

Family Living

Black literary giants, Dumas and Pushkin make new impact

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

I am very pleased to report that several area high school teachers saw my recent Portland Observer articles on these great men of letters as an excellent vehicle for acquainting youth of 'all' cultures with African involvement in the world's great literature.

In addition to mastery of their craft and a special genius in inspiring their readers, both Alexander Dumas (father) of France and Alexander Pushkin of Russia possessed just the type of personalities to capture the fancy and admiration of young minds. They did not just write about the turbulent and history-shaping events of their time, these men were on stage as well, risking life and limb for their convictions.

Today's crop of politicians, given to shrewdness to a fault, along with hordes of would-be leaders with rather tepid temperaments, 'pale' into insignificance when compared with the bigger-than-life characters who roamed the European continent in centuries past. Teachers, students and reading public may all be assured that the seminal contributions of many more of these African geniuses will appear in these pages.

As usual, I stand ready to aid in any curriculum design or development of lesson plans. I may have useful inputs as a result of exchanges with readers from varied backgrounds, and through the years I am always astonished at the depth and

range of interest of the public. There is as much to be learned here as from any texts or mode of research, sometimes a documented historical tidbit that has escaped the eager eyes of the experts.

Let me cite here the principal works from which I have drawn a great deal of facts on all three of the famed members of the Dumas clan, all named Alexander. Namely the grandfather (Napoleons greatest general), the father (author of the Count of Monte Crisco, The Three Musketeers and hundreds of other novels and plays) and the grandson, who wrote a popular play, "The Lady of the Camellias", later made into a renowned opera.

A. "Alexander Dumas: Genius of Life", Claude Schopp (A.J. Koch translation), Franklin Watts, N.Y., 1988; B. "The Titans: The Extraordinary Lives of All Three Dumas", Andre Maurois, Harper & Bros., 1957; C. "The Fourth Musketeer: The Life of Alexander Dumas", J. Lucas Dubreton (Malda Castelton Darnton translation), Coward-McCann Inc. 1928. Second hand bookstores will be your best bet for obtaining these.

And we list here some principal sources of information on Alexander Pushkin, the black poet and novelist described as "the fountain head and the epitome of modern Russian literature." This beloved African son of Russia is honored throughout the land with cities, parks and museums

named in his honor.

A. "Russian Stories: A Dual Language Book" Gleb Struve, Dover, 1961; B. "Sex and Race, Vol. I", J.A. Rogers, (obtain at your local Black Bookstore: "Reflections in Portland.) See pp. 174, 175 & 218.C. More material on J.A. Roger's book "World's Great men of Color, Vol. II" (same source); D. "Pushkin" Ernest J. Simmons, vintage Books, 1964.

"Opera Guide No. 38" published in the U.S.A. by Riverrun Press Inc., 1170 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10001, 1988. This is one of a series by the English National Opera and the 96 page booklet details Tchaikovsky's rendering of Alexander Pushkin's novel, "Eugene Onegin," into the equally famous opera of the same name.

"Great Black Russian: A Novel" on the Life and Times of Alexander Pushkin", John Oliver Killens, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1989. Poet Maya Angelou has this to say about this black, romantic revolutionary writer who was also a realist. "Killens has given us an Alexander Pushkin who lives, breathes, loves, laughs, writes poetry and dies; yet, who now belongs to all of us."

And, of course, there needs to be the usual citation of the periodical literature, etc.

Coping: Understanding a nervous breakdown

BY DR. CHARLES W. FAULKNER

Dear Dr. Faulkner: I read your recent column about the horrors of a nervous breakdown. I am having some major emotional problems. I don't know if I am having a nervous breakdown because I am not sure what it is. Could you provide more information please. Ms. J., Daytona Beach, FL.

Here is the information that you requested:

What is a nervous breakdown?

A nervous breakdown is an abnormal response of the mind and body to the circumstances in one's life. For instance, nearly everyone goes through a period of grief and unhappiness in regard to the passing of a relative, or the loss of a job.

Crying, loss of appetite, the inability to sleep, memory lapses, temper explosions, even thoughts of suicide are common, normal responses to specific crisis events. These behaviors are usually short-term. They eventually come to an end and the individual is able to resume a normal life. The nervous breakdown may be defined as having the opposite characteristics such as unpleasant symptoms, like those mentioned above, for no apparent reason, or such symptoms continuing and recurring when they should have ended. Long-term presence of the depressing symptoms.

Inability to resume a normal life, even after the crisis event has passed.

The nervous breakdown may contain some or all of the symptoms that I have mentioned. It is a general physical-emotional breakdown that may differ from person to person.

There are two primary causal categories of the nervous breakdown. A life that is characterized by multiply traumatic events which overtax the individual's ability to cope. For instance, the average person may have the wherewithal to meet and conquer the effects of a divorce, a family member's loss of life, the death of a pet, a financial crisis and the loss of a job.

