THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE AND NEGRITUDE POETRY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK WRITTEN LITERATURE

by

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To the memory of Zacchaeus Folayan Alemeru

For my wife, Mobayonle

my kids, Ore-Ofe and Toluwaleyi

my brother, Olorunjuwon Ikumapayi

my sisters, Ibiyomi and Olufunmilayo

Above all, for my mother, Omoghaiye

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INTRODUCTION

Many readers regard Négritude as the first Black cultural movement that consciously sought to give expression to the essence of Blackhood - that which makes for the distinctive qualities of the Black race. But as Albert H. Berrian and Richard A. Long have indicated in the introduction of Négritude: Essays and Studies,[1] this desire has parallels in all parts of the world where the transplantation of peoples of African descent took place. Consequently Négritude is but a part of a long standing socio-historical process.[2] The need for a rediscovery of that which distinguishes Black culture from other cultures found expression in Haiti and among Black Americans long before the 1920s and 30s when "negritude" literature flowered in the Harlem Renaissance, the Haitian Renaissance and Négritude.

There had been a fairly long history of Afro-American written literature before the Harlem Renaissance but the written works of Black writers before the Harlem Renaissance were not very concerned about creating a distinctively Black literature. As Houston Baker has rightly noted in the introduction to his anthology, Black Literature in America,[3] among the defects of these early Black American literatures was a tendency towards "servile imitation of accepted models in both theme and content".[4] Because of this the works did not truly reflect the essence of the Black experiences,

> "these early conscious literary artists," he says, "were so intent on the just imitation of their models, so intent upon duplicating the poetic diction and pious concerns of white authors that they failed to portray the conditions, fears, and aspirations of suffering humanity...."[5]

Even Charles Chestnutt, the first Black man of letters recognized as such, was not, as John Chamberlain has noted in "The Negro as Writer,"[6] free from this type of literary imitation. DuBois, in The Soul of Black Folk,[7] his collection of sociological, historical and literary essays, pointed out the uniqueness of Black culture. But it was not until the period of the Harlem Renaissance that there was a widespread group concern among writers for creating not just literature but "Black" literature.[8]

In a similar fashion, though written literature in Haiti, the first Black nation to wrest independence from an imperial power,[9] had had a long history, as Haitian writers were to say in the 1920s, her literature had slavishly imitated French literature.[10] This was to change, for under the leadership of Jean Price-Mars, there was a conscious effort to reverse this tendency. Price-Mars, through his essays and lectures, later collected in Ainsi parla l'oncle,[11] started a movement which developed into the Haitian Renaissance with the aim of creating literature that reflected the life of this Black nation, literature that was distinctively Black and Haitian.[12] In pursuit of this aim Price-Mars and his "renaissance" colleagues were influenced by the Harlem Renaissance literature. Price-Mars translated poems by Langston Hughes and other Harlem Renaissance poets and wrote critical essays on the Harlem Renaissance.[13]

The example of the Harlem Renaissance and the Haitian search for Black literature, and in some cases other Black values, was to be followed in the 1930s and 1940s by the efforts of the Négritude movement which included African and Caribbean writers. As many critics have

noted[14] and the writers have acknowledged,[15] Négritude writers were aware of the "négritude" efforts of the earlier Black movements and benefited from their views.[16] All of these Black movements were reactions to similar historical and social situations: colonialism in Africa and the Caribbean for Négritude literatures and the constricting circumstances of neo-slavery for the Harlem Renaissance. They had the same aim of countering certain perjorative images that existed in European and American cultures respectively. For Négritude writers, as Edris Makward has pointed out in "Négritude and the New African Novel in French," literature was "the efficient instrument of a liberation,"[17] just as for the Black American writer, as George Kent put it:

> The single unifying concept which places the achievement of the Harlem Renaissance in focus is that it moved to gain authority in its portrayal of Black life by the attempt to assert with varying degrees of radicality, a dissociation of sensibility from that enforced by American culture and its institutions...[18]

The similarity in the circumstances of their production and their aims and the influences of the earlier movements on Négritude give one grounds to regard the movements as parts of the Black man's ongoing attempt to repair and restore his fallen image in history.

The manner in which the movements went about these aims is fascinating because it involves an ambivalent relationship between the movements and the culture that they were reacting against. This relationship, as James Weldon Johnson in "The Dilemma of the Negro Author," and Langston Hughes in "The Negro Writer and the Racial Mountain," have noted, have potentials for undermining the "négritude"

aims of Black literatures mainly because many Black writers and intellectuals wanted Black works to be similar to, if not the same as, the works of White writers. Many writers not only adopted Western literary forms for their works and were proud to do so, even though they insisted that their works be regarded as Black literature, but some went out of their way to argue that Black works belong to the same literary traditions as Western literatures. That is why when critics express the views that the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude are revivals of Black values one hesitates to accept these without questioning. Margaret Perry's statement in Silence to the Drums[19] about the Harlem Renaissance, for example, that

> the important discovery for the Black writer during this period was self-revelation and a recapturing of or quest for the past heritage that had been stripped from his race...It is not only a revival then but also a reawakening. For the Black writer of the 1920s, the leap into the past and the nurturing of the present were tasks surmountable.[20] (my underlining)

is a generalization that can be easily faulted through close textual analysis of the works. The same is true of Robert Bone's views in The Negro Novel in America[21] when he says:

> the alienated negro intellectual fell back predominantly on the folkculture, with its antecedents in slavery, its roots in the rural south...where the folk culture seemed inadequate to his needs, he turned to the cult of African origins and to primitivism.[22]

Almut Nordmann-Seiler implies more or less the same thoughts about Négritude in La Littérature Neo-Africaine[23] when he compares Négritude "revival" of African values to the European Renaissance. "Il y a beaucoup de ressemblance, en fait, avec la Renaissance europeenne."[24] These critics probably take their cue from statements of intentions by

writers without doing close textual analysis of the creative works to substantiate their claims.

In defining Négritude as a revival of Black values many critics overlook the varying definitions by the writers. For example, Césaire who in his poetry dissociates the Caribbean from connections with the historical empires of the African past,[25] defines Négritude as expressing the experiences of being Black, in the world.[26] This involved what it meant to be Black in the past that he knew, Africa not being a part of it, being Black in the contemporary colonial situation, and being Black in a future in which all previous Black experiences would count. Senghor's definition of Négritude at a lecture delivered at Oxford University in 1962 as "the whole complex of civilised values--cultural, economic, social and political--which characterize the black peoples, or more precisely, the Negro-African world"[27] also implies the past, present and future dimensions of the Black experience. When he says in the Oxford lecture:

> as for France's policy, although we have often reviled it in the past, it too ended with a credit balance, through forcing us actively to assimilate European civilisation. This fertilised our sense of Négritude.
>
> Today our Négritude no longer expresses itself as opposition to European values, but as a complement to them. Henceforth, its militants...will use European values to arouse the slumbering European values of Négritude, which they will bring as their contribution to the Civilization of the Universal.

Senghor implies that the colonial experience is an inextricable part of the Black values of Négritude.

Apart from Langston Hughes who used the jazz and blues form in his poetry[28] and Zora Neal Hurston who used folk materials in her novels,[29]

no other writer can "truly" be said to have fallen back on "folk culture." Also apart from the dumb symbol of Father John in "Kabnis" of Cane,[30] no Harlem Renaissance writer went into the era of slavery to get materials for his writings. Among the Harlem Renaissance intellectuals there was actually a controversy over the use of the folk ways. A faction led by Charles S. Johnson distrusted the primitive image it gave to Blacks.[31] Likewise among Négritude writers, the return to the ancestral sources must not be interpreted in terms of European Renaissance revival of earlier Greek and Roman cultures without first taking note of the writers' final turning away from their African culture to a Universal civilization that is a fusion of cultures[32] and also of the various Western literary and intellectual influences on their "return". Négritude intellectuals, despite the posturings of poets like Senghor about rediscovering their African selves, had an ambivalent attitude towards folk culture. This attitude is evident in the editorial comment of the first volume of Présence Africaine.[33] The intellectuals divided mankind into the productive West and the non-productive rest of the world.

> Cette humanité aujourd'hui comprend deux groupes distincts: d'une part, un minorité d'êtres agissants, productifs, créateurs, l'Europe. En face d'elle, les hommes d'outre-mer beaucoup plus nombreux. Ils sont en général moins actifs, peu productifs (du moins leur productivité ne répond-elle pas au rhythm des temps modernes). Ils sont "le fardeau de l'homme blanc."[34]

Their conclusion is that to be away from Europe, that is to be close to traditional Black life, is to be doomed to cultural asphyxiation: "elle court le risque d'asphyxier."

The claim that there was an upsurge of "pride in their African heritage" among Harlem Renaissance writers must not be accepted without qualifications. One needs only to read Countee Cullen's "Heritage"[35] or the title poem of James Weldon Johnson's Fifty Years[36] or Langston Hughes' "Afraid"[37] and "Lament for Dark Peoples"[38] from The Weary Blues to realize that to these men Africa was an enigma. Just as every race that constituted America had pride in its ancestral cultures, the Black American was impelled to seek his heritage in Africa, but his experiences in America forced him to see Africa from Western and Christian perspectives. In James Weldon Johnson's "Fifty Years," these lines sum up the Afro-Americans' views of Africa.

> Far far the way that we have trod from heathen Kraal and jungle Dens...[39]

Having been cut off from contact with Africa and seeing Africa from Western perspectives, Afro-American writers describe their African heritage in negative images of barbarism and paganism. There is no exaltation, only a realization that Africa or the African past is part of the crisis of identity which the Afro-American faces. At best what one finds in Césaire, Toomer and Hughes is a subdued feeling of "acceptance" of that past with all of its unsavoury images.

Two major points follow from the above discussion. First the writers of the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude did not share a common view on how to approach their past. The differences of view led to diverse literary practices even within each of the cultural movements. Hughes preferred to use the forms of Afro-American oral traditions,[40] while Cullen was known for the tendencies of the Romantic school of

poetry for example.[41] Second, the differences in literary practices involved the use made of Western literary traditions in the production of Harlem Renaissance and Négritude literature. This raises the question of a need to determine how Black are the Black literatures produced, for the use of Western literary traditions by Blacks could lead to Black writers compromising the new image of Blacks they were trying to recreate. Some of the writers were aware of this.[42] It is the fear of this compromise that leads Hughes, as he says in "The Negro Author and the Racial Mountain," to opt for the technique of traditional Black Art forms. Cullen, on the other hand, rejects those very forms because they do not tally with his concept of the poetic.[43] Toomer, even though he was concerned about Black culture and the need to work this into written literature, was also equally concerned that his work should be an example of Black contribution to Western culture.[44].

Senghor's acknowledgement in "Comme les lamantins vont boire a la source"[45] that he has read and imitated a lot in French poetry,[46] as well as his fascination for the French language, for the avenues it offers to international culture,[47] is an indication of his view that Négritude literature does not preclude the assimilation of Western literary values. Césaire's acceptance of surrealism, a French cultural movement as the instrument which can help him rediscover himself,[48] along with Alioune Diop's advocacy in "Niam n'goura"[49] of opening up Africa to the cultural ideas of Europe through Présence Africaine[50] are indications that Négritude, like the Harlem Renaissance, did not see the Black culture they were trying to create as a system that could be wholly Black and totally unrelated to other cultures. The impossibility

of creating such a culture is explained by Senghor in "Négritude et Civilisation de l'Universel" when he says: "C'est notre situation de colonisation qui nous imposait la langue du colonisateur, plus précisement la politique de l'assimilation."[51]

A narrow definition of Négritude, not the movement so named, but the historical pre-occupation of the Black man to redefine Black culture, as a search for and revival of certain sets of Black values cannot lead to a comprehensive understanding of the cultural significance of the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude. This is the reason why it is better to use the term "redefinition" instead of creation or even recreation of Black culture, because the latter terms imply a complete break in the Black culture. The truth is, as Soyinka has indicated in Myth Literature and the African World[52] and Ngugi has confirmed in Homecoming[53] that African or Black cultures have always had to adjust to changing historical situations. Senghor himself says the same thing in "Vues sur l'Afrique noire: ou assimiler, non être assimilés."[54] Colonialism and the effects of slavery are historical situations to which the Black man's culture has to adjust.

A definition of Négritude that would truly reflect the cultural practices of the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude needs to see the movements in terms of a harmonization of Black values with their Western cultural heritage. At the same time, especially in the works of the African writers where a "return to the African ancestral sources" is a sustaining ideology, it is necessary to relate the works to literary characteristics of their appropriate African literary background. The assumption here is, as Ben Obumselu succinctly puts it in "The

Background of Modern African Literature,"[55] a writer does not necessarily revive the values of his ancestors if all he does is to take the value of his ancestors as subject matter ignoring the forms of its expression. Whatever we may say about the universal values of certain literary forms, the development of every literary tradition is culture-bound . Its works develop against the background of what other artists have done before in terms of literary forms and language use in that particular society. Talking of continuity in European literature, Obumselu says,

> I have suggested in the first place that there ought to be a continuity of literary forms. We can speak about European literature forms. We can speak about European literature because of the endurance of such forms as comedy, detective fiction, the lyric, etc. which are not external conventions of art only but forms of imaginative experience. These forms have a continental provenance, and endure historically. But there is also a continuity of language. I do not mean that European literature is written in one language only, nor is English literature taken by itself, restricted to one literary idiom alone. I mean that our warrant to think in terms of a continuing European tradition depends in part on the fact that the contemporary European artist has always used his medium in a manner which referred to predecessors in his own and other European languages, that in the manner of literary language, the new derives from, subsumes and enriches, even when it seems to repudiate the old.[56]

The work will be African to the extent that it shares with other works of its African community what Obumselu calls

> ...those imaginative ideas generated within a culture and shared between the artist and his audience which operate as implicit elements in the structure of works of art.[57]

Applying them to Négritude and the Harlem Renaissance it is easy to see how the forms of the works are borrowed from Western literary

traditions. Even where elements of oral literature are located in certain works, such as Bridget Jones has done in "Léon Damas,"[58] and Gerald Moore has done in "Assimilation or Négritude,"[59] their arguments to place those works within Black oral traditions do not carry weight since the works of these writers were not produced within the context and operational modes of traditional life. In some instances, as in the introduction to James Weldon Johnson's God's Trombones[60] and Countee Cullen's Caroling Dusk,[61] there is explicit rejection of "dialect," the peculiar Afro-American medium of expression. In determining the Négritude quality of these works, it is necessary to relate the works also to the forms of traditional Black literatures. The adoption of the written tradition of literature along with White models of forms for creative writing by Black not only provided a means, as Stephen Bronz has said in Roots of Negro Consciousness,[62] for proving to Whites that "Negroes could be cultured peers"[63] but it destroyed the traditional base of oral literature. James Weldon Johnson in "The Dilemma of the Negro Author" corroborates this view when he says:

> Dunbar, America's first well known Negro poet represented the only real tradition Negro authors writing as Negroes possessed. Dunbar, however, writing almost exclusively in dialect, stood for a tradition to rebel from, rather than to emulate.[64]

The discussion of the features of oral literatures is therefor useful to show how far the Black authors have moved away from the traditions of art that Blacks operated. But individual writers will be related to the traditions of oral literatures that operate in their different areas. For Langston Hughes, for the example, the appropriate traditions of art to which to relate him are the jazz, blues and spirituals traditions,

while for Senghor, the Griot[65] traditions of art are the most appropriate.

Because of the large number of writers in these movements, this work has to be selective in the materials chosen for analysis. The poetic works of the most important writers, especially those written in the 1920s in the case of the Harlem Renaissance, and those produced in the 1930s and 1940s in the case of Négritude will be the main focus of the study. The choice of the poets to be treated is determined first by the volume of their poems and especially by the significance of the poems to the development of the movements, but also by their contribution to the development of the literary and cultural ideology that sustained the movements. From the Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer are the most important from the point of view of these criteria, while Aimé Cesaire, Léon Damas and Léopold Senghor, who were the three most important Négritude writers from the beginning of the movement, are the choice. The literary practices of other poets, especially Claude McKay, Birago Diop will be brought in to contrast with these major poets.

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE MOVEMENTS

Almost two generations before the writing of Jean Toomer's Cane, the book that is thought by many to have brought the Harlem Renaissance proper into being, DuBois had published his collection of sociological essays in The Soul of Black Folks. Senghor acknowledges in "Problématique de la Négritude"[1] that the idea of Négritude probably found its source in this book Ames Noires. "Et d'abord, Ames Noires, son oeuvrage principal: On peut dire, aujourd'hui, que c'est de la qu'a jailli la source de la Négritude" (p. 18)[2] In The Soul of Black Folk DuBois emphasized the uniqueness of black cultures. He was later to do the same in Darkwaters[3], his autobiographical work. It is probably the emphasis on the uniqueness of Black cultures that appeals to Senghor for this is to be the central concern of his Négritude poems later. DuBois was one of the first to suggest in "Of the Sorrow Songs"[4] and "The Hands of Ethiopia"[5] that the Afro-American culture owes something to the African heritage and that the qualities of Afro-American culture are not only unique but represent the only original culture on American soil.[6] This view is one of the first assertions of race pride and probably influenced Senghor's own Négritude philosophy which sees Black culture, whether in Africa or in America, as distinguished by emotionalism and humanism, qualities that the rest of the world can learn from Blacks.

Just as important for the whole process of Négritude is the manner in which DuBois tried to bring together the leaders of Black movements

all over the world and to emphasize the fact that the problems of the Black man in the different parts of the world are parts of the same larger problem of dependence which must be overcome through Négritude philosophy. This pioneering concern was made possible through a monthly magazine, The Crisis which DuBois helped found in 1910. It had among its priorities the advancement of Black culture. Many of the best writers of the Harlem Renaissance, including Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Rudolph Fisher, Arna Bontemps, came into the limelight through publishing in The Crisis. But more important than these is the fact that DuBois' concern with the world Black situation found expression in this magazine.

Black culture and the destiny of the Black race as a whole was open to discussion in The Crisis. Senghor again refers to the role DuBois played in Black movements all over the world: "en Amerique, bien sûr mais aussi en Europe et en Africaine" (p. 18)[7]. DuBois' ideas led to the founding of the Pan-Africanist movement. As Thomas Blair indicates in his article "DuBois and the Century of African Liberation", from 1919 to 1945 DuBois helped organize five Pan-African Congresses.[8] By his influence he brought Nkrumah (Ghana), Azikiwe (Nigeria) Padmore (Jamaica), Kenyatta (Kenya), Wallace-Johnson (Sierre Leone) together to further his ideas about African liberation. The pages of The Crisis were open for the discussion and dissemination of ideas about the colonial African struggle for independence. It is no exaggeration to say that DuBois played a very important, though indirect, role in the struggle for African and Black cultural and political liberation. As Blair has said in the introduction to his article,

> His role as the active father of Pan-Africanism and his poetic intuition of the values of black experience and black tradition give him a position of centrality in any consideration of the origins of negritude.[9]

It is no wonder then that Senghor actually calls him the father of Négritude.

> Il faut toujours partir de W.E.B. DuBois qui fut, veritablement le père du Mouvement de la Négritude, comme l'écrit Lilyan Kesteloot, parce que la première tête qui l'aît pensé dans sa totalité et specificité, ses aspects et sa finalité, ses objectives et ses moyens (p. 18).[10]

DuBois did not invent the word Négritude and probably did not use it till Césaire used it in Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, but his concern and the central philosophy of his work is more or less the same as that of the French Black Négritude movement which did not start up for more than three generations after DuBois' The Soul of the Black Folk.

About the same time that DuBois was engaged in asserting the uniqueness of Black culture, another Black leader, whose ideas were probably more specific in directing attention towards discovering the African roots of Afro-Caribbean culture and making it the basis of a new Afro-Caribbean culture that would project a positive Black image on the world, was operating in Haiti. This was Jean Price-Mars, a medical doctor, who was inspired to turn to ethnography because of his chance reading of the work of Gustave Lebon, Les lois psychologiques de l'evolution des peuples, in 1900[11] while studying in Paris. The book had represented Negroes at the bottom of the ladder of human civilization. "Those in whom no trace of culture is to be found". To refute this assumption Price-Mars devoted a large part of his time to

ethnography. Price-Mars made it his duty to give dignity to the survivals of black culture in Haiti.

> relever aux yeux du people haitien la valeur de son folk-lore.[12]

In doing this he hoped that Haitians would find pride in their culture, knowing that it had come from important centres of civilizations in Africa, and that it had gone beyond Africa to influence other cultures.

> Il y a eu, à un certain moment donné sur le continent africain, des centres de civilization nègre dont, non seulement on a trouvé vestiges, mais dont l'éclat a rayonné par delà les limites de la steppe et du dessert.[13]

This was enough proof that the black race was not the dregs of humanity: "des rebuts d' humanité, sans histoire sans morale, sans religion."

On the contrary, the Black race can regenerate modern Western values through the force of its earlier civilization. "Il fallait infuser n'importe comment de nouvelles valeurs morales, une nouvelle investiture humaine."[14]

Price-Mars asked his contemporaries to find renaissance for contemporary decadence by turning their art to the wealth of folklore around them thus creating a distinctively, black and Haitian literature. To him the "contes, chansons, legendes, proverbs, et croyantes, represent, l'âme collective du peuple haitien".[15] To treat these in Haitian literature is to put an end to the imitation of French literature. One point worthy of special note is the fact that Price-Mars was also concerned with placing the Black man back in the union of the universal man,

> les situer dans la vie génerale de l'homme sur la planète.[16]

The influence of Price-Mars is to be felt in the "renaissance" in Haitian literature from about 1915 (when American forces occupied Haiti) through the period of the Harlem Renaissance and the formation and development of Négritude in Paris and Africa. This change can be seen in the poems of Jacques Roumain, Carl Brouard, Emile Roumer, etc. Price-Mars, probably because of his travels in the United States as representative of Haiti, was aware of the Harlem Renaissance movement and was a link between the Haitian Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance. Through a series of articles and translations in the local literary magazine, La Relève[17], Price-Mars was able to draw the attention of the literary public to parallel developments in Afro-American literature. By his association with such men as Dr. Sajous of Haiti, Claude McKay, the Jamaican-American member of the Harlem Renaissance, René Maran of Martinique, and Paulette Nardal to found the magazine La revue du monde noir, he was also able to exert some influence on Négritude literature.

Through the intellectual efforts and personal contacts of DuBois and Jean Price-Mars, there was contact between the Haitian Renaissance, the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude, and there was opportunity for inter-cultural influence. Léopold Senghor testifies to the fact that the ideas of DuBois were spread widely in both the Caribbean (Antilles) and in Africa:

> Les ideés et l'action de W.E.B. DuBois allaient être discutées, approfondies et prolongées non seulement aux Etats-Unis, mais encore aux Antilles et en Afrique (p. 18).[18]

Furthermore, he tells us how Négritude writers were not only aware of the cultural activities of the Harlem Renaissance "Nous étions

sensibles, par-dessus tout aux idées et a l'action de la 'Négro-Renaissance', dont nous rencontrions, a Paris, quelques-uns des représentants les plus dynamiques (p. 19)"[19], but that they read The Crisis, Opportunity, the Journal of Negro History, and The New Negro. In fact, as Senghor acknowledges, the Harlem Renaissance was a model for Négritude:

> Je veut dire le roman et surtant la poèsie de la Negro-Renaissance qui nous ont influencés comme modeles (p. 19)[20]

It is not easy to determine which of the two older movements influenced Négritude more. The testimony of Senghor is of little help in this case because it is almost equally glowing towards both DuBois and Price-Mars. If he praised DuBois for restoring racial pride to Blacks, he was equally indebted to Price-Mars for pioneering the search for African values:

> At the end of my search, I had the good fortune to come upon Alain Locke and Jean Price-Mars. And I read Ainsi parla l'oncle at one go like one drinks water from the well in the evening after a long day in the desert. L'Oncle gave legitimacy to the reasons for my search, confirmed what I had left. For by showing me the treasure of Négritude that he had discovered in and on the land in Haiti, he taught me to find the same values, but purer and stronger, on and in the land of Africa (p. 50).[21]

There was a third Black figure, less of an intellectual than these two, but whose influence on the Négritude movement has been acknowledged by Senghor. This was Marcus Garvey. While Thomas Blair attributes the upsurge of Nationalist consciousness among African leaders to DuBois it is to Marcus Garvey that Senghor attributes it.

> Et de fait, c'est la conjonction du mouvement de Garvey et des congrès panafricains qui influenca d'abord et le plus profondement les hommes politiques d'Afrique noire. Surtout

> les futurs leaders anglophones, comme Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah, et Jomo Kenyatta (p. 19).[22]

Even though he was more concerned with politics than with culture, Garvey's advocacy of a return to Africa for American Blacks carried with it a note of cultural pride and a belief in African values. His habit of dressing respendently as an African monarch aroused nostalgia for African kingship. In the racial turbulence of the period around the end of the first world war, Africa symbolized all that was contrary to what Blacks were denied - freedom, love, nobility, beauty - and Garvey exploited this situation. His business enterprises were a symbol of the ability of the Black man, denied by whites, to succeed commercially. His connection with the Pan African movement helped focus attention on the problems of the Black man everywhere on the globe. It is not a coincidence that this tone of universal concern for the Black man pervades the works of all the Black movements - Haitian, Harlem and Négritude Renaissance. It is for the symbolic nuances of his actions and thoughts that Senghor says Négritude is indebted to Garvey:

> Par l'accent mis sur l'Afrique, son ancienneté sa noblesse et sa beauté, par l'action menée directement sur les masses noires et pas seulement sur les intellectuels, Garvey donnait a son mouvement un retentissement mondial, comme le voulait son hebdomadaire au titre-programme: The Negro World (p. 19).[23]

This intellectual background however must be seen as part of complex socio-economic and historical factors which determined the emergence and development of these movements. The ideas of DuBois and Price-Mars emanated from and were reactions against the sociopolitical deprivations and oppressions of the Black man in America, as well as the colonized French African and Caribbean countries. The case of Haiti is

slightly different. Haiti was the first colonized black nation to become independent, fighting a war from 1789 to 1802 to become independent from France in 1802.[24] Haitian independence did not stop the United States from occupying the country in 1915, and "ruling" her till 1945. American control, which according to Naomi Garrett in her book The Renaissance of Haitian Poetry, included "the power to veto the (nominal) president", the control of finances and all legislation and "the substitution of a practical for the traditional, classical education of the Haitians", as well as the feeling of superiority displayed by the occupiers, triggered a Haitian rejection of all that they shared with the occupiers. The result was that Haitians turned, as Garrett puts in, "to look within themselves, to examine their background, their history, their conscience, and seek their national soul."[25]

The cases of the Afro-American and French Caribbean and African blacks are somewhat similar, though the first two had emerged from enslavement to free citizenship while the others were still citizens of an imperial power. The presence of a dominant White culture that insisted that the Black culture of these Africans and African descendants was a primitive non-culture led to the acquisition of Western cultural values by the Blacks in order to be deemed civilized. But even with this acquisition, the Black intellectual was still not fully integrated economically and politically into the dominant group because of his colour. The result was a double alienation. Thomas Melone's description of the African colonial subject's situation

> "Seized in a human vacuum and the distress which is the lot of exiles, the negro is a rootless wanderer"[26]

also adequately describes the situation of the Afro-American. The Black man has been a "rootless wanderer", wherever he had been colonized, for centuries. In various ways he had tried to overcome this cultural exile and alienation. Because the Black American was "systematically robbed of his humanity" as Houston Baker says in the introduction to Black Literature in America, the Black masses conserved their life experiences in folklore ballads, work songs, folk tales, spirituals, blues and later jazz. It is true that there were Black American writers as early as the eighteenth century. We have writers like Phillis Wheatley, Jupiter Hammon, and James M. Whitfield in poetry, and later William Wells Brown, Frank Webb, and Martin Delaney in fiction. These tried to show that Blacks too could be cultured, even according to white standards. This meant of course that they had to imitate current fashions of White writing. The result is, as we have noted, the works of early Black writers were not really Black. Although Charles Chestnutt, the first notable Black American fiction writer began to treat the psychological problems of Negroes in such works as The House Behind the Cedars,[27] the class of Negroes he deals with is the mulatto, and the structure and form of his work is that which had become popularized by the White literary tradition as the doomed mulatto. The plot of this novel is in the tradition of suspense and tragedy of unexpected circumstances and coincidences popularized by Hardy. But as John Chamberlain says in "The Negro as Writer", the fault is more with the expectation of the White

readers that has to be satisfied than with the incompetence of the writer.

> If his plot structure is definitely dated, the fault resides with the white models with which he worked in that era when the novel was designed to tell a story at all costs; and the spectacle of a Negro of the time working with any models at all and producing fiction with any good points is sufficient to compel applause.[28]

The first major turn in the creation of a distinct Afro-American poetry occured with the poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar. In his poetry one notes the first fusion of Black folklore and written literature. Though it is true as Chamberlain says that, "Dunbar himself preferred his standard English verse",[29] it is his vernacular poems that were acceptable to the publishers. The poet's reaction in The Poet is to ridicule the reading public for

> "...turning to praise
> A jingle in a broken tongue."[30]

However, because of this example of Paul Dunbar in the first decade of the twentieth century the foundation was laid for other Black writers to build on.

In the French Caribbean, including independent Haiti, good literature was measured in terms of French literary tradition. Though Haiti has had a long literary tradition, in spite of its independence, its traditions were modelled on the French. Naomi Garrett explains why this was so when she says, "It must be realized that the stigma of color prodded them into trying to equal the French in the French manner, in order to prove their intellectual capacity. Too, slavery and its indignities were still too recent for writers to take an objective view of their ties with Africa."[31]

Price-Mars was to complain in Ainsi parla l'oncle that Haitian life did not interest Haitian artists.

> la société haitienne, dans son passé, comme dans son existence actuelle n'offre aucun intérêt a l'art...[32]

And the writers Antonio Vieux and Philippe Thoby-Marcelin were to complain in their article "La littérature d'hier et celle de demain"[33] that their predecessors had done nothing, "Rien ou presque rien" towards the realization of a National literature, being content to imitate the writers of France

> de reprendre les lamentations de Lamartine les considerations philosophique d'un Viguy ou de pasticher la fantaisie d'un Musset.[34]

French Africans had no tradition of written literature to boast of before Négritude. They were luckier than their Afro-American and Caribbean brothers in that though the French policy of assimilation did foster alienation and exile, both culturally and physically (the intellectuals almost always ended up in Paris far from home) they had not passed through the experience of slavery like the others. They were still closer to their African background and culture. It was thus much easier for them to return to it, to idealize and glorify it. This fact gives African Négritude poetry its distinctive tone and mark.

The issue of access to publication was important in considerations of the creation of a more Black literature. Except in the case of Haiti where the population was mainly Black, and where more than one hundred years of independence and literary creativity had established a Black-reading public and Black publishers, Black writing in the '20s and '30s in the United States and Caribbean depended on a White reading public and White publishers. On account of the novelty of written

literature, African writers were more dependent on French publishers and readers. This is probably why it was in Paris that the Présence Africaine publishing company and journal was established in 1947 to sustain the cultural efforts of Négritude. Fortunately, in the 1920s and 1930s the White reading public in France and America was ready, more or less, for the type of literature that the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude were producing. For various nationalistic reasons, the Haitian reading public was also ready for a pronounced Black literature.

The reasons for this White acceptance of these literatures are to be found first in the change in Western intellectuals' views of African culture, especially African oral literature and art. Secondly, a crisis of expression in Western literary traditions turned writers toward the exotic civilizations and art of Africa and the Orient. The result was a new awareness of things African and Black. It was still thought that Africa was primitive, savage, and quaint but these very qualities had a fascination for Western man. The uninhibited emotionalism which was said to be characteristic of this civilization was what the over-intellectualized Western civilization needed to rejuvenate it. The first exposition of Western man's views of Africa came with the work of the German ethnologist Leo Frobenius whose extensive travels in Central and West Africa at the beginning of the century led to his book which translates into French as Histoire de la civilization africaine.[35] He testified to magnificent Africn civilizations. His views were corroborated by Maurice Delafosse, who researched into the African empires of Ghana, Mali, Gao and Mossi. Delafosse in his book Les noirs de l'Afrique[36] challenged the unproven prejudices of Black inferiority

and primitiveness. These works stimulated further interest in African literature. In 1927 George Hardy came out with L'art Nègre, a book on African literature. In addition to these "discoveries", West European artists like Picasso, Matisse, Modigliani and Derain had popularized African plastic arts by adapting certain of their features in their own works. Naomi Garrett mentions the public reception of Negro jazz and blues music in Europe, as well as the part played by Black men in the first world war as among the reasons why the Negro suddenly was in vogue, not only in Europe, but in America. White writers devoted their works to the experience of the Negro. In France Lucie Cousturier's book Des inconnus chez moi, (1920), Jérome and Jean Tharaud's La randonnée de Samba Diouf (1922), Marius-Ary Leblond's Ulysse Cafre ou l'histoire dorée d'un noir (1924) and Philippe Soupault's Le Nègre (1927) are among new literature created around the negro.

In the United States, the plays of Ridgely Torrence, Granny Maumee, The Rider of Dreams and Simon the Cyrenian which were staged in New York in April 1917, and the plays of Eugene O'Neill, The Emperor Jones and All God's Chillun have wings are examples of the pre-Renaissance pre-occupation with Negro life experiences by White writers. The result of these is that both in Europe and in America the public was ready for the works Black writers produced. What is more, there were White writers including Carl Van Vechten, Author of Nigger Heaven, Waldo Frank, author of Holiday and Sherwood Anderson who not only wrote about Black life but played the public relations officers between the reading public, the publishers and Black authors.

The local conditions which inspired a determination to create truly Black literature varied from one area of the world to another. We have seen how the American occupation of Haiti was the final pretext needed to get Haitians scrambling for self-knowledge through exploring Haitian folklore. In the United States, it has been noted that the first World War which drew many White workers away from urban industries gave Blacks the opportunity to migrate in large masses to the urban centres to fill many of the jobs, and to establish for the first time in Black history the urban setting necessary for the cultural revolution. Added to this was the return of Black soldiers from the first World War ready to be indignant, and determined not to swallow racial injustice in their country. The race riots of 1919 were evidence of this determination which was to be reflected in the literature of Harlem Renaissance.

For the French African subjects who created Négritude, the significance of Paris cannot be overemphasized. Life in Paris probably intensified the cultural and physical alienation that the French policy of assimilation engendered in their colonial subjects and also intensified the need to counter it. But just as important is the opportunity that Paris afforded the colonial subjects to meet students from other nations. Out of these meetings emerged the group - Etienne and Thelus Léro, Jules Monnerot, René Menil, Maurice-Sabat Quitman, Michel Pilotin, Simone Yoyotte - that in 1932 drew up the manifesto Légitime Défense[37] which marked the beginning of the movement called Négritude. Its priority was the reversal of the deculturation or acculturation process (depending on which side of the spectrum one is). This was to influence the leaders of Négritude proper - Leopold Senghor,

Aimé Césaire, and Léon Damas - who were also students in Paris at the time. Léopold Senghor acknowledges this influence in his Anthologie de la nouvelle poèsie nègre et malagache de langue francais.[38]

The result of these various factors is the emergence of the two Black movements, the Harlem Renaissance in the '20s and Négritude in the '30s. No one is certain of the exact date of the start of the Harlem Renaissance. Arna Bontemps, one of its writers, writing in the article "The Awakening: A Memoir" implies that it took the "public recognition" of Harlem Renaissance in 1924 (a reference to the dinner organized by Charles S. Johnson)[39] to make the leaders realize "they had been part of something memorable."[40] Bontemps talks of certain events that signaled that the Renaissance had arrived; the poem "I have a Rendezvous with life (with Apologies to Alan Seeger") published in The Magpie by Countee Cullen in January 1921 (Cullen was still in Dewitt Clinton High School) and Langston Hughes' "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" published in The Crisis six months later. The first book of the Renaissance, Claude McKay's Harlem Shadows was published in 1922 to be followed in 1923 by what is perhaps the most outstanding single book of the Renaissance, Jean Toomer's Cane. Countee Cullen published his first book of poetry Color in 1925 and Hughes Weary Blues in 1926. From then on it was a flood of publications: novels, poetry, short stories and a few plays, until around 1930 when the national economic depression took national publishers' attention from the Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance might not have been the great success it was but for the two journals, The Crisis,[41] and Opportunity[42] that devoted large parts of their pages to publishing new writers, to critical appreciation of established

writers, and to organizing symposia on the aesthetics of Black works[43] in which Black writers exchanged ideas with critics, Black and White. In this way the magazines were able to feel the pulse of the growth of Black literature and to give that growth direction. Through editorial comments such as "A note on the New Literary Movement" which appeared in March 1926 issue of Opportunity, the magazines were able to focus attention on aesthetic standards in Black writings. But perhaps as important as this is the fact that the journals were as concerned about Black cultural, and political events in other areas of the world. René Maran's book Batoula was reviewed in Opportunity[44] and the aesthetics of African art [45] was the subject of many essays published in the magazines. The issues of colonialism and independence in Africa[46] were discussed here long before independence was taken up seriously by African leaders. Through the magazines the writers were given the feeling of being a part of a larger Black world's concern for the dignity of the race.

One can more easily date the events of Négritude than one can the Harlem Renaissance. Though Senghor sees René Maran's Batoula as a precursor for Négritude,[47] Négritude proper developed from the events that follow the publication of Légitime Défense. The West Indian students who produced it advocated a revolt against the French political system and, as Kesteloot puts it, "an absolute reversal of a solidly established hierarchy of (French) values".[48] Among the values which Légitime Défense advocated was "the rejection of an art subservient to European standards"[49] and an imitation of the cultural model laid down by Harlem Renaissance writers, notably Claude McKay and Langston

Hughes.[50] Though the original signers did not include Césaire, Damas and Senghor, these men who have rightly been called "the principal founders of the (Négritude) Renaissance"[51] were quickly influenced by the ideas of Légitime Défense. When Légitime Défense was discontinued as a result of Government pressure, Senghor, Césaire and Damas along with others, Léonard Sainville, Aristide Maugée, Birago Diop and Ousmane Socé, who were members of a discussion group, founded another magazine, L'Etudiant Noir in 1934 to continue the ideas of Légitime Défense. Out of the ferment of ideas grew the creative works of Négritude.

The first Négritude book of poetry, Pigments,[52] was published in 1937 by Léon Damas, Césaire's book Cahier d'un retour au pays natal in 1939. Though Senghor published some poems in various magazines, his own books of poetry were not published till well into the '40s - Chants d'ombre[53] in 1945, and Hosties noires[54] in 1948. A collection of Négritude poetry edited by Senghor, Anthologie de la nouvelle poësie négre et malagache was published in 1948. This anthology with Jean-Paul Sartre's preface, "Orphée Noir", gave Négritude its first public recognition. The above publications were followed by many others in prose as well as poetry and drama. In the same way that the success of the Harlem Renaissance was enhanced by The Crisis and Opportunity, Négritude depended on Présence Africaine, a literary journal founded in 1947. Among the members of the editorial board were Senghor, Césaire, Damas, the leading Négritude writers. Thus it is not surprising that Présence Africaine disseminated Négritude views, published critical reviews of Black works, organized and published symposia on the need for

national literatures; published poems and short stories and in many cases arranged the publication of works by Black writers.[55]

From the time of DuBois and Jean Price-Mars through the literary experiences of the Harlem Renaissance and the Négritude movement, the concern has been for the creation of a unique Black literature. There is no consensus of opinion on how to achieve this. Countee Cullen finds Romanticism his best approach to Black art and boasts before Bontemps "John Keats was his God"; Césaire finds his Black art conformable with the poetic principles of surrealism, while for Senghor, as he wants us to see it, Africa is the source of his artistic forms. "Si l'on veut nous trouver des maîtres, il serait plus sage de les chercher du coté de l'Afrique".[56] The large variety of writings that result from these individual choices of artistic forms makes it necessary to search for the thread of Blackness that link them together. The search will take us in the next chapter through the arts traditions of Africa.

CHAPTER II

THE ISSUE OF THE AESTHETICS OF BLACK LOCAL LITERATURE

The most cursory reading of the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude reveals an overwhelming pre-occupation with the Black man's condition in the world. Even Countee Cullen who often raved against the fate of being made Black[1] could not refrain from dealing with racial themes. However, one would notice too that the Black themes are almost always expressed in artistic forms that one cannot describe as belonging to Black artistic traditions. One reason for this is that the writers had been formally educated and often had no sympathy with or did not know the artistic forms of their cultures well enough to use them.[2] Another is the fact that the writer was torn away from the communal base of Black artistic traditions as was the case with Négritude writers who were all based in Paris.[3] In America, the Harlem Renaissance experience was preceded by a massive Black movement from the rural south to urban centres, notably in the North.[4] The urban centres developed the base of a Black reading public that symbolized a disaffection with and a destabilization of the communal base of Black oral traditions. Black writers came to depend more on the White reading public than on the rural masses in traditional life setting that were largely illiterate. They relied less on Black art forms. Black writers who explored Black artistic traditions in their writings ran up against critical prejudices that stemmed from prejudicial views of folklore.[5] This led generally to a rejection, among many Afro-American writers, of

Black artistic traditions. Despite this background, or more because of it, Black writers desire to create a Black culture in literature needs to be examined against the background of Black aesthetics.

In order to develop a working definition of Black aesthetics, I shall start with a broad definition that applies generally to art everywhere. Aesthetics in this sense has to do with the organization of all elements that constitute an art object, the aim of which is to make the object appeal to the readers' or observers' sense of the beautiful. Hence Herbert Read in "A Definition of Art"[6] defines aesthetics as "a unity of formal relations among our sense-perceptions."[7] He bases his definitions on the assumption that "man responds to the shape and surface and mass of things presented to his senses, and that certain arrangements in the proportions of shape and surface of things result in pleasurable sensations. Aesthetics then is "arrangement" of the raw materials of art into "pleasing shapes and patterns"[8]. James W. Fernandez in "Principles of Opposition and Vitality in Fang Aesthetics"[9] is to put it in a more comprehensive way:

> Aesthetics after all has as one of its primary concerns the manner in which values whether colors or tones or even words for the poet, are formally arranged in space.[10]

While these definitions are adequate for art objects that have concrete objective existence as finished products, they describe only certain aspects of the aesthetics of Black oral literature. The artistic organization in a writer's work will usually reflect the artistic traditions of his society, as has been noted[11] but ultimately, the choice of subject, of materials and artistic forms which will help organize his materials is a personal choice. For African oral

literature, as Robert F. Thompson has noted in "Aesthetics in Traditional Africa ,"[12] "African aesthetics is the application of consensual notions of quality to particular problems of form."[13] Poems are composed with the aim of being performed in front of and with the active participation of the audience. They are subject, even at the level of composition, to a kind of critical "surveillance" by the community. What James Fernandez found to be the relationship between the carver and the villagers who consume his products among the Fang of Gabon applies perfectly to artistic productions generally in traditional societies.

> ...there is indeed a lively spirit of art criticism. It flows around the carver as he is in the process of turning out his statute in the man's Council house and it influences his work -- it becomes possible to speak of an opposition between the carver and his village critics. Very often the villagers consider themselves the final cause of the statue and apply what social pressures they can to the efficient cause, the carver, to see that the work turns out to their expectations. The carver in his turn must reach some sort of accommodation with his critics...(p. 366)[14]

The artist not only finds a compromise between his individual artistic inclinations and the communal notions of the beautiful, but as E.N. Obiechina says in "Amos Tutuola and Oral tradition"[15] his "work is public property until an individual whose turn it is to "perform" the work picks it up".[16] The individual who performs an already "composed" work can make it his own by embellishing it with as much invention as he can muster. The society would welcome the "improvisation of new and interesting variations" of such a work, but would not allow such variation to completely destroy the shape of the "original".[17] In other words the public is part composer, performer, critic and guardian of

whatever work is produced. A definition of the African aesthetics therefore must move beyond the appreciation of the finished product to encompass the whole process of production, performance, appreciation and preservation of African oral art works.

That the issue of Black aesthetics is a difficult subject to deal with will be obvious from the number of colloquia that have been held since 1962 to define African literature. No consensual definition has emerged. Thus despite the number of books and essays written on the subject, no clear definition of Black or African aesthetics has emerged. Attempts bogged down through objections to descriptive labels as in the case of Angus Calder's "An Open Letter to Pio Zirimu"[18] which observes that the word aesthetics "derived from a Greek word" and is therefore inadequate to define the qualities of African art. Andrew Gurr's definition of aesthetics in the introductory essay to Black Aesthetics as "the cultural concerns of the Black world" would put the emphasis on subject-matter. This would be inadequate since first it would incorporate the aesthetics of a lot of nonsense written by Whites about Africa as African aesthetics, and secondly it is necessary, as Solomon Iyasere has argued in "Art, A Simulacrum of Reality, Problems in the Criticism of African Literature"[19], to distinguish between the art work and the reality of life which it simulates. The one depends on the other. Art chooses materials from life but art is the transmutation of what is selected into another reality. Ben-Amos' definition in "Folklore in African Societies"[20] is perhaps the most adequate except that his emphasis is on the aesthetics of literature in individual communities. He talks of including first, "the expressive features",

which are "the styles, the contents and the structures which characterize each genre"; the "cognitive features", by which he means "the names, taxonomy and commentary by which a society labels, categorizes, and interprets its forms of folklore..."; and the "social features", the "constituents of the situational contexts of each folklore performance", in any definition of aesthetics of any form of oral literature.

Ben-Amos' insistence on the peculiarity of individual language literatures raises other problematic questions in connection with defining African aesthetics. These center around the large variety of literatures which we generally refer to by the monolithic label, African. Senghor, for whom the consideration of African aesthetics is of particular importance because of his concern with the motif of return to the ancestral sources, talks of African aesthetics as a monolithic set of artistic principles that apply to all artistic ventures within Black African areas in all his essays on the subject; "Elements constitutifs d'une civilisation d'inspiration négro-africaine",[21] "Langage et poèsie négro-africaine",[22] "L'Afrique-Noire: la civilisation négro-africaine",[23] "Ce que l'homme noir apporte"[24] and "L'esthetique négro africaine".[25] The characteristics of African works which he lists in "Elements constitutifs d'une civilisation négro-africaine "suggest that the art work is a reflection of the communal life "un aspect de la production", that it is this which gives the artwork its qualities "C'est lui qui donne sa forme, son style, son sceau d'humanité à la production"; that art is functional, "L'art est fonctionel"; that through it the community achives unity, "l'unité est

le principal charactère", that any art work is the production of everyone in the society, "l'oeuvre d'art est faite par tous et pour tous"; that African art is committed to the progress of the society, "Parce que fonctionnel et collectif, l'art est engagé"; that African Art expresses itself through image and rhythm," l'art négro-africaine s'exprime essentiellement par l'image et le rhythme" -- all probably true of all literary works in Africa, but the peculiar literary and linguistic qualities of each African language make one wary of making broad generalizations on an "African" aesthetics. Even within any single language, the large variety of poetic or literary types, each with its own peculiar subject matter and prosodic features warns us not to generalize on the aesthetics of the literatures of a language. As Charles E. Nwolim says in "An African Literary Aesthetic: A prolegomena," African literature "embraces a thousand and one genres that have to be re-defined individually in their African context."[26]

But even after saying this, one has to agree, after contrasting the works of many critics who have worked on the aesthetic of individual African literatures, that there are many similarities between them, enough for one to be able to talk of an African aesthetics, in contrast, for example, to the aesthetics of Western literary traditions. These similarities may be found in subjects treated, in the structures of African cosmology in the basic structure and function of myths, the prosodic patterns and structures in the verbal arts, in the conventions of art and among other things the social controls over those conventions. For this reason, one can talk of the peculiar quality of the aesthetics of each ethnic literature in Black Africa as an

individualized application of the same basic aesthetic principles one finds at work in Black African societies. In the same way Nketia regards each ethnic music in Africa as reflecting a huge, almost continent-wide musical aesthetics. He says:

> When we turn to the rest of Africa (outside Islamic cultures of the North) we find African societies whose musical cultures not only have their historical roots in the soil of Africa but which also form a network of distinct yet related traditions which overlap in certain aspects of style, practice, or usage and share common features of internal pattern, basic procedures, and contextual similarities. These related musical traditions constitute a family distinct from those of the West or the Orient in their areas of emphasis (p. 4).[27]

This is probably true because though emphases differ from one critic to another, analyses of various literatures by different critics[28] lead to a general agreement with Senghor's views of the general characteristics of the aesthetics of African literatures as "resulting" from a reflection of the communal life and therefore "communal" and functional, even at the level of composition. Nnolim who misunderstands these qualities to indicate a lack of concern with beauty in the arts and cites the example of "cultic" literatures, as examples of "art talking to itself" as evidence of aesthetic concern in oral literature, still agrees that these qualities mentioned above are basic to the understanding African aesthetics.

