BLACK VOICES

An Anthology of Afro-American Literature

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES, BY ABRAHAM CHAPMAN

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Equiano, or Gustavas Vassa, the African. Vernon Loggins, in his book *The Negro Author in America,* affirmed: "At the time it was published, in 1789, few books had been produced in America which afford such vivid, concrete, and picturesque narrative."

Nineteenth-century peaks of this literary form are the narratives by Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and Samuel Ringgold Ward, leading Negroes in the antislavery movement. The Autobiography section of this anthology opens with selections from the 1845 *Narrative* of Frederick Douglass.

Another current of prose writing developed simultaneously with the slave narratives—protests against slavery and antislavery expository writing. The first noteworthy work in this field, an essay of unmistakable intellectual and stylistic importance, was "An Essay on Slavery" signed by "Othello," a Free Negro. This essay appeared in 1788 in two installments in the November and December issues of *American Museum,* one of the four major magazines founded in the United States after the American Revolution. From 1791 to 1796 Benjamin Banneker, the Negro of many talents who was appointed by Thomas Jefferson to the commission which laid out the plans for the city of Washington, published his widely circulated annual *Almanacks.* On August 19, 1791, Banneker sent a letter to Jefferson, who was then Secretary of State, condemning the degradation and barbarism of slavery and arguing for recognition of the human worth and equality of "the African race." This letter was published in Philadelphia in 1792 and, until the Civil War, was reprinted countless times as a classic of Negro-American protest against slavery. Some believe that Benjamin Banneker was the author of the anonymous "Othello" essay.

From the first decade of the nineteenth century the protest writings of Lemuel Haynes and Peter Williams are remembered. In 1829, David Walker's famous abolitionist pamphlet *Walker's Appeal* was published in Boston and became, in the words of Vernon Loggins, "the most widely circulated work that came from the pen of an American Negro before 1840."

In 1827, *Freedom's Journal,* the first Negro newspaper in the United States, began publication in New York City, four years before the birth of Garrison's famous Abolitionist organ *The Liberator.* The opening editorial in the first issue of the first Negro newspaper (March 16, 1827) declared: "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the publick been deceived by misrepresentations, in things which concern us dearly. . . ."

A group of articulate writers, speakers, and fighters against slavery contributed to *Freedom's Journal*, including Samuel Ringgold Ward and William Wells Brown, who attracted public notice with their narratives. Poems by early Negro poets and versifiers were published in *Freedom's Journal* and in *The Liberator*.

We can detect a pattern in the development of Afro-American expression very similar to the general line of development of American writing. The real achievements in imaginative writing follow an initial period of expository, autobiographical, religious, and political writing. Significantly, the first fiction and first play by a Negro came from an active Abolitionist who contributed to *Freedom's Journal*. William Wells Brown, author of many important antislavery articles and books, also wrote the first novel by a Negro in the United States. The book, *Clotel*, was first published in London in 1853. A revised version was printed in the United States in 1864. William Wells Brown also wrote the first play by an American Negro, *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom*, published in 1858. Both his novel and play are of slight literary merit, but it is interesting that the Negro antislavery writings spill over into the first works of fiction and drama. Alain Locke, who is represented in the Literary Criticism section of this anthology with two essays, made an interesting point, in an article he wrote for *New World Writing* (1952):

> If slavery molded the emotional and folk life of the Negro, it was the anti-slavery struggle that developed his intellect and spurred him to disciplined, articulate expression. Up to the Civil War, the growing anti-slavery movement was the midwife of Negro political and literary talent.

The modern period of literature by Negro authors, marked by the mastery of literary craftsmanship, achievements in form, and the critical definition of specific literary and cultural problems of Negro Americans within American culture, opens with the 1890's. Paul Laurence Dunbar, Charles Waddell Chesnutt, and W. E. B. Du Bois loom large in these literary beginnings. Poems by Dunbar and Du Bois, a story by Chesnutt, and selections from Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, respectively, open the Poetry, Fiction, and Literary Criticism sections of this anthology. With the exception of the autobiography of Frederick Douglass, all of the writing by the forty-four Negro American writers in this book is from this "modern" period—predominantly from the 1920's and later—and the selections in all of the four categories into

which this anthology is divided extend to prose and poetry of the 1960's.

Very much of the literature created by black American writers in the twentieth century is unknown to the general reading public and little known even to students of American literature. Before any meaningful debate can take place on conflicting critical approaches and interpretations and on analyses of distinctive forms, structures, images, and themes, the literature itself will have to become better known. All too often, and for far too long, it has been a spurned or neglected part of our literary heritage.

The climate of indifference, neglect, or rejection in which this literature has developed is easy to document. Many important books in this field are inaccessible and out of print. One of the finest collections of Negro literature in the world, the Schomburg Collection—which is part of the New York Public Library in Harlem—does not have the budget to maintain itself and its rare books and manuscripts properly. Many public and college libraries have but the sparsest sprinkling of imaginative literature by black Americans. You can form your own idea of this state of affairs by checking in your local library to see how many of the books listed in the Bibliography at the end of this volume are available. In American literature courses in a number of high schools and colleges, books by Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Richard Wright are today assigned and taught. But in most schools the voices of the black writers remain unheard and unknown, and this also holds true for a very large proportion of the nonintegrated or resegregated schools, with their overwhelming numbers of black students.

It is a fact of life that in our day a teacher in a ghetto school in the great cultural center of Boston can be fired for teaching his black students a poem by Langston Hughes. Officially, of course, for teaching an unauthorized poem (what a horrible educational practice, anyhow, that poems need the seals and licenses of some board of approval before they can be read and discussed by students in a free society). But far beyond Boston's school procedures, the question remains: How come the poem of a leading Negro American poet is *not authorized* for teaching in the city's schools, and not only in the ghetto schools?

If you have any questions about the banned poem, "Ballad of the Landlord," you can find it with other poems by Hughes in the Poetry section of this anthology. Boston, of course, is well known for its excessive sensitivity to obscenity.

But the banned poem by Hughes doesn't have any sexual undertones or overtones. Its obscenity in the eyes of the respectable, it would appear, is its harsh illumination of the injustices of slum-life realities.

