

By Al Auster

Late December and all of January are traditionally a time of the doldrums in TV. Since the number of viewers is down especially at Christmas, and it's just before the February sweeps the networks generally fill up their schedules with public affairs specials and other serious fare beloved by F.C.C. commissioners. As a result we've had a few informative documentaries (CBS did one recently on the decade, a two parter called *American Dream/American Nightmare*, NBC did a white paper on the Presidency, and ABC got in there with *Closeup: Infinite Horizons—Space Beyond Apollo*), and some interesting TV movies.

Suddenly injected into this season's abundance of TV tales about teenage hitchhikers, haunted houses, obscene phone-callers, and someone licking leukemia, transcending cancer, and convulsive seizures are a couple of TV movies that tackle social issues. For instance, *OHMS*, a movie starring Ralph Waite (*The Waltons*) and David Birney, with bows to both *The China Syndrome* and Frank Capra dealt with the efforts of a group of small farmers in upstate New York to resist a huge power company's attempt to construct high voltage lines over their farms. The movie came complete with reminders of Vietnam-like helicopters, herbicides, and a former Vietnam protester (Birney), who helped organize and lead the farmers to victory.

Another interesting upcoming TV movie, this one highly touted by NOW, is *The \$5.20 an Hour Dream*, starring Linda Lavin (*Alice*) on Saturday, Jan. 26. *The \$5.20 an Hour Dream* is about a divorced working mother who tries to get and keep a job on the previously all male assembly line of an engine plant because she

ART «» ENTERTAINMENT

TELEVISION

Being the first woman on the assembly line



Lavin's foreman (Richard Jaeckel) wants her to get no favors.

desperately needs the extra \$.90 an hour it pays.

Problems.

On one level *The \$5.20 an Hour Dream* is a welcome relief from beer commercial images of the working class filled with scenes of all sorts of unalienated happiness and camaraderie. The assembly line at the engine plant in the southern border town where Ellen Lissik (Linda Lavin) works is a place where the men and women hardly like each other, much less their work, the bosses or their union, and where racial epithets

are barely a slip of the tongue away.

In addition, Ellen has problems that would make your average sitcom mother or father wince. For instance, there's her daughter Kim (Dana Hill) who is too old to play with dolls and too young for a bra, a beau (Mayf Nutter) who seems to think that the best place for a woman is the back seat of his sports car, and a feckless-penniless ex-husband (Nicholas Pryor), who sweats profusely at the mere mention of child support. Compounding all this are her male assembly line co-workers, who can't decide

We can see social issue films and public affairs during the doldrums between sweeps.

whether they're good ole boys or Peck's bad boys.

Lavin wends her way through all of this with a low keyed tenacity. There's none of the "Kiss mah grits" spunkiness of "Alice" in this role. As a matter of fact one of her best scenes in the movie is a moment of hopelessness when she inadvertently blurts out "there must be a law," and gets the job on the line from the befuddled personnel officer who had just turned her down. Also excellent in a supporting role is Nicholas Pryor as her actor ex-husband who, it seems, will never be better

than as a second rate performer in third rate shows.

Unfortunately, *The \$5.20 an Hour Dream* has a tendency to mar these rather good moments with the melodramatic cliché. For example, the fraternity type hazing that Ellen takes from her male co-workers takes a vicious turn when one of them convinces an obvious mental defective worker that Ellen wants to make love to him. What follows is an abortive "Of Mice and Men" sexual molestation. Needless to say women working on the assembly line have a hard enough time without also having to deal with old Hollywood conventions.

However, the major problem with *The \$5.20 an Hour Dream* is that it thinks small. An obvious comparison to it is the movie *Norma Rae* (indeed Lavin is married to *Norma Rae* co-star Ron Liebman). In that film Norma Rae not only fought for her own dignity, but there was a collective victory of the union as well.

