SELECTED POETRY OF NIKKI GIOVANNI:
A BURKEIAN ANALYSIS

Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Carolyn Tobola, B.A.
Denton, Texas
August, 1973
Tobola, Carolyn, Selected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni: A Burkeian Analysis. Master of Arts (Speech and Drama), August, 1973, 96 pp., bibliography, 47 titles.

In this study, Kenneth Burke's methods of dramatistic analysis is applied to the selected poetry of Nikki Giovanni, a Black contemporary female poet. The procedure, analysis of poetry for symbolic action, is a functional approach which focuses on the poetic language, Agency. The thesis, divided into four chapters, concentrates on discovery of the Purpose, a Black female motive, for the Act, Giovanni's poetry, in the Scene, contemporary Black America.

Chapter I is an overview of Kenneth Burke and his dramatistic method of analysis. The chapter includes an explanation of Burkeian terms pertinent to this study and a list of the nine poems which were categorically selected for this study. Also included in the chapter is a discussion of six procedural steps for poetic analysis. The final three steps are the most important in the procedure: "pun analysis," "rhetoric of rebirth," and "archytypal structure." Chapter II describes the Scene encompassing the Act. The circumference of the Scene is narrowed to include the following three areas: political and social, artistic, and familial and personal in order to determine the factors influencing Giovanni's Act. A historical account of the Civil Rights
Movement describes the social and political scene. The Black Arts Movement, a response to the social and political scene, is the essence of the artistic scene. Giovanni's familial and personal scene primarily includes information gained from her autobiography, *Gemini*, as well as from magazine articles about Giovanni. Her three major books of poetry include *Black Feeling*, *Black Talk; Black Judgment*; and *Re:Creation*.

Chapter III contains the results of the rhetorical analysis of the following poems: "Poem (No Name No. 2)," "The Great Pax White," "The True Import of Present Dialogue," "Poem For My Nephew," "2nd Rap," "Kidnap," "How Do You Write A Poem," "Revolutionary Dreams," "Nikki Roasa," and "Dedication." The final analysis reveals the Agent's dual nature: dreamer and realist. Through "pun analysis," the hierarchy motive is visible in the political, social, and familial minor orders. A music and dream motif sharply contrasted her desired rebellious image. Chapter IV contains the summary and conclusions. Also, the application of poetic analysis for symbolic action and the possibilities for the interpreter's role as a form of symbolic action are discussed.

Burke's concept that poetry, as symbolic action, serves as a peaceful means in solving problems provided insight into the function of poetry for Giovanni and for the writer.
SELECTED POETRY OF NIKKI GIOVANNI:
A BURKEIAN ANALYSIS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Carolyn Tobola, B.A.
Denton, Texas
August, 1973
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Statement of Purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Method and Procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summary of Design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE SCENE: PRIMARY MOTIVATING FACTOR</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Political and Social Scene</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Black Artistic Scene</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nikki Giovanni's Familial and Personal Scene</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ANALYSIS OF THE AGENCY</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Kenneth Burke, rhetorician, poet, and critic, described himself as a "word man." W. H. Auden ranked him as the "most brilliant and suggestive critic now writing in America," while Malcolm Cowle labelled him as "one of the few truly speculative thinkers of our time." Burke's own rhetoric, directed toward achieving a state of oneness among men, prompted one critic to summarize Burke's achievements as "possibly the finest effort of our time to make sense of our multifarous world." Burke's emergence as rhetorician and critic began with the publication of Counterstatement in 1931, Permanence and Change in 1935, and Attitudes toward History in 1937. Burke's interest then was in the concept of symbolic action. Burke theorized that words, standing for ideas, attitudes, feelings, experiences, and motives, function as "acts upon a scene." His use of the term "symbolic action" in his first three publications suggests a wide range of meanings for the term. However, three types of "symbolic action" can be isolated: (1) linguistic, verbal; (2) representative, essential self images; and (3) purgative-redemptive, carthartic function. By 1941, in the Philosophy of Literary

According to Burke, life is a drama where man, the symbol-using animal, strategically, with motives, acts out his life on a scene. And literature, enabling one to "organize and command the army of one's thoughts and images"8 becomes the "dancing of an attitude,"9 which conveys corporate internal and external gesture. Analysis of literature can, therefore, be dramatistic. In A Grammar of Motives, Burke says, "The titular word for our own method is 'dramatism' since it invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that, being developed from the analysis of drama, treats language and thought primarily as modes of action."10 Thus, the critic sees the literary piece, an embodiment of an act, in a particular scene. The circumference, narrowing or broadening that scene, is determined by the use of a set of terms named the dramatistic Pentad: Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, and Purpose.11 The interrelationships of these terms are ratios. For example, the cause of the poem may be the Scene which prompted the writing, which is the Act, thus the Scene-Act ratio. In effect, at
least for the poet, the poem becomes a solution to the problem of the scene.\textsuperscript{12}

The dramatistic critical approach was developed for Burke's analysis of poetry, "the drama of the self in quest--the continuous interaction between agent and scene and between the conflicting impulses within the agent."\textsuperscript{13} Burke believes that the central problem for the self is "how much of one's past identity must be forgotten, how much remoulded, as he moves from one role to the next?"\textsuperscript{14} Thus, for Burke, poetry is "symbolic action" performing a vital physical and psychological function for the poet as well as the reader. For example, if I have an argument with a friend before he leaves town and we part without settling our differences, I will probably feel emotionally uncomfortable. However, if I write a letter or a poem to my friend resolving our differences, I will feel better. Although outer reality is the same, my inner reality has been manipulated with the verbalization of my attitude, "symbolic action." The poem has been an Act, according to Burke, for "poetry is produced for purposes of comfort, as part of the consolatio philosophiae. It is undertaken as equipment for living, as a ritualistic way of arming us to confront perplexities and risks. It would protect us."\textsuperscript{15}

In Counterstatement, Burke identified three motives for the creation of a poem: (1) revelation-self expression and illumination, (2) ritualization-technique, and (3)
The poem's significance lies in its rhetorical function, for rhetoric according to Burke is language usage for persuasion through the strategy of identification, the sharing of human properties. The nature of identification is rhetorical, for it seeks union rather than disunion. Moreover, the effort of the work can bring men together, resulting in a consubstantial state where their differences have not been overcome but transcended. At this point, men share interests which share the same substances: literal, metaphysical, or etymological. Rhetorically the poem functions as a rhetoric of catharsis, a purgation of tensions; and as a rhetoric of statement, a formula for situational adjustment. Thus, as a rhetoric of rebirth or renewal, the poem functions abstractly, universally, historically, or individually, depending upon the nature of the work, the historical period, and the individual.

Burke's theory of poetic analysis is relevant to the field of oral interpretation because the oral interpreter should be able to decode the symbolic gesture, the literature. As Burke states in *Philosophy of Literary Form*,

The general approach to the poem might be called "pragmatic" in this sense: it assumes that a poem's structure is to be described most accurately by thinking always of the poem's function. It assumes that the poem is designed to "do something" for the poet and his readers . . . in the poet, we might say, the poetizing existed as a physiological function. And the reader, in participating in the poem, breathes into this anatomic structure a new physiological vitality that resembles, though with a difference, the act of its maker . . . if we approach poetry
from the standpoint of strategies, we can make the most relevant observations . . . I contend that the "dramatistic perspective" is the unifying hub for this approach.\textsuperscript{21}

Therefore, a Burkeian analysis of poetry for the interpreter should be helpful.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to apply Kenneth Burke's dramatistic method of analysis to selected poetry of Nikki Giovanni. As a contender for the 1973 National Book Award for her autobiography *Gemini*,\textsuperscript{22} Nikki Giovanni is "one of the most talented and promising Black poets. She is also one of the most visible, not only because she is beautiful but because she is a shrewd and energetic propagandist."\textsuperscript{23} Her poetry collections include *Black Feeling*, *Black Talk*, *Black Judgment*, *Re:Creation*; and *Spin a Soft Black Song*.\textsuperscript{24}

A Black poet was selected because of the evident historical and individual rhetoric of rebirth prompted by the contemporary social scene of Black awareness. Discovery of a Black female motive in the contemporary scene should be the final result of this study.

**Method and Procedures**

The method used in this analysis will be taken from Kenneth Burke's dramatistic *Pentad*:

We shall use five terms as generating principle of our investigation. They are: Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose. In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the act
(names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the scene (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred): also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (agent) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (agency) and the purpose. Any complete statement about motives will offer some kind of answer to these five questions: What was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency) and why (purpose). 

Thus, in this analysis, the poem is the Act. The Scene, sociological, biological, psychological, historical, is where the poem was written. The poet is the Agent who, with the use of language and form, Agency, strategically performed the Act for a specific Purpose. The procedure, analysis of poetry as symbolic action, will be the functional approach which focuses on Agency, as outlined in Philosophy of Literary Form.

Burke assumes four principles which link the symbolic action theory with the dramatistic theory. The first deals with the nature of the poet. Similarity among men enables the poet and the reader to make contact. A poet is superior only in his ability to express himself. The second assumption concerns the relationship between the poet and his acts. A poem is a "metaphor of the self" because a poet tends to write about what "deeply engrosses him." Next, Burke assumes that a single author's poems are a symbolic autobiography because the creating self produces images charged with his essence, similar to dream images. The fourth assumption names the function of symbols as "vessels,"
holding public and private meaning and identifications. Burke's critical method is developed from these assumptions.

In order to break the poet's private code, the critic must know what, when, and where to look for meaning. Burke advises to "use all that is there to use"; transposed this also means to use all there is to use to gain understanding of the literature. All fields, biology, psychology, grammar, semantics, and rhetoric, aid the critic. The Act, the poem, and the Agency, language and form, are two concrete things always present. Generally, the poem acts as an expression of self and as purgative-redemptive symbolic action. However, Burke provides six steps in poetic analysis which reinforce his statement, "Cryptology is all."

First, the structural analysis determines "what follows what and why." For example, the critic analyzes plot development and experiential patterns. Structural analysis discovers the symbols' sequential position indicating the rebirth pattern.

Next, the critic determines "what goes with what and why"; this is the cluster analysis. A selective index and exhaustive concordance are made of an author's single work or group of works. An index lists terms of high intensity, such as love, sex, society, and high frequency, frequently repeated terms. A concordance lists every context in which appears a listed term. "Essentially, it is
a way of finding out what something means by finding out what the term is associated with in the poet's mind.\textsuperscript{32}

Thus, if school is surrounded in its contexts with such words as light, high, unselfish, free, complete, the critic can assume that education is a positively charged term.

