

in the glass cast faint rippling shadows that fall across the grain of the wood perpendicularly, a gentle weave of textures. I hear the bright tinkly laughter of windchimes.

It's peaceful now; let me ponder the vagaries of my existence.

* *

In the year or more since I left Francesca I've bounced back and forth between coasts, singing in funky bars, moving from woman to woman, sometimes crashing in fancy pads, sometimes in rooms where I used an old coat for a blanket and plaster fell on me during the night. I worked as a busboy and then as a dishwasher. Most of the time I had no gig at all. I was just lewding around, fucking furiously, drinking and doping and daring the devil. I survived largely on the good graces of friends who believed in my madness and did whatever they could to nurture it. If I'd had to live solely by my wits I wouldnt have lasted long.

* *

I've a streak of sadism in me as long as your arm. In the middle of the night with a wild hail falling a dog scratches at the front door, whimpering to be let in. Asleep on the couch, I'm the only one who hears, but rather than get up I lie there gritting my teeth with a mad thrill of disgust. I know I identify with that dog, a lost thing crying for warmth — which is why I hate him. But I hate myself, too, for punishing an animal, for excoriating my own weaknesses in others. I recall other cruelties, all of them perpetrated during moments of profound frustration or guilt. The details remain under lock and key in my soul's black museum.

Are we angels, or dogs? The answer's plain enough. Fawningly, we love our masters when they whip us, and though they're kind, we'll give them a taste of our fangs when we're dog-mad.

* *

To live in the world without pain: impossible. To live in the world without madness: impossible. To live in the world without staggering beneath the weight of the known and the unknown: impossible.

* *

One day in late autumn when I was very small I was walking with my mother and we came upon a great pile of leaves gathered for disposal. A machine resembling a giant vacuum cleaner was sucking up the leaves and funneling them out the other end into a

Department of Streets dumptruck. Several men were working there, one guiding the long rubber nozzle of the machine that was like some abstract elephant's trunk, one or two raking up the leaves that escaped from the pile, and another man aboard the truck stamping down the leaves which they finally secured with a canvas tarpaulin.

Holding my mother's hand, I stood watching. The leaves, dry and brittle, multicolored, seemed to burn with cool fire in the afternoon light. Then the man working aboard the truck found a tennis ball that had been spewed up by the machine. He retrieved it and was about to throw it away when he glanced down and saw me standing there on the sidewalk. He tossed the ball to me with a laugh. — Here, sonny, he said; it's yours if you want it.

* *

Once I found myself in the East Bay terminal at three a.m. I was returning late from a recording session. The last bus for Berkeley had left long ago and I knew I'd have to wait until dawn for the next one. The terminal was nearly deserted and the prospect of spending the rest of the night there wasnt a particularly pleasant one but circumstances left me little choice. I determined to make the best of it. I was wide awake but I doubt that I'd have been able to sleep anyway. There were one or two sailors dozing in large cushioned seats with individual TV screens that allowed you thirty minutes' viewing for a quarter. Cops wandered by now and then but ignored them.

I bought a newspaper and sat down on one of the long wooden benches. I read several articles, the letters to the editor, glanced through the entertainment pages. DEATH PLOT TURNS INTO A HAPPY TRIANGLE / PACKS OF WILD DOGS PLAGUE AREA / CONGRESS BALKED: MEMBERS EAGER TO QUIT / TOP ANALYSTS ARE STYMIED BY OUR IS-IT-OR-ISN'T-IT / RAIN THREATENS / THE BLEAK SEXUAL FUTURE FOR DOGS / COMING EVENTS: TUESDAY. THURSDAY. FRIDAY / I spent most of my time with the comics.

Sometimes I was approached by queers. I'd see them out of the corner of my eye, cruising slowly through the cavernous terminal, scrutinizing the faces, the bodies. They'd sit down next to me and try to strike up a conversation. I confined my attention to my newspaper, pretending to be absorbed in it, and answered their vague questions without really looking at them. They were neither young nor effeminate; mostly they were middleaged,

dressed like moderately successful businessmen, but with a strange look in their eyes and a tense expression on their faces, as if those faces were really amorphous featureless masses, molded into shape and held that way by sheer willpower.

One, sporting a thin moustache, after realizing his suggestions werent leading anywhere (for I am no man's meat), opened his briefcase on his lap and took out some pornographic magazines. He thumbed through them expectantly.

I got up and walked away. I went to an all-night restaurant-bookstore and ordered a cup of coffee. There were several men sitting at the counter talking. I sat near them without really listening, watching the meagre traffic and the weird patterns of light beyond the glass.

I killed time by wandering back and forth between the bus station and the penny arcade across the street, where for a dime or a quarter you could ogle sixty seconds' worth of naked flesh writhing on film or lose yourself in the flashing lights and clanging bells of the pinball machines. I carried the newspaper with me even though I'd finished reading it.

I went to another all-night restaurant and ordered a coke. The place was full of people who haunt the city between dusk and dawn. I felt as if I'd emerged into the underbelly of the world.

Back in the terminal again. The character with the moustache comes back for another try. He asked me where I lived and I said, — In Berkeley. He wanted to know if I was taking a certain bus. I said, — I'm not going over that soon, it's too early. I haven't got a key and I dont want to wake my people.

— It's a long wait. Want to come over to my place?

— That's not my scene, man. I stood up and tossed the newspaper onto the bench. — It's yours if you want it, I said, and left.

It was nearly six a.m. The early workers were beginning to arrive. The terminal was starting to throb with activity. I bought a one-way ticket to Berkeley and stuck it in my wallet. It was still too soon to go.

Outside it was growing light but the streets were largely deserted. I walked up Market. I was tired now and the sidewalk was very hard beneath my feet.

* *

The layers of my mind are peeling away like the skin of an onion: residue of the past, present moments, possible futures speculated on at odd intervals . . . It's all dirty linen, bloody

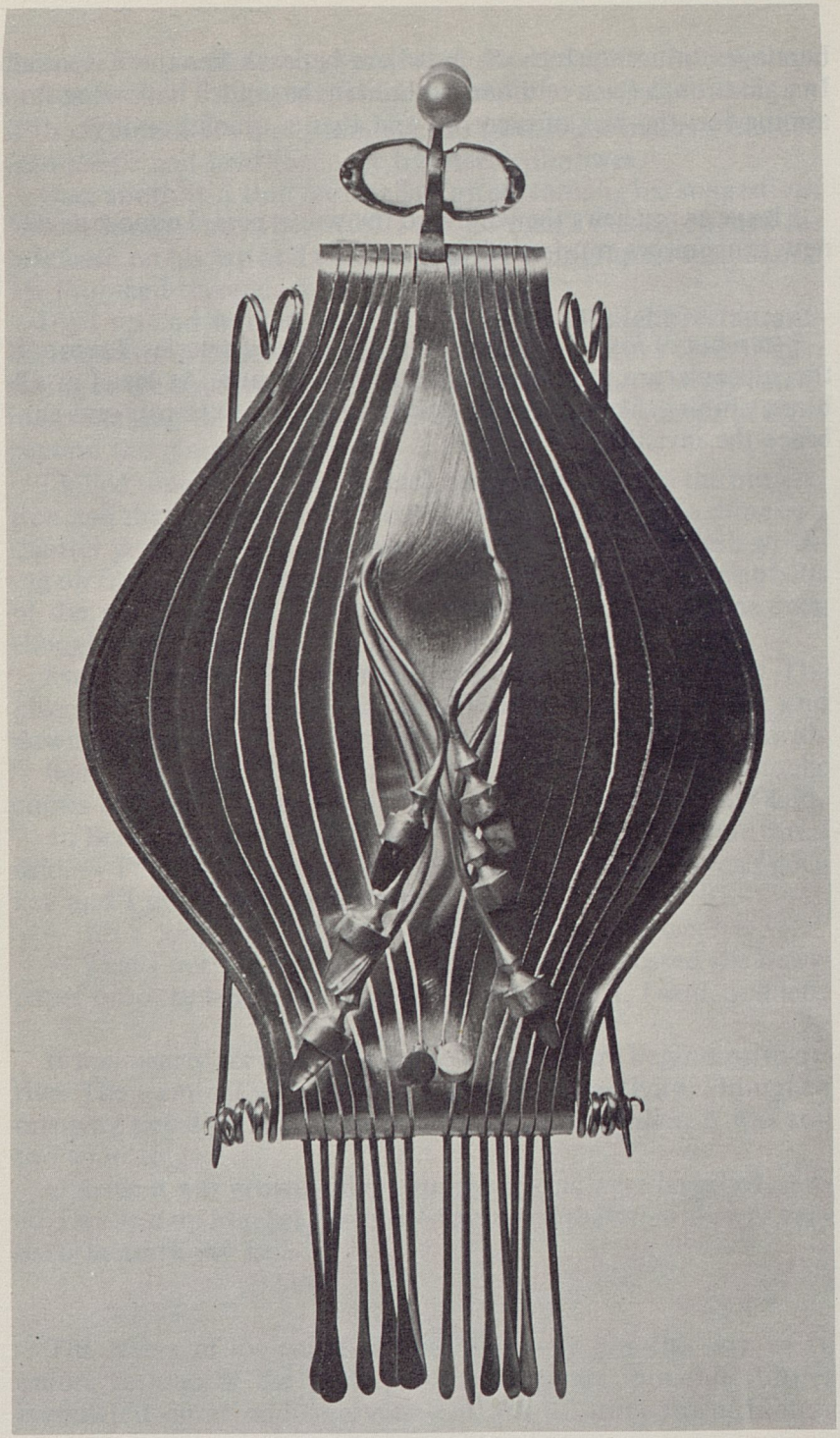
bandages, mummycloth. Somewhere beneath lies the Essential Imagination, a flash of diamond light in the void. That's what I'm aiming for: the kiss of creation and then a quick goodbye.