Although *The \$5.20 an Hour Dream* pays obeisance to the idea of other women taking jobs on the assembly line (a final scene even has a Norma Rae look alike asking Ellen if there are any openings on the line) most of the other women in the movie seem to abhor the idea of working with men on the line. The only one to give Ellen any support is her pregnant friend Ginny (Pamela McMyler). Ninety cents an hour, however, is important to a lot of women and not just your maverick's struggle. And this TV movie never gives a sense of any collective need or struggle.

The \$5.20 an Hour Dream is a sincere and earnest TV movie that even manages to get in a nice plea for the ERA. TV will begin to make more of these someday, not just in the times between its peak audience periods. However, let's hope the next time the little screen thinks a little bigger.

Al Auster is a New York historian and cultural critic.

POPULAR MUSIC

By Bruce Dancis

On Dec. 6, 1976, Bob Marley was wounded during an assassination attempt in Kingston, Jamaica, shortly before he was to appear at a concert backing the candidacy of Prime Minister Michael Manley. Marley subsequently left Jamaica and told the British rock paper *Melody Maker* that he would no longer be involved in what he called "commercial politics," which had become "too heavy."

Marley's exile coincided with a clear deterioration in his music. Both *Exodus* and *Kaya*, Marley and the Wailers' two subsequent albums, lacked the compelling drive and moving social commentary that saturated his earlier work. In fact, on *Kaya* Marley fell to re-recording several songs from his Jamaican albums of the early 1970s; all paled in comparison with the originals.

The change in Marley was all the more significant because Mar-

Marley sings for black unity with renewed faith, energy

ley was and is more than just a talented musician—he is the Dylan, Beatles, and Rolling Stones of reggae, the person most responsible for spreading reggae's Rastafarian, anti-colonialist message throughout the world, and one of the most gifted songwriters of his generation.

After wandering in the wilderness for two years, Marley returned to Jamaica and his roots. His new album, *Survival* (Island Records), reflects Marley and the Wailers' simultaneous return to both musical brilliance and militant resistance to racial and economic oppression as well as a reaffirmation of his faith. The magnitude of his achievement might best be expressed through an analogy: it's as if after releasing the disappointing *Let It Be*, the Beatles had regrouped, reinvigorated themselves, turned off their legal squabbles and turned out another *Rubber Soul*.

Marley returned to Jamaica after two years' exile from "commercial politics" following a murder attempt.

Survival initially shows its colors in an album cover made up of the flags of the independent African nations and a drawing of a slave ship's storage during the brutal Atlantic crossing. The title captures the album's theme—the need for black unity in the face of attempts to create divisiveness.

Commitment. "Zimbabwe" and "Africa Unite" both reflect Marley's longtime support for African liberation movements, a commitment that was apparently reaffirmed by Marley's recent (first) trip to Africa. And he doesn't shrink from supporting revolutionary violence when it is the only alternative.

Talking with British journalist Vivien Goldman, Marley said, "I expect if you're living by the gun, if gun is the fight, then FIRE gun. If where you come from, you fight with sticks and stones, then fight with sticks and stones. If the fight is spiritual, then fight spiritual, because everywhere the fight goes on. We don't have any alternatives."

While Marley calls repeatedly for people to take action, he also recognizes that the struggle will be long and hard—"There's work to be done/So let's do it little by little," he sings on "Wake Up and Live."

Survival also shows that Marley retains his analytical power. One of the album's best songs is "Ambush," perhaps Marley's strongest statement about colonialism: "See them fighting for power/But they know not the hour/So they bribing/With their guns, spare-parts and money/Trying to belittle our integrity/They say what we know/Is just what they teach us..."

Marley's renewed militancy is only one part of *Survival's* triumph. The disappointingly laid-back arrangements and dispirited vocals on *Kaya* have been replaced by a dynamism that puts the edge back into Marley's songs, which as usual receive sterling instrumental support from the Wailers, in particular drummer Carlton Barrett and bassist Aston "Familyman" Barrett.



