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## LMDA Review, volume 6, issue 1

Pearl Cleage

Alfred Nordmann

Hartmut Wickert

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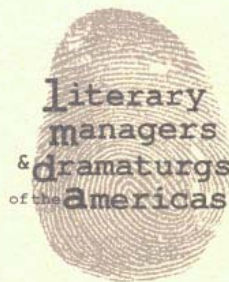
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# lmda review



Vol. 6, No. 1

## A HOLLERING PLACE by Pearl Cleage

Atlanta-based playwright (*Flyin' West*), essayist, and performer Pearl Cleage joined the panel on *Women of Color in the Theatre* at the 1994 LMDA conference in June. Here is the text of her remarks.

"It is a pleasure to be here. It is always nice to be in a room full of people who read plays for a living.

As a third generation black nationalist and a radical feminist, the primary energy that fuels my work is a determination to be a part of the ongoing worldwide struggle against racism, sexism, classism and homophobia. I approach my work first as a way of expressing my emotional response to oppression since no revolution has ever been fueled purely by intellect, no matter what the boys tell you.

Secondly, as a way to offer analysis, establish context and clarify point of view.

And third, to incite my audiences, or my readers, to action.

My work is deeply rooted in and consciously reflective of African American history and culture since I believe that it is by accurately expressing our very specific and highly individual realities that we discover our common humanity.

I am not so naive as to think that the creation of art is in itself revolutionary, understanding as I do that revolution is about the transfer of land and power and resources to the people, and knowing in my heart that revolution cares nothing for audience development and grant application deadlines and cracking the code of corporate funding.

But as a product of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960's, I also know that conscious art is a necessary and vibrant part of any long-

range plan to change people's hearts and minds on the way to changing how they live their lives.

As a black artist, my cultural heritage is a rich legacy of protest and resistance, from the novels of Richard Wright to anything by Alice Walker. The black literary tradition that I embrace is one which demands, as Amiri Baraka once said, that we write something so "b-a-a-a-a-ad" they have to ban it.

As a woman artist, my cultural heroes cross racial and national boundaries effortlessly, joined together at the womb by a sisterhood based on the worldwide presence of sexism in our lives and the unbroken legacy of our resistance to it.

I can approach Georgia O'Keefe and Martha Graham and Frida Kahlo and Sandra Cisneros and Maxine Hong Kingston and Naomi Littlebear with the same level of passion with which I embrace my homegirls, Lorraine Hansberry and Adrienne Kennedy and Ntosake Shange and Maya Angelou and Suzan Lori Parks and Bebe Moore Campbell and the Tonis, Barbara and Morrison.



Roberta Uno, Pearl Cleage, Shelby Jiggettts at the LMDA conference.

## A Fond Farewell ...

As I hand over the keys to Room 1206A, the office LMDA shares with CASTA at the CUNY Graduate Center, I want to thank everyone who helped to keep LMDA going and growing during my two years as president.

Special thanks are due to my Executive Committee members, the Board, the University Caucus, LMDA's program directors, Ed, Marvin and Jan at CUNY, and especially Emily Morse.

Thanks also to the presidents who preceded me, Alexis Greene, Cynthia Jenner, David Copeland, and Anne Cattaneo, who created and nurtured a remarkable vision of what the profession and the organization could be.

I look forward to being an active civilian LMDA member, and to working with many of you to develop new programs, to support Tim and Erin's vision, and to meet over lunch, at regional meetings and at the conference to exchange ideas, news, scripts ... and, yes, gossip. For I now know more than ever that this is an organization that is only great as the participation of its members - and we have a lot of great members. Thank you all

Victoria Abrash  
Past-President, LMDA

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**Co. Presidents**  
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## THE NTTF TRANSLATION SOURCEBOOK IS NOW AVAILABLE.

