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PROPAGANDA AS FICTION: AN EXPLICATION
OF THE WORKS OF DÔTSON RADER AND
SHANE STEVENS

by

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Dotson Rader's first book, *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore* (1969), is a partisan's account of the Columbia University student revolt. Rader's first novel, *Gov't Inspected Meat* (1971), is autobiographical, but the decade of the '60's and of student dissent looms large in the plot. Shane Stevens shares Rader's interest in the decade of the '60's and in political dissent, but he writes in his two novels about the despair and defiance of the black ghetto and of young black men in particular. Stevens' *Go Down Dead* (1969) is narrated by a sixteen-year old Harlem gang leader introduced in a violent struggle with a competing white gang and with his now emerging manhood. *Way Up Town in Another World* (1971) is narrated by Marcus Garvey Black, whose commentary on the American political and racial scene is bitter, acerbic, and largely unconvincing.

The writing of Dotson Rader and Shane Stevens possesses one major flaw: the authors' concerns with didactic racial criticism becomes propagandistic. Political aims supercede aesthetic considerations in the shaping of the novels. The consequences for the novels and for readers are severe. Technique is less important
than the authors' political doctrines. The latter overwhelm character and plot, so that all characters speak with one voice, all plots plod through to a predetermined end. With Rader and Stevens this flaw is debilitating. Their novels cannot profitably be read; the message becomes the medium. Finally, the same propaganda emerges from different novels; the four works are a monotone, a single party line.
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INTRODUCTION

Dotson Rader is a member of the New Left; his two published works mirror the political interests that such an affiliation implies. Shane Stevens, on the other hand, is secretive about his life and personal beliefs, in the mold of Salinger in contradistinction to the Maileresque Rader, but his two published works reveal him to be similarly caught up in the politics of his time.

Political motifs are not an innovation of modern literature, as even a modest familiarity with Aristophanes and Aeschylus attests. Nor must literature await this century for dramatists and novelists who put their craft in the service of the state. Two facts, however, make the current aesthetic interest in politics distinctive. First, authorial interest in didactic political statement has superseded interest in technique. Two recent novels that illustrate this point by contrast are Malraux's Man's Fate, a rare instance of a novel with a political motif that grows out of and is ancillary to technique, and Rechy's City of Night, which sacrifices technique to the author's sociopolitical views and is typical of novels of this genre written in the last decade. Secondly, the artists' obsession with political causes is so intense that novels have become weapons of propaganda. The unfortunate result is that fiction cannot profitably
be reread; once its doctrinal line has been initially exposed, there is nothing new to be learned from a second reading. Ambiguity is exchanged for monotony; art for low life. A third fact that pertains especially to Rader and Stevens is that the same social criticism emerges from different novels. Not only is each work prosaic and repetitive after one reading, but the body of each work is a predictable variation on the same party line.

My estimation of Rader and Stevens declined after reading their four books a second time. Rader's *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore* may be the best account of the student revolution of the '60's; its effect is static, however, because it evokes the same responses each time it is read. Shane Stevens, who is white, does write convincingly enough about black Harlem to frequently appear on lists of contemporary black authors, but his novels present the same answers to the same questions, brooking no responses that differ from the previously derived conclusions of Stevens.

Rader's first book is not a novel. *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore* is a chronicle of the author's experience in the turbulence of the late '60's: as an activist in the civil rights movement, a peace marcher, and eventually as a partisan reporter and street fighter in the abortive Columbia University uprisings (1967/68). In many ways his work as a journalist is preferable to his one effort at serious
fiction, *Gov't Inspected Meat, And Other Fun Summer Things*, published in 1971. Rader's interest in the novel as an instrument for political propaganda is evident in both his attempts; the shrill New Left contempt for everything traditional or conventional is largely responsible for their mawkish dramatic tone. He prefaces *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore* with excerpts from the 1962 "Port Huron Statement, " now regarded as the statement of principles for Students for a Democratic Society.

Shane Stevens' first novel, *Go Down Dead*, about the experiences of the Black Male, adolescent and adult, in New York City, has been the object of some critical attention. Many black critics doubt that the imagination of any white is equal to that task. While the question of white artists creating black characters cannot be overlooked in the aftermath of William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, I believe that seen in proper perspective this polemical problem is less important than such related literary considerations as success in technique and character portrayal. The question resurfaces in Stevens' latest novel, *Way Up Town in Another World* (1971), an unsuccessful replication of *Go Down Dead*. Choosing the black experience as a motif, Stevens, like Rader, uses it to espouse his personal political philosophy.

Blacks and students populate the fictional constructs of Rader and Stevens almost exclusively; in the imagination of the sixties the
two groups are almost always synonymous with the rebel or the vic-
tim, the two figures much twentieth-century fiction equates with heroism. Two phenomena associated with the rebel and victim, or Black and student, which also color much of modern literature are violence and suffering. Reduced to the utmost simplicity, these are the themes that emerge from a reading of Rader and Stevens and that are manifested in the social, sexual, and political levels of their novels.

These novels about blacks and students, their rebelliousness and brutalization, are not by definition propagandistic. Propaganda becomes an appropriate description when Rader and Stevens allow their political convictions to shape their novels where aesthetic considerations clearly should reign. Stevens, for example, has a Harlem street gang engage in a long discussion about a painting that simultaneously illustrates his belief in black nobility and his defiance of the principles of verisimilitude. Fiction becomes propaganda when the narrators, indeed all the major characters, speak with one voice. The characters of Rader and Stevens are created from a limited conception of the figures of the black and the student. Rader and Stevens, and their art, are captives of the slogans they adopt.

In addition to ideological comradeship, Rader and Stevens are similar in age, education, and habitat. Rader is 29, Stevens, 31;
both were educated at Columbia University; and, although Rader is not a native of the city, both are by choice New Yorkers. These facts are not crucial to understanding the two men's novels, but they do explain the temporal and spatial limits of their novels, which are about the decade of the sixties and which take place in the streets around Columbia.
"America," Rachel said, "America was going to be so different. Everybody who ever came here, even before the country was really alive, everybody thought America would be so different from the place they left. It was going to be so good." Rachel the social worker begins Rader's *Ain't Marchin' Anymore* with her lament for an America that has become evil for her. The first paragraph is a microcosm of Rader's world, introducing his setting, heroes, and villain:

We were sitting in an afterhours bar on lower Broadway. It was five in the morning and the dawn was opening outside. Everyone was tired. Street hustlers who had made no score and were hungry, junkies about to come down, and kids - New York, the East Village especially, was always full of Dickensian Flower Children away from home permanently (written in crayon inside the bandshell in Tompkins Park: Call me home, Ma, sometimes call me home), and five or six of the brotherhood sitting in the back waiting for the nod of the Mafia-captain to do what it is men in the organization do at five in the morning, squinting repulsively at the Miss Bessie queens who flitted in the thrift-shop drag in the semi-darkness, trying to catch, for a moment, the male hunger in the male eye, and, in the glance, to be women at least, authentically femme, for once in their poor lives.  

We are in the subterranean world of New York, the East Village, with
the shadowy creatures - mobsters, mainliners, homosexuals, artists (like Rader) - who populate that world. The scene is one that reappears on each Rader canvas. His heroes are the nocturnal habitants of Village bars; they are his "Wraggs," the blameless though violent victims of an indifferent society, much more deliberate and accomplished than their Victorian counterparts. The villains are here, too, but they appear only in the day. They are the businessmen, politicians, construction workers, who fill New York City's streets after sunrise, and their disapprobation for the night people is perceived by Rader as a conspiratorial determination to destroy the latter.

There are noteworthy clues to Rader's philosophy and later work in this first chapter. The remaining eleven chapters are neatly arranged around four thematic events, but the first is a prelude to all of them. Coming of age in America is the subject, and the rites lead to revolution and violence. Rachel, whom the author "loves," one of the few occurrences of that sentiment, thus threatens to and finally does kill herself "before she would let America settle irrec-claimably in the injustice and stupor of the middle class, before she would give it over finally to the pigs and gangsters and generals and preachers...and liberal educational managers who had committed the theft of its spirit before it came of birth." The enemy is identified, and the allies, too. The latter are Rachel's clients, the Black and Puerto Rican poor of the slums, and Rader's friends, the thou-
sands of troubled and disaffected students in the educational ghettos.

"I do not remember," Rader writes, "even seeing a real live black man in the flesh, personally, up close, until I was fourteen.... When I did meet a black man for the first time – he was from Ghana and he spoke with an English accent – the experience was upsetting.... What I learned from meeting him was that blacks were as intelligent, as gentle, as human as whites ... yet they were different. I found them fascinating." Coincidence doesn't excuse the paternalism and elitism evident in Rader's choice of this Black model to identify with. Objections aside, the mythology of Négritude dominates the symbolism of *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore*. There are sexual overtones ("At the time I wanted very badly to see him nude, to see if what I had heard was true") connected to the creed of the strong, violent black male ("I suspected that part of the significance of the black in the white imagination was the potential of their violence. And violence was liberating.")

Rader's ritual participation in the civil rights movement is not surprising. He analyzes his own motives in what is for him a rare passage of critical introspection:

But my sitting-in, as other college students had and would sit in until 1964 when Watts brought the Southern summer to a close, grew out of white guilt (what else?) and an attempt to declare the gap between our generation and our parents'.... God were we smug and self-righteous. No
wonder the crackers hated us.
The hero/narrator of Rader's second novel is a white male hustler. While there are basic differences in methodology between a Harlem and a Forty-Second street hustler, the hustler is a metaphor that the author obviously finds intriguing, and one that furnishes him with two convenient figures, the Negro and the homosexual, from which to shape a new hero. In a review article for the New York Times, Rader remarks, "I believe that [the current interest in homosexuality] derives from our appreciation that in some curious way exclusive heterosexuality has deprived us of the full richness of human contact with half the human race, our own sex, and we are the poorer for it." Rader does not encounter a Black until he is fourteen; he does not meet a homosexual until after his matriculation at Columbia. Achieving perspective on these experiences is a task that will obsess him, at least in the autobiographical I Ain't Marchin' Anymore and in his later novel.

