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C O N T E N T S

POETRY

Peter Wild	5	<i>Farmer and the Tramp</i>
A. P. Schroeder	6	<i>Tracks</i>
Stanwood K. Bolton, Jr.	6	<i>Trusting Winter</i>
Peter Thomas	7	<i>From the Hills of Nsukka</i>
Emmanuel A. Essien		<i>Hope</i>
Udo E. Essien		<i>Rain</i>
Eben I. I. Ibe		<i>Emergence</i>
Chris Irrechuku		<i>Lost Generation</i>
Pol. N. Ndu		<i>Decent Graves</i>
Sam O. Nwaojigba		<i>The Old Fashion</i>
		<i>A Poem</i>
Bona Onyejeli		<i>Father</i>
Peter Thomas		<i>A Question of Time</i>
Kathryn Quick	17	untitled poem
Frederick Candelaria	17	<i>Despite your Fences. . .</i>
J. Michael Yates	18	<i>Firework</i>
James Bertolino	21	<i>Dream of a Library</i>
Walt Phillips	23	<i>Orange Street Woman</i>
		<i>Couvent du Sacre Coeur</i>
Lyn Lifshin	24	<i>Poem for the Mad. . .</i>
		<i>In Back of Houses. . .</i>
Pablo Neruda	26	<i>The Gallop</i>
		<i>Age</i>
Richard W. Thomas	31	<i>Some Footnotes on Black Poetics</i>
June Manning		<i>Foiled Attack</i>
James B. Hamilton		untitled poem
Jill Witherspoon		<i>When Brothers Forget</i>
Shirley Echols		untitled poem
		<i>Old Black Man</i>
Richard W. Thomas		<i>Little Dark Girl</i>
		<i>Kids</i>
		<i>Poems for the Brothers. . .</i>
Margaret Atwood	43	<i>Border Crossing. . .</i>
Sam Cornish	51	untitled poem

REVIEWS

Thomas L. Costello	44	<i>Quest for the Necessary: W. H. Auden and the Dilemma of Divided Consciousness.</i> —by Herbert Greenberg
Stephen Hathaway	47	<i>Soul on Ice.</i> —by Eldridge Cleaver



FARMER AND THE TRAMP

Out of the ragged cornfield the badger-eyed
farmer lurched, took me by the
collar listen he said you're a bum
have nothing take my daughter she's
ugly as a coal bin unkempt spendthrift
sickly liar cheat—dumb useless
around the house and to me—no man
will have her—take her she's free
but no dowry;—just one thing she's great
in bed a regular river at its spring a
sexual she-bear who'll carry you through
galaxies

I've tried her he said with a wink.

and departing waved maybe
you can sell her somewhere cheap

so I took her

I wounded her
she wounded me
she took my wounds
I took hers; at times
we sat in the moonlight
eating grass, for nothing to eat

we slept on the stones by stone-cold rivers

she whelped malformed puppies

and she was all those things.

TRACKS

A sudden noise
is gone.
The passage of the space between
two things.

Nothing follows the thought of an
abruptly opened door:
In the full beam of the spotlight
An empty man.

Between the temple and the temple,
I am the difference, the same,
between the temple and the temple
of the identical priest

who hangs suspended in the silence
of this wilderness.

STANWOOD K. BOLTON, Jr.

TRUSTING WINTER

Five-thirty and awake
the early day would have been gray
in January
without the clouds
but I pushed out to Acoaxet
and the mute swans
always white.
Their wings are wings
their necks enter all skies
with grace and a question
and air cracks
in the distance
while the sea lifts and sloughs off
in a mixing of snow and blue sand.
I am lost in the thickets
and all I can hear
is the hesitant sea pounded by snow
and the swans are not there
but I see them.

FROM THE HILLS OF NSUKKA

Once, not so long ago, there was a raw new campus at a place called Nsukka in what was then the Eastern Region of the newly independent (and apparently united) Federation of Nigeria. It was called The University of Nigeria by its hopeful and ambitious founder and was to be modelled on the Land Grant pattern of Michigan State University, which was to be responsible for the first ten years of its operation. In 1960-61, there were just under three hundred students and two professors in the English Department to provide Freshman English classes for them all and specialised courses for the nearly fifty English Majors.

That is how I came to be put in charge of the teaching of Poetry Writing, as well as Student Drama productions, for the next five years. I had been trying to write poetry myself since I was a very small boy in love with my Cotswold home in England and had already been informally responsible for Creative Writing classes at a Boys' Secondary School in Ghana. What I could not foresee when I undertook the task at Nsukka was the high level of achievement that would come from writers for whom English was a second language. Before I left in 1965, out of some forty-odd students who had worked with me perhaps a dozen had published in *Nigeria* magazine and other periodicals, five had poems in the Heinemann anthology *Young Commonwealth Poets '65*, and one (who later worked at the Iowa Writers' Workshop) had had his first volume, *Icheke*, published by Mbari in Ibadan.

The selection offered here is drawn from the unpublished collection I brought away with me from that once flourishing community of poets it was my good fortune to direct (I will not say "teach") before I removed from those green hills to the wasteland of Salt Lake City. Looking back over those yellowing pages, I have been struck by the consistent seriousness of tone displayed by young men of considerable difference of character, theme and style. But for the two Essiens (an Efik name) all were Ibos and may or may not have survived the recent terrible misfortunes of that suffering people.

Is it merely hindsight, or was there a strain of prophecy in their work, that produces in me a feeling of awe as I read again of the cold wind that destroys lovers' dreams, the four little boys creeping down the world naked and unknowing, or the whited sepulchres who were "big men"—politicians—draining oceans dry with leaky pails? There is an epigrammatic, and enigmatic, quality about all these poems, as one might expect of a people who in their own tongue are inveterate users of proverbs; as any reader of Achebe or Okara will already be aware.

My plea for time to let the campus grow rooted and human in the poem offered for our first graduation in 1963 seems doubly ironic now. One must conjecture, after recent reports on its condition, that it has become a far worse eyesore than it was in its building-up: a desolation wrought by spiteful and illiterate men. If, however, any of the bright voices I knew survive to be raised again in the service of Biafra, we may hope that the lovely hills of Nsukka will eventually see a new community of learning planted among them; that a day will come when those present may look back at our tentative beginnings and say there was good in them after all—that from our scattered seeds a shining flower *did* grow.

