



# THE COURANT

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## EXHIBITION ON THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT WILL BE INSTALLED FOR THE SPRING SEMESTER OF 2008

We are planning an exhibition of manuscript and printed resources on the Black Arts Movement for the spring semester of 2008. Featuring the work of playwright and poet Amiri Baraka (b. 1934) and painter Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000), portions of both of whose manuscript collections are among our holdings, the exhibition will also include the work of dramatists (Ed Bullins, Ben Caldwell, Larry Neal, and Marvin X), illustrators (E. Simms Campbell, Emory Douglas, Elton Fax, and Oliver Harrington), novelists (Alice Childress, Cyrus Colter, Melvin Dixon, Ronald Fair, Arthur Flowers, Calvin C. Hernton, Chester B. Himes, Gayl Jones, Kristin Hunter Lattany, Clarence Major, Ishmael Reed, Melvin Van Peebles, Alice Walker, Margaret Walker, and John A. Williams), and poets (Alvin Aubert, Gwendolyn Brooks, Wanda Coleman, Sam Cornish, Nikki Giovanni, Lance Jeffers, Ted Joans, June Jordan, Sonia Sanchez, Joyce Carol Thomas, Lorenzo Thomas, and Al Young). Also on display will be a number of Black Arts Movement periodicals, including *Black Theatre*, *Hoo-Doo*, the *Journal of Black Poetry* (later *Kitabu Cha Jua*), *Quilt*, *Soulbook*, and *Y’Bird*.

The exhibit will suggest the relationship between the simultaneous establishment of a number of small presses devoted to authors of the African diaspora and the emergence of the Black Arts Movement. Our emphasis will be on Broadside Press, Third World Press, and an assortment of titles from British publisher Paul Breman’s Heritage Series. Founded in Detroit in 1965 by librarian and poet Dudley Randall, Broadside Press is intended “to foster within our community a passion for African American literature.” The press published broadsides, poetry, monographs, a critic’s series, and the journal *Black Position*. Poet and publisher Haki R. Madhubuti (formerly Don L. Lee) founded the Chicago-based Third World Press, which in 2007 celebrated its fortieth anniversary as an independent small press.



The second edition of *The Present Is a Dangerous Place to Live* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1993) by Keorapetse Kgositsile with a cover design by Craig Taylor. The author is a South African poet who lived in exile in the United States from 1952 until 1975.

### FEATURES

Director’s Note and Staff Focus . . . . .	page 2
Exhibitions. . . . .	page 3
Research Notes. . . . .	page 3
Recent Acquisitions . . . . .	page 7
Our Collections in Print. . . . .	page 10
Adopt-a-Book Program . . . . .	page 11

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.

*Romeo and Juliet* (2.2.43–44)

Ah, young Juliet. Soon after uttering these words, she would find herself forever martyred to the causes of semantics and—lest I forget—love. I would like to begin this column by asking you all to pause for a moment and consider what is actually in a name. If we take the 1887 acquisition of the Leopold von Ranke collection as a birth date, a rare book and manuscript library has existed at Syracuse University for one hundred and twenty years. During that time, we have been known by several names, including the von Ranke Library (1889), the Lena R. Arents Rare Book Room (1957), the George Arents Research Library (1969), the Department of Special Collections (1991), and now the Special Collections Research Center. What does it mean to call oneself a research center?

A “center” is quite simply a physical space. My goal for the Special Collections Research Center is for us to be a humanities laboratory. That is, the place on campus where students and faculty come to “experiment” with the most basic element of humanities research: original materials. Laboratories require tools such as petri dishes, Bunsen burners, and particle accelerators. With construction set to begin on the Antje Bultmann Lemke Seminar Room, we will bring our own tools—document cameras and interactive “smart panel” overlays for LCD monitors—to bear on our collections.

A research center must do more than invite use; it must actively recruit users. In this spirit, I am pleased to announce the Alexander N. Charters Adult Education Research Grants-in-Aid Program. Thanks to the generosity of the program's namesake, and Syracuse University Library Associate, Alex Charters, this endowed fund enables us to offer as much as four thousand dollars to scholars of adult education each year. For this inaugural year, we have assembled an expert panel of librarians and faculty to evaluate applications. We will announce recipients in early January. In the future, we hope to offer similar grants in design, architecture, radicalism, printing, the media, and even cartooning.

As a research center, we must also be ambassadors to our colleagues, both here at Syracuse and beyond. We must be willing to leave the comfortable, wood-paneled confines of our daily work environs and engage with scholars on their terms. I am looking forward to teaching an undergraduate course with the Renée Crown University Honors Program this spring. The course—*American Fear*—is intended to invite students to think about the historical bases of our current political climate, which is dominated by fear. Our reading will be wide ranging, from Puritan sermons to Cold War science

fiction, and students will be challenged to curate our summer 2008 exhibition. The goal of the course will be for students to conduct a collaborative “experiment” in the laboratory that is the Special Collections Research Center.

Let us return to Juliet Capulet. What is in a name? Certainly, names suffer the vagaries of taste. My own father began life with the modest moniker of Bruce Nelson. When he was thirteen, his mother changed his name to Ian MacLeod Graham Quimby. He spent the next sixty years leading a life more in keeping with that more exotic name. The lesson here is simple. A name is more than a label; it is a challenge. The most difficult part may be living up to it.

—Sean Quimby

## STAFF FOCUS

The position of the Dana Foundation fellow in the Special Collections Research Center is determined by a competitive application process open to currently enrolled graduate students at Syracuse University, and we are pleased to introduce our present fellow, Lauren Sodano. Lauren has already obtained her master's degree in museum studies and this academic year will complete her master's degree in art history. Given these impressive credentials, we are most enthusiastic about her assistance with the processing of manuscript collections and other departmental projects. In particular, Lauren is continuing work on the musical scores in the papers of Miklós Rózsa, the Academy Award-winning composer.

We are also delighted to welcome Elizabeth Bittner as a conservation intern for this academic year. Elizabeth is a conservation graduate student specializing in books and paper from the Kilgarlin Center for the Preservation of the Cultural Record, a division of the School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin. The Kilgarlin Center is the only program of its kind in the United States training future library conservators. In addition to treating items for the collections of the University of Texas, she has completed assessments for the Texas General Land Office, the archives of the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and the Milwaukee Public Museum. While at Syracuse, she will be conserving our Dewey classification holdings in the natural sciences. This range of materials holds many gems, but has not yet received any systematic attention. For Elizabeth, this will be an opportunity to learn about conservation planning and to gain experience treating a large number of rare items in need of extensive treatment. David Stokoe and Peter Verheyen will serve as her mentors.