While the Boston school authorities made news with the severity of their action, the problem is not peculiar to Boston alone. I have taught a special course on the Negro in American literature to urban high school teachers from all over the country. These teachers maintain that there are school authorities in the urban centers who insist the teachers be very wary of, or ignore, works by black writers, because these writings are too disturbing, or too realistic, or too angry, when there are already enough "problems" with the ghetto students. This constitutes a kind of literary or cultural segregation, a stifling of the black literary voices, in addition to being wrong in educational principle. The black students know the confining and frustrating realities of ghetto life as lived experience and need not turn to books for that. But literature by black writers can give the black students a meaningful ordering and illumination of the black experience in this country; it can show them the creative and imaginative power and achievements of the black man and can prove very important psychologically.

I am well aware that many schools in a number of cities have been doing excellent pioneer work in teaching significant works by black writers as an indispensable component of the English curriculum. But this is still too rare in our schools today. The fact that work by Negro American writers can still encounter hostility, suspicion, or no recognition at all, in schools in every part of the country, is part of the problem of the neglect of Negro American literature for reasons which are very frequently not literary.

As a result of the various walls standing between many black writers and the reading audience, large numbers of literate and cultured Americans, including a high proportion of English majors and students of literature in the colleges, are not aware that many meaningful literary works have been created by black Americans and are an organic part of the American literary heritage. Unfortunately we still have to contend, in our study of American literature, with the long and harsh tradition of the rejection of the Negro in our society and the historically built-in tendencies in American culture to ignore or play down the importance of the black Americans as creators of cultural values and aesthetic forms in the United States.

This is not unexplored territory. Many important studies,

anthologies, and specialized collections of writings have been published over the years—predominantly but not exclusively by Negro scholars, critics, writers, and poets. But symptomatic of the long resistance to the proper recognition of the literary works created by black Americans is the fact that, even today, you will search in vain in definitive up-to-date American literary histories, for some of the elementary facts about Negro American writers and writing. You will search in vain in almost all of the standard American literary reference works of today for the "Negro Renaissance" or "Harlem Renaissance," interchangeable terms widely used by students of the Negro in American literature to denote the extensive literary creativity of the New Negro movement that arose in the 1920's. This was the literary explosion that brought into American literature the early works of such writers as Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, Jean Toomer, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Sterling Brown, Arna Bontemps, and others, that you will find in this anthology. But our literary histories, with very rare exceptions, simply do not recognize the existence of any flowering of Negro expression, or any specific literary movement of black Americans, worthy of special notice.

This is clear evidence of how much remains to be done to become aware of the full diversity and scope of American literature, to open our ears and eyes to the voices and imaginative creations of black humanity in our midst. That is a prime purpose of this anthology. To bring to the general reading public and to the students of American literature in the high schools and colleges a large and diverse collection of writing by black Americans at a popular price—literature worth reading as literature and worthy, in my opinion, of inclusion in the American literature curriculum in the schools.

I have no special thesis about Negro American literature to advance or prove. If there is anything I would like to emphasize, it is the plural *Voices* in the title of this book, the individuality of each and every black writer, the diversity of styles and approaches to literature, the conflict of ideas, values, and varying attitudes to life, within black America. In my reading and experience I simply have not found any such thing as "the Negro."

Even the name "Negro" is today the subject of intense debate among Negroes. The question has been posed as to whether or not the word "Negro" should be abandoned and replaced by the words "black" or "Afro-American." Lerone Bennett, Jr., in a lengthy and interesting article on this problem in *Ebony* in November, 1967 wrote:

This question is at the root of a bitter national controversy over the proper designation for *identifiable* Americans of African descent. (More than 40 million "white" Americans, according to some scholars, have African ancestors.) A large and vocal group is pressing an aggressive campaign for the use of the word "Afro-American" as the only historically accurate and humanly significant designation of this large and pivotal portion of the American population. This group charges that the word "Negro" is an inaccurate epithet which perpetuates the master-slave mentality in the minds of both black and white Americans. An equally large, but not so vocal, group says the word "Negro" is as accurate and as euphonious as the words "black" and "Afro-American." This group is scornful of the premises of the advocates of change. A Negro by any other name, they say, would be as black and as beautiful—and as segregated. The times, they add, are too crucial for Negroes to dissipate their energy in fratricidal strife over names. But the pro-black contingent contends . . . that names are of the essence of the game of power and control. And they maintain that a change in name will short-circuit the stereotyped thinking patterns that undergird the system of racism in America. To make things even more complicated, a third group, composed primarily of Black Power advocates, has adopted a new vocabulary in which the word "black" is reserved for "black brothers and sisters who are emancipating themselves," and the word "Negro" is used contemptuously for Negroes "who are still in Whitey's bag and who still think of themselves and speak of themselves as Negroes."

In a deeper sense the new challenge to the name "Negro" is a reflection of the challenge to the racist conditions of life identified with the reality of being a Negro in America. It is a part of the fight for new identities and new realities of life for black Americans. *Ebony* and other Negro publications have initiated polls of their readers as to which name they prefer. At this writing, early in 1968, the first incomplete results of these polls are reported and the first choice is for "Afro-American," second choice for "black," and third choice for "Negro."

Because life in the black American community, as in every human community, is characterized by diversity, divisions, and conflicts, there can be no single approach to Negro life, the black experience, or the literature and culture created by Afro-Americans. We would consider America as a whole a very static, drab, and regimented country without the very deep and fundamental differences of opinion which mark our national and cultural life. We would reject any single thesis or sweeping generalization to define the literature or culture

of the United States. I don't know why the vigorous debates and sharp political and cultural differences within the black communities should evoke surprise and wonder. Conflict of opinions and values is the way of life of every thinking and human community. The great debates in the black communities of America today only confirm again what needs no confirmation—that the black communities are as human, argumentative, and divided in opinions as any thinking community. For an idea of the different approaches to the literature of black writers by Negro scholars, academic critics, and writers, I have included, as a special feature of this anthology, a section devoted to literary criticism by Negro Americans, ranging chronologically from 1903 to 1967.

American literary criticism largely ignores most of the works by the Afro-American writers. In the last few decades, a few individual Negro writers, namely Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin, have won critical recognition and acclaim as major American authors. To a lesser degree the critical spotlight has also shone on Richard Wright, frequently in terms of his power, drive, and searing anger—but quite often as a negative example, as the archetypal author of the "protest novel," which is so commonly dismissed as a subliterary species.