As in any other type of literature, the aesthetics of African oral literature are determined by the functions of literature in the society. There are many types of folk poetry for example - work songs, initiation songs, marriage songs, in fact as many types as there are social activities in the society, each distinguished by its prosodic features and emphasis on one major social activity for subject-matter. Thus one

cannot ascribe one single function to all. But as Nnolim has suggested, expressing a view very similar to those of Senghor, all the various types function as distinct patterns in a mosaic that is inspired by communal metaphysic. "African folkways and the oral tradition" he says "dealt with man's dilemma in his existential being and tried to grapple with man's dilemma and adventure in life..." (p. 59)[29] The different folk artistic types represent different ways of approaching this duty. In many cases, as Babalola points out about Ijala in The Content and Form of the Yoruba Ijala, or as Dorothy Blair points out in relation to the Griot tradition in West Africa, one single poetic type incorporates the society's range of poetic functions, representing the whole range of life experiences that literature reflects.

There is no agreement however on the quality of the life that African literature expresses. For Senghor the inspiration of oral literature goes beyond secular metaphysics to the realm of the spiritual. While agreeing that oral literature reflects all aspects of the social life of African societies, he sees that life itself as various manifestation of a spiritual essence, the life-force deep under things.

> Au centre de système, l'animant comme le soleil nôtre monde, il y a l'existence, ce'est-a-dire la vie ...et toute l'activité; de l'homme tend qu'à l' accroissement et à l'expression de la puissance vitale (p. 203).[30]

It is this essence which unites present existence with that of the ancestors and the unborn. Literature and the arts are expressions of this existential essence on which the whole philosophy of the life of

the community is based. Soyinka, in his Myth Literature and the African World on the other hand, talks of that spiritual realm of African cosmology in terms of the realm of "essence - ideals"[31] in which the human imagination explores regenerative ideas. The gods to him are human imaginative projections of this exploration, and the world of the ancestors, the living and the unborn is nothing but a mythic representation of the past, the present and the future of secular existence. Whether the critics take the myths of African literature literally or not, they all agree that African oral literature is closely associated with the African philosophy of existence. It is in their roles as expressions of this existence that they are more communal, more immediately functional and more utilitarian than written literatures. Soyinka explains that even in the ritual drama of the gods, the gods are an "embodiment of the social, communal will invested in a protagonist of its choice" (p. 30), as it engages with the forces which challenge his efforts to harmonize with his environment, physical social and psychic (p. 1).

This basic pre-occupation with communal interest determines the form and structures of the poetic designs. As Senghor has found out, oral literature is "made for the community the active participation of the community" in mind, "faite pour tous avec participation de tous." In rare cases like the Mbari Arts Festival described by Achebe in "Africa and her writers", the society actually selects randomly from members of the community to design motifs for the annual festival. But even in poetry where compositions originate from individuals, the poetic designs are such that the audience-community is participating as chorus,

as well as helping the leader or solo performance to modify and recompose aspects of the poem. Soyinka puts this well when he discusses the role of the audience-community in ritual drama:

> The so-called audience is itself an integral part of that arena of conflict; it contributes spiritual strength to the protagonist through its choric reality which must first be conjured up and established defining and investing the arena through offerings and incantations. The drama would be non-existent except within and against this symbolic representation of earth and cosmos, except within this communal compact whose choric essence supplies the collective energy for the challenger of chthomic realms (p. 59).[32]

For this reason one rarely sees poetic monologues in Africa oral literature. The "poem" is often designed as interchange between solo and audience, with well defined opening and closing formulas that allow the audience to come in at regulated intervals. One can say then that a poem is not complete until it has been performed in front of, and with the participation of the community-audience.

But there is another sense in which the audience participates creatively in poetic designs. A poem is rarely done and finished with. A poem is an ever developing artistic experience. Every listener to a performance of a poem can make what Babalola has described as "additament" to the original, thus perpetuating its growth. But whatever addition a performer makes to an original, he has to respect the characteristic features, that distinguish one type of poetry from another. These features could include musical percussions, prosodic features such as the breath-pause line, the peculiar manipulation of tone of the language and even the voice, whether it is to be performed in a chanting voice or sung. These conventions that have to be respected for every type constitute the traditions of a poetic type.

The community is always there, as guardians of the different poetic traditions to see that there are no mix-ups. The expectations of a poet or performer working within a poetic tradition make sure that the artist does not wander away in Bohemian-type self-communing as Nnolim suggests in his article. The language of the poem is usually one that can be shared and understood by the community. The heroes of the poems represent the collective consciousness of the community, their interests as individuals subsumed under communal interests. These are basic characteristics of the African or Black aesthetics manifested in oral literature.

But in addition, there are other aesthetic elements that relate to the forms and details of techniques of African poetry. Understandably these can best be described in relation to specific literatures of a language or group of related languages. The major issue of technique is closely related to the linguistic qualities of the language involved. It would involve the analysis of language use, notably imagery and poetic rhythm which involve the use of syntactic and tonal rhythm as well as the rhythm of percussion music that may accompany performances. The artistic traditions that we have to examine in relation to these elements of technique will be the tradition of Griot literature in French West Africa. This is necessary since the African Négritude writers are all from French West Africa and in terms of the African values they exalt and desire to return to, it is the Griot tradition that is their inspiration. As Dorothy Blair has testified,

> When aspiring African writers, encouraged by Négritude movement in the thirties, looked to their national heritage

> for the content of their works it was to the 'griots' that they turned as their reservoir of local lore (p. 26)[33]

The term griot encompasses many types of artists whose functions apparently overlap, but these artists share a quality which is best described by the term "les artisans du verb" (shapers of words). Christianne Seydou describes the origin and meaning of the word in this way:

> La term 'griot' a été adopté par la langue française pour designer tous les bardes, musicien chanteurs genealogistes, historiographes, conteurs et chansonniers des diverses population soudaniennes (p. 18)[34]

Just as in the other areas of Africa, the Griot literature functions, as G. Calame-Griaule says in "Pour une étude ethnolinguistique des littératures orales Africaines" as "une sort de mirroir dans lequel la société s' observe et mesure sa stabilité" (p. 22).[35] The form of Griot literature is fluid like major poetic forms and allows for a curious mixture of various artistic preoccupations usually collectively labelled under one of the well known types -- epic, legends. Dorothy Blair in the first chapter of her book African Literature in French, attests to the versatility of Griots.

> In West Africa the griots were the story-tellers, chroniclers, praise-singers, poets, professional entertainers. (p.25).[36]

Because of this, she says,

> Poetry was allied to song and history to legend... As with the Chanson de geste elements of magic and the supernatural were insiduously mixed with elements of facts. Mythological tales expressed the relationships that governed the creation and construction of the Universe and the existence of its inhabitants. Stripped of its sacred elements and some of its supernatural, and with an added dose of realism the myth becomes the folktale, which is still nevertheless closely associated with obscure and mystical forces...The

> participation of the audience in the tale or recital of the professional singer and chronicler, by means of gestures, exclamations, repetitions, choruses and dances could transform the occasion into a dramatic spectacle. (24-5)[37]

All the characteristics that Senghor associates with oral African literature, the communal, the functional and the divine aspects, are manifest in any performance of literature by Griots, and Senghor himself would appear to be following in the Griot tradition in the prevalence of ancestral themes in his poetry. His habit of prescribing specific African instruments as accompaniment to his poems is also apparently meant to link him with the Griot traditions. As Seydou describes in her introduction to Silamaka et Poullori, Griots always have accompaniment of some musical instruments as they perform (p. 24-26). But if Senghor or Birago Diop in their ritual poems, can be said on the strength of their subject-matter, to be reviving African values, it will be more difficult to prove the same when one considers the poems from the point of view of communal participation in their poems. The poems may express collective concern but the medium of expression and the fact of writing itself limits the possibility of communal participation in the poems.

One important aspect that has been very controversial in Senghor is the question of his rhythm. The long sentences and their majestic movement, the characteristic repetition of images and phrases have been traced to influences from the Griot tradition. Apparently the mastery of words is an important quality expected from the Griots. Griot Mamadou Kouyaté, the Griot who provided the version that was transcribed and translated as Soundjata ou l'épopée mandingue, boasts among other things of being "Master in the art of speech" and of Griots generally as

being "sacks of words."[38] It is mastery of words that Senghor refers to as "l'image," the controlling factor in poetry. In addition to their mastery of figurative speech, every critic that has worked on Griot literature has testified to the Griots' mastery of rhythm. This is Kesteloot's testimony for example.

> Le Griot a si bien conscience du rhythme qu'on l'entend souvent accelerer le debit d'un mot ou d'un groupe de mots, pour garder la symetrie avec un vers précédent. (p. 24)[39]

Senghor goes even further to assert that everything in an oral poem is a manifestation of rhythm.

> Comme je le disais, le rhythme, c'est l'architecture de l'être le dynamism interne qui lui donne formes le system d'ondes qu'il emet à l'addresse des autres, l'expression pure de la force qui, à travers les sens, vous saisit à la racine de l'être. (p. 281)[40]

What makes Senghor's notion of rhythm almost mystical is that it pervades all forms of art in African societies, not just the verbal arts, "le masque, le costume de danseur comme ses mouvements."[41] Senghor finds the characteristics of the rhythm of African oral art to be its vitality and diversity:

> "son vital; la regularité dans l'irregularité."[42]

Compounding the complexity of rhythm in oral literature (and I am emphasizing this because of its significance for Senghor's poetic rhythm) is the fact that verbal rhythm has to work within a larger rhythm of percussion

> ...les battements de mains du public, les pas et gestes des récitants et des tambourinaires. (p. 213)[43]

All traditional African literatures work within concepts of rhythm such as Senghor has described and one of the differences that strikes one

immediately in the written literatures is that they cannot incorporate this concept of rhythm.

The Harlem Renaissance and Négritude produced works in a different context from the works of Black oral literature. Their writers no longer operated within the relatively integrated communal societies on which oral literature is based. In place of that integrated system which Marshall McLuhan describes derogatively in The Gütenberg Galaxy[44] as the "product of speech, drum and ear technologies"[45] which encouraged communalism in every aspect of art, the writers, using French and forms of English that are not peculiar to the Black community, were operating within a larger metropolitan community, where they were open to cultural influences different from theirs. Unlike traditional artists, they did not need to rely on the immediate participation of their community in the shaping of their works. Creative writing is a more private venture. Their choice of artistic forms need not be limited to those available within the traditional group. As McLuhan argues, in the chapter entitled "Schizophrenia may be a necessary consequence of literacy,"[46] writing symbolizes the breakdown of the traditional mode of existence. The process of artistic creativity and its aesthetic counterpart of reading undermines the communal basis of art and the various influences it can have on the form and directions of art works. This is true even if the writer is using familiar stories and artistic techniques of oral literature. For example even though Amos Tutuola's "novel" The Palmwine Drinkard,[47] as Obiechina says in "Amos Tutuola and the Oral Tradition," is a "refurbishing of old tales by employing well-known motifs and narrative techniques,"[48] the end product is never really a work of oral

tradition. It is longer than ordinary folk-tales. The fact that it is written in English, even though it is a kind of English which manages to catch the tone of Yoruba thought-pattern, means its experiences cannot be shared by men living strictly under the traditional system. The closest that it moves to oral tradition is, as Obiechina describes it in, "its ability to assimilate elements peculiar to the oral tradition to elements peculiar to literary traditions." (p. 107)[49] Obiechina would classify it as representing "a transitional stage in the formal artistic evolution from a purely oral narrative tradition to a purely literary tradition"[50] (p. 106). Tutuola's work is no longer Yoruba oral literature. Bernth Lindfors is right when he describes Tutuola in "Amos Tutuola: Debts and Assets,"[51] as "one of the first African writers to contribute something entirely new to Western literature" (p. 334).[52]

Tutuola's case is linked up with the whole issue of whether a people's literature expressed in another language can be regarded as valid for that people, argument that has led to the conclusion by some critics that African literature written in European languages is to be classified as belonging to those European literature.[53] The controversy over this issue has not been truly resolved, but the important thing is that if it is difficult to make a case for Tutuola as an artist in the Yoruba tradition, it is even more difficult to do so for artists who not only use European languages but adopt techniques and artistic philosophies that are easily recognized as belonging to European literary traditions. This issue does not apply to African writers alone but also to Afro-Americans. It is difficult to reconcile Richard Wright's assertion in "Blue Print for Negro Literature"[54] that "Eliot,

Stein, Joyce, Hemingway and Anderson, Gorky, Barbusse, and Jack London no less than the folklore of the Negro himself form the heritage of Negro writers. Every total of gain in human sensibility and thought should be ready grist for the mill, no matter how farfetched they may seem in their immediate application,[55] with his advocacy of a genuine Negro literature. This is not to say that Negro literature must not borrow from other literary traditions. What is at issue is the question of whether or not what is borrowed is transmitted into forms that are Negro, as the Negro did with the Christian religion for example. But there is the danger that the Negro is fusing what is borrowed with Negro "literary" culture might be reducing that Negro culture to a simple tag on the culture that it borrowed from. This is the danger that is posed by Wright when he asked that written Afro-American literature, though "drawing for its strength upon the fluid lore (oral tradition)", should "mould this lore with the concepts that move and direct the forces of history today."[56]

While not advocating that Black written literature should be a simplistic recreation of traditional literature, one would agree with Ralph Ellison that for written Black literature to be genuinely Black, it would, as "Negro folklore" did, symbolize "The Negro's willingness to trust his own experience, his own sensibilities as to definition of reality, rather than allow his masters to define these crucial matters for him." To do this, it would need to turn to folklore, "which offers the first drawings of the group's character." For folklore

> describes those rites, manners, customs and so forth, which insure the good life or destroy it; and it describes those boundaries of feeling, thought and action which that

> particular group has found to be the limitation of the human condition. It projects this wisdom in symbols which express the group's will to survive, it embodies those values by which the group lives and dies.[57]

Any use of folk literature which does not project the group character of Black communities cannot be truly described as producing genuine Black literature. But the subject matter drawn from Black life is not more important than the manner of and the forms of its expression. The two go hand in hand. One could even say that the forms of artistic expression in a way determine the image which emerge from a people's literature. As Robert Felgar puts it in "Black Content White Form," "the form gives the writer's ingrained beliefs away" (p. 28).[58] It is for this reason that the works of Black writers who examine Black life through Western theories of looking at Black men and Western literary modes of expression are suspect as expressions of Black life. Senghor's, Césaire's, Toomer's, Cullen's works are guilty of this. The literary perspectives of their works are decidedly Western and undermine the Black qualities in their works.

There are two writers among the poets chosen for whom oral traditions hold special appeal -- Senghor and Langston Hughes. Bridget Jones in "Léon Damas"[59] would make a special case for Damas' Pigments as being influenced by the techniques of oral literature. The sources she says are varied: one, "the popular Negro modes" of poetic expression popularized by Hughes; two, "the heightened folk speech" style of McKay's Banjo, and the "slangy conversational idiom...similar to the choice of Creole by contemporary Caribbean poets."[60] Damas himself in an introduction to a collection of African oral poetry which he edited

has described African poetry in a manner which describes his own poetry as "Poetry which relies wholly on cadence and melody. On repetitions which create the rhythm. On the effects of antithesis and parallelism in the ideas and images."[61] But first we must note that these qualities are not peculiar to oral poetry and especially not to Black oral poetry. Their use does not immediately confer Black qualities on Damas. Damas' conversational slangy language is like the Hughes of the blues and spirituals, and some of Damas' poems do have the regular formal structures and repetitiveness of blues and jazz; his use of repetitions amount to an approximation of their song rhythm. Take a poem such as "Obsession."

> "Un gout de sang me vient/Un gout de sang me vient/m'irrite le nez/La gore/Les yeux"

(The next stanza repeats this first stanza word for word). Or "Trêve" with such lines as these

> Trêve de blues/de martelements de piano/de trompette bouchée/de folie claquant des/piéds/a la satisfaction du rhythm. (P. 21).

These are evidence of Damas' approximation of the jazz and blues rhythm. But we must note that unlike the characteristic impersonality of the blues and jazz (Hughes did not use the forms in poems describing his personal experiences), Damas' Pigments, as E. A. Hurley emphasizes in "Pigments: A Dialogue with the Self"[62] is about Damas' experiences. His approximation of elements of style from Black artistic traditions is used in artistic contexts different from their traditional usage. The poetic line and stanza in Damas are longer and more irregular in length than in Hughes. Hughes keeps most of the time, to the three-line stanza

or quatrain of the blues form. The institutionalized repetition of the first line which gives the effect of rhymes gives Hughes' lines an impression of formality. Even at their closest approximation of Hughes in "Obsession" and "Trêve", Damas' lines do not have the same effect of formality. Although Damas' frequent use of repetitions gives his poetry a musical rhythm, his poems do not give us the impression of songs in the way that Hughes' blues poems do. But even after pointing out these differences one must say that Damas is probably more like Hughes than any other writer in Négritude or the Harlem Renaissance in his ability to approximate certain elements of oral literature in his writings. These lines from "Solde"

> J'ai l'impression d' être ridicule
> dans leurs salons
> dans leurs manières
> dans leurs courbettes
> dans leur multiple besoin de singeries (p. 39)

or these from "Pareille a la légende"

> Des cheveux que je lisse
> que je relisse
> qui reluisent
> maintenant qu'il m'en coûte
> de les avoir crepus

do remind one of the repetitions in the poems of Hughes. So also does the use in Damas' poems of dialogue, as well as the tone of self-mockery evident in all the poems in which he describes his habits of assimilation

> Dans une longue carapace de lame
> mon cou s'engouffre
> la main s'enerve
> et mes orteils se rappellent
> les chaudes exhalaison des mornes

or

occidentalement
avance mon ombre,
pareille a ma légende
d'homee-inge (p. 59)

Damas' views on poetic language in African oral poems are interesting because they reflect what he himself has done in his own poems. In his introduction to Poèmes nègres sur des airs africains, he notes first that an African poem is

> Poèsie dont la caractéristique essentielle réside dans le fait qu'il improvise, elle n'est jamais déclamée ni dite, mais chantée.

The African poem he said is usually "public" poetry; therefore it speaks in familiar language

> ...jamais différent du langage familier. C'est que l'Africain, qui est né poèete et a vite fait d' improvise un change, ne compose pas pour des savants. Il compose pour être écouté du peuple. Ce qui explique les miqueries les calembours, les jeux de mots, le simplicité dans l'expression. Poèsie où la rime et le nombre de syllabes n'ont forcément aucun rôle à jouer. Poésie qui attend tout de le cadence et de la mélodie.
> Tout de la répétition qui engendre le rhythm.
> Tout de l'antithèse et du parallelisme des idées et des images" (p. 7).[63]

Few of his poems can be called public poems: "Et Caetera" which is a rousing call to arms addressed to Sénégalese volunteers during the Second World War, "Sur une carte Postale," in which he laments the building of war memorials in his country for colonialist soldiers who died in the war, "S.O.S." where he condemns the violence done to Blacks by White men, and "En file indienne", a poem that describes all colonial subjects as beasts of burden for Europe. But apparently Damas is more conscious than Senghor or Césaire about his reading public. His poetry, though restricted to private experiences, is less personal in style.

Though as Bridget Jones has noted, the poems are cast in the form of "succinct dramatic monologues", the sum of his poetic techniques, the talking voice, the song rhythm achieved through repetition of lines and key words, the self-mocking turn of phrases, the curious mixture of anger and mockery in a poem like "En file indienne", the theatrics in the poems which describe his models such as "Pour sur" combine to give Damas the image of a performer in the tradition of oral literature. But we must note that neither in theme nor in the structuring of the poems, nor in the all important aspect of art as performance is Damas' poetry a reflection of traditional Black poetry.

Senghor's use of traditional literatures is the reverse of Damas but the result is the same -- taking oral literature out of its contexts. The elements that Senghor borrows are the content of oral literature, the ritual beliefs, the worldview. These, to borrow the words of Richard Wright, "are molded with the concepts that move and direct the forces of history today." Unfortunately these forces in the case of Senghor are the intellectual ideas and literary traditions of Western literature, whose views of African oral literatures are highly suspect. Senghor's use of African myths is in direct contradiction of African oral traditions. As Obiechina has rightly noted, traditional myths are "to a great extent sacred tales," "rigid in forms and content."[64] The idea of adapting them for personal creative works outside their contexts was out of the question. An artist might use elements from them, such as symbols or the bare outlines of their plots for individual creativity, but these should not be confused with creating African myths. Senghor's "return to ancestral sources" is not

a recreation of African myths but a directing of attention to the high points of the beliefs on which the myths are based. That this involves an explanation of sorts is to be seen in the structure of many of the sentences that describe this borrowing. In "In Memoriam" for example the ode-like appeal to the dead is followed by clauses explaining their significance. "O Morts," he says, "qui avez toujours refusé de mourir, qui avez su resister à la Mort." This is also the case when he says of his "Totem" in the poem, of that title, "Il est mon sang fidèle qui requiert fidélité/Protegeant mon orgeuil nu contre/moi même et la superbe des races heureuses"... That this explanatory note is an integral part of Senghor when he is dealing with Africa is due to the fact that he is operating from an aesthetic that is alien to the beliefs he is dealing with. This alien aesthetic will be dealt with in detail in Chapter VII, but suffice it to say here that when Senghor glorifies his Africa by such images as: "femme nue" (naked woman), as "les festin funèbres fumant du sang des troupeux égorgés", as, "voix paiennes," of dancing girls and boys, "Nous sommes les hommes de la danse, dont les pieds reprennent vigueur en frappant le sol dur" and of naked boys dressed in leaves, 'mes compagnons lisses et nus et parés des fleur de la brousse!", he is not really exploring the artistic traditions of his people but looking at and expressing those traditions through the perspectives and images of Romantic-Surrealism's idealisation of the traditional man.

Langston Hughes' first two collections of poetry: The Weary Blues (1926) and Fine Clothes to the Jew (1927) represent the only real attempt to revive the Negro traditions of Art in the Harlem Renaissance.

Zora Neale Hurston explored the possibilities of the Negro dialect as a medium of expression in her novels. She also dealt with lower life characters that are more representative of Afro-American life, but she does not explore the forms of Afro-American art traditions. Almost simultaneous with the publishing of Weary Blues, Langston Hughes published the essay on Afro-American literature, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" in which he criticizes tendencies that militated against a distinctive Afro-American literature. His criticism implies a choice of contrary artistic values. Among the Black writers he finds the general assumption that one must at all times present the "better qualities" of Negroes to prove that the only difference between a Black and a White man is the difference of colour. In this way he thinks Black writers deliberately suppress all the cultural traits that really distinguish the Blacks from the Whites. He also abhors the belief that Afro-American writers must write in styles that White writers use, so that the only difference between White writing and Black writing will be in the area of subject matter. Hughes rejects both of these views because they prevent the Negro writer from being himself and "no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself."[65] The two tendencies above are what Hughes called the

> Mountain standing in the way of any true Negro Art in America - This urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mould of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible.[66]

Langston Hughes did not care much for the approval of critics, Black or White. His concern was for that winnowing away of those experiences

that deny his Blackhood from his art. So "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" is in a way a defense of his artistic practices.

> We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.[67]

True to his artistic choice, Hughes remained pre-occupied with nothing else but Negro themes throughout his career. Even in this he is different from most of the other Black writers of the Renaissance. Contrary to the general view that the low life of the Black lower class was not good material for art, Hughes stuck to the life of the lower urban class of Negroes whose daily life is more typical of negro life than that of the middle class that Fauset deals with in Plum Bun and There is Confusion for example. Langston Hughes has given expression to the life of the kitchen hands ("Brass Spittoons"), the elevator operator ("Elevator Boy"), of the porter ("Porter"), of the prostitute ("Young Prostitute"), in fact, of the whole spectrum of experiences in the lives of the "wretched of the earth" and the human types that deprivation breeds, such as the drunk, the abandoned, the suicidal etc. These portraits are not edifying to the "New Negro" and understandably many black critics condemned Hughes' poetry.

But Hughes' most important contribution to Black literature was not in his choice of subject matter but in his choice of poetic form and style. Langston Hughes in an article published many years after the Renaissance movement provides a key to the understanding of his choice of form, language and style in his poetry. In "Ten Ways to Use Poetry in Teaching"[68] Hughes asserts that there should be no "language gulf between poetry and life". The life he is describing is best expressed

in the language and forms that have expressed it for decades of Black history: the blues and jazz forms, Black American dialect and elements of the style of spirituals.

Echoing Langston Hughes' preface to The Weary Blues, Theodore R. Hudson, in "Technical Aspects of the Poetry of Langston Hughes" has given us in detail the aesthetics of the blues form from which Hughes has drawn

> The basic structure of the Blues is a stanza of three iambic pentameter lines. The second line is a repetition of the first line. The third line is a comment/increment/reaction /resolution line. The lines end in masculine rhyme....A loosely chronological series of such stanza make up a narrative blues. Sometimes the words in the second line differ slightly from the first line; sometimes the lines are shortened or lengthened slightly, sometimes the meter varies. Such variations are sometimes called "worrying the line" (p. 28).[69]

In addition to the above, Hughes prefers the Black dialect to standard English in most of his poems. The dialect in itself has a more musical ring than one finds in the syntax of standard English probably because of the freedom to ellide phonemes, especially consonants and articles that can hold up the smooth flow of the lines. Such is the case with these lines from "Ballad of Gin Mary"

> Carried me to de court
> Judge was settin' there
> Looked all around me
> Didn't have a friend nowhere (p. 35)[70]

But apart from the blues, Langston Huges uses an element from the spirituals, the "Shout", which has been adequately described by J. Saunders Redding in To Make a Poet Black.[71] The Shout "takes its name from the single line of strophic and incremental significance which is shouted or moaned after a two, three or four line stanza" (p. 115).[72]

They put ma body in de ground,
Ma soul went flyin' o'de town

Lord Jesus!

Went flyin' to the stars an' moon
A shoutin' God, I's comin' soon.

O Jesus![73]

All of these combine, in the words of Margaret Perry, to make Hughes' poetry "the most authentic black poetry until contemporary black poets started their own literary revolution" (p. 47).[74] But understandably, Countee Cullen, whose concept of poetry owes more to the conventions of English literary traditions, did not value Hughes blues and jazz poems highly. In his review of The Weary Blues in The New York Herald Tribune of May 24, 1948 he regards the "jazz poems as interlopers in the company of the truly beautiful poems in other sections of the book".

Langston Hughes' blues and jazz poetry is not reflective in the way that Toomer's and Cullen's poetry are. He depicts the situations of Black life and Black characters in the various moods and emotions that characterize that life without reflection. In doing so Hughes' personal voice or reflection is never heard. He uses poetic personae instead. This gives the poems a clearer sense of immediacy than can be found in any other poet of the Harlem Renaissance. From the first poem of the Weary Blues it becomes obvious that Hughes is concerned with more than Afro-Americans. When his persona says in "Proem" /"I've been a victim: /The Belgians cut off my hands in the Congo./ They lynch me now in Texas", he is yoking together the whole history of Black men from Africa to the U.S.A. Also this poem establishes a sad tone which pervades the poetry of the Weary Blues and Fine Clothes to the Jew. "I've been a

singer/All the way from Africa to Georgia/I carried my sorrow songs". "The Weary Blues" the title poem reinforces this note when the singer intones "I aint happy no mo'/And I wish that I had died". The few exceptions to this tone of sadness are to be found in poems where Hughes is either describing the beautiful atmosphere of a cabaret as in "Jazzonia" or describing couples dancing as in "Negro Dancers" and "The midnight/Nan at Leroy's", or as he rarely does, he is admiring a beautiful girl in "Young Singer"; "Should you tell her/That she is like a nymph/for some wild faun" or describing the appearance of a girl in "To A Black Dancer in 'The Little Savoy'" to suggest sensuousness:

> Wine-maiden/Of the Jazz-tune night/Lips/Sweet as purple dew/ Breasts/Like the pillows of all sweet does, who crushed/The grapes of joy/And dripped their juice on you?

When Hughes turns to portray individual experiences of his Black characters, we find reasons for the sadness of his songs. They are prostitutes, ("Young Prostitute"), or "Orphans" of mixed blood without any social support as in "Cross", who lament: "I wonder where I am gonna die/Being neither white nor black?". Hughes' characters are men who have turned cynical because of social circumstances. The jester in "The Jester" sums up the fate of the Blacks in these words "I am the Black Jester/The Dumb clown of the world/The booted, booted fool of silly men/Once I was wise/Shall I be wise again?" When he turns back to history, it is the memory of "The child-minded South/Scratching in the dead fire's ashes/For a Negro's bones", in the poem "The South"; or the stories of slavery in "Aunt Sue's Stories." In contemporary life the youth in "As I Grew Older" finds "social walls" have grown up to separate him from the realization of his "dreams". "And/then the wall

rose/...Hiding/The light of my dream/Rose until it touched the sky." The only doors open to the Black characters are to menial jobs - kitchen hands in "Brass Spittoons", the elevator boy in "Elevator Boy", porter in "Porter". As "Laughters" describes it, Blacks where they are lucky are "Dish-washers/Elevator-boys/Ladies' maids/Crap-shooters/Cooks/ Waiters/Jazzers/Nurses of babies/Loaders of ships/Rounders/Number writers...". The result is deprivation on a massive scale described in "Hard Luck" which breeds misery in "Misery" and all types of social misfits, suicides - in "Suicide" and drunks in "Saturday Night" ("Charlie is a gambler/An' Sadie is a whore/A glass of whiskey/An' a glass o'gin/strut, Mr. Charlie/Till de dawn comes in"), broken marriages and abandoned women in "Lament over love", "Midwinter Blues" and "Listen Here Blues".

Hughes' "traditional" poems are somewhat monotonous. No light is breaking through the dark world of the Blacks. Hughes has no social vision like what we see in Cane. He is satisfied with celebrating all that Blacks have been through, satisfied with asserting that through it all their laughter, their love of life prevail. The poet could not but exclaim in admiration at the end of "Laughters": "God, what dancing Singers-/God! What singers!/Singers and dancers/Dancers and laughters /Laughters?/Yes, laughters...laughters.../Loud-Mouthed laughters in the hands of Fate". We will note that Hughes' exploration of the life of Black America in his art was limited to the vicissitudes of Black urban existence. Except for a few songs in the spiritual tradition which can be found in the "Glory! Halleluiah!" section of Fine Clothes to the Jew there is no reference to the social vision in traditional literature

nor is there any attempt to explore it for Black social vision in Hughes'poetry. It is this fact which makes his poetry more bleak than it need have been. We must note too, that Hughes' poetry, despite its adoptation of the forms of traditional art, and despite the themes which Onwuchekwa Jemie testifies to be close to the traditional themes of the blues, is produced outside the context of the traditional community and lacks the communal quality of traditional poetry.

One must not conclude that the works of Black writers are essentially Black because they use materials from Black life and African cultures. First, it is necessary to know what they have done with the materials; to see their worldview and their conclusions about Black life, how different it is from the images they are reacting against. These, even if they are "positively" Black must be related to the forms in which they are expressed. The form of a work is intricately tied to the linguistic images by which the work expresses itself and both need to harmonize with thought or literary motive to produce an overall impression in the reader about the subject treated. It is difficult to prove "Blackness" in a work of art where the form, and the thought are alien to the subject-matter. The majority of the critical works and articles which review the Harlem Renaissance and Negritude works are deficient because they ignore the forms of the works. Even when they are discussed as has been done in relation to the works of Cullen or Césaire, the undermining effect of the Western forms used on the "Blackness" of the Black works is never discussed. The next chapter will be devoted to analysing critical views on these literary movements with the aim of revealing the perceptions of the critics and to show how

these prevent, or fall short of providing, a comprehensive understanding of these movements.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Many books and articles have been written on the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude. It is an impossible task to review every one of them in a dissertation like this. Thus this review can only be a selective one. But an attempt will be made to ensure that the books and articles selected for review are representative of the various critical approaches and ideology underlying the reception of the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude literature. It will therefore be necessary to trace the historical development of these criticisms in order to highlight the changes in perspectives that have occurred in the course of the lives of these movements. The articles and books that are selected for review will be those which deal with the perspectives of the movements rather than individual studies of particular authors. The only exceptions will be cases where the theoretical approach to studies of individual authors reflects a particular attitude towards the movement as a whole. This thesis will not try to account for all features of the critical ideology of all the books and articles selected. It will concentrate on major features of critical ideology which have greater potentialities for misdirecting the writers of the two cultural movements, from the avowed goal of creating that which will correct the debased image of the Black man and Black culture, or of misdirecting later criticism from the appropriate task of relating the

literature produced by the movements to these avowed aims of the writers.

A thorough examination of the criticism of Black literature will have to take into consideration the "revolutionary" nature of its beginning. Much has been heard of the White view of Blacks as having no culture. As Alain Locke sums it up in his article in the August issue of Opportunity, 1923, "The Creative Art of Negroes,"[1] which takes examples of African sculptures and textile designs as evidence of their "culture and civilization," "Judgment...has been passed upon the civilization of African tribes. They have none. And because none has been known to exist, the policy follows that none could exist." (p. 240). Whites try to prove that Blacks have no culture. Blacks deny this by examples of literary productions based on Black life. This polar axis in the relationship between White and Black is reflected in the development of the criticism of Black literature. Many White critics, judging Black literature by the only "civilized" standard of literature and criticism which they know, which is White, in an age when Modernism has tended to reduce social content of art to a manageable minimum, condemn the Black works, which because of their aims are heavy with social content, as non-literature. This had been the tendency. Stephen Bronz, for example, says "Harlem Renaissance novels and poems often read like polemical or sociological essays in spite of the insistence of many writers that they be regarded more as artists than reformers."[2] (p. 14).

On the other hand, the corollary to this, an expectation of exaggerated praise by Black critics for Black works of art, has been

relatively disappointed. It is true that occasionally we find Black appreciation of Black art degenerating to subjective sentimentalism, such as Alain Locke's review of Countee Cullen's Color. The review which is published in the January 1926 issue of Opportunity contains little or no objective commentary on the poems themselves. Lines such as these:

> Pour into the vat all the Tennyson, Swinburne, Housman, Patmore, Teasdale you want, and add a dash of Pope for this strange modern skill sparkling couplets -- and all these I daresay have been intellectually culled and added to the brew, and still there is another evident ingredient, fruit of the Negro inheritance and experience, that has stored up to the tropic sun and ripened under the storm and stress of the American transplanting.[3] (p. 14)

or

> Here as indubitably as in Petrarch or Cellini or Stella, there is the renaissance note.[4] (p. 15)

are typical of Alain Locke's unliterary review. No other reviews of the Harlem Renaissance literature in Opportunity and The Crisis is like it in tone of unbridged sentimental laudation. Instead, one is struck by how similar are the views of White and Black critics on the criteria for determining the "admission" of the Negro writer to the "Universal" literary hall of fame. Harlem Renaissance intellectuals, as is made clear in the editorial comment of Opportunity of March 1926, entitled "A Note on the New Literary Movement,"[5] insist on judging Black works by the same criteria as those used for White literature. The basis for this view, as Brenda Ray Moryck argues in "A Point of View"[6] published in Opportunity of August 1925, is the fact that Negro intellectuals were educated, like their White counterparts on the same materials of the White civilization. The Black man wanted to create a "Black"

literature, yet he had to depend on the cultural media he shared with his White contemporaries to do this. This creates the type of dilemma that James Weldon Johnson called the "problem of double vision" in "The Dilemma of the Negro Author," a speech of that title published in the December 1928 issue of American Mercury.

> I judge that there is not a single Negro writer who is not at least secondarily, impelled by the desire to make his work have some effect on the white world for the good of the race.[7]

This is similar to what Countee Cullen meant when he spoke of the Negro writers' obligation toward the Black race.

> For Negroes to raise a great hue and cry against such misrepresentation without attempting, through their artists, to reconstruct the situations seems futile and foolish...We must create types that are truly representative of us as a people, nor do I feel that such a move is necessarily a genuflexion away from true art.[8]

The issue of double vision involves the above but it also involves a strong effort to impress the White world with the Negroes' proven ability in the specific cultural medium of written literature. To the generation of the Harlem Renaissance, Black and White alike, "...Art was an evidence of culture civilization."[9] If the Negro could impress the White world with his artistic capability, it was believed that he would get the recognition he had long sought as a civilized being.

Even though most Black writers and critics insisted on the manifestation of race pride in Black art, the leading thinkers and writers agreed that it must not be achieved at the expense of the aesthetic quality of art. For Alain Locke, for example, writing "must reinforce our art with the dignity of race pride and the truly cultural judgment of art in terms of technical and not sentimental values."[10]

The Harlem Renaissance is a two-pronged effort at "cultural" achievement. This duality of vision has its negative effect on the criticism of the Harlem Renaissance works. Because it was aimed at impressing Whites as much as Blacks, the lead in critical assessment was left to Whites. In fact, a large part of the organization was left to Whites. The role of such Whites as Vachel Lindsay, Carl Van Vechten,[11] and Waldo Frank who knew many of the writers and were instrumental in getting their works published and introducing the writers to the public, cannot be over-exaggerated. These men were among those who shaped the direction of the cultural movement. Carl Van Vechten, for example not only wrote a novel, Nigger Heaven,[12] which was a model for Walter White's novel, The Fire in the Flint[13] and Claude McKay's Home to Harlem,[14] but he established a personal literary award for the best published work every year. His literary activity included participation in a running debate which was published for many months in The Crisis from March to November 1926 on "The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed. A Symposium." Apart from him there were others. Waldo Frank, the author of Holiday[15] a novel on Black life, and Sherwood Anderson, also a novelist who helped popularize Black life with the White public are both known to have influenced Jean Toomer's Cane,[16] one of the most remarkable works of the Renaissance, by advising on its form and introducing the work to publishers. It was probably felt that White readers' assessment was a less subjective measure of the Black man's cultural achievement than that of the Black critics, a debatable point of view. And not surprisingly, White critics classified Black works

into "literature" and "Negro literature" according to content and technique.

The low level of participation in the critical assessment of Harlem Renaissance works by Black critics is a surprising phenomenon. It inspires speculation as to why Black critics should have let Whites set the tone or pattern for the criticism of Afro-American literatures of the Renaissance. One would have expected that if they were genuinely interested in creating a new literature they would have recognized that it would require a new critical approach. This does not mean that there were no reviews of Blacks works by Black critics. There were many reviews in both Opportunity and The Crisis but there were only a few full-length essays in both journals by Blacks between 1921 and 1930, the period usually ascribed to the life of Harlem Culture. The only remarkable essay on literature was that written by William Stanley Braithwaite, "The Negro in Literature" published in The Crisis September 1924.[17] Even this is not specific to the literature of the Renaissance movement. It is a historical survey of the beginning and development of Afro-American literature in the United States. This situation is more surprising because there were outstanding Black literary scholars contemporary with the Harlem Renaissance. Sterling Brown was himself a Renaissance writer, as well as a university professor. In the words of Alain Locke who wrote an Editorial Foreword to his book Negro Poetry and Drama,[18] he was one of the "advance-guard of younger Negro poets and, as well, the then new school of American regionalist literature." From 1923 on to 1937 when he published his book on Negro literature, he was a university professor of literature in

one university after another. He was literary editor to Opportunity where he wrote under the caption "The Literary Scene: Chronicle and Comment." There was not a single review of any book in his commentary. The only notable article written by Sterling Brown, "Our Literary Audience"[19] published in the February 1930 issue of Opportunity, is not on any Black American work of literature but an exhortation to the Black audience to accept a representation of both the good and bad sides of themselves by responding favourably to Eugene O'Neill's play Emperor Jones and All God's Chillun's Got Wings, which deal with Negro life.

Unlike Sterling Brown, Benjamin Brawley, another university professor of literature, did write books and articles during the Renaissance period. His book, The Negro in Literature and Art,[20] which we shall review later, has only very sketchy reference to Renaissance literature. Certainly Brawley published an article "The Negro in American Literature"[21] in the October 1922 issue of The Bookman in which he ends up with a series of statements that amount to what one would have called the basic ideas of a Black literary ideology:

> The Negro himself as the irony of American civilization is the supreme challenge to American literature.
>
> Literature should be not only history but prophecy, not only the record of our striving but also the mirror of our hopes and dreams. Let us have the forward as well as backward look.

But he does not come forward, either to join the group of thinkers in formulating an ideology for the Renaissance or to use his literary precepts in assessing Black literature, and so give the writer a healthy direction for the production of that literature which is a "challenge to American literature." In his article "The Negro in Contemporary

Literature"[22] published in the March 1929 issue of The English Journal, he appears to have excluded the Afro-American writer of the Renaissance from "Contemporary Literature." There is no reference to any Black author. Instead, the essay includes the gamut of White writers of a time contemporary with the Harlem Renaissance, who had written about Negro life. One cannot be sure that this omission represents another classification of literature that deliberately excludes Black literature as non-literature. The fact that Brawley neglects the literary "revolution" going on around him to write a book on English literature A New Survey of English Literature[23] makes one suspect, albeit without absolute certainty, that this is the case.

Montgomery Gregory, a professor of literature at Howard University wrote many reviews of Black literature for Opportunty. The most notable of these is a review of Cane[24] published in December 1923, a detailed, idealistic and sentimental assessment of the work. In it he sets out what appears to be his literary expectation from Black writers:

> America has waited for its own counterpart of Maran -- for that native son who would avoid the pitfalls of propaganda and moralizing on the one hand and the snares of a false and hollow race pride on the other hand. One whose soul mirrored the soul of his people, yet whose vision was universal.[25]

Gregory thinks Jean Toomer "is in a remarkable manner the answer to this call." What he says above appears to be correct. But there is a snag here connected with the term "universal." Even though he praised Toomer for turning to folk material, unlike his predecessors and some contemporaries whose attitude had been one of "Unqualified opposition to the utilization of his mass life in fiction, in music or in drama," by his insistence on a condition of universalism in Negro literature he is

in fact asking that Negro folk materials be used in a manner in which they do not obtrude in the work of art. In his review of Jessie Fauset There is Confusion,[26] in the June 1924 issue of Opportunity, the ideas come up again. This time he is more explicit in his expectation of the use of Negro materials. Talking of the "time" value of There is Confusion, he says,

> however, these gentlemen are unanimous in saying that this novel presents to white America a milieu of its civilization of which it has been totally ignorant and they gladly welcome this opportunity of "looking in" on the actual life of the more cultured class of Negroes. Here lies the great value of this novel in interpretating the better elements of our life to those who know us only as domestic servants, "uncles" or criminals.[27]

Thus, Black works as he envisages them should be directed mainly at Whites. He does not make any attempt to elaborate on what critical approach one should take concerning the Black content and technique of the works. He is satisfied that

> technically There is Confusion more than reaches the level of the better class of contemporary American fiction (meaning White American fiction)

This is indirectly an invitation to judge Black American literature by the standards used to judge White literature without taking into consideration that their distinct Afro-American culture calls for a literature different from White literature. His concern is that the Afro-American writer should endeavor to enter "the doors of the literary world (that) are ajar for the talented and ambitious youth of the race."[28] This criticism leaves to the White American the option of either admitting the Negro writer to that world or not. There are two other intellectuals who were in the forefront of the cultural struggle, Charles S. Johnson and Alain Locke, who might have charted a

critical path for the assessment of the Black content of Afro-American works. Charles S. Johnson, the first editor of Opportunity, who spent considerable energy to get individual writers of the Harlem movement into a group and who was the brain behind the literary competitions organized to give Blacks opportunities to be read, was a sociologist by training and more interested in sociological than literary problems. Moreover, he was one of the opponents of the back-to-folklore roots in the Harlem Renaissance. As I have indicated in the introduction, Johnson associated the lack of progress among Blacks with the folklore mentality which put Blacks back a century behind other Americans. If anything, Johnson would have rather the Black American writer simply show, like writers from other races, that he has "culture," not "folk-culture."

In contrast to Johnson, Alain Locke had artistic interests which extended beyond literature into a deep appreciation of the visual arts. But there is no one in whom the basic dilemmas of the Afro-American intellectual are more manifested than in Alain Locke. His literary practices betray a chameleon face from one article to another. In "To Certain of Our Philistines"[29] published in Opportunity early in the Renaissance period in May 1925, an article which laments the non-use of African and Afro-American folk materials in Negro art, Alain Locke not only exhorts Negro artists to reverse this tradition:

> all vital art discovers beauty and opens our eyes to beauty that previously we could not see. And no great art will impose alien canons of beauty on the familiar -- and that may perhaps be why our own Negro artists may be the last to recognize the new potentialities, technical and aesthetic, of our racial type.[30]

but condemns the tendency among Negro artists to keep within White

American artistic traditions and impose its canons on Negro art:

> But for another more vital and imperative reason the artistic expression of Negro life must break through the stereotypes and flout the conventions -- in order that it may be truly expressive at all -- and not a timid, conventional, imitative acceptance of the repressions that have been heaped upon us by both social persecution and by previous artistic misrepresentation.[31]

He concludes with an advocacy of an independent Negro artistic tradition -- independent of White traditions.

> Artistically we shall have to fight harder for independence than for recognition, and this we cannot achieve either through slavish imitation, morbid conventionalism or timid conservatism.[32]

I have quoted from Locke's essay at length to illustrate the main ideological issues involved in creating a vital Black literary counter-culture -- the rejection of the White tradition which has falsified the Negro image and the creation of an image of its own, through, and this is the third point, an independent artistic tradition. How much easier these ideological views were said than upheld can be seen when these are compared with Alain Locke's review of Color, Countee Cullen's first book of poetry in the January 1926 issue of Opportunity. He praises Cullen for writing "for the most part out of the intimate emotional experience of race." This view is highly debatable given, not only because Cullen's often repeated desire to be remembered not as a Negro poet but as a poet, wishing that

> ...any merit that may be in...my work to flow from it solely as the expression of a poet -- with no racial consideration to bolster it up.[33]

but also because of his attachment to Keats and the Romantic principles as they relate to themes which should be lofty, imaginative, and rather

remote from daily life, and above all, his despising unemotional poetic intellectualism. Cullen accepted and extolled these virtues both in his poetry and in his critical essays. His attachment to the neoclassic couplet tradition of the Augustan style does not make for contemporary poetic qualities. Yet, for Alain Locke, Color represents a supreme achievement of Harlem Renaissance literature. From this, it is obvious that this movement was not really out to revive Black artistic values but to create within the medium of American literature traditions that which would make Afro-Americans be accepted as "cultured" men. To top it all, Locke who had advocated an independent Negro tradition of criticism to go with it, unabashedly delved deeply into English, American and European literary traditions for his reference points in his assessment of Color.[34] If Cullen has affinity with these, which I do not doubt, his work cannot be Negro in more ways than its raw materials.

The point in the discussion of the Afro-American intellectuals of the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance is that they had as much a dilemma as the White critics regarding how to place the literary works of the movement. Their minds were made up about the need to create an artistic tradition that was essentially Black. Their ways of achieving this was contradictory, almost irreconcilable with the goal. There is no doubt that at that time the only peculiar Negro culture was folk culture, about which for most educated Black people, the least heard of it the better, since it brought to mind an unappealing past. As Montgomery Gregory has put it in his review of Cane, referred to earlier,

> yet the Negro has been too conscious of his wrong, too sensitive to oppression to be able to express the beauty of his racial life or to glorify his native soil. He has likewise resented the use of his folk-life for artistic purposes.[35]

This was an obstacle to do battle with in any attempt to revive this unique artistic tradition of the Negro. The other way was the "common" artistic tradition of America which had the advantage of getting the Afro-American the recognition he so badly wanted.