We are also pleased to be able to report that Nicolette Schneider, our reference and access services librarian, was married recently. She should now be addressed as Nicolette A. Dobrowolski in your correspondence or other communications with her.

## E. S. BIRD LIBRARY EXHIBITIONS

All exhibitions in the sixth-floor gallery of E. S. Bird Library are open between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, with the exception of holidays. For more details, please consult our Web site at <http://scrc.syr.edu/>.

### *Amidst the Books: Artifacts from the Collections*

1 May 2007–31 May 2008

In the interest of having a semipermanent installation in the exhibit cases in our reading room, a selection of artifacts was made from our manuscript collections. Some of these objects may remain in the space longer than the suggested terminus in May because they are less vulnerable to light damage than others. An example of one object in this category is Rudyard Kipling's Remington portable typewriter.

### *The Never-Ending Wrong: The Execution of Sacco and Vanzetti*

24 August 2007–16 January 2008

We will commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the execution for murder of two Italian anarchist laborers, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, with an exhibition entitled *The Never-Ending Wrong: The Execution of Sacco and Vanzetti*. The exhibit will include a selection of period ephemera issued by the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee together with an array of books associated with the trial and published in the intervening years by Paul Avrich, Felix Frankfurter, and Eugene Lyons, among others. The exhibit will feature artistic expressions (cartoons, illustrations, novels, plays, poems, songs, and music) inspired by the trial, including the work of Maxwell Anderson, John Dos Passos, Fred Ellis, Howard Fast, William Gropper, Woody Guthrie, Rockwell Kent, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Katherine Anne Porter, Pete Seeger, and Upton Sinclair. It will also explore the story of the Sacco and Vanzetti mosaic by Ben Shahn on the east wall of H. B. Crouse Hall on the Syracuse University quadrangle.

### *The Black Arts Movement*

21 January 2008–31 May 2008

The exhibition will feature the work of playwright and poet Amiri Baraka (b. 1934) and painter Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000), portions of both of whose manuscript collections are among our holdings. It will also include the work of dramatists, illustrators, novelists, and poets. Also on display will be a number of Black Arts Movement literary periodicals, including *Black Theatre*, *Hoo-Doo*, the *Journal of Black Poetry* (later *Kitabu Cha Jua*), *Quilt*, *Soulbook*, and *Y'Bird*. The exhibit will suggest the relationship between the establishment of a number of small presses devoted to authors of the African diaspora and the emergence of the Black Arts Movement.

### *The Syracuse Connection to the Armenian Independence Movement*

26 November 2007–16 January 2008

A two-part exhibition on this topic is available in the library's Special Collections Research Center and in the Panasci Lounge of the Hildegard and J. Myer Schine Student Center. The exhibit concerns the Armenian independence movement (1915–20), in which Syracuse University and many local citizens were involved. On display are photographs and documents provided by Robert Koolakian, a 1966 graduate of Syracuse University's College of Arts and Sciences, whose grandfather, George Koolakian, played a confidential but crucial role in the effort to establish an independent Republic of Armenia after World War I.

The exhibit was mounted in conjunction with Robert Koolakian's lecture entitled "Struggle for Justice: Central New York's Link to the Quest for Armenian Independence," presented on 27 November 2007 in E. S. Bird Library. The talk, part of the Syracuse Symposium series, was sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences and the university library. Robert Koolakian's forthcoming book, *Struggle for Justice: A Story of the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia, 1915–1920*, will be published by the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

## BRODSKY PROJECT UPDATE

Our conservation lab had as its 2007 summer interns Ariel Ecklund and Lauren Sodano supported by the Brodsky Endowment for the Advancement of Library Conservation. Both were students in the museum studies program of the College of Visual and Performing Arts. The internship provided both with hands-on experience in the rehousing and repair of volumes in a special collections environment. In the case of Ariel Ecklund, her work creating an inventory for the Clara Sipprell Collection of photographic negatives revealed a dramatic increase in the number of deteriorating negatives since the collection was last inventoried twenty years ago. Her findings were incorporated into the organization and assessment required for preparing a grant proposal to digitize those negatives in the collection that are still in reasonably good condition.

## RESEARCH NOTES: ON FIRST LOOKING INTO THE ARNA BONTEMPS PAPERS BY RICHARD COURAGE

By imposing interpretive frames and temporal boundaries, the cultural historian attempts—however arrogantly or quixotically—to impose some order and find some meaning in the messy reality of other people's lived experience. One such project brought me recently to the Special Collections

Research Center to spend three and one-half days exploring the papers of Arna Bontemps.

*Lost Renaissance: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1930–1950* is a book begun some years ago by my mentor, Robert Bone. Too ill to continue, he has passed the project on to me, and for about fifteen months, I have worked to complete it. *Lost Renaissance* focuses on the remarkable achievements of a generation of black artists on the South Side of Chicago in the period following the Harlem Renaissance. A quick (and abbreviated) list of the key figures will convey some sense of the period's importance. In music and dance, there were Katherine Dunham, Earl Hines, Mahalia Jackson, and Muddy Waters. In the visual arts, there were Archibald Motley, Gordon Parks, and Charles White. In literature, there were Arna Bontemps, Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker, and Richard Wright. In the background loomed the Great Migration, the Depression, the New Deal, World War II, and the early years of the Cold War.

Arna Wendell Bontemps (1902–73) is an especially interesting figure. As a poet, novelist, playwright, lyricist, children's writer, anthologist, teacher, librarian, critic, editor, folklorist, biographer, and historian, he had careers and accomplishments enough for several people. He lived a relatively long life (long lived, that is, for a black man in the United States) and resided in nearly every region of the country. He held responsible positions in private schools, a government agency, and universities, and published some forty books.

His career spanned three especially fertile periods of African American cultural work, and he had connections with artists active in all three movements. He won awards for his poetry and participated in the Harlem Renaissance. While living in Chicago for eight years, he published his second and third novels and several children's books, took part in a writers group organized by Richard Wright, and was an editorial supervisor with the Federal Writers' Project. In later years, he became a mentor to and a correspondent with important figures in the Black Arts Movement.

