

Four American Writers of the 1920s — Part II of IV

Langston Hughes — A poet 'grown deep like the rivers'

Robert Cotner

Author's note: I have chosen four American writers of the 1920s to represent what I consider the dominant literary motifs emerging from American culture in that decade. Each arose from a distinct intellectual vantage point; each carried forth into later generations, and all are with us, in some form, to this day. Presented at the Bluestem Festival of Arts and Humanities, Lake Forest, IL, June 8, 2001.

While F. Scott Fitzgerald's life was reflective of the "psychological and spiritual malaise," which he found in modern life and of which he wrote so eloquently, Langston Hughes felt destiny calling him to become an African-American Walt Whitman.

Shortly after his graduation from Cleveland's Central High School in Ohio, on June 16, 1920, Langston Hughes took a train south to see his father in Toluca, Mexico. He was riding across the Mississippi River from Illinois to St. Louis, late in the day, as the sun was setting in the west. Hughes' biographer, Arnold Rampersad, gives these details: "The beauty of the hour and the setting — the great muddy river glinting in the sun, the banked and tinted summer clouds, the rush of the train toward the dark, all touched an adolescent sensibility tender after the gloomy day. The sense of beauty and death, of hope and despair, fused in his imagination. A phrase came to him, then a sentence. Drawing an envelope from his pocket, he began to scribble. In a few minutes Langston had finished a poem . . ."¹

And that poem was "The Negro Speaks of Rivers":

*I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.*



Langston Hughes (l), Horace Cayton, and Arna Bontemps converse outside the Parkway Community House, 51st St. and Parkway (now Martin Luther King Drive) in the 1940s. Bontemps wrote to Cayton about the photograph in 1969: "The picture is unbelievable! Alberta and others have even called it beautiful. The date was probably 1947, but I had forgotten about the picture being taken, and I had certainly not seen it before. As soon as I can arrange, I will have it framed for my study. Thank you ever so much for keeping it and then sending it. Does a negative exist, in case I have a chance to put it in a book? We have to start thinking about history!" Both the letter and photo are used by special arrangements with the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Chicago Public Library. (Cayton 020; photographer is unknown.)

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

*I've known rivers; Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.²*
"Beauty and death . . . hope and despair" —
these are recurrent themes we hear from the
1920s. There was little for an African-American
writer of the 1920s to find joyful but the songs
of his own soul. Rampant racism prevailed across



Musings...

CAXTONIAN

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In one of the finest essays of American literature, James Baldwin (1924-1985) delineates key aspects of human nature as we play it out in America. First published in *Creative America* in 1962, the essay was part of the celebration by the National Cultural Center of the Performing Arts, which culminated in the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

A mere seven paragraphs long, the essay has direct intellectual lineage to Emerson in both theme and spirit. "The artist," Baldwin begins, "must actively cultivate that state which most [people], necessarily, must avoid: the state of being alone." He then takes the idea of *aleness*, turns it in his hands like a cherished, ancient artifact, and deciphers the nuances of its patina. The conquest of the physical world takes so much of our attention, he says, that we fail to "conquer the great wilderness" of ourselves. "The role of the artist, then, precisely, is to illumine that darkness, blaze roads through that vast forest; so that we will not, in all our doing, lose sight of its purpose, which is, after all, to make the world a more human dwelling place."

The aloneness of which he writes is not a romantic musing "beside some silver lake." It is, rather, the aloneness of "birth or death"; or like the "fearful aloneness which one sees in the eyes of someone who is suffering, whom we cannot help"; or the "aloneness of love." Aloneness encompasses the "extreme, universal, inescapable" conditions of the human experience — things we would rather not know. "The artist is present," he says, "to correct the delusions to which we fall prey in our attempts to avoid this knowledge."

Because society must be grounded in things that are both visible and stable, every society has "battled with the incorrigible disturber of the peace — the artist." He calls the artist that "breed of men and women historically despised while living and acclaimed when safely dead." But the artist helps us to understand the unseen "mystery of the human being" and to know that "there is nothing stable under heaven." It is, and this seems to be the crux of the matter for Baldwin, the acceptance of constant changes and the use of these changes for the greater good of humankind through which we find "our maturity as nations and as people."

He says panic is inevitable every place in the world where people refuse to accept change — from the "streets of our own New Orleans to the grisly battleground of Algeria." (If he were writing today, he might have said "from the streets of our own Cincinnati to the grisly battleground of Israel.") He asserts that a "higher level of consciousness among the people is the only hope we have, now or in the future, of minimizing human damage." Inescapable as it is that we must live in society — so it is inescapable that we must live privately, inwardly. In facing squarely the truth, personally and nationally, we then must bring the reality of who we are and the ideal of "what we wish to be" into something "resembling reconciliation." Baldwin observes, "Society must accept some things as real, but [the artist] must know that the visible reality hides a deeper one, and that all our action and all our achievement rests on things unseen."