In an attempt to satisfy the conventions of this American literary and cultural tradition, the chances of true self-perception by Blacks are greatly reduced. All this meant was a drastic reduction in the racial content, or at least in the treatment of the race problem. These were reduced to ways that are not concrete enough to obtrude on the artistic interest of the work. As Lay Green has put it in her work, The Negro in Contemporary American Literature (1928),

> the decrease in race problem fiction, however, would lead to the expectation of an increase in aesthetic value and the emergence of a great and moving interpretation of the Negro by one of his own race.[36]

Yet without concrete treatment of racial themes the desired liberation from the psychological internalization of a White racist image of the Blacks cannot be achieved in the mind of the Black man. The intellectuals were aware of it -- Alain Locke, Montgomery Gregory and Benjamin Brawley. They could discuss the need for Blacks to counter the White fostered image intellectually, in their essays, but the way to this was as in the case of Alain Lockes's review of Color, at the expense of losing oneself to gain entrance. It is probably because of these complex reasons that Black intellectuals simply left the decision

on the issue of where to place Black literary works in relation to American culture to others who were more eager about such issues -- the White critics.

It is against this background of near confusion in perspectives as to what should be done with the Black works produced by the Harlem Renaissance that we must place the development of the criticism of that literature. The lead was taken up by Elizabeth Lay Green in 1928. Her book, as she describes it, is "a study course outlined".[37] But sketchy as it is, it has laid the foundation of the pattern for the criticism of the Harlem Renaissance which has persisted even in the most recent works on the subject. Many of her assumptions are carried over from long established White literary attitudes to Blacks (one of the subjects of the next chapter). Elizabeth Lay Green, the wife of Paul Green the playwright and dramatist who wrote The No Count Boy and In Abraham's Bosom, was familiar with the subject of the Negro in literature. The scope of her work encompasses a "special study of ...recent books which treat of the colored man".[38] She goes back to the pre-writing tradition of Negro spirituals and folksongs and traces the development of Negro literature and literature about Negroes to the present. Understandably, her materials include a good selection from White authors' works, including her husband's.

Elizabeth Lay Green's works display some of the worst examples of White attitudes to the Black man and Black literature. For example, she asserts that the artistic qualities of the Negro are "extreme emotionalism" and a subjectivism which make it impossible for him to succeed in the more objective forms of art -- the novel and drama.

> In the novel and in drama, forms of art demanding a more objective view of their subject matter, the white writer has surpassed the Negro, even in the use of his own materials.[39]

She is assuming that the White writer is objective in his assessment of the Negro. Furthermore, she talks of Black folklore in terms of "the primitive and spontaneous simplicity of this folk-poetry" -- terms which not only betray her ignorance of the composition of these folk poems, but which evoke a feeling of disgust in the Black. She makes his folklore a symbol of his despised civilization. Her central ideology can be seen from the above attitudes. There is literature proper and there is folklore. What is more, there is a clear-cut division between "art" and "art with social content" which is propaganda. She makes this distinction among classes of writers within the Black race:

> ... an intellectual background has given the negro poet a more sophisticated view of his medium. In developing their individual gifts some few writers have avoided any expression of racial consciousenss, confining themselves entirely to themes of general appeal and traditional form. On the other hand, an intense consciousness of race discrimination has caused some of the best colored writers to protest with passionate and biting invective -- sometimes more propaganda than poetry...[40]

After this her criticism moves even more dangerously close to racism as she implies that the first way of writing was White and literary, while the second belongs to Negro literature. When she talks about the works of William Stanley Braithwaite, one of the writers who refused to be known as a Negro poet, she says:

> his own poetry is important to this study not because of any racial characteristics but because of his high attainment in methods and subject matter identical with that of a white writer.[41]

Thus she is setting it out clearly that to be an artist the Black has to stay off racial themes or at least not foreground them in his work. She finds Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes artists because she finds in their works "sensations of universal appeal, and they are not limited by the racial point of view". Their work is distinctly individual (instead of racial) (p. 18). In the same way Jean Toomer is an artist because "The racial characteristics of his works are subordinated to his characteristics as an artist" (p. 51). As far as she is concerned,

> that his work happens to be of and by a Negro forms a minor classification. Jean Toomer is an impressionist or an imagist and must be considered with that school of writers (p. 51).

A cultural White model, equated with universality is thus injected into the criticism of Harlem Renaissance literature.

But that is not all that Lay Green put into the foundation of the criticism of Harlem literature. However, she may not be the originator of this, for earlier in 1926 W.E.B. DuBois, in his speech "Criteria of Negro Art", had talked of how Blacks in "a half shamefaced way -- are beginning to be proud of it".[42] Alain Locke reading Cullen's "Fruit of the Flowers" and "Gods", poems which refer to African concepts of God, asserts in his review of Color that they represent evidence of the revival of Black culture in a manner similar to the European Renaissance revival or earlier European civilization (p. 15)[43] Whether she was echoing other people or not, Green introduced the motif of the Afro-American's "pride in Africa's past" into the canons of the criticism of Harlem literature. This view of what the writers did with materials is a generalization which is not based on sound textual analysis of the poems of works where the African theme occurs. To these

writers, Africa is an enigma in their search for identity. Alain Locke in his article "Apropos Africa" in the February 1924 issue of Opportunity has stated clearly the reason for that enigmatic feeling:

> the dark shadow of slavery has thrown Africa, in spite of our conscious wishes, into a sort of chilly and terrifying eclipse, against which only religious ardor could kindle an attractive and congenial glow of interest.[44]

Lay Green's book lays the foundation stone of the criticism of Harlem literature.

Benjamin Brawley's book, The Negro in Literature and Art, which came out in 1930 had little or nothing to contribute to the understanding of Harlem literature. In a book of two hundred and twelve pages, only ten pages were devoted to the literature of the movement in a chapter titled "The New Realists". Brawley's views on literature (he had qualified as an English major and written a book on English literature, A New Survey of English Literature), are similar to Lay Green's. Quoting from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Poetic Principle", Brawley asserts as a fundamental truth that the sole test of the value of a work of art is whether or not it "satisfies a sense of beauty" (p. 3)[45]

> ... the aim (of art) being neither to appeal to the intellect by satisfying the reason or inculcating truth nor to appeal to the will by satisfying the moral sense of inculcating duty.[46]

This is the beginning of his book and the significance of its position is not lost on us. It is from this view that he examines all the works of the movement, a view that underplays the social obligation of art. In the hands of such, Harlem literature, whose major ingredient is a depth of feeling on race matters, is doomed to non-recognition. His criticism implies a condemnation of almost everything done in the

movement. The condemnation of the tendency towards introspective self-analysis and self-understanding as well as the condemnation of "popular" art forms is evident in this statement for example,

> Introspection and self-pity ran riot; psycho-analysis became the accepted mode; and the result was a new form of so-called art known as 'blues'[47]

The artistic sense of Brawley, which was a profound respect for established literary standards, was offended by the literary practices of the Harlem writers. He finds nothing to admire in them, which is ironic because there is so much that is conventional in Countee Cullen and Claude McKay for example. The deep anti-Renaissance feelings of Brawley are better appreciated by a look at this long quotation from the book:

> In a more general way there were three results in literature any art. The first was a lack of regard for any accepted standards whatsoever. Young writers were led to believe that they did not need any training in technique, and the popular form of poeticizing known as "free verse" was most acceptable because most unrestrained...the second result of the dominant mood was a preference for sordid, unpleasant, or forbidden themes. The third was a certain blatant quality, an obvious striving for effect that frequently gave an impression of artificiality.[48]

Even the idea of the gathering in New York by Black writers for the purpose of directing artistic energy into a Black cultural movement was offensive to Brawley who thought that it undermined the creation of true literature.

> Because this section was close to the publishers' houses, and because most of the Negroes in the metropolis lived there, the tendency has been to regard it as in a literary way the center of the Negro World. It is obvious that the literature of the race cannot be free, cannot be genuinely creative, until this burden is shaken off.[49]

From these statements it is obvious that Brawley was against the essentials of the Black revolution. He would rather keep to the literary conventions and traditions of English literature that he knew and respected with the implication that anything produced outside it was not genuine literature. His attitude towards Negro popular art forms, and probably the folklore too, from which a genuine written tradition of literature can derive, is summed up in the words with which he described them - "so-called art". His commentary reads like an explanation of why he did not get involved, rather than a true critical assessment.

The next important book, more important for Black literary studies in general than the Harlem Renaissance, is Sterling Brown's Negro Poetry and Drama (1937), published almost a generation after Brawley's book. Brown is less theoretical or dogmatic than Brawley. There is no specific theoretical approach to his study, Brown being content with making short vague thematic statements on the more than twenty Harlem Renaissance poets within the twenty pages that he devoted to the movement in the chapter called "Contemporary Negro Poetry". This is all he says about one of the young poets, of the Renaissance, Roscoe Jamison, for example,

> One of the many Negro poets...Roscoe Jamison is known for his poem "Negro soldiers"[50]

which he quotes in full. The significance of this book as it relates to the criticism of Harlem literature is the way his commentary has helped keep alive the impression that the movement represents the revival of Negro culture and the African heritage. "The resulting poetry" he says, "has among its major concerns"

1. a discovery of Africa as a source for race pride...
2. a treatment of the Negro masses (frequently of the folk...)

Countee Cullen's "Heritage", is an example of this revival or pride in African heritage,

> a statement of the atavism that was a cardinal creed of Negro poetry. Of old remembered ways from Africa persisting in civilization.[51]

He elaborates further that their Africa was "literary" and "romanticized". Contrary to his views most of the poems about Africa were questionings of the part this heritage plays in Negro problems of identity. Such questioning usually concluded with a dismissal of Africa as too distant a vague in Negro memory to provide a substitute for Negro Americanness. The claim that the literature drew materials from folk literature overlooks not only the controversy over the use of folklore in literature whose aim is to create a "New Negro" to counter the primitive image that folklore represents to most Americans, but also the actual folklore content and what use the literature made of it. For example, the blues form which Hughes used in his poetry is like the bulk of folklore, devoid of philosophic content. This is not a revival of folklore. Again, what Jean Toomer revives in Cane is the anthropologist's antiquarian image of a culture that "is dying out". For folklore to be really revived, its philosophy of existence must be researched, understood and adopted. Neither Jean Toomer, who is too distant from his subjects to understand them, nor Langston Hughes, nor Zora Neal Hurston who used folk materials in her novels, really revived folklore in this way.

The dogmatic classification of creative writing into "literature" based on universal standards of art and "racial or ethnic literature" had the effect on Black writers of a conscious turning away from literature with deliberate dosage of the racial problems to one of an essential interest in pre-occupation with form and technique. Through the 1940's and 1950's the works of poets like Gwendolyn Brooks and Mervin Tolson (Libretto[52]), and the incomparable novel of Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man, exemplify a conscious sublimation of racial concern in literary technique. Some critics like Arthur P. Davis in "Trends in Negro American Literature"[53] found social roots that gave birth to this concern in the general improvement of the lot of the Afro-Americans and the growing possibilities of social integration between Blacks and Whites in America in the 1940's. This may be so, but what Stephen Bronz says of Harlem Renaissance writers in the book Roots of Negro Racial Consciousness (1962), a book which is discussed later, seems to put the issue more on the artistic elements rather than on social problems.

> White approval also was necessary because a main purpose of the Harlem Renaissance was to prove to whites that Negroes could be cultural peers (p. 14).[54]

Artistic recognition for Black writers, in view of the ethnic classification given to Harlem Renaissance literature and the labels "journalistic writing" and "sociological essays" which have been used to describe the social realism in Black literature of the thirties, seems to be the motivation for the new tone in the literature of the forties and fifties. The pre-occupation with aesthetics as opposed to theme is put succinctly by Gwendolyn Brooks,

> But no real artist is going to be content with offering raw materials. The Negro poet's most urgent duty at present, is to polish his technique, his way of presenting his truths and his beauties, that these may be more insinuating and therefore, more overwhelming.[55]

This new attitude affected the views on Harlem literature. Its fortunes slumped to a low ebb until the revolutionary fervor of the sixties, the cultural activities which have been labelled "The New Renaissance" by Arna Bontemps, revived interest in this first Black cultural movement.

It was in the 1960's that major critical studies of the Harlem Renaissance were done, and these brought a new critical note. The old attempt to classify its literature into "Literature" and journalistic or sociological "Negro literature" did not completely die out. It persisted glaringly in the works of White critics like Robert Bone's The Negro Novel in America.[56] But the sixties saw another development in the fortunes of Harlem Renaissance literature. A new crop of Black critics emerged who produced major studies on the earlier period. Understandably, many of these, though there are exceptions, do not accept the division of that literature on journalistic and aesthetic criteria. But both these, as well as some Whites who accept that basic division as their starting point, start a new approach to Black literature that one can call a phenomenon of the sixties. This consists of a criticism which aims principally at explanation of the literature in terms of the sociological circumstances, which includes the literary and aesthetic ideology of the larger group in which the literatures of Harlem were produced. But even within this broad approach there is a wide spectrum of views often differing and even contradictory as will be shown in more detail. The best approach to these works then is to

discuss one author in detail and then concentrate only on the aspects in which the works of other authors differ from him.

Stephen Bronz's book Roots of Negro Racial Consciousness: The 1920's Three Harlem Renaissance Authors (1962) is one of the first of the major studies of the Harlem Renaissance in the sixties. It is basically a study of Countee Cullen, Claude McKay and Langston Hughes from a sociological approach. Quoting profusely from James Weldon Johnson's "The Dilemma of the Negro Author", Bronz recognizes the effect of what Johnson had referred to as "the problem of the double audience" on the works of Black writers. "The problem arises", Bronz says, "because Negro and white readers each read Negro authors with certain prescriptions in mind..."[57] The result, he concludes, is that "while most Negro authors try to reach both Negro and white readers, many fall in between and reach neither." It would appear then that the issue is a simple question of writers choosing what interest they seek to serve. But Bronz further links this problem to another which restricts the choice of the writer:

> The very existence of the Harlem Renaissance depended upon white recognition and appraisal; since the Negro book-buying public was limited, the interest of white publishers, critics, and readers was necessary for financial maintenance.[58]

Thus there is a limit to what Black writers could write and how they could write it, in terms of techniques of presentation and what image of the Black they projected, and with what intended effect. The larger reading public's expectations and appetites are either served or the publishers will not publish the books, or if they publish them, the books may not appeal to readers, and thus fail to sell. The effect on

the writer is either to write what the reading public wants, which is sensational literature, and be accused of not writing "literature" even though the book may sell, or to seek to write according to accepted "high standards" of literature which will appeal to "cultural readers" and earn the writer the reputation of being an artist, but with the obvious corollary of betraying Black representation in art. Whichever the writer chooses, the effect on the truth of the Black image that he tries to create is devastating. Against his will, sometimes even unconsciously, the writer's true volition and art is compromised. This is the dilemma and frustration that Hughes complains of in a statement quoted in Warrington Hudlin's "The Harlem Renaissance Reexamined"

> Here are our problems; in the first place, Negro books are considered by editors and publishers as exotic. Negro materials are placed, like Chinese materials or Bali materials into certain classifications...when we cease to be exotic, we do not sell well.[59]

Jean Toomer's Cane which was acclaimed a classic at the time of writing did not sell through the first edition -- it sold only five hundred copies while Nigger Heaven by Carl van Vechten, a sensational piece about Negroes, was such a tremendous publishing success that Chamberlain attributed the new American interest in the Negro during the Renaissance to the popularity of this book. It would be of interest then to show how these sociological considerations would have affected the image of the Black produced by Black writers of the Renaissance. Instead of doing this, Bronz labels the literary works of the Renaissance as "journalistic" because they questioned the social situation of the Black.

> As a result Harlem Renaissance novels and poems often read like polemical or sociological essays in spite of the insistence of many writers that they be regarded more as artists than as reformers.[60]

Bronz is falling into the same idealistic classification, which his critical predecessors were guilty of, ignoring his own sociological findings. When he accuses Cullen of not dealing with the theme of "universal man" in poems but "limiting his immediate vision to a single race instead of trying to encompass all of mankind" he again falls into another common error of idealist criticism. On a more positive note, Bronz is one of those who did not see the Negro Renaissance as a revival of Negro African and past Afro-American heritage. He rightly observes that

> Many toyed with the idea of a racial heritage in the culture of pre-colonial Africa, for Africa was a heritage unlike slavery, of which Negroes easily could feel proud. But Africa as a tradition was artificial, memories are not inherited through genes (p. 15)[61]

Bronz does not, however, elaborate on what the writers really did with African themes in their works.

Unlike Bronz's book, Robert Bone's The Negro Novel in America (1968) is not solely devoted to a study of the Harlem Renaissance. Only one chapter is devoted to Harlem literature. In this chapter, Bone still insists on seeing the Harlem Renaissance novel in terms of a "renaissance" of the past.[62] This mistake is common enough among White critics of the movement but Bone himself quoted a passage from Jessie Fauset's Plum Bun (1928) which should have convinced him that the above statements need qualification to be tenable. For the character through whose mouth the author speaks expresses the middle class attitude of

condescension towards the members of the lower class and all that they represent.

> Those of us who have forged forward are not able as yet to go our separate ways apart from the unwashed, untutored herd. We must still look back and render service to our less fortunate, weaker brethren. And the first step toward making this a workable attitude is the acquisition not so much of a racial love as racial pride. (p. 128)[63]

The Negro intellectual separates himself from the lower class, "the unwashed and untutored herd." Note the animal imagery, embodying the attitude of the "cultured" man. Note too that the "racial pride" he refers to is a "a workable attitude" assumed not out "of racial love" but from a facade of "racial pride." The lower class is too close to the middle-concept of the "primitive" which he shuns so much. Yet, despite this, Bone would assert that the intellectual fell back on folk culture. A close textual analysis of the books would have revealed that this not true.

David Littlejohn's Black on White (1966)[64] goes further, perhaps, than any other book in underrating the worth of Harlem Renaissance literature. It does not see anything good in it. Its emphasis is to locate "its substantial worth in any other context or its relevance to subsequent generations," and he finds none. He found the literature informed by "false, pathetically light and unfilled hopes."[65] He finds that "the pride and vision" they expressed "have proved to be illusory and the literature based on them...equally hollow." (p. 43). The literature he finds "betrayed the difference between the authors and the world they describe," since they wrote as "middle-class Negroes and the occasional white curiosity-seeking slummer." (p. 49) The catalogue of

the critic's dislikes continues with a complaint against excessive self-analysis by the writers of race literature and concludes with a comment on the bad effect on Cullen's poetry of his obsession with a tradition of English poetry,

> But there are limitations to such precocious, archaic skills. The diction is bound to seem at times simply false. The style so inadequately suited to his contemporary or even commonplace subjects.

The best place for a thorough review of this book is in the chapter dealing with the achievements of the Renaissance. Let it be said here that these condemnations are the result of the failure to place those works within the contexts that produced them. Littlejohn's views are not totally false. But he would have toned down his comments if he had a better understanding of the socio-historical and literary circumstances which constrain literary productions, especially in circumstances of dependence like those of the Harlem writers of the 1920's in America.

Littlejohn's book contrasts sharply with Kenny J. Williams' book They Also Spoke (1970).[66] If Littlejohn was unsympathetic towards the social circumstances of the artist, Williams pretends that those social circumstances if they existed, did not exert any negative influence on the literature of Harlem. In this, he is like Saunders Redding in To Make A Poet Black (1968). While many critics agree, and publishers' experiences reported in "Negro Author Week - An Experiment"[67] confirmed that the Black writers depended on a White reading public to which White publishers and art patrons and critics introduced them, Williams falsely affirms that

> Perhaps the more important was the fact that by the time of the Harlem Renaissance the Negro artist in America had his own audience and did not necessarily have to depend upon unsympathetic publishers nor an unreceptive public support...[68]

He is probably more emphatic than other critics about Afro-American enthusiasm for African heritage:

> At the same time they desired to incorporate their sense of their specific past -- the African heritage, the American slave experience, and the on-going search for freedom and equality -- without giving up their pride of race...[69]

He does not seem to be aware of the ambiguous attitude of the various writers towards the theme. He refers to Countee Cullen, saying,

> One needs to look no further than the work of Countee Cullen to discover how thoroughly this personal integration has taken root.

Williams views are different from those of Blyden Jackson as given in his "Largo for Adonais" (1946) published in his book The Waiting Years.[70] Cullen himself, seeing through these pretences, dismissed the African heritage and clung to the American one at the end of the poem. It would seem that Williams is a victim of wishful criticism which stems from a determination to indulge rather than criticize Harlem writers.

A work that is very close to Williams' in outlook is Saunders Reading's To Make a Poet Black (1968). Just as Williams did, he deems that consideration for the White audience's expectation was not a factor that Black writers had to reckon with in their works. To him, the Black, writer

> ...lived and worked for his own people and discovered to his astonishment that by satisfying them he pleased also a vast but incidental white audience.[71]

This is contrary to the evidence furnished by Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson, both of them partakers in the literary experience of the Renaissance. His statement ignores a literary and historical fact. It ignores the parts that White men like Carl van Vechten and Waldo Frank played in the cultural events of the Renaissance. The same accusation of ignoring the facts in order to sustain a pre-determined view can also be made against him for giving the impression that McKay's militancy as exemplified in "If We Must Die" is the typical tone of Renaissance literature. This ignores other poems that express self-doubt and despair (which one finds even in McKay as well as in other authors of the movement). Finally, Redding praises Jean Toomer for his love of race expressed in Cane without elaborating on what he loves in the race and the quality of that love. He quotes one Paul Rosefeld who says of Toomer:

> He comes like a son returned in bare time to take a loving full farewell of a dying parent: and all of him loves and wants to commemorate that perishing naiveté[72]

to support his view of Toomer's love of the race. It is true that this roughly sums up Toomer's views of the "vestiges" of the past. Cane is not a commemoration of the past, but a dirge to bury it. But one must conclude that Redding does not seem to know that Toomer, Waldo Frank, who patronized Jean Toomer with the publishers, and Sherwood Anderson (both of whom wrote books on Black life), and Carl van Vechten who also wrote Nigger Heaven, as we have noted before, were parts of a literary movement whose aim was to exploit the "exotic" and "primitive" elements, which its followers maintained still survived in the Blacks, to create "a new form of expression" in Western literature. The narrative point

of view of Toomer, the enigmatic structure of his work, the modernist tendency of his language style which often defies interpretation can be linked to this search for the exotic by the White man. Redding, if he did, might have questioned the truth of Toomer's image of Blacks instead of praising his love of the race.

Among other reasonable additions to the criticism of Harlem literature George Kent's is important. In the book, Blackness and the Adventure of Western Culture, (1972)[73], he attempts to relate the works of the Black writers to their social status as middle-class men who had more in common with the White culture they profess to be fighting than they did with the lower class of the race they claim to be defending. This too is the central pre-occupation of Blyden Jackson's essay "Largo for Adonais," only it is applied specifically to Countee Cullen's poetry. Relating the style of Cane to the narrator's alienated position, Kent talks of the tension created by the difference beween the "exiled narrator" and his "range of black characters," and how this might have determined the structure and form and language of the work that make Cane one of the best works of literature in this century, but of little use to the social image of the Blacks. He applies the views to both Claude McKay and Countee Cullen's poems with some justification, with the conclusion that the failures of Renaissance literature in not creating a Black art that spoke to the Black can be traced to the influence of the middle class whose artistic direction undermines its social obligation towards the race. He asserts that "the heavyweight middle class symbols do have their negative side" which undermine the négritude of their works. Quoting Ralph Ellison, Kent elaborates this

to mean that for the Black writer to be himself and fulfill his social obligation toward his race, he

> must achieve a freedom from the mythologies which inform the vision of the white middle class if one is to see fully the contours of the black image.[74]

To a large extent what Kent says is true, but the problem with his book is that he has chosen a critical perspective which is an oversimplication of the complex social circumstances that affected Renaissance literature by narrowing them down to a single point of view. His criticism is too one-sided to be tenable.

This discussion has covered the major emphases in the critical reception of Renaissance literature but it will not be complete without reference to some authors who are important to Harlem Renaissance studies, not so much for the strength of their ideas, as for the part they played in the revival of the fortunes of the literature of Harlem as well as the clarification of certain controversial views and terms that relate to its criticism. The first is Arna Bontemps, particularly his views in the book of essays which he edited, Harlem Renaissance Remembered (1972). Arna Bontemps was a writer in the Renaissance movement, a fact which makes his view, expressed in the essay, "The Awakening," very useful. The essay itself does not contain much more than personal remembrances of the major events of the movement but the title is of significance. It brings to mind the issue of whether or not the movement aimed at "renaissance" in the sense of revival of past values. He talks as if this was one of their aims. Speaking too of James Weldon Johnson's God's Trombones (1927), a book of poetry based on the oral tradition of Black sermons, Bontemps saw its significance as a

manifestation of that looking back, that "discovery of its own deeper roots, that seeing of itself in a widening context."[75] Linked with Alain Locke's use of "renaissance" in similar terms in his review of Color for the journal Opportunity, and DuBois' assertion in his speech "Criterion for a Negro Art" that Harlem writers were representing the past in a form that Blacks could be proud of, one would have to agree that the idea of "renaissance" was not an imposition by later-day critics, but that the hint was passed down from the writers and thinkers of the time. This does not alter the fact, however, that the Harlem Renaissance, contrary to many views, was not a "renaissance" but an attempt at a new birth. Bontemps does not remark this, nor does he note the fact that Weldon Johnson in the introduction to this book talks of the need to reject Afro-American dialect as the medium of expression for Black literature, an advice which goes against the notion of reviving the past. There are many other essays apart from this in the book, Warrington Hudlin's "The Renaissance Re-examined," Larry Thompson's "Jean Toomer: As Modern Man" among others -- but their important commentaries are mostly echoes of the major views of criticism of the Harlem Renaissance.

Another one who has played an important part in reviving interest in Harlem literature is Darwin T. Turner. His compiling of Jean Toomer's works into a complete volume that includes hitherto unpublished works, The Wayward and the Seeking,[76] helped to revive interest in Toomer. His In a Minor Chord, [77] a critical study of the works of Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen and Zora Neale Hurston, is an important contribution to the study of the Harlem Movement, but his theoretical

approach which consists of relating the high points of the works to events in the lives of the authors is slightly off the beat of the sociological approach that has been fashionable in the nineteen sixties studies of Black literature. Unlike Turner, Houston Baker's Singers of Daybreak[78] belongs in theoretical perspective to the sociological approach. He may have gone almost to the extreme, however, in his emphasis on the absolute dependence of Black writers on the White public, producers and critics. He gives the impression that Black writers had no control whatsoever over their works.

> They were moved by white patrons; they had their work modified beyond recognition by theatrical producers, and they were told time and again precisely what type of Black American writing the public would accept.[79]

He supports his claim by insinuating that that was what drove McKay into a temporary self-exile and may be one of the reasons for "Toomer's "silence" after the writing of Cane.

> Toomer did not choose the approbation that a scintillating (if untrue) portrayal of the black man could bring in the twenties nor did he speak sotto voce about the amazing progress the black man had made in American society and his imminent acceptance by a fond white world. (p. 54)[80]

I do not underrate the negative influence of dependence in the literature created by Black writers, but this overemphasis ignores the part played by individual literary preferences of the authors in the final outcome of their works, as well as the influence of group feelings on such issues as what part folklore should or should not play in Black literature.

Finally, one cannot omit what is probably the best, being easily the most exhaustive and detailed critical book so far on The Harlem

Renaissance, Nathan Huggins' Harlem Renaissance (1973).[81] Even this "best" is full of critical problems or rather is bedevilled by problems of political or assimilationist ideology which has clouded his critical perspectives. Like most of the critics of the sixties and seventies, his review of the literature produced by the Harlem Renaissance is solidly based on sociological and historical circumstances that undermined their cultural intentions and compromised their products, forcing them in a pre-determined direction. He is one of the few who denies that Harlem literature represents a "renaissance." He relates the cultural products, literary and artistic, to the fact that the movement was "run" by White men and directed towards the satisfaction of their tastes. He notes, too, the fact that the writers, wrote mostly from within European and White American literary traditions. These run counter to the intention of "recreating" the image of the Black free from the sensational distortion given it by White men. Possibly Huggins does not see the implications, for he goes on to plead for "assimilationist" literature from the Black Americans, believing, as he does, that Black Americans do not have any other authentic culture apart from the American one, and that therefore they should hug it, bloom and thorns. Huggins forgets that what he calls American culture is the one contributed to by the many groups that make up America and every other group has its peculiar culture even if it shares the culture of the dominant group. Huggins writes from an intellectual position that would have railed against the idea of "renaissance" if indeed there had been one during the Harlem Renaissance. One has to conclude then that it seems he has pointed out the weakness of Renaissance literature to

disillusion those who believe in the possibilities of and the need for a Black renaissance. First, he disagrees with the need for Blacks to search in their past or the African past for a more ennobling image of themselves than the one forced on them by the dominant culture. For him, Langston Hughes' advocation of writing in the lanaguage of the common man, that is the Afro-American vernacular, is an advocacy of "provincialism" which "will constrict the vision" and "forever limit the possibility of achieving true art" (p. 308). Harlem literature, he says, is "the voicing of a strange alienation from their culture," the American culture. Because of this he concludes that the "most important gift of the Harlem Renaissance" is "the lesson of its failures." (p. 308) The sum of what Huggins has to say is the acceptance of American culture, hook and line, with the pervasive distorted image of the Black in it. This undermines his whole critical perspective so that whatever he has to say is suspect.

It is thus obvious from all the preceding discussion that a good understanding of the achievements and failures of the Harlem Renaissance requires that we consider the works first in the light of their intended function, that is, as counter-culture. If we start from this premise, we will recognize, as many writers of the sixties and seventies have done, that this function required a different critical technique from the purely aesthetic approach of the idealist school of criticism. As we have seen, many critics have theorized on Harlem literature using the sociological approach. But even this can be subject to subjective misinterpretation. The factors that some critics have asserted with justification as exercising negative influences on that literature have

been denied by others. Williams' denial of the negative influence of White public expectations on Negro writers or of the existence of such expectations is a case in point. Even where men have emphasized the influence of sociological factors, most have not taken all these circumstances into consideration. Most have emphasized one or two. Even in this they have not related their sociological findings to what I think is the final test of the success or failure of the Renaissance effort, the image of the Black man as represented within these works. Many have pointed to the fact of Cullen's reliance on English conventions of poetry and also his use of African materials without questioning his use of them in relation to the image of himself as a Black and the image of Blacks in his poems. This will be the special contribution of this work to the study of the selected works from the Black literary movements -- The Harlem Renaissance and Négritude. By insisting on relating every critical finding to images of the Black the thesis can avoid one major pitfall of many critical works on these cultural movements: the problem of making glossy critical statements and conclusions that have no textual basis.

CHAPTER IV

LITERATURE REVIEW: NEGRITUDE

This thesis discusses the criticism of Harlem literature before Négritude, instead of dealing with their problems simultaneously, not just because one came before the other, but because much more has been done on the Harlem Renaissance. This will help us to better locate the problems of Négritude as a counter-culture because the experiences in both are similar. One finds that the same social problems of literary ideology which plagued the Harlem Renaissance were abundantly present to plague the development of Négritude and its efforts at recreating an African self-image. The colonial situation in Africa which inspired Négritude is much the same as the neo-slavery situation in America at the time of the Harlem Renaissance. The systematic process of deculturation to which Blacks were exposed leading to the false assertion that they have no culture is the same for both. The Black response in both cases, to attempt through cultural productions, as Jean-Paul Sartre has observed,

> ...to compel those who, during the centuries, have vainly attempted, because he was a Negro, to reduce him to the status of the beast, to recognize him as a man,[1]

is basically the same for both movements. Both movements claim, vaguely in the case of the Afro-Americans, to be turning back into Black history to revive Black cultural values. The result in both cases has been a failure to connect meaningfully with the past, resulting in the predictable escape into "universal" cultures, explicitly dreamed of in

the case of Négritude. There is a tendency towards ironic reversal of the goals into the production of assimilationist cultural products instead of the separatist cultural growth that was initially thought of. This is easily understandable in both cases since the writers had to depend on the cultural instruments of the culture they were "rebelling" against. The writers under discussion -- Senghor, Cullen, Toomer, Césaire and others -- not only used the languages but the modes of literary practice in those languages that expressed the culture they were fighting against. And, perhaps the supreme irony of all, the parts that Whites were allowed to, or were openly invited to play in the editorial message of the first issue of Présence Africaine which called on "all men of goodwill" everywhere "to help DEFINE African creativity."[2] Because of all the parallels in the circumstances in which they were both produced, the critical experiences of the one will prove invaluable in understanding the other. The lead in the criticism of Négritude, as for the Harlem Renaissance, was taken by the White man -- namely Jean-Paul Sartre who wrote an insightful introduction "Orphée Noir" to the first anthology of Négritude poetry in 1947; André Gide who published articles in Presénce Africaine, a monthly that operated as the "official" journal of Négritude; Lilyan Kesteloot whose books Les écrivains noirs de langue française: Naissance d'une littérature[3] and Négritude et le situation coloniale[4] both written in the early sixties are among the first, if not actually the first full-length critical studies of Négritude. Unlike the Harlem Renaissance, Négritude, aggressive in its literary assault against Western cultural domination of Africans, was equally vociferous in its attempt to set out the manner

of its critical reception. Léopold Senghor's speeches and essays in this direction make Négritude one of the most fiercely defended cultural movements in history.[5]

Probably because of this, though much critical work has been done on Négritude, most of it, by both Whites and Blacks, has been sentimental, subjective appraisals that often fail to ask and find answers to the right critical questions. On the side of the Caribbeans and Africans, this was understandable. Négritude was the first major body of written literature by Africans, something to be proud of and preserved as something sacred from searching questions. The sentiments it expressed must have been widespread among the colonized, for whom it spoke. To expose its posturings by searching criticism, as Jean-Paul Sartre did in "Orphée Noire" would be regarded as literary sacrilege. On the other hand, the Whites, especially French critics, with their assimilationist attitude towards the Africans could hardly be expected to see illogicalities and contradictions in colonized Black Africans approaching their "ancestral sources," as it were recreating their civilization through the media made possible by French. Thus the emphasis in almost all the major works has consisted of interpreting Négritude works simply as a revival of African cultural values. The nature of what has been revived and how it has been revived has not been closely examined.

This is ironic because as early as November, 1948, Cheik Anta Diop, a nationalist and intellectual, who has devoted his energy to properly examining the true role of Blacks in human civilization, in his historical research that led to the publication of Antériorité des

Civilisations nègres: Mythe ou verité historique[6] has questioned the validity of calling Négritude literature "African" literature in his article "Quand pourra-t-on parler d'une renaissance africaine?"[7] which appeared in Le Musée Vivant. And even earlier, Jean-Paul Sartre had exposed the basic contradiction in philosophy and literary practices of Négritude in his essay "Orphée Noire." These earlier critical essays were either totally ignored in the euphoric critical experience of Négritude or they were rationalized as the last desperate attempt by the colonialist intellectual to hold back the spiritual freedom of the colonized. Essays defending against this onslaught were common in the sixties, the best of which is "A Defence of Négritude"[8] by Abiola Irele, a Nigerian intellectual, published in Présence Africaine. Even Wole Soyinka's often quoted "Tigritude" witticism against Négritude and Ezekiel Mphahlele's[9] objection to the "sentimental racialism" of Négritude were vain attempts to re-orientate the criticism of Négritude towards locating its problems as African literature after the loud proclamations of its achievements. In the locating of the problems, the critical experience of the Harlem Renaissance is invaluable for the understanding of Négritude.

As a comparative study our review starts with articles which link Négritude with the Harlem Renaissance, the Haitian Renaissance and, even before them, with historical events in the United States and Haiti in the nineteenth century and beyond that inspired the search for the unique culture of Blackness. Kesteloot's Les écrivains noirs de langue français the first full length study of Négritude, relates Négritude to the Harlem Renaissance, and vaguely to the Haitian Renaissance, but only

in terms of influences, not as part of the same Black search for re-establishing its unique culture in history. Perhaps re-establishing is not the right word, because part of our finding is that Senghor's or the Afro-American effort at re-establishing the culture in the state at which it was broken off by slavery and colonialsim leads to disillusionment. One can better talk of creating a new Black culture with threads linking with the past. G. R. Coulthard's "The French West Indian Background of Négritude"[10] sees the concept of Négritude, the distinguishing and isolating of Black culture from others as having been developed earlier in history before Césaire used the word "négritude" in Cahier d'un retour. The essay then focuses on a "look at the various and gradual stages, through which négritude passed before becoming susceptible to a clear and definite formulation much as we have seen in Césaire and Fanon."[11] The Senghor- Césaire generation of Négritude", Coulthard claims, (p. 131) are inheritors of the similar efforts that has been going on continuously in Haiti for close to a century before the Négritude as we know it started.

> Perhaps the first stirrings do not appear to bear much resemblance to the fully fledged formulation we have seen in Césaire and Fanon, but in Haiti is to be found the first awareness, the first prise de conscience of the Negro in a white world, and it is the unbroken continuity of the theme in Haitian literature that forces the conclusion that to a very large extent, historically the concept of négritude grew out of the Haitian situation.[12]

Coulthard tells of the Haitian fight for independence and of the survival of French culture in independent Black Haiti: "French political dominion may have been repudiated, French literary fashion were not." But from the middle of the nineteenth century, Haitian

intellectuals sought to break the trend. Anténor Fermin's De l'égalité des races humaines (1885)[13] and Price Hannibal's De la rehabilitation de la race par le peuple d'Haiti (1900)[14] resulted from this effort. Later the works of Jean Price-Mars, such as Ainsi parla l'oncle, which Senghor claims was a major influence, was to link the Négritude of the 30s and 40s with this Haitian background. Coulthard's article leaves out the American connection however. But Okechukwu Mezu's "Black Renaissance and Négritude"[15] turns attention to efforts in the United States similar to and contemporary with the Haitian one, to draw attention to the existence of a unique Black culture. In the works of Wilmot Blyden, A Vindication of the African Race Being A Brief Examination of the Argument in Favor of African Inferiority (1857) and The Negro In Ancient History (1869) he locates the first stirrings of 'négritude' which were to continue through many ventures including the "Return to Africa Organization" for Blacks[16] and the organization of the first Pan-African Congress in 1900 by Sylvester Williams, a Trinidadian lawyer, and Bishop Alexander Walters of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion. The "négritude" activities of DuBois and Marcus Garvey were continuous of these earlier efforts. Other essays follow the pattern of these two essays, perhaps less successfully. Such is Albert Gérard's "Historical Origins and Literary Destiny of Négritude"[17] and Abiola Irele's "Négritude or Black Cultural Nationalism"[18] both of which link Négritude with the Harlem and Haitian Renaissances. Probably on the basis of the common interests and linkages, Roland Bush goes on to talk of Négritude in "Négritude: A Sense of Reality"[19] as encompassing the works of Blacks everywhere that have the aim of creating a unique Black culture.

"...Négritude as a part of neo-African literary tradition must be viewed as applicable to African peoples wherever they may be..."[20] Bruce McM Wright in the same manner lumps all Black American, Caribbean and African writers of the 1920s, 30s and 40s together as "négritude" writers in "The Négritude Tradition in Literature"[21] In the same way, Albert Berrian and Richard Long's anthology of essays Négritude: Essays and Studies[22] that includes studies in Haitian, Afro-American and Caribbean literature is rightly entitled "Négritude" in the belief that they are all connected with the search for Black culture.

The first book to be discussed is Lilyan Kesteloot's Les écrivains noirs de langue français a book whose original edition was published in 1963. It has the distinction of being "the first history and criticism of a new literature,...Négritude." Being the first, Lilyan Kesteloot is apologetic about the fact that "one will notice in it today a certain number of inaccuracies and oversights". She need not have apologized because despite its faults the book is still one of the best on Négritude. As its sub-title "A Literary History of Négritude" suggests, it not only traces the beginning and development of the movement but examines literary influences on it, particularly the influence of the Harlem Renaissance. From the beginning the motif of Négritude as renaissance has been strong. In her introduction in which one can deduce her literary point of view, she asserts that Négritude works "represent a cultural renaissance which is neither French nor even Western" (p. 7). In elaborating further on this claim, she says, "They have only made use of French in order to express the resurrection of their race." In these two statements are contained implications which

should be further examined for a clearer understanding of Négritude. The public claim of the writers that they were returning to their ancestral sources can lead one easily to accept, face value, their poetic statements about Africa. This is what seems to have happened to Kesteloot. To talk of renaissance in connection with these people, it is not enough to find African materials in their poems but to see what relationship the writer has with these materials or beliefs in his present context. To state one's ancestral beliefs when they do not apply to oneself is no revival of ancestral values. For Senghor, who is the most vocal about ancestral values for example, his Christian faith is just as important in his poems as the ancestral beliefs from which he is exiled. In fact, as Mezu was to establish in The Poetry of L.S. Senghor[23] by the time of "Nocturnes", this Christianity is the only reality left to him, since his "kingdom of childhood" symbol of the ancestors, like the dream it had been from the beginning, has vanished. In such a case, the appropriate approach to the poems is to talk of the conflict of identify which is manifest in them.

Another of Kesteloot's statements brings out vividly the truth of this conflict as it relates to cultural or literary tradition.

> These black writers must not be considered one by one, nor should they, in spite of themselves, be considered part of our literature. One would belong to the surrealist school, another would be a disciple of Claudel or Saint-John Perse, still another would fit into a lingering line of naturalists... (p. 7)[24]

The négritude poets, while claiming to be African poets, which they are, on account of their blood, belong in their writing traditions to the French literary traditions. This is what the Société des Poètes in

France recognized when in 1962 they awarded the "Prix des Amitiés" to Senghor saying,

> You are a beautiful French speaking poet, while remaining the poet of your native land and of your race...We rejoice for our culture and for our literature that the President of the Republic of Senegal is the poet of 'Hosties noires', of 'Nocturnes', a poet of profound French culture. (my underlining)[25]

Senghor himself openly acknowledges this in speeches and critical essays. If anything, the Africanness in the poems of Senghor consists of the subject-matter only. But even this, as we shall see when we relate Senghor to French intellectual tradition, was not peculiar to Senghor and his Négritude group. Some critics like Gerald Moore, in his book Twelve African Writers, tried to prove that the rhythm of Senghor's poetry is its Africanness. That this is difficult to corroborate will be obvious when we review the chapter of Senghor's poetry in that book. But let it suffice here to say that Gerald Moore admits, as does John Reed, another critic, in his article "Léopold Sedar Senghor's Poetry",[26] that these rhythmic qualities exist abundantly in Paul Claudel's poetry, a French model that Senghor acknowledges openly as an influence. The point is that from every point of view, apart from that of subject matter, the crude materials from which his art is made, one cannot with confidence prove that Senghor has truly revived traditional African values. To assert that Négritude is a cultural renaissance after reading the poems is to be less than careful enough or to operate with less than a comprehensive critical approach. The "men of culture" whom Kesteloot asserts, with Aimé Cesairé's agreement, are necessary to "help the colonized regain their history", are truly men of "culture only in

terms of their French heritage, and the "history" they are creating is the history of dreams, of a world that only touches peripherally, if at all, the life of the colonized and illiterate Africans. The Caribbean Paul Niger (André Albert Beville) a Négritude associate of Senghor, after visiting Africa could not help but note the difference between their dreams and the African reality for which they had been substituted.

> We have been living an unreal Negro-ness cooked up from the theories of the ethnologist, sociologists and other scholars who study man in a glass case. They had injected this social-scientific Negro with formaldehyde and claimed he was the new specimen of fortunate man.[27]

Kesteloot is aware of this disillusionment. She quotes from the interview with Paul Niger yet insists on a contradictory assertion. Again, one is struck that she does not seem to realize the implication for Négritude literature of the fact that at that time, "A written literature had to be in French if it were to reach anyone" (p. 21). The works can only be directed at the French public or Africans who share their views. Alioune Diop is to admit later in "Political and Cultural Solidarity in Africa"[28] that the works were directed towards the European reading public to whom Africa had to be explained. This, apart from the fact that the writers were reared in French literary culture, from which they could not be separated even if they wished, is one of the major reasons why Négritude literature had to be placed solidly in the French literary tradition. Kesteloot talked of Négritude indebtedness to surrealism, and Senghor's indebtedness to Paul Claudel, John Perse and others, yet claims that Négritude "does not try to imitate the European classics" (p. 11). This openly contradicts

Senghor's claims of being influenced, and delighted to be so, by French writers. Lilyan Kesteloot is operating from a predetermined critical point of view so that she does not allow her conclusions to result from her experiencing of the literature. She seems determined to prove that Négritude represents a "renaissance of the race". Thus she lays down a pattern of criticism which buttresses the claim of Senghor and others of "reviving ancestral values".

A large number of critics simply accept this pattern, taking as their basis, it seems, the assumption that because the poet makes a critical claim for his poetry it must be true. Among the notables that come under this classification is Craig Williamson in the introduction to his translation of L.S. Senghor Selected Poems, Poésies Choisies.[29] The introduction is divided into three sections, the first part subtitled "The Kingdom of Childhood" from a cue from Senghor's assertion that he had lived in that kingdom. It is the impressions gathered from this experience that Senghor has called the African reality. Apparently neither writer nor critic seems aware of the pejorative connotations of this for the Black man, nor of the fact that poetry built on this could be easily faulted on the issue of relevance to the reality of African life in the colonial context. Because it is fantasy, when Senghor returns to Joal in"Nocturnes" as Mezu explains, he could no longer see that kingdom. It had withered with the poet's aging. There is no doubt that there exists such fantasy or more properly such myths about gods and the dead and their relationship with the living in African traditional life. But as Soyinka has explained in Myth, Literature and the African World, such myths and gods are symbolic representations of

man's struggle with and conquest of forces that limit him.[30] The dead cannot be more than previous experiences of the conquest and guidelines for our predecessors, in the same way that we are to leave their and our own experiences for posterity. Senghor and those who follow his lead in this matter are guilty of taking symbolic myths too literally.

Having accepted this fantasy as reality, it is a logical development in both the poet and critic to introduce elements of the esoteric into their critical as well as literary concepts. Williamson accepts the concept of the writer as "magician", "sorcerer", "exercising word power over objects" and "recreating reality" like the magician. Accepting this concept as valid, Williamson seems to say that the primary duty of the writer is to turn his vision into reality. It does not seem to matter whether this vision is of an unreal world or of a world whose philosophy has been, in the words of Senghor, "like us exiled." Williamson acknowledges the unreal nature of Senghor's world:

> As the vision unfolds, it seems less what the poet knows than what the poet commands...The probability of the coming is not so important as the nature of the vision as it is presently unfolding in the poet's mind (p. 7-8).

Despite this realization, however, Williamson still goes on to assert, categorically, that "the new African culture is a black Phoenix rising from an old Heraclitian fire." It is as if, like Kesteloot, he is determined to see nothing but renaissance in Négritude. Like her too, he quotes Senghor's "though we feel in Black, we sing in French" without interrogating the potential danger this apparent contradiction can pose for the Black image in his poems.

Wilfred Cartey's contribution to the study of Négritude is somewhat in line with Craig Williamson. In his introductory essay to Norman R. Shapiro's anthology of Négritude writers, Négritude,[31] we find his attitude towards Black art as idealistic as Williamson's. Reviewing Césaire's poetry and agreeing with that poet's view of art, he asserts that "The word, the drum rhythm, the voice, the cry, all have a restorative cleansing power." This is much in line with the magical concept of art that Williamson espouses. He does not elaborate on this as much as Williamson, however, but like him he accepts the view that Négritude is the revival of the Black's Black heritage without relating this heritage, in quality and volume, to other non-African heritage in the poems. Poetry (Négritude)

> ...becomes at this historic moment for the black man a dramatic entrance into his reality, his history, his social circumstances...history becomes a total thrusting toward the heritage of the black man, poetry the enunciation of this thrust.

But the "reality", "history" and "social circumstances" at that time were a complex that was not thoroughly investigated in African Négritude poetry. It would require the writings of a later generation of French-speaking African writers, Utamsi, David Diop, Mongo Beti, especially in Mission Terminée[32] to bring this out. Négritude was certainly more than "The heritage of the black man." To accept négritude poetry as being mainly this is to fail to interrogate the poetic posturing of Senghor and his group. This is the case again when Cartey accepts Senghor's proposals for the merging of his African civilization with the Western in a universal civilization. Cartey interprets the poems in the light of the above without examining the

relationship between the two in history, in the poems and in relation to the proposed form of the merger. The merger is one of uneven partners in which African values are the lesser. The universalization motif is an escape from the Africanness he claims to be reviving.