— PETER THOMAS

HOPE

Look up,
To the silver light
Of the stars.

The dreams of lovers are tinged
With silver and gold.
They are warm;
They are real.
But the wind
That destroys them
Is cold, cold.

UDO E. ESSIEN

RAIN

Clouds seldom form in the desert,
They evaporate before they form.

The savannah has its seasonal deluge
And is dry for the rest of the year.

I love the fortunate rainy regions
In which at every season, day and night,
Rain pours, flood surges and life abounds.

EMERGENCE

Mere figures cut in clay stood and gazed,
They gazed on earth gone dead
And on life gone wood;
Caked mud around.

Land takes the dead and never breaks:
Want to come, great want to come,
Wanderer in captivity keeps;
Burnished sands press up
Against the foot that falls.

Tree shelters in the cloud
That gives no shade to man or tree.
Under the rock, no life —
Only clouds that rise not.
Fan the rock and it breaks
With a new hope unfolding;
Life yawns into the air
Swept of the dead and dying.

They smile and acknowledge it:
Land which breaks to announce
Plenty to come, great plenty to come.

They bury the gods of the dead.

LOST GENERATION

Four little boys
Walking the fields
Naked,
Armfolded for the cold;
Coming down the vast sober slopes
Against the somber green of the distant mountains
Humped across Nature.

Coming down the slopes,
Coming,
The red and yellow, black and white, boys
Creeping
 down
 the world
All naked,
 naked and unknowing;
Cold on their native soil,
Cold;
Feeling down the world,
Indigenes of a foreign land.

Each strives against a growing cold,
Each hugs him for a losing warmth
Disdainful of communal arms;
Wandering,
Like a guide too sure to err,
In the maze of ordered creation:
Cold little boys unknowing.

In a world that wonders,
In a world that fears,
They fear —
And are, one to another, cold
In a world that was warm,
A world that may warm . . .

Paradise of Sorrow.

DECENT GRAVES

Where do I
Wash my hands?

Hands that touched this glossy profile
With blackened recess,
Mobbed by increasing troops
Of restless, hungry dogs
That hound and bite their lord,
Howling aloud unheard
Except by him.

Today:
Big, saintly talks,
Fast, flash houses,
Garden sunflower gods.

Whited sepulchers —
Masks for insatiable souls
Who dare drain oceans dry
With leaky pails,
Breed all fishes into king whales
That should farm the water-bed
Or else be dead.

How do we
Wash the hands
That dug these graves?

A POEM

On a succulent marigold
On a green page, in green ink,
A poet has threaded a poem
Invisible to many an eye.

Only the poet reads his poem,
Or the heart of our minds;
But gentle breeze plays the symphony
Of the gossamer.

Fleeting eyes see no poem,
Errant ears miss no rhythm,
Hasty men and blind wind
Bend the marigold.

But the poem remains intact
And the poet clings to his page.

THE OLD FASHION

Late, very late in the afternoon,
The golden light comes stealing into the room.
How fast the river runs
Between its green banks and the marigold!

But it's very near the sea.
I hear the waves;
They always said so!
The swift river bears me to the ocean.
The motion of the boat on the stream
Lulls me to rest.
How green the banks are now,
How bright the flowers growing there,
How tall the marigold!

Now the boat is out at sea
It is gliding smoothly on.
And now there is a shore before me,
Who stands on the bank?

O, the print upon the stairs
Is not divine enough!
The light about the head
Shines on me as I go.
The golden ripple on the wall returns
And nothing else stirs in the room.
The old, old fashion!
The fashion that came in with our first garments
And will last unchanged till our race has run its course.

FATHER

Your father — and he was then
My grandsire —
Had built his house
Lofty on a nountain top
Under the noonday sun,
And there were such
Amagu boasted only two,
Sung by virgin girls
At feasts and wedding days.

Then you wore cowries
Around your knees,
Around your waist,
Around your ankles,
Around your neck;
About her wrinkled neck.

Yet why he,
Sung even beyond the Ordor River,
Why he crumbled all — the house
Built of his own sweat —
He crumbled it at dark;
None would tell it me.

And you
My father, you and my aunt
(Nebuwa her name and rightly so),
Two naked lambs deserted
By the sheep,
Trudged about crying for milk.

But you,
My father, you survived the dead
To purge this deed
And build this house again . . .
In front of which I see
The oil-bean tree, planted
By you in a broken pot
At infancy when land was denied you,
Shoot branches
And clap off seeds.

