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Atma plays show craft

By Robert Foster

After having presented Leroi Jones' Dutchmar the past few months, the Atma Theatre has now staged a production of his one-act play, The Slave. Like most of Jones' work, it is about the American Negro. However, while the first play depicts itself almost entirely to mocking a single Negro stereotype, in the second Jones has expanded his scope a bit, encompassing some interesting problems. Consequently, the white characters are deeper, and not so much just donnish fools; and the play's potential influence, especially with a white audience, is considerably greater.

But, as if to deliberately avoid a thoroughly realistic confrontation, Jones has imposed a reach more concerned situation. The events take place in a city under siege by black revolutionaries who have been robbing the country. The leader of the revolution breaks into the home of his ex-wife and children; while she screams with her second husband, a white college professor and former friend of his, he holds them at gunpoint. Such details, coming only indirectly from experience, are always disturbing to some degree, since they make it hard to convince oneself that the characters' actions are natural. Surprisingly, in this case, the problem is fairly minor, due most likely to the way the situation is revealed. It becomes clear only gradually, through the dialogue; being revealed along with the characters, it seems to fit them more naturally.

Furthermore, whatever the action...