Abiola Irele, the Nigerian intellectual, started his introduction to his Selected Poems of Senghor,[33] with a choric affirmation of the assumption of renaissance, "The most obvious character of Senghor's poetry is its overt espousal of African values." He even links Senghor's poetry to the influences of a known traditional poetess, Marõ nne, without elaborating on the specific traditional qualities of the poems. Irele's case is one in which one can see sentimental sympathy for the movement in conflict with the revelations of his critical senses. He has many insightful comments in this introduction that clearly make his position on renaissance unconvincing. The ground of his sympathy is, in fact, brought out in another essay, "A Defence of Négritude", in which he argues that the colonized Africans needed some "sustaining force" in the face of economic, social, political and cultural deprivation. So he argues, anything to combat this alienating process was welcome. This is why he sees Négritude mainly as "an act of disalienation" "carried out by a systematic reversal of white values".[34] Thus the posturings did achieve a desirable result -- disalienation of a sort. One has to agree with him to this extent. But we are no longer in the forties when a searching criticism would have undermined the needed "achievements". To locate the mistakes made at that early stage of written literature now for the sake of a healthier image of African literature is a creative service. Irele located literary contradictions

in the expression of Négritude by Senghor but fails to follow up the logical conclusions from their lead. He rightly observes that -- "Senghor has drawn on his rich and varied experiences of cultures to compose a personal poetic idiom and vision" (my underlining) -- without exploring the implications of this for the return to the "ancestral sources". Such explorations are necessary especially when Irele correctly asserts that

> the dominant influence on his poetry has been exerted by poets who sought to penetrate through the diverse manifestations of the sensible world to an essential unity in a fundamental life of the universe (p. 11).

These are French poets, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Paul Claudel, and Saint John Perse, poets of the symbolist movement who belong to the traditions of a culture that has caused the African to be alienated from himself and his own culture. The undermining force of this situation which has been exposed in Jean-Paul Sartre's Orphée Noire is ignored here. Again Irele is probably the first to point out that apart from the conflict of cultures which has created the crisis of identity in the poet, there is another conflict between the poet as a collective symbol and his personal individuality:

> The peculiar intensities of Senghor's poetry stem from the constant tension between his social individuality and his deeper poetic self, and from his effort to transcend an implied opposition (conflict) between the two (p. 13).

If Senghor thought he was a mouthpiece for his people, as is claimed by many critics, he was soon disillusioned. The fact that his literature could not reach the majority of Africans he claims to represent is proof that if he represents anyone, it is intellectuals like himself. His "universal" panacea for the cultural problems of the Africans, a

solution which is not peculiar since it is echoed in Alioune Diop's editorial in the first issue of Présence Africaine, can only be shared by men like him who can no longer fit into the African cultural context he is "returning" to. But even after all this insight into Négritude poetry, Irele can still say that the cultural dilemma which history imposes on a poet like Senghor, a dilemma which Senghor hides under his poetic postures "does not diminish his sense of loyalty to Africa". One wonders at the truth of this. It makes one suspect that Irele is deliberately refusing to synthesize his findings into a coherent, comprehensive statement.

Sylvia Washington Ba's book The Concept of Négritude in the Poetry of L.S. Senghor is guilty of all the critical faults that we have pointed out in our reviews and perhaps more. For she begins from the assumption that colonialism was a "well intentioned though ill-informed effort to bring light into the darkness". Even if "ill-informed" (p. 3) is meant to show that African civilization was not cultural darkness, other statements follow to show that Ba was not really sure about this. She thinks there is something glorious about French culture leading to the "ultimate result and supreme irony of...political independence for the colonies" (p. 3). She cannot question the nature of the independence nor does she question the implication for Senghor's poetry of the fact that he had a "mastery of French language and culture". She was convinced that is is possible "to achieve a synthesis of inspiration (African cultural needs) and means (and modes) of expression that does honour to both and betrays neither" (p. 4). Like Irele, she talks of "Echoes in Senghor's verse of the improvised song-poems of Maronne (the

traditional poet) and of the profound influence of oral tradition on his poetic expression" (p. 8). When she goes on to elaborate, however, she finds the African qualities to be "a pervasive theme of life forces", (which is not peculiar to African poetry but rather to a way of seeing the world which the Romantics, the Surrealists share with Africa) "colourful dress," "savage rites," "throbbing and frenzied rhythms" (p.45). Furthermore, she talks of images such as "spring" signifying "beginning, awakening, flourishing", as well as the image of blood, concluding that "Blood is truly life-blood for the Black African." The fact is that "throbbing and frenzied rhythms" are not characteristic of Senghor's poetry even where he recommends that they be accompanied by African musical instruments. I even doubt if it is possible since the rhythm of the African beat requires the rhythmic movement and tone variations of African languages which Senghor's French poems are obviously lacking. The characteristic rhythm of Senghor's poetic lines is the gentle majestic flow of long poetic lines often running on in enjambement. The other characteristics which Ba has listed above are not peculiar to African oral literature. Ba is also guilty of accepting Senghor's words without questioning them and applying them to the poems. As such, she assumes that Senghor did "divest himself of all borrowed attire (of French culture)" to create revolutionary literature. One would like to ask, which attire -- the French language? French poetic models? Christian outlook? or some other French intellectual and literary outlook? He still wears them all firmly, as his poems reveal to an objective reader. However, because of her assumptions, Ba is able to see evidence that Senghor discovers the "kingdom of childhood" and

peace for his soul. This is a misreading, a glossing of the surface of the poems. Perhaps the critic is misled by Senghor's statement outside the poems. A more than superficial reading would have revealed psychological stress and conflict beneath the surface self-assurance. On the positive side, Ba remarks on the "contradictions in Senghor's critical statements" which she says can lead critics to contradictory assessment of the poet's works. It is suggested that Ba is one of the victims of such contradictory critical statements. Again quoting from Modern Poetry from Africa, edited by Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier, she rightly notes that Négritude is a bridgehead, a point of departure (p. 22-23)[35] for African written literature. This view she further corroborates by quoting from Mustaphal Bal's "l'homme noire dans la poésie," (published in the June issue of La Pensé, 1962), agreeing that Négritude is the "Childhood of Black (written) Poetry". Both "departure" and "childhood" signify that which may have the seed of perfection but needs to grow to be perfect. Ba does not focus on the elements that make for imperfection.

In contrast to these selected critics who see little conflict and contradiction in the literary practices of Senghor and Négritude writers there are some critics who make the discovery of the contradictions their main focus. In some cases the critics leave off at that stage while others try to relate the contradictions to issues in the poems. One of the most interesting examples of this searching criticism is that of F. Ivor Case in "Négritude and Utopianism".[36] This article is most interesting for the way it starts in the pattern of the "renaissance" critics, asserting that Négritude is an "affirmation of African cultural

values", "preceded by a purification of the harmful aspects of the West European conditioning of the Black which has made him turn against himself" (p. 66). But he also talks of Senghor's poems in which "the passionate love of Africa and of France never seem to enter into conflict" (p. 67), and concludes that Senghor "does not battle against being an assimilado and accepts his cultural message and is proud of it" (p. 71). His thesis after proving that what ought to be contradictory statements on the poems are both valid assessments, each true of some aspects of the works, is that Négritude poetry is basically un-African, contrary to the statements of the writers and of many critics.

> What I am attempting to show is that the concept of Négritude is the direct product of a successful process of acculturation undertaken by the European in Africa. It is an intellectual concept that has nothing to do with the existential reality of the mass of black men. It is the means of integrating alienated man in the security of a myth that he has created for his own benefit and for that of his social class (p. 72).

Even more important than the above is what he has to say concerning Négritude aesthetics as exemplified in Senghor's poetry. Ultimately, the issue of revival will not be decided by what material has been drawn from Africa but on how African is the end product. This brings in the question of aesthetics -- whether it is European or African. Ivor Case brings this into his discussion of Négritude, finding that

> the individualism peculiar to the exercise is the antithesis of the authentic cultural values of Africa where art is for the largest possible group but yet not vulgarized. The oral tradition in literature is a community participatory exercise. Dance and sculpture, by their very nature, are community oriented activities...(The) intellectualization and mythification of the blackman's reality further alienate him from his brothers with whom he can only feel intellectual solidarity (p. 72).

When one has examined the motifs and style and language and world views shared with French writers, one will agree with Case who concludes his essay: "But at best today, Négritude seems no more than yet another of Western Europe's philosophic aberrations" (p. 73).

Paul Ndu in his essay, "Négritude and the New Breed"[37] published in Présence Africaine, 1973, expresses views similar to the conclusion of Ivor Case. Agreeing with the view of Paul Niger, expressed in an interview, that Négritude fails to touch on the contemporary reality of African life, Ndu asserts that,

> Négritude is the poetry of the skin, suffused with skin-deep imagery, fated items of antiquity, uninformed by the harsh realities of a bruised soul or war-torn world (p. 120).

This may not be totally true as Senghor did treat the issue of the War as it relates to the Sénégalese who fought in the second World War in "Hosties Noires" but it is true that the poetic posturings of Senghor were less occupied with the socio-political problems of the less privileged Africans than the problems of the class of intellectuals to which he belongs. It is true too, that the negative images about Africa in Senghor are borrowed from French intellectual traditions as Ndu tries to prove by referring to the book of Eugene Guernier L'apport de l'Afrique a la pensée humaine[38] in which the author, like Arthur de Gobineau did before him, concludes that "African life", both "interior and exterior" is dominated by "emotionality" and its expressive "rhythm", a thesis which Senghor adopted as framework for his poetry. Thus, the very basis of his thought, as Ndu concludes, is French, and his work cannot but be French.

> It is no wonder therefore that Négritude should receive the sanction and support from leading architects of French imperialism since, as an ideology, Négritude contained the seeds of its own destruction -- namely, total assimilation into the European mother culture (p.118).

Rand Bishop's article, "African Literature for Whom? The Janus-like Function of African Literary Criticism",[39] published in Présence Africaine, 1977, makes interesting points not only on Négritude literature but also its criticism. He blames many African critics for using their criticism to explain Africa to the world in the same way that many Africans, including Négritude, writers do. He observes that the goal of Négritude, like the views of some of the writers has been universality in literary standards, the way that Senghor aims at universal civilization. As such, and quoting Alioune Diop in "Political and Cultural Solidarity in Africa", an article we have referred to earlier, Bishop concludes that the works were directed towards Europe. But Bishop goes on to list sociological reasons why at that time of writing it could not be otherwise. There were the problems of publication, and readership which was mainly European, that would probably not accept works not written on their terms. As such, he concludes, that literature was essentially not African. But incisive as this essay is, it could have been better if Bishop had related these problems to the possible influence on the image of Africa that Senghor and others produced. This can easily be done by examining the poems for the poet's representations of Africa and synthesizing them into a coherent statement.

John Reed's article: "Léopold Sedar Senghor's Poetry" published in A Celebration of Black and African Writing, is incisive as it is, but there are more logical implications that can be deduced from his observations which the critic failed to do. For example, he says that "The Poet has to draw and select and shape from the conflicting and incoherent diversity around him" (p. 108). While he does not join the chorus of the "renaissance" critics, he does not say what the implications of these essential conflicts are for his Négritude image. This is also the case when he says that,

> Senghor's cosmos shows great similarities to the two French poets, Claudel, St. John Perse, who are not only direct influences but created their poetic worlds of material that overlap directly with his own (p. 109).

The irony should be obvious here that if Senghor kept to his original aim of "returning to the ancestral sources" he could not have operated the way that the above statement claims. In this regard one is interested to find out at what point in his poetry his "return" changes to an escape into "universalism". Reed does not explore this. Instead, he is content to say that Senghor's work could belong equally to French or African culture.

> I think we should see his poetry as much in its place within this modern supranational tradition belonging to the times of the melting pot, of interacting and conflicting cultures, as belonging to French Poetry or to African Poetry (p. 109).

I have no quarrel with the fact that Senghor belongs more to Western tradition, "the tradition or Whitman, Claudel, Saint John Perse, Eliot, etc." as Reed claims. But Senghor should not delude readers into accepting his "renaissance" claim, and critics should not support it.

Gerald Moore's essay "Assimilation or Négritude", a chapter in his book Twelve African Writers, is slightly different from Reed for the fact that he actually tries to find reasons for playing down the weakness, contradictions and ironies in Négritude literature. For him the reasons are to be found in the historical deprivation of colonialism that "called forth the counter-assertion of Négritude". Moore would exonerate Senghor and the old generation of Négritude writers from blame of cultural dishonesty, though Négritude "was a counter-assertion made very much in the intellectual terms, as well as in the language of the conqueror" because, as Moore explains, Senghor and his generation did not believe that "Their insistence upon African values was not seen by that generation as involving a rejection of what France had contributed to Senegalese tradition." But the issue involved is not so much what France has done through her colonial policy and intellectual tradition to the African psychology and image. Senghor has accepted these as good, hook and line. Instead of reversing that image and the process of damage, he accepts and perpetuates that process through acceptance of the pejorative views of Blacks by Whites in the French intellectual tradition. This is the major fault of Négritude poetry and the critical tradition that has supported it indiscriminately shares some of this fault. Gerald Moore has called for "understanding" and tolerance for Négritude poetry on the grounds "of the materials out of which his poetry and his life have been built". This type of understanding which can still lead Gerald Moore to see Négritude essentially as "a rediscovery of Africa" (p. 23) after the critical understanding he has revealed can only be intellectual self-delusion that is close to

dishonesty. It seems that having determined on the "rediscovery" view, Moore tries to prove it through Senghorian prosody.

> The parallelism of his praise poems, the constant address to the person or object praised, the imagery which continually evokes the history and heroic legends of Senegal, are all features derived from the griot traditions of the regions rather than from anything in French poetry (p. 26).

Without being knowledgeable in the Senegalese "history and legends" in Senghor's poetry one can see, in any case, that the qualities Moore refers to above are common features of the Ode and are not peculiar to African traditional poetry. Moore himself after comparing some poems of Senghor with Claudel's admits that the above qualities also characterize Claudel's poems and therefore Moore concludes that it is more reasonable to regard these characteristics in Senghor as the result of influences from Claudel. Moore raises an important question relating to the issue of literatures as "self-apprehension". He notes that "communion with the dead is central to the renaissance motif in Négritude but asks whether this can be viewed as "embodying what Soyinka has called a genuine medium of 'self apprehension', an untrammelled apprehension of himself as an African". To this question Moore could not give an answer in the affirmative, for a large part on Négritude philosophy is built on ideas about Blacks that have evolved over a long period in French intellectual tradition. Moore has to admit: "Sometimes it (Négritude philosophy) seems to contain a suspiciously large element of apprehension in terms of the other" (p. 29). Moore however, still insists, despite earlier arguments, on proving, against the argument of Reed to the contrary, that Senghor wrote for his people. His argument is that he is popular among Africans. It is true that he is popular,

first for being the first major African writer. Secondly, his image as a spokesman for the colonized has not worn off completely, most readers only glossing the surface meaning of his poems, without understanding the deeper meaning. And again one must not forget that he is a president poet. This is not to say that he is not a great writer. But I hesitate to say that his greatness is due to what he has to say about Africa and Africans. His greatness lies more in what he has added to French culture. His poetry has some validity, but it is not valid for Africans today for the same reasons it was valid in the thirties and forties. Today he should be seen as a pioneer with all the potential for mistakes that is characteristic of first explorers. Moore argues that being a product of "multiplicity of culture influences "Senghor's work must reflect this. One cannot but accept this in good faith, but should that fact make the poet accept the pejoration of one aspect of himself by the others? The French aspect of him has predetermined what he has to say and feel about his Africanness. This being so, it would appear as if the poet is not honest with himself, his art and his African image, especially the way he continues to insist in essay, speeches and conferences that "he was returning to ancestral sources" and seeing the world from that perspective. This is the center of the argument.

S.O. Mezu's The Poetry of L.S. Senghor in which Mezu analyzes the poems, relating their high points to events in Senghor's life is a good critical work. His ideological perspectives come out clearly. The book does not share the familiar view of Négritude as Black renaissance. Against the general run of criticism, Mezu establishes in the chapter on

"Nocturnes" that the return to "the kingdom of childhood" does not lead to peace for Senghor, that Joal, the symbol of that kingdom "will not exist again and perhaps never existed except in the mind of the poet (p. 78). In the chapter titled "Senghorian Aesthetics" he raises issues which are useful indices for a true understanding of what actually happens in Senghor's Négritude: Senghor's habit of interpreting African and African life from perspectives that are foreign including his acceptance of Arthur Gobineau's thesis expressed in his book Essai sur l'inegalité des races humaines 1853 and Gustave le Bon's similar views expressed in Les lois psychologiques de l'evolution des peuples (1896), to the effect that Negroes lack the White races' capacity to reason: "Emotion is Negro" (p. 86). But Mezu merely catalogues these without relating them to the possible negative influences that these could have on the image of Africa that Senghor presents in his poems. Perhaps Mezu's reference points, like Senghor's , are too much in the French literary and critical traditions for him to be deeply aware of the damage these could do to Senghor's Black man. Instead of examining the Africanness of Senghor's poetry, he compares him at various times, in "Nocturnes" alone, with François Villon, Baudelaire, René Chateaubriand, Sartre, Mallarmé, Claudel -- all French poets, without a single reference point from Africa. The reverse which would have disproved the essential Africanness of Négritude would have given Mezu's book a more balanced presentation. If we look at Mezu's concept of the African artist, one would conclude that Mezu is in no position to examine the Africanness of Négritude literature. His notion of the African artist, a "medium" through which art flows, but "exercising no central control"

over his productions, shows a lack of knowledge of African oral literature. It comes from Surrealistic leanings from which Senghor's works also suffer.

Some critics have not merely catalogued the instances of Western influence on Négritude but, have even placed the works of the leading writers, Senghor and Césaire in French literary as well as European intellectual traditions. A. James Arnold, for example, in his book Modernism and Négritude[40] places Césaire's works in the line of development of Surrealism; noting the friendship that developed between André Breton and Césaire when the former visited Martinique during the War; but even before this, Surrealism was already in Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, the first edition of which was published before the war. Apart from this, Arnold notes also the influence of Leo Frobenius and of Nietzsche on Césaire's concept of the use of myth, of the poetic hero, of the liberating power of the poetic will of the poet and of poetry, ideas which are central to Césaire's poetry. By this Arnold questions the validity of regarding Césaire as a Neo-African poet. Arnold however makes no effort to relate his findings to other Négritude poets. François Hoffmann's article "French Negro Poetry"[41] is short and has no detailed analysis but it concludes, like Arnold, that Césaire and Senghor "are among the best French poets of today" (p. 66). Vere Knight's "Négritude and the Isms"[42] starts off by talking about the influences of Marxism and Surrealism on Négritude. However, he says little or nothing on Marxism while concentrating on the influence of Surrealism. But his brief mention of Marxism directs attention to an influence that is not often discussed. The concept of the union of all

oppressed people in a global class confrontation is something that almost all Négritude writers, Césaire, and Diop, Bernard, Dadié-even Senghor's poetry contains this motif - must have picked up from Marxism, whose power to liberate Légitime Défense attests to before the beginning of Négritude literature.

Other critics who have questioned the "blackness" of Négritude poetry include Ezekiel Mphahlele, the South African writer and critic, who in his book The African Image not only repudiates the theoretical, romantic tone of Négritude poetry but argues for placing that whole tradition of literatrure in the French literary traditions where he says it rightly belongs. Bruce McM. Wright in "The Négritude Tradition in Literature," like Mphahlele, cannot see any Black essence in Négritude work. Such an essence would have expressed itself in African language:

> If the African writers uttered their poems and novels in the dialects of their forefathers, perhaps we could see the nerve of Négritude touched and responsible, despite the diluting necessity for translation into some decadent tongue of a dying culture" (p. 2)

Because they did not do this he sees no "négritude" quality in any Black writer whether African, Afro-American or Caribbean. He asks

> Who can we say was the God who gave us the Code of Négritude...
> Not Hughes. He is too simple and straightforward.
> Not Mr. Cullen. He was too classical, too white and happy to be so. M. Césaire has tried to hear the complex message and gave us a subtle translation but his signals are weak and come from a great distance. M. Senghor never gives up.

Wilfred Feuser in 'Négritude: the Third Phase',[43] a lecture published in The New African, undermines what is perhaps the only "African" quality of certain Négritude poetry that has not been

questioned - the motif of "The return to the ancestral sources." He starts his lectures by citing the example of a lecturer who made all his quotations for a lecture on Romantic poetry from Chinese literature. He is convinced that

> ...covers a variety of frequently conflicting tendencies; racial self-discovery, surrealist self-expression, Marxist revolutionary hope and Afro-Christian humanism. Its underlying unity consisted in the eternally romantic return to the sources...(p. 12)

Understandably in a lecture Feuser could not illustrate much from the works of the writers but the work points to the area of Négritude literature that needs critical attention if Négritude literature is to be understood in all of its complexities. This review will end with this quotation from W. A. Jeanpierre "Négritude - Its Developments and Significance":

> If Négritude is, admittedly, rejection of certain aspects of Western Culture, it is nonetheless assimilation of valid Western concepts, and finally transcendence of them as it accedes to the essence of its Africanitude.

The Africanitude he talks about, the Black image and the approach to it varies of course from poet to poet and from one region to another because as Feuser says, "Négritude is subjected to the conditions of time, space and culture." Négritude, like the Harlem Renaissance despite their "Black" subject-matter and the aim of the writers to create "Black" traditions of literature were not essentially Black. Their artistic forms were too heavily dependent on Western written traditions of art for that.

There is no evidence to prove that Négritude writers were aware of the attempt, through criticism, to split Harlem Renaissance works into "Literature" and "ethnic literature," using as a measure the writer's

approximation of the literary ideology of the long established written literatures of the West. It is not impossible however, that they knew. If they knew this, and sought to avoid the pitfall of being accused of producing anthropolcgical work, the best way to do this would be by way of an intense Frenchification of their literary works. Their solid roots in the French literary and academic traditions would mean recognition as "cultured" men (a reversal of the "no-culture"image that has dogged the Black) by well-known and "universally" accepted literary standards of the West. The case of letting those who have belittled them be the judge of whether or not they have attained "culture" again would rear its head, as it did in the Harlem Renaissance movement. Whether this was the reason behind the form of Senghor's poetry or not, it was produced much in line with the Modernist ideology of the West, namely Surrealism. The desire for a non-rational form of literary expression by Surrealism led to the exotic surmising that this exists naturally among primitive peoples. As Mezu has noted in "Senghorian Aesthetics," Senghor's espousal of the theory that "emotion is Negro," a concept which attributes spontaneity of expression to African art and artists is an affirmation of Surrealism's "misconception" of primitive art. This fact has the potential of undermining the aims of Négritude as a counter-culture, compromising the true image of Africa in Senghor's work. However, the French academicians, Jean-Paul Sartre for example, and André Breton, could see that his work belonged to the Surrealist and French tradition. As such, Négritude writers avoided the humiliation of accepting a "double standard of competence" that would have classified their literary works by what would be considered substandard criteria of

art in the way that much Harlem Renaissance literature was treated. Whether or not this notion of universally accepted standards of art was in the minds of Négritude writers, the fact remains that there is a conflict between the high culture that they have created and the image of the Black that has been produced using the medium, ideology and idea of French culture. Many critics have touched on this conflict but none has proceeded logically to the damage that this conflict has done to the image of the Blacks.

CHAPTER V

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE AND WESTERN LITERARY TRADITIONS

As Onwuchekwa Jemie has put it in Langston Hughes: An Introduction to the Poetry[1] there is a central crisis of identity that affects almost every aspect of Afro-American life. It is inherent in the slavery experience, for having been uprooted from the African continent, it became necessary for the Black to ask himself who he now was. Whatever answer he could provide influenced all his institutions. This is what Jemie has called "The Great Black Controversy." It asks

> should blacks be integrated into the body politic (could they?), or should they (could they?) be repatriated en masse to West Africa? First of all, are they Americans, or are they Africans? Or are they some separate new mutation, neither one or the other? Or are they (could they be) all three?[2]

The whole idea of the Harlem Renaissance, the intellectual debates that sustained it, and the works of the writers, are closely involved with the question of identity. The uncertainty as to who he is is the inspiration behind the fascination for Africa we find in the works of Claude McKay[4] and Langston Hughes,[5] even though both writers realize that the connection between Afro-Americans and Africa have been severed for so long that the memory of Africa is at best hazy and vague. The crisis of identity is never really resolved for the Afro-Americans. For example, at the time of the Harlem Renaissance, more than sixty years after Emancipation, intellectuals like George S. Schuyler in "The Negro-Art Hokum"[6] could talk so smugly about their Americanness even as Marcus Garvey's political organization based on the issue of "return to

Africa" for Afro-Americans drew a large following among the Black masses until he was deported back to Jamaica in 1927.[7] As Arthur P. Davis has noted in "Trends in Negro American Literature (1940-65),[8] the issue of identity among Afro-Amnericans sways according to the intensity of deprivation and alienation at any particular point in history. When things are bad socially and economically, then the feeling of his uniqueness within the American system intensifies. One might speculate that the extremity of that intensity expresses itself in the longing for African heritage.

The impression that one gets from reading essays by Afro-Americans, such as W. E. B. DuBois', The Souls of Black Folk, is that the Black American has a double identity, what DuBois calls a "double-consciousness--two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body."[9] The Harlem Renaissance, which provided a forum for probably an unprecedented large number of Afro-American intellectuals to get together on the issue of Afro-American unique culture within America, was an attempt perhaps the first of its kind, to harmonize this double identity into a single, consistent one.[10] Alain Locke's "The New Negro,"[11] which set out the aims of the Harlem movement as well as described the "New Negro" psychology, is a pioneering essay in this venture. It makes reference to the characteristic Black concern for what Whites think of Blacks but dismisses it as something that the New Negro has overcome. His view is echoed by Langston Hughes' essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,"[12] which concludes that

contemporary Black American writers were determined to write about themselves irrespective of the feeling of the White man:

> We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful---. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free from within ourselves.[13]

The freedom he is talking about is probably the one that comes from accepting one's self-identity, that of being Black and writing only from that perspective.

However, the Harlem Renaissance writers were never agreed on how to create the unique Afro-American culture in art. The crisis of identity which we have talked about manifests itself again in Harlem Renaissance literature. As I have noted in the introductory chapter, while Langston Hughes -- alone among Harlem Renaissance writers -- expressed a belief in building Black written literature on the Afro-American tradition of oral literature,[14] Countee Cullen thought that in the face of prejudices against Black folklore, it "would be foolish" to stick to that tradition of literature.[15] James Weldon Johnson, who acknowledges that the only Negro written tradition of poetry was the example of Laurence Dunbar's dialect poetry,[16] observed, for the same reason as Countee Cullen, that the tradition is something to "rebel from rather than exalt."[17] George Schuyler went further than these critics and asserted that Black art is to be found in Africa and that to imply that there is a distinctive Black art in America is "self-evident foolishness." The art forms that are often accepted as distinguishing the Afro-American Black culture -- the blues, jazz, spirituals are to Schuyler expressions of a "peasant"

culture and are what they are not necessarily because they were produced by Blacks. "Any groups under similar circumstances would have produced something similar."[18] Black written literatures to him are "identical in kind with the literature, painting, and sculpture of white Americans: that is they show more or less evidence of European influence." Schuyler concludes his arguments in "The Negro-Art Hokum" by saying that Black Americans are exposed to the same experiences as White Americans and that the Black American is "merely a lampblacked Anglo-Saxon." One can easily fault many of Schuyler's claims but that is not the aim of this work. I am interested here in showing the diverse literary practices of Black literature during the Harlem Renaissance.

One finds more critics in support of George Schuyler's position than one finds for Langston Hughes. For example, Brenda Ray Moryck's "A point of View,"[19] while not denying that Blacks have cultural traits that distinguish them from Whites, insists that the Negro knows as much about "Western civilization as Whites do and therefore Black literature should reflect their knowledge." The editorial comments of the March 1926 issue of Opportunity entitled "A Note on the New Literary Movement," in supporting the position of Moryck and Schuyler add that the same standards of criticism should be used in the appreciation of Black works. The writer, probably Charles S. Johnson,[20] who was editor of that paper then, was emphatic on the need to reject "a double standard of competence" as was usually done for Black works.

> If a book or poem is bad or mediocre it is bad and should not reckon for shroud of race to redeem it. The next step must be adjustments to the normal standards of American writers, the Negro writer will suffer from lack of respect and all that this implies.

DuBois the editor of the other Negro journal that exerted such a tremendous influence on the development of the Black movement, The Crisis, was not so dogmatic. Instead he organized a written symposium in The Crisis: "The Negro in literature, how should he be depicted: A Symposium" that was published in The Crisis from March to August 1926. All this goes to illustrate the confusion that surrounded the attempt to create a Black literature during the Harlem Renaissance.

The confusion is closely related not only to the Black's relationship to the dominant culture around him but also the relationship that Black writers have always had with the literary traditions of the West. Because there was no written Black tradition of art to fall back upon,[21] the first Black writers depended on White models for their works. Phyllis Wheatley's poems for example were influenced by the Augustan style of poetry popularized by Alexander Pope.[22] It was not until the evolution of the slave narratives in the examples of Frederick Douglas[23] that Black writers could be said to have developed a Negro tradition of written literature. This tradition, however, quickly became obsolete with the Emancipation Declaration of 1865. After that Negro writers again had to look to White models for their work. Even the outstanding works of Charles Chestnutt, the first Black writer that was recognized across the racial lines, were built on traditions that had long been popularized by White writers.[24] As noted earlier, The House Behind the Cedars has the basic plot technique of suspense and thematic resolutions that were the ingredients of "the tragedy of the doomed mulatto."[25] Though Chestnutt is credited with dealing with Black problems, the theme of "passing" that he deals with mainly is not one of the social problems

that were are close to the heart of the Negro situation. Moreover, as Chestnutt is to complain in a letter to his editor about his last novel, The Marrow of Tradition[26] he had to operate with the constraints of writing what his readers, mainly White, wanted to read.

> I am beginning to suspect that the public as a rule does not care for books in which the principal characters are colored people, or written with a striking sympathy with that race as contrasted with the White race.[27]

The effect of this is that Black writers at the time that Chestnutt wrote could not write "Black" literature that was honest in dealing with Black issues and could not deal with this in a style that was distinctly Black without looking over their shoulders for the reaction of their White reading public who relished Black stereotypes in literature. In fact, for a long time Chestnutt had to hide his true identity in order to ensure the sale of his books.[28] This critical review of Chestnutt's Conjure Woman, published in the January-June edition of The Critic, 1899 illustrates the truth of this argument. The critic was commenting on Chestnutt's Black character:

> And where is the humor that is supposed to be the characteristic of the old-time Negroes? Evidently the author regards it as a malady which should be either rooted out or ignored. Beyond a faint touch of it here and there Uncle Julius is as grim and as uncompromising in his selfish designs as the whitest rascal ever born. Perhaps these omissions will not strike the average reader.[29]

The critics' approach is prescriptive, not analytical, emphasis being laid on what should be there in Chestnutt's book that is not there. In this way both White critics and reading public undermine the "Black" qualities of Black writers' works on Black life, by perpetuating narrow

expectations on the Black writer and thereby forcing him to write according to acceptable or saleable patterns.

The experiences of Paul Laurence Dunbar are different from those of Chestnutt but they reflect some other aspects of the problems faced by the Black American Writer. Unlike Chestnutt, Dunbar was able to create in "dialect" what has been referred to by James Weldon Johnson as the "only negro tradition of written literature."[30] But this achievement raises interesting questions. When Dunbar wanted to publish other types of poetry written in standard English he met with opposition such as he is to complain of in the poem "The Poet."

> He sang of life, serenely sweet
> With, now and then, a deeper note
> From some high peak, nigh yet remote
> He voiced the world's absorbing beat
> He sang of love when earth was young
> And love, itself was in his lays
> But ah, the world, it turned to praise
> A jungle in a broken tongue.[31]

Later, in an interview conducted by James Weldon Johnson, he said that he did not set out at the beginning to write dialect poetry:

> you know, of course, that I did not start as a dialect poet. I simply came to the conclusion that I could write it as well, if not better, than anybody else that I knew of, and that by doing so I should gain a hearing. I gained the hearing and now they don't want me to write anything but dialect.[32]

The reason for Dunbar's dislike of the image that dialect poetry gives him is to be found in the "critical prejudices" that James Weldon Johnson complains of in "The Dilemma of the Negro Author." Langston Hughes is to describe the situation even more succinctly:

> here are our problem: In the first place, Negro books are considered by editors and publishers as exotic. Negro material is placed, like Chinese material or Bali material or East Indian material into a certain classification...

> The market for Negro writers, then, is definitely limited as long as we write about ourselves. And the more truthfully we write about ourselves, the more limited our market becomes. Those novels about Negroes that sell best, by Negroes or Whites...are almost always books that make our black ghettos in the big cities seem very happy places indeed, and our plantations in the deep South idyllic in their pastoral loveliness...When we cease to be exotic, we cease to sell.[33]

The very reason Dunbar's dialect poetry was a commercial success and was given recognition in academic circles was the one that made him hate it. They were in a way a poetic affirmation of the White image of the Black man. Dunbar probably did not write with that aim in mind, for he laments in a letter to an English friend about the "irrevocable harm" that "the dictum laid down regarding my dialect verse" by Dean Howells did to his poetic image.[34] Howells, expressing what appears to be a common view among the White readers, had said in the introduction to Dunbar's Lyrics of Lowly Life[35] that

> ...there is a precious difference of temperament between the races which it would be a great pity ever to lose, and that this is best preserved and most charmingly suggested by Mr. Dunbar in those pieces of his where he studies the moods and traits of his race in its own account of our English. We call such pieces dialect pieces for want of some closer phrase, but they are not dialect so much as delightful personal attempts and failures for the written and spoken language. In nothing is his essentially refined and delicate art so well shown as in those pieces which, as I ventured to say describe the range between appetite and emotion, with certain lifts far beyond and above it, which is the range of the race.[36] (my underlining)

The view of dialect it describes, and the limited range of subject matter, which as it implies, the dialect is capable of expressing along with the impression given that the narrow range of themes is all that Negro life is capable of yielding to the writer, leave the impression that through dialect poetry Howells and men like him are seeing examples

of "primitive" art, primitive used with its derogatory connotations. This probably explains why the White reading public and the publishers that served it were so eager to publish dialect poetry and not Dunbar's poetry written in standard English. It explains too why Black critics from Weldon Johnson in the preface to God's Trombones,[37] Cullen in Caroling Dusk[38] and Charles Johnson in "The Education of the Negro Child[39] thought it was better for the Black image to avoid the literature of the dialect. But there is an irony in rejecting folk literature like this. Black folk literature is the only literature that can be described as directly Black. And for a people trying to recreate a "Black" literature and image, the folk literature was an invaluable asset, most especially on account of its artistic forms.

The experiences that Chestnutt and Dunbar had with White critics are valuable in helping us to understand how White reaction to Black works forced Black writers to choose certain themes, adopt certain perspectives that were not really theirs, and even choose forms and literary techniques to guarantee that the works would be published and read. Through its critics, its publishers and even White patrons of Black artists, the White reading public, as Armitjit Singh says in The Novels of the Harlem Renaissance,[40] did "dictate" artistic taste to writers of the Harlem Renaissance. This, however, has two potential and contradictory effects on the Black writer. On the one hand, it forced a writer like Dunbar to write dialect poetry "against his will" by dangling the possibility of commercial success before him: Singh says for example that "many black writers" were made "keenly aware of the commercial possibilities of the primitivistic formula."[41] On the other

hand, the critical reception of Black works and especially the influence of critics like Waldo Frank[42] and Sherwood Anderson[43] on Toomer, for example, had the effect of pushing the Black writer into the Western literary traditions, "mainstream of American literature" as it has been called. Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer and Claude McKay were probably influenced in this way.

Whichever way the Black writer chose, it boiled down to the basic relationship with the dominant culture around him. Stephen Bronz succinctly sets out the detail of this relationship in Roots of Negro-Racial Consciousness, giving reasons why Black writers of the Renaissance could not ignore the larger group in their bid to produce a counterculture:

> The very existence of the Harlem Renaissance depended upon white recognition and approval; since the negro-book buying public was limited, the interest of white publishers, critics and readers was necessary for financial maintenance. White approval also was necessary because a main purpose of the Harlem Renaissance was to prove to whites that Negroes could be cultural peers.[44]

James Weldon Johnson, a writer and a leading thinker in the Harlem Renaissance, corroborates this view by his assertion:

> I judge that there is not a single writer who is not, at least secondarily, impelled by the desire to make his work have some effect on the white world for the good of his race.[45]

The desired effect on Whites may vary in emphasis from one author to another but one must conclude, from the wholesale rejection of dialect literature by important writers of the Renaissance, that there was a desire to impress the White world with the Negro's ability to create "high culture." The desire of Black intellectuals that their works be judged by standards of criticism used for White works is a good

indication of this. There is nothing wrong with this desire except that as one sees in Elizabeth lay Green's The Negro in American Literature, to impress White critics with Negroes' artistic ability the Black writer was expected to underplay his concern for Negro social issues in literature, and be apparently concerned with form and technique in art. Yet to do this was to seriously undermine the Black qualities of Black writings.

At every turn the Black writer of the Renaissance faced obstacles that undermined his desire to create Black works. He could not explore the traditional forms of Black art for his own works without the risk of his work being called "Negro" work and inferior even by Black intellectuals.[46] Yet the White models which might give him recognition as a serious artist demanded that he not deal honestly with concrete Black experiences. There was no common resolution to these artistic problems. Each writer resolved it as best he could. That is why there are many diverse views and literary practices in the Harlem Renaissance.

The above considerations indicate the dilemma faced by the the Black writer trying to recreate a Black tradition of art. They also show reasons why the Black writer was more likely to be inclined towards the "advantages" of assimilating into the "mainstream" of American literary traditions in literature. There are reasons to believe that Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes were fully aware of the artistic choices open to them and that their artistic positions were taken after due consideration of those choices: Jean Toomer wanted to write about Black life, but at the same time he wanted whatever he wrote to be a Black contribution to Western culture;[47] Langston Hughes was

aware of the critical prejudices he was going to run into preferring the exploration of Black artistic traditions for his works to following Western artistic traditions, but he chose the former; Cullen, on the other hand, who thought that it would be "foolish" in the face of WHite prejudices against oral artistic forms to use them in his works, preferred to place them solidly within the mainstream of Western literary traditions. Their works, as Alain Locke explains in his theory of the "New Negro," mark an unprecedented level of preoccupation with Black experiences and furnish evidence of a new stage of Black self-awareness.[48] Their works differ, often immensely, in the image of the Black they create, the differences having to do basically with what type of Black life each thinks it is appropriate to treat, and in what artistic forms it should be done. Langston Hughes, who was more concerned about a true representation of Black life, treated the life of the lower class of urban Negroes, using the art forms of the blues, jazz and the spirituals.[49] Jean Toomer treated the life of both rural Blacks in Georgia and Black urban life but in a style that combines the emotive, impressionistic attitude and style of Romanticism and the imagist style of Modernism. Countee Cullen, probably the most reflective of the Renaissance poets, preferred to deal with issues that pertained to the cultured life of the Negro middle class, in a style that reflects the artistic spirit and philosphies of the Romantics and the metrical style of Augustan Neo-Classicism.[50] Except in Langston Hughes' works, these Black works depended on forms of expression that are clearly alien to the Black experiences being described. One can, indeed, talk of the forms of expression being in conflict with the

subject and thereby undermining the possibility of creating a Black artistic tradition that is a counter-tradition to the Western literary one. This observation holds true for Négritude too. Though the romantic fascination towards things Black that we see in the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude literature indicates a "pride" in Black writers in the race, the root of that fascination and the forms of its expression, including its images, are derived mainly from Western literary and intellectual traditions.

Both the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude share some common attitudes to the Black race that derive from Western influences. Though this chapter is devoted to the examination of Harlem Renaissance poetry, it is useful, for the comparison of the works of the two movements, to examine here the source of the Western influences which they share, before going on to the analysis of the works. This will help us to show the essential similarities in the views of the European movements that influenced the two Black movements. For example, the movement whose influence critics have acknowledged on Négritude, Surrealism, is hardly ever related to Romanticism, which influenced Countee Cullen and Toomer. Yet the emotive attitude to life in Surrealism is the same as that of Romanticism. The emphasis on the surreal as against the surface reality of things is the same for both.[51] Also the fascination with "primitive" existence for its examples of the uninhibited life of the emotions is similar in both cases.[52] This led Romantics to relish and idealize the rural life "the noble savage," and Surrealism to be drawn towards African culture where primitive existence was still to be found.[53] And perhaps more important than these, since it relates to what Senghor

regards as the essence of African culture, is their common belief in the spiritual interconnection between all objects of existence through a spiritual essence that links all together. I am not arguing for the existence of an African theory of Romanticism. The African artists do not theorize or philosophize on their culture the way the Romantics and Surrealists did. Rather, their views of existence are inferable from the works of art themselves. Their beliefs simply inspire the works of art. But, for Senghor for example, the Romantic and Surrealist assertion of the spiritual interconnection between all objects of life is an echo of a quality that already exists in African culture. That Senghor then goes on to philosophize on these beliefs and on images that are often used by the Europeans in many of his essays[54] is an indication of the influence of Romantic and Surrealist philosophizing, and John Reed has rightly remarked that even when Senghor is talking about African literature, he describes the arts in Surrealist poetics.[55] One can talk then of the Romantic-surrealist (and African Romanticism) connection of Négritude poetry.

The Romantic movement in literature has a very large number of poets, probably no two of whom are closely alike. The emphasis here will be on the features that link them together, especially their theory of poetry. The essence of Romanticism in poetry is that it is a revolt against the neo-Classical tradition of the poetry of the Augustans with its strict notion of poetic form and conventions,[56] and its emphasis on the proper subject of poetry as the observable realities of life[57] as against the free play of a poet's fancy. The Augustans therefore valued the power of reason over that of the emotion[58] and were more concerned

with the life of the community than with individual experience.[59] They were more concerned with satiric observations on life around them that with lyrical reflections on existence. Among major concerns, Augustan wit focused on urban manners and life rather than of rural life. Romantic poetry revolted against all of these tendencies.

In place of the analytic tendencies of the Augustan poetry of reason, the Romantics, in Keats' words, preferred the poetry of "Negative Capability, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact or reason..."[60] Their poetry is one of reflections and their typical poetic form is the lyric. The Romantics did not have the Augustan respect for prosodic or metric conventions. Willian Wordsworth says in defense of the rejection of many poetic conventions that the Romantics were "experimenting with the language of men," the language of everyday life, unrestrained by poetic laws.[61] The Romantics first started the conventions of the "free verse" which the surrealist developed in their own notion of "automatic writing," the type of free verse which was subject to no control from the outer consciousness of the writer. Toomer, Césaire and Senghor were to use various versions of free verse in their poetry.

Perhaps the most important link between the Romantic poets is their advocacy of the use of the human imagination in literature. For the Romantic, the surface reality of things is only a part of the greater reality, the surreal, to which it is connected. The surface reality through man's sensory experiences of it should lead the poet to the greater spiritual reality underneath it. Shelley, echoing similar

beliefs of other Romantic poets in "A Defence of Poetry"[62] imbues the imagination with the ability, the only one available to man, to lead to this underlining reality:

> lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar; it reproduced all that it represents, and the impersonations clothed in its Elysian light stand thence forward in the minds of those who have once contemplated them, as memorials of that gentle and exalted content which extends itself over all thought and actions with which it co-exists."[63]

But the imagination is even more important than this, for it not only reveals the underlying beauty of things, but through it, as John Keats says, the poet can project into all objects of nature and live the lives of the objects without losing his own identity. It is not surprising that the language of the Romantics is not the language of analytical understanding but the language of sensations. To "live the lives of others" is to experience them emotionally. For the Romantics, emotion and the imagination are inseparably connected. Thus Wordsworth sees poetry primarily as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions,"[64] and the poet is one that is imbued, more than others, with the ability to experience the lives of others emotionally and imaginatively.[65] The notion of poetry as a self-expressing mechanism, "spontaneous overflow" is even further stretched by Shelley who believes,

> poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of will. A man cannot say "I will compose poetry." The greatest poet even cannot say: for the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness: this power arises from within, like the colour of a flow which fades and changes as it develops.[66]

Every one of the central concepts of Romanticism is echoed in the Surrealist philosophy of poetry. The surrealists have the Romantic

distrust of reasoning.[67] For them, only the life of sensations, which is possible through the imagination, is real.[68] That is why Surrealists attach primary importance to the place of emotion in poetry.[69] Emotion, in which children, "primitive peoples and the insane exult," are indications of the powers of the imagination. But the imagination is valued, much as by the Romantics, because through it the poet not only penetrates the surface reality to the underlining spirit beneath, but the poet can be a part of all things since, as Surrealists believe, there is a spiritual unity of all things, which unity is distorted by the analytical faculty of man.[70] Like the Romantics, the surrealists dislike the traditional language of poetry because it is the language of reason that cannot penetrate beneath the superficial surface of things. Their substitution for this is their own equivalent of Romantic "free verse," only in the case of the surrealists it is no longer "the language of men" but the language of the psyche freed from the restraints of reasoning.[71] Surrealists' free verse is a systematic disordering of the syntax of ordinary language, or the pattern of the language of the soul which does not correspond with the syntax of the language of reason. From this it is just a step to the Romantic notion of "poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." The notion of Surrealist automatic writing "in which the poet exerts no control over the flow of language" is similar in every way to Shelley's definition of poetry as Self-sustaining and self-expressing. Finally Surrealism and Romanticism share the concern with individual experience as against the experience of the community. However, in both movements, the individual, the poet in most cases, is seen as symbolic of mankind.

For example, Wordsworth's nature experiences which are intensely personal are viewed as exemplifying what nature can do for anyone who is close to her. In Surrealism one can see the example of the individual also as the meeting point for the group or even for mankind as in the example of Cahier d'un retour au pays natal where Césaire's individual personality gradually merges with that of the Black race and finally with that of the whole of mankind. Surrealism in essence is like Romanticism, and Robert Short has rightly acknowledged this when he describes surrealism in "Dada and Surrealism" as having "its roots in Romanticism."[72]

There are, however, a few elements in which Romanticism differs from surrealism, unless we regard the surrealist fascination with exotic "primitive" cultures as the equivalent of the Romantic fascination with the past. In their reaction against the boredom of contemporary life, the Romantics turned to the past: Byron to the history of his Scottish ancestors, Keats and Shelley to Greek romances and myths; and all of them in addition, turned to Nature. One might add that there is a pervasive mood of sorrow in Romantic poetry. This probably has to do with the nature of the themes they dealt with. The revolt against contemporary life left the Romantics with a general feeling of ennui which finds expression in their poetry: a feeling of loss of the moral values of the past, and of personal losses, morbid pre-occupation with death, of love unrequited leave a despondent note that pervades Romantic poetry.

The influence of the Romantic-Surrealist concepts of poetry on the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude varies from one individual writer to

another. Cullen openly accepts the Romantic philosophy as the basis of his poetry,[73] just as Césaire does for surrealist philosophy.[74] Toomer does not express his indebtedness to these literary movements, but his attitude to the Black culture of Georgia in Cane is nothing short of Romantic both in his idealization of that culture and the impressionistic style of his expression of it. In Senghor, however, one faces the problem of determining whether or not his relationship with Romanticism and surrealism was one influence. Senghor does not deny that he has read much of French poetry. He even says he has imitated to a considerable extent,[75] but every time he talks of Western literature as in the essay "Jeunesse de Victor Hugo"[76] or "Saint-John Perse ou poésie du royaume d'enfance,[77] Senghor's emphasis is on the aspects that Western literature shares with oral African literature that he knows. For example in "Jeunesse de Victor Hugo," Senghor says,

> Je comparerai encore Hugo a nos poètes populaires d'Afrique,aus griots"[78]

and he goes on to see Hugo in terms of the poetics of an African Griot.

> Comme nos initiés, il a vecu son experiences mystiques."

But as I have indicated earlier, Senghor's manner of describing his African culture and the images he uses are those of an outsider. Even the fact of having to describe himself as Black and beautiful, in ways in which the African operating within his own culture and talking to Africans would not have had to do, means that he was operating from perspectives alien to his culture. The perspectives are basically Romantic. Thus, one must see Senghorŝ relation to the Romantics in terms of adopting their models.

