

THE PAPER

So we stand here
on the edge of hell
in Harlem
and look out
on the world
and wonder
what we're gonna do
in the face of
what we remember.

Vol. 45 No. 7



1977 Published at City College New York N.Y. 10031

Friday, April 15, 1977

—Langston Hughes

CREATIVE ARTS '77



PART ONE

The Negro Speaks of Rivers

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood
in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to
New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in
the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Langston Hughes

The Paper is proud to present
our Creative Arts issue, Spring 1977.
The work within is a literary
and visual manifestation of the
depth of the "rivers" of our souls,
as well as a testament that Langston
Hughes's dream, far from being
"deferred," lives and grows in
us all.

A Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream deferred
Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun
Or fester like a sore — and then run
Does it stink like rotten meat
Or crust and sugar over — like a syrupy sweet
Maybe it just sags like a heavy load —
Or does it explode?

Langston Hughes

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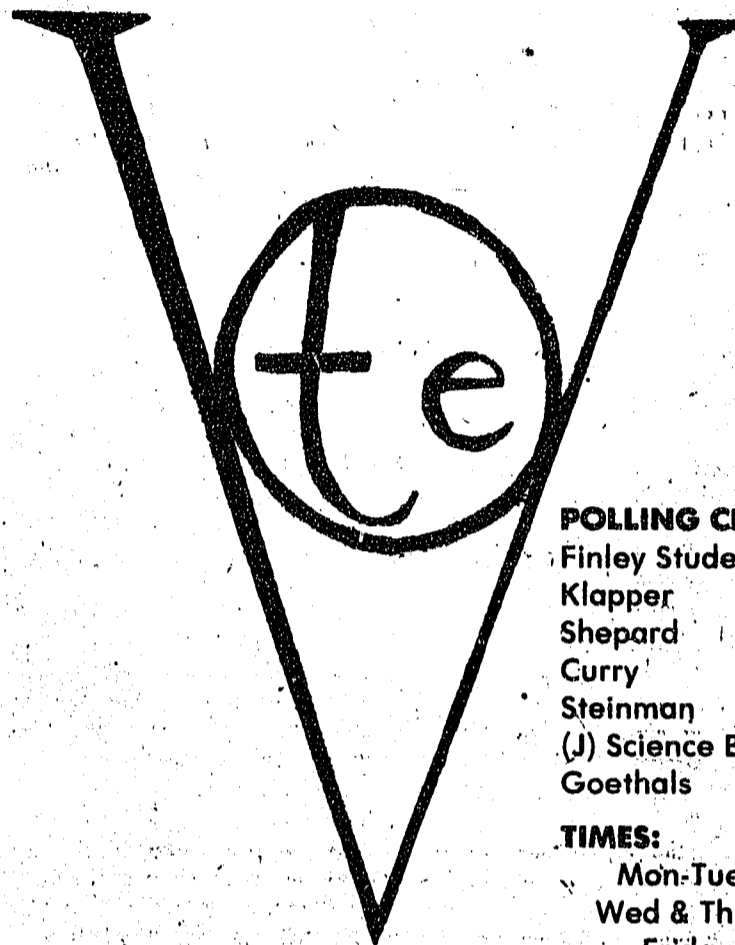
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The Informal Inferno

By Kenneth D. Williams

One warm June day, when the sun had decreed that no clouds should mar my view of the sky, I sat quietly on a Washington Square bench getting blacker by the minute. Suddenly, three informally dressed pilgrims approached me. One, behind a pair of black plastic glasses and a liberated mustache said, "Hi, my name is Rodger." He offered his hand and I shook it. "What's your name?" "Fred," I answered.

"Fred, what do you think about Christ? Would you like to learn more about him?" I told them I did not think a great deal about Christ, and was in general not interested in religion. "Well are you interested in life?" asked Rodger.

"Of course," I said.

"That's what it's really all about."

"Don't you want to be saved?" added another, a short intense fellow with flaming hair and bright hazel eyes.

"I have no idea what it is I'm going to be saved from," said I. Then the female pilgrim looked at me with blank, blue innocent eyes and said, "from going to Hell. Don't you want to go to Heaven?" I considered that for a moment. Then I replied, "actually, I do not want to go to Heaven." They were aghast. "Why not?"

"Because I am working for the Other Side."

"He's not being serious," said Rodger.

"I am quite serious. For surely if you believe in your cause, you must be aware that there are those of us who're working the other side of the street."

"Keep on joking," he said ominously under the mustache as they moved on to harass my fellow sinners.

I was not joking. I am now, and have been for some years, a willing and devoted servant of his Lowliness. For those of you who doubt me, I will share with you certain knowledge known only to those who serve the Evil One. First of all, the popular image of Hell, while not without elements of truth, has been unfairly colored by enemy propaganda.

In Hell, or the part with which I am familiar, there is a place which is cooler than the rest. Here the Master himself resides. Satan sits on a golden throne under the only air conditioner in His realm. He usually has one woman hanging on each arm, another sitting in His lap, and a fourth behind the throne, with her arms around His neck, kissing Him and whispering things in His ear. He keeps a particularly corrupt politician under each foot, to keep His feet from becoming overwarm.

The Master looks exactly like an Eighth Avenue pimp and is usually as high as a kite; but in control, definitely in control. It is said, however, that in recent years, He has become so corrupted by license, that most of the important evil above is managed by Mephistopholes. I personally doubt this.

The cool spot is a great discotheque. It is dimly lit, and has red light flashing all of the time; we have the flashing lights thanks to a technically oriented sinner whose name is quite famous up above. The people dance energetically as the ground is pretty hot even in this cool spot of Hell. Only the most select sinners get the privilege of paying for their transgressions in this area.

The D.J., my pilgrim friends would be surprised to learn, is Jesus Christ. Yes, Jesus has been cast down into the pit of damnation with the rest of us. For when he tried to enter Heaven he was politely informed, that with the entire weight of man's sins on His shoulders, he would not be allowed to go through those pearly gates with such odious baggage. Son of God or no, rules are rules, and Jesus was sent on His way. You boobs should not be shocked at Jesus' fate. For if such as you

are going to Heaven, then surely you can see why He Who Died For Your Sins cannot also be going to Heaven; somebody has to take the weight.

Jesus is a good D.J. He plays the latest tunes, and shows the gift of gab over the microphone. I'd hear him shouting. "Do it! Shake it long and strong you righteous sinners! You may think you have all eternity, but it's later than you think. Get down!" Jesus bore a striking resemblance to Lucifer. People sometimes confused them, and often asked were they brothers. Jesus would answer, "No, but we have the same Father." This would confuse the majority of the questioners.