In all honesty, however, I could have written all of the above without setting foot in Syracuse, but let me try to describe some of the results of my having delved into the Bontemps papers. Three and one-half days were barely enough time to scuff the surface of the collection of 41.75 linear feet. Thanks to the remarkable finding aid, my search could be focused, and I examined most of the approximately one hundred folders on my list.

On a good day, archival work is a treasure hunt; on a bad day, it can be a snipe hunt. As my allotted time was running out, I began to feel the gambler's desperate urge—just one more box, one more folder, and I will leave as a winner. Here is one of the treasures that made the trip worthwhile. It was a letter from Arna Bontemps to Harold Jackman dated 11



The image by E. Simms Campbell on the dust jacket of *Popo and Fifina, Children of Haiti* (New York: Macmillan, 1932) by Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes. Campbell also provided illustrations to accompany the text of the volume. While Bontemps and Hughes collaborated on many projects, this was their first joint children's book according to the dust jacket. The Arna Bontemps Papers are among the manuscript collections in the Special Collections Research Center.

November 1941: "*Native Son* opened here last night to a kind of audience it could never have in N.Y. Negroes had taken over the entire house as a benefit for the Good Shepherd Community Church. Only a sprinkling of whites got in, the result being that they giggled all through the early scenes, particularly during Mary Dalton's advances, and went wild during the final speech of Max, the lawyer. Some of them even shouted from the balcony, 'Tell 'em 'bout it!' Altogether it was a lovely night."

One chapter of *Lost Renaissance* focuses on a question posed by Wright in his Marxist literary manifesto *Blueprint for Negro Writing*: "Shall Negro writing be for the Negro masses?" His question was connected with the urbanization of southern peasants; with greater literacy, communal self-awareness, and combativeness as epitomized by Chicago's South Side; and with the work of African American artists

coming of age during the Depression. In the passage above, one Harlem Renaissance veteran conveys to another a sense of the excitement associated with a new mood and a new generation. At its center is a live audience's reaction to the stage version of Wright's first novel, whose critical and commercial success was a milestone for African American letters.

The Jackman folder was typical of the dichotomy of the treasure hunt/snipe hunt. While my high hopes for great discoveries in the papers of such poets as Sterling Brown and Gwendolyn Brooks were disappointed, the Bontemps/Jackman correspondence proved surprisingly rich. It was typical of archival material in which extended personal letters bring people, careers, and relationships to life. Like many papers of this sort, it ends with the inevitable obituary or memorial program because Bontemps outlived so many friends and colleagues. There is sometimes an inescapable sadness that hovers over archival work.

Another noteworthy result is the retrieval of missing pieces that helps scholars solve historical puzzles. For example, Bontemps supervised a study for the Writers' Project called *The Negro in Illinois*. Research and writing took nearly five years and involved over a hundred project employees, but the book was never published. The manuscript itself was apparently lost. However, as the project began shutting down in 1943, Bontemps and others somehow managed to salvage the research files, which are preserved in the Chicago Public Library's Vivian Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature. I have examined some of those fifty-three boxes in the Harsh collection, and they provide much useful historical material, but no clues as to the actual process by which the files arrived in the hands of librarian Vivian Harsh. I was aware of a parallel situation at the Federal Art Project, where much of the art produced by its employees was lost, destroyed, stolen, or even sold as scrap canvas as that agency was rapidly terminated to divert resources to the war effort. At one point, I had imagined Bontemps and perhaps a colleague or two entering the Writers' Project office in the middle of the night, boldly appropriating the files, and moving them box by box into his car, but that would have been totally out of character for this cautious, scholarly gentleman.

The papers reveal a less dramatic but more plausible scenario. The Julius Rosenwald Fund had cosponsored the study (a typical federal arrangement) and was apparently in a position to lay claim to ownership of the files. For its part, the Federal Writers' Project, which had morphed into the Writers Unit of the Works Progress Administration, was a dying agency willingly relieved of one small part of its larger burden of paper disposal. Orderly transfer and preservation of the files was arranged by the Rosenwald Fund officers working in concert with the George Cleveland Hall Branch Library.

I will end with several brief excerpts that suggest much about Arna Bontemps, his friends, and colleagues. William Haygood, the director of fellowships at the Rosenwald Fund, wrote to Arna Bontemps on 18 April 1942, awarding a grant of \$2,400 "to assist you in carrying forward your studies in library science at the University of Chicago for a twelve-month period." Bontemps, then a father of six children, who had struggled for more than a decade to find a secure professional position, made this response to Haygood on 20 April 1942: "I accept with ecstasy."

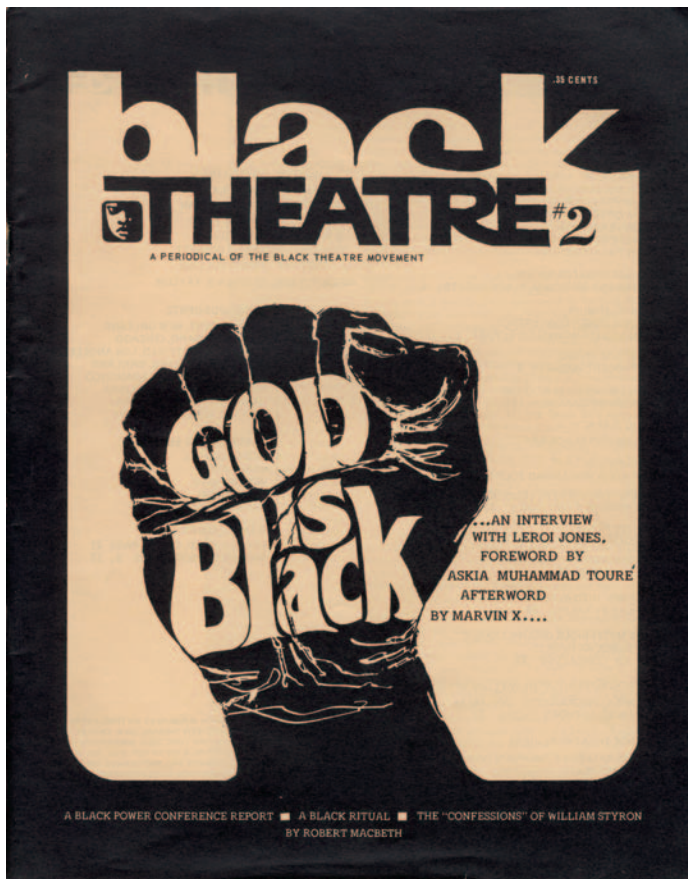
Haygood also wrote an undated Christmas card to Bontemps in the middle of the 1950s that made reference to a novel on which Haygood was working: "This one . . . grew out of notes made long ago at the Fund, which once you read. I wonder if you realize how many people you've encouraged along this way?"