A QUESTION OF TIME

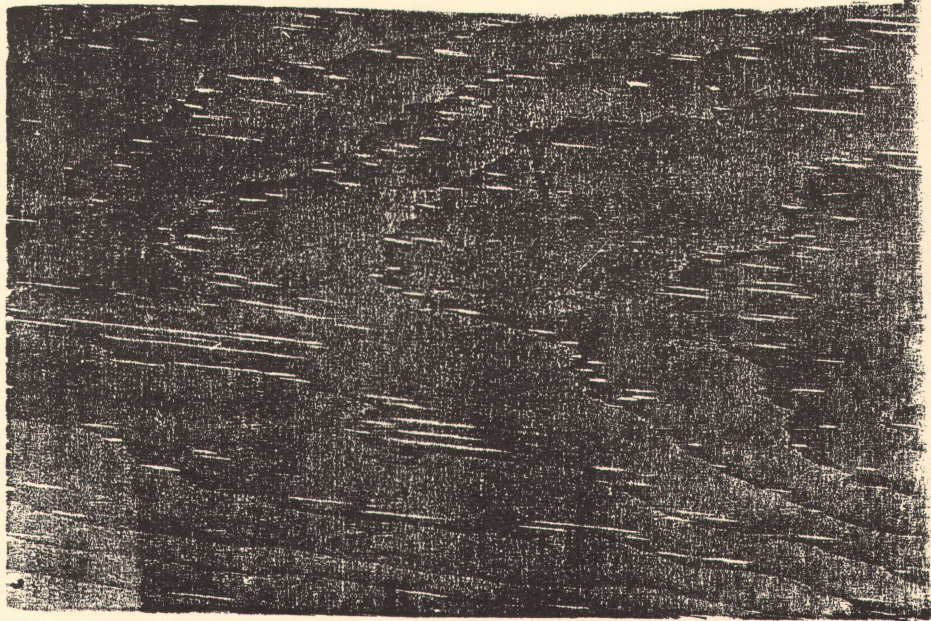
first graduation at Nsukka, June 1963

Can a brickyard powder its nose, make love, get wed, bear
Children? That, it would seem, in the terms
Employed, is what it's asked
To do. They tell the place to shine, call it
"Sweet Mother" — this wilderness of concrete, steel
And stone. What should it answer, raised
Unloving by the hands of men
Where sleeping dinosaurs are hills in order
Moulded by wind and weather many ages?

Beautiful they are, those seasonal round hills,
Where light makes royal progress night and morning:
Rain and the threat of rain
Shadow them yearly, stars and the moon
Caress them, the tawny sun laughs green.
But in the valley?
Three years ago there came with pick and shovel
Men without eyes — mechanicals — and made
A lake of mud. Now, in the morning

Of their handiwork, they look around
And would pronounce it good . . . Shall we go with them,
We who have given blood, almost,
And sweat that stone might live
And still be fruitful? Give us a lifetime;
Give us our children's children — give us
A hundred years. Then let it answer:
If rain yet cherishes those hills
And night and morning

Circle their sunsoft shoulders, white upon green —
If in the valley this has grown accepted,
Rooted and human —
Men may return on this day's scene
And say indeed "It shines!"



untitled

CAROL EKKENS

They are coming down the hall now
stopping at each door
to kick it in
pull out
the scream that lived there
(almost silently)
Our doorknob is next
We knew they were coming
but we thought it was next week

FREDERICK CANDELARIA

DESPITE YOUR FENCES
AND YOUR SEASONS

My eyes
make this landscape
mine:

more than mind,
not just
the I.

Close these lids,
darken ego,
iris, retina,

yet

I've memorized
this cleft, cliff,
hill and crest,

the warmth
of your country
and your breasts.

FIREWORK

A clear bell of silence swings
At the steeple of this topless tower of sound.

The temple-builders examine their shoes.
Citizens stop saying in mid-prose.

Scarlet landscape beneath mauve clouds,
Chrome-green shutters above the black lawns.

Only a tri-colored cat noticed,
Then, behind a Steinway piano, died.

Hearts stopped, sap in the sumac froze, who knows
What — if anything — occurred while time paused between tics?

Perhaps one pause in the musical score was the sole
Audible remark; so ceased a conscious beast.

None saw the temple had fallen,
But the bell, which continues to swing.

What the cat knew: one world come softly to one end.
One mind's projector failed; the film begins again.



untitled

RICHARD STEMMERMANN



frustration

JANICE STEIN

DREAM OF A LIBRARY

for Lewis MacAdams

Across grey carpet
her long curls reach
the boy with musk.
Now a teenager lopes by
in a green sweatshirt —
“Catbite Normal” inked in red
over his chest. His
inner ear clicks. The four
of us are alone
in a laundromat. Beyond
a metal magazine-rack
the dirty window
fails. I want to save
the life of a yellow
kitten. Catbite kicks
the boy in his
tiny pink balls. She covers
my face with her
moist opening. There are deeper
shades of blue
than the backs of
her eyes. The boy
thinks of his mother, & how
he can’t wake up.
We sin. Our lust forms
a chain. We writhe
on the rug.



ORANGE STREET WOMAN

She looks out
from beneath her shade
and her eyes
pinch little children.
She has a large house
in which to sing
her funny high song.
In the summer,
she has ivy
that runs after you.

COUVENT du SACRE COEUR

There was a male model
and the two women
were looking at that thing.
But the artist,
the artist who became famous
and who died
very old in a pile of pillows,
had a hand stuck in some clay,
his eyes
in ancient Greece.

POEM FOR THE MAD LETTER WRITER
NOT WITH ME, WHO MAY NOT EVEN BE

Rain mangles the glass.
When we drive, this car is a
basket that holds us
together. But it's all,

you know I'm pulled somewhere
different. The map tells
of bridges, other streets. These
clapboard houses that stay
like 19th century Concord. Even their

colors are fixed, made to clutch
at some past. I keep
tasting words I'll never
send you, that will probably

shipwreck at the bottom
of some poem. Do you think
in another place this wouldn't be
so? Or that even here in these
wet hills where rainy ghosts of Thoreau

are humping shadow Emilys,
making even old word trees bloom alive,
I could live with you, Love?
Tho I suppose you only breathe on paper.

IN BACK OF HOUSES

THE POET TRIES TO LIVE AS A TREE

but who'd suppose
not only his hurling
across country
stealing hamburg and shoes
or that strange June
when he drifted in
from the airport
in one of many disguises
to live under the stairs
with the dead moths
and then slip into trees,
sleeping near crickets and stars

could they tell
by a maple branch,
was anyone suspicious
in wicker chairs
of the poems that were growing,
how nights he moved
behind the houses
picking socks and green pillows,
eating their grape leaves
and lettuce
for most of July and August

who would dream
he'd be floating over dark lawns
with pencils and a candle
except maybe that kid
who cried
rolling the car window down
as he got in, but Daddy
he smells like a fire
and his clothes are broken
and there's leaves
and rained on poems
in his hair

GALOPE

Me he preguntado muchas veces
al amanecer, cuando subo
a un esqueleto de caballo,
por que el corcel no se desarma
entre los penascos que cruzo
o las arboledas que paso
o las olas que dejo atras
o la polvareda que sigue
mi insobornable cabalgata.

Oh caballo grabado en blanco
sobre el pizarron estepario
de la patagonica noche,
cuando regreso galopando
en mi montura de ceniza
como inspector de torbellinos
o como coronel glacial
de los ventisqueros que ruedan
al mar con sus caballerias.