The National Theater Translation Fund is now offering the first edition of a unique resource for theater professionals, students, libraries, and all those interested in world drama. The National Theater Translation Sourcebook is a catalogue of unpublished and hard-to-find translations of foreign plays into English, listed by language and country of origin. Each entry contains a concise plot synopsis, a listing of the number of men and women in the play, and complete contact information for the translator. Copies of the Sourcebook are \$10.00 for LMDA members and \$15.00 for non-members plus \$2.50 shipping and handling per order. For more info, contact Royston Coppenger, Executive Director of NTTF, c/o LMDA, Box 355 CASTA, CUNY Grad Center, 33 W. 42nd St., NY NY 10036; (212) 642-2657 or FAX (212) 642-1977.

## NEW DRAMATURGS

Julie Bleha is taking over the position of New Dramaturg Coordinator. Julie is the Literary Manager at the Workhouse Theatre. Before taking on the Literary Manager position at the Workhouse, Julie spent four years at the

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My view of culture generally, theatre specifically and the role of black women in theatre most specifically, is shaped by the presence of oppression in my life. I don't say this in rage or frustration, although being black and female in a place that is both racist and sexist can, and should, provoke both of these responses regularly, or as a way of claiming some exalted status because I suffer the effects of two deadly "isms" more acutely simply because I am a cultural worker.

Of course it is difficult to be black female theatre artist in America, but it is also difficult to be a black female union organizer in a southern poultry processing plant or a black female teacher in an urban middle school or the first black female member of the United States Senate.

On the other hand, it is this difficulty, this tangible and unceasing effort to confine and define our lives which makes us a group, disparate and often despairing, but irrevocably joined by oppression and our responses to it.

And my response to oppression is to name it, describe it, analyze it, protest it and propose solutions to it as loud as I possibly can every time I get the chance. I purposely people my plays with fast talking, quick thinking black women since the theatre is, for me, one of the few places where we have a chance to get an uninterrupted word in edgewise. It is my firm belief that exposing my audiences to these African American Nationalist Feminist warrior women, innocently ensconced within the framework of the well made play, will quicken the swelling of our ranks by creating an exciting alternative view of what black women — what free women! — can and should be.

In my play "Flyin' West", which is

## E-MAIL AT LAST!

### Dramaturgs Online: Pilot Project—

Geoff Proehl and LMDA's University Caucus is compiling a list of Dramaturgs and individuals interested in dramaturgy who have Internet accessible E-mail addresses. If you would like a copy of this list or have an E-mail address that we can add to this list, please contact Geoff by mail, c/o Theatre Dept., Univ. of Puget Sound, 1500 North Werner Road, Tacoma, WA 98416-0082; phone (206) 756-3754; or E-mail, proehl@ucis.will.edu. Version 2.0 of A "Guide to Theatre Resources on the INTERNET" by Deborah Torres and Martha Vander Kolk is also now available to individuals with Internet accessible E-mail addresses. To receive a copy of the guide, E-mail Deborah Torres: dtorres@umich.edu. For a brief introduction to E-mail, dramaturgy, and the Internet, see the LMDA Bibliography: 1994, available from the LMDA offices.

set in the all black town of Nicodemus, Kansas in 1898, the seventy year old black female character, Miss Leah, who was born into bondage and had ten of her children sold away before Emancipation, explains her eagerness to move from the familiar ground of rural Tennessee to the unknown dangers of the western frontier by saying:

*"I needed to be someplace big enough for all my sons and all my ghost grandbabies to roam around. Big enough for me to think about all that sweetness they had stole from me and just holler about it as loud as I want to holler."*

Which is what the theatre is for me — a hollering place. A place to talk about our black female lives, defined by our specific black female reality to each other first and then to others of good will who will take the time to listen and to understand.

**Understand what?** That this multicultural stuff is hard on everybody at first, but so is Algebra and we all managed to get through that without permanent damage to our souls and psyches. Understand what? That there are other eyes besides the ones we're used to looking through. That there are other ways

to see the world and talk about it and walk through it and become one with the parts of it that feel as familiar as your own right hand.

**Understand what?** That watching "The Joy Luck Club" made me see how white folks might feel watching "Menace II Society" since nobody in there looked like me or anybody in my neighborhood, although once I got past the visual differences, those mothers and daughters sounded a lot like me and mine.