After the cluster analysis, the critic can determine the dramatic alignment by interpretation of the information gained from the cluster analysis. The third major method is the agon analysis, simply "what vs. what."\textsuperscript{33} As Burke states, "a total drama," any complete work of literature, "is analytically subdivided into competing principles. Hence no matter which of the . . . three the (poet) begins with (agon, protagonist or antagonist) he cannot give us a full drama unless he imaginatively encompasses the other two."\textsuperscript{34}

An intensive agon analysis begins with the fourth method, "pun analysis." Now, the critic is ready to reconstruct the journey of the self in quest. There are three methods of pun analysis: phonetic, double meaning, and joycing. According to Burke, the poet conceals his true meaning by manipulating words; there is always a hidden scatological meaning.\textsuperscript{35} Phonetically, the poet may conceal his meaning, such as in the book \textit{The Ordeal of Richard Feveral} by George Meredith. "Fever" and "all" are two words which can carry sexual implications if seen as puns.\textsuperscript{36}
Then, the words can also carry double meanings. But the pun analysis which requires more guessing and distortion is the method of joycing, named after James Joyce, known for his habitual tampering with word sounds. For example, in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke worked with Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn." He joyced "urn" to read "urine." The overall motive of pun analysis, especially joycing, is the discovery of the Demonic Trinity: the fecal, sexual, and urinal orifices and the products and resemblances of all three.

Rhetoric of rebirth is the fifth part of Burke's plan. Burke says there are two kinds of problems: guilt and identity. Through poetry's persuasive action, the poet can resolve his problems. The critic looks in the poem for three archetypal images: Pollution, Purgation, and Redemption.

Evidence of the Pollution is the appearance of fecal images found through the four other methods. Thus, the negatively charged images are those which need to be transcended. Purgation, which may be painful, is a process where change occurs. It is usually symbolized by an image which implies movement; subsequently, Burke concentrates on fire, journeys, crossing, ascension, dyings, and killings. Redemption is the reverse of the Demonic Trinity. "Heaven" is a psychological reality, good and desirable, in the author's mind.
After the three separate stages are analyzed as archetypal clusters, the three together are seen as an archetypal structure. One of the several forms can appear: dialectic of the Upward Way, the Mystic Way, the tragic pattern, or the search for the self. Dialectic of the Upward Way is when the individual ascends to truth. He recognizes error, the pollution, purges himself and reaches truth, redemption. The Mystic Way occurs whenever the individual's pure soul journeys from the impure body to join absolute purity. Afterwards, the soul, with the newly gained knowledge, attempts to effect changes in his body and the world. The search for the self reveals the quest for individual salvation, an ordering of his world. However, the tragic pattern, also concerned with identity, concerns the individual's conflict with an accepted natural or cosmic principle. The tragic pattern encompasses a larger principle of order.40

In short, the ultimate goal of these methods is the discovery of what the poem does for the poet; thus, it leads to implications of what the poem does for everyone. For, Burke feels that poetry possesses potential as a means for solving problems peacefully.

For this study, nine poems were selected according to the categories of revolution, blackness, love, and womanhood. The category of revolution includes "Poem (No Name No. 2),"1 The Great Pax White,"2 and "The True Import of Present Dialogue."3 The category of Blackness includes
"Poem for My Nephew," and "2nd Rap." The category of love includes "Kidnap," "How Do You Write A Poem," and "Nikki Roasa." And the category of womanhood includes "Revolutionary Dreams" and Dedication. The nine poems are collected in the appendix.

Summary of Design

Chapter I includes a statement of purpose, and introduction to Kenneth Burke, a general description of the system, and a discussion of the method. Chapter II includes a general description of the Black contemporary scene and the Agent, Nikki Giovanni. Chapter III includes an analysis of selected poetry of Nikki Giovanni, representing a narrowing of the circumference of the terms in order to apply them to the specific problems in the poems to determine the Purpose of the poet. Chapter IV offers conclusions about the insights which have been revealed in Giovanni's poetry. Also, it offers some suggestions about the use of Burke's dramatistic method of analysis in the field of oral interpretation.
NOTES


8Burke, *Phil. of Lit. Form*, p. 298.

9Burke, *Phil. of Lit. Form*, p. 9


12Rueckert, pp. 78-79.

13Rueckert, p. 44.

14Cited in Rueckert, p. 44.

15Burke, *Phil. of Lit. Form*, p. 61.
16 Cited in Rueckert, p. 15.
17 Burke, Rhet. of Mot., pp. 19-20.
18 Holland, p. 31.
20 Rueckert, p. 27.
21 Burke, Phil. of Lit. Form, pp. 89-90, 124.
25 Burke, Gram. of Mot., p. xv.
26 Burke, Phil. of Lit. Form, p. 17.
27 Rueckert, pp. 68-71.
28 Burke, Phil. of Lit. Form, p. 23
29 Cited in Rueckert, p. 71.
30 Burke, Phil. of Lit. Form, p. 74.
31 Burke, Phil. of Lit. Form, p. 77.
32 Rueckert, p. 86
33 Burke, Phil. of Lit. Form, p. 69.
34 Burke, Phil. of Lit. Form, p. 76.
35 Rueckert, pp. 90-94.
36 Rueckert, p. 92.
37 Burke, Rhet. of Mot., p. 204.
38 Rueckert, p. 97.
30 Rueckert, pp. 103-106.
40 Rueckert, pp. 107-111.


44 Giovanni, *Re:Creation*, p. 43.
46 Giovanni, *Re:Creation*, p. 46.

49 Giovanni, *Re:Creation*, p. 3.
CHAPTER II

THE SCENE: PRIMARY MOTIVATING FACTOR

Introduction

"What can I a poor Black woman, do to destroy america?/ This is a question, with appropriate variations, being asked/ in every Black heart. There is one answer--I can kill. There/is one compromise--I can encourage others to kill. There are no/other ways." On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Nobel Peace Prize winner and leader of the Civil Rights Movement was assassinated by a sniper in Memphis, Tennessee, and subsequently, riots in more than one hundred cities followed with forty-six people killed in the civil disorders. Nikki Giovanni, along with other Black poets, responded with poetic militancy. Perhaps, as Burke suggests, the poem was a source of comfort for Giovanni as well as for others stunned by King's death.

Burke's dramatistic method begins with a review of the Scene encompassing the Act. The Scene is America in the nineteen sixties and seventies, and the Act is Giovanni's poetry. The circumference of the Scene has been narrowed to encompass three areas: political and social, artistic, and familial and personal. Knowledge of the Scene allows the critic to relate the significance of the symbols to the Agent.
Because she is young and relatively new on the literary scene, background material on her is scarce. Moreover, Giovanni herself does not reveal her personal life in depth. This, however, is not a disadvantage, for symbols carry the Agent's essence. According to Burke, a poet cannot lie in the depths of his imagery because it represents an identification with a substantive whole. The image is not only the dancing of an essence, but it is the dancing of a self who has personalized the symbol in a particular scene. Thus through analysis of the Scene, the factors which prompted the Agent's Act are discovered.

Political and Social Scene

Beginning in 1954 with Brown vs. Board of Education, the Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. White opposition to the ruling was solid, especially in the South. President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to implement integration there. Eisenhower's contention "that you cannot change people's hearts merely by laws" fell on deaf ears. Daisy Bates, President of the local National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), weathered name calling and harassment with the children, therefore, keeping them in school. In 1957, the NAACP awarded the Spengard medal to the nine Little Rock students
and to Bates, who replied: "We've got to decide, if it's going to be this generation or never."^5

The act of one woman seemed to determine that it was going to be this generation. On December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, known as the "cradle of the Confederacy" and later as the "cradle of freedom," Rosa Parks, a tired Black seamstress, disregarded the custom that Blacks yield their seats to whites on public buses. A one-day boycott of public transportation followed her arrest for refusing to give up her seat on a bus. King, president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, organized a Black community boycott of intracity travel which lasted thirteen months. The boycott resulted in a federal court order desegregating all travel conveyances in America. According to Ralph Abernathy, King's associate, the Montgomery Boycott did several things: "First, it gave Black people a sense of their own worth, dignity, and 'somebodyness.' Second, it stood Blacks erect on their own feet and emancipated them from the crippling shackles of fear. And third, it gave the Black race its first national leader in more than forty years."^7 Indeed, King, a Baptist minister, solidified the Black masses by adding the Black community's sustaining element, the church. Traveling two to three thousand miles a week, King spread his gospel with speeches, spirituals, prayers, and rallies.\^8
King's influence spread rapidly in the South. The Second Reconstruction was underway when, in 1960, Joseph McNeill, Ezell Blair, Jr., David Ramond, and Franklin McCain, four Black college students, sat down at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and ordered coffee. Although their order was refused, they continued to sit for several hours. Their continued sit-in the next day was carried by The New York Times: "A group of well-dressed Negro college students staged a sit down strike in a downtown Woolworth store today and vowed to continue it in relays until Negroes were served at the lunch counter. 'We believe, since we buy books and papers in the other part of the store, we should get served in this part.' . . . The store manager, C. L. Harris, commented: 'They can just sit there, it's nothing to me.' This initial sit-in at a lunch counter sparked a movement of sit-ins in hotels, movie theatres, and amusement parks. College students, Black and white, were the successful elements in the movement. An estimated 3,600 students were arrested in one hundred cities which were affected by the sit-ins. Desegregation of one or more establishments in 108 Southern cities and their border states resulted.

The "Big Four" organizations during the early "Negro Revolt" were the NAACP which was led by Roy Wilkins, the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) which was led by James Foreman and Stokley Carmichael, the Congress
of Racial Equality (CORE) which was led by James Farmer and later by Floyd McKissick, and the Southern Christian Leadership Organization (SCLC) which was led by King. CORE and SNCC were direct action organizations responsible for the sit-ins, wade-ins, and pray-ins. CORE, in particular, was responsible for the "Freedom Rides" which tested the federal court order of desegregation of travel conveyances. The initial Freedom Ride began in Washington, D.C., in the early spring of 1961, when thirteen CORE members planned to take an integrated ride through the South. Other freedom riders crisscrossed the South. At several stops they were beaten, but on May 20, 1961, Attorney General Robert Kennedy dispatched some six hundred United States marshals to Montgomery, Alabama, in order to protect a group of freedom riders who had been attacked there. Later in Jackson, Mississippi, where the riders converged, three hundred and five freedom riders were charged with "breach of peace." In the early stages of the movement, the organizations worked closely with the NAACP which concentrated on legal methods of achieving civil rights.