Jean Toomer's poetic success has much less to do with the Black qualities of his art than with the fact that Cane was one of the first Negro classics recognized and acclaimed as such by men of all colors and races. The reviews by Black critics make this clear. Montgomery Gregory in his review of Cane in December 1923 issue of Opportunity talks ecstatically of the book as "verse, fiction and drama fused into a spiritual unity, an aesthetic equivalent of the Southland. It is not a book to be intellectually understood; it must be emotionally, ecsthetically felt."[79] And Gorham B. Munson in "The Significance of Jean Toomer" in the September 1925 issue of Opportunity after praising the "subtle command of music" and of language, concludes:

> He is a dynamic symbol of what all artists of our time should be doing, if they are to command our trust. His way is not the way of the minor art master, but the way of the major master of art[80]

Even though both articles praise his treatment of Black experiences, the enthusiasm is more for the fact that through Cane Toomer has proved that a Black man could take his place among the great writers of the world. But it is significant to note that Toomer achieves this stature by fusing Black themes with forms adopted from the Modernist developments around him, developments that are themselves based on the fusion of the Romantic emotive attitude to art and the imagist style of the Symbolists.

Jean Toomer's literary friends were among the leading American Modernist writers: Hart Crane, Sherwood Anderson, Waldo Frank.[81] The last two were particularly influential in getting Cane published. Both Anderson and Waldo Frank had interests in portraying Negro life and both

wrote books in which they attempted to do this.[82] This is interesting for the critic who is trying to place Toomer in a specific literary tradition. While portraying Negro life, they remained essentially Western Modernist writers. Their interest in the negro, as Anderson says in a letter to Toomer,[83] seems to stem from the Western vogue at the turn of the century for the primitive and the exotic in art.[84] Their influence on Toomers's Cane is probably responsible for the artistic perspective Toomer assumes in the book. Using the words with which Toomer describes Anderson's failure in his attempt at protraying the Negro in Winesburg Ohio, one can say that Toomer's own attempt at portraying the Negro has the weak point of "being about the negro but not from the Negro."[85] Toomer examines the Negro as an outsider would do with something that fascinates him from the distance. It is easy from the many articles that have been written on it to prove that Toomer's perspectives were taken from alien artistic forms and intellectual thoughts about the Negro.

For example, Alice Poindexter Fisher in her article "The Influence of Ouspensky's Tertium Organum upon Jean Toomer's Cane," has been able to link the works of Jean Toomer and his literary friends Hart Crane, Waldo Frank, Gorham Munson, and Kenneth Burke to the mystical influences of Gurdjieff, the oriental philosopher whose ideas were later to take Toomer away for some time from creative writing. His ideas were the inspiration behind Peter Ouspensky's book, Tertium Organum - A Key to the Enigmas of the Word.[86] The cosmic concerns of Cane which run through such motifs as the destructiveness of a technological age and the need for cosmic salvation are derived from this influence. It

appears then that Black experiences were not the main interest of Toomer, but that he was using the idea of a dying Black civilization to illustrate a cosmic view derived from his mystical studies. Victor A. Kramer has drawn attention to the possible influences of Hart Crane's poem "Black Tambourine" on Cane in his article "The Middle-Kingdom of Crane's 'Black Tambourine' and Toomer's Cane[87] The similarities lie in the perspectives that both artists have on Black destiny, the broad structuring in those works of the Black man's history into the Past, the Present (the Middle Kingdom) and the Future and what Kramer describes as "the Whitmanesque optimism of Waldo Frank" which they both share.[88] When one considers that Toomer and Crane were friends and were both connected with the mystic Gurdjieff, one is not surprised at the similarities. But the main significance for us is that Hart Crane's "Black Tambourine," though it is about Blacks, would not be considered Black literature. Toomer's treatment of Black life must be understood as part of a larger fascination of a group of Modernists with Black life. Toomer himself is quoted by Kramer as saying in a letter to Gorham Munson that "Sherwood Anderson, Waldo Frank, Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg were the only modern writers who immediately influenced him."[89] Darwin J. Turner in his introduction to Cane affirms that:

> For...two years (after 1920) he studied the literature of Waldo Frank, Sherwood Andersin, Van Syck Brooks, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg and the Imagists.[90]

Toomer is even more specific about the influence of Sherwood Anderson in a series of letters exchanged between the two authors. In a letter written on December 22, 1922, quoted in Darwin T. Turner's "An Intersection of Paths: Correspondence Between Jean Toomer and Sherwood

Anderson," Toomer says of Anderson's prose work: "Winesburg, Ohio and The Triumph of the Egg[91] are elements of my growing.[92] It is hard to think of myself as maturing without them."[93] The fascination that Anderson has for Toomer lies in what Toomer calls "a golden strength...that can come from nothing less than a creative elevation of experience," in the images that are "clean, glowing, healthy, vibrant," Anderson's "Yea! to life...in our medley of harsh discordant sounds," in the near "religious function" of his art, in the religious "spiritualization of the immediate experience."[94] These qualities are to be found in Toomer's Cane. Toomer's criticism of Anderson's efforts at creating the Negro in a letter written to Anderson on the 29th of December, 1922, contains some valid self-criticism that is useful in assessing the "Blackness" of Toomer's Cane. He criticizes Anderson's efforts for failure to create the Negro, for writing about him instead of writing "out of him": "...an emotional element, a richness from him, from yourself, you have artistically woven into your own material."[95] This effort creates Negroes that are "unreal" in the same way that Toomer's Negroes, beautiful as they are, are products of his poetic imagination, too imaginative to be real. It is part of the search for the exotic in literature. It is on this score that Toomer is distinguished as a modernist writer, a man who uses language not for mere communication, but to explore the depth of the surreal, to express the inexpressible. The rural life of Blacks was a gate through which he entered the surreal of modern existence. Toomer had expressed concern to Anderson about the "contributions of the Negro to the Western World." Cane fulfills the double function of being a Negro work and yet a negro

contribution to the Modernist movement. This double image is brought out vividly in Sherwood Anderson's appreciation of Toomer the artist in his letter of January 3, 1924 to Toomer:

> You I am sure belong to us, nervous distraught us moderns, and it is quite wonderful to think you belong also to the men I say working on the docks, the black men.[96]

The quality that Toomer shares with Anderson is the ability which Ernest Boyd has described so well in his introduction to Anderson's Winesberg, Ohio:

> The impression of surface realism is reinforced by that deeper realism which sees beyond and beneath the exterior world to the hidden reality which is the essence of things.[97]

It is this which has necessitated the Modernist tendency of "lyrically, impressionistically fusing concrete details of setting with suggestive, symbolic images."[98]

Anyone who wants to prove that Cane is Toomer's attempt to revive Afro-American culture has Toomer's own claim to support him. He was afraid that the Black folk spirit he had seen in Georgia was on its way out.

> The folk-spirit was walking in to die on the modern desert. That spirit was so beautiful. Its death was so tragic. Just this seemed to sum life for me. And this was the feeling I put into Cane.[99]

This feeling is most explicitly evident as the inspiration of the poem "Song of the Son."

> Now just before an epoch's sun declines
> Thy son, in time, I have returned to thee
> Thy son, I have returned to thee
> In time, for though the sun is setting on
> A song-lit race of slaves, it has not set
> Though late, O soil, it is not too late yet
> To catch thy plaintive soul, leaving, soon gone
> Leaving, to catch thy plaintive soul soon gone

This is one of the rare straightforward lyrics in Cane, probably because it is a statement of intention. The poet or writer (because of the controversy over whether Cane is poetry or prose) goes on, not so much to describe the rural life, but to give us his own imaginative experiencing of the rural life and rural characters of the Black community. We see humans and objects mostly as they affect the poet. Karintha, the heroine of the first prose sketch, is idealized to the level of the superhuman: "her sudden darting past you was a bit of vivid color, like a black bird that flashed in light," "Karintha's running was a whir. It had the sound of the red dust that sometimes makes a spiral in the road." "her voice, high pitched, shrill, would put one's ears to itching," "innocently lovely as a November cotton flower," "She who carries beauty, perfect as dusk when the sun goes down." By these impressionistic images, Toomer tries to express something deeper than the surface, something inexpressible. This is the pattern with the female characters from rural Southern Georgia -- with Fern in "Fern", with Carma in "Carma." There is that indestructible element deep down within the Negro woman. Incidentally, one does not have that same feeling about the men, except in the archetype of the Negro ancestor Father John in "Kabnis." Elsewhere, men are described as the scourge of female beauty, innocence and power. In "Karintha" and in "Fern," the men are presented as preventing the fruition of female "power." This, however, serves an artistic purpose. The poet balances his idealization of aspects of rural life with mention of the dangers, the racial bigotry and lynchings, and above all the courage and power of survival of the race symbolized by Father John. In addition, the echoes of Black

spirituals and work songs such as "Cotton song," and the chorus "White man's land" which punctuate "Kabnis" reinforce the impression of life in rural Black Georgia.

However, in dealing with the question of renaissance some other criteria must apply apart from content or subject-matter. Toomer is making use of Black materials to create works of art that are basically non-Black. As Robert Felgar has noted in his article "Black Content White Form," the tendency among Black writers to use traditional Western literary forms to mould Black experiences militates against the Black qualities of their works. Felgar emphasizes the lack of Black forms in their works:

> lack of structural innovation will severely threaten the status of these writers as Black authors exploit existent and nonexistent forms appropriate to non-white experience.[100]

But the problem goes beyond that. For when a people's literature moves from the oral state to the written, the traditional relationship between the artist and his community changes. Since forms of arts are determined by that relationship, the forms themselves will change. It is for this reason that it is inadequate to talk of the revival of a people's values outside the forms that express them. As Robert Langbaum has stated in The Poetry of Experience,

> Form is a better index of a tradition than subject-matter in that subject matter is often controversial it is often an index of what people think they believe, whereas form is an index of what is believed too implicitly to be discussed.[101]

Toomer's artistic position is evident from the beginning of Cane. He is the outsider, particularly in the first section of the book where the emphasis is on Black culture in Georgia. Where he becomes a participant

in "Fern," communication between him and Fern breaks down and he moves away from the community. Even in "Kabnis" where he comes to trace his roots, the emphasis is on the hero as outsider. Thus he has to write "about the negro," not "out of the negro." This situation reflects well the communication gap between Toomer the poet and his subject -- the Negro community in Georgia. That community could not be his audience. Cane cannot be a product of a communal artistic participation. This is probably true of the other Black American poets of the Renaissance except, to a lesser extent, Langston Hughes, whose poetic forms and subject find their sources in Afro-American traditional poetry.

Robert Felgar argues that the form of Cane draws from the oral tradition of Black America.

> The arrangement of the different parts of Cane, sketch, anecdote, short story, poem novella-drama, within a tripartite division (rural Georgia, Washington, D.C., and Chicago, rural Georgia again)...contributes to and advertises the tentativeness, the irresolution, the frustration of Black experience.[102]

He has set out the structure of the work well. But he is falling into the mistake of confusing the spatial movements of the story with artistic form. The spatial movement may coincide with the experience of the Black man from rural life to urban life and the need to investigate those rural roots for the purpose of self-awareness. This affects the structural movement of the story. But it is not to be confused with the poet's attempts to create from the artistic possibilities of prose narrative, poetry and drama, a form which is not any of them but a fusion which supersedes each of them. It is a form which depends not on language as a medium of one to one communication but on the limitless

possibilities of the suggestiveness of words both in themselves as individual words but also in the syntactic relationships with each other, with each and every one of the others in the work. That is why Cane is not just "sketches, stories, poems, novella-drama," but a single work whose form has defied classification. For example, a poem like "Georgia Dusk" is not an isolated piece. Its full meaning depends on the accumulated repetitions of recurrent images from all of the earlier sketches and stories and poems. It gathers to itself all the latent meanings of these images and passes them on to later pieces, so that the whole work is a web of interconnected images and symbols reinforcing one another's meanings. "The setting sun" with its beauty of "flashing gold" "passively darkening for night's barbecue" reminds one of the "beauty" of the rural south, as well as the beauty of the women that face their greatest danger when they are at their most beautiful. "The barking hounds" and the image of "an orgy for some genius of the South" reiterate the violence of racial bigotry which recurs again and again. Yet in the middle of this is the "making of folk-songs from soul sounds." The "sawmill emitting smoke" and "pyramidal sawdust pile" remind one of the mechanical civilization that threatens humans and nature with destruction as it has done in the past:

> where only chips and stumps are left to show
> The solid proof of form domicile.

The African heritage from which the Black men developed comes up

> ...the men with vestiges of pomp
> High priests, an ostrich, and a jujuman

bringing back the distant memories of Africa. But above it all, the need for social salvation is reiterated by the image of "Bring dreams of

Christ to dusky cane-lipped throngs." The salvation talked about does not necessarily mean Christian salvation, but that of self-understanding. Because of the unifying suggestiveness of language in Cane, as in Modernist writing, one cannot separate the form of the work from language use. The form of the work undermines its communal quality as a Black work of art.

It is only on its content that Cane qualifies as a Black work of art. Yet even in this it is easy to interpret it as embodying more than Black experience and Black destiny. From the first story, "Karintha," a recurrent motif is the sawmill with its "pile of sawdust" that is slowly incinerating the beauty of nature. Its smoke also contaminates everything--

> "...the smoke was so heavy you tasted it in water."

The threat of this technological civilization is felt everywhere. The salvation motif in the chorus

> Smoke is on the hills. Rise up
> Smoke is on the hills. Rise up
> And take my soul to Jesus (p. 110)

is not limited to the Black community but to everything that is thus threatened. The ruminations of Kabnis are more reflective of the jitterings of man in the "lost" generation of the twenties than a reflection on the Black situation:

> Jesus, how still everything is: Does the world know how still it is? People make noise. They are afraid of silence. Of what lives, and God, of what dies in silence. There must be many dead things moving in silence...you know Ralph, old man, it wouldn't surprise me at all to see a ghost. People don't think there are such things. They rationalise their fear, and call their cowardice science. (p. 84)

These motifs are reinforced by the cosmic images of wind (air), smoke (fire), the red earth (earth) and water images, in addition to the sky, the moon and the sun which pervade the pages to link the specific situation of Georgia with the universal situation of man. Kabnis then is not just a Black man, he is a symbol of Western man in the early part of the twentieth century. At the same time Kabnis is himself, an individual who is an artist in search of artistic self-fulfillment.

> The form that's burned into my soul is some twisted awful thing that crept in from a dream a goddam nightmare and won't stay still unless I feed it. And it lives on words...I want to feel the soul...(p. 110)

We can talk of three levels of experience operating simultaneously through Toomer's symbolic style.

Toomer is a Modernist who had roots in the Romantic idealization of rural culture. His fascination for Black culture in Georgia owes something to antiquarian interest and something to a Romantic-Modernist search for exotic culture whose "primitive emotionalism" was thought to provide an alternative to modern technological civilization. Though Toomer idealized that culture, he was not really interested in the survival of the social content of that culture the underlying beauty in it that he longed for was something he could not reach himself, as the failure of his attempt in Fern shows. He abandons any attempt to understand it. Though eventually his personality was to fuse with the rest of the Black community in the search for a future destiny, the value that he was able to relate to was not so much the spiritual beauty of that past but the moral power of survival in the fact of impossible odds, as symbolized by the "old and dumb ex-slave" Father John. And the

future that he accepts is not one of a unique Black culture but American technological civilization in which the Black power of survival in the past, which he accepts along with the history of slavery, would help him to fit in. We must note too that Toomer was as concerned about the decline of American technological civilization as he was about the rural culture of the past. It was for both that he felt the need for liberation or salvation.

Toomer's Cane owes little or nothing to Black forms of art. Though he has a poetic fascination for the spirituals or their philosophy it is the distant melodies as they affect the poet that he describes. Cane is an example of ultra-modernist work. Even its form--perfect fusion of prose, poetry and dramatic sketches--still baffles critics today despite the large amount of criticism devoted to it. Its highly individualized style makes it impossible to subject it to performance in the sense in which oral literature works are performance-oriented. The images are unconventional and are peculiar to the writer. The work itself is complex and not easily interpreted. It does not belong to a Black tradition of art.

Like Jean Toomer, Coutee Cullen's poetic practices and statements of poetics easily show the gap between the artist in his poetry. This gap also appears as a conflict within the poet that is apparent in his poetry. Countee Cullen could write a poem exalting the former glories of a now fallen race and place his hopes on a future return of those glories in "Dark Majesty,"

> These men were Kings, albeit they were black
> Christophe and Dessalines and L'Ouverture;
> Their majesty has made me turn my back

> Upon a plaint I once shaped to endure.
> These men were black, I say but they were crowned
> And purple-clad, however brief their time
> Stifle your agony; let grief be drowned;
> We know joy had a day once and a clime.
>
> Dark gutter-snipe, black sprawler-in-the-mud
> A thing men did a man may do again...(p. 101)

Yet he can turn right round in self-abnegation in "Yet do I Marvel" to doubt the wisdom of God in creating Black men.

> Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
> To make the poet black, and bid him sing (p. 3)

or to write a litany expressing pity at every aspect of Black life in "Saturday's Child" (p. 3). There is a constant tension about social commitments and choice between being Black and being simply American. This is the tension that inspires the poem "To Certain Critics"

> For never shall the clan
> Confine my singing to its way
> Beyond the ways of man.
> .....
> How shall the shepherd heart then thrill
> To only the darker lamb? (p. 100)

There would appear to be a difference between Toomer as Renaissance writer and Countee Cullen on this point. In Cane there is never any doubt where Toomer's social choice and commitment lie. If Toomer feels that the need for salvation by Blacks through self-knowledge and acceptance of their past parallels the need for salvation for the Man of the lost generation from the grip and soot of modern technological civilization, he does not present it as involving a choice for the artist. Kabnis for example, is an individual, the Black man and the Man in whom all the complex experiences of life at those three levels fuse. It is only later when Toomer joins the Gurdjieff movement that he

becomes exclusively absorbed in the need for human salvation at the expense of his concern of the Black man. Even the choice of form in Cane does not strike the superficial reader as conflicting with his Black subject matter. For at the level of surface realism, Toomer does not abandon his preoccupation with Black life. He leaves it to the symbolic suggestions of his settings and situations and images to take his readers beyond the immediate Black situation to universal and cosmic concerns. On the other hand, in Cullen the conflict of social interests is reflected in his choice of artistic forms and philosophies. His choice of Romantic poetics lays emphasis on the poet as a unique and unified individual in contrast to the poet as symbol of communal collective experience.[103] This does not deny that Cullen regularly treats the collective experience of American Blacks. But when Cullen, true to his romantic call, defines poetry as "...a lofty thought beautifully expressed. Poetry should not be too intellectual. It should deal more...with the emotions,"[104] he is at the same time rejecting the type of realistic portrayal of Negro life for which Langston Hughes is most remarkable. The result is that though he often treats Negro themes, he does so in a manner that has been rightly described by Stephen Bronz as

> ...a pleasing, impressive sounding nineteenth century poetic idiom marked by imprecision and lack of concreteness that considerably blurred the racial protests he was voicing.[105]

Rarely does any poem deal with a specific social situation in Cullen, as he does in the poem "Incident" (p. 9), in which he describes an incident in which a White man called him "Nigger," which has a lasting effect on

experiences but to experiences of the poet as an individual. His fascination with his poetic idol, John Keats, finds expression in many poems. In "To John Keats, Poet at Spring Time," he not only expresses love for the poet but the poem implies that Cullen shares Keats' love of nature, and "love of Beauty." In this stanza of the poem

> And you and I, shall we lie still,
> John Keats, while Beauty summons us?
> Somehow I feel your sensitive will
> Is pulsing up some tremulous
> Sap road of a maple tree, whose leaves
> Grow music as they grow, since your
> Wild voice is in them, a harp that grieves
> For life that opens death's dark door.
> Though dust, your fingers still can push
> The vision Splendid to a birth
> Though not they work as grass in hush
> Of the night on the broad sweet pages of the earth. (p. 41)

one finds an echo of the romantics' belief that the souls of the dead are alive, absorbed and functioning in nature, and in the following stanza Cullen even asserts that Keats' should "keep revel with me, too." In "Requiescam," the first line "I am for sleeping and forgetting" is a direct echo of the line from John Keats' poem "Sleep and Poetry," while the rest is a treatment of one of the characteristic themes of Romantic poetry, death. Here the poet longs for his own death: "I would my life's old sun were setting/To rise for me no more." The longing for death is a pervasive theme in Cullen:

> Dead men alone are satiate
> They sleep and dream and have no weight,
> To curb their rest, of love or hate
> Strange, men should flee their company
> Or think me strange who long to be
> Wrapped in their cool immunity: (p. 40)

Cullen's poetry is suffused with themes of love, love consummanted or unrequired, of liberty, of the ephemeral nature of things and other

themes that mark the Romantic fascination with classical myths and history. Many of his poems, "Endymion," "That Bright Chimeric Beast," "Medusa," are poems which explore these Greek myths for their expression. Others like "To the Three for Whom the Book" are suffused with allusions from Classical and medieval literature: "Medusa," "Excalibur," "Theseus," "Minotaur," "Pasiphae," "Pan." In "The Black Christ" there are allusions to "Lycidas," "Patroclus," and "Perseus." These allusions give an erudite quality to his poems and further remove them from Black traditions of poetry. Even that much-cited "pride in the African heritage" that is found in "A Song of Praise," "Pagan Prayer," "Fruit of the Flower," cannot be far removed from the Romantic fondness for distant places and exotic cultures. The images and tone of such poems resemble those we find in the Romantic idealization of the Noble Savage. The images are those, with which the Romantics exalt sensationalism or emotivism in the °primitive cultures": images of "naked tribal dance," "of barbaric dance," of "jungle boys and girls" "treading the savage measure," of "young forest lovers" or "plighting beneath the sky."

The tone of despair which is characteristic of Cullen's Black poems is a carryover from Romantic poetics. His pessimism contrasts with Langston Hughes. yet Langston Hughes is more preoccupied with the more sordid details of Black existence. But true to the tradition of the masses of Black men for whom life must simply go on despite the odds, Hughes affirms a people's determination to live. As Margaret Perry has noted,

> a characteristic of many of Hughes' poems is the

> affirmation of life, either stated or implied, displayed thematically or dramatically.[106]

Cullen was not a part of the masses and not a part of their affirmation of life. In contrast to Toomer's acceptance of the past and the need to make the curious energy of the past the foundation of contemporary Black existence in Cane, Cullen's characteristic tone is that of a self-pity and despair. The laughter in the face of adversity and the hope of the future, "I looked and saw the rising sun" which ends the poem "The Shroud of Color" (p. 16) is a rare thing in Cullen's poetry. The desire for death as an end to his conflict is more characteristic.

> We who take the beaten track
> Trying to appease
> Hearts near breaking with their lack,
> We need elegies. (p. 50)

These Romantic preoccupations combine to subvert the importance of Cullen's Black themes. From the beginning the beauty of his works tends to take away critical attention from his message. One British critic who reviewed Cullen's Color in 1926 shows the inclination of criticism of Cullen's poetry when he says

> If there is a more promising poet in America, I do no know his name...Countee Cullen is a supreme master of beauty.[107]

Bronz affirms that Cullen was more popular with critics (White critics) than his contemporary writers. He says

> Indeed, his poetry fitted the demands of most critics and readers.[108]

Whether his choice of poetics was from a deliberate attempt to please these critics and readers one cannot definitely say, but his reason for the rejection of dialect poetry makes one suspect that this

is so.

> In a day when artificiality is so vigorously condemned the Negro poet would be foolish indeed to turn to dialect.[109]

Those who did not rate dialect literature highly were Whites and Afro-American middle class intellectuals like Charles S. Johnson who thought it reminded people of a past they did not want to remember. It appears that he rejects dialect poetry to avoid the condemnation of these critics. But this rejection is accompanied by a desire "to be known as a poet, not as a Negro poet"[110] which he said to Langston Hughes in a conversation. This desire makes him look down on qualities that are apparently Black in Afro-American writing. Thus he could say of the Black qualities of Hughes' The Weary Blues, "I regard the jazz poems as interlopers in the company of the truly beautiful poems in other sections of the book."[111] For Cullen, Afro-American poetry is part of the English tradition of poetry. "...since theirs is also the heritage of the English language, their work will not present any serious aberration from the poetic tendencies of their times."[112] This will be true if the writer chooses, as Cullen has done, to leave out those elements of culture that distinguish the Black from the other races. To include elements from the artistic traditions of the Black man would destroy his view that Black Poetry "...is a variety within a uniformity that is trying to maintain the higher traditions of English Verse"[113] (My underlining). That ultimately this involves a choice on the part of the poet is evident from Cullens's statement from his anthology of poetry by Black Writers, Caroling Dusk:

> As heretical as it may sound, there is probability that Negro poets, dependent as they are on English language, may have more to gain from the rich background of English and American poetry than from any nebulous atavistic yearnings toward an African inheritance.[114]

Cullen was definitely in a cultural tangle and perhaps no one was more aware of it than himself. The poem "A Thorn Forever in the Breast" makes this very clear. The portrait is of the poet himself:

> A hungry cancer will not let him rest
> Whose heart is loyal to the least of dreams
> There is a thorn forever in his breast
> Who cannot take his world for what it seems,
> Aloof and lonely must he ever walk
> Plying a strange and unaccustomed tongue
> An alien to the daily round of talk
> Mute when the sordid songs of earth are sung. (p. 91)

The picture of the poet that emerges from his poetry is of a man walking on the periphery of his Afro-American life, unable to accept it as it is, who "cannot take his world for what it seems." His desire for some other life manifests itself in his desire, as Bronz says, "to write on Universal subjects instead of about Negroes",[115] and even though he does write about Negro themes, he does so, as he admits himself in his article in New York Times in 1923, "in spite of myself."[116] Thus, though Cullen "chose subjects and metaphors of blackness," one sees, as Margaret Perry does, that at best, "Cullen (only) only hovered on the brink of racial writing."[117] Eventually Cullen makes the choice of going with the civilized world. His realization at the end of "Heritage" that his Western heritage as opposed to his African one, is the "civilized" side of him, "They and I are civilized,"[118] must have resolved his artistic hesitation, if ever there was a hesitation for him. The Western literary tradition is a "civilized" tradition.

With all this, to talk of "Black Renaissance" in connection with Cullen, except in the narrowest sense of addressing himself to the identity crisis brought about by his African and Black American heritage, is to be presumptous. If there are enough Black metaphors in Cullen's work that prompt critics into lauding his turning to his African heritage, there is also an overwhelming number of images from Greek mythology in every notable poem for one to consider Cullen as writing within that tradition of literature. As David Dorsey has found out in "Countee Cullen's use of Greek Mythology,"[119] the Greek myths form the essential framework for his poetic perception. Competing with this is the Biblical framework. Compared with these, the Black images are rare and far between. Cullen's poetry is erudite and needs critics who are versed in the wide spectrum of Western culture. His allusions impose a kind of archaism that is obvious in his poetic phrasing. In every sense Cullen is an "outsider" to the Black experience.

CHAPTER VI

NEGRITUDE AND WESTERN LITERARY TRADITIONS

The same conflict of identity which Onwuchekwa Jemie has found to be central to Afro-American life and literature is the main inspiration behind Négritude poetry. The cause of this conflict is analyzed in detail by Senghor in "Vues sur l'Afrique noire ou assimiler, non-être assimilés,"[1] in which he traces the historical contact with the French culture which resulted in the Africans being alienated from their roots in order to be assimilated into the French culture. "Contact de deux civilisations, cela me semble être la definition la meilleur du problem".[2] The Africans were not totally uprooted from their culture nor were they full accepted in the French society. The result is what Abiola Irele has described in "In Defense of Négritude" as "double alienation"[3] which leaves the assimilés rootless--between two worlds, and groping for both. Francois Hoffmann refers to this group in "French Negro poetry" as "marginal men who feel themselves to be different both from the 'primitive' tribe and from civilized Europe".[4] This double consciousness as a poetic theme is central to Négritude poetry. For example, the conflict between the ancestors, who would not stay dead, the African half of the poet, and his French cultural heritage, represented by his life in Paris, is the subject of "In Memoriam", Senghor's first known poem. The "return to his ancestral source" which pervades his poetry springs from this situation. Léon Damas' most important collection of poetry, Pigments, was the first such Négritude

collection devoted to an explanation of the conflict of identity in him, and the need to reject the fruits of acculturation--his "French" habits. The solution as Damas sees it in "Limbé" is to cling to his Blackness. Césaire's Black epic, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal has to go through Black history in order to understand the cause of the personality split in him. Pigments gives a false impression that it is easy to throw off the garb of French heritage for he says in "Pour Sûr":

> Alors
> je vous mettrai les piéds dans le plat
> ou bien tout simplement
> la main au coblet
> de tout ce qui m' emmerde en gros caractères
> colonisation
> civilisation
> assimilation
> et la suite (p. 51).

But the very fact of writing in French, publishing in a French journal,[5] where more likely many more Frenchmen than Blacks would read it, reveals the hollowness of his poetic will. Like Damas, Césaire too in Cahier d'un retour au pays natal starts off his "return" to his Blackness by an indignant rejection of the French civilisation which has forced assimilation on him. But as Jean-Paul Sartre indicates in his general essay on Négritude poetry, "Orphée Noir",[6] this is a case of receiving with the right hand what the colonized rebels were pushing away with the left hand. For "return" to his fatherland, the supposed symbol of the de-Westernized vestiges of his Blackness, through the pathways of the political and literary philosophies of Surrealism, a literary movement that had developed in the 1920s and still was active in France. Mainly for this reason, Bruce Wright is to say in "The Négritude Tradition in Literature", "Today, Négritude, if it exists at all, is a faintly

perfumed concept,...fashionable among the Bourgeoisie."[7] Mbella Sonne Dipoko in "Cultural Diplomacy in African Writing" sees this as forcing on Négritude writing a tendency to explain Africa to Europe.[8] The group of students who launched the Manifesto, Légitime Défense,[9] that is generally regarded as the start of Négritude, had decided to adopt the guiding principles of surrealism for the liberation of the Black from the clutches of colonialism. Légitime Défense had declared openly:

> We accept surrealism without reservation--today in 1932--we pledge our development to it. Our readers are referred to André Breton's two manifestos and to the work of Louis Aragon, André Breton, René Crevel, Salvador Dali, Paul Eluard, Benjamin Peret, Tristan Tzara.[10]

Césaire not only openly admits his indebtedness to surrealism and André Breton:

> Breton brought us boldness; he helped us to take a straightforward position; he shortens our search and our hesitation. I became aware that most of the problems I was pondering had been resolved by Breton and surrealism:[11]

but developed a close friendship with André Breton which was to result in André Breton writing a preface to the 1947 edition of Cahier d'un retour au pays natal.[12] André Breton was to say in that preface that both in his essays in Tropiques and in his poetry, Césaire's views were more less the same as the surrealists': "ce qu'il exprimait ne m'était en rien étranger, les noms de poètes et d'auteurs cités m'en eussent, a eux seuls, été de sûrs garants..."pp. 10-11). This would appear to be a contradiction of the poet's determined search for his Black values. But, as Gerald Moore has noted, Négritude writers of the 1930s did not see their use of French culture to discover their Africanness or Blackness as contradiction.[13] Senghor gives us reasons to believe that

he regards whatever he wrote as an extension of French literary tradition when he says in "Comme les lamantins vont boire a la source" that he is a cultural mulatto (métis culturel) who has to write in French though he feels as a Black man: "Si nous sentons en nègres, nous nous exprimons en français", French being a universal language, "une langue a vocation universelle".[14] Senghor even goes further to call French the language of the gods; "il est langue des dieux", which gives the writers the advantage of linguistic abstractions that their African languages did not have: "Et puis le français nous a fait don de ses mots abstraits--si rare dans nos langues maternelles--ôu les larmes se font pierres precieuses".[15] The French words, for Senghor, "radiate a million rays like diamonds, to lighten the darkness" of the night of the colonised: "rayonnent de mille feux, comme des diamants, des fusées qui éclairent nôtre nuit".[16] The use of French was a necessity, but it was a necessity that fascinated the alienated Black writers.

It is not difficult to find reasons for the enthusiastic adoption of French as the language of expression for Black literatures. Excepting the example of the Black literature of Haiti, Blacks had little or no written tradition of literature. For writers like Senghor and Césaire who studied French literature,[17] French was almost their natural medium of expression for intellectual preoccupations. And the need for publication meant that the writers wrote in the language that the publishers could sell. But also, as the colonial subjects came from different backgrounds, French made it possible for them to communicate across national and linguistic boundaries. Above all, even the indigenous intellectuals of Sénégal, as Sylvia Washington Ba indicates,

were hostile to the idea of writing in indigenous languages. She cites the example of Senghor advocating the cultivation of indigenous languages and giving expression to the "new nègre" in those languages in a lecture he delivered before the Dakar Chamber of Commerce in 1937: "the reaction on the part of the African elite", she says, "was immediate and hostile".[18] James A. Arnold reports something similar in Modernism and Négritude, only this time it involved Césaire's rejection of advice to write in the vernacular. Césaire is quoted as saying that neither he nor René Menil (his co-editor of Tropiques) could write in Creole, but also quickly added that "such a project would have been inconceivable in view of the primitive state of Martinican Creole."[19] Arnold further says that though Césaire thought that "Creole best expresses certain aspects of his sensibilities, French is the natural expression for others."[20]

All this is linked with the fact that as Honorat Aguessey says in "La Phase de la Négritude", the movement was meant for intellectuals: "pour les savants...ce que Maurice Delafosse appelait l'âme noire."[21] One must conclude then that by writing in French, often closely in the forms and language style of the French literary traditions, many Négritude writers thought they were doing their culture a service. It was at least a guarantee that the culture would survive by adjustment even if not in its ideal, original form. This is the sum of what Senghor tells the First Congress of African Writers and Artists in 1956:[22]

> In my opinion, and objectively this (cultural) interbreeding is necessary. It is a result of the contact between civilizations. Indeed, either the external situation has

> changed and cultural borrowing enables us to adapt ourselves to the new situation or external situation has not changed and cultural borrowing enables us to make a better adaptation to the situation.[23]

It is probably for this reason that Senghor is always enthusiastic about the various influences on his poetry from European sources. His critical essays are full of discussions of these influences: from Goethe ("Le message de Goethe aux nègres nouveaux"),[24] Victor Hugo ("Jeunesse de Victor Hugo"),[25] Saint-John Perse ("Saint-John Perse ou poésie du royaume d'enfance"),[26] to André Breton, Paul Claudel,[27] Paul Eluard[28] and even Arthur de Gobineau whose book Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines[29] and Gustave Le Bon's Les lois psychologiques de l'évolution des peuples (1900) spurred Jean Price-Mars' counter-research in Negro history and sociology, that resulted in the Haitian Renaissance.[30] Though there can be no doubt that Négritude writing was based on Black experiences, an understanding and explanations of it as art require that we look to the influence of such French and European works as well as the cultural influences of Europe. To look at Négritude writing as Barthélemy Kotchy does in "Retour aux sources dans la littérature négro-africaine"[31] simply in terms of "return to the sources", is to fall victim to the same type of Romanticism as Négritude writers themselves. The language and style of Senghor, as John Reed argues in "Léopold Sédar Senghor's Poetry", and as Gerald Moore reluctantly confirms in "Assimilation or Négritude", place him solidly in the French literary tradition, just as Césaire belongs to the French or European Modernist traditions of poetry. Among the European influences were those of the German philosopher Leo Frobenius, whose

work Léopold Sedar Senghor says in the introductory essay to Leo Frobenius: Anthology,[32] "The lessons of Leo Frobenius", had tremendous influence on Négritude poetry.

> I cannot do better than to speak here of the lessons we have learned from reading the work of Frobenius...when I say "we", I refer to the handful of black students who launched the movement of Négritude in the 1930s...with Aimé Césaire from the Antilles and Léon Damas from Guyana.[33]

As in the works of the Harlem Renaissance writers, the influences of the West were felt not only on the forms, structures and language of Négritude literary productions but on the very thoughts on which the works themselves were based. Thus Senghor talks of Frobenius' new definitions of "emotion" and of the "myth" and of their role in all poetry, as opposed to the previous usage of these in European thought.[34] This allowed Négritude writers, especially Senghor and Césaire, to make them parts of the essence of their poetry without any feeling of shame. The thoughts of Arthur de Gobineau on the inequality of the races, expressed in his book, Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines, were important influences on Senghor, as was the cosmic worldview of Saint-John Perse. Senghor acknowledges the influence of this worldview in his essay on the poetry of John Perse. "Saint-John Perse ou poésie du royaume d'enfance." In more or less the same tone, Aimé Césaire expresses the same fascination with a similar Claudelian worldview in "Maintenir la poésie" published in Tropiques in the October issue of 1943

> Claudel, never so fulminating as when he ceases to be Catholic to become earth, planet, matter, sound and fury, superego, superman whether he exalts the will to power (Tête d'Or) or opens the homicidal floodgates of a humor à la Jarry (Soulier de Satin)[35]

A.J. Arnold's Modernism and Négritude,[36] a study of Césaire's poetry, is a useful point of departure on European influences on Négritude. In the second chapter, "Césaire and Modernism",[37] he lists Frobenius, Nietzsche and the Modernist concept of poetry as the major influences. His approach, as he relates Césaire to these men of letters, is to relate each separately to different aspects of Césaire's poetry. This is imprecise because if we examine the reasons for which Senghor admires the influence of Frobenius, his redefinition of "myth" and "emotion" and their place in all poetry,[38] as well as the concepts of the power of poetry for which Césaire loves Nietzche,[39] one finds that these thinkers' views are very close to those of the surrealists, the movement that has been acknowledged as the main influence on Négritude. It will be more useful therefore to treat these as parts of the same Western concepts of poetry that shaped the direction of Négritude poetry. Before we do that, however, there is one aspect of Frobenius' influence which Arnold mentions that needs to be discussed. This has to do with Frobenius' propounding of "a cyclical view of Universal history",[40] which according to Arnold not only inspired a more explicit treatment in Spengler's The Decline of the West[41] but much influenced Ezra Pound's interpretation of history.[42] This is an interesting point because, by the time Frobenius came on the scene in the early '20s, the idea of the cyclical view of history as well as the decline of Western civilizations had featured in W.B. Yeats' poems[43] as well as T.S. Eliot's, and in particular, the Four Quartets.[44] It is better to consider this view of history as part of the Symbolists'

literature than to attribute it to the influence of one individual. What may not be so debatable is the fact that Frobenius' views, to Senghor and Césaire, "signalled (the possibility) of the end of the dominion of colonial oppression of Blacks in both Africa and the Caribbean".[45] Possibly the prophetic vision of Black liberation in Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, the motif of the decline of Western civilization and the confident offer of the "regenerative blood" of Black civilizations in Senghor's poetry might be due to a belief in Frobenius' prediction of the doom of the West. Senghor testifies to Négritude writers' reading Frobenius,[46] and Arnold further testifies to Césaire devoting the pages of Tropiques to an appreciation of Frobenius' work.[47]

It may be true, as Arnold suggests, that Césaire's structuring of history in terms of "birth, death and rebirth" may be due to the influence of both Frobenius and Spengler. As for Senghor, it may not be easy to say categorically that the motif of "death and rebirth" in his poetry is due to the influence of Frobenius. For this cyclical view of existence, with the three stages of birth, death and rebirth is basic to the African worldview and is a major theme in African oral literature. As Senghor indicates again and again in his poetry, the ancestors are not really dead: "O Morts, qui avez toujours refusé de mourir, qui avez su resister a la Mort"[48] ("In Memoriam") or "Ecoutons la voix des Anciens d'Elissa. Comme nous exiles ils n'ont pas voulu mourir, que se perdit par les sables leur torrent seminal".[49] ("Nuit De Sine") If Frobenius is an influence in this area of Senghor's poetry, the influence is probably not more than a reminder of what Senghor

possesses, or that the African poetic forms and structure are worth exploring for modern written poetry.

There is a second influence on Négritude writers, particularly on Césaire, Senghor, Birago Diop and Bernard Dadié. This has to do with the tendency to move beyond the concern for the Black man to concern with the human situation. For Césaire this takes the form of writing his poetry "for the Universal hunger for the Universal thirst". (C'est pour la faim universelle/Pour la soif universelle"[50] or the declaration that

> l'oeuvre de l'homme vient seulement de commencer et il reste a l'homme a conquérir toute interdiction immobilisée aux coins de sa ferveur et aucune race ne possède le monopole de la beauté, de l'intelligence, de la force et il est place pour tous au rendez-vous de la conquête...(pp. 140-141)

In Senghor, the concern expresses itself in images of union between Africa or the Black blood of Afro-Americans and Western civilization:

> Que nous rèpondions présents à la renaissance du Monde
> Ainsi le levain qui est necéssaire a la farien blanche.
> Car qui apprendrait le rhythme au monde défunt des machines et des canons?" ("Priere Aux Masques")[51]

or

> Que l'enfant blanc et l'enfant noir - c'est l'ordre alphabetique - que les enfants de la France Confèderée aillent main dans la main. ("Priere des Tirailleurs Sénégalais")[52]

Senghor even goes beyond his poetry to explain the need for, and to advocate "a civilization of the Universal" (Civilisation de l'Universel) in "Négritude et Civilisation de l'Universel",[53] a speech delivered at the Colloquium on "African Literature of French Expression" held at the University of Dakar in 1966.

The concept of a Universal Civilization is not indigenous to Africa. Many critics have suggested that the concern with the Universal comes from the influence of communism on Négritude,[54] but both Césaire and Senghor have indicated that it came from other sources--Césaire from the poetry of Claudel,[55] and Senghor, not only from Claudel and Saint-John Perse,[56] but also from the Catholic philosophies of Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.[57] The effect of this theme is to place emphasis on the Black situation as a human situation and to seek its solution not in a restoration of those values which distinguish the Black race from all others but in moving beyond racialism to the creation of a Universal Civilization.

To understand the third and major influence of Western literature on Négritude better, one needs to understand the crisis of language in Western literature that inspired the Modernist form of writing along with its concepts of poetry, concepts which were to shape the poetry of the Black movements. The cultural crisis in the nineteenth century in the West has been adequately described in detail in Richard Sheppard's essay "The Crisis of Language"[58] in Modernism. This was a reaction to Realism's insistence on finding a one to one correspondence between language and the object it describes, between language and the processes of life.[59] It was sufficient as long as men were satisfied with only the scientific, rational experiences of life. When writers were no longer satisfied with the realist way of writing, they found that "the surface of language has ceased to be luminous and grown opaque."[60] This became a crisis when people grew disillusioned with the technological civilization on which Realism was based. The scientific civilization,

as Sheppard says, was found to be an "order whose language was cerebralized...and whose forms were only superficially impressive".[61] The civilization whose worldview encompassed the whole of the cosmos, the real and surreal had been displaced. As Sheppard describes it, "the unifying concepts of 'spirit' and 'soul' could no longer be uttered; the disappearance of its mysterious unifying centre had shut off entire areas of its personality and only rarely did man feel a 'flood of higher life' breaking through the crust surrounding him."[62] It was therefore necessary to re-invent language, or , to use an image that was recurrent in Symbolist poetry, language must "phoenix-like" rise from the ashes of Realism.

The need for a new form of expressive language had been recognized long before the advent of the literary experience we call Modernism. Back in the middle of the nineteenth century Baudelaire had realized that a state of experience existed which needed a new language form to express it. This he called "sur-naturalisme," the equivalent of the modern "sur-réalisme." He described an object as having two natures, the "real and surreal."

> Dans certains états de l'âme presque surnaturels, la profondeur de la vie se révêle toute entiêre dans le spectacle, si ordinaire qu'il soit, qu'on a sous les yeux. Il en devient le symbole.[63]

About the same time Gerald Manley Hopkins was re-shaping language to make it more expressive of this spiritual instress "deep down things,"[64] But it would require the Symbolists to make this "re-ordering of language" a central concern of poetry or literature as a whole.

The central developments that resulted from this anti-realism backlash are of immense importance to Négritude. Nietzsche was to play an important part in the attempt to revive the poetic significance of myth and to restore to the poet the classical role of one who uses his poetic powers to liberate his society. Thus it is not surprising that Césaire, who was fascinated by the liberatory potentialities of myth, should discuss Nietzsche and his ideas in Tropiques.[65] Like the Modernists before him, Césaire finds that through myths he can do what the language of realistic depiction of situations will not let him do. "Only myth" Césaire says in "Poetry and Cognition"

> satisfies man completely, his heart, his reason, his taste for detail and wholeness, his taste for the false and for the true, since myth is all at once. A misty and emotional apprehension, rather than a means of poetic expression:[66]

By "false" and "true" it must be understood that he means the "suprarealistic" and the ordinarily "realistic." Poetry is not so much a communication of known facts, not so much a "means of poetic expression" as a search for and revelation of truth. In mythopoetic poetry the individual is the whole of existence, and the poet fuses everything within himself or expands into every object of existence:

> ...Poetry is an opening outward. Opening outward of mankind to the dimension of the world; a vertiginous expansion. And it may be said that all great poetry, without ever renouncing its humanness, at some very mysterious moment ceases to be strictly human so as to begin to be cosmic.[67]

Because of the ability to reach out to every element of the cosmos the poet can extend his will or desire for liberation mythically or poetically into the Cosmic consciousness.[68] Thus as Arnold argues,

> it is the inebriating effect of Nietzsche's theory of the will, freed from the constraints of a stultifying reason, that induced Césaire to exploit this source of new poetic myths.[69]

The poet, as we shall see in Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, is the one who is aware of the condition of man in its present, past, and future dimensions and acts, albeit poetically through poetic revelation, to liberate ignorant men in the cosmos. The poet thus is "the exemplary sufferer through whose sacrifice the community is reborn"[70] and poetry itself is not just a plethora of words but a liberatory force, "the highest manifestation of the will to power."[71]

The qualities that Césaire loves in Nietzsche's concept of poetry, the mythopoetic consciousness of things, which also implies "emotional apprehension" as opposed to the analytic understanding of reason, are qualities that are central to Surrealism and Modernism generally.[72] Emile Snyder in "Aimé Césairé: The Reclaiming of the Land" sees Césaire's style as being "a development of the line of Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Mallarmé and ths Surrealists.[73] When Frobenius in Histoire de la civilisation africaine[74] explains that "myth" and "emotion" are the central qualities of all great poetry, he is echoing the central concepts of Modernist poetry that emerged after the decline of Realism. But the significance of Frobenius for Négritude writers is that he found these qualities in African poetry and helped to assert the greatness of African literatures and cultures. Senghor gives him full credit for this in "The Lessons of Leo Frobenius":

> But suddenly, like a thunderclap - Frobenius! All the history and pre-history of Africa were illuminated, to their very depths. And we still carry the mark of the master in our minds and spirits, like a form of tattooing carried out in the initiation ceremonies in the sacred grove.[75]

To Frobenius, the African mode of perceiving reality,

> Réception de la réalité signifie faculté d'être ému par l'essence des phenomènes - non par les faits, mais par la réalité qui les stipule ou en d'autres termes par l'essence des faits[76]

is not a mark of barbarism. It is the faculty of all men when they are receptive. Even the Greeks as Frobenius says, and Descartes, who is regarded as the father of the Age of Reason, regarded this type of "sensation" as part of reason.

As for art and its relationship with life, Frobenius explains that it is superflous to say that art approaches the essence of life by imitating the life style of men. Art is nothing else but the "perfection of the (spiritual) essence of life", what Senghor calls "that Spiritual energy in the Other which causes emotion".[77]

> Il est superflu d'expliquer que l'art est le sens de la vie, et qu'en pénétrant les styles de la vie nous nous approchons aussi de l'essence des styles.[78]

One is the other. The spiritual essence is style. Senghor accepts these concepts and goes on to explain all aspects of art--image, rhythm, etc., in terms of this spiritual essence. Senghor's African aesthetics discussed in many articles of Liberté Vol. I owe much to Frobenius.

