

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

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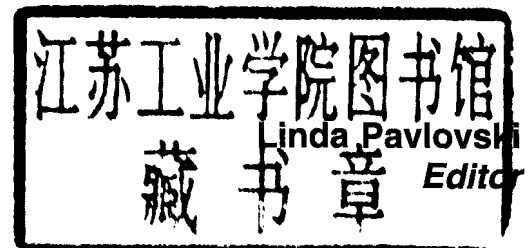
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Volume 116

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the  
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,  
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers  
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,  
from the First Published Critical  
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



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# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

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Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)* has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” *TCLC* “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

### Scope of the Series

*TCLC* is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

*TCLC* is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)* which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*.

### Organization of the Book

A *TCLC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

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A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by the Gale Group, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *TCLC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *TCLC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in the series as well as in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, and the *Contemporary Literary Criticism* Yearbook, which was discontinued in 1998.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces an annual paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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George Orwell, "Reflections on Gandhi," *Partisan Review* 6 (Winter 1949): 85-92; reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Garipey (Detroit: The Gale Group, 1995), 40-3.

William H. Slavick, "Going to School to DuBose Heyward," *The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined*, ed. Victor A. Kramer (AMS, 1987), 65- 91; reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Garipey (Detroit: The Gale Group, 1995), 94-105.

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# Toni Cade Bambara

## 1939-1995

(Born Toni Cade) American short story writer, novelist, scriptwriter, editor, and author of children's books.

### INTRODUCTION

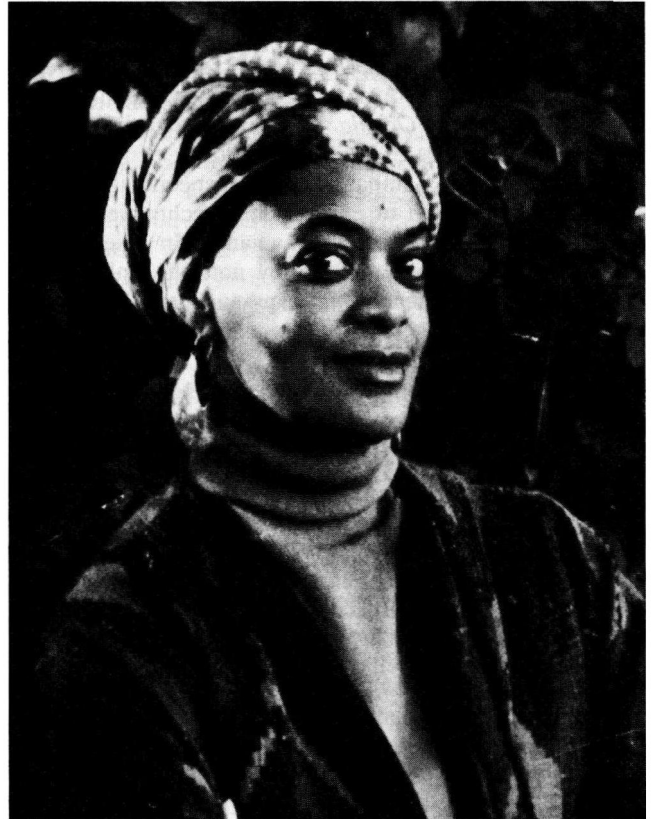
Lauded for her insightful depictions of African-American life, Bambara focused on representing contemporary political, racial, and feminist issues in her writing. Initially recognized for her short fiction, Bambara eventually garnered critical acclaim for her work in other literary genres and other media. She was a well-respected civil rights activist, professor of English and of African-American studies, and editor of anthologies of African-American literature.