From the gently rocking, joyful "One Drop" to "Ride Natty Ride's" exquisite chorus by the I Three's (three women who regularly sing backup with Marley) to the haunting charge of "Ambush," Marley has created an album without weak links.

DONALD SHAFFER ASSOCIATES, INC.

ALL FORMS OF INSURANCE

Specialists in Pension & Employee Benefit Planning

11 Grace St.
Great Neck, N.Y. 10021
212-895-7005/516-466-4642

I LOVE MYSELF WHEN I AM LAUGHING...AND THEN AGAIN WHEN I AM LOOKING MEAN AND IMPRESSIVE: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader.

Edited by Alice Walker and with an introduction by Mary Helen Washington
The Feminist Press, \$6.95.

By Barbara Wilson

It has become a truism of the women's movement that if we want to know much about the women who came before us, then we've got to search them out and bring them back to life ourselves.

This book is especially important because it focuses on the life and work of a black woman writer, Zora Neale Hurston, until recently consigned to a few disparaging footnotes in the history of the Harlem Renaissance. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, perhaps her finest novel, was reprinted in 1978 and a biography by Robert Hemenway came out in 1977, but this is the first time a representative selection of Hurston's varied output (fiction, essays, autobiography and folklore) has been gathered together in one volume.

Throughout we sense the guiding hand of editor Alice Walker the poet and novelist, making us see what Zora Neale Hurston meant to her as a black woman and writer, and what Hurston means to all of us. Hurston stirred up as much controversy in her lifetime as she no

doubt will in ours. She was not a "good girl"—she couldn't have been the writer she was if she had been. Walker, and Mary Helen Washington in her introduction, make no apology for that. Rather, they transmit their vision of her strength and courage to us.

How else than being sassy and forward could Zora Neale Hurston have moved from the poverty of a rural town in Florida to Barnard College? How else than being as resilient as a diving board could Hurston have become a noted folklorist, a prolific writer, the recipient of two Guggenheims and a major shaper of the Harlem Renaissance in the '20s?

Hurston was born about 1901 in the all black town of Eatonville, Florida. It was the first incorporated "all-Negro" town in the South, a fact of no small importance to Hurston in later life, when she was accused of writing "minstrel shows." Hurston's first experience of black life was not of racial conflict and discrimination, but of a self-sufficient, integral community.

As she wrote in a 1928 essay, "How It Feels To Be Colored Me," "I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it." Such an attitude led her to minimize the very real pain and powerlessness of being black; it also led her to explore, in her fiction and folklore, the strong and positive heritage of her people.



Zora Neale Hurston sought and found

Her books express as no other literature of the time did the humor, richness and variety of her experience of black culture. Her fate, as Mary Helen Washington puts it in the introduction, was to be writing primarily in the '30s, when the first wave of the celebratory Harlem Renaissance had passed and the black protest writer was beginning to set down his or her experience of discrimination.

Often dismissed as superficial and "unserious," Hurston can today be read with more perspective. The best of her novels,

Their Eyes Were Watching God and *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, and her fine work of folklore reportage, *Mules and Men*, are filled with strong characters and memorable, lively dialogue. The language is at times pure delight, so pithy and real is it, incorporating the wonderful metaphorical power of black language: "Ah done been in sorrow's kitchen and ah licked the pots clean;" "Anyone whose mouth is cut crossways can lie." One could quote whole pages where the dialogue races along, combining the "lying tales"

commonly told on the General Store's front porch with advice, stray wisdom and exactly phrased summaries of rivalries and differences. Nor is her literary skill confined to dialogue; Hurston can set a scene to make your blood run cold. The description of the flood in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* almost Biblically evokes a sense of elemental human fear before the forces of nature.

Women with spunk.