Rarely are Wright, Ellison, and Baldwin seen and treated, in our general American literary criticism, as part of a bigger and older current of literary expression—a literary tradition created by Americans of African descent, a literary reality which is both organically American, created on American soil in the American language, with the same rights to recognition for its American authenticity as the literature created by the descendants of the immigrants from England and Europe. Rarely is this literature of the Afro-Americans seen by our general literary criticism in its full light and complete complexity. On the one hand it is part of a literature and culture shared with white America as a whole, inevitably shaped in significant part by the dictates of the American language itself and by the forms of literary expression developed in the United States. At the same time, it is also a distinct and special body of literature, in the sense that the historical memories and myths, experiences, and conditions of life of the black Americans have been deliberately kept separate and apart, for generations, from the priority of conditions and values established for white Americans.

There is little general critical recognition of the fact that central metaphors and concepts of Ellison and Baldwin, like "the invisible man" and "nobody knows my name"—the in-

visibility and denial of identity, the facelessness and namelessness, which are associated with the Ellison and Baldwin dramatizations of the alienated Negro in America—are actually deeply rooted in the group or folk consciousness of black America and were given literary expression long before Ellison and Baldwin ever appeared on the literary scene.

In the dawn of this century, in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), a classic literary expression of the sensibility, consciousness, and dilemmas of a black American intellectual, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote:

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

Many years later, in his book *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), Du Bois described the psychological impact of caste segregation in the following words:

> It is as though one, looking out from a dark cave in a side of an impending mountain, sees the world passing and speaks to it; speaks courteously and persuasively, showing them how these entombed souls are hindered in their natural movement, expression, and development; and how their loosening from prison would be a matter not simply of courtesy, sympathy, and help to them, but aid to all the world. . . . It gradually permeates the minds of the prisoners that the people passing do not hear; that some thick sheet of invisible but horribly tangible plate glass is between them and the world. They get excited; they talk louder; they gesticulate. Some of the passing world stop in curiosity; these gesticulations seem so pointless; they laugh and pass on. They still either do not hear at all, or hear but dimly, and even what they hear, they do not understand. Then the people within may become hysterical.

The sense of duality, powerlessness, and rejection by a hostile society and environment, as expressed by Du Bois, comes from the core of the consciousness of black America and is

reiterated time and again, in a multitude of ways, by Negro American writers.

James Weldon Johnson published an article entitled "The Dilemma of the Negro Author" in *The American Mercury* in December, 1928. The title of the article itself sounds the note of duality we heard earlier in Du Bois. Observing that the Negro author faces all of the difficulties common to all writers, Johnson went on to say that "the Aframerican author faces a special problem which the plain American author knows nothing about—the problem of the double audience. It is more than a double audience; it is a divided audience, an audience made up of two elements with differing and often opposite and antagonistic points of view. His audience is always both white America and black America." The theme is insistent: two worlds, two Americas, two antagonistic points of view.

Langston Hughes voiced this sense of division in an early poem, "As I Grew Older," the full text of which you will find in the Poetry section of this anthology:

> It was a long time ago
> I have almost forgotten my dream
> But it was there then,
> In front of me,
> Bright like a sun—
> My dream.
>
> And then the wall rose,
> Rose slowly,
> Slowly,
> Between me and my dream.
> Rose slowly, slowly,
> Dimming,
> Hiding,
> The light of my dream.
> Rose until it touched the sky—
> The wall.

We hear the motif again in a late essay by Richard Wright, "The Literature of the Negro in the United States," articulated this way:

> Held in bondage, stripped of his culture, denied family life for centuries, made to labor for others, the Negro tried to learn to live the life of the New World in an atmosphere of rejection and hate. . . . For the development of Negro expression—as well as the whole of Negro life in America—

hovers always somewhere between the rise of man from his ancient, rural way of life to the complex, industrial life of our time. Let me sum up these differences by contrasts; entity vs. identity; pre-individualism vs. individualism; the determined vs. the free. . . . Entity, men integrated with their culture; and identity, men who are at odds with their culture, striving for personal identification.

Richard Wright expressed the duality and the sense of twoness as a "versus" and identified the search for personal identity with being at odds with the prevailing culture in the United States.

In a symposium of prominent Negro writers broadcast by a New York City radio station in 1961, the moderator, Nat Hentoff, asked the late playwright Lorraine Hansberry the following question:

> Miss Hansberry, in writing *A Raisin in the Sun,* to what extent did you feel a double role, both as a kind of social actionist "protester," and as a dramatist?

Lorraine Hansberry answered:

> Well, given the Negro writer, we are necessarily aware of a special situation in the American setting. . . . We are doubly aware of conflict, because of the special pressures of being a Negro in America. . . . In my play I was dealing with a young man who would have, I feel, been a compelling object of conflict as a young American of his class of whatever racial background, with the exception of the incident at the end of the play, and with the exception, of course, of character depth, because a Negro character is a reality; there is no such thing as saying that a Negro could be a white person if you just changed the lines or something like this. This is a very arbitrary and superficial approach to Negro character. . . . I started to write about this family as I knew them in the context of those realities which I remembered as being true for this particular given set of people; and, at one point, it was just inevitable that a problem of some magnitude which was racial would intrude itself, because this is one of the realities of Negro life in America. But it was just as inevitable that for a large part of the play, they would be excluded. Because the duality of consciousness is so complete that it is perfectly true to say that Negroes do not sit around twenty-four hours a day, thinking, "I am a Negro."

And Chester Himes, in an essay entitled "Dilemma of the Negro Novelist in U.S." published in 1966 in the miscellaneous collection by various writers, *Beyond the Angry Black,* wrote:

> From the start the American Negro writer is beset by conflicts. He is in conflict with himself, with his environment, with his public. The personal conflict will be the hardest. He must decide at the outset the extent of his honesty. He will find it no easy thing to reveal the truth of his experience or even to discover it. He will derive no pleasure from the recounting of his hurts. He will encounter more agony by his explorations into his own personality than most non-Negroes realize. For him to delineate the degrading effects of oppression will be like inflicting a wound upon himself. He will have begun an intellectual crusade that will take him through the horrors of the damned. And this must be his reward for his integrity: he will be reviled by the Negroes and whites alike. Most of all, he will find no valid interpretation of his experiences in terms of human values until the truth be known.
>
> If he does not discover this truth, his life will be forever veiled in mystery, not only to whites, but to himself; and he will be heir to all the weird interpretations of his personality.