Despues recojo las distancias
vuelvo a mi sueno cotidiano,
apaciguo mis fundamentos
hasta que en el alba del frio
siento golpear las herraduras
y me despierto a recorrer
el invierno recién llegado
con mi caballo transparente.

THE GALLOP

I have asked myself many times
on waking, when I mount
a horse's skeleton,
why he doesn't come apart
among the rocks I cross
or the groves I pass
or the waves I leave behind
or the dust cloud that follows
my unruly mount.

Oh horse etched in white
above the wide steppes
of the patagonia night
when I come back galloping
on my ash colored mount
like an inspector of whirlwinds
or like an icy colonel
of the blizzards that roll
to the sea with their cavalries.

After I gather the distances,
I return to my daily dream,
I calm my foundations
until in the cold dawn
I feel the horseshoes strike
and I wake to travel over
the new winter
with my transparent horse.

EDAD

Ay la mentira que vivimos
fue el pan de nuestro cada día.
Señores del siglo veintiuno
es necesario que se sepa
lo que nosotros no supimos,
que se vea el contra y el por,
porque no lo vimos nosotros,
y que no coma nadie más
el alimento mentiroso
que en nuestro tiempo nos nutría.

Fue el siglo comunicativo
de las incomunicaciones:
los cables debajo del mar
fueron a veces verdaderos
cuando la mentira llegó
a tener mayor latitud
y longitudes que el océano:
los lenguajes se acostumbraron
a aderezar el disimulo,
a sugerir las amenazas,
y las largas lenguas del cable
enrollaron como serpientes
el mentidero colosal
hasta que todos compartimos
la batalla de la mentira
y después de mentir corriendo
salimos mintiendo a matar,
llegamos mintiendo a morir.

Mentíamos con los amigos
en la tristeza o el silencio
y el enemigo nos mintió
con la boca llena de odio.

Fue la edad fría de la guerra.

La edad tranquila del odio.

Un hombre de cuando en cuando
quemaba el alma de Viet Nam.

Y Dios metido en su escondite
acechaba como una araña
a los remotos provincianos
que con sonolienta pasión
caían en el adulterio.

AGE

The lie that we lived
was our daily bread.
Men of the twenty-first century,
you must know
what we did not know
in order to see pro and con
because we did not see it,
and that you do not eat
the food of deceit
that fed us in our time.

It was the communicative century
of uncommunication:
cables under the sea
were real at times
when the lie came
to have greater latitude
and longitude than the ocean:
the languages became used to
beautifying the false,
to suggesting threats,
and the long tongues of the cable
coiled up as serpents,
the colossal lie,
until all of us became involved
in the battle of the lie;
and while we were running
we were lying,
and we came out lying to kill,
and we arrive lying to die.

We used to lie with friends
in sadness or in silence
and the enemy lied to us
with his mouth full of hate.

It was the frozen age of war.

The tranquil age of hate.

A man from time to time
burned the soul of Vietnam.

And God, stuck in his hiding place
spying as a spider
the distant country people
who with sleepy passion
fell in adultery.



anguish

LOUISE CORMIER

SOME FOOTNOTES ON BLACK POETICS

*. . . you say you write
poems? Well, brother, make
sure you put triggers on 'em!*

— Jason Lovette

Black poets in America are attempting to create an audience among their people. They are engaged in a revolution of literary symbols to liberate the people's minds from the complete symbolic worlds in which the minds of the people are now held prisoner, and to construct new symbolic worlds. Art for art's sake is a joke, an ivory-tower, middle-class, white boy laugh. It implies a poetry of fixation, of static energy: indeed it lacks the energy to blow minds and release bodies.

Black poetry in America aims for beauty of blackness not as an isolated aesthetic standard, but rather as an injection of "soul" to make real the basic ways of living: eating, sleeping, giving birth, working, dying. . . . Black poetry is human poetry. It is reading to a group of poor boys in jail. It is writing about the pain and joys of being a black human in racist America.

Some shall say: "A poem is a poem, color doesn't matter!" We say: "Go to your utopian Hell, fool!" Our poems must speak of Detroit in 1967, during our rebellion. They must speak of the underbelly of affluent, cancerous America, where we copulate and gesture behind the hundred-year-old plateglass. Can you dig it?

We're not too much interested in writing cute poems for tea-sipping audiences of black and white bourgeois academics. If we write a sonnet it better be able to roll its sleeves up and handle some black energy — or it's gonna bust a gut! In other words, poems got to hustle the revolutionary black thing, work for their keep and give the people symbols that give purpose and meaning to their lives. And to those institutional poets on the 13th floor reading poems to menopausal old ladies, who say "that isn't what poetry is!" we say "that's what it's going to be if it stays around us groovy black poets long enough!"

— RICHARD W. THOMAS

FOILED ATTACK

We walk across the grass.

Again I try.

I throw out

my new weapon

polished

precision-made

flaw less

You catch it

Return it —

It's much more harmful to me

than it would have been

to you.

And so I crumble

And in the window of my soul

Put up a huge

out-to-lunch

sign

(to be kept up —

indefinitely)

I'd have done that to you

If you hadn't of thrown it back . . .

WHEN BROTHERS FORGET

when brothers forget
 come bombs
 and politics.
come creeds
that send the armies marching.
sitting down to tea
inspires plotting
and men clasp hands
 to give the sign
 before tomorrow's battle.
warmth watches at the edge of the world
waiting for them
who have gone too far —
 mama leaning out the window
 calling her children home.

JAMES B. HAMILTON

With yet versus the world
the child flails its arms about
and shouts to someone
Here-then-gone-without-a-sound
(or fare thee well)
like some resonating bell
resounding somewhere at noon
either too late or too soon.