* *

I leave as my heirs the wind and the wilderness. I choose as my new progenitors music and light.

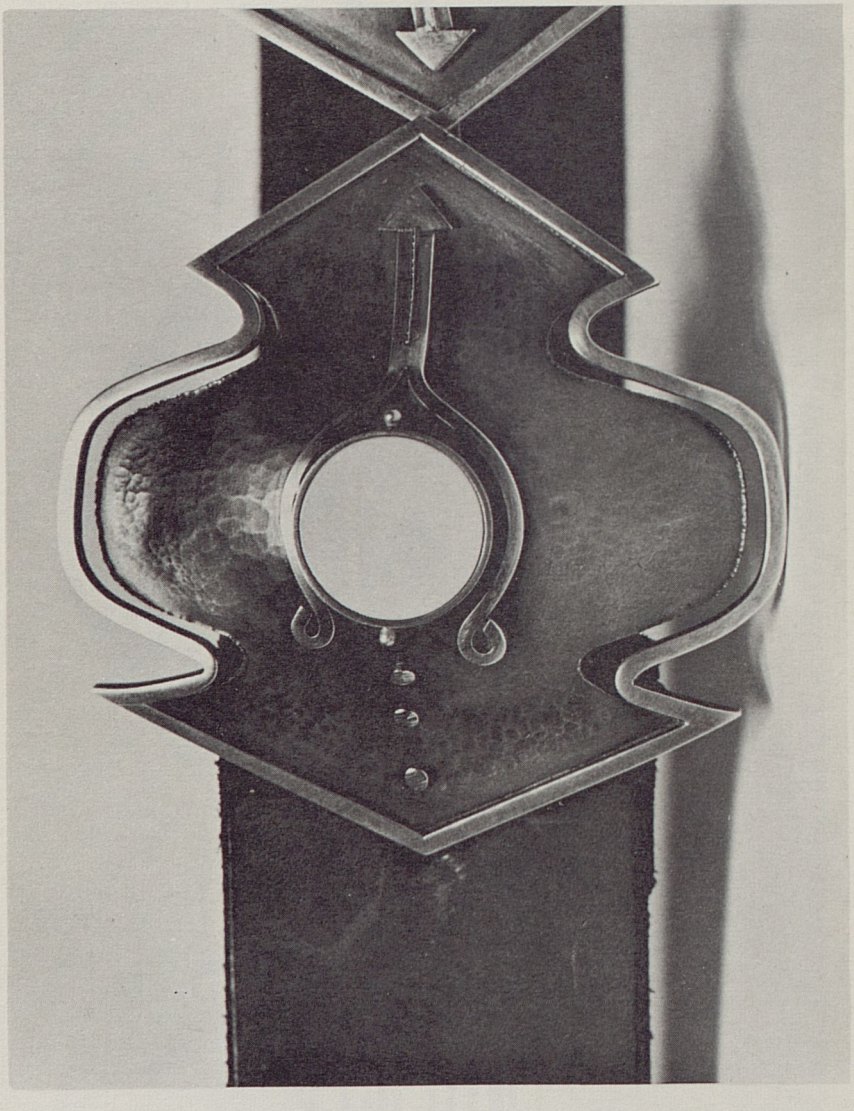
* *

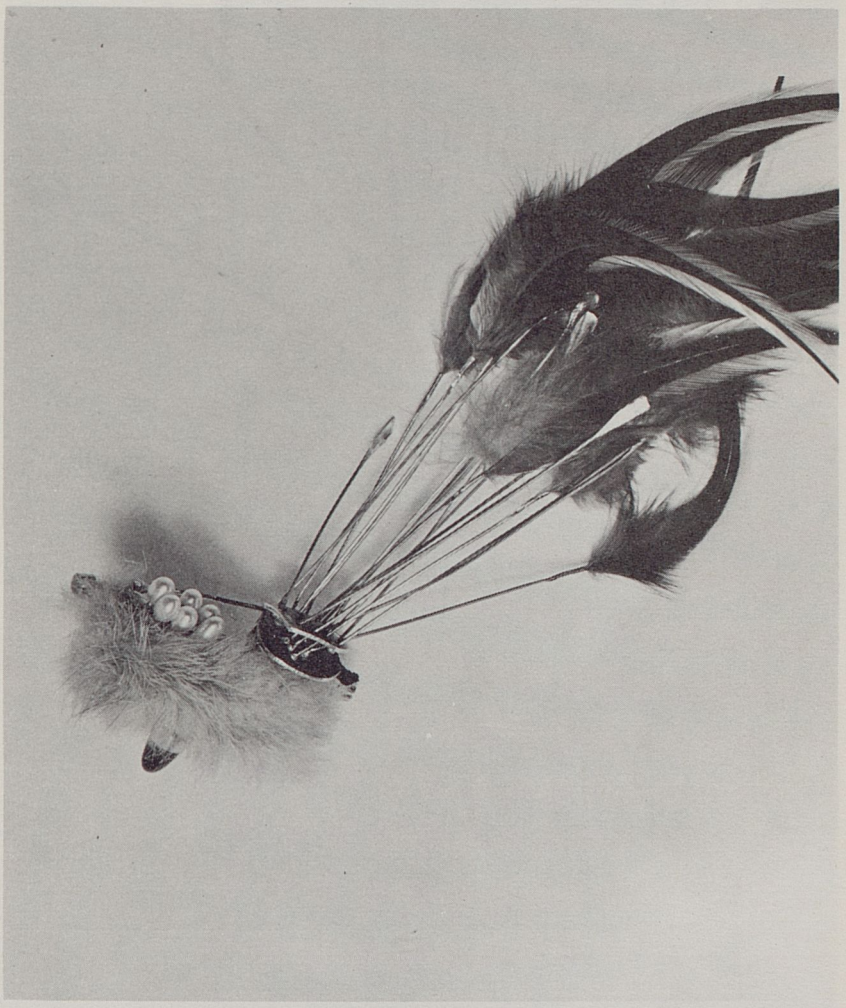
I step out of my skin. I unravel my veins and arteries, I remove the musculature, the major and minor organs. At last I'm all bone, shining like porcelain. I dismantle my skeleton and embrace the invisible.