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When we acquired material relating to African American poet Everett Leroy (later LeRoi) Jones in 1966, it was largely based upon his coeditorship with Hettie Cohen (later Mrs. LeRoi Jones) of *Yūgen*, and his coeditorship with Diane Di Prima of *Floating Bear*, another early avant-garde literary journal. *Yūgen* was subtitled "a new consciousness in arts and letters," and the Japanese word *yūgen* "means elegance, beauty, grace, transcendence of these things, and also nothing at all." Published from 1958 to 1962, *Yūgen* ran for eight issues and included the work of Paul Blackburn, William Burroughs, Gregory Corso, Robert Creeley, Edward Dahlberg, Fielding Dawson, Diane Di Prima, Allen Ginsberg, Barbara Guest, Jack Kerouac, Walter Lowenfels, Michael McClure, Jack Micheline, Frank O'Hara, Charles Olson, Gary Snyder, Gilbert Sorrentino, Philip Whalen, John Wieners, and William Carlos Williams, among others. Extending to two and one-half linear feet, the LeRoi Jones Papers consist not only of the correspondence and manuscripts of its contributors, but also a selection of Jones's typescripts and published writings, including essays, book manuscripts, book and music reviews, play scripts, and poems.

Born in 1934 in Newark, New Jersey, Jones, who later changed his name to Imamu Amiri Baraka, is also represented in our editorial files for Grove Press, which published the second collection of his poems, *The Dead Lecturer*, following his *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note*, published in 1961 by Totem/Corinth. A volume containing two Baraka plays was also published in 1964, the same year that he received the ninth annual Obie Award for the best American play produced off-Broadway during the 1963/1964 season (*Dutchman*). The year 1967 also brought two additional Grove Press volumes



The cover of number two (c1969) of *Black Theatre* edited by Ed Bullins.

to print, an Evergreen play script production of *The Baptism* and *The Toilet*, as well as a collection of short stories, *Tales*. Among the last letters in the Grove Press editorial files relating to LeRoi Jones is a reference to Jones's 1967 arrest and his wish to cancel a contract for his *Black Magic* because he felt that the publisher was "taking advantage of him in offering him such a low advance as \$500." A sympathetic reply from Grove Press editor Richard Seaver perhaps confirms this suspicion: "We know that Roi is going through a difficult period and we certainly don't want to do anything that would make it more difficult." Referring to an advance, Seaver makes this concession: "Please tell Roi to keep it and if ever he should change his mind about our doing this book, or any other book of his, we'll be open to discussion."

Four decades after our acquisition of the Grove Press Archive, we purchased a group of documents that further illuminates Jones's arrest on the charge of weapons possession during the Newark racial unrest in July 1967. Between the time of Jones's arrest and his sentencing to a prison term of up to three years, a number of writers, led by *American Dialog* editors Walter Lowenfels and Joseph North, sent letters to Louis Kapp, the presiding judge, protesting Jones's treatment (he required hospitalization following a beating after his arrest) and sentence (later reversed on appeal). There are minutes of a meeting held in January 1968 to coordinate the various

groups, including P.E.N., active on Jones's behalf. Noting the support of the Brooklyn Congress of Racial Equality and the newly formed United Black Artists Committee, the report tentatively suggests that "The tendency of this meeting was to ignore white support." Also among this group of documents is a press release announcing a 12 March benefit concert at Town Hall for the legal defense of artists "who have as a direct result of their artistic statements become embroiled in legal action." The release goes on to reveal that the nonprofit Legal Defense Fund for Artistic Freedom benefit chaired by Sammy Davis Jr. would be attended by James Baldwin, Paddy Chayefsky, Allen Ginsberg, Nat Hentoff, Norman Mailer, Loften Mitchell, Dionne Warwick, and Arnold Weinstein, with Ossie Davis as the master of ceremonies. Also among the documents is a manuscript draft of an essay that appeared in the spring 1968 issue (number five of volume one) of *American Dialog* that ends with an appeal for financial aid on behalf of the LeRoi Jones Defense Fund.

This handful of documents in a sense characterizes the extent of racial tensions in the late 1960s that arose from the assassination of Malcolm X and the urban unrest that had spread among American cities. It is also sobering to note in retrospect that such tensions existed prior to the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. on 4 April 1968.



Adding to our African American resources, we purchased the typescript for "Ten One-Act Plays" by Ed Bullins. A Philadelphia native, Bullins was born in 1935 and began writing plays in the mid-1960s that explored the disillusionment and frustration of ghetto life. A militant member of the Black Arts Movement, Bullins wrote expressly for and about blacks, and advocated cultural separation between the races. Bullins served as resident playwright and associate editor of Robert Macbeth's New Lafayette Theatre in Harlem, New York, and between 1968 and 1972, edited *Black Theatre*, which published the work of Amiri Baraka, Ben Caldwell, Wanda Coleman, Woodie King, Larry Neal, Sonia Sanchez, Askia M. Touré, and Marvin X, among others. Despite his rejection of white aesthetic standards, Bullins won the praise of mainstream critics, and during the 1970s, was the recipient of three Off-Broadway (Obie) Awards and a Drama Critics Circle Award for distinguished playwriting as well as playwriting grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Although our typescript bears no date, it contains some of the plays for which Bullins received awards through the 1960s, including *How Do You Do*, *Dialect Determinism*, and *It Has No Choice*. Others among the group of ten play scripts may well have been produced under different titles in revised versions. Yet the manuscript also has an added (and expected) link to our Grove Press records, among which is a book

proposal by “reader and finder” John Lahr for “Ten Short Plays” by Ed Bullins. Citing *The Corner*, *The Gentleman Caller*, *A Minor Scene*, and *The Man Who Dug Fish*, all of which are in our typescript, Lahr reports that “The interesting thing about these plays—which are not uniformly good—is that they were written for a black audience—and have a tone, sense of caricature, and attitude toward the foibles of their own race that often does not come out in white liberal writing on the black experience.” Further on, Lahr concludes that “I really feel he will develop as a writer; and with him associated with Grove you can attract a great many black, radical artists who are really the only ones doing interesting things at the moment.” Although there is also a letter of 19 February 1970 from Grove Press editor Fred Jordan to Bullins that outlines the specifications of a proposed contract, there is no evidence that Bullins signed an agreement. *Four Dynamite Plays* by Bullins was published by William Morrow in 1972.

