

contained in the resource book accompanying the slides and tape which also supplies information on rental sources for black-produced films as well as Hollywood films dealing with blacks which can be used to supplement this introduction. *The Celluloid Black* is a positive beginning for further study of ethnic stereotyping and a segment of black history. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, we end the program wanting more of everything: more visuals, more information about both the Hollywood and black film traditions, and more analysis of stereotypes and of their impact on both the white and black cultures. There is an old show business adage about leaving the audience wanting more. In this case, however, less is not necessarily better. The slide presentation as it is puts too much reliance on the facilitator and is a little short on material. This is really too bad because what is presented is done so very well with interesting and telling visuals, with a literate and concise script, and with clarity.

The study of the impact of film and other non-print media on cultural attitudes is just beginning and racial images on film provide a fascinating and little-explored area. Slide presentations, such as this one, provide an excellent means for initiating such an exploration. Through this and similar programs the vast, untapped world of American history and culture is at last being opened to students and scholars alike. To examine our national heritage in all its ethnic diversity is an exhilarating prospect.

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**Eddie Iroh. *The Siren in the Night*. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books Inc., 1982) 203 pp., \$5.00 paper.**

The historical novel presents many of the same problems of interpretation posed by the docudrama, both genres possessing an ambiguity attributable to the absence of clearly defined distinctions between fact and fiction. Eddie Iroh, author of *The Siren in the Night*, obviates the reader's task of inferring these distinctions by announcing in the "Author's Note" the fidelity of his presentation to both the nature and sequence of actual events and admitting the liberty taken in his creation of a military post that did not exist during the time period covered in the novel. *The Siren in the Night*, the third novel of a war trilogy dramatizing events surrounding the Nigerian Civil War, follows two other historical

novels by Iroh: *Forty-Eight Guns for the General* and *Toads of War*.

Set in Lagos immediately following the Civil War in Nigeria, the novel chronicles the relentless efforts of Colonel Mike Kolawole, Head of Federal Security and Intelligence, to prevent a rebel resurgence. Two background sections are presented, the "Flashback" recounts the secession of the Eastern Region from the Federation in 1967, the former declaring itself the Independent Republic of Biafra. And a section entitled "Return Of A Rebel, 1969," narrates the defection of Biafran Colonel Ben Oda Udaja to the Federal side in 1969, the year before Biafran surrender.

"Orders are orders," the closing words of the novel, accurately depicts the tension-filled postwar atmosphere prevailing in Lagos in 1970. Skeptical of the professed loyalty of returning rebels and critical of what he perceives to be the unnecessary magnanimity of the Amnesty Proclamation enunciated by the Federals, Mike Kolawole creates an elaborate surveillance network to monitor the activities of returning rebels. The primary target of his suspicions is Ben Udaja, whose return to the Federal side before the end of the war allowed him, in Kolawole's view, the unfair advantage of "playing the prodigal son, receiving neither a routine investigation nor a token trial" (67). Moreover, Udaja's rather rapid promotion within the important, highly visible office of Civilian Coordination proves more permanent than Kolawole deems necessary to demonstrate Federal benevolence. Mike Kolawole, however, is not the only one who lives in fear. Ben Udaja, fully cognizant of the determination and military prowess of the Biafrans because he, himself, had trained them well, lives with the constant fear that the Biafrans will ultimately kill him for his desertion. His distorted construction of reality allows his imagined fears of reprisal from former comrades to divert his attention away from the very real threats to his life and safety posed by Federal officers under Kolawole's supervision.

Iroh's treatment of this complex set of circumstances is serious and intricate. The careful reading required by the text derives, in part, from Iroh's detailed descriptions of a highly complex governmental organization, descriptions simplified only minimally by a glossary of military abbreviations and other terms. The glossary has limited value in that it tells only what the abbreviations of the numerous governmental posts stand for, but does not define them or otherwise clarify the relationship obtaining among them. This limitation complicates the immediate identification of locus of control in a given situation.

Yet several instructive features commend the work as one that merits the consideration of readers interested in understanding the nature and emphases of Nigerian life. Iroh presents glimpses of tribal characteristics via the proverbs rather generously interspersed throughout the work. These "common sayings," though frequently dismissed as clichés of

little consequence, quite often represent basic cultural assumptions that influence ideological perspectives. *The Siren in the Night* also describes the nature of tribalism and ethnic loyalty. The author uses the native word “parapo” to present the concept of ethnic affinity. Kolawole, in making crucial appointments, is often reminded of the reality of tribalism noting that the concept of “one Nigeria” was invoked for wartime convenience only, that “collective will” or a “national consensus” had been only a transient phenomenon. “For the first time, North and West banded together in a self-preserving allegiance. Not even self-government in 1957 and independence in 1960 had engendered such unity of purpose.” After the war, however “parapo had returned to power unopposed” (96, 97).

Although the claim cannot be made by this reader that *The Siren in the Night* is a novel so engaging that the reader cannot put it down, the work speaks well for Eddie Iroh’s ability to communicate the moods and motivations of a diverse Nigerian nation. The work is, more accurately, one to which the reader will perhaps return time after time in order to comprehend fully the commendably meticulous presentation of Eddie Iroh and to appreciate the illumination that it lends to our understanding of Nigeria.

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**Hadley Irwin. *I Be Somebody*. (New York: Atheneum, 1984) 170 pp., \$11.95.**

At the turn of this century, a group of American blacks from the midwest migrated to Canada to become homesteaders in the remote town of Athabasca, Alberta. Hadley Irwin’s latest novel for young people focuses on this little-known chapter of American history. The movement of entire towns of blacks north in search of freedom provides Hadley Irwin an ideal setting for a young boy’s search for identity. Rap Davis’ growth toward maturity, his determination to “be somebody” parallels the growth and determination of a people to be somebody.

The ten-year-old protagonist from Clearview, Oklahoma, may be known by the undistinguished nickname of “Rap Davis” *now*: Cassie, who is so smart it is sometimes hard to like her, might say *now*, “Rap Davis! You so dumb!” And Lacey, Rap’s more wily friend, might trick him every time *now*. But some day, Rap knows, he will be called by his real name. He will be Mr. A.J. Davis, or even His Honor Anson J. Davis. He’ll be somebody. With dreams of a future, Rap is inevitably stirred by