All this ties in with the all-important question of Négritude's Romantic attitude to the Black race. Even though one cannot doubt the sincerity of the poets in applying this Romantic attitude to Black themes in their poetry, one must face the fact that its source lies in Western literary and philosophic traditions. Senghor gives the impression in "L'esthetique Négro-Africaine" that the central concepts of Surrealism are the same as those at the core of African culture and

African aesthetics. He does explain the difference between French Surrealism and African Surrealism:

> J'ai parlé d'image surréaliste. Mais on le devine le surréalisme négro-africaine différe du surréalisme europeen. Celui-ci est empirique, celui-la mystique, metaphysique.[79]

But there is no differenece in their basic tenets: the emphasis on the primacy of emotion in poetry, and of the aim of poetry as making visible the "sur-réalite" below the surface of things through mythopoetic forms. As I have tried to argue in the previous chapter, even though Senghor discovers these qualities in the African poems, he does so through the research works of Western intellectuals, through Frobenius, but also through the surrealists who have a romantic attitude towards "primitive" societies where they think uninhibited emotionalism and ritual apprehension of surreality exist. As I argued in the last chapter this surrealist Romanticism springs from the Romantics from whom Surrealism has inherited much.

That Senghor's exaggerated Romanticizing of Africa comes from his European heritage is indisputable. African oral poetry is not preoccupied with exalting Blackhood in the way Négritude writers did. African oral literature composed by Africans did not need to do this. Also the images with which Senghor exalted Africa are the same images with which the West had characterized Africans. Senghor's image of nakedness, of emotionalism, of the dance and others are surprisingly similar to those used by Hughes, McKay and Cullen because they come from the same Western sources, only now they are being used with different poetic intentions. Senghor had adopted the images and views they express because Surrealism and the testimony of Frobenius have used

those very qualities as validation of the great qualities of African literatures.

Thus Senghor's ironic fascination with Gobineau's racist views about the inferiority of the Black man in relation to the other races is not a validation of Gobineau's racism. It is better understood in relation to the new place of honor being given to the qualities which Gobineau claims distinguish the Black from the rest of humanity. Though Gobineau asserts that Blacks are inferior to Whites, he also implies that in the universal realm of arts Blacks cannot be surpassed because of their natural endowments: emotion is indispensable in art and because "the Black essence is emotion" there is always a "black" essence in every art:

> l' élément noir est indispensable pour developper la genie artistique dans une race, parce que nous avons vu quelle profusion du feu, de flammes, d'étincelles, d'entrainement, d'irreflexion reside dans son essence, et combien l'imagination ce reflet de la sensualité, et toutes les appetitions vers la manière le rendent propre à subir les *impressions que produisent les arts, dans un dégré* d'intensité tout a fait inconnu aux autres familles humaines.[80]

Thus, the Black, according to Gobineau, is "le poète lyrique, le musicien, le sculpteur par excellence" . Even though Senghor and Gobineau are both looking at the Black from opposing perspectives, they are agreed on the superlative qualities of his arts. Thus as Okechukwu Mezu says in the essay "Senghor, Gobineau et l'inégalité des races humaines",[81] which describes in detail the influence of Gobineau's and Gustave Le Bon's book, Les lois psychologiques de l'évolution des peuples,[82] on Senghor's Négritude thinking, Senghor can ignore the racism and take the positive side of Gobineau's views.

> Malgré le racisme implicité dans ces constatations Arthur de Gobineau se place toujours parmi les premiers à reconnaître la puissance artistique des Noirs et Senghor semble avoir fermé les yeux sur le côté raciste de ses observations.[83]

"Dignity restored" is thus a key to Senghor's treatment of the question of Negro emotion in his essays and poetry. But it has led to acceptance of and expression of views that are tantamount to Black inferiority: "L'émotion est nègre, comme la raison est hèléne"[84] in "Ce que l'homme noir apporte"[85] or "Je sens dont je suis" in place of "Je pense dont je suis" for White men, in "L'apport de la poésie nègre au démi-siècle."[86] This has led Senghor to glorify concepts of the noble savage in his poetry in a way in which if he were writing within his African creative philosophy he would not have had to do. There is nothing really edifying to the African in this view of the African:

> Nous sommes les hommes de la danse, dont les piéds reprennent vigueur en frappant le sol dûr. ("Prière aux Masques") (p. 24),

Or of the image of nakedness "Femme nue, femme noire" in ("Femme Noire") (p. 16),

Or this image of nakedness in "Que m'accompagne Koras et Balafong",

> Entouré des mes compagnons lisses et nus et parés des fleurs de la brousse (p. 28).

Contrary to Jeanpierre's view in "Négritude: its development and significance"[87] that the writers rejected "the distorted image fostered on Africans" by the West, images of "paganism," of "nakedness" and "naked dances," of men dressed in nothing but leaves, which originated in the West abound in Senghor, not because of pride in being African (I do not deny he can be proud of his Africa) but as I said earlier, primarily because he is reproducing an African image consistent with the

Western theory of the African that he has inherited from the West. One can see a progressive development between European Romanticism-surrealism and Négritude African Romanticism. This is the central point of Wilfred Feuser, "Négritude: The Third Phase,"[88] as well as Ezekiel Mphahlele's views in "What Price Négritude?"[89] and "Négritude Revisited."[90]

Césaire's image of the Black is not a facile idealization as is Senghor's. His romantic picture of certain aspects of the Black man is balanced by a realistic assessment of his social situation. This romantic picture of Toussaint Louverture, the Haitian leader who led Haiti in her war of independence

> Ce qui est à moi
> C'est un homme seul emprisonné de blanc
> C'est un homme seul qui defie les cris blancs de
> la mort blanche.
> (Toussaint, Tousaint Louverture)
>
> C'est un homme qui fascine l'epervier blanc de
> la mort blanche.
>
> C'est un morciaud vieux dressé contre les eaux
> du ciel (p. 68-69)

is balanced by descriptions of the historical humilations suffered by Blacks. His return to the degenerate scenes of social deprivation and poverty in Martinique was too shocking for facile idealization. Scenes such as this

> Au bout du petit matin bourgeonnant d'anses frêles
> les Antilles qui ont faim, les Antilles grêlées de
> petite vérole, les Antilles dynamitées d'alcool
> echouées dans la boue de cette baie, dans la
> poussière de cette ville sinistrement echouée
> (p. 30-31)

are more characteristic of his depiction of the fate of the Black man in the Caribbean. Probably because of this unflattering state of the Black, Césaire quickly strips himself of any easy glorification of his African heritage as he unceremoniously severs his Martinican Blacks from the great empires of the African past, a realm of history where it is easy for him to romanticize, calling such glorification "mes anciennes imaginations pueriles." (pp. 96-7)

This does not mean as Michael Dash argues in "Marvellous Realism -- the way out for Négritude" that in Césaire's Cahier d'un retour... "cannibalism, inaccessibility to reason and various other characteristics, attributed to the Negro by a White created stereotype are lauded."[91] These are not lauded in the same way that Senghor thrills to the senstionalism of the Negro, which is a form of "The anxious desire for self-negation" (comme le desire inquiet de se nier"[92] as Césaire sees it. Instead of feigning a role like this:

> Ou bien tout simplement comme on nous aime!
> Obscenes gaiement, très doudous de jazz sur
> leur exces d'ennui (pp. 92-93)

"hoisting a great complicit smile"...(arborant un grand sourire complice)[93] at every image the colonialist heaps on the Black man, Césaire sings a litany of acceptance of the White man's prejudices with the undercurrent of irony. A sober acceptance of these without "the smile of complicity" is the foundation of self-understanding. The qualities of the Black race which he enumerates on pages 116-17 are jewels he dug up from beneath the prejudices after first accepting them. One would note, however that the images display the influences of Romanticism which Césaire must have inherited through Surrealism.

"ma négritude n'est ni une tour ni une cathédrale
elle plonge dans la chair rouge du sol
elle plonge dans la chair ardente du ciel
elle troue l'accablement opaque de sa droite
patience
---
mais ils s'abandonment, saisis, à l'essence
de toute chose
ignorants des surfaces mais saisis par le
mouvement de toute chose...(p. 116-117)

Césaire goes on for another page elaborating on these images of the Black man's cosmic connections.

In the area of language use, the French influences are those of Surrealism and the poetry of Paul Claudel and Saint-John Perse. Aimé Césaire's language is completely in line with Surrealism's concept that prescribes the disordering of the normal syntax of language in order to make language expressive enough to express the surreality of things. On the other, Senghor's language practice is in line with Claudel's and Perse's poetic diction. The characteristic Césairean line juxtaposes fragmented images with no syntactic link for poetic effect: what Roland A. Bush in "Négritude: A Sense of Reality" calls "a deliberate and 'diabolical' attempt to transform 'realities' through the inversion of cultural symbols, the destruction of logical syntax and through the juxtaposition of seemingly irrational and freely associated images."[94]

Au bout du petit matin
Un petit train sable
Un petit train de mousseline
Un petit train de grains de mais

Au bout de petit matin
Un grand galop de pollen
Un grand d'un petit train de petites filles
Un grand galop de colibris
Un grand galop de dagues pour defoncer la poitrine
de la terre (pp. 89-91)

I have selected three consecutive verses to illustrate the characteristic surrealist view of poetic language as

> the abstraction of words from their conventionalized place in speech and the recombining of them in such a way that their forgotten secondary potential-connotative properties, rhythmic and aural possibilities,. similarities with other words, forgotten meanings - become primary.[95]

But apart from this peculiar language use, surrealism's influence is also felt in Césaire's poetry in its intense tone of rebelliousness and outright revolt. As Arnold has noted:

> Surrealism primarily afforded Césaire the example of a poetic mode, intensely subjective and rooted in desire, which proclaimed its intention to throw of all those constraints that brought about the estrangement of man from himself.[96]

The emphasis on revolt against convention in Surrealist philosophy plays an important part in the origin and process of Négritude's own revolt and can therefore be said to be an influence on every Négritude writer. But the tone of revolt varies from individual to individual. In Senghor, the other important Négritude writer, it is considerably played down because the poet refuses to turn his back completely on his French heritage. In "Prière aux Masques" he states categorically the impossibility of separating from Europe: "Et aussi l'Europe à qui nous sommes liés par le nombril." (p. 23) Edward A. Jones in "Afro-French writers of the 1930's and the creation of the Négritude School," elaborates on this "non-bitterness against the European colonizers."[97] In contrast Césaire is for leaving Europe and everything Europe stands for behind,

> Au sortir de l'Europe toute révulsée de cris
> les courants silencieux de la désesperance...
> je veux cet egoisme beau
> et qui s'aventure
> et mon labour me rémemore d'une implacable
> étrave. (pp. 89-91)

Like the Surrealists, Césaire believes in a clean break before his return journey home and a psychic journey through Black history. His language and images, his linguistic style reflect his desire to rupture history to rediscover himself; "le secret des grandes communications et des grandes combustions." The violence of his revolt is described in images of "tornado," "words like mad horses" (mots en chevaux fous) of "the roaring of the tiger" (le rugissement du tigre) of "words that are tidal waves and erysipelas and marsh-fevers and lavas and forest-fires, blazes of flesh, pyres of cities..."

> mots qui sont
> *des raz-dez-marée et des eresipelas*
> des paludismes et des laves et des feux
> de brousse, et des flambées de chair
> et des flambées de villes...(p. 86-7)

This is in line with what Robert Short calls the "shocking and anarchic appearance of surrealist work."[98] Césaire's whole concept of poetry and the poet are those that he picked up from the Surrealists. Like the surrealists he rejects the language of reason: "Raison je te sacre vent du soir," questioning whether it can restore order to the chaos of his existence, "bouche de l'ordre ton nom?" Instead he equates beauty with *the language of violence;*: "Beauté *je t'appelle petition de la pierre*" Like the surrealists he adores irrationality in poetry and the poet, preferring "la folie qui savent/la folie qui hurle/la folie quit voit" (p. 72) to the poetry of "reason." Césaire believed in the power of

this type of poetry to impose its will on the chaos of the world and restore order, claiming that "nous savons maintenant que le soleil tourne autour de nôtre terre eclairant la parcelle qu'a fixée notre volonté" and that "toute étoile chute de ciel en terre a notre commandement sans limité." (pp. 140-141). With this power of command, Césaire conjures up the liberation of his race from all forms of oppression. His litany of the Negro "debut et libre (upright and free)" which fills the last five pages of the book is a poetic fulfillment of that command.

This raises the question of the role of the poet in the struggle of his race for freedom. Though as Robert Short points out, the surrealists, by insisting that the poetic imagination resides in "children, primitives and the insane," have "sponsored the revolutionary idea of the artist as everyman,"[99] it is not everyone who can call up this power. Those who can thus have an obligation toward society: "the artist has to assume a heavy burden of moral and even political responsibility." Though Cahier d'un retour au pays natal is concerned with the collective experience of the Black through history, the hero, the poetic voice of the writer, is a man apart who recognizes his aloneness and perhaps relishes his apartness. He sees the Black masses as "voiceless" in their misery.

> Ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche, ma voix la liberté de celles qui s'affaissent au cachot du désespoir. (pp. 60-61)

But we must note the irony of the fact that he is the one who is the victim of assimilation: "J'ai longtemps erré et je reviens vers la hideur desertée de vos plaies" (pp. 60-61)

This is significant to his art because he is not operating from the communal, artistic traditions of the Black society. Rather he remains alone overseeing the dawn of liberation that he calls up from his mind: "me voici divisé des oasis fraiches de la fraternité" (pp. 64-65). The Black hero he admires, Toussaint L'ouverture, is like the poet-hero, a man alone. Never at any stage in the book is there emphasis on communal union or action even when he breaks through the wall that separates him from the general fate.

> je force la membrane vitteline qui me separe de moi-même" (pp. 86-7)

The hero remains a man who acts alone on behalf of a society that is not conscious of his suffering and sacrifices. The liberation he envisages is not one communal action but one achieved through poetic revelation - a revelation not foreknown and therefore not communicable, but one that is realized in the quest that is in progress in the poem. There is thus no basis for communal participation. There is no shared knowledge. The language itself mediates between the poet and the potential Black audience. It is hermetic and requires some level of literary experience to understand.

Abiola Irele in "Aimé Césaire: An Approach to his Poetry" suggests that "His imagery and the structure of his poems reflect an African influence."[100] There are references to "Tam-tams de mains vides" and to "matin de vertus ancestrales" and to the image of Césaire's Negritude, like the supposed sensationalism of his ancestors:

> "papitant du mouvement même du monde" (pp. 118-119)

The poet's desire for "la foi sauvage de sorcier" (pp. 120-121) might suggest a connection with African literary traditions. But these do not constitute the central images of the book. And as I have indicated, the concept of poetic language, or the poet in his relation with society is non-African.

The mythic structure of the book does not reflect the characteristics of African myths. It is arbitrary and personal, created more to help the author understand himself as a Black man in history than as a communal celebration and reaffirmation of its worldview. If it shares with African myths natural images of cosmic dimensions, images of the tense, drunken earth and of her "great sex raised to the sun," "great delirium of the phallus of God" "earth risen from the store-room of the sea" of the wind and of fire, images of endless time (the whole history of the Black man) and of endless space, images by which individual actions flow to cosmic dimensions, it lacks the supernatural ingredients of African myths, Gods, ancestors that are "living" and are part of present existence. The note that characterizes Senghor's ancestral poems, of invisible presences as in "Le Totem:

> Il me faut le cacher au plus intime de mes veines
> L'Ancêtre a la peau d'orage sillonée d'éclairs et
> de foudre...(p. 24)

or of the possibility of the dead nourishing the living in

> Je chante ta beauté qui passe, forme que je fixe
> dans L'Eternel,
> Avant que le Destin jaloux ne te reduise en
> cendres pour nourir les racines de la vie. (p. 17)

is absent in Césaire's myth.

The narrative form of Cahier d'un retour au pays natal is different from African narrative myths. In African oral literature the myths are usually objective narratives cast in the form of stories that took place in a timeless and spaceless dimension, that the members of the community learn to narrate, or dramatize at appropriate times. The concern of the myths is the celebration or dramatization and affirmation of secular or religious beliefs that are essential to society's existence. As Obiechina indicates in "Amos Tutuola and the Oral Tradition," "Myths are to a great extent sacred tales." Because of this, "myths are rigid in form and content" and "do not yield to individual creativity." The emphasis in African myths is the community, and if there are heroes, such heroes represent the collective consciousness of the community which watches the drama of the myths in a participatory role. As Soyinka says, not only are the heroes "embodiment of the social, communal will invested in a protagonist of its choice" but "the so-called audience is itself an integral part of the arena of conflict; it contributes spiritual strength to the protagonist through its choric reality." Césaire's myth is a subjective interpretation of Black history and of his place in it. As such the rhetorical voice of the poet, narrator narrating, analyzing situations or affirming faith in ultimate freedom for the Black man and Man in general is central to the story. Césaire utilizes the broad structure of myths, which are not peculiar to Africa, to create a personal myth on behalf of the Black race. The structure of Cahier d'un retour... the movement from the present situation is a quest that goes into history and the subconsciousness of the race and finally winds up with an optimistic

affirmation of a regenerated future is of the familiar pattern of myths. Unlike communal African myths, Césaire does not have the choric voice of, and the mutual participation of, a community to back it up.

In every way that one looks at Césaire's myth it owes little or nothing in artistic form to Africa. Those cosmic images which I have said he shares with myths in Africa are not peculiar to African oral literature. Césaire himself has recognized and expressed admiration for this cosmic quality in Paul Claudel's poetry,[101] so that one can at least say that this quality might have come from French Modernism. If Césaire is indebted to any particular cultural myth, it is to Greek myths. This is not so much in the substance or even form or structure but in certain bird images that pervade Cahiers d'un retour au pays natal. The bird images that herald the dawn of Black liberation: "et que hulule la chouette mon bel ange curieux," the dove whose "rise" signals the beginning of rebirth, as well as the swallow that is always being born"...hirondelle de menthe et de genet qui fond pour toujours renaître..." (p. 113) remind one of the myth of the phoenix in Greek mythology that dies only to rise to life again from the ashes of its former self. The hermetic quality of Césaire's work does not come from "imitating the esoteric character of African ritual incantations," as Irele suggests, but from surrealism's concept of the poetic language, and from the yoking together of the various European cultural influences that inform, and are often present in the poem.

In Senghor the most important influence of Surrealism is not so much in the spirit of revolt, though we do not rule that out completely. Neither is it in the use of language. There is never any sense of

fragmentation in Senghor's use of language, nor impersonality. The poetic voice in Senghor is a personal one detailing his cultural experiences, experiences which might be collective experience at some symbolic level, but in every essence are Senghor's experiences. The characteristic Senghorian line is long and majestic rhetorical and grammatically correct, and in normal syntactic order. These lines from "Je t'ai filé une chanson" are characteristic of Senghor's poetry

> "Je t'ai filé une chanson douce comme un murmure
> de Colombe a midi
> Et m'accompagnait grêle mon khalam tetracorde
> Je t'ai tissé une chanson et tu ne m'as pas
> etendu
> Je t'ai offert des fleur sauvages, dont le parfum
> est mysteriuex comme des yeux de sorcier
> Et leur éclat a la richesse du crépuscle a
> Sangomar. (p. 175)

Unlike Césaire who approaches poetry as a process of discovery and creation revealed as a process of "intuitive and emotional apprehension," Senghor like his model, Claudel, whose main poetic preoccupation is the Catholic celebration of a harmonious universe, avoided the imagistic style of his Symbolist contemporaries, in the belief that in the modern age of disillusionment it was his obligation to communicate the truth of an ordered universe in his poetry. As Germaine Mason testifes in A Concise Survey of French Literature,[102] Claudel felt "It was left to him, whose inspiration was a divine gift to describe the universe where all creation (even minerals) attests to the glory of God and it was his mission to make it intelligible to others." While th normal Surrealist poet is "hermetic," Claudel wrote in a style that is lucid and prosaic.

> He used a completely free metre, nearer to prose than verse, with an unusual rhythm which follows the natural rhythm of breathing, and also reproduced the flow of his own thoughts. Claudel described his medium not as a disintegration of the traditional verse line but as the supreme and final development of prose.[103]

Christophe Campos in his essay "Poetry and Collective Experience,"[104] which groups Claudel with Saint-John Perse, another poet who has influenced Négritude poetry, especially Senghor, describes Claudel's poetry as basically "reacting against symbolism" though he wrote at the same period as the major Symbolists. Both Claudel and Perse devoted their poetry to the expression of the existence of harmony in the Cosmos. And Saint-John Perse's poetry, in appearance at least, is similar to the prose style of Claudel. His symbols are more complex however. But both stand out in their language as rebels against the ideals of the Symbolists' view of poetic language as broken images.

But despite this prose-like structure and statements of his lines, Senghor's poetry is basically mythical in more ways than one. There is a personal myth, as there is in the other poets, that is constructed as a journey in search of an identity. And though this is an offshoot of the quest for identity, Senghor takes us deep into the African mythological cosmos. This African view of existence is what Lamine Diakhaté defines in his article "The Myth in Senegalese Folk Poetry:"[105] when he says:

> What about the myth? It is at the heart of every human creation. It expresses the surrealist apprehension of invisible superhuman forces, cosmic forces. It therefore becomes the moving element of our creation, allowing us to transpose into our reality elements which are beyond our control and in our senses.[106]

These cosmic forces are not just spiritual "essence ideals," abstractions of spiritual and moral powers that exist in the human psyche as we find them to be in Cane or Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, but personalized existences or beings, ancestors who have passed away but are yet "living" gods, the spiritual essence of objects and places. Myth in the sense in which it is defined by Diakhaté is the type of poetry by which the life of these forces is experienced through the sensations of the poets, the lyrical rendering of a "fact," a way of sublimating feeling.

> ...The African Negro joins together, in a single lyrical impulse, God, water, stone, fire...[107]

This definition leaves out a large part of the elements that constitute myths. It leaves out the element of narrative. For myth, the story is essential:

> myth may be defined as a story of a complex of story elements taken as expressing, and therefore as implicitly symbolizing certain deep-lying aspects of human and transhuman existence.[108]

African myths are stories that embody the essential beliefs of the relationship of man with the rest of the Universe. Diakhaté's definition of myth, which is applicable to Senghor's use of the elements of myth from African literature, is similar to the concept of "the mythopoetic mode of consciousness"[109] rather than myth proper. Diakhaté talks of "myth" as "an ability to feel without apprehension, a capacity for living the other." This is not different from surrealism's concept of poetry in which deliberately disordered language invokes an emotional, non-rational apprehension of surreality. The only difference between the "mythopoetic consciousness" of reality in Senghor and that

of a French surrealist is that Senghor draws from the images and rituals and beliefs of African myths.

This is not meant to underplay the effect of these elements of African myths on Senghor's poetry. If nothing else, they help distinguish African Négritude poetry, especially Senghor's and Diop's poetry, from Negritudinist poetry from the Caribbean and from the United States. The distinctive note of ritual fusion between the poet, representing the contemporary African, and the ancestors, represented by the animal totem, which is an animal yet felt under the skin of the poet in "Totem" is not found in Black poetry outside Africa. Senghor succeeds in describing a world replete with living but invisible presences who nonetheless exert strong influences on life in such poems as "In Memoriam." In "Prière aux Masques," and ode-like appeal to the ancestors for deliverance from European influences, the powers of these invisible presences are vividly described:

> Masques! O Masques!
> Masque noir masque rouge, vous masques blanc-et-noir
> Masques aux quatre points d'où souffle l'Esprit
> Je vous salue dans le silence!
> Et pas toi le dernier, Ancêtre à tete de lion
> Vous gardez ce lieu forclos à tout rire de femme, à tout sourire qui se fane
> Vous distillez cet air d'eternité ou je respire l'air de mes pères.(p. 23)

But though we often come across these elements of African myths, it is obvious that they are pieces or vestiges from a system that has broken down. The Africa of the ancestors, just as the Europe of technological civilizations from which the poet is running, is dying, if not dead:

> Voici que meur l'Afrique des empires--c'est l'agonie d'une princesse pitoyable
> Et aussi l'Europe à qui nous sommes lies par nombril

(p. 23).

This is a key image in Senghor's poetry. Though he advocates a return to these ancestral sources, his hope for the future does not lie in these sources as a coherent and complete system of living. The ancestral tree has fallen: "Mais quel orage bûcheron a abbatit l'arbe séculaire?" (p. 48) His hopes for liberation lie in allying the vestiges of the African world with whatever is good in European civilization, as "yeast to the white flour of Europe." This conviction reflects also the artistic principles and practices of Senghor. Though he gives the impression that what he admires most in the works of writers in French literature are those aspects that they share with African literature that he knows, there is no doubt that his literary practices do not reflect the outstanding charcterstics of African oral literature. For example, when he talks about Saint-John Perse's poetry, he sees in it the literary practices of the Senegalese Griots. Perse's poems in "Exil," he says in "Saint-John Perse, ou poésie du royaume d'enfance," remind him of the visit of the last king of the Sine, Koumba Ndofene Diouf's visit to his father's house (Senghor's) in the company of four Griots: "Et quatre troubadours, quatre griots l'escortaient," singing poems about the horse, about the king and above all about man. "Exil" is about the same things:

> C'était le même ton a peu de choses près à hauteur
> de Roi, à hauteur d'homme, à hauteur d'honneur.
> C'était le même rythme, allant à l'amble la même
> qualité des mots et des images.[110]

It is a debatable issue whether the rhythm, the ambling movement of Perse as well as the quality of his words and his images could really be

like those of the Griots who sang in Sénégalese languages. The languages are different--one is intonational and the other tonal--they obey different linguistic laws. But there is one thing we are sure of, the qualities which Senghor admires in Saint-John Perse are abundant in Senghor's own poetry. One can certainly talk of influence. Senghor contradicts himself on the question of influences by and imitation of French writers. In "Comme les lamantins vont boire a la source", first he accuses critics of falsely alleging that he imitated Saint-John Perse, "Tel me reproche d'imiter Saint-John Perse, et je ne l'avais pas lu avant d'avoir ecrit 'Chants d'ombre's et 'Hosties noires,'"[112] then he admits that he has "read a lot of French poetry" and "imitated a lot":

> Pourquoi le nierai-je? Je confesserai même--Aragon m'en donne l'exemple--que j'aî beaucoup lu, des troubadours à Paul Claudel. Et beaucoup imite...[113]

In the essay on Perse he had confessed that as far back as 1938 before he published any book of poetry he had read Perse's "Exil."

The influence of Perse can be seen in many areas of Senghor. He says of Perse's rhythm, for example:

> Ce qui me frappe, ce qui m'enchante d'abord dans un poème, ce sont ses qualtés sensuelles; le rythme du vers ou du verset, et sa musique, Saint-John Perse me comblait.[114]

Even more specifically, the "verset" of Perse:

> est composé de vers blancs, librement repartis: héxasyllabe, octosyllabe, decasyllabe, alexandrins. Ce que je veux souligner, c'est que, sous ses differents aspects, c'est le rythme binaire, celui de l'amble, le rythme même des forces vitales...[115]

Perse's poetry is "the poetry of emotion." Its music compensates for the absence of the chants of the oral literature of Africa

> la musique du verset compense l'absence moderne du chant....

In place of the traditional European rhyme, Perse emphasizes assonance and alliteration as well as other internal prosodic features:

> A l'intérieur du vers, dans le cadre du verset, il existe d'autre pause et partant, des accents secondaires....[116]

Repetitions -- of images and words, even of conjunctions, such as "car, puis, surtout" --- are prosodic features with Perse, he says.

Senghor's poetry shares similar prosodic qualities with that of Perse. Unlike Césaire's fondness for the broken image, Senghor writes in the almost prose style of Perse. The beauty of his poetic lines as in Perse, lies less in the poetic turn of phrases, or in the violent coupling of contrary images as in Césaire, than in the wise use of repetitions of words and sounds, the sensation of dextrous balancing within line, and the overall music in his poems.

> Absente absente, O doublement absente sur la
> sécheresse glacée
> sur l'éphémère glacis du papier, sur l'or blanc
> des sables où seul pousse l'elyme.
> Absents absents et tes yeux sagittaires traversant
> les horizons de mica. (p. 150)

The lines are straightforward statements in the normal order of French syntax. Even where there are no exclamation marks as in the first line, the movement is controlled by the choice of polysyllabic words, or where the words are monosyllabic, of consonants, preventing any rush. The reader is forced to pause at many points along the line, with the result that there is a slow, majestic -- ponderous where it is less

successfully managed -- movement along the lines. Together with this, the repetition of words and sounds, both within individual lines as well as across lines that do not even follow each other, makes for musical quality. Like Perse's lines, Senghor's lines do not always correspond to grammatical units. Not only do we have frequent run-on of the sense into lines that might appear unpoetic to a reader:

> Je te reçevrai sur la rive adverse, monté sur un
> quadrige de piroques et coiffe de la mitre double,
> ambassadeur de la Nuit et du Lion-Levant, (p. 143)

but sometimes the poet has a comma where there should be a full stop.

> Les hommes y sont de quatre coudées. Ils ne
> distinguent pas leur gauche de leur droite, ils ont
> neuf noms pour nommer le palmier mais le palmier
> n'est pas nommé.
> ("Pour Koras et Balafong", p. 143)

Compare these with some lines from "Exil."

> Et qui donc avant l'aube erre aux confins du monde
> avec ce cri pour moi? Quelle grandefille répudiée
> s'en fuit au sifflement de l'aile vister d'autre
> seuils, quelle grande fille melaimée.[117]

Not all Perse's lines are like these. They are usually as long but he often indicates pauses through the use of commas. Also, there is usually a word repeated many times in the sentence to control the movement of the lines.

> Et comme un haut fait d'armes en marche
> par le monde, comme un dénombrement
> de peuples en exode, comme une fondation
> d'empires par tumulte prétorien, ha! comme
> un gonflement de lévres sur la naîssance
> des grands livres.[118]

The structure of the Senghorian line is similar to that of Perse in many ways. Senghor likes to give the impression that "C'est le style des grands poèmes traditionels: de l'ode et de l'épopée" but none of the

lines of the poems he transcribed and translated into French have this type of line. The singer would be out of breath before he could articulate such lines. In these translated poems each line corresponds to a sense, as well as grammatical unit:

> vous, soldats, qui jamais n'avez en peur
> Ecoutez le chant du Vautour
> Le chant immortel
> ---
> Je chante le Vautour dans sa gloire
> Quand il se pose, il ouvre un gouffre en terre. (p. 228)

Or from "Chant Du Feu"

> Feu que les hommes regardent dans la nuit, dans la nuit profonde
> Feu qui brûles et ne chauffes pas, qui brilles et ne brilles pas
> Feu qui voles sans corps, sans coeur, qui ne connaîs case au foyer,
> Feu transparent des palmes, un homme sans peur t'invoque. (p. 227)

Even when the lines appear long as in these last examples, they are still well within what can be uttered in a breath. Each line has a self-contained meaning. Where the poem is not arranged in lines corresponding to sense and breath units as in this narrative from Peul, "Ballade Toucouleur de Samba-Foul,"

> Samba était noble et genereux; il avait toutes
> qualités pour regner; mais son pere mourut
> cependant qu'il était tout enfant, et son oncle,
> Abou Moussa lui ravit le commandement.
> Abou Moussa cherchait même a le faire perir. (p. 230)

The punctuation marks indicate the breath pauses and where the line would end or begin. In short, Senghor's own poetic lines look much more like Perse and Claudel's than the lines of traditional African poetry.

One other area in which one can see the influence of the West, and of Perse and Claudel in particular, is in the cosmic views of Senghor's poetry. In the way that Césaire recognized and admired the cosmic qualities of Claudel's poetry, Senghor also admires this essential quality of Perse's poetry: "La poésie de Saint John Perse" he says "est une poésie 'cosmic', qui embrasse toute la planète et toute Histoire. A ce titre, elle use de tous les mots de toute la planète et de toute Histoire:"[119] This he says imposes a sensuous quality on the poems. The images are concrete rather than abstract and the rhythm, based on the rhythm of life, reinforces the sensuous qualities of his poems. Senghor's poetry is just as cosmic in that sense of the word. His images are drawn more from the natural life around him than from abstract mental concepts. One can say that this is a quality of oral literature too. But one can speculate that Senghor might not have written in this way if he had not seen the beauty of such writing in French in the works of Perse. Moreover, the Biblical and Classical images and Christian rituals, part of the cosmic qualtiies of his work, upon which his work almost equally depends, place as much importance on these external frameworks as the African ones. The images of "Latin Muses", "the intoxication of Vespers", of "black priests dancing/leaping like David before the Ark of God," of "Prodigal son" (all from "Pour Koran et Balafong"), or of the image of "montparnasse" ("Poème liminaire"), the references to "Pindar", to "the Phoenix rising", and "Byzantine plains" or to the concept of "The Universal Marseillaise" (the French National Anthem) are parts of a conscious effort to give a cosmic quality to his poems. This artistic effect finds correspondence

in the thought of a cosmic, or more appropriately a universal civilisation, in which the notion of cosmic harmony replaces the division that rationalism imposes over human existence.

There is one other reason why Perse's "Exil" would appeal to Senghor. To Senghor,

> "Exil" est une séparation physique de sa patrie...Il est plus...le drame de la solitude: ...il est celui de tous les hommes, le drame du poète, coupé de la Société et de son Siècle, s'interrogeant sur les moyens et partant sur la valeur de son art. C'est l'exil d'Alexis Saint-Léger, l'exil de l'Homme, l'exil du Poète, et même du Poème.[120]

This is very interesting for an understanding for the general movement of Senghor's poetry. To the situation of Saint-John Perse in America, the situation which inspired the poems of "Exil", Senghor sees his own separation from Africa as parallel. This parallel manifests itself as Senghor the African, representing his ancestral sources whom he says are "exiled", and on the level of Senghor the poet, an individual man, as well as on the level of Senghor the Man, representing the whole of humanity. Senghor's poetry is an attempt to resolve this triangular conflict in a poetic vision that uses the three levels in a single resolution. The form that this takes is a poetic journey of search, that starts from self-analysis that discovers the dual nature of his existence, torn between Europe and Africa. "In Memoriam" describes this situation vividly. The poet's personal exile can be said to be paralleled by the situation of the Sénégalese "tirailleurs" who died fighting for European democracy only to face further colonial oppression after the Second World War. The collective experience described in "Hosties Noires" parallels the personal experience described in "Chants

D'Ombre". They are the situations which warranted the search for ancestral values culminating in the physical return to Africa. The disillusionment that follows this return necessitates the beginning of another quest. For that to which the poet returns has been destroyed. The paraphernalia of kingship and nobility that signify these qualities in the ancestors are dead, lost as booty to the West. It is left to the poet, "Maître de Langue", the "ambassador of his people and ancestors" to assure the survival of the vestiges of ancestral values. The resolution as Senghor sees it is in the fusion of the good qualities of all cultures in a Universal civilization. For, following the path of the Evolutionists, "la théorie moderne de l'Evolutionisme", Senghor sees the present situation of the ancestral civilization in terms of the need for "rebirth": "il s'agit de ruines fecondes, ou la vie renaît sur les cendres de la Mort."[121] Once more, one must note that the concept exists in African oral literature but Senghor places his source in Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.[122] For the African, Senghor's advice is "nous devons donc adapter nôtre vie. En nous organisant d'une façon nouvelle, en creant des formes nouvelles de civilisation." Perse's poetry shows Senghor the truth of the need for cultural rebirth. Thus "Exil's" movements lead to death in the "West" in preparation for rebirth, an image that is most suggestive to Senghor. Simultaneously with the African themes, we see that Senghor is also preoccupied with death of contemporary European civilization and the need for it to be revitalized by some cultural traits that have survived in the decayed civilizations of Africa. Senghor's myth, as it were, involved the whole of existence, especially with the need for Man to be reborn into a new

civilization. At the level of his art the rebirth motif manifests itself in the various elements which go to make his poetic production. French language and thought, philosophy and literature, the Christian religion and rituals, and elements of Greek mythology overwhelm the African aspects of his work by his indebtedness to Europe. One cannot talk of a "renaissance" of African values except in the narrowest sense of reference to the vestiges of broken civilizations. Despite his insistence that the central concern of his poetry is the return of ancestral values, the return must be viewed only as a stage in his search for identity and for the means of regenerating Black civilization.

Every element of the art of Toomer and Cullen, Césaire and Senghor can be successfully related to sources in Western intellectual and artistic traditions except the experiences of the Black man on which the works are based. But even the experiences themselves are all directly related to the social system that colonialism and slavery brought about. That is why it would be impossible to produce works of art that are based only on Black art traditions. To do this one would have to go to pre-colonial and pre-slavery experiences, ignoring the cultural change brought about in the life of the Black by colonialism and slavery. This is probably the most salient point proved by the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude. Almost every part of their writings springs from the very culture they are reacting against, despite their determination to create literature that is Black. The images of the Black which they produce, true to the social contexts and the history of the Black from which the experiences depicted come, are, as the following chapter makes clear,

seen from within the context of the Western socio-political system which had replaced the Black's civilization. Even the images of the Black man's future are not less dependent on Western civilization, for as Césaire and Senghor and a host of lesser Négritude writers see it, Black security depends on the emergence of a Universal civilization which will fuse all cultures into a "raceless" one.

CHAPTER VII

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE, NEGRITUDE AND THE PAST

The Black image in the movements' literatures is closely related to their views of the past. "Image" is being used to denote the writer's conceptualization of the place of the Black man in society at a particular time and place, and of his place in human history. Both of these are closely related as they involve the Black worldview. In the social context in which the Black literatures under consideration were produced Black worldview could not but be one of dependence. Both in Africa, the Caribbean and the United States, Black men were either still in the bondage of colonialism or were products of emancipation from slavery that left them hardly better off than their colonial brothers. Instead of a worldview where Blacks had control of their destiny, Black worldview in the 20s and 30s could only mean the place of the Black man within a system designed and run by White men. In the United States there is a strong impression in Black folklore that evolved through the slavery experience, and in poems based on that folk view, that the kingdom of the earth belongs to the White man. The rewards of the Blacks are waiting in the world beyond.[1] The Black American tried to reconcile himself to the historical worldview of the white man by trying to integrate himself into that history through cultural assimilation.[2] The assimilationist tendencies which Arthur P. Davis talks about in "Integration and Race Literature,"[3] can be attributed to the absence of the evolution of an essentially Black worldview which includes a

positive Black image for the Black man. In the same manner, the assimilationist policy of the colonial powers can best be understood as a concerted effort to dislodge the African from his essentially African worldview and to replace that worldview with a European-centered one.

The extent of the Euro-centredness of the contemporary Black worldview can best be illustrated by a discussion of the editorial "proclamation" of Négritude ideology in Alioune Diop's comment in the first issue of Présence Africaine. Alioune Diop had worked closely with Négritude writers from the beginning. He was in a way what Alain Locke was to the Harlem Renaissance one of Négritude's leading intellectuals, its public relations officer, and its propaganda mouthpiece. The significance of that article or commentary will best be appreciated when we realize the role that Présence Africaine played in the Négritude movement, and the role of Alioune Diop in it: publishing new writers and thus introducing their works to the public; in some cases arranging the publication of new books of new writers with the publishers; opening up the pages of the journal to leading contemporary French intellectuals who gave Négritude their support, and supporting and publishing research in African civilization and culture as well as publishing essays on and translations from African oral literature. It is not inconceivable that the ideas expressed in "Niam n'goura" were shared widely in Négritude circles. Senghor worked closely with that magazine. As Edward A. Jones tells us in Voices of Négritude,[4] he was an editor of the magazine.[5] The close similarity between the views expressed about traditional African culture and the need for universal civilization which we find in Alioune Diop's commentary and those we find in Senghor's essays and

poetry encourages one to think that they must have been "official" Négritude views. This makes the editorial commentary useful in understanding Senghor's literary ideology in relation to the worldview of colonized Blacks.

To Alioune Diop,[6] Africa is associated with cultural "silence", for Africa has been "enclosed for thousands of years in a kind of cosmic silence...arrested in a state of vain and animal vitality" (p. 107)[7]. The Africans are engulfed in lethargy and worry less about the affairs of the world around them than about present pleasure.

> We worry little about knowing and mastering the world but bother much about enjoying the food with which the present is heavy-laden. We live in the "here and now".[8]

Thus he sees the Black man as "conspicuous by his absence in the building of the world." Alioune's African "needs to know the meaning of an ideal," because up till now he has never worried about such things. His African, "like the birds of the air or lilies of the field, worries little about the morrow," as he is satisfied with relishing the "free spontaneity" of the simple natural life. His "human will-power is limited." He is only "barely productive (at least his productivity does not correspond to the rhythm of modern times)". "Blacks are 'the white man's burden.'" This image of African lethargy, of stagnation and unproductivity is similar to that which we have seen in our analysis of Senghor's essays.[9] Unlike Senghor, however, Alioune Diop does not pretend to any delusion of " a return to the sources." He is explicitly Eurocentric in his worldview where Senghor is pretentiously returning to an Africa-centric worldview only to slip through the back

door of universal civilization into the same Diopian Euro-centric worldview. For Alioune Diop and Senghor, in spite of what he says in his poetry about Africa regenerating Western cultures, Africa is in a state of lethargy and decadence and needs the technology and active intellectual culture of Europe to revive her. The image of Europe is the exact opposite to that of Africa; the positive axis of the Diopian (and Senghorian) Manichaean world of men: "a minority of active, productive and creative beings, i.e., Europe," "creator of a militant civilization," as opposed to the "silence" of Africa. The whole of human history is the result of "forces set in motion by the tireless activity of the European." Against the "animal vitality" of Africans, Europeans possess the "rigours of invincible reason." Europe is the sole possessor of the cultural values which Alioune Diop says can be used for the "transformation of these overseas men into brains and aims" necessary for existence. Given this Manichaean division of the world into the "dynamic" and "static" cultures, a division which we must understand was created first by the colonialists and is therefore not necessarily true, but which is accepted by Senghor and Diop, Alioune Diop not surprisingly openly chooses to be French. "Our view is pleased with being French, with living in the air of French thought..." Again, in this, Alioune Diop is different from Senghor, for Senghor while admitting that many of his thoughts, like most African intellectuals of the time, derived from French philosophy, and while admitting that he "read and imitated a great deal" of French poetry, still wants us to believe that he could return to Africa and view the world from the perspectives of an African worldview. Finally, Alioune Diop is

forthright about the status of the alienated Black intellectuals between these two Manichaean worlds. He sees men like himself, alienated Black men, as being "neither white, yellow, nor black," "incapable of returning completely to our ancestral traditions or of assimilating ourselves to Europe...we had the feeling of constituting a new race mentally crossed...we had abandoned ourselves between two societies: without a recognized meaning in either, being strangers to both."[10]

There was thus an ambiguous, at best ambivalent attitude towards the past. Though the pre-colonial past holds the image of Blacks that is different from the denigrated image in Western culture, Black writers and intellectuals realised that the system of the past could not survive whole in contemporary life and that Blacks needed some new system, which may not contain elements from the past, to assure the survival of the race. This ambivalence must be taken into consideration in order to understand the nature of the Black image in these Black movements.

That revival of the past as a coherent system is not the aim of the movement is however obvious from the poems. The Afro-American and Caribbean Blacks were too far from its influences, for the African worldview to be really relevant to them. They either turned to it only to reject the possibilities it holds for Black "liberation", as in Countee Cullen's "Heritage" or they almost ignore it except for some sentimental images such as Hughes and Toomer used. Césaire, following in their steps, dismisses the illusion of Carribean African cultural and historical heritage in Cahier d'un retour...[11]. The result is that the Blacks of the Americas realistically accept their place in Western civilization while hoping for a form of assimilation or cultural fusion

that will assure the Black man his rightful place in history. Unlike the Afro-American and Caribbean writers, the African Négritude writers start off by advocating a return to an essential Black worldview. Senghor and Birago Diop exemplify this view. The disillusionment that follows Senghor's "return" is testimony that, like their brothers in the Americas, the African survival depends to a large extent on their adaptation of Western civilizations. Senghor seeks this survival in a fusion of Western and Black civilization while Bernard Dadié and David Diop on the other hand seek to restore African political rights through the international struggle of all oppressed men. Either way the attempt to place the Black man back in the mainstream of history where he will be a part of the control of his destiny does not amount to a revival of the past.

While the approach of the writers will appear to differ they are agreed on the view that the future of the Black man lies in his ability to approximate European and Western values to his needs. When Hughes claims "I too I am America" and Cullen realizes that the only civilized heritage he has at the end of "Heritage" is his Western heritage, as opposed to his African heritage, and Claude McKay echoes them in "America":

> Although she feeds me bread of bitterness
> And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth
> Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
> I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.

We must understand this to mean that there is not going to be any advocacy of a separate Black civilization in the future. This view is the same as Senghor advocating a universal civilization in place of the

ancestral worldview, and the same with Césaire, who denying the existence of a Black essence different from the Human Spiritual essence, foresees Black liberation in terms of a universal civilization in which every race has a place.

> et il reste à l'homme à conquérir toute interdiction immobilisée aux coins de sa ferveur et aucune race ne possede le monopole de la beauté, de l'intelligence, de la force, et il est place pour tous au rendez-vous de la conquête (p. 139-41)

For Césaire, the poetic will is the will of the whole of humanity, on behalf of whom the poet exercises that will for liberation

> ...et nous savons maintenant que le soleil tourne autour de notre terre éclairant la parcelle qu'a fixée nôtre volonté seule et que toute étoile chute de ciel en terre à nôtre commandemant sans limité (p. 141)

In many cases, the Black writers subsume their concern for the Black man under the larger concern for humanity, and perceive the Black man's problems as an aspect of the larger problem of mankind.

Among the Harlem Renaissance writers, no other writer refers to the African heritage as frequently as Cullen. Even when he is not specifically discussing the African heritage Cullen uses African images to describe the beauty of his Afro-American characters. For example in "A Song of Praise," he pictures the "arrogant and defiant" beauty of the women in terms of qualities that are African

> Her walk is like the replica
> Of some barbaric dance
> Wherein the soul of Africa
> Is winged with arrogance

The poet appears to be exalting his African heritage when he describes himself as:

...my heart is pagan mad
My feet are never still
(Pagan Prayer)

or when he asks this rhetorical question in "Fruit of the Flower"

Why should he deem it pure mischance
A son of his is fain
To do a naked tribal dance
Each time he hears the rain?

But the images with which he describes Africa are the same as those with which Western man has always denigrated African civilization, images that emphasize the emotional content of that civilization in comparison to the rationalism of White civilization. Thus even the passages we quote are suffused with images of "paganism," "barbaric dance," "madness," of "feet (that) are never still," of "the naked tribal dance." In "Heritage" the images are just as derogatory. Africa is a wilderness of "jungle herds" and "wild barbaric birds," "wild cats" and "bats," of "leprous flowers" and of "quaint outlandish gods." Of "monarch claws" and "silversnakes." The life of the people is the life of "nakedness," of "Great drums throbbing through the air" and of "savage measure," "of jungle boys and jungle girls" romping the wilds without inhibition. The values represented by these images are not very attractive. The poet is quick to admit that time had separated him from the Africa he is talking about:

One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved.

"Heritage" throws some light on the ambivalent attitude that Afro-Americans have towards Africa. It is not really love of Africa that makes him turn to the African image, but the need to have some values by which he can counter the white man's charge that he has no

culture and no history: he "shapes a human creed" substituting a black concept of a Black Jesus Christ for the White one in Christianity.

> Wishing he I served were black
> Lord, I fashion dark gods, too
> Daring even to give you
> Dark despairing features
> Crowned with dark rebellious hair...

He quickly repents of this "sacrilege" and returns to the fold, a "prodigal son":

> I belong to Jesus Christ
> Preacher of Humility
> Heathen gods are not for me.

At the end, Cullen accepts his integrated Americanness as the only "civilized" heritage he has.

What we have said about Cullen and his relations with Africa more or less applies to Langston Hughes. While Africa is closely associated with the crisis of identity in Cullen, reference to Africa is rarer in Hughes. The poet seems to know straightaway what Africa means to him, without having to agonize over this knowledge as Cullen does. In "Dream Variation" he knows that the type of freedom which he desires, a kind of reckless, indolent freedom which he vaguely associates with Africa is only a dream.

> To fling my arms wide
> In some place of the sun
> To whirl and to dance
> Till the white day is done
>
> Then rest at cool evening
> Beneath a tall tree
> While night comes on gently
> Dark like me
> That is my dream
>
> To fling my arms wide
> In the face of the sun

Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done
Rest at pale evening...
A tall, slim tree...
Night coming tenderly
Black like me (p. 43)[12]

The setting is of a far place, the refrain "Dark like me, Black like me" is suggestive of a Black place and race which link with Africa.