Black man
with your bushed Afro-
and
very large tiki
and
wearing you Da' Shiki
Who You Try'in to Fool.
You You would be Black Man
with your tight double vinyl suit
and
your fraternity pin
shining like the stars
and
your neatly pressed pants
You Ain't Fooling Nobody
(but yourself)
going to school to get a ed u cation? huh
just to get that pink lady
and
play it cool
sure let her send you through school,
pay your light,
gas,
rent,
car note,
buy your clothes
and

If you're nice BOY she may even clean your laundry. YOU BLACK MAN!
You mean you traveled 500 miles (maybe more)
for this gold mine
Man you struck it rich

all
you got
to do
is give
her
some SWEET
black DICK

Hey brothers what bout me
i'm black too black woman REMEMBER?
You think i need a flunkie to ge my Cum la my bills paid?
HELL NO NIGGERS.

Take that little miss whiteness
yeah go on and sleep with her
let her buy your soul just for a nickel
you ain't

ready
for me
no way.

FOR MY BLACKNESS

FOR MY WOMANHOOD.

OLD BLACK MAN

Eyes long testifying the deeds

of man

OLD

BLACK MAN, Bent over and —

Broken

How I honored you for your

BRAV ERY

your COUR AGE

to live

Your hands / show the pain

of digging,

digging the grounds for ME, for U. S. . . .

us.

Your eyes / testify

the lies

you told to

avoid the lashes,

the

nightmares

of DEATH DEATH!

You've come / along ways

old black Man

OLD

PROUD

BLACK MAN

Just to say / "I live in America land

the

of

free, "Free?

ARE

you

Really?

Your legs tired, / aching, / wanting

to rest,

But

knowing the "MAN" will gain an

IN CH

if you ain't your Best / best
compared to

What?

OLD BLACK MAN,

take sit

please a

Let us young Blacks take a stand

I say we say / will done,

you

brought

us

here

this far

inthe

land

of america,

land of opportunity,

FOR WHOM?

MY WONDERFUL OLD MAN

I hope won't

I

grow

a s

o l d

as brave / as

c o u r a g o u s

in this land of America,

land of the

FREE?

land of OPPORTUNITY?

LITTLE DARK GIRL

(To a 12 year old)

Little dark girl don't cry
the ads with bleaching
cream are jive
monkeys have straight hair too.

Little dark girl don't cry
if God isn't black
as you
He can forget my prayers; my
time's yours.

I'll deliver you the
sky, walk across sugar, black star.
Warmth and song.

Little dark girl don't cry
those white and light chicks
got their thing going today

But tomorrow, baby
shall be your thing
and I'll stretch it out
for 24 centuries

and
dark girls
shall be the measure of queens
of ads and fads
and
bleaching cream companies
shall be bombed!

KIDS

Kids really dig playing
In the snow. Building snowmen
And snowcastles.

On buses they talk their little
Heads spinning.
Can hardly understand a word
They're saying.

Their mothers understand.
If you want to understand
You'll have to wait until
Their mother's faces translate
The baby talk.

I wonder what kids
Think about when they're playing?

I wonder if they think
We old cats got our thing
Uptight?

It's a helluva thing
The way kids never drop their eyes
Once they got you on target.

POEMS FOR THE BROTHERS IN
LANSING BOY'S TRAINING SCHOOL

*THE POEM IS MIGHTIER
THAN THE SWITCHBLADE*

They think I gonna smuggle
a gun in
or some dynamite in my pencil
or tell you about the closets in
their skulls
or give you a recipe on how
to poison the ginger bread or
trap a cat on the john
and lynch him with toilet paper.

But, they ain't hip that
the poem is mightier than the switchblade.

I'm just gonna read some nice poems.
Poems you can take to bed.
Poems that can fight for you
when your hands are tied

and you can put a trigger on them
if you want to.

II

When I'm alone
and everybody else is doing
their own thing.
And everything is dark and
jive and the world is
laying traps.
I just sit and dig it
before I jab . . .
I just sit and wrap
my thing up tight
before jabbing . . .
then
I move out slowly
like an angel with
a do-rag on.
I move out and
before they're hip to
what's happening
the world is out cold.
Lying out, limp, because
I sat there and wrapped my
thing up tight,
because sometimes jabbing
at the wrong time blows
your whole thing. Sometimes
you got to fake a cat off balance
like instead
of jabbing,
go into a beautiful spiritual bag
and blow a cat's mind

splash his soul
all over the place

leave him chasing himself

because he can't figure out
how you got so pretty so fast!



BORDER CROSSING: QUEBEC TO MAINE
JUNE 1968

In a white frame building
the official writes on the form:
everything is in order.

The road is black,
no sun;

In the lake the black trees waver
and are left behind.

As the car passes, children
playing on the gravel
turn up their faces to us, thin
and soundless as a mirage

The yards and the strung washing
carry on as usual

An old woman wearing a man's hat
is digging in the earth.

Quietly
we enter
we are entered by
the land of death.

AUDEN'S OEUVRE

Herbert Greenberg, *Quest for the Necessary: W. H. Auden and the Dilemma of Divided Consciousness*. Harvard University Press, December, 1968, \$5.95.

The ways in which artistic careers develop is always an interesting question for study; it is certain that there is no strict pattern, yet a point of similarity one is likely to discover among such diverse geniuses as T. S. Eliot, Picasso, and even the Beatles is their refusal to sit still with success. Surely it must always be somewhat tempting to re-use the successful formula, to insure the instant acceptance. But perhaps "refusal" is inaccurate; it is more likely that for minds of the highest order, those whose sensibilities keep pace with the changing world, it is impossible to keep doing repeat performances. Every step must be a "first step."

Whether or not these first steps are also "further steps," however, is quite another matter, one which usually requires the perspective of a later generation. For "further steps" implies continuity, progression, transition, and usually an artist's contemporaries have their hands full with explication and evaluation, and are too impressed with originality, to be able to see through to unity. W. H. Auden is still very much alive, and with his poetic career now beginning its fourth decade, Herbert Greenberg has written a provocative and convincing book showing that Auden's works, from first to last, "make one consistent *oeuvre*."

Auden is a poet who has always had a reputation for intellectual inconstancy. His good friend C. Day Lewis has written that "the dogmas of one year are, with Auden, the heresies of the next." He was sold on communism and then he sold out; he was nurtured on the existentialists but he now finds the anthropologists more amenable; and of course he made that unpopular leap from atheist to Christian. Thus any effort to prove that Auden has been preoccupied with a single idea throughout his career might seem merely an ingenious exercise.