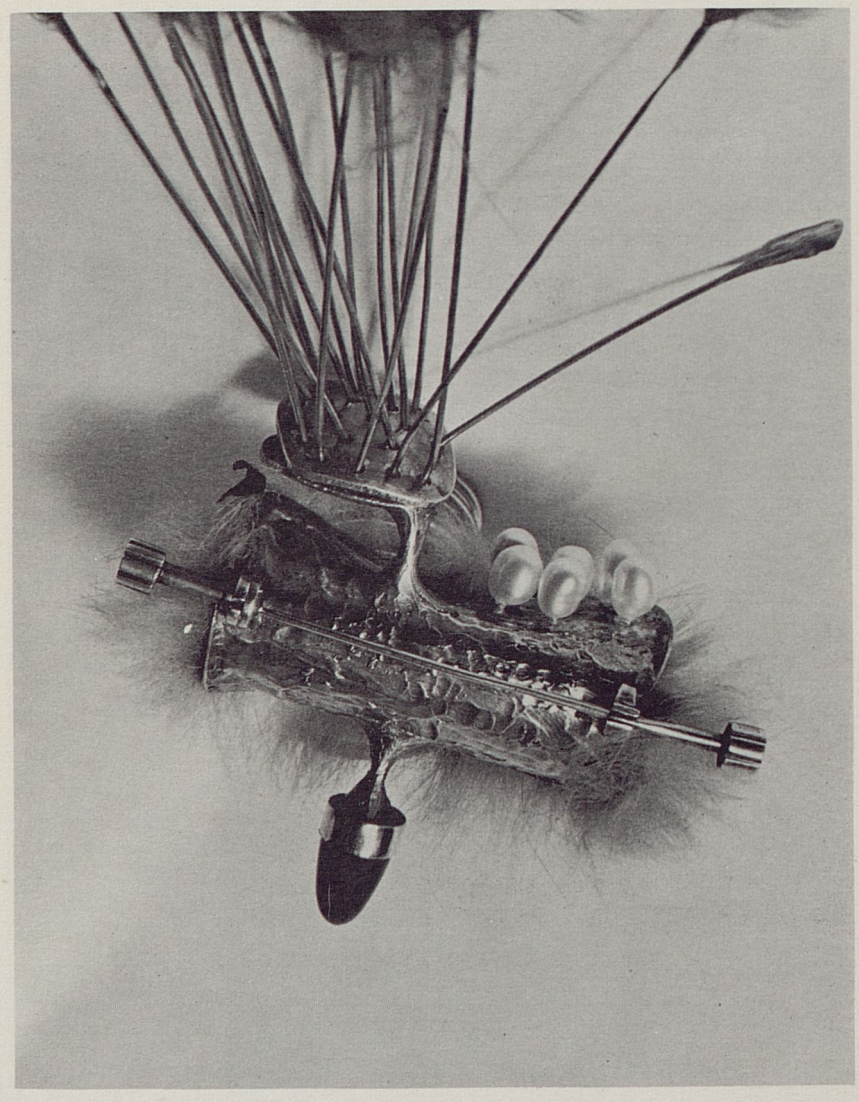


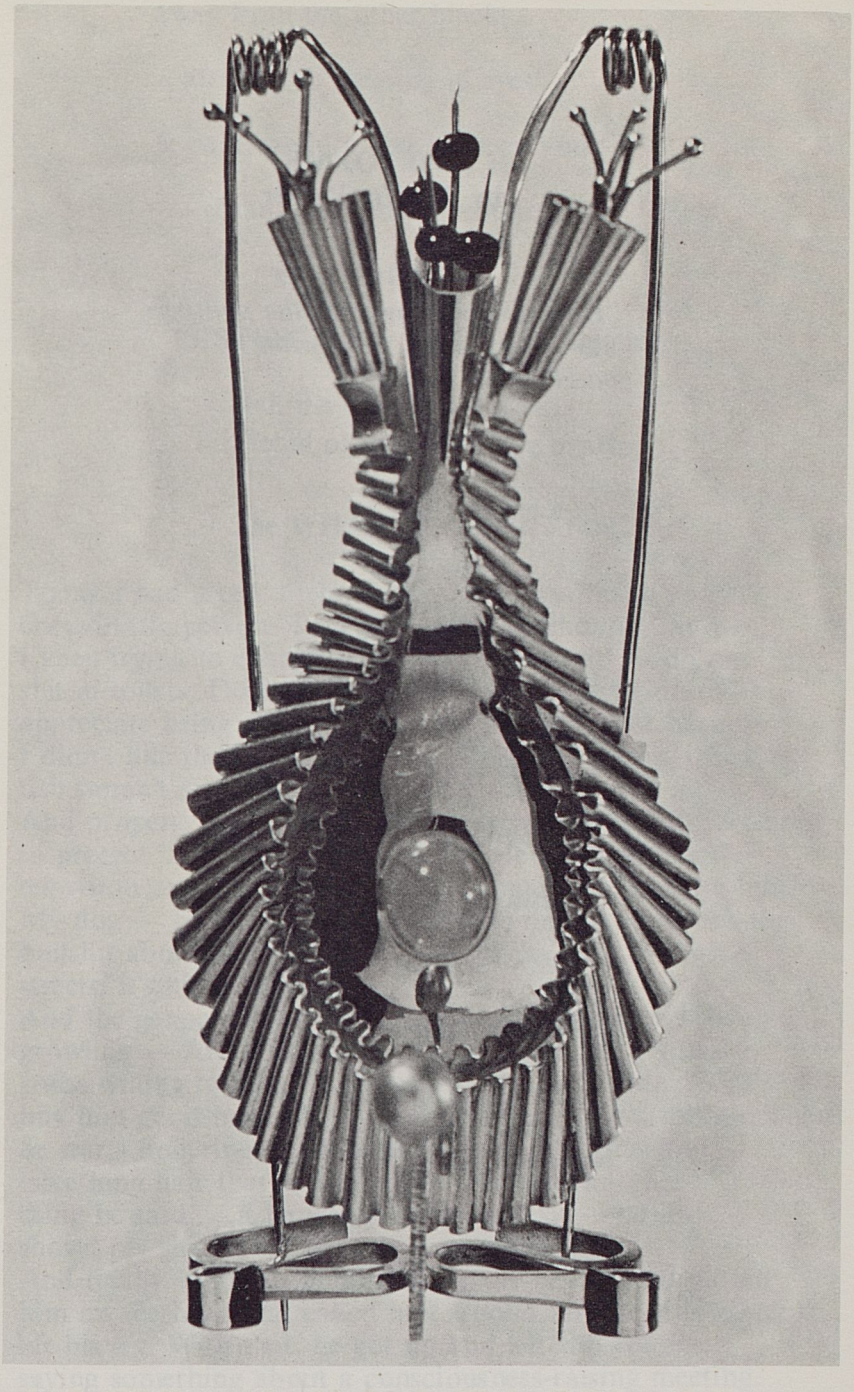
BOB JEFFERSON

Craftsman









TWO POEMS
by Patricia Parker

"How do we know that the panthers will accept a gift from white middle-class women?"

Have you ever tried to hide?

In a group

of women

hide

yourself

slide between the floor boards

slide yourself away child

away from this room

& your sister

before she notices

your black self &

her white mind

slide your eyes

down

away from the other blacks

afraid — a meeting of eyes

& pain would travel between you —

change like milk to buttermilk

a silent rage.

SISTER! your foot's a size smaller,

but it's still on my neck.

The WHAT Liberation Front?

Today I had a talk with my dog. He called me a racist, chauvinistic person. Told me, he didn't like the way I keep trying to change him. Dogs — he said — do not shit in toilets. Dogs — like to shit outside & he didn't appreciate being told to shit in the gutter — just because I didn't like the smell of his shit. He informed me that fish weren't so hot about my shit either.
And property — he wanted to know why people expect dogs to protect their capitalistic interest. He never watches television or plays records. & how come I put tags on him? My dog — he laughed. He is his own dog. And what's this bullshit about his sex life. If he wants to fuck in the streets, it's his business.
And the genocide against dogs! Now by this time he's growling — And I just said, he didn't have to get nasty. I was willing to study the problem. After all didn't I buy him good bones & get him groomed once a month. Then he starts hollering about if he wants to get dirty and have long hair that was his right too. And another thing he said — if he wants to sit, he'll sit — so just shovel my shit about sit, roll over, stand up.
And finally he said standing up — the next time I patted him on the head and called him a good boy, he was going to lift his leg. With that, he got up and left the house saying something about a consciousness-raising meeting.