However, by 1963, the familiar slogan in the movement was "Freedom Now," thus indicating a growing mood of impatience; consequently, the civil rights movement reached a turning point. Large demonstrations were organized across the country. For example, in Birmingham, Alabama, King opened a non-violent anti-segregation campaign which
concluded with more than 2,000 demonstrators, including King, being arrested. The tools for arrest and suppression, led by Police Commissioner "Bull" Conner, were police dogs and fire hoses. National news media gave full attention to the scene: "The police dogs and the fire hoses of Birmingham have become the symbols of the American Negro Revolution. . . . When television showed dogs snapping at human beings, when the fire hoses thrashed and flailed at the women and children, whipping skirts and pounding at bodies with high pressure streams powerful enough to peel bark off a tree—the entire nation winced as the demonstrators winced." Police brutality, a frequent scene for the demonstrators, did not diminish the fervor of the movement. On August 28, 1963, more than 200,000 persons, including many whites, marched on Washington, D.C., where King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. King's dream of freedom and equality for all men, regardless of color, was met by a response of white backlash. On September 15, in Birmingham, Alabama, four Black girls were killed by bombs which were thrown in the 16th Street Baptist Church. As a result of the violent backlash to its passive plea, a new bitter mood pervaded the movement. Not only did the four young girls die, but Medgar Evers, NAACP field marshal, was assassinated in front of his home in Jackson, Mississippi, earlier in June of 1963. And, in November of 1963, President John F.
Kennedy, who favored civil rights for Black people, was assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

Efforts to secure legal rights continued following the demonstrations which erupted in 1963 and 1964. In 1964, the Civil Rights Bill was passed by Congress. President Johnson was aware that the bill did not address the "structural problems of the color cast system" when he said, "You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race, and then say 'You are free to compete with all the others,' and still justly believe you have been completely fair. ... We seek ... equality as a fact and as a result."

Further efforts for legal equality continued with King's voting rights campaign in Selma, Alabama. During the campaign, marchers again suffered from harassment by tear gas, nightsticks, and whips. SNCC workers, primarily college students, began to live and eat with the sharecroppers in the South as they sought to register voters. More violence occurred in the campaign when three SNCC civil rights workers were found murdered. Klux Klansmen were suspected of the crime but, although brought to trial, were never convicted for the offense. As a result of King's demonstrations, the Voting Rights Act was passed, thus suspending voter tests and federal examiners.
A new emphasis in the Black movement began in the mid-nineteen sixties. Whereas the initial stage had been integration, to gain human rights, the second stage shifted to politics and economics, to gain Black power. Although the militant Black disagreed with SCLC and NAACP on the importance of whites in the movement, they did agree on the need for emphasis on strategies to gain political and economic power for the Black masses, especially those of the Northern ghettos. Northern cities were ghettos filled with Blacks who had moved North for industrial jobs. "Between 1910 and 1966 the total Negro population more than doubled, reaching 21.5 million, and the number living in metropolitan areas rose more than five fold (from 2.6 million to 14.8 million)."17 Migration of Blacks into the North or West was not followed by a pattern of assimilation. Discrimination in such areas as housing, education, and employment discouraged Black efforts to improve economic and political status.

Thus, "Burn, Baby, Burn" became a slogan in the cities during the "red summers" of 1966 and 1967. In 1965, the Watts section of Los Angeles exploded with fires, lootings, and gunfire which continued throughout seventy-five U.S. cities, including Newark, Cincinnati, and Tampa. One of the worst riots in U.S. history occurred in Detroit where forty-three persons were killed and over six hundred persons injured; the damage estimate was $40-50 million.18
Consequently, on July 29, 1967, President Johnson appointed a commission headed by Otto Kerner, Governor of Illinois, to study the causes of the riots. Police practices, unemployment, and inadequate housing ranked as the three major causes of riots in the cities. The commission blamed white society: "What white Americans have never fully understood but what the Negro can never fully forget is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."¹⁹

For example, police brutality, ranging from the use of insulting language to excessive and unjustified use of force, was believed to have been used on at least 50 percent of those ghetto inhabitants surveyed by the Kerner Committee.²⁰ James Baldwin, a contemporary novelist and playwright, gives a vivid description of the patronization he received in Harlem: "I was thirteen and was crossing Fifth Avenue on my way to the Forty-Second Street Library, and the cop in the middle of the street muttered as I passed him, 'Why don't you niggers stay uptown where you belong?' When I was ten, and didn't look certainly any older, two policemen amused themselves by frisking me, making comic (and terrifying) speculations concerning my ancestry and probable sexual prowess, and for good measure leaving me flat on my back in one of Harlem's empty lots."²¹ In short, ghetto residents felt that police conduct stripped them of their dignity.
Unemployment figures for Blacks were double those for whites in every category. In 1966, 28 percent of all Black families' incomes were $7,000 or more as compared to 55 percent of white families' incomes. Furthermore, as Daniel P. Moynihan said in the *Kerner Report*, "The principal measure of progress toward equality will be that of employment. It is the primary source of individual or group identity. In American what you do is what you are: to do nothing is to be nothing." Moreover, the housing that Blacks could afford was substandard in most instances. Racial discrimination in the housing market forced Blacks into the ghetto. There they paid high rent for overcrowded housing. In the cities where the riots occurred, 24 percent of all units occupied by nonwhites were overcrowded compared to only 8.8 percent in the white occupied units. In addition, the *Kerner Report* listed such major grievances as inadequate education, poor recreation facilities, and unfair political representation as causes for ghetto unrest. Although the "red summers" shocked white America, which had visions of foreign espionage and uncontrollable civil war, in actuality, "the rioters appeared to be seeking ... fuller participation in the social order and the material benefits enjoyed by the majority of American citizens. Rather than rejecting the American system, they were anxious to obtain a place for themselves in it." Thus, the scene in America in the late
sixties appeared to be that of physical revolution. Disillusioned Blacks went to the streets to express their demands.

In addition to physical revolution, a psychological revolution under the slogan of Black Power affected the Black masses. Gradual change was no longer acceptable by young Black revolutionaries who rejected the aid of white liberals. Stokley Carmichael "electrified" the nation with his chant of "Black Power" in 1966 over national television from Lowndes County, Alabama.” Hence, the militants questioned the value of integration, or as the saying goes, "Why fight to get into a burning house." And, Malcolm X, spokesman for the Black Muslims in 1963-64, grew dissatisfied with the religious prophecy of the doom of white power. Consequently, he turned to the idea that Black Power could be achieved only through a struggle for power. His famous phrases "by all means necessary" and "by ballots or bullets" struck chords of fear in white America and visions of strength in Black America. Thus, the Black revolutionaries decided that whites had no intention of moving until Blacks moved.

However, Black Power connotated various scenes for the members of the Black community. For example, Floyd McKissick of CORE stated in 1966 that those who stood for Black Power did not "advocate violence." But Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton interpreted Black Power differently: "Those of us who advocate Black Power are
quite clear in our own minds that a 'non-violent' approach to civil rights is an approach black people cannot afford and a luxury white people do not deserve. It is crystal clear to us—and it must become so with the white society—that there can be no social order without social justice. White people must be made to understand that they must stop messing with black people or the blacks will fight back! Subsequently, various camps supporting their own interpretations of Black Power were organized. For example, Stokely Carmichael's split with SNCC to join H. Rap Brown in the Black Panther party indicated a more volatile aspect of Black Power. Although King and others involved in passive resistance were opposed to Black Power because of its supposed violent racist tendencies, they later could accept the economic and political concessions which Black Power demanded from the government. Basically, Blacks wanted to establish economic bases within their own community through a collective effort, and they desired a political voice which was subsequently gained through equal representation.

In order for the economic and political goals to become reality, Black communities had to learn to love being Black. Thus, the popular phrase "Black is Beautiful" became a slogan in the Black Power movement. Centuries of self-hatred had to be erased before the Black community could have the confidence to gain political and economic power for themselves. As a result of being a colonized people, their
culture had been stripped from them as well as their identity. Blacks underwent a "white wash" in order to reach the white standard of success. Frantz Fanon, in Black Skin White Masks, clarified the plight of the colonized people: "Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness."32 One of the first results of the Black Consciousness was the change of the name denoting their race from Negro to Black. Blacks seemed to believe that the "namer of names is always the father of things."33 Thus, by naming themselves, they asserted their definition of their identity. Black cannot be slurred like Negro: "negra" and "nigger." Another result was the change in dress codes. For example, men and women wore "Afros," natural hair styles, and "dashikis," African shirts. Consequently, the Black communities gained pride in their natural beauty rather than self-hatred of their Black features.

The political gains came slowly, however. In 1966, Robert C. Weaver became the first Black Cabinet member; and in 1967, Blacks for the first time were elected mayors of
major cities: Carl B. Stokes in Cleveland; Walter E. Washington in Washington, D.C.; and Richard G. Hatcher in Gary, Indiana. Also in 1967, Thurgood Marshall became the first Black Supreme Court Justice and Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts became the first Black to serve in the U.S. Senate since Reconstruction. By 1969, ten Blacks were seated in the 91st Congress; and in 1971, thirteen Blacks had congressional seats. Blacks held nearly 2,000 of the 522,000 elective offices in the U.S. by 1971. Moreover, in 1972, Shirley Chisholm of New York City, first Black U.S. Congresswoman, entered the political race for President of the United States.34

Legal battles waned in the early seventies. King's death in 1968 deprived the movement of its charismatic leader who had unified the early Black movement. His death influenced Congress to pass the Civil Rights Bill of 1968, which expanded federal protection to civil rights workers, expanded equal employment, and encouraged open housing. Ralph Abernathy, King's successor as President of SCLC, emphasized the economic plight of the poor, thus including all races in a Poor People's Campaign in Washington, D.C. Marchers emphasized the need for a minimum annual income, but there were few achievements in the War on Poverty effort initiated by President Johnson. However, two court trials gained public attention. Bobby Seale, co-founder of the Black Panthers with Huey P. Newton, was charged with
murder. And, Angela Davis, Black Panther supporter, was accused of being an accomplice in a fatal 1970 shootout in California. Both trials gained publicity because of the evident white racism in the proceedings.35 Presently, in 1973, the legal battles center on the desegregation of public schools through the uses of buses. It appears, in 1973, that President Richard M. Nixon is not going to propose legislation supportive of furthering civil rights for Blacks or other minority groups.

Therefore, the cause of the civil rights movement in 1973 is politics, according to Atlanta's Black vice mayor, Maynard Jackson.36 Primarily the concern is to improve economic and social conditions for Blacks in ghettos and rural areas, but politics is the single strategy of the movement. Indeed, a recent example was the election of Tom Bradley as mayor of Los Angeles, the nation's third largest city with a distinct Black minority of 18 percent.37 Bradley, one of ninety Black city mayors in 1973, won more than half of the minority vote as well as half of the white vote. He stated, "I have never run as a Black. . . . I am a politician who happens to be a Black. This will be the new style. We Blacks will achieve political influence because of our stand on all the issues."38 Thus, the direct action of the sixties has been replaced by a political power struggle in the seventies.
Although nearly a third of Blacks live in poverty and the Black unemployment rate is double the rate for whites, the Second Reconstruction Period could be coming to a close. As Julian Bond, U.S. Congressman, stated, "Black people have stopped being chic."\(^3^9\) And, on a recent televised showing of *Black Journal*, symposium members, including Stokely Carmichael, Angela Davis, and Carl Stokes, emphasized the need for unity within the Black leadership community.\(^4^0\) Perhaps Dr. Kenneth Clark's perceptive remarks before the Kerner Committee in 1967, were more accurate than one could have imagined then: "I read that report . . . of the 1919 riot in Chicago and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '35, the report of Harlem riot of '43 . . . the Watts riot. I must again in candor say to you members of this Commission—it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland with the same moving picture reshowed over and over and over and over again, the same analyses, the same recommendations, and the same inactions."\(^4^1\)

Thus the struggle for equal civil rights in the political and social *Scene* has illustrated various moods, ranging from King's non-violent resistance to the ghetto's fiery street eruptions. Gains have come not only in the form of legislation and public office, but also in positive attitudes toward Black pride and Black beauty. In addition, observation of the *Scene* has shown everchanging values.
and ideas which present the problems for the Agent. Consequently, the Act should reflect the various moods of the Scene because the Scene is a fit "container" for the Act which is the Agent's response to the Scene.