Jesus rarely dances, and when he does, only with Mary Magdalene. Mary could have risen to the Heights, but chose instead to be with her man. The other Mary we have learned from those who have been cast down from above in one of the periodic purges that are used to keep everyone up there in line, mopes around complaining about "that slinky bitch who led my boy to damnation." She has it all wrong. Mary

often dances with other men. Jesus doesn't worry, because he knows only He can touch her.

Mary can do it on the dance floor; she has much competition. You have seen nothing until you've seen the dance floor of Hell! There's Pope Pius doing the lindy-hop, and there Karl Marx doing the split; which he prefers to call his dialectical contradiction. You should see Queen Victoria doing the bump!

There are those that almost never dance. George Washington for instance, stands by the men's room selling marijuana. Everyone suspects him of stealing record albums, although what he would do with them, only God knows. Then there's Sigmund Freud, who instead of dancing, wanders about whispering things in women's ears. The women usually blush.

When Karl Marx doesn't dance, as he often does not, he goes off with Jesus, and they converse privately. If anyone approaches them, they fall silent, and will not speak again until that person has passed. They get along well together.

The Big Splash!

By Ted Fleming

Saw a dude in New Haven one Friday night by the name of James Sterling Cooper. Mike (or Michael as the nickname goes) was a fairly close friend of mine until he made the mistake of stealing over one hundred bucks from the company till. He had a key to my west sixteenth street apartment and made the hit the spring evening my brother Tyke and I went to see "The Godfather."

"I'll catch up to him," I thought to myself, "I know where his wife and kid are." Not very long thereafter, I did find him at the home of his wife Terry. In order to talk things over we went to the apartment of Robert, a cousin of Terry's, where Mike was staying as he and Terry were separated. I played dumb about the robbery until he admitted it. He remarked with a cynically amused smile that I was a funny guy. Naive is what he was thinking, but give an arles his head, and he may forget that another ram is coming.

He talked about his seeing a psychiatrist and how he was essentially falling both in therapy and his attempts to

get his shapely shrink into bed. We were drinking bloody marys, and I was conveniently drinking very little of mine. He had conceded already that he was going to pay back the money, but as he talked about what he had done to Tyke and me, he got a little too cute and subtly contemptuous as he continued to unfold his state of mind. As he continued to speak, I flashed on the image of Michael Corleone as he was about to kill his ganster B-movie adversary Plotzo or Sollozzo or whatever tab Al Lettieri's role carried. As the director Coppola focused the frame on Pacino's deadly ponderances, the sound of his mark's voice faded on the track. We could perceive the detachment on Michael's visage as the words directed his way, moved farther and farther away from his conscious mind. Cooper's voice faded out the same way as I started to see the bloody mary dripping down his face.

At the appropriate pause in his speech, Coop got the Big Splash! I had him. You might say I rendered his front-all wet! At the point of impact, his face went from a smirk to a frozen grimace. "You just lost the money,"

This is the Hell I have known; those of you who've been there know what I say is true. Now I don't claim to be a zealot; I intend to be on the winning side. Although there seems to be no chance at all of our team blowing the game at present, I have taken precautions to guard against any unfortunate upsets. To hedge my bets, I have had some sainted friends of mine promise to put in a word for me with Peter, to get me through the gates, should things go the other way. And though they have never asked me explicitly, I know, that they know, that I know, that they expect me to do the same for them. I will. That's what friends are for.

The Master knows of my double dealing. He's not angry. No, he understands my position, approves of it, and has told me that in my place he would do the same. In fact, he says he would not trust me if I followed any other course. For the Master does not trust those who make no provisions for themselves; nor do I.

he said firmly. But after he regained his composure while going about cleaning up Robert's rug, he reluctantly backed off his ego-bruised position and told me that I probably would get the bread.

Unfortunately for him, I had only exacted enough recompense for my own part; Tyke had also been ripped-off. While Mike was at the sink, I moved over to the nearby table where he had left his half-full glass. The next time he turned around, he saw me re-depositing his drink right back on the same spot he had just cleaned. He moved to restrain me, making guttural utterances in a defeated tone, and the main event was on.

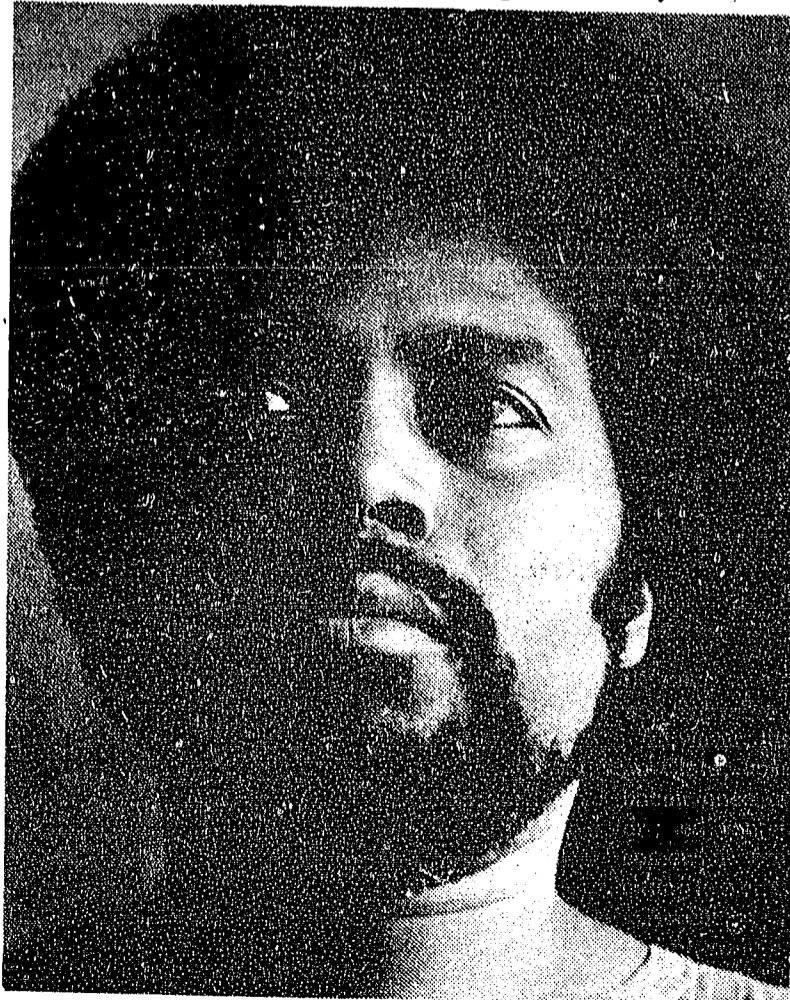
We wrestled for a few beats with neither one of us using a fist to strike a blow. Cooper was holding on trying to tell me that he would fight me outside, but not in Robert's apartment.