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Born Toni Cade in New York City, Bambara later acquired her surname after discovering it as part of a signature on a sketchbook in her great-grandmother's trunk. Her early years were spent in New York City—in Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Queens—and in Jersey City, New Jersey. Bambara has credited the variety of cultural experiences found in the New York City area as well as the encouragement of her mother and other women in her neighborhoods as major influences on her development. In 1959 Bambara's first published work of fiction, "Sweet Town," appeared in *Vendome* magazine; that same year she earned a B.A. from Queens College. Bambara also attended several European and American universities, dance schools, and the Studio Museum of the Harlem Film Institute. She traveled in the 1970s to Cuba and Vietnam, where she met with representatives from the Federation of Cuban Women and the Women's Union in Vietnam. Upon returning to the United States, Bambara settled in the South, where she became a founding member of the Southern Collective of African-American Writers. Later she turned her attention to scriptwriting, often conducting workshops to train community-based organizations to use video technology to enact social change. She died of colon cancer on December 9, 1995.

### MAJOR WORKS

Bambara first attracted critical attention as the editor of *The Black Woman*, an anthology containing poetry, short stories, and essays by such distinguished African-American



authors as Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, and Nikki Giovanni. Generally regarded as her first major work, *Gorilla, My Love* (1972) collects short stories Bambara wrote between 1959 and 1970. Focusing largely on the developmental experiences of young people, *Gorilla, My Love* remains Bambara's most widely read volume and contains the popular stories "Raymond's Run" and "Gorilla, My Love." Examining problems of identity, self-worth, and belonging, "Raymond's Run" concerns a young girl who excels as a runner and takes great pride in her athletic prowess; in the course of the tale, she learns to appreciate the joy of sport, her competitors, and her ability to train her retarded brother as a runner and thereby endow him with a similar sense of purpose and accomplishment. In 1980 Bambara published her first novel, *The Salt Eaters*. Set in Claybourne, Georgia, the book tells the story of two women: Velma Henry, a community organizer who is experiencing severe emotional problems and has attempted suicide, and Minnie Ransom, a faith healer with an extraordinary reputation. Through the relationship of these two characters, *The Salt Eaters* explores the possibilities

for spiritual renewal and social change in contemporary society. Published posthumously, *Deep Sightings and Rescue Missions* (1996) includes short stories as well as essays focusing on Bambara's interest in African-American films and filmmakers.

### CRITICAL RECEPTION

Bambara's work is often praised for its insights into youth and the human condition, its political focus, and its representations of African-American culture and feminist concerns. In particular, *Gorilla, My Love* is acclaimed for its realistic descriptions of the lives of young people and for its use of dialect. Bambara has been specifically praised for her incorporation of experimental techniques and her examination of community and change. In assessing her oeuvre, commentators additionally note the link between her portraits of African Americans and her dedication to political and social activism.

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### PRINCIPAL WORKS

- The Black Woman: An Anthology* [editor and contributor, as Toni Cade] (poetry, short stories, and essays) 1970  
*Tales and Stories for Black Folks* [editor and contributor, as Toni Cade] (short stories) 1971  
*Zora* (screenplay) 1971  
*Gorilla, My Love* (short stories) 1972  
*The Sea Birds Are Still Alive: Collected Stories* (short stories) 1977  
*The Salt Eaters* (novel) 1980  
*The Long Night* (screenplay) 1981  
*Tar Baby* [adaptor; from the novel by Toni Morrison] (screenplay) 1984  
*Raymond's Run* (children's fiction) 1989  
*Deep Sightings and Rescue Missions: Fiction, Essays, and Conversations* (short stories, interview, and essays) 1996  
*Those Bones Are Not My Child* (unfinished novel) 1999

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### CRITICISM

Lois F. Lyles (essay date December 1992)

SOURCE: "Time, Motion, Sound and Fury in *The Sea Birds Are Still Alive*," in *CLA Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 2, December, 1992, pp. 134-44.

[In the following essay, Lyles explores the "revolutionary thrust" of the stories compiled in *The Sea Birds Are Still Alive*.]

One of the most arresting features of the short stories in Toni Cade Bambara's *The Sea Birds Are Still Alive* is their revolutionary thrust. The influence of the avenging Fury, revolution, upon the minds, hearts, and actions of the characters in the stories is manifested through the depiction of the characters' sense of time and through the prominence of descriptions of sound and motion.