**Understand what?** The intricacy of navigating a conversation at the National Endowment for the Arts with a new Native American friend who leaned over to whisper conspiratorially in my ear when our panel chair said the representative from another Native American arts group wouldn't be able to attend the session: "Isn't that just like a Sioux?"

**Understand what?** Why black audiences and white audiences laugh at different things during the same performance of the same play?

**Understand what?** How to give a sane answer to the white reporter who, after listening to me talk about the black female characters in

## REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENTS

**Northwest:**  
John Kazanjian  
(New City Theatre)  
Cynthia White  
(Oregon Shakespeare Festival)



**Northern California:**  
Nancy Griffith  
(Berkeley Repertory Theater)  
Mark Cuddy  
(Sacramento Theater Co.)



**Southern California:**  
John Glone  
(South Coast Rep)



**Four Corners:**  
David Jones  
(New Mexico Rep)  
Elizabeth Ramirez  
(Arizona Theater Company)  
Aden Ross  
(Salt Lake Acting Co.)

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my play struggling against racism in the old west, asked me why, since being black seemed to be such a terrible thing (to her, not to me!) I didn't just pass for white and be done with it, and never understood the level of insult in her question.

**Understand what?** That if I can be a little black girl reading the plays of Henrik Ibsen and Tennessee Williams and thrilling to the evil of Hedda Gabler and weeping for the tragedy of Blanche DuBois, it is not out of the question that audiences of people who have never been and will never be little black girls could be moved and changed and challenged and exhilarated by the work of Lori Carlos and Thulani Davis and Cheryl West.

**Understand what?** That the richness and specificity of cultures outside of what some people insist on calling the "mainstream" are worth the effort to crack the code. Not because the grant said you had to diversify your audiences and your artists. Not because the community of color is getting restless. Not even because of some vague feeling that it's the right thing to do. Because waiting for you — for all of us — who make the effort to see beyond our own front stoops, are ideas and images and characters and language that make the picture more complete; that make the song more harmonious; that make the theatre more alive and that make the possibility of a future together feel less like a pipe dream and more like a promise.



## SHAMANISM VILIFIED AND REDEEMED SAM SHEPARD'S STATES OF SHOCK

by Alfred Nordmann and Hartmut Wickert

This is the conclusion of the article begun in the last issue of the LMDA Review. This director/dramaturg team share their process in developing a production approach for the German premiere of Sam Shepard's *States of Shock*. The first section laid out how Nordmann and Wickert arrived at their interpretation. This conclusion details how their reading was applied in production.

In Edward Kienholz's installation "A Portable War Memorial" we found a confrontation of images which corresponded almost too precisely to the juxtapositions and confrontations in *States of Shock*. With our stage designer Peter Brower we deboned this installation and formed a skeletal version of it which emphasized the tall black chalkboard wall, the actual memorial within the installation. Of course, the Colonel and Stubbs take the place of the soldiers in the two Jima flag-raising statue, a hollow silvery shell of which is included in Kienholz's installation. This basic visual composition also corresponds to the shaman conception of a world-tree or a world-pillar, home for the souls of the unborn. It was here that the Gods worked, here emerged the dualism of good and evil, here it was that new life was created. (Stolz, Schamanen, p. 152)

Provoked by the savage whipping he had received from the Colonel, which had left him lying in front of this black monolith, Stubbs moves outward from there to claim the space on his reawakened own.

From here I can see their boots. [...] From here, I can see their bodies mixed with ours. [...] Their heads are blown off. (p. 40)  
Another shaman prop of tremen-

dous importance is the drum employed for shaman sessions. It "served for musical accompaniment [...] helped the shaman move into a state of trance, and like the costume it possessed a spiritual and symbolic power" (Stolz, Schamanen, p. 143). Accordingly, while Shepard calls for a visual as well as musical imagery of war as the "cyclorama is lit up with tracer fire, rockets, explosions in the night" (p. 1), we have left this entirely to the two drummers whose schemes were more and less vividly discernible behind a gauze curtain. And instead of merely illustrating a scenery of war, the drummers emphasized the ritualistic elements in the performance, the dance-qualities of the play. By assigning the drumming to the shaman's drum, the musical evocation of war was transferred to the inner states of the characters and of the world created on stage. Frequently, for example, the eruptions, solos, and dialogues of the drums were provoked by the Colonel.