There is the overall suggestion that the poet is running from "White" darkness to Black light. But note too the similarity between Cullen and Hughes in their use of the dance motif to suggest the expression of the emotional characteristic that is associated with Africa. This motif recurs again in "Danse Africaine," this time coupled with the familiar image of "The low beating of the toms-toms" that "stirs your blood" into frenzy. In "Lament for Dark People," and "Poem" as well as in "Afraid," the poet echoes another familiar image of Africa -- the image of Africa as the "jungle."

They drove me out of the forest
They took me away from the jungles
I lost my trees
I lost my silver moons. (p. 100)[13]

These clichés of Africa come from the same lack of knowledge of Africa that we see in Cullen. Even though Hughes' use of these images suggests "innocence" and "peace", he is also quick to suggest that this is not civilization. In the end it is no agonizing decision for him to choose this civilization over the "innocent joy" of the jungle.

I, too, am America (109)

These are the African poems in Hughes' first collection of poetry, Weary Blues (1926). The impressions of Africa we find in them do not amount to any celebration of Africa. If anything, they are a poetic

treatment that borrows from the White man's propaganda about Africa. I the other collection which he published during the Harlem Renaissance, Fine Clothes to the Jew (1929)[14] there is no notable reference to Afric except the descriptive "Dark Ones of Africa" with which he addresses th Afro-Americans in the South in "Sun Song." There is little in Hughes' poetry to support the claim of revival of the African heritage. It is surprising that Hughes did not have much more to say than he did about Africa, because unlike the other Harlem writers, he actually was in Africa as a seaman in 1923 before he settled down to be a writer. And judging by the account he gives of the journey in the chapter called "Africa" in The Big Sea he was deeply impressed by Africa, with her "People, black and beautiful as the night."[15] Perhaps having seen, first hand, the similarity between the plight of the Africans in the colonial situation and their Afro-American brothers, he decided that there was not much to idealize in the African situation especially for someone like him who did not know much about the pre-colonial worldview of the Africans. However, after Hughes became a writer and developed a deep liking for the art forms of Negro folk literature, which he used almost exclusively in Weary Blues and Fine Clothes to the Jew, he, alon with Arna Bontemps, gradually became committed, as Charles Nichols confirms in the Prologue to the book Arna Bontemps, Langston, Hughes Letters: 1925-67 (1980)[16] to the development of "African and Afro-American culture throughout the world, the creation of a vital and productive art among Negroes"[17] (p. 1). In pursuit of this aim, Langston Hughes became a part of the early development of African written literature in English. Through advertisements in African dailies, Hughes

was able to gather articles, poems and short stories for a collection of African writing he called African Treasury.[18] He was able, to translate this in a French edition, Anthologie d'écrivains africains et malagaches,[19] a year later. It provided many of those whose works were included in the anthology the first opportunity to read. Some of these are now familiar names among African authors -- Can Themba of South Africa, Abioseh Nicol of Sierra Leone, Bloke Modisane of South Africa, Ezekiel Mphahlele also of South Africa, Tom Mboya of Kenya and Onyenaekeya Udeago of Nigeria among others. His interest also extended to African oral literature. In 1963, he edited a book of African folklore in translation called Poems from Black Africa.[20] In the same way, his interests in Négritude literature led to the translation, in collaboration with Mercer Cook, of the Caribbean writer Jacques Roumain's book Gouverneurs de la rosée.[21] Thus Hughes, though he did not revive the African heritage in his Renaissance writings, has made up for it by involving himself heart and soul in the cultural development of modern Africa. In this the only other Afro-American with whom he shares the honour of a world Black vision is DuBois, one of the initiators of the concept of Pan Africanism, who out of love for Africa chose to be buried in Ghana.

Just as with the other Afro-American writers the African poems of Claude McKay are few. The images do not have the sentimental qualities of Hughes. They are candid expressions of admiration for the past glories of Africa, glories which she has completely lost in the modern context of Western civilization. "Invocation" expresses a longing for the "Ancestral Spirit" which has given the Black man a place in history,

that "didst raise the Ethiope standard in curtained days." But the poet admits that it is, like him, "thine exiled counterpart," exiled from contemporary life, hidden in "the deepest of the night." In "Africa," though the poet catalogues the great achievements of Africa in the past, "when all the world was young in pregnant night," Africa's glories are now swallowed up in oblivion, "the darkness swallowed thee again." Her degenerate place in modern life is well imaged in

> Thou art the harlot, now thy time is done
> Of all the mighty nations of the sun.

In these poems, as in "Outcast", his longings for African "forgotten jungle songs" and her "darkness" and "peace" are always restrained by the social realities of having been born and brought up and of having to live under a Western social system, alienated from the realities of Africa. In Toomer's work the reference to Africa is even rarer. The surreal qualities he admires in the Black characters in Cane are derived from the African heritage.

> ...the men, with vestiges of pomp
> Race memories of king and caravan.
> High priests, an ostrich, and a juju-man
> Go singing through the footpath of the swamp.
> (p. 13)

But the civilization of which these images are vestiges has been replaced in Africa by Western civilization, and so the liberation of Afro-Americans would not come from Africa. This image is summed up in "Convention"

> African Guardian of Souls
> Drunk with rum.
> Feasting on a strange cassava
> Yielding to new words and a weak palabra
> Of a white-faced sardonic god
> Amen,

Shouts hosanna. (p. 26)

At best the African heritage is discussed and quickly dismissed as a "myth" created to satisfy a social and psychological need in the works of Harlem Renaissance poets. Even as a spiritual homeland, Africa was vague in their minds because they were not familiar with African thought systems and cosmology. They looked at Africa through the images of Western Christianity and through the images of Western artists for whom, as Warrington Hudlin has noted, Africans and Blacks "represented the uninhibited man that they idealized. They were the noble savages, the carefree child of nature" (p. 274). When the Harlem Renaissance writers accepted these images of Africa they were accepting Western stereotypes that were false.

Rather than the exaltation and revival of the past, the emphasis in the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude is on the fate of the Black man in the contemporary Western socio-political system. Whether in the Harlem Renaissance or in Négritude the overall impression is of protest or complaint against Black sufferings and deprivations, both economic and political. Whatever critics say about Black pride in Black history and culture, the apparent pre-occupation is of alienation, double alienation both from a former Black cultural system, as well as the Western social system that destroyed it and has replaced it. There is a general feeling of both material and spiritual rootlessness as alienation is presented as an accomplished process which can hardly be undone.

All the same, the tone of the poets differs immensely even though the materials they are using are drawn often from the same experiences.

Claude McKay for example is noted for "the militant tone" of his poetry, exemplified in these lines from "If We Must Die," the poem that made McKay famous and always given as a good example of this militancy:

> Though far outnumbered let us show us brave
> And for their thousand blows deal one death blow
> Like me we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack
> Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back.

It marked the first time that the idea of "fighting back" was expressed in Afro-American literature. And it is true that an "apparent" tone of indignation pervades many of McKay's poems, but in some, like "Enslaved," the anger no longer inspires a rallying call to arms but expresses sorrow over the suffering that the Black man has been subjected to in history, a sorrow that borders on self-pity for the race. Helen Pyne Timothy in "Claude McKay: Individualism and Group Consciousness" describes the pervasive tone of McKay's poetry as a "delicate tenderness and melancholy." This is evident from these lines:

> Although she feeds me bread of bitterness
> And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth
> Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
> I love this cultural hell that tests my youth.
> Her vigor flows like tides into my blood
> Giving me strength erect against her hate
> Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
> I stand within her walls with not a shred
> Of terror, malice not a word of jeer
> Darkly I gaze into the days ahead and see her
> Might and granite wonders there beneath the
> Touch of Time's unerring hand like priceless
> Treasures sinking in the sand

When the poet foresees an end to the American system of life this is left in the hands of "Time." Ironically this vision of ultimate destruction is so mild, compared with the power of the American culture which he describes, that it is not convincing. Despite his "militancy"

McKay's poems accept the realities of his place within the Western system as unchanging. In "Outcast" he seems to indicate the need for getting out of the grasps of Western culture;

> But the great Western world holds me in fee
> And I may never hope for full release
> while to its alien gods I bend my knees.

but at the same time he indicates that he is trapped within the system. The cultural alternative that is represented by "Africa" has no validity for him. In "Africa" he is very explicit about this in his address to the continent

> Thou art the harlot, now thy time is done
> Of all the mighty nations of the sun.

McKay had no vision of solution to the contemporary Afro-American problem. He has no "future image" for the Black man in his poetry.

In contrast to the apparent "militancy" of McKay, Countee Cullen is always despondent, despairing, pessimistic. This tone comes up wherever he is considering the situation of the Black man. The pervasive image is that of self-pity. This is what leads the poet to question God in desperation at the irony of calling God "Our Father" and Christ "Our Brother":

> Or are we bastard kin
> That to us your ears are closed
> Your doors barred from within?

The deep note of self-pity is evident through every stanza of "Saturday's Child." Two lines of the quatrain stanza are a designation of "Black" status:

> I cut my teeth as the black raccoon
> For implements of war.
>
> They swatched my limbs in a sackcloth gown

On a night that was black as tar

For I was born on Saturday
Bad time for planting a seed
Was all my father had to say
And one mouth more to feed.

The images of the poem are more significant if we know that Saturday mean "Saturn's" day, Saturn being the Black god of the underworld. Black then signifies that which brings sorrow and pain. "The Shroud of Color" is even more explicit on the issue. At the end of that poem he changes his mind and "accepts" the fate of being Black but not before his inner ruminations had thrown up these thoughts:

Lord, being dark, I said, "I cannot bear
The further touch of earth, the scented air
Lord being dark, forewilled to that despair
My colour shrouds me in, I am as dirt
Beneath my brother's heel...(p. 16)

Cullen must have gotten tired of the sad note of his poems, for he complains in "Self-Criticism" that in place of the sadness of song it was better not to sing at all

Shall I never feel and meet the urge
To bugle out beyond my sense
That the fittest song of earth is a dirge
And only fools trust Providence?

Than this better the need never turned flute
Better than this no song
Better a stony silence, better a mute
Mouth and cloven tongue.

A ray of hope flits past occasionally as in "Black Majesty" where he recalls great men of achievements who were Black, "Christophe and Dessalnies and L'Ouverture" and concludes:

A thing men did a man may do again (p. 101)

The rays are rare and are too faint to offset the darkness of sorrow when Cullen talks about the Black man. One is not surprised then that apart from the poem "Heritage" where he deals vividly with the issue of Black identity as it relates to Africa on the one hand and America on the other, Cullen's "Black" poems are abstract and lack concrete details from Black life, unlike Hughes' poetry, which deals with the concrete reality of Black low life. He finds refuge instead in the Romantic attitude towards life and in Romantic themes.

Langston Hughes' poems would be just as sad as Cullen's but for the difference that while Cullen's poems are reflective, Hughes simply recreates the lives he is describing in the rhythm of poetry without any comments from the writer. A brief survey of his themes reveals that they are not sentimental or idealistic presentations of Black life, nor do the poems describe happy situations: "Hard Luck" describes a Black man who has to pawn his clothes to a Jew: "Suicide" describes the sorrows of a "gal" who has been abandoned by her man: "Bad Man" is the song of a "Drunken" man who "beats ma wife an' beats ma side gal too/Beats ma wife an' beats ma side gal too/Don't know why I do it but/It keeps me from feeling blue." Almost all the songs of The Weary Blues and Fine Clothes to the Jew are in this vein. The exceptions are the "Glory! Halleluiah!" songs in the second collection. Hughes does reflect on the Black situation in a work like the novel, Not Without Laughter where his hope for "Black" liberation is in educating the younger generation, but in these two early collections, all he does is simply to celebrate Black life in all its variety and sorrows.

In the 1930s the only available Black written literatures that Négritude writers had were the works of Harlem Renaissance literature. Négritude writers were therefore not in a position to be finicky in their appreciation of those works. The apparent contradictions in the image of Africa in these works did not strike them as the superficial note of fascination with Africa and African culture. Instead, Négritude writers found models for their own works. For example, in "La Poésie Négro Américaine," Senghor attributes the love of race in Négritude poetry to the influence of Claude McKay; "Claude McKay," he says, "peut être considéré, à bon droit comme le véritable inventeur de la Négritude. Je ne parle pas du mŏt, je parle des valeurs de la Négritude" (p. 116). The quality he values most is their affirmation of their Blackness, for as he says, after their example it is easy to accept being Black.

> Je crois que cette pureté dans le sentiment et l' affirmation de la Négritude aura été unique dans la poésie négro-Américaine. Après lui, on accepte, bien sûr, d'être noir, voir <nègre> (p. 117)

In the works of Harlem Renaissance writers, and in particular Hughes' poem "Song for the Black Virgin", Senghor detects and is fascinated by their love for Black women, a fascination which will influence his own admiration for Black women in his poetry:

> Et ils ont un culte tout particulier, fait de respect et d'amour, de desire et d'adoration, pour la Femme Noire, qui symbolise la Négritude. Car la femme est, plus que l'Homme, sensible aux courants mystérieux de la vie et du cosmos, plus perméable à la joie et à la douleur (p. 117)

But it is not just the love of the Black woman but also the manner of its portraiture in poetry that fascinates and influences him. The ability to suggest a spiritual essence by describing the physical qualities of their human subjects, as in Gwendolyn Bennett's "To A Young Brown Girl," Frank Marshall Davis' "For You." and Cullen's " For a Brown Boy" are models for Senghor's own poetry,

> Comme en Afrique noire, par delà sa beauté plastique, dont nul trait m'échappe au Poète, on vise à exprimer ses richesses spirituelles (p. 118)

The poets, Senghor says, emphasize the emotional warmth of the Black. "Ils chantent ce qu'il y a de chaud, de vibrant, dans le Nègre, comme une force élémentaire au delà de la conscience"(p. 118). It is in these qualities, as Senghor asserts, that the genuis of the race lies. Senghor does not mind, as we shall see in his poems, that this view often involves a glorification of "the barbaric" and the "monstrous":

> Au terme de cette évolution, on fait, du genie de la race, prenant le môt dans une acception dionysiaque, quelque chose de barbare, de monstreûx (p. 118)

There is one final point in which Négritude might have been influenced by Harlem Renaissance writing. Senghor expressed admiration for the way that Countee Cullen assimilates important elements of Christian culture and negrifies them for the benefit of Black culture. Such is Cullen's concept of "The Black Christ," and later in "Heritage." This must have been an indication of the rich possibilities of such negrification in a new, emerging Black worldview. The Western literary traditions that were adopted, to express Black values (discussed in Chapters V and VI) are examples of negrification of Western values. But

on an even larger scale, the ultimate liberation of the Black man depends on this in Toomer, in Césaire and Senghor.

To conclude on Harlem Renaissance influence on Négritude, one should note that Négritude writers simply ignored the aspects of Harlem Renaissance poetry that expressed self-doubts, even cynicism about the Afro-American life or the fate of Black men. Senghor, for example, accepts the way Cullen negrifies Christ but ignores the dismissal of African civilization as "uncivilized" in "Heritage." Despite this dismissal in Cullen, the lamentation for the lost glories of Africa in McKay, and the realization of the distance in time and geography between Black Americans and the African experience expressed in Hughes, Senghor still says that in their works, "...on découverte sa négritude, qu'on la cultive et l'exalte, c'est qu'on songe à l'Afrique comme a un riche heritage" (p. 120).

The reaction of Negritude writers to the influences of the African image in Harlem Renaissance varies from poet to poet. In Césaire and Leon Damas the influences do not spur a return to African ancestral values. The desire expressed by Damas in "Limbé" for his "black dolls" so that he can be what he was before "the hour of uprooting" is better seen in the context of the assimilation process that he had been through, that which has prevented him from being himself, rather than as a desire to return to African ancestral values. What he wants essentially is the courage to be a man, to be himself.

> ...recouvrés mon courage
> mon audace
> redevenu moi-même
> nouveau moi'même de
> ce que Hier j-étais
> hier

sans complexité
hier
quand est venue l'heure du déracinement

Léon Damas is different both from Senghor and Césaire. Though his poetry goes back to the days when slavers came to take the ancestors away from Africa in "ils sont venue ce soir" his poem does not or cannot explore the ancestral sources of Africa. The significance of the going to Africa by Whites for him is the "death" that he has suffered:

Depuis
Combien de Moi Moi Moi Moi
sont morts,
depuis qu'ils sant venus ce soir (p. 56)

Unlike Senghor he does not advocate a synthesis of cultures to assure the Black man's survival. The characteristic voice of Damas seeks to reject all elements of Western cultures that proclaim him an "assimilé." In "Si souvent" the indignation reminds one more of David Diop's poems than of Senghor

Je me sens pret à écumer toujours de rage
contre ce qui mi entoure
contre ce qui m'empêche
à jamais d'être
un homme (p. 46)

The tolerance that Senghor feels towards France is absent here, but Damas has nothing to substitute for that which he is rejecting.

J'ai l'impression d'être ridicule
Avec mon cou en cheminée d'usine
avec ces maux de tête qui cessent
chaque fois gue je salue quelqu'un (p. 41)

His rejection of French culture extends as Bridget Jones has remarked in her article, "Léon Damas"[22] to his rejection of the surrealist style of language. Damas' tone of rebellion may be like the indignant and mocking tone of parts of Cahier d'un retour where Césaire mimicks the

racial prejudices of White men towards Blacks but Damas does not shape the broken imagery of Césaire's poetry even though he talks of fighting all that limit him,

> alors je vous mettrai les piéds dans
> le plat
> ou bien tout simplement la main au collet
>
> de tout ce qui m'emmerde
> en gros caractêes
> colonization
> civilization
> assimilation et la suite (p. 44)

Damas' poetry does not possess the same future orientation that characterizes Senghor's and Césaire's poetry. There is no large vision of liberation for the Black man as we see in the others. The main focus of poetry is on himself as an individual, though this individual self can be seen as an example of what the assimilationist policies of colonialism do to colonial subjects. There is some truth in what E. A. Hurley has said in the article "Pigments - A Dialogue With Self" concerning Damas' collection of poetry. He notes the poet "is not speaking here on behalf of or to any particular racial group with which he identifies, he is really speaking to himself. Pigments, in fact, emerges as essentially a personal, if not private statement which involves a conversation that the poet holds with himself." But whether his poem is seen as an expression of individual experience or not, his pre-occupation with the destructive powers of assimilation is unmistakable. In this he is like the other Négritude writers for whom this is a major theme. While however this takes the form primarily of the split personality which is never really truly resolved in Senghor

> Elle m'a dit "Seigneur!"

> Choisir! et delicieusement écartelé entre ces
> deux amies
> Un baiser de toi Soukeina - ces deux mondes
> antagonistes
> Quand douloureusement - ah! Je ne sais plus qui
> est ma soeur et qui est ma soeur de lait

and takes the form of a survey of the deprivations, and of the spiritual and material lethargy assimilation has caused and is causing among colonial subjects, particularly in Martinique in Césaire's poetry:

> Au bout du petit matin, l'extrême, trompeuse
> désolée eschare sur la blessure des eaux;
> les martyrs qui ne témoignent pas; les fleurs
> du sang qui se fanent et s'éparpillent dans
> le vent inutile comme des cris de perroquets
> babillards; une vielle vie menteusement souriante,
> ses lèvres ouvertes d'angoisses désaffectées;
> une vieille misère pourrissant sous le soleil
> silencieusement; un vieux silence crevant de
> pustules tièdes l'affreuse inanité de nôtre
> raison d'être (p. 31)

it takes the form of a description of the process of assimilation and of the rebellion against it in Léon Damas. In the poem "Hoguet" Damas describes in his childhood the upbringing under an assimilé mother ("Ma mère voulant d'un fils très bonnes manières a table", "Ma mère voulant d'un fils memorandum,") who helped lay the foundation of the poet's assimilation into French culture, against his will since he wants nothing else but to be Black.

> Ma haine grossit en marge
> de la culture
> en marge
> des théories
> en marge des bavardages
> dont on a cru devoir me bourrer au berceau
> alors que tout en moi aspire à n'être que nègre
> autant que mon Afrique qu'ils ont cambriolée
> "Blanchi" (p. 56).

Unlike Senghor and Césaire, who have acknowledged their huge indebtedness to Western literary and intellectual traditions, one cannot link Damas to any Western ideas or movements. Bridget Jones has said that the major influences on him are to be found in Afro-American writers, particularly Claude McKay and Langston Hughes. Damas, she said, "adopted their poetic conventions."[22] This is difficult to accept because these writers belong to two different poetic traditions -- Hughes belongs to the Afro-American poetic tradition, while McKay, with his characteristic style of the sonnet, belongs to the conventions of the Western literary tradition. One can see the defiant, sometimes violent tone of McKay in Damas, and maybe the slang repetitiveness in his style comes from the jazz and blues traditions.

Damas' images are often violent as these examples will illustrate:

> mois quelle bonne dynamite
> fera sauter la nuit
> les monuments comme champignons
> qui poussent aussi
> chez moi

or

> Et rien
> rien ne saurait autant calmer ma haine
> qu'une belle mare
> de sang
> faite
> de ces coutelas tranchants
> qui mettent a nu
> les mornes a rhum
>
> "Si Souvent" (p. 46)

but unlike McKay's violent images have no surcease. McKay's images mellowed after the defiance of "If We Must Die" to become the resignation of "Invocation" and the fascination that comes close to love for the achievements of the oppressors in "America." Again, McKay's

formal style, most of the time, is the conventional couplet of the Augustans that subordinates everything in the line to the smooth rhyming sound at the end, which is almost always undermining the violence of his language. There is nothing formal about the structure of Damas' lines. The irregular length of the lines and the occasional rhymes which are quickly thrown into relief by many unrhymed lines gives an impression of jagged or ragged lines that intensify the violent modes of the poems. The Harlem Renaissance influence on Damas is minimal. He shares neither the Harlem Renaissance idealization of the emotionalism of the African ancestors, nor their forthright rejection of that African heritage for Western civilization. Perhaps Damas is like Afro-American writers in the overall impression of rootlessness that one gets from his works.

As in Damas, Césaire avoids any overt romanticising of Africa. The mysterious woman in Cahier d'un retour au pays natal is not to be equated with the Black essence that Senghor's "Femme Noire" symbolises. This does, however, represent some spiritual essence:

> pour que revienne le temps de promission
> et l'oiseau qui savait mon nom
> et la femme qui avait mille noms
> de fontaine de soleil et de pleurs
> et ses cheveux d'alevin
> et ses pas mes climats
> et ses yeux mes saisons
> et les jours sans nuisance
> et les nuits sans offense
> et les étoiles de confidence
> et le vent de connivence (p. 81)

that has been lost to the world. This woman is the essence of life that the poet is "magically" recalling, instead of an object of admiration like Senghor's woman is in "Femme Noire." Césaire has made it clear that the Black Carribean has no common history with the African when he

disassociates himself from the great empires of African history and their heroic leaders (p. 97). He does not explore African history for ancestral values. The concept of being able to become one with every object of existence as expressed in the lines

> A force de regarder les arbres je suis
> devenu un arbre et mes longs piéds
> d'arbre ont creusé dans le sol de larges
> sacs à venin de hautes villes d'ossements
> à force de penser au Congo
> je suis devenu un Congo bruissant de
> forêts et de fleuves
> où le fouet claque comme un grand étendard
> l'étendard du prophête

is not the same concept of being one with all things that is often expressed in Senghor's poetry, the concept that is central to African worldview. In Césaire the lines attest to the power of the poet's imagination to become what he wants to be and should be seen in the context of the description of the nature of poetic language, "Des Mots?...Ah oui, des mots" which filled the previous page (p. 71). When the poet asks the rhetorical question, "Qui et quels nous sommes?", the reference is not to the Black race but to the poets as a group. Caribbean Négritude writers did not pre-occupy themselves with the African image the way that some Harlem Renaissance writers did and African Négritude writers were to do. The past in Cahier d'un retour au pay natal is one of slavery, suffering not of idealized ancestry. But at the same time Césaire's poetry leaves us with a clear vision of the cultural doldrum that has been the fate of Blacks due to the colonization process. His solution to the cultural vacuum is neither the return to the past nor an acceptance of the socio-economic status

quo, but a sublimation of the past and an oppressive present in a classless and raceless universal civilization of the future.

The only writer that one will find difficult to prove did not revive African culture among Négritude writers is Birago Diop. He is said to have been dissuaded by Léopold Senghor, a fellow Senegalese, from imitating classical French poets, and advised instead to turn to "Senegalese sources, traditional oral forms, rhythms, and styles..."[23] Birago Diop, unlike Senghor who had to agonize over the need to return home culturally to Africa, probably because he was physically alienated in Europe at the time of writing, did not have to agonize about the need of a "retour." Birago Diop, again unlike Senghor is said to have spent most of his adult life not in Europe but in Africa and simply presents African rituals and beliefs in his poems. "Viaticum" is a poetic recreation of a ritual that lets the "Spirits of the Elders" move before the poet, seeing him through all dangers. The ritual itself described in the first three stanzas, one of which is quoted below, constitutes the poem. The aim is to achieve a plastic, visual representation in poetry

> with her three fingers red with blood
> with dog's blood
> with bull's blood
> with goat's blood
> three times mother touched me
> with her thumb she touched my brow
> with her index my left breast
> and my navel with her third[24]

The rest of the poem describes how the poet relates to the ritual. "Dipstych" based on the belief of the ghostly appearance of the ancestors tries to catch the sense of mystery and the awe-inspiring

atmosphere of the ancestral visitor to the homestead. It is a mystery in which the whole of nature is involved:

> The sun, hung by a string
> deep in the indigo calabash
> boils up the kettleful of day
> The Darkness, frightened at the coming
> of the daughters of Fire, burrows
> at the foot of fenceposts...

as the ancestral spirits descend

> But in distressing silences filled with hummings
> pathways thick with mystery
> slowly become visible
> to those who have departed
> and those who will return[25]

The portrayal of ancestral descent is the simple aim. "Spirits," from which I have quoted earlier, is a celebration of the essential unity of being, the dead and the living, the animal and the inorganic, the substantial and the non-substantial, held together by the spirit of the ancestors. Even when he is making a statement about the African situation, Diop is never far from the traditional oral form of song. In "Kassak" (Kassak is a name for what E. C. Kennedy calls "age-old West African memory-training songs"), where the theme is the alienating and scattering effect of colonialism, the poet borrows the form of the "Kassak" where thematic statements of each stanza are punctuated by a one-line refrain. His hope for the African revolution that would topple colonialism to "restore to Africa its fervor" is expressed in terms of the alienated one's return to ancestral knowledge

> You'll know then what your clay gods think
> what black-masked fetishes have said
> At the flaming twilights, on beautiful nights
> ...

Léopold Sedar Senghor, like Birago Diop, makes the return to the ancestral sources the central image of his poems. But unlike Birago Diop whom he advised to turn to the poetic traditions of Africa for his inspiration, Senghor is not "recreating" or celebrating African rituals but commenting on them and interpreting them. Senghor is a "prodigal son" who is returning to his ancestral sources, but who is also, at every stage of his return, talking to "someone" about his return. Often the poems take the form of a dramatic monologue as in "In Memoriam" or "Joal." Sometimes they take the shape of a one-sided dialogue as the poet addresses himself to another being within the poem: to Aimé Césaire in "Lettre à un poète," or an imaginative image as in "Femme Noire" or "Prière aux masques." Most of the time, however, there is an explanation of some sort going on about African culture or African life and beliefs. This has prompted critics to raise questions about Senghor's audience, and Senghor has confirmed in "Commes les lamantins vont boire à la source" that his "message is addressed to the Frenchmen of France as well as to other men."

> Mais on me posera la question: Pourquoi, dès lors, écrivez-vous en français?...que notre message s'addresse aussi aux Français de France et aux autre hommes (p. 225)

For this reason, though Senghor is much closer to African history and the African ancestral sources than Afro-Americans were, Senghor's views of that history and the ancestral sources are expressed in images that are essentially not different from the use of his Harlem Renaissance brothers. This is because like them Senghor is borrowing the image of the Whiteman's views of Africa thus viewing Africa through alien eyes.

Senghor's poetry is replete with images of nakedness, rhythmic singing and dancing, adornment with bush flowers.

These accumulate into an impression of primitivism and have prompted strong reactions from many African critics. Kofi Awoonor, an African writer himself, who saw the need at one stage of African literature to write about pre-colonial experiences, seems to have best summed up many African critics' feelings when he contends that Senghor's kind of excessive exaggeration of ancestral values does more harm than good.

> The old kind of writing, the setting up of a false myth in response to another false myth, was of course false. Our ancestors were as barbarous and as cruel and as devious as anybody else's ancestors...That concept, of lovely Africans, noble savages with tall spears gleaming in the blazing African sun, turned Africa into the Central Park of the World"[26]

To understand the image of Africa that Senghor finds after his "return" one must understand that the "prodigal son" starts his journey as an assimilé. Senghor might give the impression, in contrast to the Harlem Renaissance's hesitant reaching for Africa, of a self-assured return to his ancestral values, but this is a false impression. The poems themselves carry the burden of the stress of conflict and confusion felt by Senghor, the archetype of the alienated Africans. He is torn between his allegiance to two contradicting cultures. His cry of appeal to be saved from himself, which he makes to the ancestors in "Que m'accompagnent koras et balafong":

> Je me réfugiais vers toi, Fontaine - des - éléphants a
> la bonne eau balbutiante
> Vers vous, mes Anciens, aux yeux graves qui
> approfondissent toutes choses, (p. 29)

is of no avail since his ancestors are as "exiled" as he is.

"comme nous exiles."

The pain expressed in the poems comes from a sense of double exile, the exile of his person in Europe, and the exile of the very values he is contemplating a return to in Africa. The image with which he describes the vision of his return illustrates his inability to clearly distinguish between what he is leaving behind and what he is returning to.

> De tes rires de tes jeux, de tes chansons, de tes fables
> qu' effeuille ma mémoire
> Je ne garde que le curé noir dansant
> Et sautant comme le Psalmiste devant l'Arche
> de Dieu, comme l'Ancêtre à la tête bien jointe (p. 29)

The ancestor and the West, symbolized by the Biblical image, fuse into one image, made up of perhaps two elements but remaining one. This is a central dilemma that Senghor does not resolve in his poetry, or at least does not resolve by a choice between his need to "return" to his African self and the realization that this is not easy, perhaps not possible. This realization prompts the rhetorical question in the poet: "Ah! ne suis-je pas assez divisé" (p. 56). The love of Africa is simultaneous with the love for Europe. When he rejoices at the possibility of his return to "the fresh bed of my childhood" he is aware simultaneously too that

> Demain, je reprendrai le chemin de l'Europe.
> chemin de l'ambassade
> Dans le regret du Pays noir. (p. 52)

The sense of physical distance which one finds between him and his Africa also functions as an image for the psychological and cultural distance between him and the ancestral values he seeks. His poetry is more one of distant memories and cultural journeys in the realms of the

mind and memory, than a poetry of actual experience. The motif of remembering is strong. For example, each of the seven stanzas of "Joal" is introduced by "I remember." The major events on which his poems are built, apart from "Hosties Noires," are events that he recalls from childhood scenes. Often these memory recalls do not come easily. The frequent use of "Let me" in "Nuit de Sine" when he tries to recreate a typical night, especially his desire to "breathe the smell of the Dead" is an indication of the psychological effort required to get into that mood and of the struggle involved in establishing communication between himself and the past. When he addresses his Africans it is through a letter as in "lettre à un prisonier" or through a long imaginative conversation as when in "Nocturnes" he address the Princess, "Princesse, ton épitre m'est parvenue au..."(p. 141).

Disillusionment is the best word with which to describe his feelings when he comes face to face with the reality of Africa after his exile. The dream of his earlier poetry collapses.

> A! Mourir à l'enfance, que meure le poème se
> désintègre la syntaxe, que s'abîment tous les
> mots qui ne sont pas essentiels (p. 201)

The earlier convictions of his poetry were born out of "ignorance and innocence" that need to be superseded by a rebirth into knowledge:

> Dansons au refrain de l'angoisse, que se
> lève la nuit du sexe dessus notre ignorance
> dessus notre innocence. (p. 201)

In place of the nobility of the ancestors imaged in the spectacle of the procession of a king in "Que m'accompagne koras et balafong":

> Koumba Ndofène Dyouf régnait a Dyakhâw
> superbe vassal
> Et gouvernait l'administrateur du Sine-Saloum

> Le bruit de ses aieux et des dyoung-dyoungs le
> precédait
> Le pèlerin royal/parcourait ses provinces, écoutant
> dans le bois la complainte murmurée
> Et les oiseaux qui babillaient, et le soleil sur
> leurs plumes était prodigue
> Ecoutant la conque éloquente parmi les tombes
> sages. (p. 32)

there is a turn-about of imagery

> Je le sais bien ce pays n'est past noble, qui est
> du jour troisième, eau et terre à moitié (p. 143)

The land is now found to be empty of all the ancestral grandeur that he had dreamed of:

> Que vaste que vide la cour à l'odeur de nèant
> Comme la plaine en saison sèche qui tremble de
> son vide
> Mais quel orage bûcheron abattit l'arbre
> séculaire (p. 48)

Instead of the joy of reunion the poems carry a note of lament at the cultural ravages that had taken place. The lament of a king who has been taken prisoner along with all of his household and paraphernalia of kingship becomes an appropriate symbol of the destruction of the ancestors:

> On nous tué, Almamy! Sur ce haut bûcher, j'ai
> jeté.
> Toutes mes richesses poudreuses: mes tresors d'ambre
> gris et de cauris
> Les captifs colonnes de ma maison, les épouses
> mères de mes fils
> Les objects du sanctuaire, les masques graves et
> les robes solennelles
> Mon parasol mon bâton de commandemant, qui est
> de trois kintars d'ivoire
> Et ma vielle peau. (p. 33)

Even the "pagan" half of the poet's personality is totally overwhelmed by the Western assault. In "Pour deux balafongs" the Christian half overwhelms the "pagan" half, tearing it out of the poet:

> Mon dieu! Mon Dieu! mais pourquois
> m'arracher mes sens paiens qui crient? (p. 189)

Disappointed, Senghor prays for the kingdom of childhood, not as the symbol of the life of the ancestors that he had visions of as a child, but this time expressing the desire to be a child again so that he might live perpetually with those visions, without having to test them against contemporary reality. He prays

> Que je renaîsse au Royaume d'enfance bruissant
> de rêves
> Que je sois le berger de ma bergère par les tanns
> de Dyillor où fleurissent les morts.

Further down in the poem "Elégie de Minuit" he prays for eternal sleep in the state of childhood which is possible only in poetry:

> Je dormirai du sommeil de le mort qui nourrit
> le Poète
> O Toi qui donnes la maladie du sommeil aux
> Nouveau-nés, à Marône la poétesse à Kotye-
> Barma le juste!
> Je dormirai à l'aube, ma poupée rose dans les bras. (p. 200)

Senghor's solution to the problem of the Black man's image is similar to the solution advocated by Césaire and Toomer. The reality of contemporary life has shown these writers that the damage done to African cultures was so bad that those cultures could not survive as coherent systems upon which Black men could base their hopes of liberation from Western civilizations. The view that the state of African culture was now degenerate which finds ample expression in his poetry also re-echoes in many of his critical essays. In "Vues sur l'Afrique Noire ou assimiler, non-être assimilés" he discusses the need for assimilating the French culture

> "Il est surtout question, pour la Colonie, de s'assimiler

> l'esprit de la civilization Français. Il s'agit d'un assimilation active et judicieuse qui feconde les civilizations autochtones et les fasse sortir de leur stagnation ou renaître de leur décadence. (p. 145)

In "Education" he advocates the Classics because, as he says:

> Je sais que, pour les peuples négro-africains, il n'est pas question de meilleure école car, si l'education est dévelopment des qualitiés natives, elle est aussi correction des defauts héréditaires et acquisition des vertues contraires. (p. 67)

In this light, the invitation to the princess in "Princesse ton épitre" to form a union of "heaven and earth" (Nous serons le ciel et la terre) is an attempt to ennoble or rejuvenate the degenerate state of African culture, where his own contribution is imaged as "half water, half earth" (eau et terre à moitié) that has "no nobility" in it. This is contrary to the impression that Senghor wants to express that it is Europe or the West that needs African values. The rain of cultural blessing that he commands magically on the world is possible as a poetic gesture.

"Seigneur, entendez bien ma voix (PLEUVE! it pleut)"

The lord he is referring to is not the Christian lord but some lord who is synonomous with the Muse who confers on the poet the status of "Master of Language," with which power he rejuvenates the whole world. Confronted with the reality of contemporary African life, however, it is the African who has to adapt. As Senghor put it to the first International Congress of Writers and Artists in 1956, "either the external situation has changed and cultural borrowing enables us to adapt ourselves to the new situation, or the external situation has not

changed and cultural borrowing enables us to make a better adaptation for the situation" (p. 75).

Césaire is less pretentious than Senghor, for in the colonial situation of Martinique he quickly recognized that Black liberation cannot progress on the concept of a separate Black essence. He turns his back on such a concept and is quickly absorbed into the surrealist concept of a universal, spiritual essence that the poet can tap to will human liberation, not Black liberation since his is only a part of the larger need for human liberation into reality. Toomer, too, does not advocate a separate Black civilization. He sees the need for the Black man to accept himself wholly, including his past slavery experience and make this the foundation of his future development. But the hope for the future lies in an integrated American civilization. As for Cullen, the question does not even arise since he has rejected the African image which held, though vaguely, the possibility of an alternative system to the American civilization. He and Hughes assert and accept their Americanness in the end. For Claude McKay, not only is the glorious African past buried in the past, but he sees no possibility for the Black man of escaping from the American system. Perhaps it is in recognition of this that he turned to the comforts of the Catholic Church before he died.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE AND NEGRITUDE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND RELEVANCE

The discussion in the preceding chapters indicates that both the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude, with the notable exception of Langston Hughes, did not see their "renaissance" simply in terms of their revival of unique Black cultural and artistic values. The concept was rooted within the Western social systems on which the writer depended. Revival meant, borrowing Senghor's words "assimilating Western values" to remould "the decadence" of the Black image. This, as we have noted, involved the irony of accepting Western negative images. But despite all the weaknesses that are inherent in their artistic choices, the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude have great significance for the growth of contemporary Black literatures. The number of books and articles which are still published on these movements is a good indication of this. On Négritude for example, three major books have appeared in the last two years: René Depestre's (a Négritude writer himself) book Bonjour et adieu à la négritude,.[1] René Menil's (one of the signers of Légitime Défense) book Tracées: identité, négritude, ésthetique aux Antilles[2] and A. J. Arnold's Modernism and Négritude.[3] New writings mainly interrogate the basis of classifying the works of the movements as African and neo-African. The factors which undermined the Africanness or Blackness of these works, as we have indicated, are directly related to the socio-political circumstances in which the works

were produced. But if one has a balanced view of these two Black movements one will find that the very sociological factors on which we have faulted their literary practices as "Black" and "African" literary movements become useful indices to rate their achievements. Given the constraints of the context in which they worked, it is virtually impossible to do better than they did. When the dominant American and French colonialist cultures despised the Blackman for being primitive, lacking any notable history and civilizations, they implied that the Black was not even capable, within the contemporary contexts of the Twenties and Thirties, of producing any notable work of literature that could be called "cultured." The Afro-American had faced consistent, pejorative criticism in the history of the reception of his literary works, that considered him incapable of producing belles-lettres. One can thus understand the obsession with producing works of art that would be classified as high quality works, as opposed to those that White critics have always referred to denigratingly as "Negro" literature. In the light of this, the literary creations of Countee Cullen in Color, and Jean Toomer in Cane, as well as Langston Hughes in The Weary Blues and Fine Clothes to the Jew, works which were produced during the Harlem Renaissance era, even though these could not talk to the majority of the Black masses, are still to be regarded as great achievements on behalf of the Black race. A good test of the personal achievements of these writers is that more than sixty years after Harlem Renaissance literature came into vogue, the works mentioned above, as well as James Weldon Johnson's Autobiography of the Ex-Colored Man, still excite critical attention today as they did in their own time. As for Léopold

Sedar Senghor, a good testimony to his distinguished place as a writer, among writers anywhere and any time, is the literary award, Prix des Amitiés Français, made to him by the Société des Poètes, and the message that came with the Award.

> We rejoice for our culture and for our literature that the President of the Republic of Senegal is the poet of "Hosties Noires", of "Nocturnes", a poet of profound French culture.[4]

The message contains an irony which I have referred to earlier, the fact of an African writer being more or less called a "French" writer. André Breton in recognition of Césaire's artistic power, says of him in admiration: "Et c'est un Noire qui manie la langue français comme il n'est past aujourd'hui un Blanc pour la manier."[5]

For this reason one cannot agree with David Littlejohn's views expressed in his book Black on White a view which might be applied equally to Negritude, that the Harlem Renaissance has no relevance outside the period of its life in the Twenties:

> And nothing freezes the Harlem Renaissance more into a past forever closed than a look back at the false, the pathetically light and unfulfilled hopes of its participants and observers.[6]

The Harlem Renaissance has for example, a great relevance to the development of Negro literature both in the United States and in Africa and the Caribbean. Despite its many weaknesses, which we have tried to relate to their social environment, we must recognize that the Harlem Renaissance represents one of the first attempts to develop an independent, Black literature. It is the Harlem Renaissance that first

felt and gave expression to the urge to treat Black social problems in literature, and one of its artists, Langston Hughes, represents the first major, unforced use of Afro-American art forms, genuinely incorporating Black elements into modern Black literature in ways that contemporary African writers are still doing. Perhaps the best evidence of the relevance of the Harlem Renaissance is the fact that the Black cultural revolutions of the Sixties are often called "The New Renaissance," in recognition of the contribution of the Harlem Renaissance to Black, cultural development. The psychological group self-analysis that has become familiar in the Afro-American's literary attempt to understand himself originated in the literature of the Harlem Renaissance.

The peculiar relevance of Négritude to Africa relates to the fact that it was both a cultural and political movement. Directly or indirectly, the philosophy of Blackness, even though it could only be shared by the small intellectual class, who however were also the leaders of independence movements, made a major contribution to eventual political independence for the French-speaking African countries. It stimulated a sense of identity which the intellectual leaders were able to spread even to the illiterate majority to press for independence. The nature of the political independence it led to hardly matters here, though political independence for French African countries like its cultural counterpart is deeply rooted in a French controlled system. What is important is that Négritude literature provided the rallying point and was the voice for the political aspirations as it was for the cultural aspirations of the Africans. As cultural expression, Négritude

Senghorian style might have been problematic but whatever its weaknesses, the constant pre-occupation with the theme of Africa drew attention to that area of experience. And whatever English speaking African writers like Wole Soyinka[7] and Ezekiel Mphahlele felt about Négritude's aesthetic philosophy and writing, especially towards Senghor's peculiar brand of Négritude, there is no denying that the conflict of cultures which is manifested in his poetry was a useful model for the treatment of that theme that was so prominent at the early stages of the development of English African literature, especially in West Africa. Even Soyinka himself returned to the Yoruba sources for the worldview and images with which he interprets events in contemporary African life. And he is not alone in this. The tone of Ayi Kwei Armah's Fragments (1972), and The Healers (1979) as well as Kofi Awoonor's This Earth My Brother (1972) owes a lot to their looking at contemporary life through the earlier worldview of the ancestors. The difference between Senghor and these people is, first, that later generation of writers, possibly learning from Senghor's poetry, have discarded overt propaganda. Secondly, perhaps finding better direction as a result of experiencing Senghor's works, and also because they wrote in post-independence days as opposed to Senghor's pre-independence thirties and forties, there is no longer a search, a quest for the ancestors. These later writers assume the point of view of their ancestors, some of whom are present in the books, Naana in Armah's Fragments and the Woman of the Sea figure in Kofi Awoonor's book.

The observations we have made about the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude become useful lessons only if we relate them to the

development of Black literature after them. Thus despite our recognition of the glowing achievements of their writers, this thesis must again turn to the failures of the movements in order that contemporary developments in Black literatures may avoid them and develop into healthy, truly Black literatures. The first point to make in this regard is the fact that though they achieved some recognition of the Black race's capability, this recognition was achieved by talking over the head of the race to others about the race. The literatures were not directed to the Black race itself, but at others on behalf of the Black race. By doing this even though one can see that this may not necessarily be the fault of the writer but rather that of the social and cultural constraints in which he was working, the writer has lost the communal basis on which the African worldview is built and with it the communal instinct and will for facing obstacles and triumphing over them on the way of progress. The writers lost the Black worldview and the Black audience that are basic to the production of a truly Black literature. This has led inevitably to the distortions of the Black image, for that image is now produced, according to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in a speech, "The Writer of his World"[8] delivered at the Africa Centre in London in December 1980, from "Afro-Saxon" perspectives in English African literature.

Critics might argue that the Black worldview which existed before the slavery and colonial era is obsolete, given the colonial and slavery experiences. I would say yes and no. Yes, if by this is meant the recreation of that worldview in Black literature that emphasizes mainly rituals and religious beliefs as they relate to the ancestors -- the

kind we find in Senghor's and Birago Diop's poetry, the kind that we find in Mulaisho's The Tongue of the Dumb[9] and Umeasiegbu's The Way We Lived.[10] This approach may excite artistic interest but its anthropological touch takes away from its effectiveness in the modern context. But the principles on which the Black worldview were built can be useful, in fact they are the only valid principles for the production of Black, revolutionary literature. By revolutionary here, I mean that which can help to bring about changes in the neo-colonialist situation of the Black everywhere. For according to the principles of the African worldview, art is functional and is basic to every level of social existence. Being so, it is, as Soyinka has discussed in Myth, Literature and the African World and Achebe in "Africa and Her Writers", a shared experience that involves every member of the society. The artist is not apart, alone in his own world in the Bohemian - or whatever - tradition, only peripherally touching on the world around him. As Obumselu has said in "The Background of African Literature", he works within artistic traditions and views of existence that are common property in the community. His language does not constitute a barrier between him and his readers or listeners. He does not shy away from new ideas and experiences but he does not let them blow the essential worldview of the community apart. Instead he incorporates them into that worldview, forming a growing social armoury against all exigencies. Even the experiences of colonialism, especially now that most African countries are independent, can and should be subjected to Africa's selective assimilation for the purpose of enriching the African worldview, a worldview which re-establishes the Black man as controller of

his own destiny. As for the Afro-Americans, they may not be politically independent and separate, but these principles will certainly prove useful. Only by establishing himself as the prime mover of his own destiny, that is, by re-establishing a Black worldview even within the larger American worldview, can he begin to re-assert himself on the American scene. This can be done by a type of literature that speaks to the Black intellectuals as well as the masses. For if the writers have revolutionary ideas, it is in the masses, the community, that the revolutionary energy exists to turn his ideas into social reality. The writer can awaken the masses to consciousness of that power and the need to channel it towards bringing about changes.

The absence of these principles from the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude literatures was responsible for the frustrations, confusion, despair and lack of direction, particularly in the Harlem Renaissance, but also in the escapist note in Négritude poetry. Many of the writers of subsequent Black literatures have tried in one way or the other to correct the weaknesses they find in these earlier literatures in their own with varying degrees of success. Every generation has reacted against one tendency or another, forcing the literature of their various regions in a different direction. For example, Afro-American writers in the Thirties, reacting against what they saw as the romantic tendencies of the Harlem Renaissance writers turned to the style of stark realism that peaked in the master works of Richard Wright's short stories, The Children of Uncle Tom[11] and Native Son. The writing of the Forties and Fifties, suspecting the usefulness of protest literature, which is part of the heritage handed down by Harlem Renaissance writers, in an age

bent on integration, downgraded the merits of the social function of art and immersed themselves in the principles of art for art's sake. Melvin Tolson's Libretto for The Republic of Liberia (1953)[12] and Harlem Gallery (1965)[13] are evidence of the extremism that this principle can lead to. They no longer communicate to anyone except the most erudite critic. Even Ralph Ellison's novel Invisible Man[14] is not totally free from the faults that art for art's sake can lead to. Though one does not at any time lose sight of the thread of the Afro-American theme, this is woven into a complex web of images and symbols that requires the patient, specialist critic to make meaning of. Of course there were those like Margaret Walker and Owen Dodson (the early works) who continued with protest poetry, but they were not highly regarded. Even though writers like Leroi Jones, Nikki Giovanni, Ishmael Reed and Don Lee revived the tradition of protest literature in the sixties, their concern with form, with language, often mediates the social message and they end up not communicating with the Black reader on behalf of whom they are talking and to whom they often expressed the desire to talk. Here too, part of the breakdown in communication may be due to the problem of language, the use of English in a form not spoken and probably not understood by those they wanted to speak to. This may not be the same with the use of English and French or any other European language in an African context where there is a different native language. But there may be some similarities in the language problem observed by Ngugi in the African writer's use of English.