Black Artistic Scene

At the time the search for Black identity began in the Black Power movement, the Black Arts movement assisted the cause. For, as Larry Neal, a contemporary Black poet stated, the Black Arts Movement is the "aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept." The role of art during a revolution, according to Leon Trotsky, is to "deal with themes which reflect the revolution or be colored by the new consciousness arising out of the revolution." Thus, the artists' revelation and perception captures and shapes the revolutionists' dream.

As a result of the political and social Scene, Black art consequently became a different Act compared to what it had been in the past. As a protest against the irrational racial Scene, the Black Arts Movement explains the unique status of American Blacks, and more significantly, explains the racial situation to other Blacks: "Who am I?" "Who am I?" "Who are they?" and What are they?" Ralph Ellison, contemporary Black novelist, clarified the identity problem in The Invisible Man: "You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a
part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. And, alas, it's seldom successful." Furthermore, Charles Silberman, author of *Crisis in Black and White*, stated that the Black man's central problem is to discover his identity, or to create an identity for himself. Thus, through literature as well as through a social and political struggle, the Black man has been able to establish his identity.

Although there was a Black Arts Renaissance in the mid-twenties in America, it did not prove to be as influential as the recent movement. The Black Arts Movement supposedly began in Harlem with the establishment of the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School under the direction of Le Roi Jones, a playwright and poet. The union was between arts and politics which gave the community new images, consequently, a "New Breed." Following the initial preview of the various Black arts, dance, poetry, drama, music, and song, the pride in Black talent spread. For example, in Chicago a Wall of Respect, a mural recognizing various Black Heroes, was erected.

Although the psychological function of the movement is to enable Black people to rise from a negative to a positive state of existence, there are several possible additional gains according to Eugene Perkins, Black author, editor, and publisher. First, there is the need to "establish a national
entity and not merely a subculture that Americans give approval to. Then with the establishment of a Black aesthetic, Black people will share a common culture which will provide unity. Second, the Black artists, who support the revolution, can free Blacks from the Euro-Western sensibility. Furthermore, Perkins advocates that this can be accomplished through a union among artists in order that there be a unity of purpose. Consequently, the Black artists can define a new morality, according to Perkins. Additionally, Perkins has designated several goals for the Black Arts Movement. One is the creation of Black cultural programs for children, subsequently raising their Black awareness. Another goal is the organization of Black movie companies and a major Black publication company in order that the representative Black experience be shared with the Black masses. Perkins also encourages the establishment of repertory theatre and Black Studies programs. In short, the fundamental purpose of the Black Arts movement is to restore Black people's culture as well as their identity.

Poets are generally considered to be among the vanguard of the Black Arts Movement. On March 6, 1968, the following statement appeared in The New York Times: "Poetry ought to have a strong social character and . . . the most important force in American poetry is the poetry of social protest by young Negroes." The importance of poems in the Black community cannot be underestimated. According to
Clarence Major, a Black poet and editor, they "function like universal mandalas (circles) while they continually liberate our spirits." Thus, as stated by Perkins, "contemporary Black poets should create authentic images in poems which are real . . . in the sense that one can almost feel, hear, smell, and see that which the poem is attempting to illustrate." Black poets perform a ritualistic duty by reinforcing myths or ideals. As poets or "priests" they learn to sing, dance, and chant their words "tearing into the substance of their individual and collective experience." Consequently, poetry as a ritualistic form teaches and inspires as it aids in the search of Black identity, reinforces Black pride and unity, and helps to create the "soul, the consciousness and the conscience of blacks."

The revolutionary mood of poets in the sixties was an immediate reaction to the Scene, political and social. As a result, numerous Black journals have appeared on the literary scene. Indicating a break with Western culture and a reorganization of Black literature, they were means of "intense looking inward." They were created for Blacks, by Blacks, which also aided the growth of Black economic power: The Journal of Black Poetry, Joe Goncalves; Umbra Anthology, David Henderson; Black Dialogue, Abdul Karim and Edward S. Spriggs; Soul Book, Donald Freeman; Black Arts Quarterly, David Rambeau and Willie Thomas; Loveletter, Al Young; and Blkartsouth, Tom Dent. Negro Digest also
continued to promote Black poetry. One of the more successful publication firms was Broadside Press, Dudley Randell, publisher, which included Giovanni's work in its publications. For the first time in America, Black people were provided with the opportunity to decide who their favorite poets were in the Black literary scene.

"Rage" poetry, or intensely violent poetry which was rhetorically vehement, appeared in all of the journals. However, the rhetorical lash at white society was not meant to be the essence of revolutionary writing. According to Mari Evans, a contemporary Black poet, revolutionary poetry is "couched in the language of the people, demystified, it does all . . . with the equivalency of modern war drums." Black poetry in the sixties was not only a rhetorical lash at white society but also a unifying means for the Black community. However, the "war drums" of the sixties are muted at the "death of the defensive posture."

The Black writer in the seventies writes in an oral "rappin" style which reflects Black ideals that are not extreme. As stated in Black World, the white man has been ridiculed in Black literature, but the Black man has not dealt with his identity. Writers in the sixties often presented images of "Super Black" which did not exist in reality. Because of this, a deepening of the identity crisis occurred. But in the seventies, the writer or poet is no longer defensive about his past or present, according
to Lance Jeffers, creative writing and Black literature professor and poet. Jeffers stated that in the seventies the writer will face "hell," which is the "means not to collapse because of man's present reality but to face up to the potentialities of man; to face hell means to face up to man's ability to conquer himself, to face up to man's infinite potentialities for health and goodness, for godliness, for creativity." In addition to facing "hell," the writer will "journey into the vast Afro-American soul . . . a journey whose destination is self-discovery and psychological freedom . . . the birth of a new prophecy and the building of a grandeur." Giovanni herself has muted her rage in an age of self-discovery about her role as woman and mother. One of her poems illustrates her symbolic gesture toward the changing art scene:

Revolutionary Dreams

I used to dream militant
dreams of taking
over america to show
these white folks how it should be
done
i used to dream radical dreams
of blowing everyone away with my perceptive powers
of correct analysis
i even used to think i'd be the one
to stop the riot and negotiate the peace
then i awoke and dug
that if i dreamed natural
dreams of being a natural
woman doing what a woman
does when she's natural
i would have a revolution

1-22-70
Therefore the changing political and social Scene brought a change in the artistic Scene of Black America. And the artist, as Agent, responded with an Act which fit the "container," the Scene. Consequently, according to Burke's theory of symbolic action, the Agent's vehement Act, being a cathartic release, decreased the possibilities of his committing physical violence. Moreover, the Agent was a unifying source for the Black masses who sought their identity and cultural heritage.

Nikki Giovanni's Familial and Personal Scene

To continue narrowing the circumference of the Scene in Giovanni's life, her personal background has been examined. Giovanni's poetic works include Black Feeling, Black Talk, 1968; Black Judgment, 1968; Re:Creation, 1970; and Spin a Soft Black Song, 1971. Gemini, published in 1971, is her autobiography, and Truth is on the Way, recorded in 1971, is her single poetry-gospel music album. Although Boston University has collected her works, few factual articles on her life are available. Thus, her autobiography Gemini serves as the primary source for knowledge of her background and experiences from which her poetry evolved. She describes her autobiography as "a fictionalized account of the first twenty-seven years of my life." Therefore, there was often factual inconsistency between her autobiographical account and available magazine articles about her.
For example, although she does not speak of poverty in her autobiography, she is described in a recent article as having "roots in poverty." Nevertheless, the poetry analysis may reveal much more data than any factual account of her life.

According to Giovanni, who has been described by her critics as a "genius and a fabulist" as well as an "ego tripper," she writes from her own experiences rather than from dreams about what her audience "should be into." As a founding member of SNCC at Fisk University, Giovanni illustrated her inherited pugnacity: "Me, I'm different. I generally don't like to get into arguments, but I did like to fight. . . . How and why I became a fighter is still a mystery to me; if you believe in innateness, then I guess the only logical conclusion is that it's in my blood." As a child, she lived primarily in Wyoming and Lincoln City, Ohio, a suburb of Cincinnati; however, she was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, where her parents Gus and Yolande Giovanni met as college students. As a "real hip down home dude" from Cincinnati, specifically a "deprived area," her father was selected through a "kiss a nun program" to attend college. There he met Yolande, "the prize of all times," who could not resist the "nigger the world awaited." They married and had two daughters: Gary born in 1940, and Nikki born in 1943. Economically, Giovanni's family was not "well off." In her childhood, her mother was unemployed and her
father had several jobs. Later, her mother became a supervisor in the Welfare Department, and her father became a social worker. Although she wrote respectfully about her parents in Gemini, she idolized Louvenia, her grandmother, and Gary, her older sister. Giovanni, as Louvenia's "representation on earth," depicts the impetuosity of that Southern Black lady who was known to rap those heads who had no respect for Martin Luther King. Louvenia Watson was intolerant of whites; consequently, she was forced to flee Albany, Georgia, in a covered wagon after an argument with a white merchant. Spared from being lynched, she and John Watson, her husband who taught Latin, settled in Knoxville, Tennessee, where Yolande was later born. The Watson’s and the Giovanni’s responsibility to her grandmother was seen at the death of John, her husband: "If I couldn’t protect this magnificent woman, my grandmother, from loneliness, what could I do?" Louvenia survived the loneliness with Giovanni’s frequent visits to churn butter and make ice cream. However, her grandmother did not psychologically survive "progress" for urban renewal displaced her home. She missed the wall where Yolande had thrown her doll and the familiar smell of fried chicken on Sunday. When Giovanni graduated with honors from Fisk University, her grandfather’s alma mater, on February 4, 1967, Louvenia’s dream was realized. And, on March 8, one month later, Louvenia died. But as Giovanni
stated, "All the old people died from lack of adjustment, died for a cut off of a cut off."\textsuperscript{84}

As a four-year old, Giovanni began her stance as a fighter, protecting a future artist, her sister Gary, "commonly known to white people as a smart Nigger."\textsuperscript{85} Her "sheer ability to rap" resulted in numerous confrontations where Giovanni offered her services. As a precocious Black Power child, she was simply Gary's sister. And Gary often encouraged Giovanni in her guardian role. "She said, taking me aside in the back yard, 'You know why I don't fight? It's not that I'm scared or something—but I'm a musician. What if my hands were maimed . . . then Dr. Matthews couldn't give me rehearsals any more. Why their families would starve. . . . And the world would be deprived of a great talent playing \textit{Clair de Lune}'.\textsuperscript{86} Although her sister did not become a great talent, Giovanni did help protect Gary's dream.