One characteristic of the revolutionary is that he or she experiences the future as present. The expression, "revolution in my lifetime," which was the rallying cry of some radical black organizations of the sixties, is the embodiment of the spirit which governs many of the characters in *Sea Birds*. "Revolution" is future; "my lifetime," present. The expression conveys the hope and the expectation that the two time frames will congeal.

The revolutionary is always striving for a future in which current modes of action and thought are transformed or even obliterated as a result of the overthrow of "the system"—the government and its social, economic, and military apparatuses. The revolutionary welcomes—indeed, demands—the birth of a new man and a new woman to accompany the beginning of a new political and social order. Bambara's stories reveal characters who seek to be transformed during the revolutionary period so that they may be ready for the new order. The analogy that comes most readily to mind is that of the "born again" Christian, the believer who lives an exemplary life in order to be ready for the New Jerusalem. Although a revolutionary seeks a regeneration of secular, not of spiritual, existence, the revolutionaries in Bambara's stories display a fervor about their causes commensurate with the fervor of the devout.

Since a revolutionary lives by a sense of the presentness of the future, that person tries to create, either in his or her own mind, or in actuality, the environment which will take shape after the revolution. The militants in *Sea Birds* live in a state of readiness for social and political upheaval. They live in expectation of a time when poverty of pocket and spirit will disappear, so they attempt to create genuine sisterhood and brotherhood among their people. These are characters with eyes fixed on apocalypse.

One such character is Naomi in "The Apprentice." Although an indefatigable community organizer, she is not young, as might be expected; she is "salt and pepperish in the bush."<sup>1</sup> Her collective feeds needy people and has a police watch to help forestall police brutality. She loves the masses and wants to spur them on to revolution; she dreams of how ideal people would be, once freed of their oppressors.

Naomi's statement, "It's just a matter of time, time and work . . . cause the revolution is here" (34) implies that effort must be exerted so that the revolution *can* happen; yet, paradoxically, the revolution *is* happening. The confusion of present with future in Naomi's thinking suggests that working to create a revolution means immediate apprehension of revolution.

The work revolutionaries do, which gives them a sense of existing concurrently in an oppressive present and in a liberating future, is shown in other stories, such as **"The Organizer's Wife."** The woman of the story's title is Virginia, wife of Graham, a teacher in a school attached to a black-owned farm cooperative. Graham teaches the local people about Malcolm X and Fannie Lou Hamer, about Guinea-Bissau and Vietnam. He teaches them that "discipline, consciousness and unity" (13) will overcome the rapacity of the white people who want to seize the blacks' land and keep them downtrodden.

Graham has a tobacco tin from which he customarily offers the neighboring farmers tobacco. The can is red and pictures a "boy in shiny green astride an iron horse. It was Graham's habit, when offering a smoke, to spin some tale or other about the boy on the indestructible horse, a tale the smoker would finish. The point was always the same—the courage of the youth, the hope of the future" (5). The can signifies both Graham's solidarity with the people (Graham starts spinning the tale of freedom; the listener finishes it) and the need for struggling to bring a future of freedom to fruition. The can has the black nationalist colors: red (for blood), black (for the people), and green (for land). Thus it symbolizes the "new Africa," the co-op which people are building through the struggle to own and control their own land and thereby control their own lives.

The snake in this garden of black hopes is a white one, of course. As the story opens, Virginia looks at her garden, which has been neglected since her husband's arrest for inciting to riot. She notices that her corn is "bent . . . grit-laden with neglect. . . . [S]he saw a white worm work its way into the once-silky tufts turned straw, then disappear" (5). The white worm (figuratively, the serpent, the Devil) is the white man who has renounced his humanity in order to turn a profit from land which a black man would use for subsistence.

At first Virginia despairs of fighting the white power that has stolen the black people's land and jailed her husband because of his work as an organizer. She contemplates leaving the co-op with her family once she raises the money for Graham's bail. But finally Virginia decides to stay and fight alongside her people to win back the land that will feed them. She knows that Graham is convinced that their people "would battle for themselves, the children, the future, would keep on no matter how powerful the thief, no matter how little the rain, how exhausted the soil, cause this was home. . . . Home in the future. The future here now developing. Home liberated soon" (16-17).