TWO POEMS
by Jack Micheline

It is not Here on Earth I am Seeking

I don't know what I am seeking
in the cool night
Rivers and birds
a sensuous lip
a rainbow of dreams
past waterfalls
the ruins of cities appear and fade in front of me
awkward man
he dresses and clowns
seeking love and shelter in criminal ways

I want to rip off the mask of the sniverling lip
from a want that runs from an abstract pose
from a lie

This reality lies deep in the ground
or high in the sky
it is not here on earth what I am seeking
it is not in speeches or books
or in the heat of bedrooms or palaces or parties
it is not the dried heart or dead conscience of our age
it is somewhere that a child knows and is forgotten
it is an eye of a dog ravaged in streets
or in an open smile of a baker or shoemaker
it is by the fireside of rivers where men share bread and song
it is not here in the cities that drown me
that take my heart
and leave me limp and wobbly
drunk on eyes and feet and faces of the multitudes
I must travel to some far off place
where rivers flow
and stars dance
where children bring garlands of love
and emeralds to the soft breeze of heaven
where prisons are not known

it is not here on earth what I am seeking
scavenged and torn bleeding from wars
and greed and shameless murders
let me just weep for the beauty I see and walk alone
to whatever dream and heaven I seek
then I will die with swans in the river
and send my love to strangers and friends
this poetry I breathe which is life and my heart
and to you who seek the unknown
I send you love and the rivers

October 24, 1964, London, England

Paris

The prostitute stands
one block from Rue Martin
puffing on a cigarette
She waits for her next calling
She stands proud like France in war
She stands without paint
to take on the world
like a true poet

Paris, France, Spring, 1964

Two brothers have grown up in a changing Morocco. While they have been exposed to "Civilization", their mother has kept her traditional way of life: married at the age of thirteen, she has rarely been outside of her home. Her two sons decide to introduce her to the marvels of the modern world. Driss Chraibi's novel is about the emancipation of the mother who likes her taste of civilization so much that she eventually becomes herself a champion of the emancipation of other women.

From: LA CIVILISATION, MA MÈRE
by Driss Chraibi

●

For her second outing, we took her to the movies. The movie-house was one of these popular pre-World War II "coliseum" types where the show was continuous from noon to midnight and happened simultaneously on two levels. Double setting and double action: on the screen and in the audience. Young men came in groups, carrying guitars (for the romantic sequences) fire crackers and slighshots (for the fights and the cowboys scenes), bags of peanuts, clappers, whistles — and a tremendous desire to have fun! Everybodysmoked: kif, tobacco, pipes, cigars and some herbs that I was never able to identify.

When we came in, the whole audience rose as one man. Never before had a woman entered the movie-house. They studied my mother from her hair to her ankles, gauged my brother's gigantic size up and down and from one shoulder to the other, then they sat down, disappointed, disgusted. During all this time, only three whistles were directed at my mother, I counted them . . . . . .

A magaphonic voice arose, sounding strangely like our prayer crier's.

"This is the manager speaking. Attention please. The movie is going to start. You have never seen a movie like this one before! World exclusivity! Superproduction in technicolor! Made in Hollywood, America! I had to pay for it in Dollars! Silence, my dear countrymen! Silence! And let me warn you: if a single flying object, beer bottle, rock or rotten orange hits my screen, I stop the show and I don't give the money back. OK?"

"OK daddy!"

Near me, a boy with fat cheeks spat and yelled in a falsetto voice: "Send your lemon granpa!"

The lights were turned off and a surge went: "Ah-h-h-h-h . . ."

The Son of Scheherezade (such was the title of the movie) sprang from the purple horizon, crossed the desert on a Far West horse, stopped in an oasis planted with shiny green palm trees, got off his horse and showed himself to us in all his splendor: white teeth under a pencil line mustache, bullfighter vest, pirate pants.

"Who is this shadow?" asked my mother.

"He is an Oriental prince," said my brother Nagib, "he is the hero of the movie".

"Douglas Fairbanks Junior", shouted a voice coming from the back, "a tough one who handles the sword like a pro and knocks women out with a smile".

"No sir", said the fat face, "Errol Flynn".

"Be quiet", said my mother, "will you please be quiet."

A mandolin started a little song, a horse-like laughter tore the room in two, firecrackers blew in the four directions while two hundred jaws were busy cracking peanuts. Arabs with Texan faces started to appear from behind the palm trees and they all bent their bows toward the son of Scheherezade who was patting the neck of his horse.

"Look out, look out!" screamed a high pitched voice, "they are right there, they will kill you, turn around, jump on your horse and run away, fast, fast!" It was my mother. In the burst of laughter that shook the audience, I made out an indignant voice:

"See what you did, auntie. You screamed so much that the poor Douglas listened to you instead of watching out. He did not see his attackers, and now look at him: he is bound, tied up, completely wiped out!"

My mother was now standing up on her chair, and in the dark tumult, in the tobacco smoke as thick as an old cloud, she was answering tit for tat:

"Rascals, you are all rascals. And first of all, who started? If you had been quiet instead of yelling like pigs, it would not have happened! Whose fault was it? I ask you? Whose fault?"

"Come on, sit down mother", said Nagib, "Be calm, everything is going to be all right, you will see."

But everything did not go all right. Our hero, his chest bare and smooth, his pectorals oiled and his hair pomaded, was tied up to a post in the middle of a public square crawling with people. A huge Black man, clad in a leopard loincloth was flogging him.

The fat face sneered, the audience howled: — "Go ahead, Mamadou, avenge your race!"

"Stop, stop!", my mother begged, wringing her hands, "Go de-

liver him, Nagib, it is an order. Go, for Heaven's sake! You are strong enough to prevent this monster from doing any harm. Go, my son, and I will bless you until the end of my days."

Nagib did not move. He did not have to intervene. A princess with a diadem on her head was coming in an open carriage. She was wearing a light, extremely light bathing suit made of sparkling sequens. A hundred mouths shouted among the concert of clappers and fire crackers: "Come over here baby!"

With a gesture of her delicate finger, she pushed away the torturer and said:

"Stop, stop! I am scheherezade! I am his mother!" The bonds dropped, as if by magic. Douglas Fairbanks fell in his mother's arms as my own mother clapped furiously while behind us the mandolin improvised a belly dance.

"Thank you", said my mother, "You did your duty, you saved your son. God will reward you a hundredfold" . . . . . .

The second film was a western with a sheriff, a stage coach and Indians. I can only recall one thing about it: Chance. Chance was there, that day, on the screen. Even my mother could recognize the Indian chief, painted as he was. One of the actors of the previous movie, he was none other than the one who had whipped Scheherezade's son. At the head of his tribe, he had wandered out of his reservation and had made his first mistake: he had gone on the warpath and had attacked a stage coach driven by Whites. In spite of his size, what could he do with his half-naked tribe armed with nothing but arrows? While on the other side, they had beautiful uniforms, hats, boots and guns, all loaded with an incredible number of bullets that practically always hit their targets.

My mother was holding her breath. Wishing harm to no one, she loved all her fellow creatures, but when the Indian chief and his horse fell into a deep Colorado ravine, she gave a funeral eulogy:

"To the memory of the horse! May the Kingdom of Heaven be open to him! His angelic soul is in the presence of God! And you, the man, you forgot that the one who did an atom of Evil will see Evil. You whipped a human being a while ago and now God has punished you! Rest in peace anyway, I forgive you" . . . . .