As a child, Giovanni liked to write and read. She often went down to the drugstore to secretly purchase \textit{Screen Stories}, and she favored mythology in school. Frequently she went to "B" movies only to return home to secretly write stories.\textsuperscript{87} Due to confinement because of childhood respiratory illnesses, she frequently wrote stories to entertain herself. Later in college, she enjoyed reading T. S. Eliot, Ayn Rand, and James Joyce.\textsuperscript{89}
At sixteen she entered Fisk University. But, much to her family's chagrin, Fisk was not tolerable to Giovanni: "I could not/did not adjust to the Fisk social life. And it could not/did not adjust to my intellect." She was expelled for returning home without permission. However, she later returned to Fisk where she was involved in SNCC activities and the John Killeen's Fisk Writer's Workshop. And she edited Elan, a campus literary magazine. Indeed, she underwent a metamorphosis, changing from an Ayn Rand-Barry Goldwater disciple to a Stokely Carmichael-H. Rap Brown revolutionary.

In Gemini, she credited her involvement in the Black Revolt to Bertha, her roommate. Bertha wanted to know what Giovanni had to conserve and insisted that she like individual Blacks as well as the masses. It seems, though, that Giovanni had never suffered from a racial identity crisis. "I've always known I was colored. When I was negro, I knew I was colored; now that I'm black I know which color it is. Any identity crisis I may have . . . never centered on race." And Giovanni has yet to reveal any personal experiences involving discriminatory treatment. However, her decision to join the revolution prompted her to drop out of graduate school. Thus, following her graduation from Fisk in June, 1967, she planned the first Cincinnati Black Arts Festival which she led to the establishment of The New Theatre. Also, in a group effort, she aided in producing
Love Black, a short magazine dedicated to spreading the Black Consciousness or Black is Beautiful theme. The group published articles written by local Black people who frequently mailed their writings in on toilet tissue and brown paper bags. Since the articles were printed on 8½" by 11" paper and never took up more than a page, the audience could read the entire magazine in a short period of time. The two-fold purpose of the magazine was for the Black public to learn something positive about themselves and to enable them to complete something they started, thus the feelings of pride and accomplishment.⁹⁴

Perhaps her parents' attitude caused Giovanni to return to the academic scene. Her father wanted her to understand the system she was fighting and to know the Black people who were working in that system. "I think you're doing fine work but you must set an example, too. . . . if you want to destroy something, you must first learn how it works and what need it's filling. After the . . . Black Flame encases the world, you'll want your people to work for the Black Nation."⁹⁵ Subsequently, she returned to the "establishment" where she taught creative writing at Rutgers University; lectured at the Black History Workshop in Cincinnati; spoke as Youth Day Speaker at Reverend Cleage's Church of the Black Madonna in Detroit; and began a Black History group in Wilmington, Delaware, where she was expelled for her political activities.⁹⁶ At this time,
her bullets were her writings which included prose publications in *Negro Digest*, poetry publications in anthologies, and poetry collections in single publications.

Giovanni's "scalding rhetoric" included the subjects of revolution, riots, power, and whites in her various articles which appear in *Gemini*. She was very prorevolution during 1968 and 1969. "There's nothing irresponsible about chaos and anarchy... That's the thing we've got to understand. The revolution isn't to show what we're willing to die for... Nobody's trying to make the system black. We're trying to make a system that's human so that black folks can live in it... we can save ourselves through Revolution, our baptism by fire." To reinforce her militant view, she rationalized riots. Giovanni, a lover of logic, assumed that the white man was the "rapist," and black land was the victim: "You see the honkies' whole sex thing is tied up to land. Land is their love... Now, land has always been black. And you know God well enough to know that he goes first class... We live in harmony with land because we are part of land and we are out of land... You can't destroy land because she'll always be there, but you can destroy the rapist's claim. The only thing about land that makes the beast think he owns her is the stake he's put up to clinch his claim... That's when you burn." And, in response to the Black Power movement, she wrote that power had always been a part of her training in life. She
had learned if she did not wield power, it would be wielded over her. Moreover, Giovanni stated that as far as whites were concerned, they are white, first; people, second; and interested in their own welfare, third.99

Although her stance as a revolutionary may have been muted by the changing Scene, political and social, her role as a major Black poet has earned her the title of "Black princess of poetry."100 In response to questions as to why she became a writer, she replied that she could not see anywhere to go intellectually, so she decided to take a chance on feeling.101 And, she believes that her poetic sense is derived from the oral tradition of Black people: "We are the poems and the lovers of poetry. Poetry is the culture of a people. We are poets even when we don't write poems just look at our life, our rhythms, our tenderness, our signifying . . . new Black poets . . . rap a tale out, we tell it like we see it. . . . We are still on the corner . . . and the corner is in fact the fire, a gathering of the clan after the hunt. . . . The new Black poetry is in fact just a manifestation of our collective historical needs."102 Giovanni is involved in the Black Arts Movement because she believes that Black artists need each other's support. Although she does not feel that the Black artists' responsibility is to provide possible solutions for Black people, they should "tell it like it is but also . . . tell it like it can and should be."103 In other words, each individual
should make his own decision. Her most recent collection of poetry is set to gospel music on an album entitled *Truth is on the Way*. In the "oral rappin', moving music spirit of the seventies," she introduced her album in July, 1971, before a crowd of 1,500 at a free concert at the Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem. Her choice of gospel music reflected her deep love for her grandmother: "I wanted something my grandmother could listen to and I knew if gospel music was included, she would listen." Giovanni has continued to write for the revolution even though her rage is not as visible as it was in her earlier writing.

In addition to writing, she has traveled to Haiti, Europe, and Africa. But more important, she has lectured on numerous university campuses. According to Giovanni, "being a poet goes on all the time. When you're not writing, you're listening or talking." Her rapport with adolescents, especially college students, earned her the "Youth Leadership Award" on May 14, 1973, designated by *The Ladies Home Journal*’s annual "Women of the Year Awards." And her advice to youth is "to build up tolerance" and "to discover who you are, what you want to do, and where you want to go." She was also singled out by Omega Phi Psi in 1972 for her contribution to the advancement of Black culture. But her most cherished prize is her son Tommy who challenges her commitments to poetry and the revolution. "To protect Tommy there is no question I would give my life. I just
cannot imagine living without him. But I can live without the revolution."\textsuperscript{109}

Consequently, as the \textit{Scene} around Giovanni changed, so did her poetic gestures. Although she does not accept the turmoil of unemployment and inadequate housing, she seems to be "softer."\textsuperscript{110} She even published a collection of poems for her son, \textit{Spin a Soft Black Song}. As a small woman, 5'2" weighing approximately one hundred pounds, she admits to being shy although she has become a "heroine in the ghettos" for her statements on Black individualism.\textsuperscript{111}

Perhaps her fame is a result of her continued admiration for Ayn Rand: "She's about genius . . . the fight in the world today is the fight to be an individual, the fight to live out your ego in your own damn way. . . . I believe in a nation built on individualism."\textsuperscript{112}

In summary, Giovanni is best described by her closest friend, Barbara Crosby, who wrote the introduction to \textit{Gemini}: "At this writing she is still growing, and I wouldn't presume to understand her. All I know is that she is the most cowardly, bravest, least understanding, most sensitive, slowest to answer, most quixotic, lyingest, most honest woman I know. To love her is to love contradictions and conflict. To know her is never to understand but to be sure that all is life."\textsuperscript{113}
Summary

The analysis of the Black contemporary Scene, political and social, artistic, familial and personal revealed several important factors. First, the political and social scene was restless after years of discrimination. And the Civil Rights Movement, a response to the unheeded Black demands, prompted the eventual development of the Black Power Concept. Militancy in the movement resulted with the continued slow pace of civil rights legislation. Although the sixties were fiery with black anger, the seventies thus far have been progressive in politics. As a rejoinder to the Black Power concept, the Black Arts Movement began in the Black community. The Black Arts Movement's purpose was to unify the Black masses for the revolution as well as to establish a culture. Thus, it met the Blacks' identity problem with a possible solution. Among the Black artists is Nikki Giovanni, a fighter and a poet. Graduate of Fisk University, Giovanni published her fiery rhetoric in the period of the Black Revolt. Although Giovanni did not actively participate in the street revolution, she vicariously played the role through her poetry. Thus, the observations of the Scene revealed the diversified mood of the sixties as well as the diversified mood of Giovanni.
NOTES


5Bennett, p. 317.

6Bennett, p. 315.


8Bennett, p. 315.

9Lewis, p. 86.

10Bennett, p. 318.


12Bennett, p. 319.


14Bennett, p. 360.

15Cited in Bennett, p. 360.

16Bennett, p. 433.

Kerner Report, p. 115.


Kerner Report, p. 302.


Kerner Report, p. 251.

Cited in Kerner Report, p. 252.

Kerner Report, p. 472.

Kerner Report, p. 7.


Boggs, p. 213.

Cited in Washington, p. 97.


Toppin, p. 112d.

Toppin, p. 112d.


38 Cited in "Beating the Voter Backlash," p. 17.

39 Cited in Goldman, p. 29.


41 Cited in *Kerner Report*, p. 29.


46 Silberman, p. 166.


53 Major, p. 111.


63 Jeffers, pp. 255-257.

64 Jeffers, p. 259.

65 Jeffers, p. 263.


67 Rueckert, p. 152.


71 Nikki Giovanni, Gemini (New York: The Bobbs Merrill Co., 1971)

72 Giovanni, Gemini, p. xii.


76 Bailey, p. 48.

77 Giovanni, *Gemini*, p. 29.


80 Giovanni, *Gemini*, p. 35.


85 Giovanni, *Gemini*, p. 29.


87 Giovanni, *Gemini*, pp. 9, 141, 15.


89 Giovanni, *Gemini*, pp. 67, 140.


94 Giovanni, *Gemini*, p. 46.


Giovanni, Gemini, pp. 38, 50-51.

Giovanni, Gemini, pp. 48-49.

Giovanni, Gemini, p. 80.

"Women of the Year Awards," p. 69.

Giovanni, Gemini, p. 148.

Giovanni, Gemini, pp. 95-96.

Cited in Bailey, p. 53.

Mazer, p. 50.

Cited in Bailey, p. 52.


Bailey, p. 48.

Cited in Mazer, p. 50.

Mazer, p. 50.

Bailery, p. 52.