Life for an artist in America is little different from that of an artist anywhere — except for certain historical perspectives. The dangers he sees for American artists "rest on the fact that in order to conquer this continent, the particular aloneness of which I speak — the aloneness in which one discovers that life is tragic, and, therefore, *therefore*, unutterably beautiful — could not be permitted." The "lover's war" each artist has with the society, has the potential to bring all people to true freedom and to fulfill the "opportunity which no other nation has of moving beyond the Old World concepts of race and class and caste, and create, finally, what we must have had in mind when we first began speaking of the New World."

In this essay and in many of his other writings, James Baldwin reveals requisite universals in the human experience, through which people of all cultures, all races, all faiths become human and establish a truly humane society. Such is the profound role of books and ideas, of art and philosophy, which we celebrate month by month and year by year.

Robert Cotner
Editor

*Selected chronology of
books by James Baldwin*
1924-1987

- Go Tell It on the Mountain* (fiction), 1953.
The Amen Corner (drama), 1954.
Giovanni's Room (fiction), 1955.
Nobody Knows My Name (essays), 1961.
Another Country (fiction), 1962.
The Fire Next Time (essays), 1963.
Blues for Mr. Charlie (drama), 1964.
Nothing Personal (photos with Richard Avedon),
1964.
Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone (fiction),
1968.
A Dialogue with Nikki Giovanni (non-fiction),
1971.
A Rap on Race (a recorded conversation with
Margaret Mead) (non-fiction), 1971
No Name in the Street (non-fiction), 1972.
If Beale Street Could Talk (fiction), 1974.
The Devil Finds His Work (non-fiction), 1976.
Little Man, Little Man: A Story of Childhood
(children's lit), 1977.
Just Above My Head (fiction), 1979.
The Evidence of Things not Seen (non-fiction),
1983.
The Price of the Ticket: Collected Non-fiction, 1948-
1985.
Harlem Quartet (fiction), 1987.



Photo of James Baldwin by Richard Avedon, which appeared in *Harper's Bazaar*, April 1964; from the collection of Robert Cotner.



A scene from the Goodman Theatre's production of James Baldwin's *The Amen Corner*, May 2001. Used through the courtesy of the Goodman Theatre.

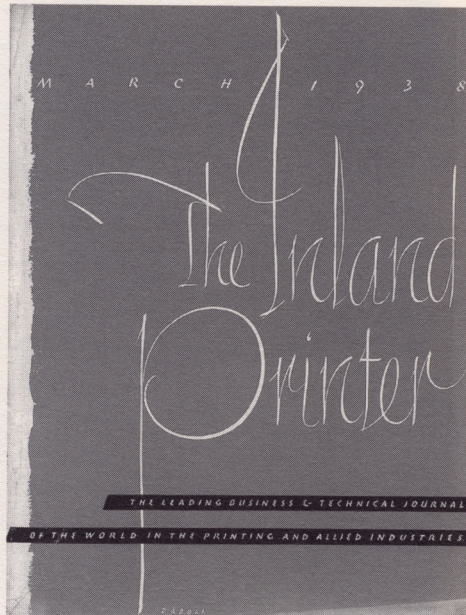
A glimpse into Chicago's tradition of print and graphic arts — In the

Susan Jackson Keig

Recently my son found a copy of *The Inland Printer* for March 1938, and I am sending it along, for it has so much about Chicago and its tradition of printing and the graphic arts in its heyday, that you may find material for the *Caxtonian*. *The Inland Printer* was published between 1883 and 1978. It then became the *American Printer*, and it is still produced in Chicago. The page size of the 1938 edition is 9 1/2 by 12 inches.

The Newberry Library has a complete run of the fine trade publication in the Wing Collection.

The following graphic essay illustrates what I am speaking of.



Cover: hand lettering and design by Chicago designer Ray DaBall.

Modern Tendencies in Lettering

By Raymond F. DaBall

GENTLEMEN: Drawn letters, like spoken words, are overt conveyors of expressing ideas, and I feel much more expressive with a pen in my hand than with words in my mouth. But I do appreciate the compliment implied in my being asked to talk on Modern Trends in Lettering this afternoon.

Since I profess healthy respect, if not slight reverence, for the roman alphabet, I am sure it would be rather rude of me to jump to speak, with both feet right into the middle of a discussion of modern trends without first giving at least a passing nod in recognition of the trials and tribulations of this noble roman character which remain to this day the same essential form they had in 500 B. C.