* * *

She did not sleep that night. She came to my bed room and kept me awake until the crow of the cock. Everything was getting mixed in her head: the two movies, fiction and reality, romance and violence, her own childhood that she had almost forgotten

and the world of noise and furor she had just burst into. A door had been opened. Through this water gate, everything was pouring into her at the same time like a torrent and she was trying to dam up what was foreign to her nature and to assimilate the silt that would fertilize her mind one day.

Used to counting on her fingers ("This is my house and I will die here, this one is my husband, that one my son and that other one my other son and all the rest has never existed for me, is totally unknown to me"), used to relying on her inward life since she was born thirty five years ago (few thoughts, very little vocabulary, a few scattered and faded memories, a lot of dreams and whimsicality). She had been surrounded by a rain of silence and the only dialogues that she was able to have with the three strangers who lived with her were about two things: housecleaning and meals. And her solitude was made even harsher and more immense by her overwhelming daily activities: she ground the wheat, sifted it, made dough, kneaded bread, baked it, washed all the floors in the house, polished the shoes, cooked, played the tambourine, danced bare foot, told us stories to make us happy, chased the flies away, washed the laundry, made tea and pastries, played the clown when we were sad, ironed the clothes and embroidered without complaining — without complaining. She went to bed only when we were asleep, she rose before dawn — and the rest of the time she listened to us. Why should she have been unhappy? The awareness of happiness only comes with freedom.

— Translated from the French
by Colette Myles

BONES
by Wilson Riles, Jr.

Skeletons clinckle
In the womb
Of centroplasm
Stirring ancient tunes

In syncopated rhythm
Note
These missing beats:
Time-bound tunes

Time's wind hurls
Earthly shards
Through shields of genes
To Counterpoint THE TUNE

Serene sirens of old seas
Becomes jungle beats
Which dissolve into
Perforated city-hot wounds

Rise up, to dance
Your boogaloo's
Shaking muscle sore
Hips to Sun Ra

Spreading leg-arm-mouth
In Screaming Torture
Due to those wounds and tunes
Of time's purifying winds

(FRANCISCO)
by Cyn Zarco

each time i walk past for my
early morning class, i see you
waxing your white, sleek jaguar
(fine automibile!)
you move the cloth so gently
over fenders, around head-
lamps, her white, smooth body
sparkling under your hand. sometimes
i catch you
lying underneath her; i can only
see your feet point upward.
but when you ride her (ah!
when you rider her.) nothing
can stop you now.

20 january 1972

From "FRANCISCO"
(a novel)
by Alison Mills

donnel just came ova tapdancin.
what it is!
he got a friend named john with him — a big eyed kind of in his thirties skinny legged dude. donnell is in the movie too. donnell is friend, actor, college student and mysterious character. hes franciscos friend. donnell and francisco and i hang out together ova here sometimes on cole street, where francisco lives and me now. francisco got rid of boopsy. boopsy is his cousin, whos always high on somethin tip toein around with his lightskinned wavy-haired bi-o-sexual self. hes strong in his own way, in that he hasnt completely destroyed himself yet, tho he seems to be workin on it cause his mother didnt love him.

he lives from place to place. he lived with francisco free for six months and francisco finally put him out cause he didnt neva get no job or nothin and contribute to his own existence. boopsy dropped ova yesterday when francisco and donnel sat me down in the kitchen, and started gettin on my case cause i had gone away and locked francisco out and he was climbin up the side of the house, tryin to pry open a window so he could get in and work on his film. boopsy told us that he had gotten a job as a guinea pig. some doctors or somebody are gonna give him drugs, and experiment on him and stuff. he gets three hundred dollars and free room and board for thirty days. francisco said that was good, at least you're gonna get paid for what you do.

* * *

francisco is in his bedroom now. you should see him. he looks like a mad man. a mad scientist or somethin with all those little strange instruments in front of him. a little cardboard screen. he looks like a nut sittin all hunched up on a stool with the bedroom blinds closed, editin his film, choppin his film up, crackin up at

the music, lovin the people in the scenes, talkin to himself. sometimes i go in there, and i don't go in there often. he tells me to get out — or not to step on the film.

i went to the park and picked some flowers and exercised my body for a taste, and then drove back home and started comparing my feet to franciscos. his is the color of my face and my feet are the color of his face — im a yellow nigga, freckled face nigga. you know, you've seen our kind. he asked me if bloods use to eva make fun of my freckles
and i said naw,
but white filks did. i use to go read for parts and stuff. they use to look at me wonderin like — niggas got freckles too. once when i went to private school in new york, the white folks made me out to be everything else otha than black. some of them would ask me if i was greek, indian — anythin but black.
i dont know.
then there was a time when in elementary school
now i remember
if you black and freckled and light with wavy hair you good black — and if you was othawise the direct opposite — bad. that was only in limited circles howeva. sometimes dark black kids hated light black kids and vice versa, but not me.
i dont know.
i just didnt think very much of my physicalness, and nobody else did either. i wasnt considered cute or nothin. i could have been tho if i hadnt of worn the same clothes everyday. i mean my parents were well off, lived in a big house with a swimmin pool — middle class blacks, and could have bought me clothes and did. i just didnt wear them i use to wear this woolen grey sweater and woolen grey skirt everyday, no matter how hot it was. i loved that grey skirt and sweater. my friends use to be surprised when for the first time they would come ova my house. They thought i was poor. i looked like i didnt belong to myself, much less to good parents. Anyway—
then i came in the kitchen and put these flowers in this vase amongst all this shit on the kitchen table, and started thinkin bout how i first met francisco ova at joes house. joe brought me ova there from david hendersons cottage to have dinna and hang out. see i had come up from l.a. to visit. joe started gettin into a philosophical discussion about makin it, and how i couldnt change the world, and how it was nice to have all these idealistic ideas but they would just be ideas sooner or later, and id come to know the

stark ugly truth of the world as is, and always will be — period.
and then
knock knock on the door
and joe said openin it
here comes one nigga who thinks he can change the world.

* * *

he was tall and dark brown with a conquistador mustache with some blue corduroy pants on, some kind of yellow and red striped sweater — and those shoes! he had on some blue shoes that had this yellow tongue stickin out of a red mouth with thick wooden heels, and i loved those shoes. i had a light for francisco just behind those crazy shoes. but he didnt pay me no mind. i was all in black again, with my hair all wavy, bushed out parted in the middle, lookin unheard of, and one of my eyes would have to be red.

joe and francisco talked some business for a while after i was brushingly half introduced. this was after he had been in the house ten minutes already. i said hi. he said hi, and then went on talkin to joe. well, i went in the kitchen to talk about dietin with joes wife elaine, who is also a piscean like me. and francisco was into his film, talkin bout this and that. joe is a painter and he wanted joe to make some posters or somethin, and then after they finished talkin they settled down to eat some tuna fish sandwiches. i was still in the kitchen laughin when francisco looked at me and me at him. david called and told me to wait for him outside cause he was comin to get me and didnt feel like comin in. so i said goodbye to both joe and elaine, and francisco who ignored me when i mentioned where i was stayin — only to return cause david didnt come, as usual. he didnt come till two hours later. francisco asked me to be in his next film cause in between all this action somehow it slipped out bout me bein an actress on t.v. on all those tired t.v. shows and specials with my guest-starring role self and about some movie i was gonna do if it eva got done. francisco said actors needed a challenge, and that was for true. who doesn't? thats why i was excited about doin that film i was suppose to do, cause i thought it would be good. but it sure was funny bein called an actor cause it wasnt that i didnt like t.v. i didn't like what i did on t.v. too tough.

i didnt like films thatd been made within the last onslurge of black slop, and i was glad i hadnt been in none of them. besides, i didnt

give a fuck. id rather starve than do somethin i didnt believe in, and i didnt start actin to make no million dollars. i started cause i was gonna die if i didnt cause i love the theatre and film and t.v. and all of it and i wanted to do things of quality, things that were beautiful. joe told me to shut up.

i told him to leave if he didnt want to hear what i had to say. he said it was his house. i said *so?* and went on talkin bout how i had done things in my considered to be successful times, times when i made a lot of money, lived in a big great house in nichols canyon and walked recognized on the streets. how i wanted to protect my talent given to me, and it was sad that up to a time that meant the inability to do things on a certain financial level. but i worked in new york with walter jones, and dick williams. and did a one act play at immamu amiri baraka's spirit house in new jersey, and worked at the house of kuumba with michael coleman, tho i only made fifteen dollars a night, a far laugh from a thousand a week. i lived like boopsy — from place to place.