We also purchased a Bullins manuscript dated January 1971. Dedicated to Brother Martin Luther King Jr., this work entitled “Miss Marie” is further identified as “#4 of the Twentieth Century Cycle.”



For the past several years, we have been collecting Federal Theatre Project materials, including Play Bureau publications, play scripts, programs, issues of the *Living Newspaper*, and the project’s short-lived (1935–38) bulletin, *Federal Theatre*. Among our recent acquisitions is the program for the “Negro Unit” production of William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Arranged and staged by Orson Welles, the production featured Canada Lee as Banquo and Maurice Ellis as Macbeth, and the program’s synopsis of scenes indicates an alternation between “The Palace” and “The Jungle.” The program also notes that the Negro Unit Orchestra was conducted by Joe Jordan, and that the overture, composed and performed by James P. Johnson, was titled *Yamekraw*, “a genuine Negro treatise on spiritual, syncopated, and blues melodies expressing the religious fervor and happy moods of the natives of Yamekraw, a Negro settlement situated on the outskirts of Savannah, Georgia. It is believed to be the first Negro rhapsody.” Known as one of the originators of the “stride style” (a transition from ragtime to jazz piano), the African American pianist and composer James Price Johnson (1894–1955) is probably best remembered for his “Charleston,” the musical composition that came to define the Roaring Twenties.

The April 1936 issue of *Federal Theatre* that we purchased several weeks later occasioned this *New York Herald Tribune* headline: “3,000 Jam Harlem Street to See W.P.A.’s ‘Macbeth.’” Although noting the absence of a disturbance, the article goes on to record that the Negro cast at the Seventh Avenue and 131st Street Lafayette Theatre “drew such an overflow crowd” that an emergency police squad was summoned to clear the



A depiction of one of the costumes designed by Nat Karson and executed “in our own workshop” for the production of *Macbeth* arranged and staged by Orson Welles for the W.P.A.’s “Negro Unit.” It appeared in the April 1936 issue of *Federal Theatre*.

street. The issue also featured a two-page color spread of costumes designed for the production by Nat Karson and executed “in our own workshop.”

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

We recently received a donation of books from Wendy Bousfield. The volumes in question are *Lives of the Necromancers* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1835), a curious “account of the most eminent persons in successive ages, who have claimed for themselves, or to whom has been imputed by others, the exercise of magical power” by William Godwin, the husband of Mary Wollstonecraft and the father of Mary Shelley, and *The Gift* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, n.d.). The latter book is a miscellaneous compilation of small prose and verse pieces and has a note on the paste-down on the inside front cover that maintains that “The Purloined Letter” by Edgar Allan Poe contained within is the second printed version of this work. Both of these volumes are excellent additions to our permanent holdings.



We also had another wonderful donation of printed material from David Tatham and Cleota Reed. This consisted of a portfolio in yellow wrappers of fifteen maps and plates that

pertain to the Adirondacks and the Genesee River; a letter dated 17 September 1974 from Edward Comstock Jr., assistant curator of the Adirondack Museum, to David Tatham (with a letter dated 5 November 1973 from William K. Verner, chief curator of the Adirondack Museum, to H. Ward Jandl discussing the importance of the content of the portfolio); *The Inward Eye* (New York: Scribners, 1952) by Peggy Bacon and inscribed by the author to Mary Petty and Alan Dunn with an accompanying original illustration; *The Oddity* (New York: Pantheon, c1962) by Peggy Bacon and inscribed by the author to Mary Petty and Alan Dunn; *The SP Century: Boston's Society of Printers through One Hundred Years of Change* (Boston: Society of Printers and the Boston Public Library in association with Oak Knoll Press, c2006) edited by Scott-Martin Kosofsky; and *Reaching* (Northridge, Calif.: Santa Susana Press of the California State University at Northridge Libraries, 1979) by George P. Elliott and illustrated by Irving Block. This last item was number eighty-nine of an edition of three hundred numbered copies and was signed on the colophon page by both the poet and the illustrator. These are all most welcome additions to our permanent collections: the Peggy Bacon items are charming; the volume on the Society of Printers and the limited-edition book of poetry are most appropriate for our holdings on printing history; and we absolutely concur with William K. Verner's assertion that the plates in the portfolio are "among the most important relative to the iconography of the Adirondack region."



Our recent acquisition of *Wild Scenes in the Forest and Prairie* (New York: William H. Colyear, 1843) by Charles Fenno Hoffman serves as a splendid complement to the Adirondack and Genesee River portfolio that was just mentioned. An extract (pp. 49–50) that deals with Mount Marcy captures the spirit of the volume quite nicely:

The group of wild hills among which the Hudson rises, stands wholly detached from any other chain in North America. The highest peak of the Adirondachs [*sic*], or the Black Mountains, as some call them, from the dark aspect which their sombre cedars and frowning cliffs give them at a distance, was measured during last summer, and found to be nearly six thousand feet in height.

Mount Marcy, as it has been christened, after the public functionary who first suggested the survey of this interesting region, presents a perfect pyramidal top, when viewed from Lake Sandford. Its alpine climate is very different from that prevailing in the valleys below; and I observed its cone sheathed in snow one day, when I found the water temperate enough to enjoy swimming in the lake. The effect was equally beautiful and sublime. The frost had here and there flecked the forest with orange

and vermilion, touching a single sumach or a clump of maples at long intervals; but generally the woods displayed as yet but few autumnal tints: and the deep verdure of the adjacent mountains set off the snowy peak in such high contrast, soaring, as it did, far above them, and seeming to pierce, as it were, the blue sky which curtained them, that the poetic Indian epithet of TA-HA-WUS (*he splits the sky*) was hardly too extravagant to characterize its peculiar grandeur.