"That's too bad," I answered recalling a passage from the Book of Tyke: "We can start here and work our way outside," as I started to flip him around the room taking full advantage of his compromised and, esoterically speaking, his strong feelings of GUILT!

I finally let him restrain me, because I didn't have enough fuel from anger to continue. I couldn't muster a rage because I was too totally aware of the overall situation. Minimal anger was the best I could do, but I can assure anyone concerned, it was a convincing performance. Coop's head was turned completely around. He continued to repeat he'd fight me, but "outside." The point, however, was moot, for the floor show was over.

As we left the mise-en-scene, Coop moved head-shakingly down the street still wondering why I did in Robert's place in the settling of the score. Must a blind man step in horse manure before his nose tells him it stinks? It had all come down to an exact fit. If he had just taken money from me, I could have handled the case without pressing the charge. I know about how mitigating and extenuating circumstances can erode the strength of character; but he screwed my brother in the process, and I could not let that pass. And still he could not see why I had let an innocent party suffer material loss, a party to which he would have to account although we both knew the guy. The answer was a simple one: Mr. Cooper had tampered with the primal forces of my particular nature.

Oh yes, not long thereafter, I received a personal letter and a money order for two-hundred bucks.



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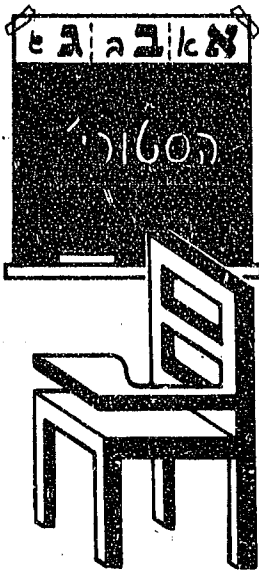
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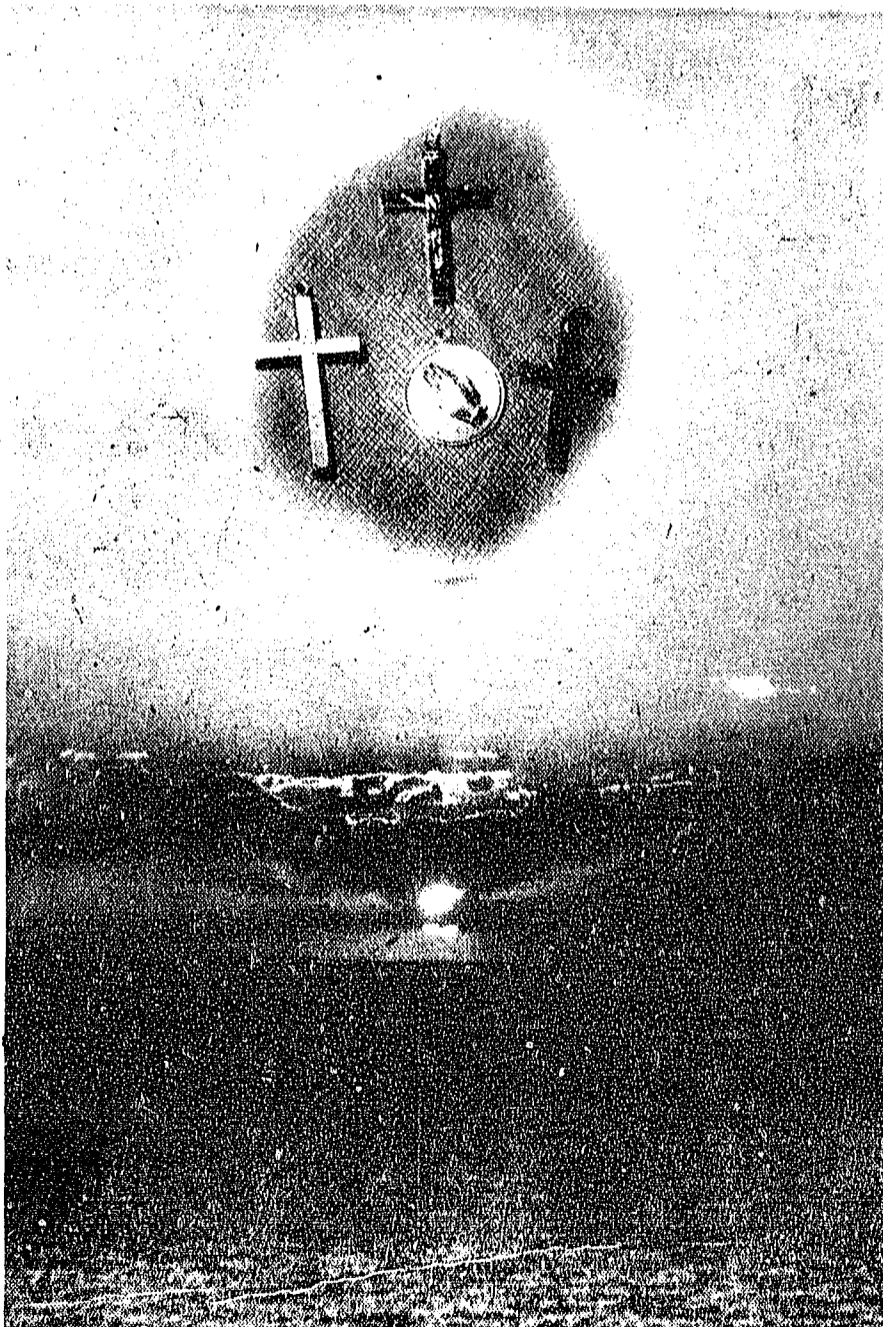
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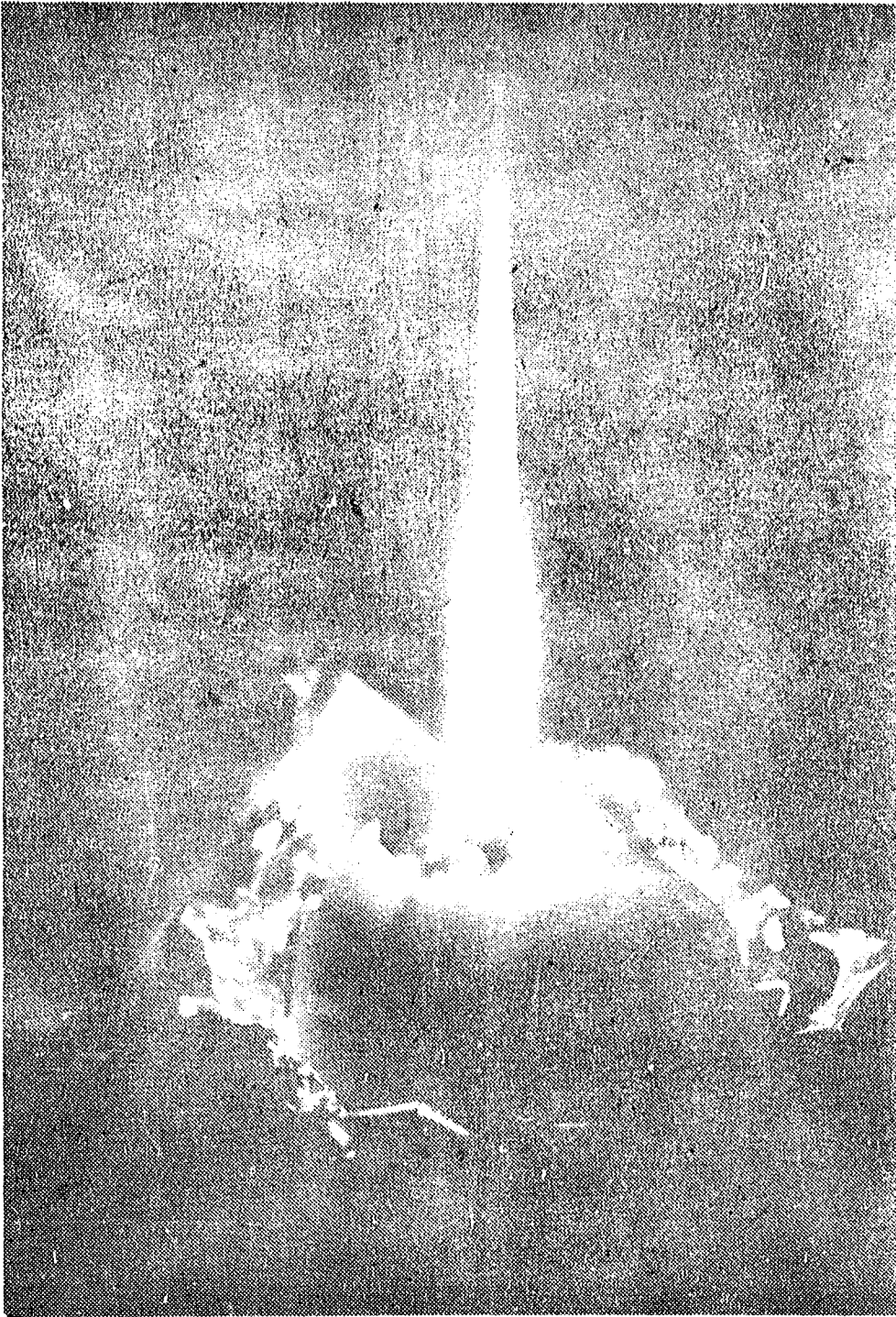
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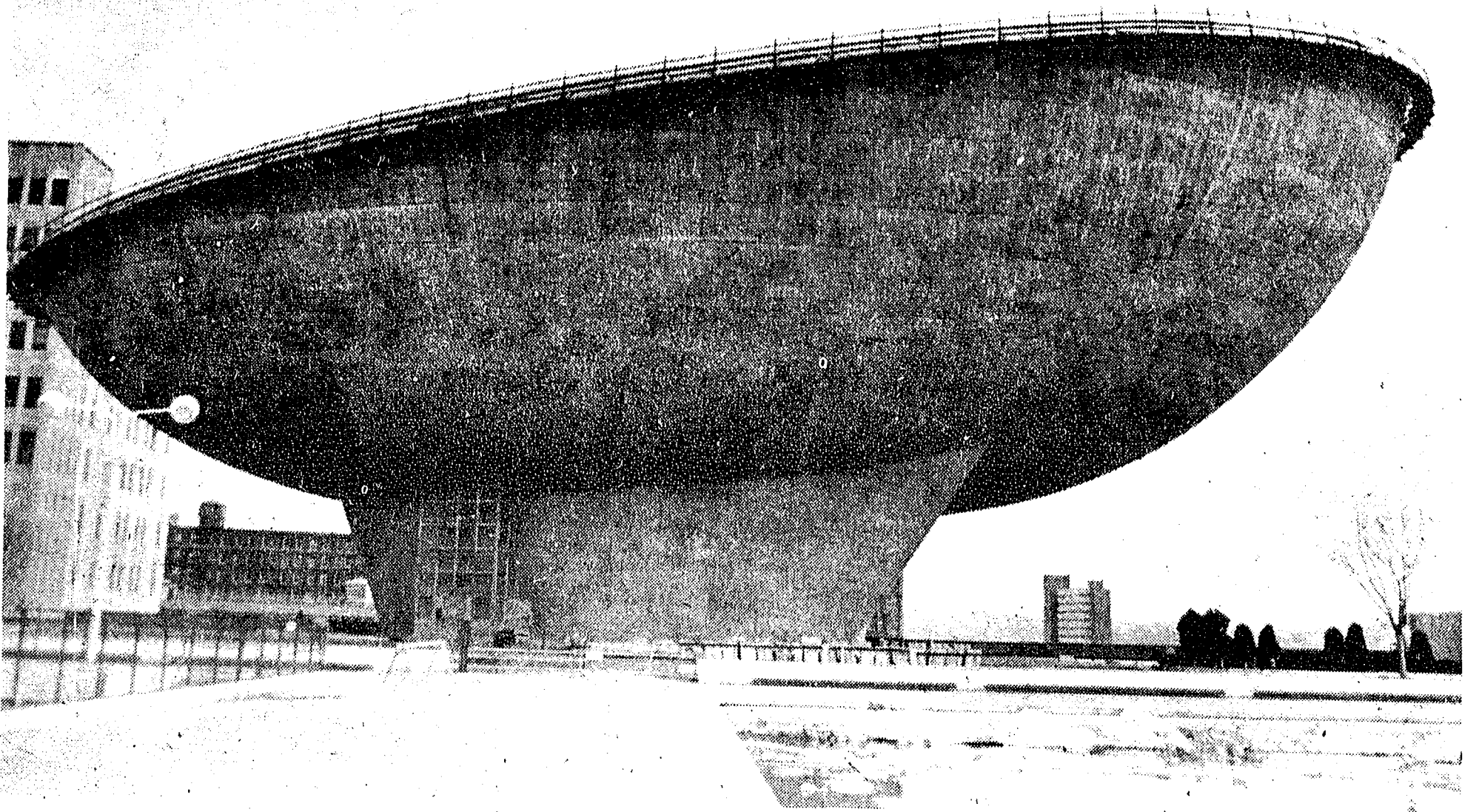
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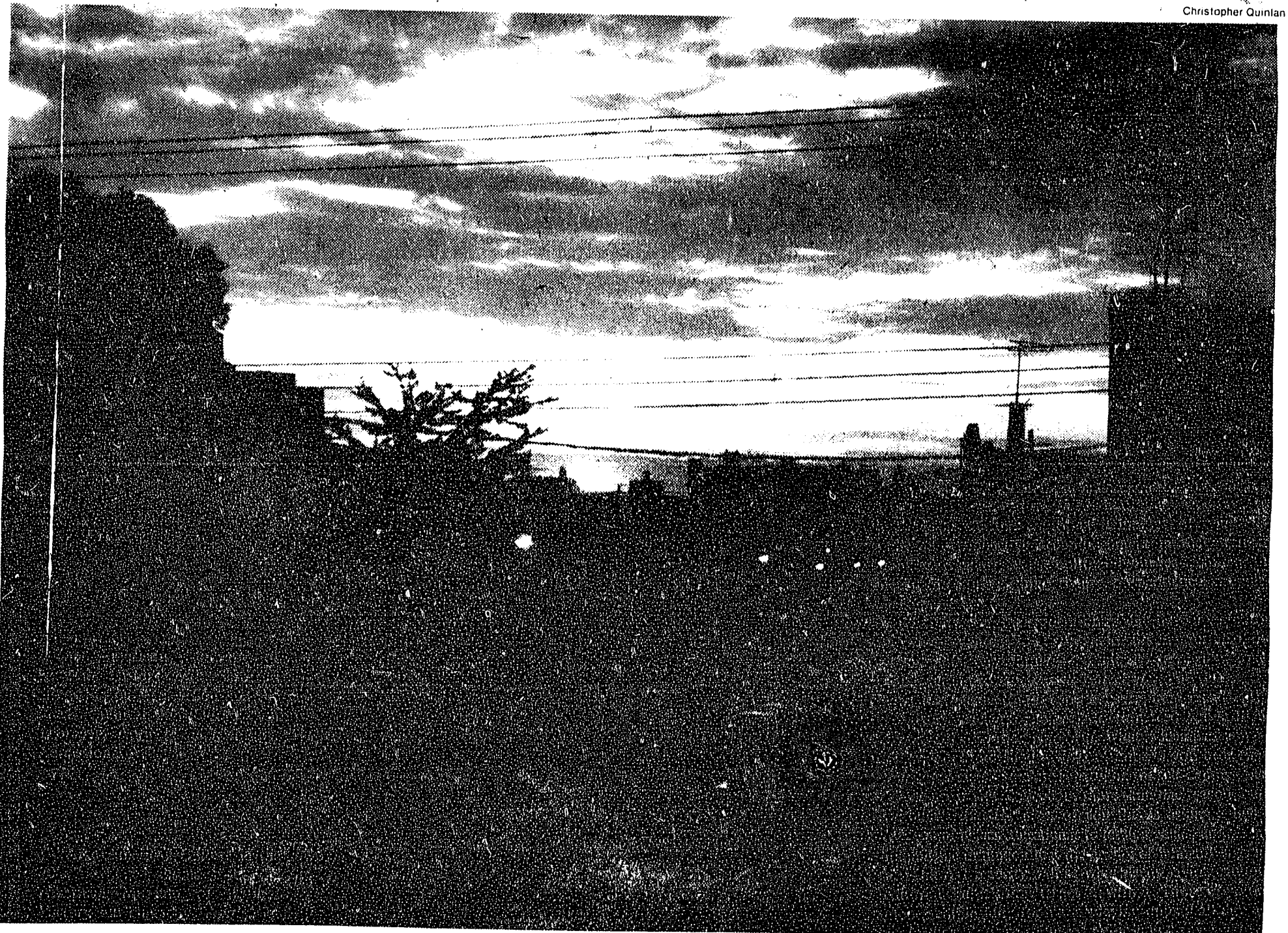
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A Bitter/Sweet Affair