Because this is an anthology of literature by black Americans, appearing at a time when the tensions and harsh realities of race relations in the United States are critical and high on the social, economic, and political agendas of the nation, it may also help serve a public function which literature is preeminently qualified to perform: to illuminate the human realities of black America. Without minimizing the value of the factual knowledge offered by history, sociology, anthropology, and economics, literature offers a depth of insight into the hearts and minds of black Americans which cannot be approximated by the social sciences.

The literature in this anthology takes us into the inner worlds of black Americans, as seen and felt from the *inside.* Literature as a way of knowing and perceiving probes beyond the conscious, the fully known, and the fully thought out. With contrast and analogy, imaginative ways of ordering images and values, with metaphor and symbol which suggest and imply the shapes and intimations of things and conditions sensed and known in the psychic subsoil, literature searches and captures human hopes and fears, dreams and nightmares, aspirations and frustrations, desires and resentments, which do not register on the computer cards, statistical surveys, and government reports. If America had only done something about the truths and literary revelations in Richard Wright's *Native Son,* published in 1940, with its profound psychological illumination of how the prison box of the big city ghetto was generating violence and destruction as the only language and means of action that had any validity

for the hemmed in Bigger Thomas, living in a world without viable alternatives, moving in an incomprehensible mausoleum of dead dreams and hopes—then our past summers of discontent might have been very different.

There is still another special insight into American life that we get from black writers: the look and the feel and the psychological texture of the behavior of white Americans as it is manifest to black Americans. Here, too, we have an area of great human complexities, of codes of behavior and hidden emotional recesses, of cruelty and guilt, of cold calculation and the irrational, crime and conscience, hate and love. Here we find further illumination of a major concern of modern literature, the walls that isolate and separate man from man and the barriers to human connection and communication, with particular attention to what the "curtain of color" does to people on both sides of such a curtain. If, in addition to aesthetic delight, we turn to literature for its power of human illumination, both as mirror and lamp, then certainly the mirrors and lamps created by the black writers have a special value for America—if we are ready to look at the truths they expose.

2

A long time ago in the literary history of the United States, when the great debate was unfolding on whether and when and *how* a distinctively American literature would develop on this continent, the question of the Negro in American literature was an organic part of the whole discussion. Some of the highly original and nonconformist writers of that day, seeking to probe the uniqueness of America, thought that the United States differed most from England and all other countries in its human composition and evolution, its absorption of people from all the continents, races, and regions of mankind. A truly American literature, these writers believed, would somehow express the new fusion of peoples and races in the new continent, the new human realities and conditions of life in the United States.

This conception was clearly voiced in the dawn of the "Golden Age" of American literature by Margaret Fuller, first editor of the transcendentalist journal *The Dial,* who later joined the staff of the New York *Tribune* as the first professional book reviewer in America. In her landmark essay "American Literature: Its Position in the Present Time, and Prospects for the Future" (1846), a composite of reviews she had first written for the *Tribune,* later published in her two-volume collection of writings *Papers on Literature and Art,* Margaret Fuller wrote:

> We have no sympathy with national vanity. We are not anxious to prove that there is as yet much American literature. Of those who think and write among us in the methods and of the thoughts of Europe, we are not impatient; if their minds are still best adapted to such food and such action. . . . Yet there is often between child and parent a reaction from excessive influence having been exerted, and such a one we have experienced in behalf of our country against England. We use her language and receive in torrents the influence of her thought, yet it is in many respects uncongenial and injurious to our constitution. What suits Great Britain, with her insular position and consequent need to concentrate and intensify her life, her limited monarchy and spirit of trade, does not suit a mixed race continually enriched with new blood from other stocks the most unlike that of our first descent, with ample field and verge enough to range in and leave every impulse free, and abundant opportunity to develop a genius wide and full as our rivers. . . . That such a genius is to rise and work in this hemisphere we are confident; equally so that scarce the first faint streaks of that day's dawn are yet visible. . . . That day will not rise till the fusion of races among us is more complete. It will not rise till this nation shall attain sufficient moral and intellectual dignity to prize moral and intellectual no less highly than political freedom. . . .

A decade later, in the high tide of the "American Renaissance," Walt Whitman wrote in his Preface to the first (1855) edition of *Leaves of Grass:*

> Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. . . . The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people. To him the other continents arrive as contributions. . . . he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake.

Almost a century later, the American poet William Carlos Williams in his prose volume of poetic insights and interpretations of the American heritage, *In the American Grain,* wrote:

> The colored men and women whom I have known intimately have a racial character which has impressed me. I have not much bothered to know why, exactly, this has been so—
>
> The one thing that never seems to occur to anybody is that

the negroes have a quality which they have brought to America. . . . Poised against the *Mayflower* is the slave ship—manned by Yankees and Englishmen—bringing another race to try upon the New World. . . . There is a solidity, a racial irreducible minimum, which gives them poise in a world in which they have no authority.

The hopeful vision of Margaret Fuller, Walt Whitman, and many others—that the United States would realize the promise and potential of its genius by transcending racial exclusiveness and welcoming the contributions and qualities brought to this continent by all races and continents—clashed, and clashes to this day, with a tenacious, strong, and contrary current in American culture. It is in conflict with a cultural attitude and posture which Professor Horace M. Kallen, in his book *Cultural Pluralism and the American Idea* (1956), has designated as "a racism in culture":

It claimed that the American Idea and the American Way were hereditary to the Anglo-Saxon stock and to that stock only; that other stocks were incapable of producing them, learning them and living them. If, then, America is to survive as a culture of creed and code, it can do so only so long as the chosen Anglo-Saxon race retains its integrity of flesh and spirit and freely sustains and defends their American expression against alien contamination.