* * *

francisco came down to l.a. cause somehow he let it be known that he wanted my phone number. he called about a week after our first meeting ova joes house — he was in l.a. to take care of some business at c.f.i. we got together. he showed me his film at a screenin room at ucla's campus. i thought it was good but was honestly bored with angela. maybe it had a lot to do with her bein in jail and what that environment does to a person, maybe. francisco had her smilin sometimes and the cigarette stains on her teeth showed up. she looked hard sometimes, very hard, but her hands were soft, then at otha times there was this vision of strength and beauty. and i wondered about her when she talked about marxism in reference to a socialistic way of living, a community way of cooperating with each otha. i questioned her. i questioned her knowledge of herself, of her people, why should she have to refer to marxism to back up her statements, when she could refer to her own heritage, to africa, to a time, a place, a people that existed before marx was thought of — to a whole culture, history that was her own. francisco called her the daughter of europe. later he told me that she was a girl scout.

someone who knew her before the famous days said she was a nice girl, unmaterialistic, use to wear the same coat everywhere she went, and drive around in an old beat up car, and would prob-

ably never have any money, contrary to the hierarchy in the panther organization.

i wondered if all that college education had denied her that knowledge of herself. i didnt know, but whatever it was, her statement, her stand, if not questioned as to its background, is a stand i admire her much for takin and so i left it at that.

after the film in thought how she had a great opportunity to do something great — but how she would have to grow specifically. i saw the need for her to grow spiritually. malcolm x and martin luther king were highly spiritual men who captured the minds spirits souls dreams hearts hopes of people magically. i didnt receive that same feeling from angela.

* * *

francisco loves james brown. its true. francisco lives in san francisco. francisco trips out behind james brown the way i trip out behind wheat germ and the piano. francisco is the only nigga i know who is like a graduate from stanford (tho, the only reason he went to stanford after bein the president of berkeley high, was so nobody would say nothin bout what he does, so nobody would fuck with him. which turns out to be understandable cause one night when i was in l.a. my dad called me into his bedroom and asked me who he was, and what he did, and i mentioned all that stuff about him makin a film, which did not at all make my father too happy, and then i said, and hes a graduate of stanford, which made my father relax a little and settle back like the world was in order at last.

both my parents are college educated. i am not. i never went cept for a couple of weeks at l.a. city college. and then to visit linda wright a friend of mine from high school now and then. ive lectured at west virginia state college, and read poetry at the arizona university and done plays at cal state, and ucla. but ive never attended one any length of time as a student.

but you know yesterday i went ova this friends of mine house who lives in baldwin hills with her parents and francisco came and got me, but before we left he sat down to talk to this girlfriend of mine. the mother acted like francisco wasnt even human cause he did look like some stray nigga, and slightly wiped out cause that same day we had just arrived from drivin to l.a. and then my

friend asked when did he graduate from stanford, or somethin bout stanford, and that lady acted like an electrical fuck hit her and got all excited by francisco (and started talkin to him all friendly like) who is crazy bout james brown. i mean he actually goes out and buys his records. i mean even donnell thinks its strange, and couldnt too much be strange to donnell cause he is really strange to me. i mean donnell wears these painters hats all the time, is gonna go be a lawyer. i mean he goes to college at san francisco state and shit and got some kind of degree from ucla or somewhere in psychology — use to be a gangster in new york, use to be a heroin addict, is always neat and i dont know where he lives. he just disappears in and disappears out.

* * *

francisco just came in here, the floor is mopped so he has to tip-toe him in his black multi-colored stripes of blue red and yellow t-shirt. francisco likes bright colors. i could kick his ass. i asked him to take the trash out and i ended up doin it. i dont wat to say anything. well, maybe i should. no i wont.

* * *

i started to read this story out of essence magazine about black women and how behind every successful man there is a woman who could probably be successful herself. thats true, i guess. but then i dont know no man that got just one woman. i mean most of these successful men must have passed through lots of could-be successful women. so what does that mean? well, i dont know how francisco would feel about all this. but i wont say nothin. cause he works hard on his film, and he cant think about anything else but his film, and i understand how that is, cause when i work on music thats all i can think about is the song. and i just understand cause it takes a lot of concentration to get anything done. and maybe men dont get any fun out of life till after theyve worked. then they go crazy. and maybe after the film is out and everything we'll go away and make love all the time. i dont know, but i know the kitchen is clean now. the trash is out. he gave me those pair of shiny brown pants and i wore them downtown with him today. and i wish i could eat and neva gain a pound, and i know that i wish people who make all these stars and shit responded to quality more often — i mean i wish some of all this copy-cat copy would disappear somewheres. but people dont produce quality — they dilute it till it dont exist no more, after it sounds like, looks like somethin thats already been seen a million times already.

originality remains at the bottom disposal in the sink of the sea.

* * *

francisco had to do the soundtrack ova — well some of it. so he flew in the two actors who had to redub their voices. donnell and john kingston. john kingston goes to school at howard, hes short and round with big baby eyes and would always be sayin in a deep funny voice something gonna grab you. somethin gonna jump out the bushes and grab you.
austin mc coy —
down on avalon, and his old greasy recording studio in his own backyard was were francisco did it. he found mc coy through charles — a friend of his who told francisco he didnt need to spend the money to get donnell and john to fly in from nowheres, that he could get two men to do their voices ova, but francisco wasnt goin for it.

austin mc coy converted his garage into a recording studio that had all the facilities needed, all the facilities any hollywood studio would have. francisco says he wasnt that good, and austin was always fallin asleep on the job. i became cook and such, always off to the store to get beer, juice, wine, watermelon, nuts, chicken and such shit. the redubbin was completed durin one weekend. it took two hard days in spite of mc coys lectures. one sunday mornin we got ova there about ten, and mc coy was waitin for us with an early mornin sunday go to meetin sermon. he was in a clean shirt, freshly pressed pants on his skinny-boney legs. his wavy hair all oiled down to a slick shine. his bloodshot eyes as blood shot as eva cause mc coy is a wino. he talked about angela, bout white folks bein the great imitators of all time, bout the whole rip-off thing — he spoke in an intelligent sophisticated nigga southern rhythm. i like him, i thought he was cut. he thought I was cut too till we started talkin to each otha, then we would get into arguments behind him sayin that women were put here to be controlled by men and have been fightin their natural place in life ever since the beginnin of time.

francisco lost a friend in the process — charles — who escaped with two hundred dollars of franciscos. but that was okay i guess — cause i didnt hear about that very much — i heard mostly bout how charles thought too much.

this morning the trash can was burnin, and i put the napkins in the

ice box. thats better than two days before when i put the eggs in the freezer, and francisco saw it. he came in the bedroom where i lay readin a book and tole me, quietly controlling himself, not to put the eggs in the freezer please. but see, the regular part of the ice box is as cold as the freezer. hes tryin to be cool after gettin almost angry enough to hit me, after he came home one day and saw that i had painted the ice box, stove heater in livinroom, and chest in hallway bright red.

anyways last night we went ova to charles countee's house. he had a surprize birthday party given for him by his old lady. pat petersson, a short nice white lady, thats into bein nice. shes about thirty and well taken care of, and charles just turned twenty-seven black, and looks like he is in his forties. francisco says charles always looked old. he was born lookin old. charles had a black liberation flag hangin on his wall, and all those revolutionary black books sittin around everywhere. francisco wore a beautiful black velvet suit and his silver high heel shoes. hes cute with that conquistador mustache and all. we went out and danced to stevie wonders latest album and carried on. its hard to dance with francisco cause all i want to do is laugh all the time, cause he dances real funky. he finished his film yesterday.

