

ANGER, AND BEYOND: The Negro Writer in the United States. Edited & with an Introduction by Herbert Hill, Harper and Row, New York 1966. 217 pp. \$5.95.

CHARACTERISTIC OF THE INSIGHT of W. E. B. Dubois was his classic statement of the dual nature of the American Negro in his *The Souls of the Black Folk*: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others . . . One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro—two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

This duality of consciousness is a recurring theme of *Anger and Beyond*. Containing twelve essays by Negro and white writers, given originally at the University of California (Berkeley), it includes a memorable symposium on the late Richard Wright. This searching book explores the history of American Negro literature and the forces acting upon the contemporary Negro writer.

Two essays astutely place Negro writing and its double nature in perspective. In an incisive introduction, Herbert Hill editor of a previous work entitled *Soon, One Morning.—New Writing by American Negroes*, correctly observes that the duality and complexity of the literary tradition of Negro writing—its assertion of a universal humanity and its concentration on the struggles of the Negro—have allowed for a new power, "a new freedom for creativity" for the contemporary writer. He concludes that the "unique social experience of the American Negro is the stuff of great literature." For Saunders Redding, in an excellent historical analysis of Negro literature, the survival of Negro writing attests to its *elan vital*. "Three times within this century," he notes, "writing by Negroes has been done nearly to death: once by indifference, once by opposition, and once by the enthusiasm of misguided friends." However, Redding is extremely optimistic about the future of Negro literature: "Writing by American Negroes has never

been in such a splendid state of health, nor with such a bright and shining future before it."

THE REMAINING ESSAYS grapple with the problems of Negro double-ness, its sources, its relationship to the eternal quest for personal and artistic identity and its expression in Negro writing. Sociologist Horace Cayton exudes the spirit which sets the tone of the entire work when he quotes Richard Wright that "The seasons of the plantation no longer dictate the lives of many of us; hundreds of thousands of us are moving into the sphere of conscious history. We are with the new tide. Voices are speaking, Men are moving. And we shall be with them. . . ." In a more subdued essay Leroy Jones affirms the responsibility which is imposed upon the contemporary writer by his inescapable involvement in the matrix of duality: "Whatever the expression and the experiences available, wherever we are, our most important obligation is to tell it all exactly as it is."

There follows an essay by Nat Hentoff who defines his approach to the theme with disarming intensity in an opening statement denouncing an "absurdity" propounded by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan in their work *Beyond the Melting Pot*, in which they contend that the Negro "is only an American and nothing else." What is essential, Hentoff argues, is greater insight into those elements of Negro-American culture which can aid in the reshaping of the total American consciousness. Robert Bone portrays Ralph Ellison as a major contributor to this end. In a superb article Bone presents Ellison, through the latter's personal exploration, the intertwining of two art media—jazz and writing—and its final expression in the artist. "Each solo flight or improvisation, represents (like the successive canvases of a painter) a definition of his identity: as individual, as member of the collectivity, and as a link in the chain of tradition." "True jazz," Ellison contends, "is an art of individual assertion within and against the group." Bone concludes that this perspective ap-

plies to the Negro artist who must be able "to affirm whatever is uniquely Negro in his background while insisting precisely on the American quality of his experience."

Finally, in the essay by playwright and poet Ossie Davis, Negro humor is redefined and restated. Negro humor, states

Davis, "has been taken away, emptied of its bitter protest, and has been used against us. And this has led us, sometimes, to rebel against our own humor." To reaffirm, to reconstruct, to utilize this double heritage in a constructive way, is the motif of this provocative collection of writings. JOSEPH BOSKIN

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CORRESPONDENCE

Protests Article On World Labor Movement

To the Editor:

I CAN WELL IMAGINE the sacrifices of time, money and energy involved in the publication of *New Politics*. For this reason I was surprised that 5 pages of the 1966 Winter Issue had been devoted to the article, "The Colonization of the International Trade Union Movement"—a simple rehash of other articles, with the same theme, argument, and even identical targets, innuendos, associations and assumptions, that have appeared recently in other periodicals, e.g., *The Nation*, *The New Republic* and *The Washington Post*. I had thought *New Politics* was dedicated to airing non-conformist views, not readily found in the commercial press. Yet, it is obvious that the ideas expressed in this article by virtue of their repetitious and unoriginal nature fall into a pattern of thinking one can only categorize as conformist.

Many years' experience with the labor movement has enabled me to observe firsthand several activities commented on in the article. Ever since the founding of the AIFLD, I have had frequent opportunities to teach in its courses and at present I collaborate in its activities. My views—which, I assume, are familiar to the readers of *New Politics*—do not coincide in many tactical aspects with all of those views held by the AIFLD and other organizations mentioned in the article. However, no one at AIFLD has ever sug-

gested that I modify my position in lectures or lessons—a suggestion which I, of course, would never have accepted. Even when I have disagreed radically with several positions taken by AIFLD, the AFL-CIO or the U.S. Government, I have continued to voice my dissent openly and to comment on its significance in AIFLD classes. Therefore, I can affirm that this campaign—and this article is a part of it—does not reflect the real situation which I have been able to observe from close range.

This alone would not have induced me to comment on the article, for I do not object to criticism of the AFL-CIO, AIFLD or any other organization for that matter. Although my suspicions are aroused when an article full of accusations is merely the echo of previous articles and when its author bears a name that I have never seen listed in any other periodical.

What I object to and what has caused me to comment is the tone in which the article is written (another point of similarity with the earlier articles). Witnessing this tone in *New Politics* came as a shock to me. The pages of *New Politics* seem to me an improper place to launch unsupported accusations, especially in a manner that is reminiscent of McCarthy's style. As a Spaniard I particularly resent the declaration (which the author quotes from an anonymous source but apparently holds as true) that the "CIA leads the