By Diane M. Wilson

"Nigger! You can't live with them and you can't live without them," Faye prophesied. "You better forget about Richard and concentrate on Phil. I don't know why you can't forget about Richard."

Venetta didn't know why either. She listened as her best girlfriend tried to give her some honest advice. Venetta knew she would probably be telling Faye the same things if their positions were reversed, but they weren't.

"It's not everyday you find a man who wants to do for you. Phil is a man, Vee. I hate to say it but your Richard is a nigger. There's a difference you know?"

Venetta agreed there was a difference. She thought a moment about the "niggers" Faye had been involved with — street hustlers, hoodlums and con artists. Richard wasn't perfect but he had managed to stay out of trouble. Venetta didn't feel like arguing, though.

"Hey, I'll speak to you later, girl. I'm going to call Richard and see if we can't get together tonight."

"You're determined to have your cake and eat it too, Vee," Faye continued. "There are women out here looking for one man to make 'em happy but you've got to have two."

"I know, I know." She was in a hurry to get off the phone now. She wanted to try to catch Richard at home before he went out for the night.

"I'll speak to you later."

Venetta nervously dialed Richard's number. "Why does my stomach cramp up every time I call him?", she thought to herself. "It would seem that after seven years I'd overcome my fright." She wondered if it was necessary to fear a person in order to love them.

"Hello."

"Hi sweetheart. I'm surprised to catch you at home. You're usually out when I call."

"Really?"

Venetta sensed that Richard was in one of his "don't bother me tonight" moods but she went on with what she had to say.

"I called to see what you're doing tonight. I thought maybe, if you weren't busy, we could go to the show or you could come by."

"Really."