At the beginning of the performance the characters sit on stage like actors waiting for their cue. They are sitting in expectation of their destiny, of a beginning. During the opening assault of the drums, the Colonel is visible dancing in the wings. He wears a coat which resembles the shaman costume as described in the literature but which also features the requisite references to the uniform of the eternal soldier. The Colonel then proceeds to check the experimental set-up, the rehearsal set, in other words, his battlefield. He establishes or reconstructs the daily situation. His acting assistant or

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Jean Cocteau Rep as the business manager and the assistant to the Artistic Director. She holds an MA from Kings College/RADA and will be returning to graduate school at Columbia this fall. Thank you to Susan Bougetz for organizing and fostering the New Dramaturg Program. Her contributions have been invaluable.

### THE DRAMATURG'S VOICE

The next issue of Theatre Symposium, a journal of SETC edited by Paul Castagno, will focus on "The Dramaturg's Voice." The journal will feature papers given at Emory University in association with the 1994 LMDA conference and will include an edited transcript of a marvelous panel from the LMDA Conference featuring Mark Bly, Anne Cattaneo, Shelby Jiggetts, Michael Lupu, Paul Walsh, and Susan Willis. Copies of this issue of Symposium are available at a discount to LMDA members. Contact: Paul Castagno, Box 870239 Univ. of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL 35987; (205) 348-9032.



**Homestead States:**  
Chris Baker  
(Alley Theater)  
Brad Mooy  
(Arkansas Rep)



**Great Lakes:**  
Roger Danforth  
(Cleveland Playhouse)  
Wesley Savick  
(Theater X)  
Charles Smith  
(Northwestern University)



**Ohio River:**  
Janet Allen  
(Indiana Rep)  
Michael Bigelow Dixon  
(Actors Theater of Louisville)  
Susan Gregg  
(Repertory Theater of St. Louis)



## ANNOUNCEMENT: American Dramaturgy

The premiere issue of American Dramaturgy, the first journal-publication devoted solely to the study, practice and theory of dramaturgy in America, published by the Florida State University School of Theatre, will appear in the Spring of 1995. Each issue will contain three sections: a) articles examining and documenting important productions in the American theatre by the dramaturg who collaborated on the production; b) Documents in Dramaturgy, which will include Dramaturg's Protocols, Study Guides, notes, logbooks, translations and other actual examples of ancillary material prepared by production dramaturgs; and c) The Dramaturg's Bookshelf, which will include lectures, course-material, etc. related to the study and practice of dramaturgy. The initial issues of American Dramaturgy will serialize the famous series of Lectures by Leon Katz entitled "Principles of Play Analysis," as presented at FSU School of Theatre in the Fall of 1993. The first issue of American Dramaturgy will be entitled The Ibsen Dramaturgy and will examine major Ibsen productions in America in the last 20 years. Anyone who worked as dramaturg on a production that they feel was especially interesting or significant, or anyone else interested in this publication should contact: Michael Zelenak, Director, Dramaturgy Program, Florida State University School of Theatre, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2008. (904) 644-7254; FAX (904) 644-7246.