Hurston was no feminist, and at least one of the stories in the reader, "The Gilded Six-Bits" is almost sexist in its conception of the erring wife and her husband's forgiveness. But more often Hurston gives her female characters just as much spunk as her males. Another story, "Sweat," shows a woman who stands up to her husband in spite of repeated threats and beatings.

No discussion of *I Love Myself When I'm Laughing* would be complete without reference to Alice Walker's moving afterward, "Looking For Zora." Walker describes visiting Eatonville and meeting the people who knew Hurston, finding her unmarked grave and buying a headstone that will read: "Zora Neale Hurston/ 'A Genius of the South'/ Novelist Folklorist Anthropologist/ 1901-1960."

One can't help but cheer at the knowledge that one more woman has been reclaimed. ■ Barbara Wilson is a Seattle fiction writer and journalist.

CLASSIFIED

PUBLICATIONS

NEW DIRECTIONS IN POWER STRUCTURE RESEARCH VOL II: A special issue of The Insurgent Sociologist, edited by G. William Domhoff. \$6.80 postpaid from our bookshop. A Periodical Retreat, 336 1/2 S. State. Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

FREE MAGAZINE featuring 500 books...natural health, gardening and other interesting subjects. Provoker Press, St. Catherine's 585, Ontario, L2R 7C0.

STOP THE ARMS RACE in outer space. Join Citizens For Space Demilitarization, \$5.00 or send stamped envelope for sample newsletter Space For All People. CFSO, 530 B Moultrie, San Francisco, Ca. 94110.

HUCKSTERS IN THE CLASSROOM, by Sheila Harty, is a detailed report on market practices directed at the world's largest captive audience—school children. Citing examples of ideological bias and blatant product advertising, this report provides extensive evidence of commercial exploitation through curricula. Under the guise of "public service," corporate industry is courting teachers and school systems with free teaching aids that promote brand names and vested ideologies. The report urges closer evaluation of industry materials and further use of alternative sources for balance. It is available from the Center for Responsive Law, P.O. Box 19337, Washington, D.C. 20036. \$20.00 for corporations and \$10.00 for educators.

FOOD NEWS. If you're serious about the politics of food, you need

the COMMUNITY NUTRITION INSTITUTE's weekly newsletter. Monitors issues from farm to table. Write Box T, C.N.I. Weekly Report, 1146 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO READ YIDDISH TO READ THE MORNING FREIHEIT! Founded in 1922, the FREIHEIT publishes an English supplement to its week-end edition with news and information on "The Jewish community in U.S. & Israel." Soviet Jewry and Jews in other parts of the world. Jewish culture in Yiddish and other languages. "Problems of anti-Semitism and racism in U.S. and abroad. You'll find the FREIHEIT's approach different than that of most other Anglo-Jewish publications—and you'll admire its progressive, anti-establishment viewpoint. Subscription rate: \$8.00 per year (sample copy on request). Send check or M/O with name and address to MORNING FREIHEIT, 22 W. 21st Street, New York, N.Y. 10017. TRY IT; YOU'LL LIKE IT!

TRAVEL

ITALY POLITICAL STUDY TRIP
ROME: PCI & DC nat. rep's;
BOLOGNA: agri. co-op—city services;
VENICE: Biennale dir.—sem. "saving Venice";
TORINO: FIAT "robots"—CIGL labor rep's;
June 6-June 21, \$1195 from Chi., \$1110 from NYC. Option to stay longer. Contact Roberta Garner, chairperson, Sociology Dept., DePaul Univ., 2323 Seminary, Chicago, IL 60614.

BOOKS

SAVE 10-35% on any book in print! Write for free brochure. ABC, Box 1507/TT1, Kingston, Canada K7L 5C7.

HANDBOUND BLANK BOOKS. Money back guarantee. 6 1/2" x 10 1/2" 96 pp. Cloth/marbled paper/hardcover. Send \$15.00 to The Watermark, Indianola, WA 98342.