The first chapter of I Ain't Marchin' Anymore is a collage of experiences that inevitably lead up to and affect the events of the two critical years of 1967 and 1968, which define the temporal limits of the book. There is a vaguely sketched youth of idealism and innocence, succeeded by a growing disaffection with America as the result of this country's refusal to aid Hungary in the abortive 1957 revolt.
There follows the moderate activist period of sit-in's and peaceful demonstrations, which is finally replaced by a brooding pessimism and cynicism in 1967. "King made his grand gesture before the United Nations (another dead liberal symbol) and while he shouted 'End the War!' the New York police were introducing us to the war at home. We had come of age."

"April 15, 1967." That is the way we are introduced to the second chapter of this book. Time for Rader is meaningful only if associated with political action, usually culminating in violence or sex, or both. There are four central events, and the first, which is covered in this chapter and the third, is a peace march from Central Park to the United Nations. Rader is there, in the company of Philip, "blond, tall, blandly good-looking; standing with a group of fraternity brothers." The anti-war march is to move along a pre-determined route, but a splinter group of SDS'ers attempts to liberate another route. Predictably, the students and police clash, with characteristic results. Both Rader and Philip are clubbed, which is meant to tell us something about the way America treats her own. Philip, again, is "very young and blond and WASP and utterly clean and removed from street brawls and loudmouthed pigskin cops and other darkly fierce tokens of repression which the poor and black and homosexual and angered and Leftist and nonconformist young know today. American all his life, and only today he woke to America."
Apparently, anything worth saying is worth saying twice, or more. Rader also reveals his penchant for sentimentality and self-righteousness, qualities that mar his style.

Philip, who learns quickly - "The stinking bastards, the Fascist bastards," he yells after he is beaten - in his helplessness, his violated state, becomes sexual for the first time:

Later that evening I walked over to the West End Bar, leaving Philip curled up on the floor... seeming very young lying naked on the rug, his arms tucked between his thighs, his feet curled under his bottom. (35)

The undisguised eroticism of these lines exposes a central paradox about Rader: to him, there is beauty and strength in the impotent and powerless, and only vulgarity in the strong.

A rather crude Freudian streak permeates the author's analysis of the riot: "There were many police standing around, cocky, flipping their penis clubs up and down, kings of the fucking hill." (33)

Rader is too aware of the sexual implications of masculine violence: "One of the curious side effects of the experience of violence, at least for me, is that it creates sexual hunger," (35) he confesses.

There will be more literal allusions to Norman Mailer, but already an affinity is visible in Rader's amateurish attempt to causally relate war to instinctive masculine behavior, an achievement of Mailer's Why Are We In Vietnam?
This initial stage of political growth culminates with Philip leaving New York for the summer, followed by a temporary quietus. He is succeeded permanently by a young black homosexual, Al, who is, like the author, a student at Columbia. Rader is attracted to Al because the black student did not point the finger of guilt at all whites, unlike the majority of black students then at Columbia who, "while it is understandable, were a pain in the ass to be around with their crapping about White Guilt, treating you like a honkey motherfucker whether you were one or not." (49) To Rader black radical arrogance is as distasteful as the obsequious response it elicits from whites: "Most whites responded to this kind of racist arrogance by prostrating their guilt and kissing black ass." He attributes his friend's attitudes to the fact that "he was a homosexual, a victim twice, and thus had an extra portion of tolerance in his beautiful mind." (50)

Al is to be Rader's second initiate. The scene will shift to the capitol, to the first "March on Washington," but the details are the same. Al's rebellion had, prior to the March, been mostly verbal, but, as in Philip's case, the violence of the police will alter that. Before the March there are two interesting conversations in which Al analyses some social realities that affect him personally: racism and homosexuality. Racism is hate, rich hate, directed against the poor or culturally different. Al explains his approval of the homosexu-
ual community in a convenient and somewhat idealistic vein: "You know why I like gays, should I tell you why I like the gay community? Because, baby, they don't care what goddam color you are. They only discriminate in sex. Period." (56) To this remark, Rader can be envisaged smiling approvingly.

Rader is majoring in comparative literature at Columbia. Daniel Dodson and Lionel Trilling are the major influences on his literary and political outlook, although he ultimately rejects Trilling because of his willingness to compromise. Dodson is the source of his information about the March, which is to be led by Mailer, Spock, Dellinger and Lowell. Rader's imaginative response to the experience is colored by his belief in "the delicacy of young men, the ease with which they are wounded and put off." (58) The affair comes off as a rather saccharine episode, with a face-off between the author and a desperate homosexual who pleads for a tryst in a public restroom as its highlight. Rader's skill waxes dull in the face of the inevitable comparisons with *The Armies of the Night*.

Al learns his lesson, though, as Philip had. With sufficient provocation he insults the federal marshalls. "You motherfucking redneck marshals. You fascist bastards. You honkey racist pigs." (71) He in turn is clubbed, the official certification for a bonafide radical.

From Washington the action moves for the third stage of the
author's education to Princeton where a SDS meeting is held. The path Rader will take has been determined by Al and Philip: "...Al (returned from Washington with an intense hatred of White America) and Philip (grown militant, disaffected, to the point of quitting his fraternity, growing a beard, his language roughed into long fits of profanity) had moved to the Left of me" (82). The SDS conference is a strategy meeting for demonstrations that will erupt at Columbia shortly. Rader's impressions of the methods and goals of SDS are at this stage negative:

Robert Lowell was right when he said that radicals have no handsome style; they could not write, they could not speak. Not interestingly. Anger destroyed balance, and style depended on balance. All they had was anger. And that was not enough.

A more pointed critique of Rader's stylistic weaknesses is difficult to conceive. Regrettably, Rader's standards for others seem not to apply to his own writing, a fact that becomes more obvious the more one reads.

Rader gets down to the central event of his education, the Columbia student revolt that began in February, 1968, and lasted to the end of the academic year. Perhaps because his heart and his mind are in it, this section of the book, roughly one-third of the total, is free of most of the bad writing, if not of the self-righteousness, of the preceding pages:
On February 28, about two hundred of us marched from Low Library to protest the presence of recruiters from Dow Chemical (the napalm makers) on campus.... The next day we marched over to the gym site in Morningside Park where the University was trying to build a new college athletic facility. There were a lot of cops there.... By April, the campus was divided over the gym issue,...over the University's affiliation with the Institute for Defense Analysis and other Defense Department institutions.... The administration remained arrogant and removed and incredibly insensitive. (110-111)

Again the stage is set and the conflict defined. Rader is at his best in describing the battle between the university and her students in which each side's moves suggest total ignorance of and disregard for the aims and intentions of the other side. The radicalization of the author, however, is completed. He is disaffected from his professors:

It is hard, overnight, to see your professors as enemies tainted by bloody CIA finds. It is hard, but, more often than not, it is true. (124)

from the University:

Right in front of Jacques Barzun's office. There was the University inside, behind the door, while the young were getting kneed in the balls by the cops. The President and Vice-President downstairs in Low while the pigs were mopping up their students.... Nice old men. Teachers. Bastards. (145)

and from American society in general: "What most Americans still believe, that this land and Holy Canaan Country are one in the
same... Jesus Country....The ultimate blender, the great blood-red, lying myth that gives pap to the Real America is, you guessed it, Americanism" (167).

The first confrontation ends in a student bust; in its aftermath a university-wide strike is called. There is a stalemate until May, when another confrontation becomes imminent. The whole scenario - students occupying buildings while faculty watch helplessly, jocks murderously; the university half-heartedly negotiating then calling in the police to clear "university" property, culminating in greater hostility between the disputants - is then mechanically, pathetically repeated. This time, Rader himself is clubbed, ergo initiated, and chased into Livingston Hall, where "for about an hour, to my lasting shame I crouched in a stall in the john" (161). Having undergone this visionary experience, Rader then tells us what it means:

And I knew - and this was the only meaningful experience - that the only community any of us would know was the community of the victims. For we were cut off, all of us, from what Dick Nixon likes to call the "mainstream of American life." We were apart. We were the young and black and radical and the disaffected and the homosexual and the head. (179)

The author's initiation is complete, his identity established. Yet, if the object of this political education has been to increase his self-awareness, has it been successful? I believe not. Rader ultimately
sees himself and his comrades in conventional roles, as "black" or "radical" or "homosexual." There is nothing apocalyptic about his vision of the new order. He ends prosaically: "If Eldridge Cleaver was correct when he said that a civil war could be fought between one dissenter and his nation, then a civil war was going on in America" (80). No new concept of sainthood or evil is proffered, as Genet does in his incendiary and political romances.

"Rader and his friends display little real knowledge or understanding of contemporary politics," one reviewer concludes. The conclusion is valid and inevitable. Malamud's victims are more believable, Mailer's machismo more convincing, and even Bellow's politics more acceptable. Rader's interest in the corruption of the American Dream, the concentricity of sex and economics and violence in American life, and the hustler as the counterculture's answer to the business tycoon, resurfaces in his novel. The suspicion persists in me that I Ain't Marchin' Anymore is a first draft of the novel, and that greater wisdom would have kept it from the publisher. Even if it is granted that the book has topical interest, one still cannot deny Steven Roberts' contention that this is "hardly a book at all, more a series of undigested and overwritten tirades against the Establishment."