A hasty glance backward over a space of two thousand five hundred years shows that these essential forms have been not only glorified, but often preserved. They have been condensed and expanded—modified by monks and electricians—and adapted by engineers and blown up by engravers. We have even seen them expounded on the movie screen, and the fragments reassembled as if by magic to make sense again before our startled eyes.

In short, these essential forms have served as the basic framework upon which every lettering man who had, or thought he had, a new idea, could hang his more-or-less successful innovations. And as these experiments developed and proved to be of value, they created the modern trends of their own times.

Lower-case roman and italic were the most important developments of all, and contributed the greatest permanent values. In a period of over two thousand years, no abstract form of sufficient mass has yet been evolved to replace a single one of the original roman capitals.

If it any wonder, then, that the modern lettering man sometimes feels that the process of evolution has worked in reverse in his particular case and has again made him an ape rather than an artist in the creation of letters? In other words, that he has reverted to type and must "cling" to the time of tradition whether he likes it or else.

Working within the narrow restrictions of his craft, the modern lettering man has ample time to ponder his past and speculate on his future in advertising. He is a wise old ape—so he stops grating and starts groping for a more comic view of his situation. Soon he sees a great light and a way out—he will become something more than a mere lettering ape! He enlarges the jungle of his activities to include a thorough understanding of modern layout, illustration, and typography, which form the triangle of modern advertising design, with lettering as just one of the three angles.

So far, I think I have demonstrated some cleverness in avoiding the subject assigned to me. And, of course, cleverness is a virtue which does not pay—except as it may afford incidental entertainment of a low order. Just as in modern lettering we sometimes find a tendency toward cleverness, in no one but the lettering man himself. The same fault may also occur in the layout or in the choice of an inappropriate type face and the whole ad will bristle with so much self-conscious cleverness that the reader's attention will be diverted into a blind alley and so come to a "dead end."

As an example of what I mean by novelty, I submit Bifar (Figure 1). Believe it or not, a complete alphabet in this style of lettering was cast in type, and in this instance, when I say the lettering man has reverted to type, I mean to "monkey business" which is literally obscene. Bifar has departed far, much too far, from the classic roman standard.

These characters originated in France as railway signals, and, as such, they were designed with colored lights under conditions for which they were intended. But I confess I cannot see their value on paper. It should be possible to take any single

Talented Autobiography

From June 19, 1922, on farm near Clyde, New York; early reader of 7 (shown here); 17 (shown here); studied art at Mechanics Institute, Rochester; scholarship student. At twenty went to Art Institute, Chicago; Free-Lance; Crabb Engraving Company, Chicago; second, Rogers and Company, War; complete artistic blockout.

"Back to Chicago and Rogers and Company after the Associates then to Lord & Thomas (not so happy); Berwick & Cooper (crude); back to Rogers and Company as set designer. Unconscionable year to free-lance; did so for two years. Great director with Harry H. Farrell for John H. Dunham Company; chief designer for Earlfield Wilkes Studios; art director for William Douglas McAdams (but refused to go to New York when agent moved there—disagree!).

"Have free-lanced since 1929, serving agencies and manufacturers direct; coordinated design of package and labels for College Inn Foods, Wisco, and Spicis in 1933-34. Institutional advertising pieces and booklets; wildlife arrangements for old photography for R. H. Donnelly and Sons Company. Institutional work for the Chicago Tribune.

"Have been associated for the past six years with Harry H. Farrell, package and product designer; and, more recently, also with Herbert Fisher, architect and industrial designer; thus able to give more comprehensive service in coordination of design to all phases of industry. Active in National Institute of Graphic Arts. Married (happy) to a sweet singer and famous cook (top bigamist—singer and cook same person); not really, but bank notes, cash determined to be an artist's wife of everything; Hobby: music."



RAYMOND F. DABALL

Article by Raymond F. DaBall.

PROVOCATIVE SOPHISTICATED

TYPE PEIGNOT

designed by A. M. CASSANDRE—PARIS

OFFERED BY CONTINENTAL

New York

16 Sizes
2 Weights
Specimens Gladly

AMERICAN NUMBERING-MACHINES

BIG BOY

ANY SPEED ANY PRESS

No. 123456

AT ALL BRANCHES AMERICAN TYPE FOUNDRIES AMERICAN NUMBERING MACHINE CO. ATLANTIC AND SHEPHERD AVES., BROOKLYN, N.Y. BRANCH—108 WEST MADISON STREET, CHICAGO, ILL.

FIELD FOR THE HOUSE ORGAN EDITOR

Whether yours is an elaborate sixty-four page book or just a small folder, Indian Head Cover will take one problem off your mind. Made in helio attraction colors, ranging from a good spring green through a rich October brown to a pure snow white. It contains a color suited to each month of the year. The price is modest and will leave most of your budget for other things. Your printer will enjoy its easy printing surface, alike on both sides. Let us show you this attractive cover. Just attach the coupon below to your business letterhead and mail it to us. We will send you without obligation the complete Indian Head Cover sample book giving all the information.