> To write in English...is objectively to perpetuate the neo-colonial vice, to identify with the language instrument of a foreign culture. This meant the continued repression of

> African languages and cultures. It involved the selection of a language, of concepts, of an audience opposed to the workers and the peasants. This fact of language being an expression of culture had defeated his attempts to translate Petals of Blood (back) into Kikuyu (the language of the original experiences on which the book is based).[15] (my underlining)

Even though the Afro-American dialect is a form of English, the English used by the writers especially in "Modernist" writing certainly meant a "selection of concepts and of audience opposed" to the Afro-American masses.

In Africa, French-speaking African literature after Négritude has been, compared with the English African writings that sprouted after the pubication of Amos Tutuola The Palm-Wine Drinkard 1954, relatively quiet. This has led to speculations that since many of the writers were also political leaders whose work played a significant part in the drive to independence, the achievement of political independence took away from the themes that gave their works life. On the other hand, the notable writers in English-speaking African areas were usually academicians who had little to do with the fight for independence. By the time they started writing in the late fifties (Achebe's Things Fall Apart[15] the first notable West African classic, was published in 1958), Négritude poetry had existed for almost three generations. Note that I have left out South Africa because South African Black literature had existed for much longer than Negritude and it is not likely that it was much influenced by Négritude literature. Understandably the first generation of these English African writings in West Africa and East Africa dealt with the clash of cultures. Things Fall Apart[16] and Arrow of God,[17] T. M. Aluko, One Man One Wife[18] Sarif Easemon The New

Patriots,[19] Ama Ata Aidoo's The Dilemma of a Ghost and Anowa,[21] Soyinka The Lion and the Jewel,[22] Ngugi The River Between[22] and The Tongue of the Dead all dealt in one way or the other with this theme. Significantly, none of these preached a philosophy of return to ancestral sources, probably because the thirties and forties are not the same socially as the sixties when these English African writers wrote. Perhaps too, because of the reaction of Soyinka to Négritude, the example of Senghor having shown how illusory that philosophy can be. Yet the use of African materials did involve a kind of return to the past in a different way from the anthropological recreation of that past. Not only did Soyinka debunk the notion of the heroic past in The Dance of the Forests[24] but some of his other works, like Idanre and other Poems for example, have tried to interpret contemporary life through the worldview and images acquired from ancestral civilization. Achebe has tried to reconstruct that civilization to bring out vividly the values that were destroyed by colonialism. This too has been the line of approach of Ayi Kwei Armah's Fragments[25] and Kofi Awoonor's This Earth My Brother.[26] In addition to this, J. P. Clark has recorded and translated the long Ijaw Saga of Ozidi into a book Ozidi Saga[27] with images that to some extent parallel contemporary events in Nigeria. The East African writer Ngugi in his comprehensive novel Petals of Blood[28] has traced the historical development of Kenya from precolonial ancestral times, through the colonial era, right down to the degeneration of the neo-colonial post independence times. Consciously he parallels or juxtaposes images that invite a contrast between the African ancestral system and the destructive colonial systems.

Beautiful as some of these are as works of art in their own right, the problems that we have noted in connection with Harlem Renaissance and Négritude are apparent in them. Like Countee Cullen for example, the poet Christopher Okigbo had declared that he does not want to be known as an African poet but as a poet, that his poetry is not meant for vulgar ears but that he has written them for poets like himself. He has divested his work of all obligations towards his society. He later recanted to write social poems on events in Nigeria before the 1966 coup d'état[29] but the point has been made that many African writers had a Bohemian attitude to art quite unlike that of traditional forms of art. His poetry, like the erudite pattern of Modernists like T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, borrowed freely from any culture he could. In a very similar vein, though Soyinka delves into Yoruba cultural traditions of literature for his art, his borrowings from many Western cultures, particularly the Greeks, have been intense. The form and philosophy of J. P. Clark's plays The Song of a Goat and The Masquerade borrow from Greek dramatic aesthetics. Even Ngugi Wa Thiong'o who thought he had written a lucid Kenyan socialist novel in Petals of Blood was amazed, when he attempted to translate it from English to Kikuyu, at how much it had appropriated from Western aesthetics. The novel resisted all attempts to translate it. The translations had to be abandoned. Since then Ngugi has abandoned the practice of writing in English. His play Ngaahika Ndeenda (1977) co-authored with Ngugi Wa Mirii and his novel Caithaani Mutharaba-Ini (1980) are written in Kikuyu. The communal response to these works made it clear that for the first time he was communicating with the "peasants and workers" even though it is

primarily through writing.

> He has seen the appropriation of his novel Caithaani Mutharaba-Ini (The Devil on the Cross) into the communal and oral traditions of African society. Everywhere his novel was being read by families and groups in work places.[30]

One can assume too that writing in the local language is raising the political consciousness of the people because as a result of his play being adapted and staged in Kenyan towns and villages the Kenyan government saw Ngugi as a threat to their stability and imprisoned him. Other writers, like Soyinka, have seen the need for an Africa-wide language to improve African artistic expression, and he has advocated the teaching of Swahili all over the continent to prepare the way for it.

Whether Ngugi's example will be followed by other writers or not remains to be seen. If it is, that will create other problems too. Certainly, even with translations, except one done simultaneously with the original to accompany the original in the market, artistic communication between the various parts of Africa will be seriously handicapped. Also many of the smaller communities whose populations are too small to support literary publications in their languages will find themselves in the doldrums. They will have to depend on the development of their oral literary practices. This however is being overtaken by social developments that encourage different social relations. Most educated Africans now would rather read than gather at night in compounds waiting for story-tellers. Perhaps the use of the radio and the television which can partially create the communal basis of African art and which the public can relate to, and a more organized use of the

dramatic form of literature to serve, not just intellectuals, but the public, as was the case with Ngugi's play, may reverse the drift away from the traditional basis of African art. But whatever happens to literature in the African languages, the literatures that have been produced in European languages, though they are problematic, where they deal with African experiences are valid as African literature, and will continue to develop for a long time to come. But we can make it more and more truly African by rooting it in the aesthetic principles of traditional African literature and the Black and African worldview. It is not likely that all Africans and African descendants in other parts of the world will ever write the same type of literature even if they all return to the African worldview of the past. But as literature remains one of the areas where the Africans of the diaspora can exercise some control and attempt to counter the cultural control imposed upon them by others, the African worldview and the principles of art which support it will prove useful in their endeavour.

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[2]Ibid., p. ix.

[3]New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971.

[4]Ibid., p. 3

[5]Ibid., p. 4

[6]The Bookman (February, 1930), p. 605.

[7]Chicago: McClurg, 1903.

[8]This concern is best exemplified in Langston Hughes' essay "The Negro Author and the Racial Mountain," The Nation (June 23, 1926), p. 693.

[9]Haitian search for "Black Culture" goes far back into the nineteenth century as G.R. Coulthard says in "The French West Indian Background of Négritude," Caribbean Quarterly, 7, 3 (December, 1961), p. 132.

[10]Naomi M. Garrett discusses this in detail in "The Causes of The (Haitian) Renaissance," the second chapter of her book The Renaissance of Haitian Poetry (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963), pp. 62-72.

[11]Paris: Compeigne, 1928.

[12]See Naomi Garrett, p. 62.

[13]Ibid., pp. 73-85, in the section entitled "The New Negro Literature in the United States."

[14]Most notably among these is, Ellen Conroy Kennedy, Black Writers in French (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), especially pp. 56-74.

[15]Among Senghor's many essays, the essay "La poésie Négro-Africaine" in Liberté, Vol. 1 (Paris: Seuil, 1964), pp. 104-121, is most detailed in its acknowledgement of the Harlem Renaissance influences.

[16]Ibid. Senghor thinks it is in the views of the Black race that Négritude is most indebted the Harlem Renaissance.

[17]Ibadan, 22 (June, 1966), pp. 37-45.

[18]George Kent, Blackness and the Adventure of Western Culture (Chicago: Third World Press, 1972), p. 17.

[19]Westport: Conn., Greenwood Press, 1976.

[20]Ibid., p. 12.

[21]New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.

[22]Ibid., p. 64.

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[24]Ibid., p. 7.

[25]Aimé Césaire, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1971), pp. 96-97.

[26]Interview with Aimé Césaire, by Lilyan Kesteloot (June 1959), quoted in Black Writers in French, p. 105.

[27]Léopold Senghor, "What is Négritude", Negro Digest, 11, 6, (1962), pp. 3-6.

[28]Langston Hughes, The Weary Blues (New York: A. Knopf, 1926); Fine Clothes to the Jew (New York: A. Knopf, 1927).

[29]Zora N. Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1934).

[30]Jean Toomer, Cane (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1923).

[31]For more details, "Négritude et la civilisation universel," Présence Africaine, 46 (1963), 8-13.

[32]See Charles S. Johnson, "The Education of the Negro Child", Opportunity (February, 1936), pp. 39-45.

[33]Présence Africaine is a journal, founded in 1947 as a forum for the discussion and dissemination of Négritude views. It also published creative works by young Africans.

[34]Alioune Diop, "Niam n'goura", Présence Africaine, 1 (1947), p. 8-9.

[35]Countee Cullen, On These I Stand (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927), p. 24. All quotations from his poetry are taken from this collection.

[36]James Weldon Johnson, Fifty Years and Other Poems (Boston: Cornhill, 1917), pp. 15.

[37]The Weary Blues, p. 101.

[38]Ibid., p. 100.

[39]Fifty Years, and Other Poems, p. 15.

[40]This is described in Langston Hughes' essay, "The Negro Author and the Racial Mountain".

[41]Arna Bontemps in "The Awakening" published in The Harlem Renaissance Remembered (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Comp. 1972), testifies how Cullen boasted that "Keats is his God".

[42]James Weldon Johnson's "The Dilemma of the Negro Author" in American Mercury, 15, 60 (1928), pp. 477-481, discusses the problem.

[43]Countee Cullen, ed., Caroling Dusk (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), p. xiv.

[44]This is expressed in a letter Toomer wrote to Sherwood Anderson, quoted in Darwin Turner's "An Intersection of Paths: Correspondence between Jean Toomer and Sherwood Anderson, "College Language Association Journal, 17, 4 (1974), 455-467.

[45]Liberté, Vol. 1, pp. 218-227.

[46]Ibid., p. 219.

[47]See Senghor's essay "Le Français, langage de culture", Liberté, Vol. 1, pp. 358-363.

[48]Cited in James Arnold's Modernism and Négritude (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 75.

[49]"Niam n'goura", pp. 7-14.

[50]Alioune Diop says in "Niam n'goura" that without assimilating European culture Africans would die of cultural asphyxiation.

[51]Présence Africaine, 46 (1963), p. 9.

[52]Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

[53]Ngugi, Wa Thiong'o, Homecoming (New York: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1972).

[54]Liberté, Vol. 1, pp. 39-69.

[55]Ibadan, 22 (June 1966), pp. 46-59.

[56]Ibid., p. 50.

[57]Ibid., p. 46.

[58]Bridget Jones, "Léon Damas," in King and Ogungbesan, ed A Celebration of Black and African Writing (Oxford: Oxford University Press; Zaria: Anmadu Bello University Press, 1975), pp. 60-73.

[59]Gerald Moore, "Assimilation or Négritude", in his book Twelve African Writers (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 17-41.

[60]New York: Viking Press, 1927, p. 7.

[61]Caroling Dusk, p. xv.

[62]New York: Libia Publishers, 1962.

[63]Ibid., p. 14.

[64]P. 476.

[65]The "Griot" tradition of art is one under which professional historiographers, singers, entertainers, reciters are classified in French West Africa.

CHAPTER I

[1]L.S. Senghor, "Problematique de la Négritude" in L'Union Progressiste, Colloque sur la Négritude (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972), pp. 18-28.

[2]Ibid., p. 18.

[3]W.E.B. DuBois, Darkwaters (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1920).

[4]The Souls of Black Folk, pp. 264-278.

[5]Darkwaters, pp. 56-75.

[6]The Souls of Black Folk, p. 265.

[7]Colloque sur la Négritude, p. 18.

[8]Négritude: Essays and Studies, p. 11.

[9]Ibid., p. 8.

[10]Colloque sur la Négritude, p. 18.

[11]The account of his chance encounter is recorded in Léon Damas' "Price-Mars: The Founder of Haitianism" in Négritude: Essays and Studies, p. 24.

[12]Ainsi parla l'oncle, p. 1.

[13]Ibid., p. 84.

[14]Ibid., p. I.

[15]Ibid., pp. 187-88.

[16]Ibid., p. 1.

[17]Price-Mars' articles on the "Renaissance négre aux Etats-Unis" appeared in July 1932 (p. 15), August 1926 (pp. 9-15) and September 1932 (p. 9), in La Rêléve. His translation of Langston Hughes' "Our Land" appeared on page 10 of the September 1932 issue of the magazine.

[18]Colloque sur la Négritude, p. 18.

[19]Ibid., p. 19.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Quoted in Vere W. Knight, "Haiti and Martinque" in ed., Bruce King and Kolawole Ogungbesan, A Celebration of Black and African Writing, p. 50.

[22]Colloque sur la Négritude, p. 19.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Thomas O. Ott, in The Haitian Revolution (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), gives a good historical account of the war of independence.

[25]The Renaissance of Haitian Poetry, p. 60.

[26]Thomas Melone, "The Theme of Négritude and its Literary Problems", Présence Africaine, English edition, 20 (1963), p. 169.

[27]Charles Chestnutt, The House Behind the Cedars (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1900).

[28]P. 603.

[29]Ibid., p. 609.

[30]Stephen Henderson, ed Understanding the New Poetry (New York: Morrow Quill Paperbooks, 1973), p. 96.

[31]The Haitian Revolution, p. 52.

[32]Ainsi parla l'oncle, p. 191.

[33]La Nouvelle Ronde (July, 1925), pp. 26-29.

[34]Ibid., p. 28.

[35]Leo Frobenius, Histoire de la civilisation africaine (Paris: Gallimard, 1936).

[36]Maurice Delafosse, Les noirs de l'Afrique (Paris: Payot, 1922.)

[37]Légitime Défense published in Paris in 1932 is a booklet in which some French colonial subjects from the Caribbean declared their determination to revolt against the French social and political system and all its values.

[38]L.S. Senghor, Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malagache de langue francaise (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1948), p. 55.

[39]Reported in Opportunity (May, 1924), p. 143.

[40]Bontemps, p. 1.

[41]The Crisis, founded in 1910 under the direction of W.E.B. DuBois as its first editor, was the official journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

[42]Opportunity, the official journal of the National Urban League, another Negro organization which was founded in 1911, started publishing in 1923 with Charles S. Johnson as its editor.

[43]Among the symposia organized by The Crisis, for example, is this one entitled "The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed: A Symposium". The discussions were published from March to September 1926.

[44]Maran's Batouala was reviewed in Opportunity (January, 1923), pp. 30-31.

[45]The most outstanding of these are "A Note on African Art" by Alain Locke, Opportunity (May, 1924), pp. 134-138, "The Creative Art of the Negro," Opportunity (August, 1923), pp. 240-245.

[46]Alain Locke's "Back Stage on English Imperialism", Opportunity (April, 1925), pp. 118-125, is an example.

[47]L.S. Senghor, "René Maran, précurseur de la Négritude", Liberté, Vol. 1, pp. 407-412.

[48]Black Writers in French, p. 16.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid., p. 20.

[51]Ibid., p. 16.

[52]Léon Damas, Pigments (Paris: Guy Levi Mano, 1937.) All quotations from Damas' poems are taken from this edition.

[53]L.S. Senghor, Chants d'ombre (Paris: Seuil, 1945).

[54]L.S. Senghor, Hosties noires (Paris: Seuil, 1948.)

[55]The reissuing of Césaire's Cahier d'un retour au pays natal in 1956 is an example.

[56]L.S. Senghor, Poèmes (Paris: Seuil, 1964), p. 158. All quotations from Senghor's poetry are taken from this edition.

CHAPTER II

[1]See "Saturday Child" in On These I Stand, p. 10.

[2]Césaire's admission he could not write well in Creole is reported in A.J. Arnold, Modernism and Négritude, p. 73.

[3]For details of this see Black Writers in French, Chapters I and II, pp. 15-101.

[4]For more details, see Black Literature in America, pp. 7-8.

[5]See preface to God's Trombones, pp. 7-8.

[6]Less A Jacobus, ed Aesthetics and the Arts (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), pp. 4-7.

[7]Ibid., p. 5.

[8]Ibid., p. 4.

[9]Carol F. Joplin, ed Art and Aesthetics in Primitive Societies (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1971), pp. 60-73.

[10]Ibid., p. 307.

[11]Obiajunwa Wali, "The Dead End of African Literature", Transition, 4, 10 (1963), p. 13.

[12]In Art and Aesthetics in Primitive Societies, pp. 374-481.

[13]Ibid., p. 374.

[14]Ibid., p. 366.

[15]Présence Africaine, 65 (1968), pp. 85-106.

[16]Ibid., p. 86.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Andrew Gurr and Pio Zirimu, ed Black Aesthetics (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1973), p. 200-204.

[19]Journal of Modern African Studies, 11, 3 (1973), pp. 448-449.

[20]Research in African Literature, 6, 2 (1975), pp. 165-197.

[21]Liberté, Vol. 1, pp. 252-286.

[22]Liberté, Vol. 1, pp. 159-172.

[23]Liberté, Vol. 1, pp. 77-82.

[24]Liberté, Vol. 1, pp. 202-217.

[25]Liberté, Vol. I, pp. 173-190.

[26]Ba Shiru, 7, 2 (1970), p. 56.

[27]J.H.K. Nketia, The Music of Africa (New York: W.W Norton & Co., Inc., 1974), p. 4.

[28]Among African writers and critics who have researched into African Oral Literature are Adeboye Babalola in The Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), Wole Soyinka in Myth Literature and the African World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), Chinua Achebe, "Africa and Her Writers" in his Morning Yet on Creation Day (London: Heinemann, 1975).

[29]Nnolim, p. 59.

[30]Liberté, Vol. 1, p. 203.

[31]p. 12.

[32]Ibid., p. 39.

[33]Dorothy Blair, African Literature in French (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 26.

[34]Christianne Seydou, Silimaka et Poullori (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), p. 18.

[35]Languages, 18 (1970), pp. 22-24.

[36]Blair, p. 25.

[37]Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[38]Quoted in Blair, pp. 26-27.

[39]Lilyan Kesteloot, La Prise de Dionkoloni (Paris: Armand Colin, 1975), p. 24.

[40]Liberté, Vol. 1, p. 281.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid., p. 213.

[44]Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962.

[45]Ibid., p. 8.

[46]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[47]Amos Tutuola, The Palm-Wine Drinkard (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1952.)

[48]p. 87.

[49]Ibid., p. 106.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Cahiers d'études africaines, 10, 38 (1970), pp. 306-334.

[52]Ibid., p. 354.

[53]Obiajunwa Wali, "The Dead End of African Literature", Transition, 4, 10 (1963), pp. 13-16.

[54]Richard Wright, "Blueprint for Negro Literature", Amstad, 2 (1936), p. 15.

[55]Ibid., p. 13.

[56] Ibid., p. 10.

[57]Ralph Ellison, "The Art of Fiction: An Interview" in his The Shadow and the Act (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 171.

[58]Studies in Black Literature, 4 (1974), p. 28.

[59]In A Celebration of Black and African Writing, p. 60-73.

[60]Ibid, pp. 61-62, 64-5.

[61]Léon Damas, Poémes nègres sur des airs africaine (Paris: Guy Levi Mano, 1948), p. 7.

[62]Black Images, 3, (1974), pp. 37-45.

[63]p. 7.

[64]Obiechina, p. 87.

[65]"The Negro Author and the Racial Mountain", p. 693.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid.

[68]College Language Association Journal, 10 (1968), p. 275.

[69]Black World, 22, 11 (1973), p. 29.

[70]Fine Clothes to the Jew, p. 34.

[71]Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939.

[72]Ibid., pp. 11-116.

[73]Fines Clothes to the Jew, p. 45.

[74]Silence to the Drums, p. 47.

CHAPTER III

[1]P. 240.

[2]Roots of Negro Racial Consciousness, p. 114.

[3]Alain Locke, Review of Color, Opportunity (January 1926), p. 14.

[4]Ibid., p. 15.

[5]P. 81.

[6]P. 247.

[7]American Mercury, 15, 60 (1928), pp. 447-481.

[8]Countee Cullen, Contribution to the Symposium "The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?" The Crisis (August, 1926), p. 193.

[9]Alain Locke, "The Creative Art of Negroes", Opportunity (August, 1923), p. 240.

[10]Alain Locke, "To Certain of Our Philistines", Opportunity (May, 1925), p. 155.

[11]Langston Hughes, The Big Sea (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977). Pages 210-216 give more details of the role Vachel Lindsay and Carl Van Vechten played in Hughes' poetic career.

[12]Carl van Vechten, Nigger Heaven, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926)

[13]Walter White, The Fire in the Flint (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924).

[14]Claude McKay, Home to Harlem (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1927).

[15]Waldo Frank, Holiday (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923).

[16]See Darwin Turner's introduction to Jean Toomer's Cane, p. ix, xix.

[17]The Crisis (September, 1924), pp. 204-210.

[18]Sterling Brown, Negro Poetry and Drama (Washington D.C.: The Associates in Negro Folk Foundation, 1937).

[19]Opportunity, (February, 1930), pp. 42-47.

[20]New York: Duffield and Comp., 1930.

[21]The Bookman (October, 1922), pp. 137-141.

[22]The English Journal (March 1929), pp. 194-202.

[23]New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925.

[24]Montgomery Gregory, "Review of Cane," Opportunity (December, 1923), pp. 147-5.

[25]Ibid., p. 374.

[26]Montgomery Gregory, "There is Confusion: A Review," Opportunity (June, 1924), p. 181.

[27]Ibid., p. 181.

[28]Ibid., p. 182.

[29]Opportunity (May, 1925) p. 155.

[30]Ibid., p. 155.

[31]Ibid., p. 156.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Countee Cullen, quoted in Blyden Jackson's The Waiting Years, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), p. 43.

[34]Review of Color, Opportunity (January, 1926), p. 14.

[35]Review of Cane, Opportunity (December, 1923), p. 374.

[36]Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1928, p. 51.

[37]Ibid., p. 5.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid., p. 6.

[40]Ibid., p. 10.

[41]Ibid., p. 14.

[42]Opportunity (October, 1926), pp. 290-7.

[43]Review of Color, Opportunity (January, 1926), p. 15.

[44]P. 37.

[45]The Negro in Literature and Art, p. 3.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid., p. 116.

[48]Ibid., p. 118.

[49]Ibid

[50]P. 60.

[51]Ibid., p. 61.

[52]New York: Twayne, 1953.

[53]In James A. Emmanuel, and Theodore L. Gross, ed Dark Symphony (New York: The Free Press, 1968).

[54]P. 14.

[55]Gwendolyn Brooks' speech quoted in Margaret J. Butcher, The Negro in American Culture (New York: A. Knopf, 1956), p. 146.

[56]New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.

[57]Bronz, p. 38.

[58]Ibid., p. 14.

[59]In Harlem Renaissance Remembered, p. 275.

[60]Bronz, p. 13.

[61]Ibid., p. 15.

[62]Bone, p. 64.

[63]Plum Bun, p. 128.

[64]New York: Grossman Publishers, 1966.

[65]Ibid., p. 42.

[66]Nashville: Townsend Press, 1970.

[67]Ruth Wright, "Negro Authors' Week - An Experiment", The Crisis (April, 1931), p. 124.

[68]Williams, p. 232.

[69]Ibid., p. 244.

[70]Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976.

[71]Ibid., p. 45.

[72]Redding, p. 100.

[73]Chicago: Third World Press, 1972.

[74]Ibid., p. 25.

[75]Arna Bontemps, Harlem Renaissance Remembered.

[76]Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1980.

[77]Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971.

[78]Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974.

[79]Ibid., p. 53.

[80]Ibid., p. 54.

[81]New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

CHAPTER IV

[1]Jean-Paul Sartre, "Orphée noire" in S. Allen, trans.,Black Orpheus (Paris: Presénce Africaine, 1963), p. 15.

[2]Richard Wright, trans. "Niam n'goura," Présence Africaine, I (1947), p. 185.

[3]Black Writers in French (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974).

[4]Intellectual Origins of the African Revolution (Washington, D.C.: Black Orpheus Press, 1972).

[5]Senghor's essays on culture are collected in Liberté, Vol. I. and II (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1964).

[6]The African Origins of Civilizations: Myth or Reality (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1974).

[7]Le Musée Vivant (November, 1948). pp. 7-10.

[8]Transition, 3, 13 (1964), pp. 9-11.

[9]Ezekiel Mphahele, in the chapter "What Price Négritude?" The African Image (London: Heinemann, 1962), pp. 25-39.

[10]Caribbean Quarterly, 7, 3 (1966), pp. 128-136.

[11]Ibid., p. 131.

[12]Ibid., p. 131.

[13]Antenor Fermin, De l'égalité des races humaines (Paris: 1885).

[14]Price Hannibal, De la réhabilitation de la race noire par la peuple d'Haiti (Port-au-Prince: Impriematur, 1900).

[15]Black Academy Review, 1-2 (1971), pp. 9-22.

[16]For more details of this see J. Pracey, A. Meier, E. Rudwick, ed Black Nationalism in America (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Inc., 1970), pp. 38-48.

[17]Diogenes, 48 (1974), pp. 14-38.

[18]The Journal of African Studies, 3, 3 (1965), pp. 320-48.

[19]Black World, 22, I (1972), pp. 36-47.

[20]Ibid., p. 37.

[21] Studies in Black Literature, 3, (1972), pp. 1-3.

[22]Albert Berrian and Richard Long, ed Négritude: Essays and Studies (Hampton: Hampton Institute Press, 1967).

[23]Okechukwu Mezu, The Poetry of L.S. Senghor (London: Heinemann, 1973).

[24]Black Writers in French, p. 7.

[25]Quoted in Washington Ba, The Concept of Négritude in the Poetry of L.S. Senghor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 24.

[26]In Bruce King and Kolawole Ogungbesan, ed A Celebration of Black and African Creative Writing, pp. 102-111.

[27]From an interview with Paul Niger, quoted in Black Writers in French, p. 279.

[28]Présence Africaine, 41 (1962) pp. 67-8.

[29]Craig Williamson, Introduction to L.S. Senghor,Poésies Choisies (London: Rex Collings, 1976), pp. 1-21.

[30]Soyinka, p. 3.

[31]Wilfred Cartey, Introduction to Norman R. Shapiro, ed.,Négritude (New York: October House Inc., 1970), pp. 17-36.

[32]Mission to Kala (London: Heinemann, 1964).

[33]Abiola Irele, ed.,Selected Poems of Senghor (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 1-37.

[34]"A Defence of Negritude," p. 10.

[35]Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier, ed.,Modern African Poetry (Middlesex, Eng: Penguin, 1962), pp. 23-4.

[36]African Literature Today, 7 (1975), pp. 65-75.

[37]Présence Aficaine, 86 (1973), pp. 117-133.

[38]Eugene Guernier, L'apport de l'Afrique a la pensée humaine (Paris: Payot, 1952).

[39]Présence Africaine, 101/102 (1977), pp. 57-80.

[40]Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.

[41]Yale French Studies, 21 (1958), pp. 60-71.

[42]Black Images, 3, 1 (1974), pp. 3-37.

[43]The New African, 3 (April, 1966), pp. 60-65.

CHAPTER V

[1]New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.

[2]Ibid., p. 2.

[3]On These I Stand, p. 24.

[4]See the Poems "In Bondage" and "Africa" in Wayne F. Cooper, The Passions of Claude McKay (New York: Schocken Books, 1973).

[5]See "Our Land" (p. 99) "Lament for Dark Peoples" (p. 100) "Afraid" (p. 101), in The Weary Blues.

[6]The Nation, (June 16, 1926), pp. 662-663.

[7]For more details on Garvey's influence on Black thinking in the 1920s, see Silence to the Drums, pp. 9-10.

[8]Arthur Davis, pp. 519-526.

[9]The Souls of Black Folk, p. 45.

[10]They Also Spoke, p. 23.

[11]In Dark Symphony, pp. 74-83.

[12]Langston Hughes' "The Negro Author and the Racial Mountain" goes even further to say that many writers desired to be White in their works.

[13]Ibid., p. 693.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Caroling Dusk, p. xiv.

[16]"The Dilemma of the Negro Author," p. 448.

[17]Ibid.

[18]"The Negro-Art Hokum", p. 663.

[19]Opportunity (August, 1925), p. 247.

[20]For details of Charles Johnson's editorship, see M. Singh, The Novels of the Harlem Renaissance (London: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press), 1976, p. 9.

[21]This is discussed in Baker, Black Literature in America, pp. 3-4.

[22]Reviews of Wheatley such as the one quoted in Mason The Critical Reception of American Negro Authors in American Magazines (1800-1885), Dissertation (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1963), p. 62, make this point.

[23]See Baker, Black Literature in America, p. 5.

[24]See Chamberlain, "The Negro as Writer", p. 605.

[25]This tradition treats the danger inherent in the social situation of mulattoes as their desire to be absorbed into the white society which ends in tragedy.

[26]Charles Chestnutt, The Marrow of Tradition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1901).

[27]Quoted in Robert Farnsworth, "Testing the Color Line - Dunbar and Chestnutt" in C.W.E. Bigsby, ed.,The Black American Writer Vol. I, (Deland: Everett/Edwards, 1969), p. 123.

[28]For more details see introductory note on Charles Chestnutt in James A. Emmanuel, Dark Symphony: Negro Literature in America, pp. 25-26.

[29]Review of Chestnutt's The Conjure Woman in The Critic (January-June, 1899), p. 650.

[30]"The Dilemma of the Negro Author", p. 448.

[31]In Henderson, Understanding the New Black Poetry, p. 96.

[32]James Weldon Johnson, Along This Way (New York: Viking, 1968), p. 160.

[33]Quoted in Donald Ogden Steward, Fighting Words (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1940), pp. 58-59.

[34]Bigsby, The Black American Writer, p. 113.

[35]Paul Dunbar, Lyrics of Lowly Life (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1899).

[36]Ibid., pp. xvii-xviii.

[37]God's Trombones, pp. 7-8.

[38]Caroling Dusk, p. xiv.

[39]Opportunity (February 1936), pp. 39-45.

[40]The Novels of the Harlem Renaissance, p. 25.

[41]Ibid.

[42]See Cane, pp. xv-xx.

[43]For more details see Darwin Turner, "An Intersection of Paths: Correspondence between Jean Toomer and Sherwood Anderson", p. 458.

[44]Bronz, p. 14.

[45]Quoted in Bronz, p. 10.

[46]Countee Cullen thought of Hughes' traditional poems in The Weary Blues that they are "interlopers in company of the truly beautiful poems in other sections of the book."

[47]Cane, pp. xvi, xix.

[48]See Emmanuel, Dark Symphony: Black Literature in America, pp. 74-5.

[49]Hughes makes this choice clear in "The Negro Author and the Racial Mountain".

[50]Bronz, p. 46, discusses this in detail.

[51]See Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism", in the book of essays they edited, Modernism (London: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 19-53.

[52]Robert Short, "Dada and Surrealism," in Bradbury and McFarlane Modernism, after pointing out this similarity asserts that surrealism is heir to Romanticism's aesthetics.

[53]Short, in Bradbury and McFarlane, Modernism, p. 292.

[54]See Okechukwu Mezu, "Senghor, Gobineau, et l'inégalité des races humaines," for more details.

[55]"Léopold Sedar Senghor", in King and Ogungbesan, ed.,A Celebration of Black and African Writing, p. 106.

[56]See B.R. Mullik, Romantic Literature (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1962) p. 1.

[57]See W. Wordsworth, Preface to The Lyrical Ballads (London: R. Taylor and Co., 1805).

[58]See Mullik, Romantic Literature, p. 27.

[59]Wordsworth considered the "Urbane airs" of the Augustans as "Social Vanity, the armour that we wear to conceal our deepest thoughts and feelings".

[60]John Keats, in M.B. Forman, ed The Letters of John Keats (New York: Humphrey Milford, 1931), p. 77.

[61]Wordsworth, Lyrical Ballads, p. 8.

[62]See D.H. Reidman and S.B. Powers, eds Shelley's Poetry and Prose (New York: W.W Norton & Co., 1977), pp. 480-598.

[63]Ibid., p. 487.

[64]Wordsworth, Lyrical Ballads, p. 10.

[65]Ibid., p. 13.

[66]Reidman, Shelley's Poetry and Prose, pp. 503-504.

[67]See Bradbury and McFarlane, Modernism, p. 292.

[68]Ibid.

[69]Ibid., p. 302.

[70]See R. Sheppard, "The Crisis of Language" in Bradbury and McFarlane, Modernism, pp. 323-336.

[71]Ibid., p. 329.

[72]Modernism, p. 301.

[73]Bontemps, The Harlem Renaissance Remembered, p. 14.

[74]See Arnold, Modernism and Négritude, p. 75.

[75]See Senghor, Liberté, Vol. I, p. 219.

[76]L.S. Senghor, "Jeunesse De Victor Hugo," Liberté, Vol. I, pp. 126-129.

[77]"Saint-John Perse ou poésie du royaume d'enfance", Liberté, Vol. I., pp. 334-353.

[78]Liberté, Vol. I, p. 127.

[79]Montgomery Gregory, "Review of Cane", Opportunity (December, 1923), p. 374.

[80]Opportunity (September, 1925), p. 263.

[81]See A.P. Fisher, "The Influence of Ouspensky's Tertium Organum upon Jean Toomer's Cane", College Language Association Journal, 22, 4 (1974), pp. 504-515, for details.

[82]Waldo Frank's Holiday and Sherwood Anderson Winesburg Ohio (New York: The Modern Library, 1919) are about Negro life.

[83]See Turner, "An Intersection of Paths: Correspondence between Sherwood Anderson and Jean Toomer".

[84]See Kenny Williams, They Also Spoke, p. 24.

[85]"Intersection of Paths: Correspondence between Sherwood Anderson and Jean Toomer", p. 460.

[86]P.D. Ouspensky, Tertium Organum - The Third Canon of Thought - A Key to the Enigmas of the Word translated by Nicholas Bessaraboff and Claude Bragdon (New York: Random House, 1970).

[87]Victor Kramer, "'The Middle Kingdom' of Crane's 'Black Tambourine' and Toomer's Cane", College Language Association Journal, 22 (4 June 1974), pp. 486-497.

[88]Ibid., p. 487.

[89]Ibid., p. 487.

[90]Introduction to Cane, p. xii.

[91]Sherwood Anderson, The Triumph of the Egg (New York: The Modern Library, 1919).

[92]"An Intersection of Paths", p. 456.

[93]Ibid., pp. 457-8.

[94]Ibid.

[95]Ibid., p. 459.

[96]Ibid., p. 462.

[97]Ernest Boyd, "Introduction to Winesburg Ohio (New York: The Modern Library, 1919), p. xv.

[98]"Intersection of Paths..," p. 456.

[99]Introduction to Cane, p. xxii.

[100]Felgar, p. 28.

[101](New York: W.W Norton, 1957), p. 36.

[102]Felgar, p. 29.

[103]A. Dinger, "A Study of Countee Cullen", New York World (August 7, 1927).

[104]Ibid.

[105]Roots of Negro Racial Consciousness, p. 48.

[106]The Silence of the Drums, p. 49.

[107]International Book Review, 4 (March, 1926), p. 252.

[108]Bronz, p. 48.

[109]Caroling Dusk: An Anthology of Poetry by Negro Poets, p. xiv.

[110]"The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain", p. 693.

[111]Countee Cullen, "Review of Weary Blues", Opportunity (February, 1926), p. 73.

[112]Caroling Dusk, p. xi.

[113]Ibid., p. xii.

[114]Ibid., p. xi.

[115]Quoted in Bronz, p. 48.

[116]Interview of Cullen published in New York Times (December 2, 1923), Section 2, p. I.

[117]Perry, p. 57.

[118]On These I Stand, p. 28.

[119]College Language Association Journal, 22, No. I (September, 1969), pp. 62-67.

CHAPTER VI

[1]Liberté, Vol. I, pp. 39-69.

[2]Ibid., p. 40.

[3]Abiola Irele, "A Defence of Négritude", p. 10.

[4]François Hoffman, p. 62.

[5]Pigments was first published in 1937 by Guy Levi Mano Journal, Paris.

[6]Jean-Paul Sartre, "Orphée Noir," Preface to L.S. Senghor, ed Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malagache de langue française (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948) pp. ix-xliv.

[7]Studies in Black Literature, 3, I (1966), p. 2.

[8]Africa Today, 4 (1968), pp. 8-11.

[9]For more details see Black Writers in French, especially the chapter entitled "Surrealism and Criticism of the West", pp. 37-44.

[10]Ibid., p. 37.

[11]Quoted in Arnold, Modernism and Négritude, p. 75.

[12]Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, p. 8-27.

[13]Twelve African Writers, p. 20.

[14]Liberté, Vol. I, pp. 226.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

[17]In 1937-8 Césaire was "completing a Diplome d'Etude Supérieure on the theme of the South in Black American literature" (Modernism and Négritude, p. 11). For details on Senghor's literary interests see Black Writers in French, p. 194.

[18]Washington Ba, p. 15.

[19]Modernism and Négritude, p. 73.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Présence Africaine, 80 (1971), p. 41.

[22]This was held in Paris, France, in 1956.

[23]Quoted in John Reed, ed., L.S. Senghor, Prose and Poetry (London: Heinemann, 1976), p. 75.

[24]Liberté, Vol. I, pp. 83-86.

[25]Ibid., pp. 126-129.

[26]Ibid., pp. 334-353.

[27]Ibid., pp. 218-227.

[28]Ibid., pp. 130-132.

[29]See O. Mezu, "Senghor, Gobineau, et l'inégalité des races humaines."

[30]See Léon Damas, "Jean Price-Mars, the Father of Haitianism," in Berrian and Long, Négritude: Essays and Studies, pp. 24-38.

[31]Présence Africaine, 76 (1970), pp. 143-165.

[32]B. Haberland, ed., Leo Frobenius: An Anthology (Wiesbaden: Frantz Steiner Verlag, 1973).

[33]L.S. Senghor, "The Lessons of Leo Frobenius", in Leo Frobenius: An Anthology., p. vii.

[34]Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

[35]Quoted in Arnold, Modernism and Négritude, p. 54.

[36]A.J. Arnold's book is the only critical book which has pointed out specific influences beyond the French ones.

[37]Modernism and Négritude, pp. 51-70.

[38]See "The Lessons of Leo Frobenius", pp. vii-viii.

[39]Modernism and Négritude, p. 53.

[40]Ibid., p. 51.

[41]Spengler, The Decline of the West, np, nd.

[42]See Modernism and Négritude, p. 51.

[43]See "The Magi" (p. 124), "The Second Coming" (p. 184) in W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems (New York: Macmillan Comp., 1956).

[44]T.S. Eliot, The Four Quartets (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1943).

[45]Modernism and Négritude, p. 51.

[46]Leo Frobenius: An Anthology, p. vii.

[47]Modernism and Négritude, p. 53.

[48]L.S. Senghor, Poèmes, p. 9.

[49]Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[50]Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, pp. 124-125.

[51]Poémes, p. 23.

[52]Ibid., p. 68.

[53]Présence Africaine, 46 (1963), pp. 8-13.

[54]See Vere Knight, "Négritude and the Isms," Black Images, 3, 1 (1974), pp. 3-13, for details of Négritude writers' brief courtship with communism.

[55]See Arnold, Modernism and Négritude, p. 54.

[56]Liberté, Vol. I, pp. 334-553.

[57]For details see L.V. Thomas, "Senghor and Négritude," Présence Africaine, English Edition, 26 (1965), pp. 108-109.

[58]R. Sheppard, "The Crisis of Language," in Bradbury and McFarlane, Modernism, pp. 323-336.

[59]For more details see Modernism, p. 325.

[60]Ibid., p. 323.

[61]Ibid., p. 325.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Quoted in Clive Scott, "Symbolism, Decadence and Impressionism" Modernism, p. 211.

[64]See G.M. Hopkins, Poems (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948).

[65]See Modernism and Négritude, p. 53.

[66]Ibid., p. 55.

[67]Ibid., p. 57.

[68]This belief is stated explicitly in Césaire's Cahiers d'un retour au pays natal, pp. 140-141.

[69]Modernism and Négritude, p. 53.

[70]Ibid.

[71]Ibid.

[72]See Modernism, p. 329.

[73]In Rowland Smith, ed, Exile and Tradition (London: Longmans/ Dalhousie University Press, 1976), pp. 31-43.

[74]Leo Frobenius, Histoire de la civilisation africaine (Paris: Gallimard, 1952).

[75]Leo Frobenius: An Anthology, p. vii.

[76]Histoire de la civilisation africaine, p. 25.

[77]Leo Frobenius: An Anthology, p. IX.

[78]Histoire de la civilisation africaine, p. 39.

[79]Liberté, Vol. I, p. 210.

[80]Arthur de Gobineau, Essais sur l'inégalité des races humaines (Paris: Librarie de Paris, 1933), p. 200.

[81]Mezu in "Senghor, Gobineau, et l'inégalite des races humaines" describes Senghor's indebtedness to Gobineau.

[82]Gustave LeBon, Les Lois psychologiques de l'évolution des peuples (Paris: Librarie Felix Alcan, 1927).

[83]"Senghor, Gobineau, et l'inégalité des races humaines", p. 131.

[84]L.S. Senghor, "Ce que l'homme noir apporte", Liberté, Vol.I, p. 24.

[85]Ibid., pp. 22-38.

[86]Ibid., p. 141.

[87]Présence Africaine, 39, English Edition, (1962), pp. 33-49.

[88]The New African, 3 (April, (1966), pp. 60-65.

[89]E. Mphahlele, The African Image (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), pp. 25-39.

[90]Ibid. second edition, 1974, pp. 79-95.

[91]Black Images, 3, 1 (1974), p. 83.

[92]Cahiers d'un retour..., pp. 64-65.

[93]Ibid., pp. 104-105.

[94]Black World, 22 (1972), pp. 36-47.

[95]Bradbury and McFarlane, Modernism, p. 38.

[96]Arnold, Modernism and Négritude p. 53.

[97]Edward A. Jones, p. 26.

[98]Modernism, p. 308.

[99]Modernism, p. 308.

[100]In Ulli Beier, ed., An Introduction to African Literature (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), pp. 59-68.

[101]Modernism and Négritude, pp. 53-54.

[102]Totowa, New Jersey: Adams, 1966.

[103]Ibid., pp. 248-249.

[104]In John Cruickshank, ed., French Literature and its Background, Vol. 6, "The Twentieth Century" (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 143-167.

[105]Présence Africaine, 39, English edition, (1962), pp. 1-15.

[106]Ibid., p. 13.

[107]Ibid., p. 14.

[108]A. Preminger, F.J. Warnke, and O. B. Hardison, ed., Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 538.

[109]Ibid., p. 538.

[110]Liberté, Vol. I, p. 334.

[111]Liberté, Vol. I, pp. 218-227.

[112]Ibid., p. 219.

[113]Ibid.

[114]Ibid., p. 235.

[115]Ibid.

[116]Ibid.

[117]Saint-John Perse, Oeuvre Complète, Vol. I (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), p. 214.

[118]Ibid., p. 210.

[119]Liberté, Vol. I, p. 340.

[120]Liberté, Vol, I, p. 344.

[121]Ibid., p. 346.

[122]Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

[1]The theme song: "This world is not my home/This world is not my home/This world is a howling darkness...in Lawrence W. Levine's Black Culture and Black Consciousness (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 6., is typical of Negro expectation of reward in heaven while leaving the earth to Whites.

[2]The effect of the struggle by the Black Middle Class to integrate on Black American literature is the subject of Leroi Jones' "The Myth of Negro Literature" in Leroi Jones' Home (New York: Morrow, 1966), pp. 105-116.

[3]In Anonymous, The Black American Writer and His Roots (New York: The American Society of African Culture, 1960), pp. 34-40.

[4]Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1971.

[5]Ibid., p. 20.

[6]The quotation from "Niam n'goura" is from Richard Wright's translation of it in the same issue of Présence Africaine, I (1947), p. 185.

[7]Ibid., p. 196.

[8]Ibid., p. 191.

[9]See these images of the African "shut up inside his black skin." "He lives in primordial night" in "Psychologie des Negro-africains," translated by John Reed and Clive Wake in Léopold Sédar Senghor Poetry and Prose (London: Heinemann, 1976), p. 29, for example.

[10]Présence Africaine, I (1947), p. 186.

[11]Cahier d'un retour, p. 97.

[12]The Weary Blues, p. 43.

[13]Ibid., p. 100.

[14]Langston Hughes, Fine Clothes to the Jew (New York: A. Knopf, 1929).

[15]Langston Hughes, The Big Sea (New York: A. Knopf, 1940), p. 102.

[16]New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1980.

[17]Ibid., p. 1.

[18]Langston Hughes, ed., An African Treasury (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1960).

[19]Langston Hughes and Christianne Pygnault, trans., Anthologie d'écrivains africaines et malagaches (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1962).

[20]Langston Hughes, Poems from Black Africa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963).

[21]Langston Hughes, trans Masters of the Dew (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947).

[22]Bridget Jones, "Léon Damas", King and Ogungbesan, ed., A Celebration of Black and African Writing, pp. 60-73.

[23]Ellen Conroy Kennedy, ed., The Négritude Poets (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), p. 150.

[24]Ibid., p. 151.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Kofi Awoonor, "An Interview by John Goldblatt", Transition 41, 8 (1972), pp. 42-44.

CHAPTER VIII

[1]Paris: Robert Laffont, 1980.

[2]Paris: Robert Laffont, 1981.

[3]Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.

[4]Quoted in Washington Ba, p. 24.

[5]Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, p. 14.

[6]Littlejohn, Black on White, p. 42.

[7]Soyinka's "A tiger is known by his Tigritude" witticism expresses his feelings towards the propaganda note in Senghor's Négritude poetry.

[8]Ngugi's speech, "The Writer of His World," is reported in Nii K, and Kojo Bentsi-Enchill's article, "For an Afro-African Literature," West Africa, (December 22-29, 1980), p. 2604.

[9]Dominic Mulaisho, The Tongue of the Dumb (London: Heinemann, 1971).

[10]R.N. Umeasiegbu, The Way We Lived (London: Heinemann, 1969).

[11]Richard Wright, The Children of Uncle Tom (New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1936).

[12]Melvin Tolson, Libretto for the Republic of Liberia (New York: Twayne, 1953).

[13]Harlem Gallery (New York: Twayne, 1965).

[14]Ralph Ellison, The Invisible Man (New York: Random House, 1952).

[15]"For an Afro-American Literature," West Africa (December 1980).

[16]Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart (London: Heinemann, 1958).

[17]Arrow of God (London: Heinemann, 1964).

[18]T. M. Aluko, One Man One Wife (Lagos: Nigerian Printing and Publishing Company, 1959).

[19]Sarif Easemon, The New Patriots (London: Longmans, 1965).

[20]Ama Ata Aidoo, The Dilemma of a Ghost (Accra: Longmans, 1965).

[21]Anowa (Harlow: Longmans, 1970).

[22]Wole Soyinka, The Lion and the Jewel (London: OUP, 1963).

[23]Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, The River Between (London: Heinemann, 1965).

[24]Wole Soyinka, The Dance of the Forests (London: Heinemann, 1972).

[25]Ayi Kwei Armah, Fragments (London: Heinemann, 1974).

[26]Kofi Awoonor, This Earth My Brother (London: Heinemann, 1972).

[27]J. P. Clark, Ozidi Saga (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1976).

[28]Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Petals of Blood (London: Heinemann, 1975).

[29]Christopher Okigbo's poems are collected in Labyrinths (London: Heinemann, 1971).

[30]West Africa (December 22/29, 1980), p. 2605.

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