There are passages in Gov't Inspected Meat and Other Fun Summer Things that almost succeed. Rader's novel about an orphan-
become-male-hustler is, unfortunately, too dependent on his non-fictional work. Rader narrates *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore*; a character, Angel, almost indistinguishable from Rader in his beliefs, narrates the novel. Too, the themes catalogued in the preceding paragraph appear again, as do the outraged tone and the sentimental innocence. Here is another version of the new American Dream: an orphan male at the mercy of a predatory society. Angel hustles his body for a living. There is no love; like everything else in this portrait of America, sex has been depersonalised and commercialised, leaving violence as the only arena in which there is the possibility of personal expression through physical contact among people. The ambitious entrepreneur must auction his body to the highest bidder, who in every case is a representative of the enemy of the people: the respectable American middle class.

Theodore Solataroff suggests the strengths and weaknesses of Rader's vision in contending that "it seems to me the homosexual imagination is having a more decisive effect in defining the moral as well as the authentic character of the age since its view of human nature seems much more arresting and convincing to our sensation-seeking, anxious, and cynical eyes than does the old-fashioned earnest humanism of Saul Bellow or Bernard Malamud." 5 There is the exotic and persuasive here, but they appeal only to the senses Solataroff implies and do not transcend their origins. Mary McCarthy's
belief that "sex annihilates identity, and the space given to sex in
the contemporary novel is an avowal of the absence of character." is appropriate to Gov't Inspected Meat. The character of Angel is as dull and incredible as the novel's technique is simple. Both in the end fail. Ideology drowns personality, and Rader seems a feckless observer of his own didactism.

Angel's odyssey in search of America ends in ambivalence, as does Oedipa Maas'. Along the way he encounters almost allegorical characters (Good in the person of the unsuccessful father; Pity in the emasculated Black; Evil in the perverse artist) and undergoes ritualistic experiences (sexual corruption, political enlightenment, economic victimization) that give him the air of a medieval pilgrim. The analogy is superficial, for, Rader would say, the corruption of innocence in modern America is total and irredeemible.

The novel opens in New York City with Angel surviving the only way America has taught him:

In New York, and hungry from sleeping three nights in the Port Authority Bus Terminal without a goddamn meal in my belly, on a wooden bench yet in the waiting room of the men's tearoom, and selling what I believed I would never part with - not again - for five lousy bucks to a salesman from Jersey who left my cock smelling of cheap wine and tobacco juice. In the terminal, thinking what? Thinking about my old man, and about Parker, and about my Jewish mother.... And about my sister Lily.
Truth for Rader lies at the end of some dark maze-like tunnel where origins and termini are intertwined. The guides through this subterranean wasteland are the blind Teresiases, exiles from the social order, among whom deviance is normative. The blight with which Angel and his fellow journeyers must cope is sexual. There is some significance, then, in the fact that Angel begins his odyssey in a Terminal; the suggestion is clear that wherever has been lost is somewhere behind him.

Angel's problem is his detachment. He is alienated from his deepest feelings, a stranger to his own sensations: "Glancing down at his head bobbing in the lamplight, in the shadows near the bushes by the New York Public Library, and then looking away through the trees toward the street, I was detached, like a fruit-picking pro...." (6). Prostitution is the new frontier he will explore, another "midnight cowboy born too late for his calling":

The hustlers in tight whites and levis, laundry packed bulking around the meat, inside their mannered pose the marooned silence, under the ass of Almighty America, them, our countrymen, victims keeping it stiff, the lips that is. They were the butchest, the most rugged, the most tried and losing, roughly beautiful creatures on the street; like a pack of Plain dogs, eyes sealed open and alert to score. The life, friend, the life. (7)

Time in Rader's novel is defined by personal encounter; it is psychosocial and chronological. The first four chapters are devoted to
Angel's childhood in Evanston, Illinois, as it is determined by his peripatetic father, his sister Lily, a black friend Parker, and the memory of a mother dead in his childhood. Angel's father is the avatar of the perennial failure obsessed by delusions of monetary success hidden beneath the rhetoric of his latest scheme. A one-time crop-picker, preacher, abortionist, and encyclopedia salesman, he abrogates the care of his son and daughter to an emasculating, shrewish aunt in Evanston. To Angel, father is "a pimp for any product with a chance of a comfortable margin of profit, say two-hundred percent" and a "thorough, dyed-in-the-wool, everyday, All-American, total, collapsible, failure" (7).

There is a degree of ideological compassion in Angel's condemnation, though. Angel sees his father as a victim, also; he is but another duped citizen brought up to believe in the accessibility of wealth in American, and grown desperate and pathetic in his efforts to find his own fortune. His quest for the American dream becomes a hunger "grown until it threatened to become him, grown that big" (11). And so he runs, away from his own failures and the haunting etching of his wife in the faces of Angel and Lily. He disappears until the end of the novel, when he reappears again in California. His legacy to his son does not disappear, however: "His gift to me: a sense of hunger" (11). A starving picaro through ancestry, Angel sets out on his trek through the urban wasteland.
Angel's feelings toward the opposite sex are determined quite early by the contest of will and guile that he must continually wage with his aunt. Her greeting for the two youngsters—"Two brats, one of them blind!" (15)—is honorable when compared with her subsequent actions. She uses a length of cord to control her blind charge, Lily, by tying her to a tree in front of the boarding house she manages. She inspects Angel's body, remarking angrily his circumcision, and informs him of his immediate conversion: "You aren't a Jew any more; you're a Methodist" (17). Fortunately, her religious sentiment is more apparent than real. "Her public piety was established for business reasons," the narrator explains; her charity toward her niece and nephew is limited by the same considerations. This "dyke Sitting Bull" decides to pack sister Lily off to a state school for the blind, arousing in Angel his first sense of failure and bringing down his wrath on her: "[A]dditionally, there was, if unnamed, a nub of guilt exposed by the news... I had promised my old man to protect her" (120). Four years later, Lily returns, more confident with her handicap, but holding her father and brother personally responsible for the fate that has befallen her. With this history to contend with, Angel obviously will find no happiness with women. His masochistic search in the world of men is inevitable.

"I had a few friends in the neighborhood, the best of them a black fellow named Parker who was a year older than me and worked
part-time in the Shell station next door" (23). Angel's useful education takes place in the streets of Evanston and Chicago, and Parker is his instructor by precept and example: "Learning, I was learning from Parker in everything needed" (25). In addition to the rules of survival in the streets, Angel learns the value of friendship, political identity ("Parker rapped about politics constantly.") , the nature of black oppression and the sexual uses to which his body could be put in obtaining these. When Parker is lynched by a group of Evanston white men, Angel also learns hate, self-righteousness, and the cruelty of life lived without friendships.

Two of the novel's most successful passages are found in the Parker episode. The first is the paragraph in which Angel describes his initial sexual experience with a girl, at the age of fifteen and three-quarters:

We were in the garage at night where Parker worked, the place was locked and dark. It was the first time I had gotten laid. Parker arranged it. He in the backseat of one car. I in another. The place smelling of grease and of the lily-of-the-valley perfume my girl wore. My girl - a dog whom I found wastefully beautiful....She chewed gum and maintained a shouted conversation with the girl in the next car...plus a running commentary on how the chicken (me) was doing on his first swim, while Parker yelled me encouragement and instructions from time to time. (27)

On those rare occasions when Rader's humor emerges from beneath his uningratiating rant, *Gov't Inspected Meat* offers a genuine
picture of modern adolescence. A second instance occurs in the same chapter. Parker takes Angel to a Chicago ghetto to meet his girlfriend, Doris, who is a junkie. The ghetto is Angel's introduction to the reality of political oppression in America. Doris, raped at thirteen, violence grafted to her life, a heroin addict destined to die in the arms of her teenage lover, is one, and the most melodramatic, victim of this oppression. Among those who more forcefully resist is Thelma, a friend of Doris', of whom Angel is for a time enamored; Thelma, "who was a fanatic about black nationalism, Marcus Garvey, and Mother Africa, hated, like Parker, the big man, the pusher, killing slowly" (28). Angel learns that the Establishment is a party to this misery, too, for it is responsible for the fact that "twenty-four hours a day the trains clanker by the building, rattling the dishes in the kitchen, their thunder passing ... as rattle on the back fire escape where small black children sat at night, like prisoners behind the rusted iron grating, swinging their feet above the right of way" (28).

A state of war exists between the trains, and the ghetto blacks:

The fire escape overlooked the railroad tracks. A train came by and, when it passed by the building, so close you could reach out and drop cement blocks on its roof, Thelma shouted, "Sit back, boy!" at Doris' brother, I instinctively swung my arm in front of him, forcing him back as bottles, cans, pieces of roofing came thudding on the tracks from the windows above. Thelma laughed. "Wait until tonight. All night the whistles toot. They pays us back" (30).
This passage, and Thelma's warning, is as powerful a condemnation of society as any in the novel, and it is achieved without the shrillness, the obvious and disturbing authorial intrusion for ideological reasons, that pervades much of the remainder of the novel.

Leslie Fiedler, affirms Ihab Hassam, believes that the contemporary novel of outrage originates not in the writing of Richardson but in that of de Sade. Omitting James Purdy's *Eustace Chisholm and the Works* and Hubert Selby's *Last Exit From Brooklyn*, Rader's novel is the strongest support of this thesis that I have read recently. Parker is murdered and castrated by a mob led by the husband of a white woman the black has had an affair with. The cuckolded husband, who just happens to be an officer in the American Legion, is aided with gusto by some fellow Causausians, among whom a group of off-duty policemen are prominent. The sadist is one of the stock characters of the author: "Dead, and they could not leave the kid alone. They pulled down his pants, and bent over him... leaned over Parker's body and castrated him. The nation's hight court" (34). Again, Angel places the guilt for the occurrence on himself; he had been forewarned of the fate awaiting his friend and had done nothing: "Parker's head was below the water. And I did not warn my friend" (39).