KNOWLTON BROTHERS, Watertown, N. Y. I want to know more about your Indian Head Cover. Please send me the sample book.

NAME _____ POSITION _____

its results Amaze You

A performer, through long and faithful practice of his art, acquires a mastery which amazes you. For the past 30 years Kimble has specialized in Motors for the Graphic Arts. Here too results are amazing.

KIMBLE ELECTRIC COMPANY
2011 West Hastings Street, Chicago, Illinois

KIMBLE Motors
Distributed by AMERICAN TYPE FOUNDRIES
Branches and Sales Agents in Twenty-Five Cities

Composing Room TRAGEDY!

Here's a composing room tragedy for you! Presses waiting...copy marked RUSH RUSH RUSH...and the last "o" is gone! Sure...this is the big customer who specified the face to be used...phoned in the rush copy...said "no proof wanted." But that's always the way.

You know what happens then. The comp has had to rob a standing form to get those vital "o's"...and that means delay and future trouble.

This cannot happen in a Ludlow-equipped plant. For its composing room takes rush jobs or "run-of-the-hook" jobs in stride, with the help of the Ludlow. And while it is tragic to run out of type at a critical moment, it's expensive to do so at any time.

But who can foretell just what sizes and faces will be required by copy demands which must always remain unpredictable?

Then why not meet this situation the logical Ludlow way? With Ludlow matrices you can set any amount of composition in any specified size or face. And not only is your type supply unlimited, but the whole expense of type making is included in the productive composition time—which still is less than that required to set and make up single types!

Get the facts. Ask for details and for specimen sheets showing modern and traditional Ludlow typefaces.

Ludlow Typographic Company
2032 Clybourn Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

Please Mention The Inland Printer When Writing to Advertisers

Advertisement from Chicago's Ludlow Typographic Company.

PREPARATION

Printers, as well as farmers, prepare for the business of spring with proper groundwork. Now is the time to check your roller equipment to make sure you are ready to handle the various types of printing which will be popular during the year 1938.

New designs, type faces, papers and inks lose their effectiveness if poorly printed. Get the fullest benefits from these innovations by the exclusive use of Ideal Rollers.

Ideal Rollers are the smallest part of your manufacturing cost. You will want to use them to assure the excellent results you have every right to expect from all of your painstaking preparations.

There really is a difference. Order Ideal Rollers NOW!

IDEAL ROLLER & MANUFACTURING CO. CHICAGO Sales and service offices in principal cities NEW YORK

Please Mention The Inland Printer When Writing to Advertisers

Images of rural America grace the pages.

heyday of 1938 through a copy of The Inland Printer

letter of any alphabet, isolate it, and still be able to recognize it—unless it is upside down or sideways. It is possible to read a word set in Blier—and distracting rather than difficult, to translate it, in a short sentence, which would be just about the limit of its usefulness under any condition. But meanwhile, what has become of the message?

As a matter of fact, Blier is now serving a life sentence on the shelf—so it is hardly a threat towards the overthrow of our alphabet. I have just taken it out on parole, so to speak, as a typographic enemy

thrown in for good measure. And he will be able to recognize it—unless it is upside down or sideways. It is possible to read a word set in Blier—and distracting rather than difficult, to translate it, in a short sentence, which would be just about the limit of its usefulness under any condition. But meanwhile, what has become of the message?

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Figure 1. Blier, an exaggerated Blier which Mr. DaBoll calls "typographic enemy Number One."

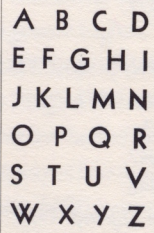


Figure 2. At the other extreme, Kibel—a French sans-serif, and a "modern classic in its own right."

Number One. I am really thankful for Blier—it has given me something to talk about on this occasion.

Now let's go to the other extreme and consider the form and style of Kibel—a modern classic in its own right, having the widest application to modern requirements for a sans-serif letter (Figure 2). Yet its structure is the very essence of the reason original. Here an A is an A, and a B is a B, so matter what its position or what company it keeps.

Between these two extremes the letter will explain his modern tendencies for better or for worse in his efforts to create those masses of style which are just as legitimate and necessary as the schemes of modern advertising in which clothes are worn by men and women.

His work may reflect anything from the smart frivolity of a French dressy line script to the heavy utility of Bauer Beton Extra Bold—with a third dimension

the idea of streamlining, vertically, as in the modern skyscraper, the horizontal feeling for speed being stressed by long lines of type, well headed, and sometimes with extremely narrow paper margins.