The phrase "home in the future" demonstrates the presentness of the future for the revolutionary. Home is where one lives now; the future is where one is yet to be. The idea "home in the future" juxtaposes both situations.

**"Broken Field Running"** is a story about two teachers from a black "freedom school" and their charges. These

teachers, like the protagonist of **"The Apprentice,"** strive to bring the future to life now. **"Broken Field Running"** is set in the black ghetto of Cleveland, in winter, and the cold and snow create a harsh environment symbolic of the bitterness and omnipresence of white domination. The teachers and students of the story anticipate a postrevolutionary society devoid of bitterness because there will be no rich people and no poor people, only free people.

The teachers have names (Dada Lacey and Ndugu Jason) which are part African, part Western. These names suggest the transitional status of the adults, who were brought up in a Western tradition but who have embraced, at maturity, African ways. Some of the children at the school have Western names; a couple (Malaika and Kwane), non-Western. The non-Western names represent the hope that a new generation can be reared in non-Western ways. At the end of the story it is given to Malaika to present, in her innocent, endearing way, her vision of what a world of free people would be like:

" . . . everybody'll have warm clothes and we'll all trust each other and can stop at anybody's house for hot chocolate cause won't nobody be scared or selfish. Won't even be locks on the doors. And every sister will be my mother."

(69)

Malaika's vision of life after the revolution seems hopelessly ingenuous, yet pleads the case for revolution much better than could any strident harangue by an adult militant. It is a crime, as Malaika tells us her "nana" has said, that old people should have to eat dog food because that is all they can afford (68). It is a crime that poor people like those of **"Broken Field Running"** are forced to live in prison-like buildings, send their children to prison-like schools, shop in prison-like stores, and defend themselves both against a hostile white world and against their own black neighbors who steal from and assault them. Through Malaika, the voice of innocence appalled, we learn that we *do* need some kind of revolution to restore our humanity.

Dada Lacey, the freedom-school teacher, doubting that revolution will come to free the people, is trapped in the present—stymied in the gloom and degradation surrounding the slums near Hough Avenue. But Jason's words provide an answer to Lacey's despondency; Jason says that the revolutionary era is already here, "[b]ecause the new people, the new commitment, the new way is already here" (69). Jason assures Malaika that the new era which she awaits is happening "in our lifetime" (69).

Though Jason uses the phrase "in our lifetime" a few times, he never prefaces the expression with the word "revolution." He does not need to. The idea "revolution in our lifetime" is so deeply imprinted on the minds of all connected with his school that "revolution" is heard mentally as part of the slogan though the word is never said. For the freedom-school teachers and students, revolution, the future condition, is present existence.

The triumphant signs of this idea are the descriptions of circular movement at the end of the story. Jason whirls "around on his heel like he's executing a new figure" (69). Malaika, using her arms as wings, glides around the teachers, who "stay put till she comes full circle" (67). The circle is an image of revolution, a complete turn in law, behavior, custom, thought.

"Broken Field Running" shows a new generation being educated in communal values. The young, trained in liberation schools, will be the ones to single-mindedly carry out black nationalist goals. Their elders, like Dada Lacey, may tire of battling for freedom, but the young have the drive to pull the enervated through. The story concludes with Malaika and Ndugu Jason dragging the tired Dada Lacey along to Jason's home.

The revolution as a literal present, rather than the present-experienced-as-future, is illustrated by "The Sea Birds Are Still Alive," a story which has a central position and a central importance in the collection (as might be inferred from the use of the story's title as a title for the entire work). The three stories ("The Organizer's Wife," "The Apprentice," and "Broken Field Running") which precede "Sea Birds" are about blacks who—though not involved in violent conflict with the government, which they perceive as oppressive—await this conflict. However, the oppressed people depicted in "Sea Birds" are actually involved in a revolutionary struggle. For these people in an unnamed Asian country, war and death are everyday realities, and have been for decades. Thus, the word "alive" in the story's title has a powerful symbolism: in this world of carnage, where the common folk have been dying for generations in the attempt to rid themselves of a series of colonizers, the revolution will ultimately succeed and guarantee life where death has reigned omnipotent. Time in "Sea Birds" is demonstrated to be the revolutionary's strongest weapon, for with the patience born of a national tradition of struggle, the revolutionary will inevitably vanquish the ruling class. "Sea Birds" suggests a link between the African-American freedom movement and the worldwide movement of people of color fighting capitalism and imperialism. If Asians, like the Cubans mentioned in "The Apprentice," can dare to work for their liberation, blacks, too, have this choice—this duty.