In the fall of 1856, the financier and philanthropist George Peabody (1795–1869) returned to the United States from London, where his many business enterprises were based. The purpose of his trip was to reconnect with some of his relations, tour throughout the country, and extend some of his benefactions. With funds generously donated by the Library Associates, we were able to acquire a marvelously detailed letter that describes a fishing excursion that George Peabody and his nephew Robert Singleton Peabody (1837–1904) heartily enjoyed in the Thousand Islands. The twelve-page letter was written from Clayton, New York, by the nephew to his fiancée, Margaret Goddard, and conveys the recreational part of one of George Peabody's rare visits to America:

This is the tenth day since I left home,—i.e. Rutland—& I have had a most delightful time ever since. I have thus far gone out every day with my uncle. We are the only ones who can go in a boat except the single oarsman, who goes with such boat. My uncle has the middle seat facing the stern,—I the one behind facing him. He has two lines, one on each side of the boat, & I one, running directly out from the stern. The boatman rows slowly over the water, in and out among the beautiful islands scattered like gems in the surface of this most noble river, & whenever a fish takes hold we draw it in,—“hand over hand,” that is with the usual trolling lines— & the boatman takes it off. The other day our two boats caught over 100 lbs. of pike or pickerel & bass. We could easily have increased the amount. The ladies here are among the best & most constant fishers—for the boats are wide roomy, & comfortable, & perfectly clean & dry, so that you could wear any dress however nice, without fear of injury. Immediately after breakfast in the morning, at about seven o'clk, we take our overcoats, fishing tackle, provisions &c, & start off for fishing grounds five, ten, or even more miles from here, trolling all the way, & landing whenever we choose in the facing islands scattered in every direction. The boatmen agree before starting, where all those in the party will meet to take their picnic dinner & about twelve we go on shore, & the oarsmen prepare dinner, after building a fire to cook the chowder with. They are

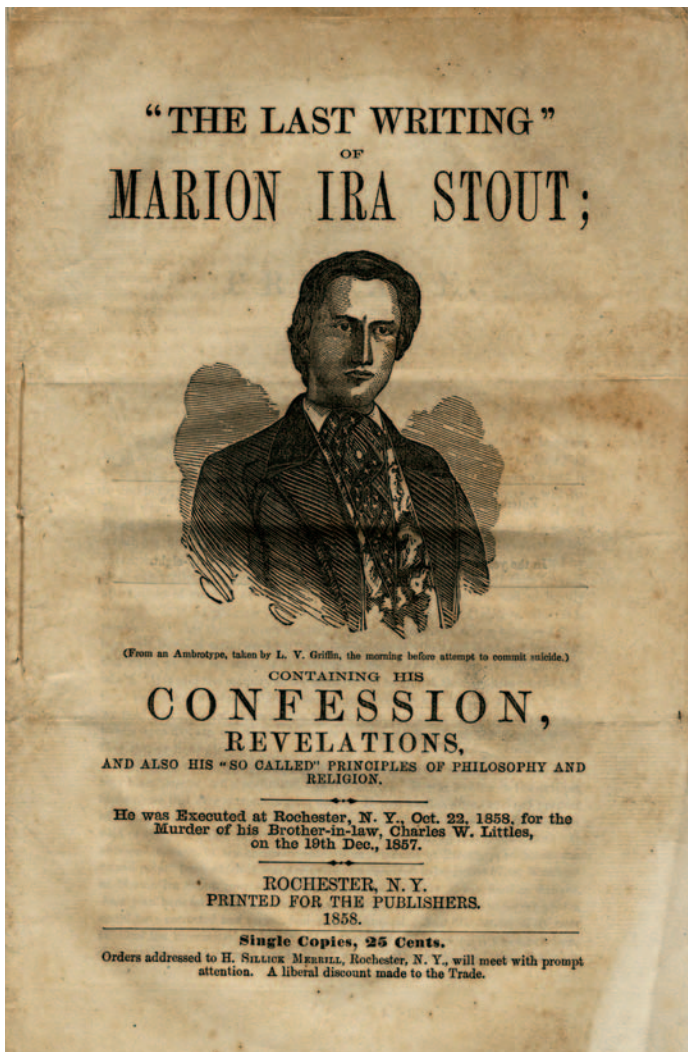


capital cooks, & the appetite one acquires by a fish of five or six hours, & a fast of equal length, is amazing. Our landlord evidently understands the wants of visitors for he puts up splendid dinners, with especial regard for the tastes & wants of every individual, & a more accommodating man I never met. We usually spend about three hours on shore, & the places where we dine are selected with reference to their beauty & comfort, & by the men who are acquainted with the most beautiful spots in the river. I consider this part,—exclusive of the dinners,—which is no small consideration in this latitude,—to be the pleasantest part of our daily life. The change from the boat & the constant rocking on the water, under a sun, often very powerful, to the delightful shade & coolness of the islands, where there is always a grateful breeze & the most beautiful views, renders this more pleasing than if onshore all the time. We do have merry times during our meal, for we have enough to talk about in the morning's sport, & experience. After about three hours on shore, during which time it is almost useless to fish, as they will not bite, we start out again, and fish for about four or five hours so as get home about half past seven or eight, when we get our tea, & mail. We do not get through until about eight or half past & then the different parties meet in the piazza, a parlor of our hotel & compare notes, for each day brings something new—a great “catch” of bass, or pickerel, a water spout, or “squall,” or perhaps a muscalunge, the king fish of the river & whenever one is caught, the lucky boat comes in with a white flag at the bow, & another is hoisted in the wharf or hotel at its arrival. Sometimes a little music comes in, or a boat race, of which we have had several, or some racing matches on land fill up the evening so that we seldom get to bed before twelve or one o'clock, & often later. You can see that our time is pretty well filled up since everyday is much like the last.