However, long lines with plenty of leading, narrow margins, display lines running up or down or at an angle with speed, abstract background shapes and a touch of surrealism—these do not constitute a blanket recipe for the solution of every problem in direct-mail advertising. Such an approach is not for the initiative fledgling, but for an artist who can rationalize all elements of such a problem.

Martin Johnson, of Chicago, has produced for the Abbott Laboratories a large number of direct-mail pieces which are exceptionally good examples of this modern style. His interpretations do fit the purpose and the product admirably, and they have proved their worth to the satisfaction of the client in result. And, to

get back to my own subject, these adventures in design demonstrate that it is not so much the actual forms of letters themselves as the manner in which they are used in the layout that give us the modern effect. Suitability, legibility, and simplicity are unimportant words which the conscientious letterman considers well as he works out each new problem.

Without the careful consideration of those points he will surely suffer "just another job." Form follows function, and this should not be overlooked in the execution of a scheme of lettering.

A whimsical client is usually best suited by a whimsical treatment. I recently designed a set of nine pieces of stationery in this mood for the eminently successful, albeit whimsical, photographer, Valentino Sarra (Figure 3). The silhouette of a camera with a long rubber tube and bulb on a chain takes into consideration by the photographer for the position of the letter. If the letter is long, the type over this vertical line without damage to the format; but in any event Mr. Sarra affixes his signature with a flourish of a big blue pen and a nice regard for the position of the line on the envelope; the bulb indicates the start-point for the name of the party whom addressed.

On the invoice and statement, incidentally, the design becomes even more functional because, with the "phone number on the line total, the client can save himself time when calling up Mr. Sarra to ask "what the hell do you mean—\$1,000?" Mr. Sarra has carved this design, like size, on his office door and has placed it in the window of his studio floor with the addition of a little "kicker" punched on top. This attention to the coordination of design in the various aspects of a business is definitely a modern tendency in which lettering plays an important part.

Script forms, whether thin monoline, gracious Mid-Victorian revivals, or the general utility script looked out with a break, all indicate a sense of freedom, a sense of ease which was lacking in our laboriously static imitations of the type of a few years ago. We were working backward. These broad-based characters are certainly an indication of a trend for lettering logically precedes type, and several types of this nature (Signal, Kaufmann, Hauser) already have been cast. One of the most striking modern scripts to have appeared in a recent year or two. The stroke was heavy and the down stroke, thin. It was a luxury for

style. Here at last, I thought, is something new! But soon after I found its inspiration in a book of French calligraphy of the seventeenth century. So what? Well, for one thing, the modernized version of the up stroke added the severity of the modern composition letter than its ancient prototype. That's all, and that's enough, I should say.

The more delicate hand-drawn scripts are pretty apt to have a definitely calligraphic feeling—but without heavy curves and volutes. Modern curves are still but springs—ending abruptly—and the whole line moves along at a brisk pace as if it meant business. This is quite evident too, in the later script types, such as Trafalon and Coronet. Amongst the old forms Commercial Script and, particularly, Bank Script, are very useful as smart fonts for display lines of caps set in Slim Black or Boston Thin.

One of the most recent script faces by the Bauer family—very smart looking and, for an old, firmly established (probably South German or North Italian) of the Fifteenth Century. It frankly admits its antiquity by its name: Legally.

Concededly, the famous French poster artist, who designed the most outstandingly different alphabets in recent years, it is called Pignat, and is a combination of caps and lower case with the caps predominating. It is surprisingly legible, although a solid page of it gives somewhat the effect of Greek to you. Have a you to use it on a cosmetic account. Several books have been printed with it. But I have very reliable information that the idea of a combination cap-and-lower-case roman alphabet is not new, and that it really looks up somewhere in this world at intervals of twenty-five or thirty years. Pignat is the latest re-invention.

It is interesting but unprofitable to speculate on the possibilities of a phonetic alphabet based on the principles of shorthand. Such an alphabet certainly would be in line with the modern tendency toward speed and simplification as applied to teaching in the schools today. There are already several phonetic alphabets, and the idea has been experimented with since 1860.

I mean to be conscious of a growing tendency—and I hope it is not just wishful thinking on my part—toward a loosening up and a widening in the range of lettering techniques in their various applications to advertising. The constantly increasing use of photography is partly responsible for this, and I think that its most effective appeal in characters which come closest to handwriting. They may be on paper or fashioned from paper,

DaBoll article continued.

Foreign Papermaking Increases

A World Machinery News, a bulletin issued monthly by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce of the United States Department of Commerce, reports the purchases of machinery and the building of additional mills for the manufacture of paper in several different parts of the world, having these reports on news that machinery has recently been purchased for the construction of a paper factory on one of the major islands of the Philippines, near Zamboanga. The factory is to be divided into two sections, one for the manufacture of finished paper products, and the other for making standard machine paper, with capacity of 100 tons per week.