These brutal childhood and adolescent memories are resurrected to convince the reader that Angel is doomed to the life of a hustler, that he has found his identity in brutality. In spite of the
weighty evidence, even this inference is denied the reader. Rader leaves no room for equivocation. Parker himself ("we used to travel into Chicago and check into the Turkish baths and let the faggots go down on us for coins") had noticed in Angel too much eagerness to participate in fag-baiting and, says Angel, had "insinuated that I loved him in that way and I suspected that it was true and hid from him" (40). It is anticlimactic, then, to learn that Angel flees like his father, compelled not by economic but by sexual failure.

Angel's second significant encounter, and his first in New York City, is with a sixteen-year old Irish boy whose mother is a prostitute. The narrator is hired by a Chelsea Rector to supervise a church-sponsored student pool hall in the mostly lower middle class neighborhood, which is where he meets Willie. There is the inevitable violence. Willie, who leads the "last mick gang left on Manhattan Island," and his friends mistakenly roll Angel. There are the ethnic homosexuals, "rejected by their own group, held in asylum with us, paying for integration by doing the crap work" (46). Finally there are Angel's suggestions that violence and sexuality may be less than totally separate phenomena; he remarks of Willie's gang that "there was a relationship between their violence and their manhood."

Gov't Inspected Meat implies that violence has become a last desperate alternative to physical love among men. Angel evades
this conclusion by passively watching as Parker innocently walks into a trap. He cannot deny his feelings for Willie so easily—one wonders if the reason is that Willie is white, although the question seems not to bother the narrator: "a texture of the voice, a gentleness in manner, almost feminine, contradicted immediately by an awareness of violence festering unreleased beneath the skin" (49). Like Parker, Willie is victimized by his environment. Abandoned by his father, pushed into the streets by his mother, he learns quickly the requirements for survival. There is his gang, which is an adolescent fantasy that has to die before the man appears, and there is Forty-Second Street, in an almost literal sense a poor man's stock market, to which he eventually gravitates. The depth of the feeling that Willie and Angel share is revealed by the viciousness of their relationship. His first summer in New York City over and the pool hall closed, Angel gets a job as a clerk in a bank and temporarily enters the straight world. Willie visits him in his new apartment, is offended by some innocuous remark of Angel's, and returns later to ransack the place, casting away everything of value. Not to be unavenged, Angel visits Willie's mother as a paying customer and leaves a souvenir in Willie's bedroom. But the exchange of insults exposes the truth. "I loved Willie," Angel admits, "like a brother I loved him....I was afraid he knew, and knowing it he hated me" (62). Angel sees Willie a year later standing in the rain on Forty-Second
"in a leather jacket and jeans and boots, his hair long, his appearance and his mannered husterlike slouch" (59). It is inevitable, Rader concludes, that all poor young men end up on the auction block.

Angel and Willie would have to acknowledge too many ugly truths if they met again; consequently, they don't. Willie is replaced by Cooper, a married history professor at Yale who is blessed with a baby boy, a frigid wife, and homosexuality. He follows Angel for three successive nights, finally building up the courage to speak to him. Parker-like, he functions in the dual role of educator and corruptor: "He was the first person to tell me it was not correct to say 'Between you and I'" (78). Angel spends some time with him in New York, and then goes with him to New Haven while the unresponsive wife is away. There, in the presence of the infant

He asked me to lie naked on the couch across from him in his living room, while he sat, dressed, with reading glasses, and behind him a bookshelf full of many books, and he read Eliot's "Prufrock".

For an uneducated waif, our narrator has a puzzling penchant for Housman. Too, there is an awareness of degeneracy that surpasses even Wilde; the scene ends with the professor, his child, and Angel in bed. Rader's picture of the life of the cultured is his criticism of American culture: both are sycophantic, elite and too pedantic and distant from life to interest the world's Angels.

Two blacks attract Angel's attention next. The first, Andrew,
is a militant from South Carolina in New York City to raise money from the cause-oriented liberal community. Angel meets him, too, on Forty-Second Street, and candidly confesses his appeal: "You guessed it. It was Parker I was near in his color" (92). Andrew also becomes his first connection with the Movement, and significantly, supplies the missing link connecting sex with money and politics: "Hustling, while he hit the streets, was a means to something very real and very serious to him. Getting the coins to organize and make his Freedom Ride to Richmond..."(101). Angel's whiteness becomes more apparent in his dealings with an aware black male. Andrew enlightens him on the race issue: "Inside you are a liberal mother just like every other honkey in this town. And when you do something for the cause you do it believing you do it for your friends. Well, mister, you gotta learn better where your friends is. Not all the black cats, not all the whites... not everyone's your friend. You got to learn to tell the victim inside, to smell him out and stay on his side of the street." As with Parker, whose death Angel had tried to avenge by mugging the guilty Legion commander, Andrew's blackness gives the narrator an opportunity to prove his own manhood, that is, his ability to commit violence. A man propositions Andrew in a bar, is rebuffed, and in a huff murmurs something to Angel about "silly nigger faggots." Angel lures the offender to a rooftop and beats him to the ground, discovering too late that the victim is a
sado-masochist. His attempt to defend Andrew's honor falls as far from the mark as his understanding of his own motivation. Later, he comprehends more completely this jugular impulse. "It was Andrew, and Parker also, I was striking for, black men who made me want to lash out to make me equal to their courage. It was myself I was defending. For I, too, at times wanted to die."

Angel goes on one of Andrew's Freedom Rides, returns to New York City, and sees Andrew no more. The experience influences him strongly; it especially hardens his attitude toward the effectiveness of black resistance: "Guilt-ridden, bloated with collective crime, and it did no good, no good at all, not after learning of Andrew's death somewhere how long ago alone and soundless in some Southern county unnamed..." (119). David Cartwright, an aspiring young painter, also black, from Maine, fills the vacuum created by Andrew's exit. In every detail but race he is the antithesis of his predecessor. Angel, however, is at first fascinated, for many of the same reasons that Rader had been interested in Al in *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore*:

He interested me. Because he was black - that requires no further explanation - and did not seem self-aware of his blackness and because he was young and honest and naive, and for some reason it was harder all the time to find anyone who was young, honest, and naive. (122)

As he talked about his girl (fascinated, I wanted to see his penis, just for the record, just to once again deny the myth, in the
Again the possibility of a permanent friendship between a black and a white is thwarted by the intrusion of sexuality. Angel and David never come to violence, nor do they ever see each other again.

Sam Parsons is another character whose historical identity is poorly disguised. The tension between the historical person and the Rader creation gives him a duality that is never reconciled. Parsons is an obvious parody of Norman Mailer. Andrew's mise-en-scene at the left-liberal fund raising party also serves as Sam's; there, the latter is described by Angel as a "short, heavyset man looking like a football player gone to pot" who as he spoke and drank "slipped in a very bad, very clipped Southern accent" (95). As I have pointed out, Rader is thorough. To leave no question as to the real identity of Sam, he later allows Sam's girl, Barbara, to tell Angel that Sam is working on a new book about the war: "A novel. I don't see what it has to do with the war. The war isn't even mentioned in it" (150). Sam Parsons as demented artist completes the line of suffering victims whose acquaintance Angel makes in his pilgrimage through Gomorrah. His social importance is a reflection of Angel's success as a hustler and of the reality of class in this country: "Christ, I tell you, when I thought about Sam I used to wonder why anybody with that much money and brains and fame could be as fucked up as street jocks, the poor with their parts broken and
irreplaceable" (144). Hustling, Rader has implied, is an art form, and Sam Parsons is the unequalled literary hustler. The egalitarianism ends there. Sam, unlike the street hustlers, evokes bathos from those he unveils himself to: his boisterousness and belligerence are comic. He has his private hell, too, which is the rationalization required for eccentricity. His feelings for women alternate between public affection and private brutishness. In public, Sam is the show-off, the tough out to prove the errant nature of public attitudes about artists; in private, he proves equal to the most depraved rumors. Angel spends an evening in Sam's apartment and sees him emerging from the shower:

...as he emerged from the shower, on his chest, on the tender skin beneath his armpits, long, narrow, bright red welts there on the side of his chest. Around his groin, on the inside of his thighs (and it was there, on the inside of my thighs, where the idea of paid ever pleased me), beside his sex were scores of small bruises about the size of quarters, like strawberry birthmarks.... There was a lack of randomness to the abrasions and burns...which made them shocking and vastly pitiable and obscene. (157)

Questioned by Angel, Sam blames the war for this violence turned in on himself, but denies any memory of having inflicted the burns. Angel's disbelief is the disbelief of the reader. Is it possible even in this schizophrenic age for violence against the self to be anonymous?
Angel is acutely aware of metaphor and irony. Sam Parsons' exposure as another casualty of the sexual madness that inflicts mankind persuades the narrator to leave New York City, "having been too long in one place, and learning that I was being changed badly by that place. Not that hustling was bad. It was neither good nor bad. It was that rage kept appearing in me and I could not understand its appearance and my response to it was violence" (170). Before departing, he decides to seek a kind of symbolic purification or exorcism in the St. James Baths, one of the city's most noted gathering spots for masochistic deviants, which is housed in a former Orthodox Church and owned by a police-supported charity for boys. Angel shares with the reader details of the grotesque rites occurring behind the walls of this pagan temple. He similarly exposes to us his increasing distaste for the life represented here, and his realization that there may be a better life for him elsewhere: "I found the place antisexual, overstated, ahuman, lacking any semblance of personal interrelationship, except on a highly contrived, physical level" (165). He accepts for the first time the limitations in the area of human contact that accompany the homosexual life (homosexuality denies us contact with fully one half the human race, those of the opposite sex, after all): "The men there were rigid because the poses were limited, the repertory of sexual gesture painfully bound to a kind of masturbatory theater" (165). Finally, he
arrives at the truth that until this point has evaded him. His exorcism leads to a new vision:

And what I learned, it was essential for me to know and accept it if I was to grow up complete, was that the freedom lay elsewhere. It was not to be found in the unreal masque of the gay hunt. It was not in the streets. But it was elsewhere. No, not in the straight world, but somewhere farther, tougher, without ease. Somewhere inside. (165).