We were also able to purchase with the generous assistance of the Library Associates a marvelous cache of twelve letters associated with Ebenezer Meriam (1794–1864), a meteorologist, pamphleteer, and philanthropist, who was supplying support for schools on the Onondaga and Oneida Indian reservations. This lot was of particular interest to us because eight of the letters were written by the Reverend Samuel J. May (1797–1871), the New England Unitarian minister and reformer who relocated to Syracuse in 1845. The urgency of the problem that May is confronting is revealed in a letter of 26 November 1855 to Meriam: “I shall be most happy to make the best use, in my power, of the money you may be pleased to send me for the benefit of the Indian children. Some of them are so destitute of clothing that they cannot attend school.” The letter

from May to Meriam was efficacious, as another one from May to Meriam dated 29 December confirms: “I returned today from the East, whither I went a fortnight ago, to deliver lectures in Salem, Providence and Boston—and found your favor of 26<sup>th</sup> enclosing a check for one hundred dollars to be expended in purchasing clothes for those children who attend the Indian School. I have already taken some steps towards the accomplishment of your benevolent purpose—and in due time will send you a full and exact account of my doings.” A letter from May to Meriam dated 19 January 1856 confirms that they have further plans in common: “I am glad you are thinking of a Farm School on the Reservation, and I am happy to inform you that a commencement has already been made. The present teacher, W<sup>m</sup> Tibbits has hired a number of acres of the Indians and is cultivating them. He employs Indian laborers—and if he can receive some further aid from the Legislature, he will enlarge his operations—and engage to employ only Indians.—I shall in a few days make a communication to the Superintendent of Public Instruction on the subject.” May feels compelled to conclude this letter with the acknowledgment that he has been somewhat overextended in his efforts with the Indians: “You will see that I have had enough to do the past year—so much indeed that I have been obliged to neglect my ministerial duties—and must hereafter decline to hold the offices I have held in the Indian Department. I shall still retain my connection with the Mission—and my interest in the Tribe—but some other person or persons must be found to take the care and official responsibility.” In another letter to Meriam on 31 January, however, May provides a more detailed account of the school and farm on the Onondaga Reservation: “I am much inclined to favor your plan of instituting on our Reservation, a Farm school. It can be done—at least the experiment can be commenced at small expense. There is already there a good dwelling house, barn, well and cistern. Indeed Mr Tibbits—the present teacher—has already gone somewhat into farming operations. And if the Legislature would appropriate \$450 or \$500 instead of the last sum, Mr Tibbits would be enabled, he thinks, to carry on his day school in Summer by a good female assistant—while he was giving his principal attention to the Farm—and in winter would devote himself to the School—together with his assistant.—I really think well of his project, and believe the Legislature could not make proper provisions for the young of this Tribe at so cheap a rate.” Samuel J. May was, of course, best known for his abolitionist work, but as this gathering of correspondence amply demonstrates, he was involved in many of the reform movements of the mid-nineteenth century. An examination of May's communications with Gerrit Smith located in the Gerrit Smith Papers in our holdings confirms this.



The title page of *“The Last Writing” of Marion Ira Stout; Containing His Confession, Revelations, and Also His “So Called” Principles of Philosophy and Religion* (Rochester: H. Sillick Merrill, 1858). The caption below the image reads as follows: “From an Ambrotype, taken by L. V. Griffin, the morning before attempt to commit suicide.”

In addition to our cluster of correspondence relating to the Reverend Samuel J. May’s involvement with the education of Native American children on the Onondaga and Oneida reservations, we also just obtained a letter dated 24 July 1832 to May from Noah Worcester (1758–1837), a theologian who created the *Friend of Peace*, a pacifist journal. The twelfth volume of the *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1943) describes May as “a disciple of the venerable Noah Worcester in the movement for universal peace, writing and speaking much in its favor.” May, in fact, founded the Windham County (Connecticut) Peace Society in 1826. This communication would have been written to May when he was the pastor of a Unitarian church in Brooklyn, Connecticut, and alludes to May’s loan of two papers to Worcester presumably for the purpose of extracting some of their content. Worcester’s last major publication was entitled *Last Thoughts on Important Subjects*, and it appeared

in 1833. Worcester also inquires about a tract intended to be written by May and distributed at a convention in New Haven.

We recently purchased *“The Last Writing” of Marion Ira Stout; Containing His Confession, Revelations, and Also His “So Called” Principles of Philosophy and Religion*. This pamphlet published in Rochester, New York, in 1858 by H. Sillick Merrill was irresistible because Stout was convicted of perhaps the most sensational nineteenth-century murder in the city. He allegedly conspired with his sister to lure her husband, Charles W. Little, to the High Falls of the Genesee River in Rochester where Stout bludgeoned Little to death and attempted to dispose of the body in the river. Both Stout and his sister, however, were hurt in the process of removing the body from a rock ledge where it had become lodged, and these injuries were partially responsible for their convictions. When one considers the strong suggestion of incest between Stout and his sister as one of the motivations for the crime, the story of the murder of Charles Little becomes more understandable as one of the most notorious in the city’s history. (It is also conjectured that Stout feared that Little would reveal his criminal past.) Stout provided his own explanation of his actions (p. 18): “I have indeed grossly erred, but my errors originated more in the regard and affection I had for others, than from any personal motives.” Even Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony would become involved in this saga as a result of their opposition to the death penalty.

## OUR COLLECTIONS IN PRINT

Many books, articles, and other publications appear each year that are substantially based on research conducted in our collections. We call attention here to a few works that we have recently received and encourage all of our researchers to keep us informed of their publication activities.

*Captured Motion: The Sculpture of Harriet Whitney Frishmuth. A Catalogue of Works* by Janis Connor, Leah Rosenblatt Lehmbeck, and Thayer Tolles was published by Hohmann Holdings of New York in 2006. Harriet Whitney Frishmuth (1880–1980) was an early twentieth-century American artist and sculptor best known for her bronze female nude art. This book is an authoritative study of Frishmuth’s life and artwork. Included in this volume of 296 pages are essays by Janis Connor and Thayer Tolles, two specialists prominent in the field of American sculpture. The essays cover her biography and her association with her foundries, especially the Gorham Company. The book is supplemented with an illustrated catalog documenting 155 sculptures, including those that are somewhat obscure, and a chronology of Frishmuth’s life and work, both compiled by Leah Rosenblatt Lehmbeck.

Within our Harriet Frishmuth Papers, there exists correspondence, photographs, blueprints, sketches of her work, personal mementos, scrapbooks, and publications. Also included are art works such as glass plates, paintings, and sculptures. Over thirty images from our collections were used in the publication, including images of Frishmuth, her sculpture, and various papers. Both Lehmebeck and Connor visited our facility for their research in the Frishmuth papers.