A plant for the manufacture of wrapping paper, with capacity of 100 tons per week, is being constructed at Oaxaca, State of Veracruz, Mexico, by the recently formed Fabrica de Papel de Oaxaca, S. A., Oaxaca or Pachuca, from the U. S. Paper Industry Publishing, said to be the only paper factory of any importance in the Northwest Indies, is reported to be planning the establishment of a second paper mill near Mexico. The factory is to be divided into two sections, one for the manufacture of finished paper products, and the other for making standard machine paper, probably for export purposes. Paddy straw, it is stated, will be used mainly in the manufacture of the present factory of the company at Pachuca, in addition to the producing 40,000 tons annually, mainly consisting of wrapping paper.

Chicago personalities of the printing trade.

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Hughes

Continued from page 1

America: lynchings were still considered legitimate family entertainment in some parts of the country. And everywhere — traveling by train, bus, or auto — African-Americans were assigned back seats, subjected to segregated rest rooms and drinking fountains, and given no room in the inn, for eating or sleeping.

But fortunately, creative African-Americans of the decade, people including Langston Hughes, W.E.B. DuBois, Countee Cullen, Arna Bontemps, Alaine Locke, Zora Neal Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, and others heard music in their souls and began singing. They left for us from those dark days rich, bright traditions in scholarship and poetry, as well as in the novel, short story, and stage play. This legacy, sad with irony, but tinged always with beauty and hope, is still cherished today by a wide American population.

Courage must be considered as one of the great virtues to come from African-American writers of this decade. The courage to create, to share creations, to publish, to perform, to dream — that one day, *one day*, what I think, what I say, what I write will be heard, understood, and appreciated.

Once, while Langston Hughes was working as a busboy in the Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, DC, Illinois poet Vachel Lindsay came to read. While Lindsay sat at dinner the evening before his performance, Hughes dropped three of his poems on Lindsay's table and "fled to the kitchen."³ Rampersad completes the incident: "That evening, Lindsay startled his large audience by announcing that he had discovered a poet, a bona fide poet, a Negro poet no less, working as a busboy in their very hotel. As proof, he read all three poems to the audience. The next morning Hughes found several white reporters waiting to pepper him with questions about his poetic gift (curious in a Negro) and how he had come by it."⁴

Rejecting certification for himself, which was offered him in a scholarship to Harvard, Hughes chose, rather, to attend remote and uncelebrated Lincoln University in Pennsylvania to be near and associated with other African-American people. He wrote his friend Carl Van Vechten this explanation: "You see, I'm going

into seclusion, weary of the world, like Pearl White when she retired to her convent. And I hope nobody there reads poetry."⁵

The move to Lincoln was a part of his unique, deepening experience as poet and person. He emerged from the seclusion of Lincoln University to become, in fact, an African-American Walt Whitman, an affinity he consciously celebrated in his poem, "I, too, sing America":

I, too, sing America;
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.
Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed, —

I, too, am America.⁶

Courage and hope, fired by genius, gave the separate-and-unequal world in which African-Americans lived a vitality. These virtues ensured the later promise in America of a legacy, which included Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, our own Gwendolyn Brooks, and many others. ❖

To be continued
(Next month will feature Robert Frost)

EndNotes:

¹ Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes Vol. I, I, Too, Sing America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 39

² Langston Hughes, *The Selected Poetry of Langston Hughes*, New York: Vintage Books, 1974, p.4.

³ Rampersad, p. 117.

⁴ Rampersad, p. 117.

⁵ Rampersad, p. 124.

⁶ Hughes, *Selected Poetry*, p. 275.

A selected chronology of books by Langston Hughes 1902-1967

Poetry

The Weary Blues, 1926.
Fine Clothes for the Jew, 1927.
Four Negro Poets, 1927.
Scottsboro Limited:
 Four Poems and Play In Verse, 1932.
Shakespeare in Harlem, 1942.
Freedom's Plow, 1943.
Fields of Wonder, 1947.
One-Way Ticket, 1948.
Montage of a Dream Deferred, 1951.
Ask Your Mama:
 12 Moods of Jazz, 1961.
Black Misery, 1969.
The Panther and the Lash:
 Poems for Our Time, 1969.