Angel has to run no more. He has discovered the private universe of the self that flees with one, whatever asylum one may seek. The personal reconciliation of the tensions that rip that universe into shreds is achieved by means of his symbolic purification in the St. James Baths. There is nothing incorrect about this conclusion; there is just the fact that James Baldwin's characters have travelled the same terrain many times before.

Angel now returns to his father and to the past. His journey leads him westward to California, which in this novel sheds its rugged out-where-the-men-begin image for the headier cloak of religion. California, in other words, is to New York City as St. Francis d'Assisi is to Attila the Hun. There, the reformed hero finds his father, parked, in his senility, in the Haven of Rest Mobile Homes Park, Inc., with a wife acquired for material comfort, and still delirious with grand schemes to tap the American Dream. The last forty pages of the novel are the least cogent. They succeed only in clarifying
two points that are already dead for the reader because of overemphasis. First, minutes before Angel's father collapses and dies, which is only minutes after he returns with his son from an unsuccessful effort to contract as a public relations agent for a homosexual minister in Los Angeles, Angel enters the perilous chapel: "For quite simply, at that moment, in that gesture, I loved my old man. What was remarkable was that it was such an easy thing for me to give way to" (193). Inscape allows him a feeling he has been denied by the real world: love. His father is the logical object of that feeling: "Harmlessness, that is much to say for a man in America. That he hurt no one, even when he tried." Violence, Angel reiterates for Rader, is a prop in that masturbatory theater that masquerades as love.

A few days later, in a bar - this one straight - with a newly discovered friend, Angel makes his most difficult confession: "I could not remember wanting to be anything in particular, unless it was to be black. How far we have come" (199). The futility of his wish, and the new direction his loyalties will take because he cannot be black, have postponed the confession. The admission made, the denial is ready, for the author permits no disappointments in this novel. In an alcohol-induced stupor, the friend antagonizes two blacks in the bar. A fight - "a beautiful display of human brutality" - ensues, and the friend is pummeled mercilessly. Angel's en-
crusted attitudes linger momentarily - "I was a coward in that I hesitated, not immediately wanting to respond, not with the blacks involved..." (200) - but his new ethos overwhelms them:

...the cowardice passed in the beating, in the actuality of it - for a moment it was unrelated to me, like a mysterious ceremony performed for others, a performance - the sounds, the fact of his taking it alone, deciding by virtue of the sheer inbalance of the odds against him, and even if I had not heard him talk, not known him at all - perhaps it would have been easier then to come to his side - even if it had been Andrew and Parker who acted as the attackers, if only, who were offing him, even then by instinct I would have sided against them. For me, that was a long-awaited truth come true. That was making good, that it was on his side that I belonged. (203).

The awl is the catalyst for yet another realization for Angel - best summarized by the existentialist doctrine, now a commonplace, that being is achieved through action - in which he identifies that "somewhere farther, tougher" where freedom lies. "My guilt," he concludes from the floor of the bar, "over Willie, over them all - sharp, unbitter, so like me - flowing into and compounding that over my hesitation to side with my dying friend, and in the guilt something of my manhood disfigured and splintered like glass" (205). Such introspective wisdom occurs in Rader almost always in moments of violence, sexual or physical (Bellow's Henderson: "Truth comes in blows.") and becomes the standard
by which Angel grows into maturity. This drab, non-partisan ethos consummates his quest and marks his communion with the heroic. The fight over, he fantasizes that he sees Willie, the Irish teenager. He stumbles into the street in pursuit of his friend, loses sight of him, and frenziedly attempts to call out to him. His attempt fails ("But his name would not come."), and Willie, and Parker, and Andrew and the world they represent melt away in the distance.

_Ain't Marchin' Anymore_ and _Gov't Inspected Meat_ place Rader solidly with the muckraking, sensationalist school of contemporary writers. He concentrates his ire on the conception of the American political system and the depravity that such corruption forces on a dissenting minority. Consequently, Rader's emotions, not his aesthetics, become the focus of the reader's interest. The intensity of the author's feelings make _Ain't Marchin' Anymore_ cogent. Rader's tunnel vision is appropriate for an essentially subjective recounting of contemporary historical events; yet the anger that so powerfully directs attention to the tragic Columbia student revolt diverts attention from Angel's narrative in _Gov't Inspected Meat_. Rader attempts to proselytize his social doctrines in his novel, and fails for the same reasons - his own intrusive convictions and his sacrifice of literary practice to political expedience - that defeat his compatriot, Shane Stevens.
In cold and haughty anger the black [Willie Spearmint] replies: "No ofay motherfucker can put himself in my place. This is a black book we talkin' about that you don't understand at all. White fiction ain't the same as black. It can't be.

[Lesser] "You can't turn black experience into literature just by writing it down.

[Willie] "Black ain't white and never can be. It is once and for only black. What I feel you may feel different. You can't write about black because you don't have the least idea what we are or how we feel. Our feeling chemistry is different than yours. Dig that? It has to be so. I'm writing the soul writin' of black people cryin' out that we are still slaves in this fuckin' country and we ain't gonna stay slaves any longer. How can you understand it, Lesser, if your brain is white?"

Bernard Malamud, The Tenant.

Shane Stevens' novels present black men in anguish, oppressed and enslaved by a racist society. The novels leave me with the desire at the end - but not for identical reasons - to join Dostoevsky's Underground Man and Stevens' own heroes in beating the walls as hard as we can. Rader's scene is Stevens', too, but this time the narrators are black. Adam Clayton Henry in Go Down Dead and Marcus Garvey Black in Way Up Town In Another World
take their place, fists upraised, alongside William Styron's Nat Turner as the defiant white writers' response to the recent black manifesto which castigates whites for presuming to create black characters. While it seems to me that *Go Down Dead* offers a more successful challenge to this creed than *The Confessions of Nat Turner* or *Way Up Town In Another World*, there are too many flaws with the first novel for it to be fairly categorized a complete literary success.

Richard Potrter's contention that "life in literature is exhibited by the acts of performance that make it interesting, not by the acts of rendition that make it 'real'" offers an interesting scale with which to measure Stevens' art. Judged on the basis of their performances, Stevens' characters fall victim to the cliched ideologies that constitute their personalities. Too, Stevens' attempt to render his two novels real which must be construed to mean his interpreting with some validity the contemporary black milieu, can be reduced to the uneven effort on his part to recreate in them the controversial street language of the ghettoes or, as academia has euphemised, non-standard English. Stevens' achievement, which rests primarily on his first novel, is respectable. There are occasional passages of *Way Up Town* which merit individual attention, as well.
The "novel of protest" is a rubric inclusive enough to contain Stevens' works. The protest in political, both in its form, political harangue, and its content, liberal causes célébrés, as was true of Rader; and as was also true of Rader, ideology defines - one could say confines - character and makes evaluation an ideological rather than an aesthetic task. Or, to continue with the terms at hand, the novel of protest becomes more protest than novel. Stevens compounds the difficulties of his craft by using black narrators to voice what become essentially white, left-liberal political philosophies. Malamud's Willie Spearmint shouts to the Jew Lesser that no "ofay motherfucker can put himself in my place." Willie may not be correct, but he has correctly identified an area the novelist must approach thoughtfully and sensitively. James Baldwin's Giovanni's Room is a fair analogy. A black writer undertakes to write a European novel with white characters and fails. The novel fails because the characters are failures. Leslie Fiedler suspects Giovanni of being "a Negro disguised as a European," and the point has already been made that Stevens' two black narrators appear to be liberal white ideologues in blackface.

Adam Clayton ("King") Henry and Marcus Garvey Black are also rebels who become willing victims in the end, as did Angel. Stevens' treatment of the black experience is sympathetic, at times sentimental. He belongs at the other end of the spectrum from
Saul Bellow, whose portrayal of a black pickpocket in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* gives the distinct feeling that what one is faced with is that new barbarian who poses a threat to all civilized values and offers in their place "sexual niggerdom." The difference between Bellow and Stevens is a matter of focus and perspective. Bellow's pickpocket is an evil force, the genesis of which is no concern of the author; Stevens' sixteen-year old gang leader and bigtime con man are, by contrast, double victims, first of the society that reduces them to the status of non-humans and secondly of the modern phenomena of alienation and mass violence that gnaw away at them spiritually. They are condemned to their status of delinquent and hustler, and thus they cannot be held personally responsible for the role they have been forced to adopt.

The violence of *Go Down Dead* gives the novel its shape. "Beside *Go Down Dead*," James Frakes comments in *The New York Times Book Review*, "James Baldwin sounds like Edith Wharton and even LeRoi Jones sounds prissy." The novel is a first-person narrative of the last seven days in the life of "King" Henry, Harlem dropout, gang leader, and president of one of the toughest gangs on the Island, the Playboys.