Literary critics have always sought such underlying unities, however, and Professor Greenberg is not the first to have sought it in Auden. Barbara Everett observed that it is the variety and fertility of his work rather than its unity which first commands attention; nevertheless, it is his unity and coherence which she takes as her central theme. Randall Jarrell, in a hostile 1941 article entitled "From Freud to Paul: the Stages of Auden's Ideology," concludes that beneath these stages Auden's constant concerns are "guilt, anxiety, and isolation." And in 1963 Monroe K. Spears, though he doesn't really demonstrate the fact, agrees that Auden's subject has always been man's will in conflict with his unconscious desires.

What makes Professor Greenberg's study useful, however, is that he employs the problem of divided consciousness to make sense out of many of Auden's most obscure poems. He has

not used the poems for the sake of arriving at the concept; rather he has taken a concept which is inherent in the poems to explain the poems. And what is most illuminating is that in his readings he shows that the problem of divided self is not simply an underlying philosophical position: divided self is what the poems are *about*.

The division itself Auden borrowed from Dante's distinction of Love Natural and Love Rational. In Freudian terms the conflict is between the Id and the ego. The natural love of the Id is always without error; the rational love of the ego may err "through an evil object or through too little or too much vigor." Each revision in Auden's thinking, Greenberg states, "may be regarded as a renewed effort to answer the question of how and by what authority love is to fulfill itself in a divided creature." The search for this principle is, in short, the quest for the Necessary.

In the early work the quest was couched in psychological terms. Man's problem is the repression of his instincts and unconscious desires, and the consequence of such repression is disease. Thus Auden's early poems are peopled with victims of headaches, heartaches, and cancers. The cure? Decide to be healthy: give vent to desires. Leave the unhealthy environment, which "makes us well without confession of the ill." The problem, however, is that no one wants to live or leave. Thus Auden's celebrated concern with the Death-wish; thus the many preparations for journeys in which "no one goes / Further than railroad of the ends of piers."

It is this early poetry which earned Auden his reputation and although, as Greenberg suggests, its basis is a naive psychology, still these poems have a bite which many of the later poems, despite the intellectual refinements, often lack. Much of the obscurity of the early work, however, stems from Auden's ambivalence of feeling, and much of Professor Greenberg's achievement consists of defining and explaining this ambivalence. *The Orators*, for example, is a work which has been defeating critics for decades, and although Mr. Greenberg does not pretend to "solve" it, he at least asks the right questions. In fact, his suggestion that Auden was at this time flirting with fascism is an insight which would probably provoke the scholars' scorn had not Auden himself recently admitted the fact.

But whatever brief attraction that ideology held for Auden, it was precisely Hitler's rise to power a few years later which, Greenberg suggests, helped motivate Auden's conversion. the recognition of an outlaw impossible." It is this "sense of law," then, Auden's intuition that evil cannot be subdued by human effort alone, which becomes the topic of most of his 1940's poems.

Greenberg's discussion of the middle years is interesting. He argues that Auden's conversion does not greatly alter his fundamental conception of how man shall live. The answer is still love, though now love means "not merely vitality . . . but the *humanizing* of vitality." And although, as with Eliot, Auden angered many early admirers who felt he was abandoning the "cause," Professor Greenberg is correct in insisting that Auden's leap falls quite short of the other-world. He continues to confront the contemporary situation, he is still committed to

the "Just City," but he has discovered that to know good is not necessarily to will it. And it is this discovery which Auden takes as his theme in "The Sea and the Mirror," "For the Time Being," and *The Age of Anxiety*.

The Auden of today is so different from the Auden of those poems that one's first thought is that even the poet as Christian was but a passing phase. Professor Greenberg's analysis is again instructive. The poems of the 'forties, he says, "were not yet the works of Auden as Christian but of Auden as convert," and in those poems he felt the need to justify faith and to formulate belief. "Today Auden is writing *out* of his Christianity rather than about it."

Apparently the poet at ease with his faith has proved a much more elusive person. "His new role," Greenberg says, "is to delight in roles," and this naturally makes him difficult to pin down. The most consistent thing about his many poses seems to be his tone or manner, which is usually whimsical, self-mocking, playful, what Stephen Spender describes as "seriously unserious." He toys a good deal in analogies with anthropology; man's physical body, once a carrier of disease, is now a source of delight; and his setting is no longer glacial or volcanic, but "Intriguing dales. . . hills of the shape I like." What is most noticeable, Greenberg observes, is that the mood of the crisis is abated. The motive of his poetry is no longer quest; it is rather that of a man simply enjoying that point in life at which he has arrived.

Professor Greenberg ends his study with the remark that today Auden is writing some of his best poetry, and that "we may continue to expect from him. . . guidance on the question of how we are to live and to love." But in fact, the surface of Auden's poetry is sometimes so baffling that in order to benefit from his guidance we require another guide. In his prefatory note Spender recommends that we can legitimately claim one in Herbert Greenberg; he is surely right, but I would add that *Quest for the Necessary* is not for the novice. It is a brilliant intellectual achievement; it is not an "Introduction," nor is it an "appreciative" or an emotionally engaging study. In a sense, Mr. Greenberg has himself assumed the Audenesque stance: detached, impersonal, clinical—the "Hawk's view." It is a confrontation with the poet on the poet's own terms, and if his probing has not totally exposed Mr. Auden, it has at least cracked through that dazzling, baffling surface.

— THOMAS L. COSTELLO

SOUL ON FIRE

Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, Dell, 1968, \$1.95.

It is as difficult to write about Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* as it is to write perceptively about the aesthetics of a great symphony. You must experience it yourself. Then you will feel the nameless, indescribable joy of discovering that the ideas vaguely formulated in your mind have been articulately and wittily put on paper. Other things not even vaguely formulated will suddenly seem eminently reasonable. If nothing else, you will discover that this monster, which is what the mass media would have us think of Mr. Cleaver, is in reality a remarkably sane and rational and compassionate human being. It is almost inconceivable that such a wealth of incisive social criticism can be contained in a mere 210 pages. Cleaver presents the case of the black American and the disaffected white American in such a way that only the most fossilized moss-backed dinosaur can fail to grasp his meaning. But understand he must, because sooner or later he will be confronted by the truth of Cleaver's words.