Opera and Drama

The Negro Mother and Other Dramatic Recitations, 1931.
Mule-Bone, (with Zora Neal Hurston), 1932.
Mulatto, 1935.
Little Ham, 1936.
When Jack Hollers, 1936.
Don't You Want to Be Free?, 1937.
Soul Gone Home, 1937.
Emperor of Haiti, 1938.
Front Porch, 1939.
The Sun Do Move, 1942.
Street Scene: An Opera in Two Acts (with Elmer Rice; music by Kurt Weill), 1947.
Troubled Island: An Opera in Three Acts (music by William G. Still), 1949.
Five Plays, 1963.
Jericho-Jim Crow, 1964.

Fiction

Simple Speaks His Mind, 1950.
Laugh to Keep from Crying, 1952.
Simple Takes a Wife, 1953.
Simple Takes a Claim, 1957.
The Best of Simple, 1961.
Simple's Uncle Sam, 1965.

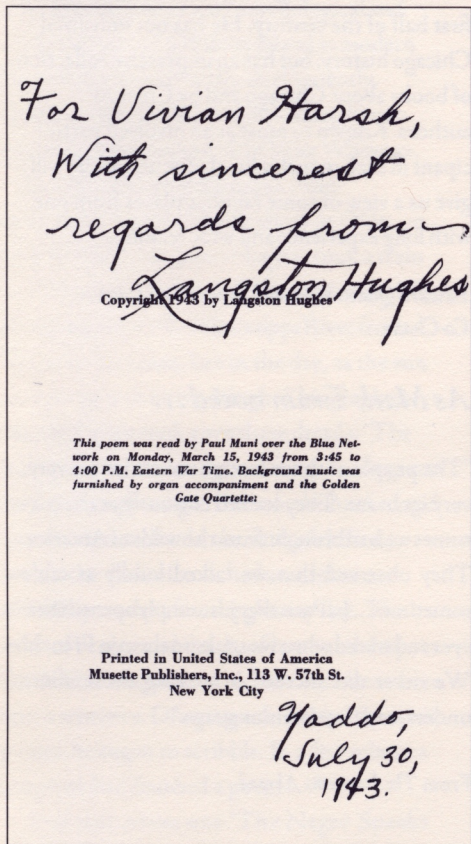
Non-Fiction

The Ways of White Folks, 1934.
Proletarian Literature in the United States, 1935.
A New Song, 1938.
The Big Sea (autobiography), 1940.*
Sweet Flypaper of Life, 1955.

- Tamborines to Glory, 1958.
- The First Book of Africa, 1960.
- Fight for Freedom, 1962.
- Something in Common, 1963.

Jo Thomas, "Gathering Up Every Word of the Prolific Langston Hughes," *The New York Times*, (July 31, 2001), pp. B1-B2, writes that the 35 books by Hughes published in his lifetime represent but half of his total production. The University of Missouri Press (Hughes was born in Joplin, MO) is now publishing the *Complete Works of Langston Hughes*, which will run 18 volumes when finished.

*The Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, the Chicago Public Library, located at 9525 S. Halsted St., Chicago, has all drafts of Hughes' meticulously edited autobiography, *The Big Sea*, in its superb collection.



Signed copyright page of first edition of Hughes' *Freedom's Plow*. Used through the courtesy of the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Chicago Public Library.

Caxton Club President outlines visions for new year

Jim Tomes

Thanks to all Caxtonians for your votes of confidence for me as the new president, Peggy Sullivan as the new vice president and program chair, and our colleagues new to the Council. We will do our best to merit the privilege of serving the club and to preserve its spirit and traditions.

The club is happily thriving and functioning well, thanks to the leadership and skills of past president Fred Kittle and the officers, committee chairs, and Council members. The diversity of the membership — including collectors, authors, librarians, book designers, publishers, printers, editors, artists, lawyers, doctors, academics, traders, graphic artists, scholars, typographers, business people, self-styled "accumulators," and all-around raconteurs — is quite remarkable. The common ground for all these interests is, of course, our shared love for books.

The love for books that binds us together (pun intended) creates a naturally civil, collegial, and congenial spirit, laced with a gentle sense of humor — all making the whole enterprise a stimulating and enjoyable experience. Peggy and I are committed to continuing this spirit.

We also want to continue the tradition of open participation and dialog by and among as many members as want to contribute their ideas, talents, suggestions, and even money! Virtually all of our recent programs have been the result of member's suggestions. We now have a sizeable back-log of speaker prospects, but please keep them coming.

We have some exciting projects underway this summer: following the Council's approval in June of the proposal that we host the FABS 2002 visit, Hayward Blake, as our FABS representative, has energetically organized a three-day program in Chicago for June 20 through 23, 2002. The program will include a tour and exhibition of Fred Kittle's Doyle Family Collection at the Newberry Library, the Northwestern University Library, the University of Chicago Special Collections, some unique Chicago private collections, the Art Institute and Chicago Symphony libraries, and a Caxton Club hosted dinner. The details will be announced in the next FABS newsletter and in future *Caxtonians*.