"I mean, after all it's Friday night and we should be together." "Well, I don't know what's happening tonight. We'll see."

"Oh," Venetta knew that "we'll see" meant she wasn't going to see him tonight. There was silence for a few long moments before she continued.

"So, how's everybody on your end doing?"

"Everyone's fine."

Another silence.

"Well, I won't keep you long, baby. Do you think there's any chance of us getting together tonight?"

"What did I say? You don't listen," Richard stated rather nastily.

"I heard what you said, Richard." She always called him by his full name when she was getting mad. "I just wish you could be more specific. Why can't you just say yes, Venetta, I'll be by or no Venetta, I can't make it."

What did I say," Richard repeated

"You said 'I'll see what's happening.' That usually means no, so why can't you just say no?"

"Why do you always have to give me a hard time. I told you I didn't know what was happening tonight. If nothing comes up maybe I'll be by."

"Maybe you'll be by," Venetta questioned. "You're the one that's giving me a hard time. Why can't you put me first

once in awhile. You know that the only thing that might come up is your going off with Sam or Leroy to get high or to go shoot some pool down at the center. Why can't you spend some time with your woman for a change?"

"I'll speak to you later. And, uh, you can forget about me coming by."

"But Richard..." Venetta pleaded.

Venetta had hardly said good-bye before she heard the phone click.

"Shit! He doesn't want to hear it. If he doesn't have some nerve." He knew she was right. He knew that nothing was going to 'come up'. He just didn't feel like coming over because she had asked him to.

Venetta slumped into her worn, green armchair, the seat sinking to the floor under her weight. She felt lonely. She was depressed and she was mad. She felt humiliated. Richard always had a way of fucking over her she didn't like. He was able to control her. No one else could do that.

"His ass would be here if he wanted to screw," she continued thinking to herself. She wondered if he realized his ability to screw her even when he wasn't with her.

"Fuck him," Venetta announced out loud. A small smile crossed her lips. "Who needs him anyway." Faye was right. Niggers weren't worth the bother.

Venetta stood up and tried to stretch away some of her tension. She still didn't have anything to do that night. Worst of all, it was a Friday night, party night when the week's frustrations were released on dance floors and in dimly lit night spots. As she stretched she felt her body.

Venetta was only twenty-three years old. She was fairly attractive and lived alone in a two bedroom apartment. She had moved from her mother's place a year ago. She hadn't seen her father since she was eight years old.

She walked over to the window. There was a full moon hanging in the sky. She made herself a rum and coke. The full moon, the booze and her loneliness combined to arouse her. She thought about calling Richard back and trying a different approach to persuade him to come by, but experience had taught her that second attempts only made him madder and lengthened the time between his visits. As few times as he came by she knew he had to be sleeping with another woman although she preferred to think that seeing her three times a month was satisfying enough for him.

The ring of the phone interrupted her thoughts.

"Hello."

"Hi there, sweetheart. What you doing?"

It was Phil

"Nothing, baby."

"Can I come over?"

"Sure, why not?"

"Okay then, I'll see you in a few. Bye."

He threw her a kiss. "Well it looks like I won't be alone tonight after all. Good old Phil to the rescue," she dryly laughed to herself.

Phil was her friend first, her lover second. He knew more about her than Faye. He knew of her relationship with Richard. Richard didn't know anything about Phil.

Phil greeted Venetta with a big kiss. "Hey, you feel like going out? Do you want to go to the show or something?"

He was so considerate. Why couldn't Richard be more like that, Venetta thought.

"No thanks, babe. Why don't we just stay in tonight. I'll make you some dinner and we'll relax together."

"That's fine by me baby," Phil said

smiling. She knew he wanted her tonight.

"If only Richard wanted me tonight."

Phil sensed that something was the matter.

"What's wrong, baby?"

"Nothing sweetheart." She knew she could discuss her problems concerning Richard with Phil but she preferred not to this night. She cared deeply about him, but their relationship had reached the point where she couldn't tell him everything. She had to make him think that he was number one.

The two sat alone in the green armchair after a quiet evening of television and a game of scrabble. Phil softly began kissing Vee on her neck, indicating that he wanted to make love. She admired his body. He wasn't tall and lean like Richard but his shorter, stockier appearance appealed to her.

"Are you in the mood tonight, baby?"

Venetta looked in Phil's light brown, inviting eyes. Richard would never have the courtesy to ask her if she was in the mood. Whether she was or not, he would just take her.

"Why are you so compromising with me, so thoughtful and so fucking kind," she blurted out.

Phil spoke as though Venetta hadn't just yelled at him.

"What do you mean, babe?"

"I mean if you want to make love to me why don't you just do it. You don't have to beg my permission. Don't you have any goddamn balls at all!" She was suddenly furious.

"I've got more balls than Richard has."

Venetta was startled by Phil's statement. She looked him in the eye. She wanted to hear more. "And what do you mean by that?"

"If your Richard is so much of a man than why doesn't he treat you like a woman? Why doesn't he treat you with some respect, take you out more or be with you more? With all the time you've been spending with me lately, you can't be seeing much of him."

Venetta was shocked. It was the first time Phil had spoken out against his alter ego. It was the first time she could remember hearing him raise his voice. His emotionalism excited her.

"Since when have you let Richard bother you," she further agitated. "I told you up front that there was another man in my life."

"Richard's not bothering me Vee, you are. You want me to be like him for you, you want me to play his types of games, but that's not what I'm about. If you can't accept me as I am than don't accept me at all."

Venetta suddenly realized why she needed Phil. He filled the empty void, eased the pain within her that Richard had

unknowingly caused. She had been trying to combine their contrasting personalities and blend them to form one individual. It was as though she were mixing ingredients to bake a cake — a dash of Phil's considerate nature and a taste of Richard's domineering forcefulness and Voila! you have the perfect man. Neither one could satisfy her emotional or sexual needs independently, but lately she had been feeding too much off of Phil.

"You're right baby, I'm sorry. You've got to be yourself. I wouldn't want you any other way."

Phil sensed her sincerity. "I know babe. I'm sorry for yelling at you the way I did."

"There you go compromising me again. Don't be sorry. You meant what you said and it needed to be said. Maybe you should treat me like that more often."

"All I want to do is love you, baby. I want to make you happy."

"I know babe, I know. But sometimes in order for me to appreciate the good there's got to be some bad. If everything was always peaches and cream we'd both go crazy. Sometimes when I yell at you I'm really just asking you to deal with me." Can you understand that sweetheart?"