The rapid pace of "The Apprentice," "Broken Field Running," and "The Long Night" is a reminder that the person who demands "revolution in my lifetime" incessantly works toward that goal. It is no accident that a common synonym for the black civil rights struggle during its heyday was "The Movement." A related expression, "to move on," meant to act upon, to confront, or even to deal violently with an enemy.

Much physical movement is perceptible in the stories about revolution in *Sea Birds*. The title of "Broken Field Running" implies the importance of motion. In that story, the children and their teachers, traversing the ghetto, with its pimps, hustlers, and muggers, are like soldiers zigzagging

across a mined battlefield. Teachers and students jog-trot down Hough Avenue toward their individual homes, but the symbolic home they are hastening toward is a new day in which Third World people can be free. Jason asks Lacy, "Do you realize . . . Western civilization is already the past for most of the Third World? We've got to prepare the children faster. Time's running out" (50-51). As the story ends, Malaika, Jason, and Lacey are heading for Lacey's home, and, significantly, Malaika and Jason whisper, "Let's hurry . . ." (70).

Images of sound, like images of motion, are extremely prominent in *Sea Birds*. Under the heading "sound," I include both inchoate talk and nonverbal noise. Dialogue in some of the stories can be puzzling. Speeches conceal rather than reveal. Talk is galloping or clipped. The confusion of speech is reminiscent of the turmoil of black existence. Dialogue, like revolution, leads us to awareness through a merciless dialectic.

Thus, "The Organizer's Wife" opens with a verbal confrontation of uncertain meaning between Virginia and the black farmers whom her husband has organized. Virginia greets the men with the monosyllable "Mornin" (5). She offers her husband's tobacco tin (an object symbolic of communal striving) to the men; when nobody accepts a smoke, Virginia, muttering what sounds like "Good-for-nuthin," abruptly leaves the group (5). Reacting to the muttering, the men ask themselves whether Virginia had been criticizing "Them? The tin? The young one thought he saw her pitch it [the can] into the clump of tomatoes hanging on by the gate. But no one posed the question" (5). The men are not even sure of what they heard the woman say. It is not just that her utterance was abrupt or cryptic; the actual words have been lost.

Significantly, the men fail to question Virginia about her words. These men like to talk, but Virginia's manner has silenced them. There is among them an orator, a boy who has won people to the co-op cause with his gifted tongue. Even this boy has nothing to say. The men begin to talk only after Virginia leaves:

"Why didn't you speak?" Jake shoved the young one.

. . .

"Watch it, watch it now," Old Boone saying. . . .

"You shoulda said somethin," the tall gent spat.

"Why me?" The young one whined—not in the voice he'd cultivated for the sound truck. "I don't know her no better than yawl do."

"One of the women shoulda come," said the tall gent.

(5-6)

After this interchange, the men are silent. We are aware that they feel that they should have responded to Virginia, but we do not know why they feel this so strongly. We do not know why the men think that a woman could have broken through to "the organizer's wife," whereas they could not.



Much later in the story, it is revealed that Virginia is despondent because her husband has been arrested for inciting a riot. The story shows the murderous effect which white injustice (of which Graham's arrest is only the latest manifestation) has on black people. The first demonstration of this effect is what trouble does to people's speech. The story opens in an unnatural silence: the farmers are very quietly examining the ruin of Virginia's garden. Their recognition of Virginia's tragedy (which is theirs, too, since they feel that Graham is their brother) stills their tongues. When conversation does start, it is abrupt and tangled. The soul-power residing in pithy, spicy, black language has been stilled.