Cited in Bailey, p. 52.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE AGENCY

In the preceding chapter, the Agent's Scene was observed in order to discover the factors influencing the Act. However, to understand the Purpose of the Act, the Agency, poetic language, must be analyzed. Language, "that great purgatorial Agency," is the focal point for a dramatic analysis. The role of language is clarified by William H. Rueckert in Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations: "Language produces hierarchies, hierarchies produce categorical guilt as well as provide man with a means of purging and redeeming himself through the dialectic of transcendence made possible by symbolic action and the verbal hierarchy." Before discussion of the Agency, however, it is necessary to clarify the term "hierarchy."

Basically, hierarchy is a "value-charged structure" which ranks ideas, acts, and people. It has an inherent progressive form; therefore, participants who either hope to mount the hierarchy through possession or action or fear to descend it, possess the "hierarchy motive." From it develops "hierarchy psychosis," which is an "uneasiness stemming from the social order." At birth, man inherits "categorical guilt" when he is "unavoidably born into a.
preexisting hierarchically ordered political, social, economic, and religious structure." Thus, Burke concludes that "categorical guilt" is one of the primary causes for the Agent's "burden." In this study the socio-political motive is seen in the Agency. And, as Burke suggests, the motive is often expressed in a "veiled form of social courtship or social allegory." Sexual courtship and sexual imagery become expressions of mounting or descending the social hierarchy.

Thus, the Agent's Giovanni's problem often results from her "categorical guilt" established by the socio-political hierarchy motive which can be divided into three minor orders: political, social, and familial. In the political minor mode, the Agent's challenge is her role as a revolutionary. In the social minor mode, she expressed "hierarchy psychosis" as a woman and as a Black. Her efforts to climb the social ladder are evident in the frequent sexual imagery expressing her desire for recognition as a Black and as a woman. And, in the familial minor mode, her background and her son Tommy establish her "categorical guilt." Indeed, she must acknowledge and accept her heritage in order to accept herself. These three areas constitute the Agent's all-encompassing Purpose, which is to discover her natural self. This coincides with Burke's philosophy that man's universal situation is the quest for the self.

The following poems illustrate the familial minor order: "Nikki Roasa"37 and "Dedication."38

For purposes of concentration, this study is limited to the analysis of the *Agency* in nine poems representative of each of these three minor modes, which include "Poem (No Name No. 2)," "The Great Pax White," "The True Import of Present Dialogue Black vs. Negro," "Poem for My Nephew," "2nd Rap," "Kidnap," "How Do You Write A Poem," "Revolutionary Dreams," "Nikki Roasa," and "Dedication." Analysis of
the Agency has revealed the Agent's portrait to include that of a revolutionary poet, lover, and dreamer. Through cluster and pun analysis of the Agency, there appears a musical and dream motif which describes the Agent's personality as everchanging and self-expressive. Similar to modulating musical rhythm, the Agent's dreams change. Additionally, the dream motif, symbolizing repressed wishes, perhaps signifies the Agent's journey toward transformation of her self into a more "real" person. "Poem (No Name No. 2)," "The Great Pax White," "The True Import of Present Dialogue Black vs. Negro" sharply contrast the harmonious Agent of "Kidnap," "Nikki Roasa," and "How Do You Write A Poem." Thus, it seems that the two principle agons in the Agent's Scene are white society and womanhood. Through her Act, she discovers possible solutions to her problems.

The Agent, as a Black revolutionary, presents herself in "Poem (No Name No. 2)," as well as in "The Great Pax White," and "The True Import of Present Dialogue." The Purpose of these poems is to raise her level of Black consciousness. As a lyric, "Poem (No Name No. 2)," dated December, 1967, is a statement of attitude toward the Scene. For, according to Burke, a lyric is a "short complete poem, elevated or intense in thought and sentence, expressing and evoking a unified attitude toward a momentous situation... the gratification of the whole residing in the nature of the work as an ordered summation of emotional experience,
otherwise fragmentary, inarticulate and unsimplified.\textsuperscript{40}

Furthermore, a lyric is a cathartic outcry which rhetorically acts in persuading the Agent to move from chaos to order or to remake herself over in the image of her poetry.\textsuperscript{41}

A lyric "moment" can arbitrarily be named, such as the name Explosion for "Poem (No Name No. 2)." Thus, amidst the "bitterness" of the Scene, the Agent sees order. Through the critical method of pun analysis, the critic observes the "outcry" conclude in a confident attitude: Bitter Black Bitterness/Back Better Bitterness/Betterness Black Brothers/ Better Back Let/Blacker Get Better/Let Black Betterness Win.

Moreover, Sir Richard Paget's theory of gesture speech reinforces the explosive pattern of this lyric, as well as the longer poems "The Great Pax White" and "The True Import of Present Dialogue." Paget's theory of gesture speech equates the plosive sound of $B$ with an equally intense physical experience.\textsuperscript{42} Thus, the Agent's internal feelings toward the external view are summed up in a stinging Act matching the mood of the political Scene. Hence, the Purpose of the Act is to ventilate the Agent's feelings toward the Scene.

Further evidence of the attitude of the Agent in the political Scene is the Act, "The Great Pax White," a chronology of white homicidal "victimage." According to Burke, "victimage" and "mortification" are two primary means of purging "categorical guilt." Making others suffer for our own sins is "victimage"; making ourselves suffer for our own
sins is "mortification." In "The Great Pax White," and "The True Import of Present Dialogue," the Agent's Purpose is to purge herself of "categorical guilt," that being the role of "nigger." Structured in Biblical form, "The Great Pax White" transfers the role of scapegoat, historically associated with Blacks, to whites, who are credited in the poem with centuries of "victimage." In other words, the Agent purges inferiority feelings by citing the deeds of the whites. Beginning with the promise of death to all, the Act includes a summary of that fulfilled promise: "Cause they killed the Carthaginians/ in the great appian way/ And they killed the Moors/ 'to civilize a nation'/ . . . And they barbecued six million/ . . . And crossed the 16th parallel/ . . . So the great white prince/ Was shot like a nigger in texas/." And, the Agent associates Blacks with positively charged elements such as the "Black Madonna" and the "black dude," Jesus. Yet, the Agent surrounds the church with negatively charged elements, as in the following example:

"And the foundations of the mighty mighty/ Ro man Cat holic church were laid." The sexual implication may connote an element of the Demonic Trinity. In the "name" joyced to "game" of God and in the "name," "game," of peace, whites "victimize" other races. The Agent's final question, "ahh Black people/ ain't we got no pride?" is the Redemption. For the "beastial," "bestill," peace must be "stilled" by black respect.
As in "The Great Pax White," the term "nigger" is associated with death in the poem "The True Import of Present Dialogue Black vs. Negro." Through means of purgation, "mortification" and "victimage" in the Act, the Agent gains identity through the naming process. Indeed, Burke designates the importance of the "ritualistic naming and changing of identity . . . as the most fundamental psychological process." Consequently, poetry serves actively in the ritualistic and changing of identity because the poet uses it as a rhetoric of rebirth to effect changes in "role." The Agent's Act gives her a new name, Black rather than "nigger." In addition, "The True Import of Present Dialogue" illustrates the Agent's internal reaction to the name "nigger." Again, whites are associated with the Demonic Trinity, such as in the lines, "Can you piss on a blond head," or "Can you lure them to bed to kill them." Before a "nigger" can kill a "honkie," "victimage," he must kill his own "nigger" mind, "mortification." By killing his own "nigger" mind, he is in a sense killing whites, for they are the father of the name. Cathartic and gesture terms such as "kill," "poison," "stab," "shoot," "splatter," "fire," and "cut" illustrate the purgative journey through the rhetoric of rebirth, that is, in this instance, the search for the self. Once the "nigger" is "killed" then there are Black Men (Women) who are able to "kill White for Black." Hence, the "hierarchic motive" to climb up from the derogatory role as "nigger" to
the respectful role as Black is the **Purpose** of the **Agent** in the **Act**. Blackness, as indicated in this poem, is an integral part of the **Agent's** identity. The lyric "Poem for My Nephew" illustrates her "moment" of Delight with Blackness. When the "light" of awareness is "thrown" on the past "shadow," then there can be a Black self growing "longer and taller and blacker."

The critical method of "clustering" designates a stark, harsh **Agency**, such as the terms "kill," "nigger," "war," and "death"; however, the **Agent's** appeasing portrait appears in musical and dream imagery in such poems as "2nd Rap," "Kidnap," "How Do You Write A Poem," "Revolutionary Dreams," "Nikki Roasa," and "Dedication." Moreover these poems illustrate the social and familial hierarchy motive. For example, "2nd Rap" another lyric arbitrarily named **Rhythm** literally refers to H. Rap Brown, but figuratively it refers to his spirit. The **Agent's** frequent use of the term **turned** indicates the change that **2nd Rap** brings to the Scene. To glorify him, the **Agent** employs a musical motif with references to Aretha Franklin, a popular contemporary Black vocalist. And, **2nd Rap** is a life power for the **Agent** who compares him to a "light," a source of wisdom. Another example is the interpretation of the following lines: "he's a spirit turned/ pisces to aries/ alpha to omega" meanings he's fire (Black Flame) that's changed knowledge to action. Concluding with sexual imagery in the following lines, "he's a man
turned himself into Black/ women/ and we turn little hims (hymns) loose on the world/, the Agency reveals the social "mounting" of the Agent. Rhetorically, the Agent ultimately makes herself over in her poetic imagery; she bears a son, another "hymn" to sing the spirit of Blackness. Consequently, "they [whites] ain't never gonna get" or suppress the Black Revolt because it is a rhythmically increasing spirit. Thus, the Purpose of the Act is for the Agent to reinforce her hope in the spirit of Blackness.

Another lyric with a musical and birth motif is "Kidnap," arbitrarily named Desire, subsequently establishing the Agent's personality as a dreamer. Musical terms such as "ode," "phrases," "meter," "lyric," "complement," and "song" with rhythmic overtones correspond with the sexual imagery of "blend," "dash," "wrap," "win," and "complement." The Agent seems to prefer her "house," her own body, rather than the artificiality of "jones beach" or "Coney Island." Since this poem is dated February 17, 1970, her son's birth year, there is reason to speculate that the Act equals her Scene, which is pregnancy. Moreover, by "pun analysis" of "Kidnap" and "show you off" as well as "red [womb] Black [face] green [fertility]," the terms connote the birth of Black fertility.

In addition to presenting sexual desires, "Kidnap" displays another desire, that being the Agent's quest for an artistic role, "i wish i were a poet." As clearly revealed in Gemini, her autobiography, Giovanni chose a career
in writing because she wanted to work with her "feelings" rather than with her intellect. Thus, in "How Do You Write a Poem," an individual rhetoric of catharsis, she struggles with the role of being a writer. She questions the "realness" of writing in the following lines: "what can they ask you to put/ on paper that isn't already written/ on your face/ and does the paper make it anymore real/. These lines reveal the Agent's conflict between the natural state of being and the often contrived state of writing. Hence, the Purpose of the Act is to find a "spot" free from "emotional and physical bullshit," the Pollution. And, the negatively charged images are the lover and the poem because they are "clustered" with the following sexual terms: "blend," "baang," "scent," and "touch." The Agent's Purgation or suffering is observed in the following joyced lines: "i'm tired" implies "i've tried," and "we lost a friend" implies "we lost each other." Moreover, the Agent's lover does not recognize the Agent's real self, thus, she "checks" or "chucks" her contrived feelings. Consequently, the Agent's Redemption in the new natural attitude as the structural form of the Act is an informal conversational style.