* * *

this mornin bill eves called up and said he out to marry me. i think so too. bill eves is someone i went with a long time ago in new york, a friend of an x-old man of mine. bill eves now works in san francisco. francisco wanted bill to get some footage of angela out of some newsroom. Bill couldn't do it. francisco managed to get somebody else who worked at some otha news studio to do it. francisco got the film, had it copied, and returned it back to its respective place without any high ups or low in-betweens knowin it had been borrowed. francisco put his arms around my sweaty waist just now. my waist is sweaty cause i been exercising. he gugged me. and said he loved me — and i smiled my regular full blush.

* * *

now i tell you francisco was ova ishmael reeds house about a week ago. and we managed to sit ova there watchin t.v. till one in the mornin. i think we would have been there till dawn if it had been left up to francisco cause he didnt feel like movin. ishmael and francisco started talkin bout the latest book ishmael was gonna have out, and ishmael was pullin out press releases and historical

facts about african culture. i believe he gave me the distinct impression of havin studied and researched everythin about black people that ever was, or might be — magical, fantasy or real. we met ishmael in a bar hangin out ova in berkeley cause we had driven over there one weekend seein franciscos family and all. they started talkin bout his book, *green front t.v. fixed up,* which francisco wanted to direct, and is goin to direct cause ishmael gave him the word of mouth rights to do it — and so they were sittin round beatin the rug all night long about angela davis, crackin up on the way she talked, crackin up on how each otha talked. this sense of humor of their has no respect for nothin. it is cold-blooded and somehow true. i mean downright fracturingly factual. one night francisco, donnell and i were ridin along beboppin after comin from minnies can-do (an old timey lookin bar where folks go to dance to old timey music, out of the fifties and shit, and then they got this intermission where on their way singers who are on their way to gettin on their way sing, and carry on) crackin up on how jimi hendrix got caught in a purple haze — and francisco loves jimi hendrix. francisco got jimi hendrix hangin off his walls and shit. he be playin jimi hendrix in the mornin for his takin a shower music. crackin up on how james brown got drowned and shit, in his cold sweat. i think he only makes fun of people he loves. he dont bother with people he dont care about one way or the other. he was makin fun of how ishmael will bring out a book to prove what he is sayin. he'll bend ova pointin to a page in a book sayin read it . . . read it . . . its right there!

you got to see ishmael, hes kind of a grangly-powerful stout lookin mad man, with light brown color i think and cute lovable smiles when he smiles. hes crazy. his wife carla fixed some african rice for dinna that night, and some duck. it was sure good. i didnt catch the name of that african rice cause i was slightly drunk and very much not here. i be wandering off sometimes — and when i come back i cannot tell you where i have been, cause i do not even know i was gone.

* * *

so at five thirty today, we're all gonna go down to sausalito and screen the film in some screenin room, for our friends and for francisco to examine it, and see if he is pleased. its mainly for him. and then sunday we're gonna drive down to l.a. and check out hollywood. i dont know. i think its not so much that behind every great man is a great woman as much as a great man is a great man

and a girl is a girl. bill eves came ova with a red scarf flyin round his neck, red and white striped pants on, red shirt under an orange sleeveless sweater, blue, red, yellow high heel men shoes on, red scarf danglin from his left wrist — and his big gorilla before mankind-time hands. high on acid. donnell and john have been here gettin drunk and talkin loud. we all havin a good time. i didnt get drunk today cause today is my off drunk day.

we all drove down to sausalito. we all included lenni and lady friend with false eyelashes and rich lookin town and country clothes (but they got lost followin us down, and neva saw the film) and franciscos cousin. besides bill eves, and me, and everybody else right? we arrived to find the screenin room to be a house-shack by the ocean surrounded by junk. a big junk yard full of wood and rusty parts of old cars that somehow got humped up on top of each otha in front of thick wooly itchy bushes trees and weeds that hid some steps that lead up to a rickety plank that met some wooden shaky steps that lead to the house-shack where franciscos film was to be screened. im tired now from bein happy so i might not tell this right — but the house looked like it was in the appalachian hills of west virginia. it was beautiful, rustic, wooden. old fashioned pictures of old timey white folks hung on the walls. we stood in the house just as the sun was goin down in orange and turquoise — those colors lit the room warmly. about four or five people sittin on an old raggedy great lookin couch greeted us warmly. the women didnt have any make up on, or shoes. they looked like they were out of tobacco road with style. they were nice and offered us wine, and showed us around their home. there was this truly beautiful room that had windows so clean where you could see the ocean and sky meetin. there was a velvet antique sofa, a brass bed with an old well-maintained quilted blanket on top.

i could have lived there. it was a romantic place. especially at that time of day. michel cerf came with his wife who is pregnant — and he brought two french people, husband and wife, who were visitin him from hollywood for the weekend. they had to return on monday to continue work on their film. bill eves was on acid, john and donnell on wine, i was on apples, and francisco was just on. the film started. i must say i was nervous. i was nervous cause i love francisco and i wanted that film to be great. i was a nervous wreck. i watched the people watch the film. their eyes never left the screen. and when there were breaks because francisco had to change reels they didnt move. but sat fixed in seats, waiting for it

to continue. the french people watched it with the same amount of intensity. michel cerf whispered to francisco after each reel — they adore it.

after the film was ova, michel cerf invited us all ova to his house which was also in sausalito.

now we get in the house, donnell immediately starts hittin on this cute french girl, and bill eves starts a conversation with me, askin me what am i doin with myself? im with francisco, thats what i was doin obviously. francisco talked to the french people about movies. they say in their charming french accents — your film is wonderful.

donnel and john got drunk. donnell got loud and crazy pullin on his nose, and john sat straight faced starin into the straight ahead. eyes wide, completely transfixed, still, passed on to anotha state of unconsciousness. michel had to carry john out when we finally did leave. donnell tumbled along on his own two feet. both were too drunk to drive, so bill eves did. imagine, two drunks sittin in the front seat beside the man behind the wheel whos on acid. what a team! they were suppose to follow us. but we lost them on the highway.

we got home and changed our clothes, cause we were goin to anotha party. a party ova at nancy's house, who francisco told me was one of his girlfriends. we got dressed up great, francisco in his velvet suit again cause i asked him to wear it. and me in a my long clingin white dress. donnell and john and bill arrived — donnell slightly sobered up, and bill eves on the case professionally. he really knows how to deal with acid.

we went to the party. nothin but white folks dancin to the rollin stones. there was some good cheese and bread and shit. joe was there. we took a walk on the street together and talked about life. francisco changed the music and put on james brown — cold sweat — and came and got me to dance with him. i dont dig james brown too tough. or maybe i just didnt like bein there. i mean i like parties that have some black folks there. cause when we all get togetha sweat be pourin from the walls and shit and the energy be so high and i have a good time without even thinkin about it. as i danced with francisco surrounded by all those white folks i just didnt get the same feelin. i sat down in a chair and just watched the

party. a young man talked to me. i felt strange cause i was happy and here i was at a party that i wanted to go to and had a lot to dance and feel good about because francisco's film was good, but here — there i sat sittin in a chair discussin the difference between new york and san francisco with this young man. nancy turned out to be a nice girl with long wavey blonde hair, and blue eyes. donnell was after pussy. bill was there havin a good time. franciscos sister was there too. i had been lookin forward to meetin her. francisco says shes never been with a black man.

francisco and i left and drove back to san francisco and sat at enricos drinkin coffee and eatin cheese-cake. we were silent for a long time. starin at the cars goin by, the people walkin by. some of the women francisco knew. i thought everythin was perfect in the film except for the beginnin. i thought it needed to be cut somehow. i felt strange about openin my mouth to say that, but i felt i had to, so i did. he listened. we had a good time. we got home at about two or three, and fell asleep. it had been a good day.

the next day francisco called me into his bedroom and showed me the first ten minutes of the film on that little cardboard screen. he asked me what did i think needed to be cut. i showed him the places and we edited the film together for a while, then francisco continued on his own cause him and me disagreed somewheres about somethin. it was fun tho.