A second manifestation of the quietus wrought by racism is the wasteland which Virginia's garden becomes after Graham is imprisoned. Quite literally, life is being destroyed: cabbages, poke salad, corn, tomatoes, and strawberries are dying. This blight represents how whites have taken an America that could have been an Eden and spoiled it through their lack of humanity and their greed.

In other stories in *Sea Birds* speech and sound create a malestrom effect. Talk is often quick and arresting; an example is the bald question, "Is that a brother?" (24) which opens "The Apprentice." In this story the "brother" referred to by Naomi is a black man, stopped on suspicion of car theft, who is being body-searched by a policeman.

"The Long Night," the fifth story in the collection, follows "Sea Birds," a tale of the courage and persistence of Asian revolutionaries. The stories preceding "Sea Birds" are about blacks developing communal unity, organization, discipline—developing cultural awareness and political consciousness in preparation for a revolutionary era. The violent action of "The Long Night" is the climactic culmination of the lessons about building a revolution provided in the previous stories (especially "Sea Birds," in which actual—not merely projected—violent struggle is represented).

"The Long Night," which describes a police raid on the headquarters of black revolutionaries, opens with a succession of noises. The first sentence of the story is, "It whistled past her, ricocheted off the metal hamper and slammed into the radiator pipe, banging the door ajar" (94). The words "the bullet," had they been used instead of "it," would have had a very different effect, that of distancing us from the experience of the raid. To read "it" is to experience the terror of the raid in a manner that replicates the experience of the victim, who hears an "it" zinging past before her reason tells her that the "it" is a bullet. Like the protagonist (the rebel-victim), we vibrate from the shock of the raid, as sound after sound bombards us in rapid succession. Glass crashes, concrete and brick spatter, wood splinters, a bullet "pings" on a fire escape, grit heaves up against the windows, pots and pans bang, a car coughs and sputters, garbage cans are scraped against concrete, cops bellow as they storm over the roof. This is bed-

lam. This is revolution. It is not clean, quiet, orderly, and rational. It is fast, noisy, messy, and bloody.

Despite its noisy beginning, "The Long Night" ends quietly. It ends with the mention of language. Language, the orderly patterning of meaningful sounds, is in decided contrast to the babel which opens the story. Thus an intimation is given of the state of order which will follow the revolution if the struggle is successful. The young woman comrade trapped in the police-besieged building has a vision of people "[s]urfacing for the first time in eons into clarity" (102).

An incantatory quality characterizes the thinking of the rebel-victim as she imagines the gathering of those of revolutionary spirit, who "would look at each other as if for the first time and wonder, who is this one and that one. . . . And someone would whisper, and who are you. And who are you. And who are we. And they would tell each other in a language that had evolved, not by magic, in the caves" (102).

The infusion of a hushed beauty into speech at this point communicates a sense of the world made right again. After the long night comes day. The sound and the fury of revolution over, the people will be reborn with identities manifested to one another through the blood language linking ancestor and child in the knowledge of the struggle to be free.

Many of the characters in *Sea Birds* are conscious that, as Jason of "Broken Field Running" says, "a whole new era is borning" for the Third World (51). The birth of a new consciousness in those seeking to midwife the new era is a precondition of that era's coming to light. In developing the new consciousness, which implies selfless dedication to renouncing materialism, bettering the lives of the poor, and building the community's resistance to oppression, the revolutionary has an eschatological awareness of inhabiting simultaneously the present and the future which he or she wants to bring about. Through the idea of embracing a "home in the future," Bambara depicts the revolutionary's view of time as malleable, inevitably the servant of the Cause.

Just as time in the stories seems subject to the revolutionary will, so do motion and sound appear to be its agents. The birth of a new era is noisy and turbulent; fittingly, these qualities apply to the persistent images of motion and sound through which Bambara conveys the pell-mell haste, the catapulting drive of people consumed by the fury of revolution.

#### Note

1. Toni Cade Bambara, *The Sea Birds are Still Alive: Collected Stories* (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 26. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number(s) only.