The truth is essentially this: white America owes a tremendous debt to black America, and it is about four hundred years overdue. Like any other deadbeat, white America will be hounded and pursued until it pays off. But that isn't all *Soul on Ice* is about. Mainly, *Soul on Ice* is a celebration of freedom—psychological, emotional, and physical freedom. To this end, Cleaver ironically presents the case of the American Negro, chained by prejudice, hate, and fear. One of his most provocative and stimulating essays proffers the argument of the Black Eunuch and the Supermasculine Menial.

Essentially, this argument involves dividing the human race into four basic categories: the Omnipotent Administrators, the Supermasculine Menials, the Ultrafeminine Flowers, and the Subfeminine Amazons. The divisions precede medieval notions of society, but an explanation in terms of feudal societies is helpful in understanding how the arguments can be applied in a multiracial society. Simply, the Omnipotent Administrators and Ultrafeminine Flowers can be compared to feudal lords and their ladies. They are nominally in charge. Actually it is the Omnipotent Administrator who feels he is really in control of things, by virtue of his superior intellect. Devoting his attention primarily to his mind he unfortunately neglects his body. In Cleaver's estimation he becomes feminized by this neglect. His masculine counterpart is the Supermasculine Menial, the feudal serf fit only for work in the fields because of his incredible stupidity. The Supermasculine

Menial, working all day in the field, neglects his mind and, in fact, becomes alienated from it through disuse:

Weakness, frailty, cowardice, and effeminacy are, among other attributes, associated with the Mind. Strength, brute power, force, virility, and physical beauty are associated with the Body. Thus the upper classes, or Omnipotent Administrators, are perennially associated with physical weakness, decay, underdeveloped bodies, effeminacy, sexual impotence, and frigidity. Virility, strength, and power are associated with the lower classes, the Supermasculine Menials.

A similar dichotomy can be seen in the women of both classes. The woman of the Omnipotent Administrator, in response to his reduced masculinity, seeks to increase her femininity. She becomes, therefore, Ultrafeminine. To accomplish this she "repudiates and abdicates the domestic functions of the female (which is, in the female, the counterpart of the function of brute power in the male.)" No dishpan hands for this creature; her role is to sit around and look beautiful and ultrafeminine for her submasculine man.

The counterpart of the Ultrafeminine Flower is the Subfeminine woman, or Amazon, chained to the kitchen, a veritable weed in the garden of Ultrafeminine Flowers. She is a drudge, unattractive and unfeeling. But she is also strongly and vulgarly feminine, and therefore attractive to the Omnipotent Administrator who wants to reestablish his masculinity. To accomplish this, the Omnipotent Administrator invented the Black Eunuch in the United States, although the concept is equally applied to a feudal system. Essentially, the Omnipotent Administrator has access to all women of both classes. He is not supposed to be attracted to the sub-feminine woman, but he can't help himself, and seeks her out whenever he can. Fearing that she is attracted only to physical power and beauty he tries to convince her that it is only right and proper that he should have his way. Obviously, the Supermasculine Menial cannot be granted the same freedom with the Ultrafeminine Flower that the Omnipotent Administrator assumes with the Amazon. The Supermasculine Menial becomes, in a real sense, emasculated, because he can never have the Flower, and can have the Amazon only if no one else wants her:

In a society with a racially homogeneous population, in which the people at the top are racially the same as the ones at the bottom, the competing images are not mutually exclusive. A Supermasculine Menial, for instance, who acquires the training of an Omnipotent Administrator, can become a member of the elite, (Fielding's *Tom Jones*?) and function accordingly—assuming the existence of some vertical mobility, which is not, of course, always the case.

However, place a biological barrier in the way, for example race, and vertical mobility is impossible, for those in power come to regard the trappings of the Supermasculine Menial's *social function* as the result of *hereditary racial characteristics*. The most obvious manifestations of this type of wrong-headed thinking can be seen in the situation in which the American Negro finds himself today. Committed to his body and alienated from his mind for four hundred years, the Black American is experiencing a rebirth of wonder and awareness. As Cleaver says in his eloquent section entitled, "To All Black Women, From All Black Men," "But I would ask you to recall, that before we could come up from slavery, we had to be pulled down from our throne." Black Americans are not arriving; they are experiencing a Renaissance, a re-arriving.

Coincidental with this re-arrival on the part of American Negroes is the revolution of the white youth in this country. By aligning with each other, the two mass movements have gained an increased strength that is disproportionate to the number of people participating in each. The addition of white youth to the Civil Rights Movement broadened its impact. Prior to that time, the white power structure could shrug its shoulders in mock fatalism and declare philosophically, "Well, they'll settle down after a while. They always have. We can deal with Negroes. Deep down inside they know their place." But the presence of young whites in the demonstrations raised more eyebrows. What were they screaming about?

Cleaver traces the rebellion of white youth through four broadly discernible stages, and is admittedly playing a long shot by placing faith in America's white youth:

There is in America today a generation of white youth that is truly worthy of a black man's respect, and this is a rare event in the foul annals of American history. From the beginning of the conflict between blacks and whites, there has been very little reason for a black man to respect a white, with such exceptions as John Brown and others lesser known . . . The sins of the fathers are visited upon the heads of the children—but only if the children continue in the evil deeds of the fathers.

The first stage of the youth rebellion in the United States began in the Fifties when young people started to refuse to participate in the system, "having discovered that America, far from helping the underdog, was up to its ears in the mud trying to hold the dog down." This reappraisal really began at the end of World War Two. A whole generation of Americans had lived through World War One, the mad boom of the Twenties, the Depression, and the Second World War. They had finally arrived. Arrived at what, they began to ask themselves? Was it the mad frenetic perversion of the Turner Thesis that Jack Kerouac describes in *On the Road*? After all, what good does it do to be able to travel seventy miles an hour when you don't know where you're going anyway?