King struggles to survive against this setting of crime and dirt, anger and depravity. Rader's Angel goes to New York City
and supports himself by hustling; King is a more experienced hustler. Stevens' blacks have only their bodies as possessions, and the trade in flesh is brisk and deadening. King's hustle includes drugs, contraband, sex—anything for which there is a market:

One thing about living here in Harlem you can't get no worse. Least if you is in prison they feed you and you know why you is there and what spose happen to you. But round here nobody give a dam. Everybody too busy hustling for themselves.  

Hustling ceases for violence alone. The hatred of blacks for whites and whites for blacks gives the novel the thread of a plot it possesses. King is preparing his gang to "go down on" the Jefferson Tigers, a white gang from the Jefferson projects whose turf is contiguous. The two gangs have a violent history of internecine rumbles:

[Bustup's] sister got took by ten twelve Tigers one night behind the church on 121 street. They laying her good and put her in the hospital.... She was twelve then.

The first day's narrative concerns itself primarily with the role of the school in Harlem. One of King's earliest memories of school dates from his ninth birthday when he was seduced by Miss Dingwistle, "a big black womin with great big arms and everytime she talk she wheeze." Matters at school haven't improved. As King approaches P.S. 99, late, with Dancer,
another Playboy, he encounters an irate teacher, Mr. Manelcorn, who shouts: "You goddam boys get back in your classrooms. Who the fucking hell you think you are? I got to be in that rat trap so you got to be in there. Now get your shitass inside" (14). Inside turns out to be more of the jungle outside, with the teachers mumbling to themselves and seeing and hearing only what they want to see and hear, which is little. In his history class, King does make one strained connection between the teacher's comments on Canada and his own life:

That aint the only place they is hunting. Plenty hunting going on right here. Everybody is hunting or getting hunt....Sometime it a zoo....Sometime it a jungle. Speshly at night. That when all kinds animals come out that you dont see in the day. They is things round here you see at night that if they was in a zoo you would have to pay a hundred dollars to see them. (20)

In addition to animals, the Harlem zoo is complete with the hated trains, too, just as was the Chicago ghetto of Gov't Inspected Meat: "That [train] sound like the crack of doom.... Them people what live so close they could touch it I feel sorry for them. That is one sound I never get use to. Nobody do" (30).

Friday concludes ominously. King and Kingfish are shot at from an automobile by a group of Tigers; neither is hit. The impetus for further aggression is supplied by this raid, since gang honor demands that attacks be answered. King does plan
to answer, but he has in mind something on the order of a final solution. At the time, however, he is seriously shaken by the event:

May be it look funny that I get all shook up when them Tigers start shoot'at us.... But when you hear the bad news go off like that man you dont think of nothing but getting out the way. (31)

The dimension of King that is most credible is the affective. His feelings are those of any teenager - fear, hunger, love, hatred. His political attributes are less believable; they are too well articulated for one of his age.

Saturday begins with plans for retaliation. King obviously understands the meaning of escalation. He also proves himself an accomplished strategist. He wants to finish off the Tigers in one final rumble:

But all this fooling round get us nowhere it just use up the strength. What we want is a all out boppin. That finish them and that just what we going get when I is ready. (35)

Semper Paramus is King's motto. Readiness for him encompasses replenishing his arsenal. His plans here are commensurate with his aims. To finish off the Tigers he wants bullets and dynamite. The procurement of these items will guide his hustling activity for the remaining days. "The fire. That what
I is waiting for. If I could get a couple sticks we really burn them good." He knows where the sticks can be bought and lacks only the money.

King also reminisces about the way he became "prez" of the Playboys. He has asked the other members of the gang whom they wanted to succeed Raven, the preceding president who was killed while playing alley oop, a game like follow-the-leader that involved leaping from rooftop to rooftop, and

...they all say they want me. They say that cause they know I got heart. I is big and fast and a very smart cat. And I got the heart for the job. (38)

To be president of his gang is for King the pinnacle of success, just as a corresponding success in school would have meant nothing to him. His mother nevertheless wants him to stay in school in order to get a better job:

What the hell she mean a better job. Where is they a better job I could get. Aint nobody going give me any job. And who need a job anyway when I is president of the swingest bopping gang in New York with a turf what is eight blocks round. (54)

King's prestige increases with that of his gang, which makes defeat of the Tigers even more essential. The obsession of an all-out bopping remains with him as the chapter ends at a Greenwich Village party he has been taken to by Fifth Avenue,
a friend, in order to meet a connection in the Harlem drug business.

Sunday is a quiet day in Harlem, but for King and the Playboys the late action is thick. The contrast between the normally frenetic Harlem and the outwardly quiescent Harlem of this Sunday strikes King as significant:

Sunday is one day they is a little peace round Harlem. Everything quiet round here Sunday morning mainly cause everyone too fag out from Satday night. Sometime Lenox avenue look like one of them places in the movies after the war go through....

Sunday, appropriately, is a day for King to reflect on his life and his power. Commencing with Harlem, the focus is narrowed to his eight-square blocks of turf and finally to the Playboy clubhouse. He identifies the stores and bars that are assets to his territory and concludes, "And theys a number of whore houses what have real good reps" (76).

After a pointless gresion in which King rides a bus to and from Times Square, Stevens returns him to the clubhouse and one of the most incredible scenes in the novel. The gang is cleaning up the new clubhouse they have rented to replace the older one burned down by a careless wino. Pencil shows up with a picture for the vacant walls, a print later identified by the knowledgeable Dancer as the "Mona Lisa." For four
pages various members of the gang comment on the painting's significance. King says:

\begin{quote}
Just a picture of some womin what is there from the waste up and she is smiling. She is just got her hands fold and she is smiling. (92)
\end{quote}

Kingfish say "Thas one crazy picture aright the way she smiling there. What she looking at she smile like that? (93)

Dancer say to him," I hear about that smile. On the tv they talking about that she is smiling like that and they say everybody look at her and wonder the same thing. Nobody know what she smiling at not even the man who paint her....(93)

One of Stevens' intentions is to document the innate intelligence of ghetto leaders like King and Dancer who, when denied socially useful tasks, turn to socially destructive acts. Their charisma is more clearly recognizable and acceptable when it manifests itself in ways indigenous to the novel's setting.

There is a spurious quality to these passages because they clearly would be more appropriate to the school, which is one of the white institutions King has already labeled irrevelant to Harlem youth. The author, by allowing his didactic goals to guide his imagination, gives King's character two seemingly irreconcilable dimensions.

Sunday ends in more bloodshed. Violence breeds in
Harlem darkness, King informs us. The Tigers have abducted one of the Playboys' debs, Shirley, and raped and tortured her, after which they dump her on the concrete walk facing the new clubhouse: "Shirley is drip blood on the bed. Blood coming from where somebody carve U Suck on her stomach." (97) This provocation intensifies even further King's determination to destroy the Tigers: "They think they is going get everything round here what belong to us. But what they really going get is nothing but death." (102)

Monday brings a return to the humdrum of Harlem life and the efforts to escape it. Infuriated by the brutal rape of Shirley, King, needing money to buy weapons, visits the Dealer to offer his services as a pusher. Stevens' prose is at its best as King introduces himself to the Dealer in two ways that contrast significantly:

'I is president of the Playboys,' I say to him.

'I is Miz Henrys boy from round 122-street.'

The Dealer is impressed with his position in the gang, but brushes aside his family identification: "Relations dont mean nothing boy." The only other suggestion that any of the novel's characters have families is in the few brief mises-en-scene of King's mother and of the siblings of some of the other gang
members. Thus, not only the kenning-like names (Kingfish, Blade Man, King, Jewelry Joe, Real Estate, Cock, Dancer, Wall, Action) but the lack of social distinctions between adolescence and adulthood gives Stevens' Harlem a medieval flavor, evoking a period when fathers, the masculine virtues, group security, and peer loyalty were paramount in importance.

The attraction of trafficking in illicit drugs and the corollary hatred of the police are explained by King. His explanation fits in with that of the current spate of black movies like "Super Fly" which insist that drugs are the only remaining path by which blacks can escape poverty. King interprets this phenomenon:

You ask a boy what is in school round here what he want to be when he get more old he say 'I want to be a connexion.' He see that where all the big money is. (118)

King is aware of the irony of the situation that he is involving himself in as a carrier for the Dealer, that he will in effect be collaborating with the hated police. The traffic in drugs is tolerated by the police because they profit immensely from it. King's analysis reveals the depth of his knowledge about institutional corruption: "...its good buzness for the headbreakers to bust the low men every once in a while.... They take the money from the big shots for letting them alone and they bust the low men so they keep they jobs." (114)
His services are accepted by the Dealer, but Monday is a slow day so King returns to the clubhouse and plots a retaliatory raid into Tiger territory. He and Dancer commandeer two taxis and force the drivers to take them into enemy streets, at which point King shoots at a group of Tigers, who are standing on the street, apparently hitting one of them. Having replied appropriately to the earlier insult, the Playboys can now prepare for the final confrontation.

As Monday ends, the Playboys still lack the money to buy the "fire" or the bullets for the single pistol they own. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday King hustles for that money. He gets three dollars for each of four deliveries he makes for the Dealer, but that is insufficient to buy his arsenal. On Tuesday, therefore, he visits Morris, a Harlem con man who deals in pornography and other hot merchandise. From him he obtains a stock of dynamite, in exchange for agreeing to appear in an "art" movie that Thursday. There are two passages here that are illustrative of the way that Stevens uses King as his own political voice. In a passage of philosophical introspection that would be rare coming from any sixteen year old, King thinks "you got to live here to find out what it like. Man you got to die here you got to die inside a little bit every day you living." That the statement is true has been proved by our own experience of King's life; that King says it reveals more
of the author's commitment to ideology than the character's consistency.