Two Poems
by
O.O. Gabugah

THE OLD O.O. BLUES

Like right now it's the summertime
and I'm so all alone
I gots to blow some fonky rhyme
on my mental saxophone

Brother Trane done did his thang
and so have Wes Montgomery,
both heavyweights in the music rang,
now I'mo play my summary

It's lotsa yall that thank yall white
(ought I say Uri-peein?)
who thank Mozart and Bach's all right,
denyin' your Black bein'

Well, honkiephiles, yall's day done come,
I mean we gon clean house
and rid the earth of Oreo scum
that put down Fats for Faust

This here's one for-real revolution
where ain't nobody playin'
We intends to stop this cultural pollution
Can yall git to what I'm sayin'?

Sittin' up there in your Dior gown
and Pierre Cardin suit
downtown where all them devil clowns
hang out and they ain't poot!

We take the white man's bread and grants
but do our own thang with it
while yall bees itchin to git in they pants
and taint the true Black spirit

I'm blowin for Bird and Dinah and Billie,
for Satch, Sam Cooke and Otis,
for Clifford, Eric and Trane outta Philly
who split on moment's notice

Chump, you ain't gon never change,
your narrow ass is sankin'
Like Watergate, your shit is strange
You drownin' while we thankin'

My simple song might not have class
but you can't listen with impunity
We out to smash your bourgeois ass
and by *we* I mean The Community!

BLACK QUEEN FOR MORE THAN A DAY

I thirst for
the kool-aid
of your fabulous
fine fruit-flavored throat

Lick that ebony tongue
out at me
and let that licorice
divine heavenly lickrish
slide down my system

Chocolate Mama, *mmm mmm*

Beauty is to boodie as
class struggle is
to ass struggle
so let's git it on
for the night is long

When you place your hot dark arm
'cross my chest
I'm like
some fierce tribal warrior
ready to get
down to natural bizness

With my head held high
I walk through the sky
with its cornrow of stars
and you scroonched all
up next to me
sweet as you are

I'm the original poet
(and I damn well know it)
when you suckle me,
you stallion you

Black woman
my African Queen
for more than a day
kiss me with your
Congo
lips

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Lawson Fusao Inada's first book of poems, *Before the War,* has been widely praised. Fresno, California-born, he presently lives and works in Ashland, Oregon . . . **Al Young**'s fourth book, *Who Is Angelina?,* a novel, will be brought out by Holt early in 1974 . . . **John A. Williams** is the veteran novelist/journalist whose latest works are *Captain Blackman* (a novel) and *Flashbacks* (essays), both from Doubleday . . . **Frank Chin**'s prize-winning play, *Chickencoop Chinaman,* was recently produced by the American Place Theater in New York. He is at work on a new novel, *Charlie Chan on Maui* . . . **Jefferey Paul Chan** is Chairman of Asian-American Studies at California State University at San Francisco . . . **Shawn Hsu Wong** teaches Asian-American literature at Mills College . . . **Betye Saar** lives in Southern California where she continues to work and win awards for her outstanding contributions to the visual arts . . . **Mario Lafont** is a young poet from Colombia . . . **Glenn D. Godfrey** is from British Honduras and has recently completed his first novel. The recipient of a Stegner Fellowship in Creative Writing, he presently teaches literature at Xavier in New Orleans . . . **Charlotte Painter's** latest novel is *Notes from the Malaga Madhouse* (Dial). She is currently compiling, with Mary Jane Moffett, a collection of women's letter and diary excerpts to be published by Random House . . . **Elias Hruska-Cortes,** of Ukrainian-Cuban extraction, was reared in Havana and presently lives near San Jose, California. He has published a book of poems jointly with Chicano poet Roberto Vargas. "The Reaper" will be a central poem of a new collection entitled *Entre Espigas (Between Thorns)* . . . National Book Award-nominee **Ishmael Reed** has a new book of poems, *Chattanooga,* just out from Random House which will shortly bring out *The Last Days of Louisiana Red* (his fourth novel) . . . **Steve Cannon** has recently completed the screenplay of his popular underground novel, *Groove, Bang, Jive Around.* New Orleans-born, he has been active on the New York literary scene for some time . . . **Doyle Foreman,** Sculptor, is Assistant Professor of Art, Merrill College, University of California, Santa Cruz, and Art Editor of *Yardbird II* . . . **Jay Wright**'s *The Homecoming Singer* (Corinth Books) is a collection of poems that has been warmly received on both sides of the Atlantic. An ex-professional baseball player and active playwright, he presently lives in Scotland . . . **Bob Jefferson** is an instructor at California College of Arts and Crafts, a jewelry-maker and creative craftsman based in Berkeley . . . **Robert Garner** is a short story writer from Kentucky who is presently based in San Francisco. He has contributed to *Dues,* the new annual anthology of Afro-American writing edited by Ron Welburn . . . **Joseph Geran, Jr.,** Painter-Sculptor, is Assistant Professor at California College of Arts and Crafts, teaching sculpture, drawing and painting . . . **Nate Mackey:** "Born 1947 in Miama, Florida. All my life from the age of 5 spent in California, except for four years of study at Princeton. Began to write upon hearing Monk do 'Pannonica.'" . . . **Michael S. Harper** is the author of *Dear John, Dear Coltrane, History Is Your Own Heartbeat, I Want a Witness and Debridement.* Recipient of the Black Academy of Arts and Letters Award, he teaches at Brown in Providence, Rhode Island . . . **Billy Wandera** is from Kenya and has published a novel with the East African press in Uganda. He is a grad-

uate Engineering student at Stanford . . . **Joyce Carol Thomas** teaches Spanish at California State University at San Jose and is author of *Bittersweet,* a book of poems recently brought out by poet Jon Eckels' Firesign Press . . . **Barrington McLean,** Painter and printmaker, is an instructor at Cabrillo College in Aptos, California . . . **Charles Wright** is the author of three remarkable books, the latest being *Absolutely Nothing to Get Alarmed About* (Farrar Straus Giroux). He resides for the time being in Mexico . . . **Jim Marks** is an active "jazz" musician who has published two books of poetry — *Vibrations* and *Sanctuary.* His LP "Touching Your Feelings" was recently issued on his own Nicole label . . . **Bob Fox** is former editor and founder of the now defunct *Night Times,* a San Francisco Bay Area newspaper that was way ahead of its time. At present he is an editor of *City* magazine . . . **Patricia Parker** is a legendary California poet whose work has appeared in innumerable little magazines and in several anthologies . . . **Jack Micheline** is the well-known and widely published poet whose work is internationally admired . . . **Driss Chraibi** of Morocco, is the best known of North African writers. He lives in Paris where he works in French broadcasting . . . **Colette Myles,** of Gypsy origin, is a native of Paris. She presently works as Associate Specialist with UC Berkeley's Institute of International Studies. She is married to Glenn Myles, the well-known graphic designer and poet . . . **Melvin Dixon** is a young Providence, Rhode Island poet . . . **Cyn Zarco** is a young Filipino-American writer who has read from her work extensively on the West Coast . . . **Alison Mills,** Los Angeles-bred, is in her early twenties but has already enjoyed a quiet, successful career as a TV actress and personality. *Francisco (My Jazz Man)* is her first novel, soon to be published by Gumbo Press . . . **Charles Lynch** is a Brooklyn-based poet whose work has appeared in little magazines . . . **June Jordan** has edited two books of poems, edited an anthology of children's poetry and contributed reviews and articles to *The New York Times* . . . "**O.O. Gabugah** draws strong folk poetry from the voice of a strident but vital black revolutionary who attacks the Uncle Tom," says *The Nation.* Mysterious, elusive, irascible, he is currently preparing his selected poems under the auspicious title, *O.O.'s Greatest Hits* . . . **James D. Houston** is the author of three novels *(Between Battles, Gig* and *Native Son of the Golden West)* and a collection of short stories *(The Adventures of Charlie Bates)* He is also a professional bassist and guitarist in the Santa Cruz area . . . **Marianne Raphael** is active in the womens' movement in Manhattan and has published widely . . . **Wilson Riles, Jr.** is a PhD candidate in education at U.C. Berkeley.

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