Stage Two emerged when this silent generation of Americans, still placing its faith in the American Way, searched for places in society which would allow them to participate in its change. To their dismay they discovered that the society had no intention of changing.

Despairing, some dropped out and floated into cool beat pads to smoke pot, listen to jazz, and drift along in "a perpetual orgy of esoteric bliss." Others, of a stronger disposition, recognized the need for, and sought, positive action. It was these young people who linked themselves up with the Negro revolution. In Cleaver's estimation, it was these who should have troubled the power structure. Instead, as usual, the power structure stupidly tried to treat the effects of the malaise, rather than its cause:

If all the unemployed had followed the lead of the beatniks, Moloch, (Allen Ginsberg's bloodthirsty deity which symbolized The System), would gladly have legalized the use of euphoric drugs and marijuana, passed out free jazz albums and sleeping bags to all those willing to sign affidavits promising to remain "beat." The non-beat disenchanted white youth were attracted magnetically to the Negro revolution, which had begun to take on a mass, insurrectionary tone.

When white youth joined with Black Americans in Civil Rights Demonstrations, Stage Three had begun. With white troops in the ranks, Negro leaders felt strengthened and employed tactics they could never have used with all black troops. Suddenly, America discovered that white people were being beaten and maimed by mobs and police. The brutal murders of Mrs. Viola Liuzzo in 1965, and the three civil rights workers in 1964, aroused America's conscience a little. In a very real way, the white civil rights workers represented America's conscience, and a conscience can be ignored for only so long.

Stage Four, now in its infancy, sees white youth employing all the tricks and subterfuges learned in the Negro struggle to attack problems in the society at large. The universities have remained immobile for too long. Congress has fiddled away its time indulging itself in insipid debates on the problems confronting America. As if there were any question, government, Federal, State, and local, has wasted time on civil rights debates. The power structure has responded too often with brute force, hoping that these and other problems will simply go away if given enough time. Cleaver remarks:

The characteristics of the white rebels which most alarm their elders—the long hair, the new dances, their love for Negro music, their use of marijuana, their mystical attitude towards sex—are all tools of their rebellion. They have turned these tools against the totalitarian fabric of American society—and they mean to change it.

The crucial point in Cleaver's analysis of the Negro revolution and the youth rebellion in the United States among whites is their interdependence. The rebellion of the white youth gained its impetus from the Negro revolution, and it wasn't until white people joined the Black struggle and were brutalized that American society began to respond, if it really did,

which is a moot question. What racist America saw, and sees, in the presence of white people in Negro demonstrations is defection and treason. And treason it may be. But it must be in order for the ancient and decrepit social ethic of the United States to become responsive to the cries of its victims.

Soul on Ice is more than this. Cleaver's style has a soulful Whitmanesque quality to it, as when, after an appropriate string of epithets concerning the treatment of colored peoples by white America, he remarks, "Did it irritate you, compatriot, for me to string those epithets out like that? Tolerate me. My intention was not to sprinkle salt over anyone's wounds. I did it primarily to relieve a certain pressure on my brain." With appropriate line breaks, this section could have been lifted from *Song of Myself*.

Maybe *Soul on Ice* should be put on the shelf next to Whitman. It is a song of freedom, a celebration of life and of all life's promises. It is a breath of fresh air in a stuffy and stifling time. Like cold beer on a hot day, you will want to drink many times from this strange container.

— STEVE HATHAWAY

SAM CORNISH

do you
dig ray
charles

when the
blues are
silent

in his throat

& he rolls
up his
sleeves

CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

PETER WILD is a widely published poet. His book, *The Afternoon in Dismay*, was recently published by the Art Association of Cincinnati. He has previously appeared in *Red Cedar Review*.

A. P. SCHROEDER is Co-Editor of *Contemporary Literature in Translation*.

STANWOOD K. BOLTON, Jr. is Editor of *Premiere* (Belmont, Mass.).

PETER THOMAS taught for eight years in Ghana and Nigeria. His first collected volume, *Poems from Nigeria*, was published by Vantage Press in 1967. He has published in a number of magazines and is currently at Mackinac College, Michigan.

THE NSUKKA POETS were all at one time students at the University of Nigeria.

KATHRYN QUICK has poems in recent issues of *Kayak*, *Wormwood Review*, *Lillabulero* and others. She lives in Lone Tree, Iowa.

FREDERICK CANDELARIA is the Editor of *West Coast Review*.

J. MICHAEL YATES teaches Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia. He is Co-Editor of *Contemporary Literature in Translation*, and Poetry Editor of *Prism International*. He has published five books and appeared in numerous publications.

JAMES BERTOLINO has published widely and has previously appeared in *Red Cedar Review*. He has published several books of poems. His third book, *The Crimson Coat*, is coming soon from Cranium Press.

WALT PHILLIPS is a reporter. His poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Kauri*, *Massachusetts Review* and many others.

LYN LIFSHIN has poems in *December*, *Apple* and others. Her book, *Why is the House Dissolving*, was recently published by Open Skull Press.

PABLO NERUDA is considered the best living Spanish poet. An excellent volume, *Twenty Poems* is available in translation from The Sixties Press.

RICHARD W. THOMAS is a student at Michigan State. His poetry has appeared in two anthologies *Black Fire* and *Nine Black Poets*, and in several small magazines.

JUNE MANNING is a sophomore at Michigan State, originally from South Carolina.

JAMES B. HAMILTON is presently a Post-doctoral Research Associate in Chemistry at Michigan State.

JILL WITHERSPOON is presently studying Social Work at Michigan State. She has published in *Collage*, E. Lansing.

SHIRLEY ECHOLS is a freshman at Michigan State.

MARGARET ATWOOD's first book of poems, *The Circle Game*, won her the Canadian Governor General's Award. Her second book, *The Animals in that Country*, has been chosen Canada's best by the Centennial Commission.

SAM CORNISH edits *Mimeo* and is widely published. He is currently at work on an anthology with Hugh Fox, *The Living Underground*, to be published later this year.

THOMAS L. COSTELLO is a graduate student in English at Michigan State.

STEPHEN HATHAWAY, a former student at Michigan State, is currently serving his country in a private war with the draft.