Later, after the first delivery he makes for the Dealer, King compares the education represented by P.S. 99 with the school of the streets: "Now I know I going gradejate aright but it going be from Dealers school not that fool school what learn you nothing important." (151) James Frakes' review of Go Down Dead points to these "blobs of fake philosophising" as one of the flaws of the novel. 13 There is nothing fake about the ideas, but King should not be voicing them.

The didactic function that the hero-victim serves is more evident in the narration of Wednesday's events. The day is the lull before full-scale preparations begin for Friday's attack, and King passes the time pondering the significance of the schools, his own destructive tendencies, and black power groups:

Who needs school. I get up early cause my mother home today. I make out like I go to school. Then I just walk. (161)

King's perambulations about Harlem convince him anew of the sor didness that his life has been reduced to by powers over which he has no control Frustrated and angry, he confesses:

It just take the heart out a man to see all this. I is solid fed up. I want to kill to smash. I quick turn all round look at everything but theys nothing to
smash down. Just people same as me. (170).

King is pessimistic about Harlem's future: "Theys a war coming up here and it coming soon" (175); heaven, "If the motherfucking whites is up there then theys going be a Heaven Harlem sure as sin" (177); and the Black Muslims' Pan African movement:

Nobody going give them half the country or any part of it. And all that crap about us being brother to them people in Africa and in that crazy Islam where ever that is man that dont mean nothing to me. (180)

The fault with these digressions is that they add little that is new to either the plot or the character of the narrator. They are padding to what the author probably sees as a skimpy plot; rather than give it flesh, they merely add extra weight.

The chapter devoted to King's narration of Thursday's events commences with the completion of the arsenal and the arrangement of a site and weapons for Friday with the Tigers. There have already been several clues to the outcome, and there are more for the reader in Thursday's narrative. When Morris gives King the one firestick he has earned, King reacts jubilantly: "And my mind starts to blow up white men and I cant stop it" (191). Wall, the ambassador of the Playboys, goes to arrange a parley with Durango, the leader of the Tigers. With overwhelming impact, the complexity and almost formal diplomacy with which these teenagers communicate with each other
emerges in this chapter, although once again Stevens detracts from the effect by permitting King to re-articulate the obvious:

The man what own the store has a rule that only one man from a gang is in the store at a time. Thas a good rule then nobody get ambush when they is being peaceful. Everyone respect that rule or nothing ever get done. Everybody know there got to be law and order. (197)

There is a similar passage two pages later in which King elaborates further on these laws of the jungle:

And if you do a little ambush on the side thas one thing. But when they is bizness meetings and like that between gangs a man got to be crazy to pull anything wrong. Everybody would go down on him till he was dead. Cause without that protection it aint even a jungle. Then it is just a snake pit. (199)

Following a brief interruption during which the headbreakers raid the clubhouse searching for the slayer of a social worker, King along with Wall, his vice-president and ambassador, and Kingfish, his executioner, leave for the meeting with the Tiger leaders, Durango and Humper. Once again, the impression left by the meeting is the gentlemanly decorum and formal code of behavior that govern the talks:

At a war council the presidents dont talk. They is just there to give the sign that they agree or not. (204)

Man if people only knowd half the rules and things a mans got to have in his head
before he can take on the sponsbilty 
of leading a gang like the Playboys. 
It probly a lot tougher then that West 
Point where them army men go. And 
a lot more dangerous too. (204)

The weapons - "Everything is go," the time - Friday at ten, and 
the place are set. The day King has been waiting for is at hand.

King's attitude Friday, the last day of his narrative, is 
credibly portrayed; fear and fatalism predominate. "Every time be-
fore a rumble begin I feel all scared and like it aint really happening 
to me," admits King (208). He counters his fear with his stature in 
the gang, though simultaneously berating this strategy: "I lay there 
thinking like that. That I a big man and all that. Shit I know when 
I saying it that it make no sense. I aint nobody and I never going to 
be nobody" (211). This last feeling makes his fatalism more under-
standable; he feels "That I was on my last go round. I can hear a 
noise.... It come closer and closer then it explode....Then I know 
I is dead." King's qualities of leadership are augmented by such 
clairvoyance.

The rumble arrives, many members of both gangs are killed 
with zip guns, knives, and, of course, dynamite: "The blast catch 
Humper and the other Tiger running away. It knock them down but 
it get Humper the worse. Look like it blow his leg off" (230). The 
blast and approaching sirens break up the fracas, and King evaluates 
the outcome: "Everyone what is running away is the winner. Every-
one what is laying here is the loser" (232). King is one of those left behind, having sustained a knife wound that makes him incapable of fleeing with the others. He limps as best he can toward safety, only to be intercepted by a policeman:

He see me running he say "hold it right there and put your hands up." He dont see I got the gun too dark. I take a step to him and when I bringing up my arm I give it to him. In the belly. Too close to miss. (232)

King's options are removed now. He might have outlived his wounds and the manslaughter convictions that would certainly have been lodged against him, but he knows there is no way he will ever escape the police once he is branded a cop-killer. "He [the cop] got just what he deserve next time he be more careful if he not dead already. Dont matter none to me cause I going to die anyway, I feel it in my bones" (234). Whether or not King is rational in his frightened and injured condition becomes immaterial. There is no reason in the ghetto. The two alternatives, death or prison, are for him identical. He manages to stagger to a vacated building and collapses inside. The remaining stick of dynamite is his last hope: "Bustup was right. This going be my insurance aright" (234).

Stevens concludes this rambling narrative well. He has managed to convey the hopelessness and pointlessness of King's life and the determined but doomed efforts of King to alter these
facts. Faced with failure in these efforts, King chooses to die the way he has lived. Courage is all he has, and he maintains it until the end:

I is going sit right here till they come for me and then I going light this fire stick and theys going be one less stinking building in this stinking motherfucking Harlem. Yeah. (235)

The final two lines sum up his stance in the face of despair: "I is plenty scared. But I aint sorry about nothing what I done. A man got no time to be sorry" (236). Nihil ex nihilo.

Go Down Dead is a good novel with some serious flaws. There is the paramount question of the extent to which Stevens portrays a black experience (i.e., this particular black experience) as it really is or could be, and not as a white liberal sees it. Stevens' choice of a gang leader is easily understood; Ihab Hassan has explained it succinctly:

Romanticising his [the juvenile delinquent's] explosive energy, his sexuality and his command of terror, hipsters see him as the new shaman, the radical visionary of an apocalyptic orgasm at the center of which all being is fused.14

The wording is important. King is Stevens' radical visionary, and the tragic, self-destructive note on which the novel closes is their apocalyptic orgasm. But is King at all times persuasively and un-challengeably black? I think not. Stevens gives his hero the outer
accouterments of a black Harlem gang leader. Superficially, King's portrait is authentic. What is missing is the literary equivalent of what R. G. Collingwood calls "inner history"—the subjective but consistent portrayal of what might have been, what might have happened. After reading *Go Down Dead*, I am left with the conviction that King could exist only in the novel. Stevens succeeds in conveying a sense of the tragic waste and utter futility of lives like King's;¹⁵ the novel is successful as propaganda. But finally, King's fictional existence acquires temporal limits imposed for ideological reasons. The long passages in which King is seen dealing with his friends, or the Tigers, or other Harlem hustlers, are the exceptions to this limitation. They give *Go Down Dead* its literary permanence.

Stevens' latest novel, *Way Up Town in Another World* (1971), is the narrative of Marcus Garvey Black. The author's intentions here are made explicit when he assigns the narrator the name of one of America's first black militants. *Way Up Town* introduces Marcus as a child, victimized by white separatists, and follows his education in the streets until he becomes both a perpetrator and victim of racial animosity. Ultimately, Marcus' vision is foggy, his stance too general, his language too politically vague and contradictory to transcend the convenient propagandist stereotype in which he is cast.
Way Up Town in Another World is Stevens' second novel and the longer of the two he has written. The time span the novel encompasses is considerably greater than that of Go Down Dead. The hero, Marcus Garvey Black, is observed from childhood in Mississippi through his initiation into blackness in Harlem and his subsequent cynical withdrawal, for a total of more than twenty-five years. Marcus in the interim takes us on a contemporary journey that rivals Angel's for exoticism. The social problems, the countercultural life style and crusades, and the everpresent black revolution are the issues that compose the plot of which he is the center. The novel begins where Go Down Dead left off:

On the night I was born they put the tar and feathers to my Uncle Ben. They chained him on the ground and packed tar all over him and wrapped him in white pillow feathers. Then they poured the gasoline over everything and burnt him alive.

The language is Marcus', the narrator; it is the eclectic speech of the contemporary hipster, different in rhythm and vocabulary from black English and because of its trans-social origin easier to render. This fury unleashed on blacks by Southern whites is the motivation for the family to make the pilgrimage north to Harlem, when Marcus is fourteen.

Marcus' character is less interesting than King's. His personality doesn't transcend the pastiche of topical events that form
it. Stevens uses him as a political commentator, and that function
supercedes all others. Marcus is a darker, shallower James Bond,
whose epic bedroom exploits and authorially determined opinions
form the framework of his being.