HELP WANTED

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER wanted. Taking applications for a Community Organizer to work with various groups: low-income, minorities, ethnics, seniors, clergy, and working class on issues such as: hunger, recreation, education, media, housing and transportation. Salary negotiable with experience. Plenty of fringe benefits. Personal transportation not needed. Send resume to the Hammond Community Center, 5461 Calumet Ave., Hammond, Indiana, 46320 or call (219) 933-7377. An equal opportunity employer.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR—Earthwork, food and land resource center, San Francisco, Ca. Duties: administration, program planning, staff coordination. Administrative and political experience necessary. Salary \$10,400, benefits. Send resume to Earthwork, 3410 19th St., San Francisco, Ca 94110.

POSITION WANTED

29 YEAR OLD PHYSICIAN/ certified in family practice, internal medicine. Influences: left (Chomsky) and right

(Rothbard) libertarianism. Interests: economic development, workplace democracy, individual liberty. Speaks Spanish, French and German. Seeks honest work. Jeff Weil, 3630-A S. Maplewood, Tulsa, Ok. 74135.

EDUCATION

EXTERNAL M.B.A. and Master of International Management programs. Northern Utah Management Institute, Box 1626-B, Park City, UT. 84060

A RADICAL INTERDISCIPLINARY education at an accredited state college: The Evergreen State College. Offering political economy, alternative energy, small-scale farming, appropriate technology, innovative art. Hands-On Policy, ample access to equipment, total involvement, group and individual learning options. B.A. or B.S. Be prepared for the contradictions inherent in a state supported institution. Write: Grapevine-ITT, P.O.B. 2618, Olympia, Wa. 98507. *Students and Friends of Evergreen*

ORGANIZATIONS

FOR A COOPERATIVE COMMON-

A PERIODICAL RETREAT
336 1/2 S. State
Ann Arbor, MI

An Alternative bookshop with several hundred periodicals and an extensive line of books. For our free newspaper, send your name, address and 15¢ stamp.
Tel. (313) 663-0215

Guild Bookstore
1118 W. Armitage
Chicago, Ill. 60614

The Midwest's largest selection of Marxist and leftwing books and periodicals. Many titles in Spanish & German.

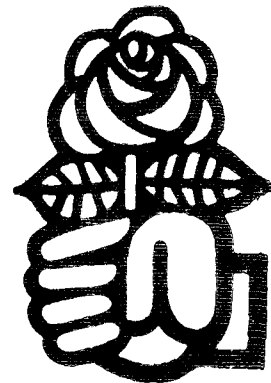
Tel. (312) 525-3667

WEALTH IN MINNESOTA, contact the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Association, 3200 Chicago Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55407

CORPUS—National Association Registered/Married Priests: Box 2649, Chicago 60690.

FOR SALE

ANTI-NUCLEAR FUNDRAISERS: books, t-shirts, buttons, bumperstickers, posters, records (whole-sale). Movement-produced, Union-made. Lowcost custom printing



Introducing

The School for
Democratic Socialism

Classes start on February 1: Courses to be offered in February and March include "Problems of Modern Politics" with Irving Howe/Robert Leachman, "Corporate Power and NYC Politics" with Ruth Messinger/ Paul DuBrul and courses on "Schools and Society," Marxist Perspectives on Soviet Society" and "An Introduction to Democratic Socialism."

Enrollment is limited, so act today. For a copy of the School brochure, write: School for Democratic Socialism, 125 West 72nd St., NYC 10024 or call (212) 724-4727. The School is a project of the New York City chapter of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee.

WRITE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD HERE:

IN THESE TIMES CLASSIFIEDS

35¢ PER WORD PREPAID
SPECIAL DISCOUNTS

3-9 INSERTIONS 30¢ PER WORD
10-19 INSERTIONS 25¢ PER WORD
20+ INSERTIONS 20¢ PER WORD

SEND TO:

1509 N. MILWAUKEE AVE.
CHICAGO, IL 60622