Venetta walked over to her desk. She pulled a notebook from her drawer and turned a few pages. She showed Phil a poem by Carolyn Rodgers she had clipped from a magazine:

There you were,
sitting across the room
frowning at me,
and me,
raving and carrying on
like a fool.
I felt like one too.
a woman can ACT mighty witchy
when all she needs and wants, is for
her man
to tell her to shut up!
and then take her in
his arms,
and deal with her.

Phil looked over at Venetta. He needed her; she was everything he wanted in a woman — aggressive, intelligent, sensual. He felt he would win out over Richard for her affection if he could remain patient. "I love you, Vee."

"I love you too, babe."

She went over to him and put her arms around his waist. She began kissing him on his ear. She could feel how much he wanted her and the realization excited her.

He gently lifted her onto the bed. Physically, Venetta enjoyed Phil much more than Richard, but it was the thought of her other lover sexually enjoying her,

stroking,
stroking,
stroking . . .
that brought Vee to a climax.

Black Poetry

I was in this poetry class
Where all we did was this
Ancient history biblical stuff
I thought it was time we
Did some black poetry
So I sat down eagerly
Pen in hand, to write
But I could think of no
Cold hardships I had had
Or trudges I had held
In racial hues,
So I decided that maybe
I wasn't black enough
To write black poetry
Maybe my hams were too
healthy and my body too warm

I thought maybe my
Brothers were too good at
Staying out of trouble
And my sister was too smart
Maybe my parents made
Too much money
For me to write black poetry
Maybe this having a job
And going to college
Wearin' pretty clothes
And speaking pretty well
Was too good for writing black poetry —
Pen still in hand
And suddenly
I felt deprived.

Melanie A. Scott

Thursday April 28, Friday April 29, 1977
COME TO THE
HARLEM
Renaissance Program

A program designed to stimulate a growth of awareness between members of the Harlem community and the City College population

THURSDAY APRIL 28, 1977

- 11:00 Third World Music Club Band and Drummers
- 12:00 Introduction..... Carl Stewart
- 12:30 Chuck Davis Dancers—Performance
- 1:15 Current situation in South Africa—David Sibeco, P.A.C. of Azania
- 1:35 Current situation in South Africa as it relates to Harlem—Elombe Brath (Patrice Lumumba Coal)
- 1:55 Health in Latin Community..... Dr. Helen Rodriguez, Bio-Medical Center
- 2:15 George Edward Tait—Performance (Black Massical Music)
- 3:30 Collaboration..... Performance, Jazz
- 4:30 Alternative Black Education..... Brother Basir The East
- 5:00 Role of the Black Studies Department in Harlem—Leonard Jefferies
- 5:30 (Titos Sampa) Tanawa Ltd. performance
- 8:00 Play—Ceremonies in Dark Old Men

FRIDAY, APRIL 29, 1977

- 9:45 Drummers
- 10:15 Jes Oliver and the City College African Dancers
- 10:45 Announcements
- 10:50 The Black Church..... John Skinner
- 11:10 The nation of Islam..... Ali Rasheed
- 11:30 The Importance of City College to Harlem—Percy Sutton, Manhattan Borough President
- 12:00 The current C.U.N.Y. situation from a student perspective—Cheryl Rudder, City College Student Senate Pres.
- 12:30 Tipica 73—Performance
- 2:15 Linking up the college and the community—Moses Harris (Black Economic Survival)
- 2:35 Solar Caravan..... Performance, Jazz
- 4:00 Poetry—Louis R. Rivera
- 4:30 The historical development of Harlem community—John Henrik Clark
- 5:00 Community development..... Amiri Baraka
- 5:30 Poetry workshop..... Gil Scott Heron
- 7:00 Role of Tree of Life in Harlem..... Kanya (Tree of Life)
- 7:30 Various aspects of contemporary life as they pertain to Black people—Dick Gregory
- 9:30 Play—Ceremonies in Dark Old Men

Thurs: 11:00 am-7:30 pm Fri: 9:45 am-9:00 pm

Location: Outdoors-Convent Ave. bet. 138-140 Sts.

Ceremonies in Dark Old Men - Indoors

Finley Ballroom

Monday-Wednesday: 6:30pm

Thursday: 8pm

Friday: 9:30pm

ART DISPLAY—Thurs. & Fri.-Bowker Lounge (Shepard Hall)

Monday-Friday Lewison Lounge (Finley)

ADMISSION FREE

Sponsored by Day Student Senate, Harlem Renaissance Committee (United Peoples)

FPA PRESENTS:

PUNK

Hologram Show/Steinman Hall Lobby
April 18-22nd

Folk Music with Steve Forbert & Rand
Littlestone in Monkey's Paw, April 19th,
12-3 PM

Noon Poetry Series: Wed. 12-1 F330
April 20th—Alison Colbert & Lee Willis

Paul Newman Film Festival, The Prize 12 & 4
The Hustler 2 & 6 PM in Monkey's Paw

*Talent Show AUDITIONS April 19th & 26th
*in Rm. F438 12:30-4:00 PM *

John Holmstrom and "Legs" McNeil The Creators
of Punk magazine here to do their 'JOE SHOW'
A new visual experience...ELECTRONIC
comix—April 21st in the Finley Ballroom
F101 from 1-3 P.M.

FOR MORE INFO CALL 690-8188 or ASK IN RM. F151



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Name _____ Age _____
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The Harlem Renaissance Committee Student Senate of CCNY —presents— Ceremonies in Dark Old Men by Lonne Elder, III

April 25..... Open dress rehearsal 6:30 p.m.
April 26 & 27..... previews 6:30 p.m.
April 28..... premiere 8:00 p.m.
April 29..... final performance 9:30 p.m.

at
The Grand Ballroom
Finley Hall

Directed by
Tony Stokes

Carl E. Brown
Anthony Chase
Charles Kashi

with

Debbie Chatman
Carmen Carver
Philip Marshall

Sidney Saddler

* Call 690-8175/6
for schedule of other festival events

"I am issuing a Natinal Call for Survival to All Concerned
Leaders and to All Concerned Citizens of America"