The first institution Marcus criticizes is the school. His
aversion is rooted in the same experiences as King's. He finds his
education pointless, the teachers hostile:

I didn't like school at all. Most of
the teachers were young and they didn't
like the school. They all said so. One
time somebody was mad and told the teacher
to go to hell and the teacher said "I'm in
it now with you little bastards."...[T]he
young teachers hated us but the old teachers
didn't even see us no more. (23)

Disaffected from the school, there is for Marcus only the street. He
quickly adapts to the life of a hustler, Harlem style, while avoiding
the pitfalls of the gangs:

I run with the gangs a couple years when I
was still in school. But I never went in
heavy 'cause it didn't make that much sense
to me.... I wasn't gonna get myself wasted
for no little strip of shit with cement on top
of it. These North niggers was crazy. (26)

By the age of sixteen he is "all set for pushing and pimping." By
the time he is seventeen, he has a police record, for hustling
stolen watches, has survived six months in the city jail, and
comes out "knowing things worth least three high school diplo-
mas." His education for life is completed.
Marcus' remaining exploits bring him into contact with and a reflective stance vis-a-vis whites, prisons, sex, Vietnam, the civil rights movement, and, most importantly, religion. He becomes resigned to his fate as a second-class citizen in a white society. He is philosophical about race, at times even articulating the third world view that race is less important than the economic distinction between the "haves" and the "have nots": "The truth is you can't stay live stay hate 'cause color hate eats up everything inside you. Then you turn out a stone racist like some of the black nationalists we got up here" (174). Marcus' attitude toward whites is clearer in later passage in which he is thinking about the meaning of the blues:

Real music is about suffering and everybody suffers. Don't matter what color skin you got.... White people know about pain and hate and death just like we do. And I think they know more about being lonely than anybody do. (264)

Not that Marcus has not encountered hatred from whites. His stature is enhanced by the frequency and quality of such encounters. By the time he is twenty-five, his entire family—both parents and three siblings—are dead, all of them victims of white violence. His father's death is illustrative. He is run over by a white man's automobile, and the guilty driver gives Marcus' mother ten dollars as compensation. There are other more personal con-
tacts. He is warned by a cop in the East Village that "I'd like to blow your fuckin' nigger head off, only it's still daylight. But if I catch you around here tonight, you're dead" (126). At a bar in Key West, the owner warns two white men Marcus is with that "We don't serve Negroes here" (54). [Their response is borrowed from W.E.B. DuBois' satiric sketch, "On Being Crazy": "Listen, fat man, we don't want a Negro. Whisky. All we want is whisky."] Marcus, in tune with the author's noble conception of him, rises above prejudice, however, to a more universal view that sees bias as a weapon of the old order against the new.

Marcus' sexual appetite is guided by the same color-free principles as his racial attitudes. The views, as they are presented, are enlightened, but Marcus seems to have arrived at them flippantly, almost by default. Homosexuality is exempted from his circle of tolerance, however — with vehemence when the homosexuality is forced, as it is in prison. Mr. Coles, a teacher in the South Carolina town where Marcus lived between sojourns in Mississippi and Harlem, tries unsuccessfully to seduce Marcus when he is twelve. Years later, when Marcus is eighteen and serving a sentence for manslaughter handed down after he had killed a white hoodlum in self-defense, another attempt is made that is viciously thwarted. Prior to that, Marcus discusses the primitive level to which prisons reduce humans emotionally:
Besides always being cooped up like some fuckin' bird and the beatings and crazies running around, the sex thing was the big hangup ... the fag gangs made it ten times worse. Not the real freak fags, anybody could get them for the price of a smoke. But the fake fag gangs that went 'round raping everything young they could get their hands on. They were mostly the hard cons, older and tougher. (72)

When Marcus is cornered by the most notorious gang, he escapes by brutally castrating its leader. But he cannot escape the lurid scenes that he witnesses, or the stories he hears of those less resistant than he:

Gang banging like that went on all the time day and night. Once they made somebody a punk boy, they'd be after him every time they needed to get their rocks off. Everybody knew what was goin' on...but nobody said nothing....(75)

The sexual violence of the prisons overflows into the world outside, suggesting again the base connection between male sexuality and violence. Too, Stevens shares with Rader the Freudian interpretation of police atrocity: "They'd ride around in their plastic wagons dressed in their plastic suits and that big cock gun strapped to their belts and they'd be King Shit" (120). He decries the necessity of blacks and the young using their bodies as bargaining chips in dealing with the establishment. Thus, Marcus, who does not allow his conscience to interfere with his business instincts, finds the pimp business excellent in the heyday of interracial harmony:
At that time, whites were thinkin' black is beautiful. 'Course it didn't last too long, just one of them crazy things that sometimes hits everybody like the flu. But I didn't care nothin' about black is beautiful long's they didn't think it was cheap. (86)

The economy of hustling, Stevens suggests, is thus controlled by the same white managers who send the trains through Harlem and profiteer in the illicit drug traffic that flourishes there. A discussion among Marcus and some brothers reveals the practical effect this has on the way human beings are viewed by other human beings:

"And she ain't got no tits at all, only the nipples."
"Yeah, and her ass so fat it got waves in it."
"And her cat got worms in it."
"And her mouth got evil teeth in it."
"And her head got bugs in it."
"And her one eye got blood in it."
"Jesus, she sure is ugly." (61)

Marcus does love and eventually marry one woman. She, however, kills herself just after their first child dies and at about the same time Marcus deserts her for a few days. Afterwards, Marcus is bedded by black women and white women, his taste for a permanent relationship apparently soured by his wife's death. For him, promiscuity is the modern equivalent of love.

Marcus' pilgrimage also involves him in the counterculture of the affluent young college revolutionaries. At different times,
he returns to Mississippi with a group of activist students, immerses himself in the Village drug culture after his wife dies, has several affairs with white students [one of whom he meets in the Columbia community], and responds in the manner of the reliable sounding board for the revolutionary sentiment of the '60's that he is intended to be. As a black, he is least believable in this role. His statements are conventional, and at times he "knows" too much about areas of American society that are supposedly foreign to him: "Columbia is like a college town. The kids all smoke dope and fuck a lot and hate America. Just like any other college town...." (144) Stevens has drawn Marcus as a social dilettante who touches many cultures but is affected by none of them. As a result, his blackness seems appliqued. Furthermore, Stevens can't decide which side of Marcus' character to accentuate, that of the observant hedonist or that of the black revolutionary. Consequently, passages like the one following, in which Marcus describes "The Battle of Algiers" as a training manual for a black revolution in this nation, are incongruent with an important aspect of his perceived character:

That picture is the bible of the black man's fight in this country, the blood's bible. "The Battle of Algiers," The Battle of America. If they done it, we can do it 'cause we gotta be smarter'n they are. We're Americans, aren't we? (237)
There are some believable black characters in *Way Up Town*.

In *Another World*. The authentically black characters are the con men who, in Stevens' Harlem, are most frequently found in churches, protected by the cloth. Marcus' distaste for religion has the hollow sound that assures one that the distaste is the author's, but the black ministers are Harlem's. The best of them is Bishop Brown, whom Marcus is taken to see by one of the latter's white mistresses.

For the only time in the novel, Stevens captures the rhythmic quality of Harlem life, at least of the hucksterish side of it:

[Bishop Brown] wherever I am, I don't let sin in. If you got strife in your life I'll help you. If you got mud in your blood I'll help you. Yeah. And if you got a hole in your sole I'll take care of that too. (227)

Stevens is also successful in showing the complete power these spiritual impostors hold over their audiences:

"I can turn bad luck into good luck."
"Do it."
"Remove crazy spells from your body."
"Do it."
"Make your enemies give you up."
"Do it."
"Make your boss give you a raise."
"Do it."
"Yeah, and if all that ain't enough I'll even stop your boy or girl from being a dope addict. Now how you like that?"
Everybody cheered. (229)

Marcus' assessment of religion takes two forms, neither of them original. First, he compares Christianity to the movie "Snow White," concluding that "the church is the wicked witch that does
evil and Jesus is the poison apple that makes the black man sleep just like he was drugged" (15). The second form comes in response to Bishop Brown's sermon. Marcus thinks the Bishop is "one of the best jive ass niggers I ever heard," a con man who "deserves all the money he was stealing" (233). He concludes:

I listened to him talk about that faith and trust. Sounded to me like he was leaving out the last part. If you have money you'll be took. God's way. (231)

Again, Stevens' voice has replaced the narrator's.

The qualitative difference between nihilism and cynicism, which describe the philosophies of Go Down Dead and Way Up Town In Another World respectively, makes Stevens' later novel less pessimistic than the first. The closing episode is less violent to be sure. Marcus dreams that he successfully organizes the Afro-American Improvement Association, whose goal is to return American blacks to Africa and transform that continent into the mother country for blacks around the world. His dream culminates in a fashion that evidences the author's liberal belief in the necessity for racial harmony:

Just when I had everything set for all us Afro-Americans to go to Africa, the brothers over there sent a message. It was very short and very clear.

"Niggers, Stay Home." (302)
Stevens' attempt to create the post-militant, or noncolor-conscious, black is abortive. The novel does contain several amusing and carefully wrought caricatures; alone they are not enough to overcome the contradictory voices with which the narrator speaks. Stevens' purpose in writing this novel, I believe, is to present a model of the black male compatible with the liberal philosophy of race that is optimistic about ultimate racial amity in this country. I have described what he achieves. The gulf between his goal and his achievement is widened by the use of caricature. The only portraits that are black are criticisms of the very black culture it is the author's visible aim to apotheosize and are in essence no improvement over the black portraiture encountered in earlier American novels and movies which perpetuated racial supremacy and negative black stereotypes.

Go Down Dead is in every way superior to Way Up Town In Another World. The considerable difference between the relative success of the first novel and the failure of the second reflects the considerable differences between literature as experience and literature as propaganda. Lesser, Malamud's Jewish novelist in The Tenant, administers Spearmint that "You can't turn black experience into literature just by writing it down." The truth of that statement is one that evades Shane Stevens in the writing of his latest novel.
FOOTNOTES


4 Ibid.


13 Frakes, p. 58.


15 Frakes, p. 58.
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