The Website subcommittee of the Publication Committee met last week under the leadership of Wendy Husser, with Frank Piehl, Paul Baker, Fred Kittle and Mike Braver, and described their program for adding new features to the existing website this fall and planning for a future enlarged website.

Susan Rosser's Publication Committee will be publishing *The Chicago Diaries of John M. Wing* in 2002. The book features a two-year portion (1865 and 1866) of the never-before-published diaries of Wing, a young journalist who moved to Chicago after the Civil War and witnessed some of the city's major post-war developments, including the opening of the Chamber of Commerce building (which included the stock exchange), the Union Stock Yards, and the Lake Tunnel, then considered an engineering marvel. While Wing is known today as the benefactor of the foundation on the history of printing at the Newberry Library that bears his name, the book shows he was an acute observer of a city and a nation at a critical moment. The book will include not only transcriptions from his diary, with annotations by Caxtonian Robert Williams, but an introduction by Paul Gehl, Curator of the John M. Wing Collection at the Newberry, an essay on American journalism at mid-century by Professor Richard Schwarzlose of Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, an appendix listing Wing's newspaper articles, references, illustrations, and an index. The book is scheduled for publication in the fall of 2002 and will be the first Caxton Club publication to be co-published with a major university press.

We are looking forward to starting the new season on September 19, 2001, with a dinner meeting that promises to be a very interesting program presented by Caxtonian and new Council member Bob McCamant and his team at the Sherwin Beach Press. They will talk about their production of a beautiful, hand-made, limited edition of Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*. We will begin, as usual, with a Council meeting at 4:00 pm, cocktail reception at 5:00, dinner at 6:00, and the speakers at 7:30. ❖

Bookmarks...

Dinner Program

September 19, 2001

Robert McCamant

Innocents in the Print Shop

The fall 2001 season for The Caxton Club will begin on Wednesday evening, September 19, with a dinner meeting and a presentation by Caxtonian and Councilor Robert McCamant, proprietor of the Sherwin Beach Press. Bob and his colleagues will tell the story, which they've called, appropriately, "Innocents in the Print Shop," a story of their production of a handmade, limited edition of Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*. The work took almost four years to create. It includes cartoons drawn by Heather McAdams, who traveled to Europe and the Holy Land to retrace Twain's steps.

The book is set in hot metal and printed on a hand-driven Vandercook proof press. The paper is mouldmade Johannot, imported from France, and the binding is an unusual, non-adhesive form with exposed spine sewing, housed in a black-and-white wrapper intended to suggest a portmanteau.

Bob will be joined in this color-slide presentation by his partner, Martha Chiplis, and the binder Trisha Hammer. Copies of the book will be available for sale during the evening. Let's get the new season off to a rousing start as we welcome these Innocents in the limited-edition presentation.

Peggy Sullivan

Vice President and Program Chair

Luncheon Program

September 14, 2001

Leonard Freedman

Amusements in bygone Chicago

Caxtonian Leonard Freedman, with a true bookman's aplomb, will entertain us with a talk on the "Roaring 20s." That is the decade, for those who do not remember firsthand, which brought us movie houses, vaudeville, White City, the Coliseum, circuses, medicine shows, and Riverview. He will describe the bygone amusements as seen through the eyes of a young fellow who was there.

Freedman's interest in Chicago amusements was nurtured as he grew up in Chicago in the first half of the century. He has not only lived Chicago history, but has an impressive collection of books about Chicago and by Chicago authors. Known to most as an involved participant in each month's lunch discussion, he will give us a view of some familiar places from one with long experience and wide reading.

Edward Quattrocchi & Leonard Freedman

Co-Chairs

As Mark Twain noted...

"The people of those foreign countries are very, very ignorant. They looked curiously at the costumes we had brought from the wilds of America. They observed that we talked loudly at table sometimes... In Paris they just simply opened their eyes and stared when we spoke to them in French! We never did succeed in making those idiots understand their own language."

From *The Innocents Abroad*



Detail of an illustration by Heather McAdams for the Sherwin Beach Press edition of Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*.

All luncheon and dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of BankOne, BankOne Plaza, Madison & Clark, Chicago. Luncheon and discussion, 12:30pm. Dinner meetings begin with spirits at 5pm, dinner at 6pm, lecture at 7:30pm. BankOne's parking garage, 40 S. Clark Street, offers a special parking rate after 5pm to guests of the Mid-Day Club. When you leave, please tell the parking attendant you were at the Mid-Day Club, and your parking fee will be \$10.75. Members planning to attend luncheons or dinners must make advance reservations by phoning the Caxton number, 312 255 3710. Luncheon for members and guests, \$20. Dinner, for members and guests, \$40.