## WHO WILL BUY?

The new revised 1994-95 editions of the **LMDA Guide to Dramaturgy Training Programs, the LMDA Internship Guide and the LMDA Bibliography (including a new section on E-Mail!)** are now available. **The Guides are only \$5 each, the Bibliography is \$3. We also still have few LMDA thumbprint T-shirts and LMDA Atlanta T-shirts available for \$10 and \$15. Part II of the Dramaturgy Teaching Sourcebook will be available in February. Contact the office at (212) 642-2657 to place an order.**

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actor-colleague Stubbs is lurking for his cue. He is the actor without text, without a biography, without instructions, left alone with the wheelchair and a huge scar as his only props, an actor who has to invent his character from scratch and without ground to stand on. The situation at the beginning of the play is a summons to begin. The Colonel responds to the summons and assumes the strenuous task to initiate life. Mentally he is permanently geared towards battle, and he accepts that challenge as a battle for the theater and against the dullness of the empty stage:

*COLONEL [...] All those days. All those horrible long days without the enemy. Longing out the window. Staring at the stupid boredom of peacetime. The dullness of it. The idiot deadness in everyone's eyes. (p. 58)*

When he begins to reconstruct with Stubbs the death of his or of a son, he realizes through the creative act of playing a ceremonial war scenario, he instantiates it for that very moment. At the same time he reclaims Stubbs from the idiot deadness of his ecstatic trance.

*COLONEL He's suffered a wh-kind of disruption. Temporary kind of thing, they say. Takes some time to unscramble. [...] Shot*

*smack through his chest is what it was. Show the lady, Stubbs. (p. 3)*

By ordering the banana splits, setting up the war scenario, holding speeches about nation and individual, bringing in the loud driving rhythms of the drums, the Colonel promotes the development of Stubbs. Stubbs moves from being a debilitated man without language and memory who is at the mental and emotional level of an infant, he moves from being an empty vessel at the beginning of a rehearsal process to an idiosyncratic creative character who controls his own motions at the end of the play. "My thing is arising! I can feel it! [...] It's coming back! It's all coming back to me now" (p. 63), says Stubbs as he produces the last proof for his male independence.

The Colonel takes into account the most current forms of military thinking. While his actions are quite physical, at least in respect to the body of Stubbs, his system of reference is a virtual reality, it consists of war scenarios that take the place of physically experienced confrontations with the enemy. Once experience can no longer be remembered or communicated, as with Stubbs in the first half of the play, scenarios become more important than actual experience. By the same token, disenfranchised and fully objectified subjects take the place of personal histories and

destinies, and the subject appears only as a statistical entity. Stubbs's trauma probably is to be referred to the Vietnam war, his pain is physical, it resulted from an actual confrontation with an actual enemy, it involves a loss of orientation and the severance of the individual.

Not only Stubbs is drawn from social amnesia into a social context, and not only he is transformed from an actor without a defined character into a protagonist in a collective drama. Glory Bee and the White Couple are also drawn by the pull of the shaman session, they are also reactivated. Glory Bee becomes empowered by the Colonel to take charge of her business. She learns that she can be trained and turned into a complex machine in perfect equilibrium (p. 47). Also, she lends her own body to Stubbs and thus enables him to become a man again. With a song on her lips she casts her body into the play of forces. And at the end it is she who keeps the memory of peace-time and its beauties alive. She no longer embodies an imbalanced world but becomes a protagonist playing the role of mother, lover, and wife, the archetypal role of the woman who sacrifices happiness on the altar of warfare.

While the White Couple had originally witnessed the Colonel's educational measures in a voyeuristic manner, White Man and White Woman become differently involved in the community. Inspired by Glory Bee and her peace-time reminiscences, the White Man becomes absorbed by memories, films, former relationships, he fosters the sentimentality of a man who is dying.

**WHITE MAN** What was it we used to do in those "quiet times"? [...] Didn't we dance or something? Weren't we on a pier? A dock of some kind? Watching the lights in the distance? [...] Didn't we dance



**Northeast:**  
David Kent  
(Merrimack Rep)  
Jayme Kozsyn  
(Huntington Theatre)



**Southeast:**  
Adam Versenyi  
(Playmakers Rep)  
Carolyn Cole  
(North Carolina Playwrights Center)  
Del Hamilton  
(Seven Stages)



**Mid-Atlantic:**  
Sydne Mahone  
(Crossroads Theater)  
Michael Hollinger  
(Philadelphia Festival  
for New Plays)



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cheek to cheek? (p. 59)

This 'deflected glance' of the White Man testifies to the increasing disorientation in a society which refuses to acknowledge that it is embarked on a very definite common course. A rather different symptom of the same kind of disorientation can be discerned in the White Woman who perceives a threat but treats it as an easily manageable nuisance that will just have to give way. Perhaps she represents the perennial pragmatist who exemplifies the stance taken by the infamous "Duck and Cover" Campaign which insisted on the basic harmlessness of nuclear war.