The dream quality of the Agent's personality appears again in "Revolutionary Dreams," another example of rhetoric of rebirth, specifically the "search for self." By joycing the repetitive phrase "i used to" to "I was used sexually," the militant and radical self becomes the negatively charged
imagery. Her "radical dreams" of blowing everyone away with her perceptive powers is evidently sexual with reference to "blowing" and "perceptive powers," sexual prowess. The Agent's Purgation appears in the following lines: "then i awoke and dug." Her Redemption or "heaven" is the state of "doing what a woman/ does when she's natural"; subsequently she is a revolution herself. Seemingly the Agent's burden is the need to decide who she really is naturally. Of course, the Act also expresses a desire to ascend the social hierarchy as a woman.

There is more evidence that the Agent suffers from "categorical guilt," as in previously discussed poems, in the poem "Nikki Roasa." Even though the title, specifically the term "Roasa" which connotes fruitfulness, is a positively charged name, the Agent's memories are negatively charged. She cites examples of hardships, such as the outside toilet, poverty, and arguments. Moreover, she transfers her suffering to her father, an archetypal image of transferred feelings, who loses another "dream" when he sells his stock. Purgation is the journey through childhood memories as seen in the following line, "childhood remembrances are always a drag." Redemption occurs with the transfer of her "hard childhood" memories to the white biographer, the scapegoat. Consequently, she can accept herself when she accepts her heritage which she resolves as "Black Love."
In "Dedication," the **Purpose** of the **Act** is to rid the **Agent** of her negative feelings about her son. In fact, a chapter in *Gemini* illustrates her complex feelings about motherhood. The title of the chapter is "Don't Have a Baby Until You Read This." In the **Act**, Tommy devours her life. This interpretation is gained through pun analysis of the second line: he "eats chocolate cookies and lamb chops" connotes that he devours bread and meat, substances of life. **Purgation** occurs with the diaper change which causes Tommy to suffer. **Redemption** is the new name "mommy" (mom-me) which "supersedes" or succeeds more than any other previous name. Indeed, when the critic lists the verbs in chronological order, the rebirth pattern appears: eats, climbs, cries, change, hold, defined, gave, supersedes, controls, and makes. The verbs seem to reveal the struggle of the **Agent** to define her real self.

**Summary**

In this chapter, nine poems, representative of political, social, and familial hierarchy motive, were analyzed. Through cluster and pun analysis, the **Agent's Purpose** for the **Act** was discovered. Basically, Giovanni's motive is "search for self," and this is illustrated in all of the nine poems. Although Giovanni's image appeared rebellious in the political mode, it appeared appeasing in the familial and social mode with her use of a music and dream motif.
Her Pugation occurred frequently through "mortification" and "victimage" which usually delivered her a new name: Black. The analysis revealed Giovanni to be both a realist and a dreamer who seemed perplexed when she could not be her "natural self." In conclusion, the dream motif reinforces her journey to discover her real self.
NOTES


2. Rueckert, p. 131.

3. Rueckert, p. 132.

4. Rueckert, p. 132.

5. Rueckert, p. 132.

6. Cited in Rueckert, p. 142.

7. Rueckert, p. 143.


30 Giovanni, *Re:Creation*, p. 16.

31 Giovanni, *Re:Creation*, p. 17.


33 Giovanni, *Re:Creation*, p. 23.

34 Giovanni, *Re:Creation*, p. 31.

35 Giovanni, *Re:Creation*, p. 43.

36 Giovanni, *Re:Creation*, p. 46.


38 Giovanni, *Re:Creation*, p. 3.


41 Rueckert, p. 196.

43 Rueckert, p. 147.


45 Rueckert, p. 50.

46 Burrows, p. 454.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Kenneth Burke has provided the critic with a functional method of literary analysis which enables the critic to name and thus identify a writer's motivation. Consequently, the purpose of this study has been to apply Burke's dramatistic method of analysis to selected poetry of Nikki Giovanni, a contemporary Black female poet.

According to Burke's theory of symbolic action, words function as acts upon a scene. Thus, poetry is a form of symbolic action which performs a vital function for the poet and the reader. From the theory of symbolic action, Burke developed his dramatistic method. The method for this study has been taken from Burke's dramatistic Pentad, the terms of the system: Act (what was done); Scene, (where was it done); Agent (who did it); Agency (with what instrument was the Act done). This study designated the Act as Giovanni's poetry, the Scene as the Black contemporary scene, the Agent as Giovanni, the Agency as her poetic language, and the Purpose as the "quest for self." The procedure for analysis emphasized the Agency.

Six procedural steps have been outlined for the analysis:

70
(1) Structural analysis determined "what follows what."
(2) Cluster analysis determined "what follows what and why."
(3) Agon analysis determined "what vs. what."
(4) The intense agon analysis continued with "pun analysis."
(5) "Rhetoric of rebirth" identified the poem's archytypal imagery of *Pollution*, *Purgation*, and *Redemption*.
(6) The archytypal structure, composed of the three images, was identified.

In order to decode the poet's symbolic gestures, it has been necessary to observe the *Scene* from which she drew her symbols. The circumference of the Black contemporary *Scene* has been narrowed to include the political and social, artistic, and familial and personal scenes in Giovanni's life.

The political and social scene in the nineteen-sixties indicated that the Black community was a powder key. Generations of discrimination had prevented Blacks from participating freely in the political and social hierarchy. However, by the nineteen-sixties, Blacks had lost patience with promises; they demanded equal rights. Consequently, across the country, nonviolent demonstrations for equal rights were led by Martin Luther King and others. Later, after months of harrassment, many Blacks turned to more active and even violent demonstrations. "Freedom Now" and
"Burn, Baby, Burn" were the slogans of the movement's militant element. The slogan with more permanence and consequence was "Black Power" which signified an economic and political strength. Subsequently, Black Consciousness spread and produced a more unified and proud people. However, King's assassination seemed to mark the beginning of a gradual deemphasis of civil rights legislation, for in the seventies, legislation and demonstration for civil rights has been diminutive compared with that in the sixties.

As a result of the new political and social emphasis in the Black community, Black arts have gained a new significance. Although Blacks had always produced various art forms, there had never been equal opportunity for them to gain recognition. As a colonized people, stripped of their culture, they had lost their sense of identity. Thus the Black Arts Movement, which included music, poetry, dance, and art, had a dual purpose. It established a means for Blacks to display their talent as well as a basis from which to establish Black culture. Black movie companies, Black studies programs, and Black publications aided the movement in spreading Black awareness. At the forefront of the Black Arts Movement were the poets who served as an effective unifying instrument.

During the height of the Black Revolt, poetry was a war drum and a weapon. The "Super Black" image appeared frequently in the poetry, therefore causing a serious
identity crisis because there had been few "Super Blacks."
Numerous Black poetry journals, as an emphatic split with
Western culture, were published. The journals contained
bitter and hostile rhetoric reminiscent of the ghetto unrest
in the cities. Writers in the seventies, though, seemed to
have dropped the "Super Black" imagery and fiery rhetoric
in exchange for a search for the "real Black identity."
Therefore, the role of Black arts has been shaped by the
political and social scene.

After observing the political, social, and artistic
scene in Giovanni's life, Giovanni's personal and familial
scene has been discussed. Her recent autobiography Gemini
has been the primary source for background material because
an inadequate amount of information was available, and,
furthermore, some of the information was contradictory.
Giovanni has been a "fighter" as well as a poet, lover,
and mother. Born in 1943 in Knoxville, Tennessee, she is
an example of her grandmother's assertive nature and her
mother's beauty.

Giovanni began to write as a child when she was con-
fined indoors with respiratory illnesses. Her interest in
literature continued through adolescence and young adult-
hood. She read numerous books, including those by James
Joyce, which may have influenced her later poetic style.
After graduating with honors from Fisk University in 1967,
she began to write seriously. She wrote at John Killeen's
Fisk Writer's University and edited _Elan_, a literary magazine. Her involvement with the revolution began when her roommate insisted that she join the movement. Her activities included the direction of Cincinnati's first Black Arts Festival. Later, she was a creative writing instructor but lectured at various political gatherings to continue her revolutionary activities. During 1968 and 1969, her response to the Black scene was to publish poetry and prose. Like other Black writers, her response was militant and radical. But, with the mood change in the political and social scene, Giovanni has changed her poetic style. As the mother of Tommy, her "prized possession," she seemed to fade as a revolutionary poet and to bloom as a natural woman. This study of Giovanni's background has revealed that she has constantly changed her role in society.

The analysis of her poetry is in Chapter III. It has been necessary to understand Burke's "hierarchic motive," "hierarchic psychosis," and "categorical guilt" before the analysis of the _Agency_, poetic language, began. Subsequently, the poetry has been divided into categories illustrating the political, social, and familial hierarchic minor orders. Representative poems were selected to be analyzed: "Poem (No Name No. 2)," "The Great Pax White," "The True Import of Present Dialogue Black vs. Negro," "Poem For My Nephew," "2nd Rap," "Kidnap," "How Do You Write A Poem," "Revolutionary Dreams," "Nikki Roasa," and "Dedication."
The burden in her poetry appeared to be "categorical guilt" resulting from her rank in society as a Black, as well as a woman. Another burden which appeared was that of determining her identity. Thus, the all inclusive Purpose of her writing seemed to be the "quest for the self."

Through the method of "pun analysis," the Purpose of the Act was discovered. The portrait of the artist as a Black revolutionary has been shown in "Poem(No Name No. 2)," "The Great Pax White," "The True Import of Present Dialogue," and "For My Nephew." "Poem(No Name No. 2)" has lyrically amplified her explosive attitude toward the scene. Pun analysis of the terms "bitter" and "black" have led to insight of the Act's Purpose. "The Great Pax White" has been to be a purgation through "victimage." Cathartic and gesture terms such as "kill" and "fire" have revealed the pattern of rebirth. Moreover, the term "nigger" associated with death in "The Great Pax White" has been discovered in the similar associational cluster in "The True Import of Present Dialogue," a poem illustrative of both "victimage" and "mortification." Both "The Great Pax White" and "The True Import of Present Dialogue" indicated Redemption in the name Black. Through Purgation, the term "nigger," the Pollution is transferred to a victim, white society, from the Agent, Giovanni. Thus, Giovanni's Act as a rhetoric of catharsis relieved her "categorical guilt" and as a rhetoric of statement provided a formula or name for the situation. In "Poem For My
Nephew," a "moment" of Blackness, she lyrically "summed up" her attitude as Delight.