The famous Gunnar Myrdal study of the American Negro problem, published in 1944, dealt with this same reality in a strictly sociological context, and called it "the anti-amalgamation doctrine." This doctrine is the opposite of the "melting pot" theory, which envisaged the assimilation and amalgamation of the various streams of white immigrants to this country into an American synthesis. The "anti-amalgamation doctrine" works in reverse and is described as follows in the Myrdal report:

The Negroes, on the other hand, are commonly assumed to be unassimilable, and this is the reason why the Negro problem is different from the ordinary minority problem in America. The Negroes are set apart, together with other colored peoples, principally the Chinese and Japanese. While all other groups are urged to become Americanized as quickly and completely as possible, the colored peoples are excluded from assimilation. (*Quoted from the Condensed Version of the Myrdal study* The Negro in America (*1964*) *by Arnold Rose.*)

We can detect signs and echoes of this "racism in culture,"

this "anti-amalgamation doctrine," which is rooted so deeply in the American consciousness and American social practices, in white America's critical approaches to the Negro in American literature. I hasten to make clear that I am not saying that all American critics, writers, and readers are racists. What I am saying is that it is very difficult to maintain, in theory and practice, that the Negro is unassimilable, so different and inherently incapable of fitting into America like other people that he must be kept separate and apart, and at the same time see that this despised Negro has been, and is, a real and significant creator of American cultural values and aesthetic forms. Racism and currents of conflict with racism, including the resistance to racism of black America, are organic elements in the dynamics of American culture. And, since the pressures of racism in American life and thinking remain more powerful and pervasive than the significant but weaker currents of antiracism, inescapably racist attitudes often spill over into the literary domain and blur America's literary and critical vision.

Evidence of how the pressures of racism penetrate literature can be found in the crowded gallery of stereotyped Negro characters in American fiction and drama—certainly not all Negro characters by white writers, but quite predominantly: the servile Negro, the comic Negro, the savage Negro. The opening lines of Sterling Brown's book *The Negro in American Fiction* (1937) declare bluntly: "The treatment of the Negro in American fiction, since it parallels his treatment in American life, has naturally been noted for injustice. Like other oppressed and exploited minorities, the Negro has been interpreted in a way to justify his exploitation."

Ralph Ellison, in an early essay now included in his book *Shadow and Act*, wrote: "Thus it is unfortunate for the Negro that the most powerful formulations of modern American fictional works have been so slanted against him that when he approaches for a glimpse of himself he discovers an image drained of humanity."

The racist attitudes and feelings which have spawned the well-exposed stereotypes of Negro character in American imaginative literature have also been responsible for distortions of critical criteria and for the double standards and special criteria we often encounter in American literary criticism when the works of Afro-American writers are discussed. Whether it stems from a fear of looking at the blackness of the black experience in America and the human consequences of American racism or whether it stems from some

cultural variation of the doctrine of the "unassimilability" of the Negro, the fact is that we do encounter in American literary criticism various forms of rejection and negation of the meaning and value of the human experience of the Negro in America.

I shall later offer the evidence on which I base this assertion, but first I want to contrast the very common sympathetic approaches of modern literary criticism to the particularity and otherness of regional and ethnic individuality, as primary proof of why I think there is a reverse tendency in American criticism, a tendency to reject the unique value of the ethnic individuality of the Negro. What seems to be frequently reversed when the Negro enters the picture are the critical criteria—commonly accepted by more than one school of modern literary criticism—that literature is the art of the particular and individual, that the universal in literature is most fully achieved in the depth and completeness with which the uniqueness of the individual is portrayed, and that human freedom is a valid subject for artistic and literary exploration.

Let us see how some modern critics and writers approach and appreciate the particular ethnic and regional literary worlds of writers who are not Negro.

Albert Camus, the French writer of Algerian birth, declared in an interview included in his book *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death:* "No one is more closely attached to his Algerian province than I, and yet I have no trouble feeling a part of French tradition. . . . Silone [the Italian writer] speaks to all of Europe, and the reason I feel so close to him is that he is also so unbelievably rooted in his national and even provincial tradition."

William Faulkner declared in his well-known *Paris Review* interview: "Beginning with *Sartoris* I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it. . . ."

Isaac Bashevis Singer, the Jewish writer who came to the United States from Poland in 1935, writes in Yiddish and has been widely hailed as a significant figure in the contemporary literary scene since his works began appearing in English in the 1950's, wrote in an article published in *Book World* early in 1968: "But the masters of literary prose have seldom left their territorial and cultural frontiers. There is no such thing as the international novel or international drama. Literature is by its very nature bound to a people, a region, a language, even a dialect."

James Joyce, writing outside his native Ireland, created his entire fictional world out of Dubliners, and this was no bar to his universal recognition as a giant of modern fiction.

W. B. Yeats, recognized as a major poet of the twentieth century, is not dismissed by any critic as "not universal" because he gave full expression to his Irish self, nor is he dubbed a "protest" propagandist by any serious critic because he stressed the thematic literary inspiration he derived from the Irish freedom movement. Yeats shed much light on the question I am now trying to examine in his essay "A General Introduction For My Work," written in 1937 for a complete edition of his works which did not appear, and later incorporated into his book *Essays and Introductions* (1961). Stating as his "first principle" that "a poet writes always of his personal life, in his finest work out of its tragedy, whatever it be, remorse, lost love, or loneliness," Yeats went on to say that he found his subject matter in the Irish resistance movement. He stated it in a very personal way: "It was through the old Fenian leader John O'Leary I found my theme." He speaks of O'Leary's long imprisonment, longer banishment, his pride, his integrity, and his dream—the dream of Irish freedom—that nourished and attracted young Irishmen to him and attracted the young Yeats too. He recalled that at the time he read only romantic literature and the Irish poets, some of which was not good poetry at all, and he added: "But they had one quality I admired and admire: they were not separated individual men; they spoke or tried to speak out of a people to a people; behind them stretched the generations."

This is a quality we also find, in a different way, in the works of the Negro writers in which we can also feel this sense of a people speaking out to a people, with a sense of the generations behind: mythic memories of the remote African past, memories of slavery and common experiences in America.

Yeats, of course, as an artist, voiced his strong hatred of didactic literature but at the same time took pains to disavow any idea that his Irish self separated him from world literature and humanity as a whole. Later in this same essay Yeats wrote:

> I hated and still hate with an ever growing hatred the literature of the point of view. I wanted, if my ignorance permitted, to get back to Homer, to those that fed at his table. I wanted to cry as all men cried, to laugh as all men laughed, and the young Ireland poets when not writing mere politics had the same want, but they did not know that the common and its befitting language is the research of a lifetime, and

when found may lack popular recognition. . . . If Irish literature goes on as my generation planned it, it may do something to keep the "Irishry" living. . . .

