

# 'Homewood Trilogy': Romantic and realistic

by Ken Stiggers

Like the blues, Joan Edgar Wideman expressed with feeling the "flip-side" of American living in the fiction novel "The Homewood Trilogy."

Three stories recreate the evolution of Homewood, a black community located in the eastern section of Pittsburgh, Pa.

In the "Homewood Trilogy," the reader hears voices which reminiscence and bear

witness to a one-hundred year evolution of Homewood from an nineteenth century American community to a ghetto of the twentieth century.

The first story is "Dem Balla," a portrait of a black family (The Frenches) and an expression of the black-experience. Wideman brings to life mini stories told by many voices. One voice tells the story of Freeda French's anticipation

of death in the form of a china-man.

Wideman uses specific events in Freeda's Life and creates impressionistic rhythms that represent a sad story. The reader feels Freeda's remorse when she finds her husband, "Big Hat"-John French, dead, wedged between a toilet seat and a bathtub. Meanwhile, friends and neighbors crowd inside the French household to

share their sorrows. Within that crowd of people Freeda encounters her first view of death, the china-man.

After the burial of her husband, Freeda becomes very sick. In her hospital sick bed, she patiently awaits death, and suddenly dies when a china-man passes her room.

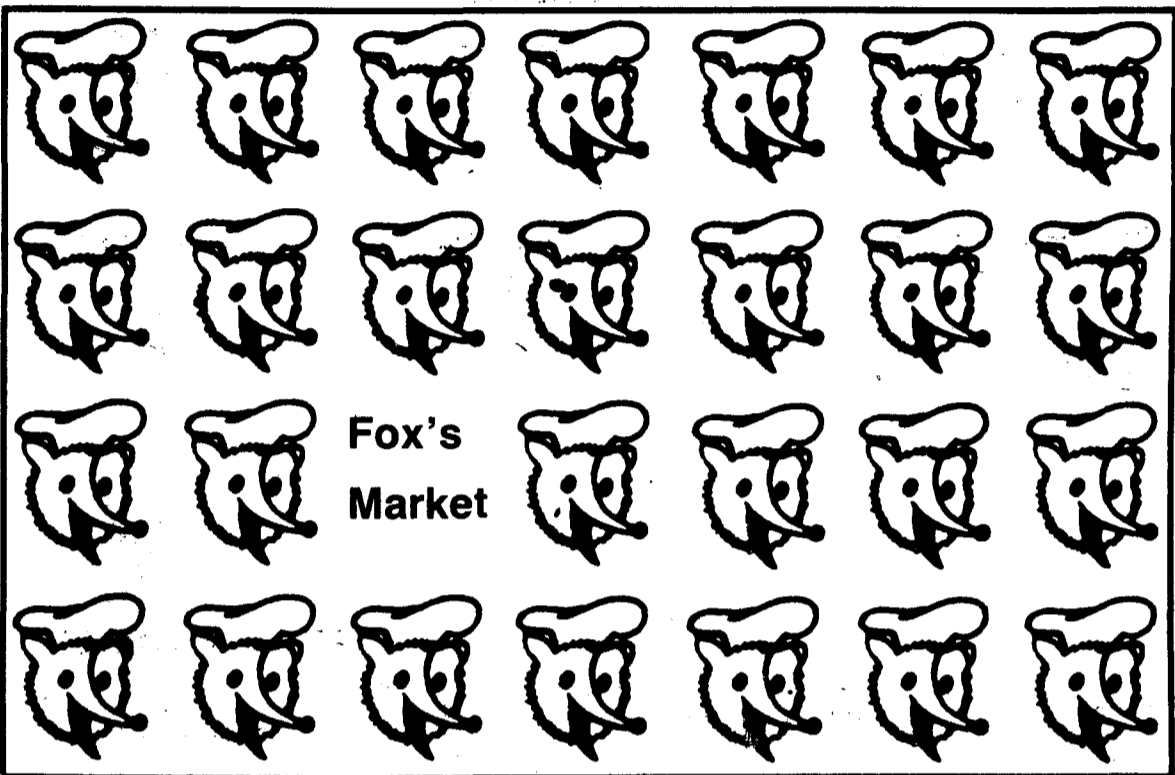
In the story, "Hiding Place", Wideman highlights the strength and courage of two people (Mother Bess and Tommy) who hide from failure and the harsh realities of the world.

Mother Bess angrily hides from a present world that is without the lives of her husband and son who were killed in World War II. Young Tommy, an accomplice in a store robbery, hides from his failures and the police. Both Bess and Tommy overcome their fears, resolve their angers, recall what they have lost and come out of hiding.

In "Sent For You Yesterday," winner of the Penn Faulkner Award for Fiction, four characters reveal the rich and compelling legends of Homewood's past. A gifted piano player named John Wilkes, on the run from the law, returns to Homewood to be gunned down by police.

Wilkes rhythmic-playing style recreates the story of Homewood. The Albino, Brother Tate, preserves John Wilkes's music and becomes a legend to his best friend, Carl and his sister, Lucy. Carl and Lucy inherit the memories of Brother Tate (who also died), the music of John Wilkes along with the stories and rituals of Homewood's past.

Wideman accurately, poetically and creatively uses black speech. It is not an exaggerated dialogue. The naturalness of the black dialect (continued on pg. 8)



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 Tuesday: 1-9 p.m.  
 Wednesday: 12-3 and 5-9  
 Thursday: 1-5 and 6-9 p.m.  
 Friday: 12-3 and 5-8 p.m.  
 Saturday: 1-5 p.m.  
 Sunday: 1-4 p.m.

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Sausage	5.00	6.25	7.00	9.75
Mushroom	5.00	6.25	7.00	9.75
Black Olive	5.00	6.25	7.00	9.75
Green Pepper	5.00	6.25	7.00	9.75
Meatball	5.00	6.25	7.00	9.75
Anchovies	5.00	6.25	7.00	9.75
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