In 1956, *Time* magazine called Marcel Breuer (1902–81) one of the “form-givers” of the twentieth century. As a student of the Bauhaus school, Breuer began designing tubular furniture but quickly utilized his sharp sense of proportion, shape, and material to become one of the most important architects of the twentieth century. A new installment in the Taschen Basic Architectural Series (*Marcel Breuer, 1902–1981: Form Giver of the Twentieth Century* [Köln, Germany: Taschen, 2007] by Arnt Cobbers) provides an introduction to the design and architectural career of Marcel Breuer. This ninety-six-page reference volume contains a biographical introduction, numerous grayscale and four-color images of Breuer’s most famous architectural structures from the 1920s to the 1970s, and supplementary descriptive text. Also included is an appendix with a chronological list of his works and a map indicating the locations of the featured structures.

Some of his most notable buildings spotlighted in this publication are the abbey and campus of St. John’s University in Minnesota (1953–61), the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris (1952–58), and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City (1963–66). His life and work are still discussed today, and his designs and concepts are considered relevant in contemporary architecture. The National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., is displaying an exhibition entitled *Marcel Breuer: Design and Architecture* that will be in place between 3 November 2007 and 17 February 2008.

We are the primary repository for Marcel Breuer’s Papers. His papers include correspondence, drawings, plans, blueprints and other architectural drawings, and business records. Several images from our Marcel Breuer Papers were included in this publication. We recently digitized and placed online selected unpublished and little-known architectural drawings and sketches by Breuer revealing the beginning stages of his creative process.



“*Something on My Own*”: *Gertrude Berg and American Broadcasting, 1929–1956* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), a biography of the actress Gertrude Berg (1899–1966) by Glenn D. (“Pete”) Smith Jr., chronicles Berg’s accomplishments in theater, film, and literature throughout three decades. Smith explores Berg’s life and work and how both influenced radio and television broadcast history. As an actress, Berg is

most famous for starring on radio as the Jewish housewife Molly Goldberg in *The Rise of the Goldbergs* for which she was the creator, star, writer, and producer. In addition to radio, Berg was active in theater, television, and the movies. She also wrote a cookbook (*The Molly Goldberg Cookbook*) in 1955 and her autobiography (*Molly and Me*) in 1961.

We are the primary repository for the Gertrude Berg Papers. These papers consist of nearly one hundred linear feet of correspondence, clippings, scrapbooks, interviews, and radio and television scripts, including those from the productions of *The Rise of the Goldbergs* and *House of Glass*. The Berg papers support multidisciplinary research in the areas of Jewish American history, women’s history, and radio/television broadcasting history. Glenn D. (“Pete”) Smith Jr. is currently an assistant professor of communication at Mississippi State University. He visited our facility in 1998 to research the Berg papers extensively. This biography reflects this research along with interviews he conducted with Berg’s family members and colleagues. Smith’s dissertation (“*It’s Your America*”: *Gertrude Berg and American Broadcasting, 1929–1956*) was awarded the 2005 Margaret A. Blanchard Doctoral Dissertation Prize by the American Journalism Historians Association.

#### ADOPT-A-BOOK PROGRAM

A portfolio of political cartoons by the African American artist Oliver Harrington still within its original shrink-wrapping was listed in a dealer’s catalog, and we immediately ordered it. This is entitled *Soul Shots: Political Cartoons* (New York: Long View, 1972?). All of the subject matter pertains to the Vietnam War, and it is grim in its nature, as the image on page twelve reflects. Born in Valhalla, New York, Oliver Wendell Harrington (1912–95) was a cartoonist and a political satirist. He is best known for his single-panel comic strip *Dark Laughter* that featured “Bootsie,” whom he later described as a “jolly, rather well-fed but soulful character.” In a sense, to describe Harrington as a “cartoonist” is to overlook the detail of his drawings and the poignancy of his observations. As a black cartoonist in a profession dominated by white men, Harrington’s criticism of the national lack of will to enforce laws against lynching and other racially inspired violence attracted national attention. Covering World War II in Europe and North Africa for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Harrington made the acquaintance of Walter White, then executive secretary of the NAACP. White encouraged Harrington to join the organization’s public relations department, and this further increased his visibility in the national arena. As was true for many civil rights political activists, Harrington became the focus of an investigation during the McCarthy era, and eventually left the United States to settle in Paris with other black American expatriates, including novelists Chester Himes and Richard Wright. In 1965, Harrington’s cartoons



An uncaptioned Vietnam War political statement by Oliver Harrington published in a portfolio entitled *Soul Shots: Political Cartoons* (New York: Long View, 1972?) by Oliver Harrington and with an introduction by Elton C. Fax. All of these cartoons originally appeared in the *Daily World*.

were published in *Laughing on the Outside: The Intelligent White Reader's Guide to Negro Tales and Humor* edited by Philip Sterling and with an introduction by J. Saunders Redding. A staunch critic of the Vietnam War, Harrington published antiwar cartoons in the *Daily World* between 1969 and 1972, and these were gathered together in *Soul Shots*, a portfolio of sixteen drawings in observance of his sixtieth birthday. Harrington's other books include *Bootsie and Others: A Selection of Cartoons*, which was published in 1958 with an introduction by Langston Hughes, and *Why I Left America, and Other Essays*, published in 1993. *Dark Laughter: Satiric Art of Oliver W. Harrington from the Walter O. Evans Collection of African-American Art* also appeared in 1993. At the age of 84, Harrington died in Berlin in 1995. Harrington's *New York Times* obituary notes his studies at Yale University and the National Academy of Design.

If you would like to see other political cartoons by Oliver Harrington that originally appeared in the *Daily World*, several of them will be appearing in our exhibit space on the sixth floor of E. S. Bird Library for the spring semester of 2008. If you would like to stake a personal claim in our collections, please consider adopting this portfolio that we have recently purchased for one hundred and fifty dollars. Your

name, or the name of someone you wish to honor or memorialize with your gift, will be included on a bookplate affixed in an archivally sound manner to the inside cover of the volume and will also be added to its electronic catalog record. Adopt-a-book gifts are fully tax-deductible, and donors will receive a proper receipt for tax-filing purposes. If you would like to adopt this or another item recently acquired for our collections, please contact William La Moy at 315-443-9752.

## ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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The editor is William La Moy. Mary Beth Hinton serves as the consulting editor. If you would like to receive the *Courant* regularly by mail or would like information about membership in the Library Associates, please contact Mary Beth Hinton at 315-443-9763. (Her university e-mail address is [mbhinton@syr.edu](mailto:mbhinton@syr.edu).) The *Courant* is also available electronically in a PDF version from our Web site at <http://scrc.syr.edu/courant/>.

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