In his poetic approach, Yeats united three components which to others may seem irreconcilable or incompatible: to express the personal and private self, to express the common humanity the individual shares with all men, and to express the ethnic or racial self with its particular mythology and cultural past. If for "Irishry" we substitute black or Negro consciousness we can see that the best of the Afro-American writers have been struggling to express and blend the three components Yeats speaks of and a fourth as well, which has made the situation of the black writer in America even more complex: their personal selves, their universal humanity, the particular qualities and beauty of their blackness and ethnic specificity, and their American selves. These are not separate and boxed off compartments of the mind and soul, but the inseparable and intermingled elements of a total human being, of a whole person who blends diversities within himself. This is the rich blend we find in the best of the Negro American artists.

The significance of Yeats' experience and point of view for an understanding of certain aspects of American literature is stressed, in a different way and in another context, by Cleanth Brooks in his book *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country*. Brooks writes:

> Any Southerner who reads Yeats' *Autobiographies* is bound to be startled, over and over again, by the analogies between Yeats' "literary situation" and that of the Southern author: the strength to be gained from the writer's sense of belonging to a living community and the special focus upon the world bestowed by one's having a precise location in time and history.

Certainly the Negro writer has this "sense of belonging to a living community" which should be appreciated as a source of strength. But the Negro writer and Negro community in the United States have historically been denied the advantages "bestowed by one's having a precise location in time and history." The Negro in America has been denied a proper location and place, has been in perpetual motion searching for a proper place he could call home. During slavery, the flight to freedom was the goal—the search for a home, a haven, the search for a possibility of secure belonging. After the Civil War, and to this day, this historical reality has expressed itself in the great migration from the South to the North and the patterns of flight and migration which are inherent in the spatial and plot movements in the novels of Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin. This opposite reality, of uprooting and dislocation, gave the Negro writer, to use the language of Brooks, a different "special focus upon the world," a focus of *denial* of a place, which we hear so clearly as far back as in the spirituals.

Here is how this theme is expressed time and again in lines chosen at random from different spirituals.

I'm rolling through an unfriendly worl'.

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
A long way from home. . . .

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Coming for to carry me home. . . .

I got a home in dat rock,
Don't you see? . . .
Poor man Laz'rus, poor as I,
When he died he found a home on high,
He had a home in dat rock,
Don't you see?

Deep river, my home is over Jordan.

I am a poor pilgrim of sorrow. . . .
I'm tryin' to make heaven my home.

Sometimes I am tossed and driven.
Sometimes I don't know where to roam.
I've heard of a city called heaven.
I've started to make it my home.

American literary criticism has still not come to terms with the "special focus upon the world" that the realities of being a black man in America have created for the Negro writers. And all too often the critical assumptions articulated by Camus, Faulkner, Singer, and Yeats are reversed into some kind of special critical doctrine for the black writer which seems to say or imply that to be meaningful for America, to be universal, the black writer has to be *other* than Negro,

other than racial, *other* than what he actually and truly is.

What about the evidence for this statement? Let me begin with Louis Simpson, a fine contemporary American poet with a liberal and humane sensibility. When *Selected Poems* by Gwendolyn Brooks was published, he reviewed it among a group of new volumes of verse, in *Book Week* (October 27, 1963). Simpson wrote:

> Gwendolyn Brooks' *Selected Poems* contain some lively pictures of Negro life. I am not sure it is possible for a Negro to write well without making us aware he is a Negro; on the other hand, if being a Negro is the only subject, the writing is not important. . . . Miss Brooks must have had a devil of a time trying to write poetry in the United States, where there has been practically no Negro poetry worth talking about.

Why is writing about "being a Negro" a subject which "is not important"?—why, unless you somehow feel or believe that being a Negro is not important or that Negro life doesn't have values or meanings that are important? And why should there be anything wrong with our being aware of the Negro as author, anymore than it is wrong for us to be aware that Yeats is Irish and that Isaac Bashevis Singer is Jewish and that Ignazio Silone is Italian and that Dostoyevsky is unmistakably Russian and that Faulkner is very much a Mississippian? And why so cavalierly dismiss practically all Negro poetry in the United States with one fell swoop?

Or take another example, this one from academic criticism by Marcus Klein, a member of the Barnard College faculty. In his book *After Alienation: American Novels in Mid-Century* he devotes two chapters to Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin and considers them very seriously. He writes:

> But what seems characteristic of major Negro literature since mid-century is an urgency on the part of writers to be more than merely Negro. . . . The time has seemed to urge upon him [the Negro writer], rather, a necessity to discover his nonracial identity within the circumstances of race.

Why this emphasis on being more than "merely Negro" and "nonracial identity"? Perhaps the clearest answer is provided in a critical statement by William Faulkner. In the rich and complex fictional world of Faulkner we encounter many Negro characters, ranging from Negro stereotypes tainted by the racism of their Mississippi origin to Negro characters of great artistic stature, with depth and dignity and profound symbolic meaning, like Sam Fathers and Lucas Beauchamp in

Go Down, Moses. As man and critic, Faulkner, on numerous occasions, expressed the basic racist assumptions and attitudes of his society and his Mississippi environment, which Faulkner, the artist—at his best, but not always—succeeded in transcending. Let us look at one of his public nonliterary statements. In a speech delivered at the University of Virginia (February 20, 1958) and published in his book *Essays, Speeches and Public Letters,* Faulkner said:

> Perhaps the Negro is not yet capable of more than second class citizenship. His tragedy may be that so far he is competent for equality only in the ratio of his white blood. . . . For the sake of argument, let us agree that as yet the Negro is incapable of equality for the reason that he could not hold and keep it even if it were forced on him with bayonets; that once the bayonets were removed, the first smart and ruthless man black or white who came along would take it away from him, because he, the Negro, is not yet capable of, or refuses to accept, the responsibilities of equality.
>
> So we, the white man, must take him in hand and teach him that responsibility. . . . Let us teach him that, in order to be free and equal, he must first be worthy of it, and then forever afterward work to hold and keep and defend it. He must learn to cease forever more thinking like a Negro and acting like a Negro. This will not be easy for him.