At the end we find the catastrophe of war appropriated by and incorporated into a society. The remembered and represented war has become actual and present, and it is conjured and conducted with the same kind of magical energy as that which supposedly makes rain. All five protagonists contribute, each in their own way, to this. The Colonel now remains as a partner to Stubbs. By playing for him the role of traitor, he keeps his energy at rest and serves as a foil and point of contact for Stubbs. He is the enemy and he guarantees the continuation of war, he is the antagonist and indispensable partner at once. And while the Colonel talks of his trip into a world of terror, they all sing a song together which reassures them of their common race. They created a space of complete actuality in which past, present, and future have become fused.

As Stubbs raises his sword against the Colonel, the action has reached a point of resolution, however tentative, temporary or terrifying. Stubbs or the actor Rainer Piwek pads the Colonel or Hartmut Lange on the shoulder, the Colonel raises from the wheel-

chair and the two walk off together, arm in arm, quite pleased with themselves. There is a resolution not of a kind which the author grants himself or the audience as a conclusion or even a happy end. Their resolution is that of two musicians who reach a moment of temporary satisfaction and respite in their competing, often discordant pursuits. Shepard does not believe in resolutions because they strangle the play and its audience alike. The resolution reached by the Colonel and Stubbs is definitely one not to be believed in. If the image of virility is completed in the act of killing, and if Stubbs's final menacing posture becomes a terrifying strangulation of the action, one must hope that the music will go on.

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#### CONFERENCE WRAP-UP

Thanks to all the panelists and participants who helped to make the LMDA Conference in Atlanta fruitful and fun. Paul Castagno, Allan Kennedy, Lenny Pinna, and Elizabeth Ramirez proposed and produced provocative panels; Jayme Koszyn, Geoff Proehl, and Susan Jonas brought the University pre-conference to new heights; Kenny Leon provided an inspirational introduction; Swamp Gravy and John O'Neal showed us their special kinds of theatre; Walter Bilderback played host with good cheer; Gayle Austin and Tim Habeger provided invaluable assistance; the Atlanta area theatre community put on a great show; and many, many others went out of their way to make the conference a success.

The panels were stimulating, conversation was lively and the bar and barbecue were first rate. Thanks to everyone who pitched in.

#### IS IT SOMETHING IN THE XEROX PAPER AT ICM?

LMDA's birthrate continues to soar. Joining births earlier this year to members Melissa Cooper, Tim Sanford, and Paul Castagno, the newest arrival is Richard Pettengill's son Nathaniel, born June 12. CONGRATULATIONS!

#### ANNUAL MEETING

**At the annual meeting, held in Atlanta on Monday, June 6, members voted to retain our current officer nomination and voting system, to hold next year's conference in Los Angeles and 1996's in Toronto. Many other important topics were discussed. Minutes of the annual meeting will be sent to all voting members later this year.**

**Canada:**  
Michael Springate  
(Prairie Theatre Exchange)  
Shelley Tepperman



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(Manhattan Theatre Club)  
Victoria Abrash  
(Philadelphia Drama Guild)  
Lenora Champagne  
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[Tear Off]

**LMDA NEEDS YOU!**

For our regional structure to serve LMDA members across the country well, LMDA members across the country have to get involved. Fill out this form to let us know that you are interested in being active in your region.

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I am interested in being a regional Vice President

I recommend \_\_\_\_\_ to be a regional Vice President

I would be interested in participating in regional activities.

I suggest the following activities, events, or topics for my region (feel free to offer to host an event at your theatre!):

Complete and return to LMDA, c/o CASTA, Box 355, CUNY Grad Center, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036

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