W.D. Muhammad

In Response to this call, Concerned Students of City
University Invite Minister

Farrakhan to speak to NEW YORK CITY on The Mission Of Survival

Community Morality Drugs

Education Family Economics

Youth

Politics

and the Dance Theatre of Harlem

Friday, April 22, 1977

7:00 to 9:00 PM

AT

Mahoney Gym City College
138 Street and Convent Avenue

Sponsored by **Day Student Senate CCNY &
Student Govt. Association BMCC**

Makin' It Funky

Jill Nelson

Much of what has been printed here in *The Paper* during this semester has dealt with the culture of black people, circa 1977, and much of what has been written has been critical. This might lead a reader to believe that we at *The Paper* are discouraged by the general state of Black arts and culture, and might suggest that we are discouraged by what is known as "culture" today. This is not the case. If we were discouraged *The Paper* would no longer be printed, for writers without positive cultural images do not write about culture, and eventually, they do not write at all. The critical articles which have appeared on these pages are just that, critical articles. The positive aspects of Black culture may appear only sporadically on these pages, but there are reasons for this. Specifically that we have chosen to address what is known as mass culture, which we have defined as that music, film, or television programming that reaches most people, most often. The choice to deal primarily with these aspects of culture has been a spontaneous one. No editorial meeting was held in which the decision was made to write about the televised *Roots*, or *Minstrel Man*, to scathingly review *Airport 77*, the heroin epidemic in Harlem, or student apathy. Writers chose to write about these aspects of Black life and culture spontaneously, without design. It has been our surprise and reward that from the spontaneous improvisations of a handful of writers has come somewhat of a critical stance, a united, though individually oriented vision of ourselves as Black and Latin people and the culture which we have created.

But culture, which is a living, growing, organic being, does not exist in a vacuum, and could not exist without the breath of the artist, the audience, and the society. So Black culture is in fact not the exclusive domain of the Black artist and audience, but part of the gigantic and oppressive body that we know as American society. And because of our oppressed condition in America, in spite of the fact that the bulk of what is known as American culture is rooted in the dirt, trees and fruits of Black peoples' labors, we are in reality not often in control of our music, literature, or our dance. In fact, we often find ourselves in the

position of having our culture "borrowed," amended, and reinterpreted without our knowledge, permission, or creative input, a phenomena better known as being "ripped off." Yet the strength of our culture, specifically our music, with its ever present foundation in our experience as African people, lives on. This is exemplified through our use of rhythms and tonality, and also the modern day use of the slaves field holler as exemplified by our funk, jazz and blues artists. These aspects of culture emerge even through the fog of disco, the Top Forty, financial exploitation, and what might be called our gradual acceptance of americanization.

Yet we are an oppressed people. We are displaced persons whose cultural identity have been systematically destroyed by capitalist society since the first white man set foot in Africa. And it is this historical/cultural perspective we at *The Paper* have attempted to integrate into our writings about Black life and culture circa 1977.

Despite the tenuousness of our position in American society, as manifested by the elimination of African Literature courses, the imposition of tuition, the too early deaths of John Coltrane, Erroll Garner, the obscurity of such magnificent artists as Mary Lou Williams, our culture lives. It is all around us, in Ron Carter, John Lewis, Alex Haley, and in US. Black culture is the backbone, heart and arms of American culture. Yet it is not for free. As Black people we pay a price for every aspect of our culture that is brought to prominence, whether on record, stage, or the printed page. We must know and remember this; that we cannot accept without critical evaluation any aspect of our cultural existence as Black and Latin people living in America.

It is this critical evaluation that we at *The Paper* try to offer through our words, our photographs, and our cartoons. We embrace Black culture as we embrace a long absent but never forgotten lover. Yet at the same time, we must subtly, while enjoying the feel, sight, and sound of our cultural lover, softly check its being for any traces of disease, corruption, and outright lies picked up during its travels in a foreign and cold land.

The Funky Get Down

casually she makes love with them on dunes
grass
unknowns beds,
touching intimately places not within the head.
It is easy, she laughs
and moving her body
diagrams the ease with which she gives
and takes
and comes, satisfied,
back unto herself
spilling uselessly onto blades
or sheets which stick into her
like they did,
and once succumbing to her
grasping casualness are gone,
soft and useless.

Jill Nelson

Untitled

Love is like a newborn baby

It causes me to grab my belly and wonder
If the pain was worth the bother
It breast feeds on the generosity, the patience
and the understanding I have nurtured
It demands my constant, immediate attention
every waking day
It disrespects my need to be me.

Love is like a newborn baby
Struggling to walk on two feet
Dependent on ME to be there when it's hungry
Dependent on ME to understand when it needs a change
Dependent on ME to hold it against my breast and burp
away the frustration.

Love is like a newborn baby

And I comfort it
And I hold it
And I rock it to sleep
And I sing love songs to make it stop crying.

Love is like a newborn baby

And I pamper it
And I make sure its diapers are clean
And I pat it on the back
And I sing love songs to make it stop crying.

Love is like a newborn baby

And I give it its bottle
And I give it its pacifier
And I hold it
And I comfort it
And I rock it to sleep.
And I sing love songs to make it stop crying.

Love is like a newborn baby

And I sing love songs to make it stop crying.

by Diane M. Wilson

The Search

I search anxiously for myself
But don't know where I am.
Stranded out here
I plead not to lose myself
Outside lookin' in is
No play pretty.
For identity is necessary
To keep in touch with yourself.
Lookin' around the corners
Long dark hallways
See nothing, be shadows
It's so hard to see
Where can I be found.

Synnova Percy

The Forseen Judgement

As I sit in this corner awaiting my trial
The dreams of a newborn child;
A seed of an unborn tree
Stepped on by the bitter clowns of his time,
back by the cruel torment of the fruits of life,
Which will not be his.
Limited by the ways and means of survival.
Clayton Robinson

Ecosphere

The sun doesn't shine
In me any more
There's no light
In my eyes
Cloudy movements
overcast my thoughts
And gale winds toss
my soul
Leaves of my life
fall from my branches
Yellowed and reddened
with age
As I am uprooted
by the storm
And drowned in a
flood of tears
But I'm not disturbed
by the movements of my earth
For if not for the rain
I might dry up and blow away
Like the sands of
an arid desert.

Melanie A. Scott

Logical Outcome?

my thighs are wet with
mutual come
legs tremble
sweat pools between breasts,
air farts
thrust from between open legs,
we are inside
reaching dumbly into darkness,
I open and open
we are almost there,
you have me
just—
then I come,
practically.

Jill Nelson

the revolution
comes within me
takes shape
beneath hands kneading
blossoms in black soil,
my tears run all through
the revolution
wraps our stomachs
Journes our spirits
sucks our tittles
naked makes us of energy,
flies us to warmer climes
In time
In time
the revolution
mothers us,
shes so fine
oh yeah
so fine.

Jill Nelson