Here we have the crux of the problem: the rejection by powerful forces in American life and thought of any positive qualities and values, in Negro life—the negation by cultivated people, by artists and poets, of the worth of "being a Negro" and "thinking like a Negro" and "acting like a Negro." In short, the repudiation of Negro identity and the vicious circle: on the one hand, the pressure to blot out the blackness of the black man, the pressure to make him like a white man —and, at the same time, the unrelenting pressure to slam the door of white society in his face and say: "Negro, keep out!"

These approaches to Negro life and literature contradict the critical premises voiced by T. S. Eliot in his famous review of James Joyce's *Ulysses,* which became axiomatic for much of modern criticism. Eliot declared that "in creation you are responsible for what you can do with material which you must simply accept. And in this material I include the emotions and feelings of the writer himself, which, for that writer, are simply material which he must accept—not virtues to be enlarged or vices to be diminished." Too much of American literary criticism is still not simply *accepting* the materials of the Negro writer—his subject matter and feelings and emotions, which are part of his material—and, in violation of well-

established critical principles, is arguing with the material rather than addressing itself to how the writer has made artistic use of his particular material.

The underlying assumptions of Simpson, Klein, and Faulkner are the antitheses of the premises long held by Negro American writers.

Participating in a radio symposium in New York City in 1961, Langston Hughes said:

> My main material is the race problem—and I have found it most exciting and interesting and intriguing to deal with it in writing, and I haven't found the problem of being a Negro in any sense a hindrance to putting words on paper. It may be a hindrance sometimes to selling them. . . .
>
> Well now, I very often try to use social material in a humorous form and most of my writing from the very beginning has been aimed largely at a Negro reading public, because when I began to write I had no thought of achieving a wide public. My early work was always published in *The Crisis* of the N.A.A.C.P., and then in the *Opportunity* of the Urban League, and then the Negro papers like the Washington *Sentinel* and the Baltimore *Afro-American,* and so on. And I contend that since these things, which are Negro, largely for Negro readers, have in subsequent years achieved world-wide publication—my work has come out in South America, Japan, and all over Europe—that a regional Negro character like Simple, a character intended for the people who belong to his own race, if written about warmly enough, humanly enough, can achieve universality.
>
> And I don't see, as Jimmy Baldwin sometimes seems to imply, any limitations, in artistic terms, in being a Negro. I see none whatsoever. It seems to me that any Negro can write about anything he chooses, even the most narrow problems; if he can write about it forcefully and honestly and truly, it is very possible that that bit of writing will be read and understood, in Iceland or Uruguay.

Hughes was consistent in his position over a long period of years, a position which is really no more than not applying a reverse critical standard to the Negro writer. Some thirty-five years earlier, in his famous article "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" published in *The Nation* (June 23, 1926), Hughes wrote:

> One of the most promising of the young Negro poets said to me once, "I want to be a poet—not a Negro poet," meaning, I believe, "I want to write like a white poet," meaning sub-consciously, "I would like to be a white poet," meaning behind that, "I would like to be white." And I was sorry the young man said that, for no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself.

In one of his interesting essays, "The Literature of the Negro in the United States," which is included in his book *White Man, Listen!*, Richard Wright stated his views this way:

> Around the turn of the century, two tendencies became evident in Negro expression. I'll call the first tendency: The Narcissistic Level, and the second tendency I'll call: The Forms of Things Unknown, which consists of folk utterances, spirituals, blues, work songs, and folklore.
>
> These two main streams of Negro expression—The Narcissistic Level and The Forms of Things Unknown—remained almost distinctly apart until the depression struck our country in 1929. . . . Then there were those who hoped and felt that they would ultimately be accepted in their native land as free men, and they put forth their claims in a language that their nation had given them. These latter were more or less always middle class in their ideology. But it was among the migratory Negro workers that one found, rejected and ignorant though they were, strangely positive manifestations of expression, original contributions in terms of form and content.
>
> Middle class Negroes borrowed the forms of the culture which they strove to make their own, but the migratory Negro worker improvised his cultural forms and filled those forms with a content wrung from a bleak and barren environment, an environment that stung, crushed, all but killed him. . . .
>
> You remember the Greek legend of Narcissus who was condemned by Nemesis to fall in love with his own reflection which he saw in the water of a fountain? Well, the middle class Negro writers were condemned by America to stand before a Chinese Wall and wail that they were like other men, that they felt as others felt. It is this relatively static stance of emotion that I call The Narcissistic Level. These Negroes were in every respect the equal of whites; they were valid examples of personality types of Western culture; but they lived in a land where even insane white people were counted above them. They were men whom constant rejection had rendered impacted of feeling, choked of emotion. . . .
>
> While this was happening in the upper levels of Negro life, a chronic and grinding poverty set in in the lower depths. Semi-literate black men and women drifted from city to city, ever seeking what was not to be found: jobs, homes, love—a chance to live as free men. . . .
>
> Because I feel personally identified with the migrant Negro, his folk songs, his ditties, his wild tales of bad men; and because my own life was forged in the depths in which they live, I'll tell first of the Forms of Things Unknown. Nu-

merically, this formless folk utterance accounts for the great majority of the Negro people in the United States, and it is my conviction that the subject matter of future novels resides in the lives of these nameless millions.

Wright affirmed not only the distinctive literary values and the rich forms and content forged in the depths and lower depths of urban Negro life, he also insisted on its value to America. Later in this same essay, Wright declared: "We write out of what life gives us in the form of experience. And there is a value in what we Negro writers say. Is it not clear to you that the American Negro is the only group in our nation that consistently and passionately raises the question of freedom?"

More recently, at the American Academy Conference on the Negro American which took place in 1965 and resulted in the two special issues of *Daedalus* devoted to "The Negro American," Ralph Ellison participated in the discussions and said:

> One thing that is not clear to me is the implication that Negroes have come together and decided that we want to lose our identity as quickly as possible. Where does that idea come from? . . . If one assumes that a group, which has existed within this complicated society as long as ours, has failed to develop cultural patterns, views, structures, or whatever other sociological terms one may want to use, then it is quite logical to assume that they would want to get rid of that inhuman condition as quickly as possible. But I, as a novelist looking at Negro life, in terms of its ceremonies, its rituals, and its rather complicated assertions and denials of identity, feel that there are many, many things we would fight to preserve. . . .
>
> There are great ideas of this society which are available to Negroes who have a little consciousness. . . . Contacts are being made. Judgments are being rendered. Choices are being made. I know that in the life styles of any number of groups in the nation, there are many things which Negroes would certainly reject, not because they held them in contempt, but because they do not satisfy our way of doing things and our feeling about things. Sociologists often assert that there is a Negro thing—a timbre of a voice, a style, a rhythm—in all of its positive and negative implications, the expression of a certain kind of American uniqueness. . . . If there is this uniqueness, why on earth would it not in some way be precious to the people who maintain it?