However, a person may be overwhelmed by a 10-year marriage is characterized by constant spousal abuse, multiple loss of family members or friends in an automobile accident, a financial collapse which results in the loss of possessions such as automobile and house, the inability to find a compatible mate, the inability to get a decent job, and flunking out of school.

These or similar events may push some people into a condition whereby they feel that life is not worth living and they contemplate suicide.

The second major cause of a nervous breakdown is a chemical imbalance in the victim's body or brain which causes a physiological disturbance.

How can one obtain professional help?

Get a recommendation from a friend who is presently involved in

therapy; consult your physician; talk with your priest, pastor, school guidance counselor; or contact your state psychological association.

What methods of treatment are available?

If you are diagnosed as having a nervous breakdown, medicines are sometimes recommended. Your therapist may use any of several modalities or treatment to help you. They include:

- A. Behavioral therapy. The therapist attempts to change your behavior (not your personality).
- B. Teaching coping skills. So that you may take immediate measures to counter the symptoms of a nervous breakdown.
- C. Teaching interpersonal skills as a means of elimination tensions between you and others; and
- D. Teaching cognitive/behavioral procedures designed to eliminate negative thinking patterns. Some therapies may involve group counseling.

Other Facts About a Nervous Breakdown

Women tend to be more prone to nervous breakdowns than men (consult the American Medical Association for verification). Women generally endure more marital stress such as sexual and physical abuse, and poverty. They also face pressures associated with raising children, demanding husbands and a tendency to dwell on personal problems.

\$4.8 million victim assistance available

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) today announced that Oregon will receive \$4.8 million in federal assistance to enhance crime victim services.

The money was awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice to the Victim Compensation Program and the Victims Assistance Program as a part of the Crime Assistance Grant Program.

The two programs come from the Crime Victims Fund (Fund), which was established by the 1984 Victims of Crimes Act (VOCA). The funds come from fines, penalty assessments and bond forfeitures from convicted Federal offenders -- not taxpayers.

"Our justice system too often forgets about the people who should be its first concern -- the victims of crime. Reimbursing victims with money taken from criminals is something our system should do more of," said Wyden.

The Victims Compensation Program will reimburse victims from crime-related expenses such as: medical costs, mental health counseling funeral and burial costs and lost wages or loss of support.

The Victim Assistance Program provides services to crime victims including: crisis intervention, counseling, emergency shelter, criminal shelter, criminal advocacy, and emergency transportation.

Head Start Brings National Speaker

Albina Head is hosting quest speaker Dr. Carolyn Reedom, award winning principal from Las Vegas, Nevada, Thursday, March 20, 1997, 7:00 p.m. at Lutheran Family Community Center 4219 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Child care provided.

Dr. Reedom is a 27 year veteran teacher and administrator, named 1989 National Distinguished Principal by the U.S. Department of Education and National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the 1989 recipient of the Outstanding Elementary School Administrator presented by the Las Vegas Alli-

ance of Black School Educators. She will share techniques parents can use at home to help their child learn, and discuss ideas of how parents can be more involved in their child's school. Parents will learn how to make their child a winner in public education and meet with others from the community who also want to see our schools change and children succeed. This will be the seventh in a series of workshops designed to help parents improve public education and their children's academic performance. For more information please call 282-1975 ext. 203.

Night Swim for Teens

Teens will get a break from the routine when they sign up for a night visit to the North Clackamas Aquatic Park.

The supervised activity is set Friday, March 7 from 8 p.m. to midnight. Teens will go by van from Bagley Center, 4100 Plomondon, to the aquatic park. Swim time is from 9:15 to 11:15 o.m. Cost is \$7. Registration is required by Monday, March 3.

The event is sponsored by Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation program. Chaperones from the city's Teen Program will accompany the group. Call Johnny Tucker, 696-8558, or Sondra Tackett, 892-7053 for details.

Paulus To Meet with President Clinton

State Schools Supt. Norma Paulus and other chief state school officers will meet with President Clinton Monday (March 17) at 1:30 p.m. (eastern time) at the White House.

The state school superintendents will be in Washington, D.C. to attend a legislative meeting of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the national organization which represents the state chiefs. CCSSO arranged the meeting with the President, Vice President Gore and U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley.

The meeting is expected to include discussion of the President's "Call to Action for American Education in the 21st Century," particularly on the topics of benchmarking individual student test results and the use of learning technologies and telecommunications. Paulus is one of nine state superintendents who serve on CCSSO's board of directors.

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The statistics about young black men are familiar: Homicide is their #1 killer; one fourth are in jail, on parole, or probation; and their rates of unemployment, teen fatherhood, educational dropout--and death--exceed those of any other demographic group. *Living to Tell About It* is the first book to look beyond the statistics at the real lives of most young black men in America today. Journalist Darrell Dawsey traveled across country, listening to young men talk about their childhoods, relationships with parents and women, sexuality, self-respect, spirituality, and ambitions. The result is a portrait of a generation facing manifold challenges and dilemmas of black manhood--and living to tell about it.

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