The cluster analysis in the political minor mode has been found to be a direct contrast to the one in the social and familial minor mode. The Agent's portrait has been discovered to be appeasing in the music and dream motif in "2nd Rap," "Kidnap," "How Do You Write A Poem," "Revolutionary Dreams," "Nikki Roasa," and "Dedication." "2nd Rap" has been found to be a lyrical representation of Giovanni's faith in the Black Spirit. The musical imagery in such terms as "rap" and "note" developed the rhythmical spirit of the Act. And, the sexual imagery in the frequent term "turned" has illustrated the social hierarchy motive. In "2nd Rap," the theme of delivery or childbirth carried in the line "and we turn little hims/ loose on the world" was also found in the lyric "Kidnap." It seemed to be representative of the Agent's Scene, pregnancy, after "pun analysis" of "kidnap," "show," and "red Black green" was shown to mean the birth of Black fertility. Moreover, the lyric contains numerous musical terms such as "ode," "lyric," "phrases," and "meter." "Kidnap" and "How Do You Write A Poem" have both illustrated the Agent's struggle with the role of being a poet. In "How Do You Write A Poem," the conflict was between the contrived state, represented by the term "real." Then there emerged the Agent's quest for "reality," which was edified in "Revolutionary Dreams."
This poem has been shown to contain the Agent's Purgation of her "militant" and "radical dreams." Her Redemption was the dream of being a natural woman which meant being her real rather than contrived self.

Consistent with her identity quest was the need to accept her past. This has been seen in "Nikki Roasa" where she transferred her memories of suffering to her father and her biographer. She has been redeemed and has consequently accepted her past and herself, as illustrated in "Black Love is Black Wealth." The analysis of the final poem has exposed Giovanni's most successful identity where she could see, "supersede," as never before. With the "possession" of her son, she had descended the political hierarchy, and developed "hierarchy psychosis." However, through the naming process, specifically "mommy," it seemed she has more successful self images than ever before.

Consequently, the analysis of Giovanni's poetry has provided several conclusions. Prior to the completion of this study, I felt that Giovanni was a fraud because of the apparent inconsistencies between material in her autobiography and in magazine interviews with her. She seemed to be posing as a model for the revolution rather than being a genuine example of Black spirit. In addition, Giovanni's secretive nature aroused more doubt about her authenticity and sincerity. However, as this analysis has
revealed, Giovanni's nature seems to be the result of her role as a dreamer and a realist.

According to Burke, a work of art contains a ramified symbol: "A ramified symbol does more than evoke a similar pattern of experience in the reader, for once ramified the symbol functions as the poet's 'interpretation of a situation' and may be treated as a formula which provides one with a terminology of thoughts, actions, emotions, attitudes for conveying a pattern of experience."¹ The symbol as formula gives "simplicity and order to an otherwise unclarified complexity."² It has been concluded that Giovanni's ramified symbol is "dream." And the rhythm motif, particularly music battlement and sexual imagery, suggested Giovanni's search for self. Therefore, I acknowledge Giovanni's "realness."

Through the use of Burke's Pentad, specifically the Scene-Act ratio, the Black female motive has been discovered to be the "quest for self." Confronted with being a minority in two categories, Black and female, she struggled to define her identity. Analysis of the Scene clarified the motivating factors for the Act. Political and social unrest designed a new role for Black artists. Although Giovanni was not armed with weapons in the street, she has been capable through poetry, "symbolic action," of firing harmless bullets. As a rhetoric of catharsis and a rhetoric of
statement, her poetry "danced" her attitude and formularized her solution for the **Scene**.

Information gained from this analysis should assist an oral interpreter. As another form of symbolic action, the interpreter conveys the author's symbols to an audience. With application of Burke's **Pentad** to the interpreter's selected literature, insights will be gained, therefore, increasing potential for a successful performance. The interpreter must comprehend the literature before he can successfully deliver the poetic gesture for the audience's benefit. Also, the interpreter's understanding of the **Purpose** of the poem for the **Agent** will lead the interpreter to consider what the poem does for him and his audience. Perhaps a consubstantial state will exist between the interpreter and his audience whereby differences are transcended through language.
NOTES

1Cited in William H. Rueckert, Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), p. 16.

APPENDIX

"Poem (No Name No. 2)"

Bitter Black Bitterness
Black Bitter Bitterness
Bitterness Black Brothers
Bitter Black Get
Blacker Get Bitter
Get Black Bitterness

NOW
"The Great Pax White"

In the beginning was the word
And the word was Death
And the word was nigger
And the word was death to all niggers
And the word was death to all life
And the word was death to all
dance is death and be still

The genesis was life
The genesis was death
In the genesis of death
Was the genesis of war
be still peace be still

In the name of peace
They waged the wars
ain't they got no shame

In the name of peace
Lot's wife is now a product of the Morton company
nah, they ain't got no shame

Noah packing his wife and kiddies up for a holidy
row row row your boat
But why'd you leave the unicorns, noah
Huh? why'd you leave them
While our Black Madonna stood there
Eighteen feet high holding Him in her arms
Listening to the rumblings of peace
be still be still

CAN I GET A WITNESS? WITNESS? WITNESS?
He wanted to know
And Peter only asked who is that dude?
Who is that Black dude?
Looks like a troublemaker to me
And the foundations of the mighty mighty
Ro man Cat holic church were laid

hallelujah jesus
nah, they ain't got no shame

Cause they killed the Carthaginians
in the great appian way
and they killed the Moors
"to civilize a nation"
And they just killed the earth
And blew out the sun
In the name of a god
Whose genesis was white
And war woed god
And america was born
Where war became peace
And genocide patriotism
And honor is a happy slave
dause all god's chillun need rhythm
and glory hallelujah why can't peace
bestill

The great emancipator was a bigot
ain't they got no shame
And making the world safe for democracy
Were twenty million slaves
nah, they ain't got no shame

And they barbecued six million
To raise the price of beef
And cross the 16th parallel
To control the price of rice
ain't we never gonna see the light

And champagne was shipped out of the East
While kosher pork was introduced
To Africa
Only the torch can show the way

In the beginning was the deed
And the deed was death

And the honkies are getting confused
peace be still

So the great white prince
Was shot like a nigger in texas
And our Black shining prince was murdered
like that thug in his cathedral
While our nigger in memphis
was shot like their prince in dallas
and my lord
ain't we never gonna see the light
The rumblings of this peace must be stilled
be stilled be still

aah Black people
ain't we got no pride?
"The True Import of Present Dialogue
Black vs. Negro
(For Peppi, Who Will Ultimately Judge Our Efforts)"

Nigger
Can you kill
Can you kill
Can a nigger kill
Can a nigger kill a honkie
Can a nigger kill the Man
Can you kill nigger
Huh? nigger can you
kill
Do you know how to draw blood
Can you poison
Can you stab-a-jew
Can you kill huh? nigger
Can you kill
Can you run a protestant down with your
'68 El Dorado
(that's all they're good for anyway)
Can you kill
Can you piss on a blond head
Can you cut it off
Can you kill
A nigger can die
We ain't got to prove we can die
We got to prove we can kill
They sent us to kill
Japan and Africa
We policed europe
Can you kill
Can you kill a white man
Can you kill the nigger
in you
Can you make your nigger mind
die
And free your black hands to
strangle
Can you kill
Can a nigger kill
Can you shoot straight and
Fire for good measure
Can you splatter their brains in the street
Can you kill them
Can you lure them to bed to kill them
We kill in Viet Nam
for them
We kill for UN & NATO & SEATO & US
And everywhere for all alphabet but BLACK
Can we learn to kill WHITE for BLACK
Learn to kill niggers
Learn to be Black men
"Poem For My Nephew
(Brother C.B. Soul)"

i wish i were
a shadow
oh wow! when they put
the light on
me i'd grow
longer and taller and
BLACKER
"2nd Rapp"

they ain't gonna never get rap
he's a note turned himself into a million songs listen to aretha call his name
he's a light turned himself into our homes look how well we see since he came
he's a spirit turned pisces to aries alpha to omega
he's a man turned himself into Black women and we turn little hims loose on the world
"Kidnap Poem"

ever been kidnapped
by a poet
if i were a poet
i'd kidnap you
put you in my phrases and meter
you to jones beach
or maybe coney island
or maybe just to my house
lyric you in lilacs
dash you in the rain
blend into the beach
to complement my see
play the lyre for you
ode you with my love song
anything to win you
wrap you in the red Black green
show you off to mama
yeah if i were a poet i'd kid
nap you
"How Do You Write A Poem?"

how do you write a poem
about someone so close
to you that when you say ahhhh
they say chuuu
what can they ask you to put
on paper that isn't already written
on your face
and does the paper make it
any more real
that without them
life would be not
impossible but certainly
more difficult
and why would someone need
a poem to say when i come
home if you're not there
i search the air
for your scent
would i search any less
if i told the world
i don't care at all
and love is so complete
that touch or not we blend
to each other the things
that matter aren't all about
baaaanging (i can be baaaanged all
day long) but finding a spot
where i can be free
of all the physical
and emotional bullshit
and simply sit with a cup
of coffee and say to you
"i'm tired" don't you know
those are my love words
and say to you "how was your
day" doesn't that show
i care or say to you "we lost
a friend" and not want to share
that loss with strangers
don't you already know
what i feel and if
you don't maybe
i should check my feelings
"Revolutionary Dreams"

i used to dream militant
dreams of taking
over america to show
these white folks how it should be
done
i used to dream radical dreams
of blowing everyone away with my perceptive powers
of correct analysis
i even used to think i'd be the one
to stop the riot and negotiate the peace
then i awoke and dug
that if i dreamed natural
dreams of being a natural
woman doing what a woman
does when she's natural
i would have a revolution
"Nikki Roasa"

childhood rememberances are always a drag
if you're Black
you always remember things like living in Woodlawn
with no inside toilet
and if you become famous or something
they never talk about how happy you were to have your
mother
all to yourself and
how good the water felt when you got your bath from one
of those
big tubs that folk in chicago barbecue in
and somehow when you talk about home
it never gets across how much you
understood their feelings
as the whole family attended meetings about Hollydale
and even though you remember
your biographers never understand
your father's pain as he sells his stock
and another dream goes
and though you're poor it isn't poverty that
concerns you
and though they fought a lot
it isn't your father's drinking that makes any difference
but only that everybody is together and you
and your sister have happy birthdays and very good christ-
masses and I really hope no white person ever has cause to
write about me because they never understand Black love
is Black wealth and they'll probably talk about my hard
childhood and never understand that all the while I was
quite happy
"Dedication"

to tommy who:
eats chocolate cookies and lamb chops
climbs stairs and cries when i change
his diaper
lets me hold him only on his schedule
defined my nature
and gave me a new name (mommy)
which supersedes all others
controls my life
and makes me glad
that he does
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Articles


Reports


Encyclopedias


Miscellaneous