Later in the proceedings, which took the form of an elaborate exchange of views by a group of experts, Ellison added:

> One concept that I wish we would get rid of is the concept of a main stream of American culture—which is an exact mirroring of segregation and second class citizenship. . . . The whole problem about whether there is a Negro culture might be cleared up if we said that there were many idioms of American culture, including, certainly, a Negro idiom of American culture in the South. We can trace it in many, many ways. We can trace it in terms of speech idioms, in terms of manners, in terms of dress, in terms of cuisine, and so on. But it is American, and it has existed a long time, it has refinements and crudities. It has all the aspects of a cultural reality. . . .
>
> The feeling that I have about my own group is that it represents certain human values which are unique not in a Negritude sort of way, but in an American way. Because the group has survived, because it has maintained its sense of itself through all these years, it can be of benefit to the total society, the total culture.

John Oliver Killens, novelist and writer in residence at Fisk University, states another important view of a black writer in this way, in his volume of collected essays, *Black Man's Burden* (1965):

> And now, in the middle of the twentieth century, I, the Negro, like my counterparts in Asia and Africa and South America and on the islands of the many seas, am refusing to be your "nigger" any longer. Even some of us "favored," "talented," "unusual," ones are refusing to be your educated, sophisticated, split-leveled "niggers" any more. We refuse to look at ourselves through the eyes of white America.
>
> We are not fighting for the right to be like you. We respect ourselves too much for that. When we advocate freedom, we mean freedom for us to be black, or brown, and you to be white, and yet live together in a free and equal society. This is the only way that integration can bring dignity for both of us. . . . My fight is not for racial sameness but for racial equality and against racial prejudice and discrimination. I work for the day when black people will be free of the racist pressures to be white like you; a day when "good hair" and "high yaller" and bleaching cream and hair straighteners will be obsolete. What a tiresome place America would be if freedom meant we all had to think alike or be the same color or wear that same gray flannel suit! That road leads to the conformity of the graveyard!

The black cultural nationalists today not only take for granted the value and distinctness of their blackness but affirm a "black aesthetic" in literature and culture. Very revealing of the divergent and new currents of thinking among

black writers today is the issue of the magazine *Negro Digest* for January, 1968. A large part of the magazine is devoted to a survey of the opinions of black writers, which is introduced in the following way by Hoyt W. Fuller, Managing Editor of the publication:

> There is a spirit of revolution abroad in the shadowy world of letters in black America. Not all black writers are attuned to it, of course, and some are even opposed to it which is to be expected also, one supposes. . . . There is, therefore, a wide divergence of opinion among black writers as to their role in society, as to their role in the Black Revolution, as to their role as artists—all these considerations tied into, and touching on, the others. *Negro Digest* polled some 38 black writers, both famous and unknown. . . . The questions elicited from the writers opinions relative to the books and writers which have influenced them, the writers who are "most important" to them in terms of achievement and promise, and what they think about the new movement toward "a black aesthetic" and the preoccupation with "the black experience," aspects of the larger Black Consciousness Movement.

Laurence P. Neal, a young black nationalist writer, expressed this view in the *Negro Digest* poll:

> There is no need to establish a "black aesthetic." Rather, it is important to understand that one already exists. The question is: where does it exist? . . . To explore the black experience means that we do not deny the reality and the power of the slave culture; the culture that produced the blues, spirituals, folk songs, work songs, and "jazz." It means that Afro-American life and its myriad of styles are expressed and examined in the fullest, most truthful manner possible. The models for what Black literature should be are found primarily in our folk culture, especially in the blues and jazz. . . .
>
> Strictly speaking it is not a matter of whether we write protest literature or not. I have written "love" poems that act to liberate the soul as much as any "war" poem I have written. No, it can't simply be about protest as such. Protest literature assumes that the people we are talking to do not understand the nature of their condition. In this narrow context, protest literature is finally a plea to white America for our human dignity. We cannot get it that way. We must address each other. We must touch each other's beauty, wonder, and pain.

Other Negro writers, like Saunders Redding and Robert Hayden, rejected the idea of a "black aesthetic." Redding asserted that "aesthetics has no racial, national or geographical

boundaries," and Robert Hayden voiced sharp disagreement with the cultural black nationalism of LeRoi Jones. Poet and novelist Margaret Walker, on the other hand, wrote:

> The "black aesthetic" has a rich if undiscovered past. This goes back in time to the beginning of civilization in Egypt, Babylonia, India, China, Persia, and all the Islamic world that precedes the Renaissance of the Europeans. We have lived too long excluded by the Anglo-Saxon aesthetic. . . . Where else should the journey lead? The black writer IS the black experience. How can the human experience transcend humanity? It's the same thing.

The contemporary black writers polled by *Negro Digest* were asked who, in their opinions, was the most important black writer. Richard Wright headed the choices, with Langston Hughes and James Baldwin in second and third place and Ralph Ellison trailing Baldwin.

In reply to the question on "the most important living black poet" LeRoi Jones came out first, with Robert Hayden and Gwendolyn Brooks in second and third place and Margaret Walker in fourth.

This is a time of great liveliness, controversy, and creativity in the black literary world in the United States. The pages of *Negro Digest* month after month reflect the vitality of the black literary scene, and new literary publications are coming forward, like *The Journal of Black Poetry* and the Broadsides Press, which publishes black poetry. New literary voices are being heard, like those in *From the Ashes*, the collection of writing by the writers in Budd Schulberg's workshop in Watts, and in *ex umbra*, the magazine of the arts produced by the black students at North Carolina College at Durham.

I close this anthology reluctantly with the feeling that so much is happening and being born that it would be good to keep the book open and bring in still more of the new. But the end of this anthology is not conclusion, I hope, but further beginnings: greater appreciation of what black writers have contributed and are contributing to the diversity of American literature, and movement towards greater inclusion of works by Negro writers in our American literature courses in the high schools and colleges.

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