

# The Richard Wright Newsletter

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## Letter From the Editors

Greetings on the occasion of the publication of Volume II: Number I of the *Richard Wright Newsletter*. We would like to welcome 35 new members who have joined us since our last issue. Our size is ever increasing and serves as an indicator of the continued significant growth of scholarly and professional activity pertaining to Richard Wright.

A factor in this growth is the overwhelming response to the Library of America's editions of Wright's works. We have reprinted the excellent *NYTBR* article by Arnold Rampersad which appeared shortly after the volumes' publication. Readers should also look forward to the LOA editions of *Black Boy* and *Outsider* in paperback by Harper Collins as well as a revised edition of *Lawd Today* by Northeastern University Press.

Keneth Kinnamon has expanded his unparalleled *Richard Wright Bibliography* with an "Addenda" first presented at the American Literature Association Meeting in San Diego, in May. Additional entries have been included here by Kinnamon. There is no doubt that this bibliography together with the Addenda (to appear annually in the *Newsletter*) will become the standard bibliography in Wright Studies as well as a model for bibliographic work in

literary/critical studies generally.

As a result of the wide circulation of the newsletter at a number of professional conferences and meetings, and especially at the Paris Conference on "African-Americans in Europe," the *Circle* has been in touch with a broad range of scholars and readers, all of whom we thank heartily for their support/membership and look forward to hearing from on a regular basis. For all of you who joined the *RWC* in its founding year, please be reminded that we need you to renew your subscription to maintain the work and staff of the highest quality.

Finally, we would like to thank Kelley Lynn Norman for her dedication and commitment to the *Circle* and the *Newsletter* since its founding. We wish her well as she begins her career as an English teacher. And we welcome graduate student, Tanya Millner, who joined the staff of the Project on the History of Black Writing this summer, and who has enthusiastically accepted the position of editorial assistant for the next two year period. Please direct all inquiries and requests to either of the editors and forward all subscriptions to Tanya Millner. Δ

*Jerry W. Ward, Jr. and Maryemma Graham*

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## Too Honest for His Own Time

by Arnold Rampersad

When the Library of America asked me to edit a volume of Richard Wright, I was pleased to do so. I was also apprehensive. Given the history of his dealings with publishers, some tough decisions would have to be made if justice were to be done to him.

Certainly Wright would be well served by being in the Library of America. His work would appear in beautiful and durable volumes, with the promise of being kept permanently in print. And there could be no doubt about his right to be in such company. Of *Native Son*, Irving Howe has shrewdly declared that American culture was changed "forever" with its explosive appearance in 1940; and *Black Boy* belongs on any definitive short list of American autobiographies. With works twice chosen by the Book-of-the-Month Club, Wright had also enjoyed

success and influence unparalleled among black American writers of his era.

Success had come, however, at a price. Certain of his important works, including *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, suffered changes and abridgements that Wright would never have made on his own. The issue for the Library of America was whether we could restore his texts that had been mangled in order to meet the extraordinary demands of his original publishers.

Would the Library of America be prepared to take responsibility with me for undoing changes that were the result, not entirely but in some part, of racism - racism that was seldom conscious of itself, that was expressed in subtle, even benign ways, but racism nonetheless? Most of the major areas of textual controversy in Wright's work can

be traced to the inevitable conflict that pitted an extraordinarily forceful and brilliant black writer, one who was bent on speaking the unspeakable, against white agents, editors and publishers who, often with what they construed to be Wright's best interests in mind, had very determining ideas of what whites were willing to accept from such a source.

I soon discovered that the Library of America was fully prepared to take on this responsibility. Moreover, it decided to start with two volumes of Wright.

Wright's mixture of brilliance and fearlessness makes virtually every one of his works a challenge. Compared with him, some of the bravest of earlier black writers seem almost timid. There is some truth in the scornful opening of his 1937 essay "Blueprint for Negro Writing," in which he asserts, "Generally speaking, Negro writing in the past has been confined to humble novels, poems, and plays, prim and decorous ambassadors who went a-begging to white America. . . dressed in the knee-pants of servility. . . For the most part these artistic ambassadors were received as though they were French poodles who do clever tricks."

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When Wright realized that his first book, four long stories entitled *Uncle Tom's Children*, was "a book which even bankers' daughters could read and weep over and feel good about," he swore that the next one would be different. He would make sure that "no one would weep over it; that it would be so hard and deep that they would face it without the consolation of tears." That is a fair characterization of the almost violent impact of his next book, *Native Son* — and perhaps of Wright's career as a whole.

Taught early by the writing of H.L. Mencken to appreciate the power of "words as weapons," Wright struck boldly when he encountered falseness or injustice. From his first publications in Chicago as a Communist poet to his death in Paris in 1960 at the age of 52, he took on, at one time or another, white supremacy, organized religion, capitalism, Communism, Fascism and colonialism. Early in his career he also repudiated black cultural nationalism; no major black American writer has written more harshly about black culture. Studious, cautious, he was nevertheless on a mission to speak the truth as he saw it, and this zealotry threatened to bring him into conflict with everyone who stood between him and the reading public.

Each of Wright's books presented the Library of America with a different set of editorial problems. A fair example is *Lawd Today!*, his first novel, though not published until 1963, three years after his death. Eight major publishers rejected the manuscript when it was submitted to them in 1935 or thereafter. It was finally brought out in 1963 by Walker & Company and treated almost like a foundling, attracting little attention, although — to me at least — it is among Wright's most compelling works, far more accomplished than, for example, his thin psychoanalytic novel *Savage Holiday*, which appeared in 1954.

*Lawd Today!* casts important light on Wright's beginning years as a writer. It reveals that at the height of his involvement with Communist Party, and even as he loyally published propagandistic verse, he had been secretly creating fiction shaped by the existential values

and modernist techniques that were anathema to Communists — and affording not a glimpse of the revolutionary potential of the masses. Anticipating the concerns that would mark the first years of his voluntary exile in France after 1947, when he became friends with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, the novel confirms the independence that fired his imagination and intellect from the beginning. Had this work appeared in the mid-1930's, the party almost certainly would not have waited till the early 1940's to expel him.

Why did so many publishers reject the book? For a combination of factors: its status as a first novel, requiring special faith at a time (the Depression) when publishers had to be unusually cautious; its nihilism, which would have antagonized leftists; and, not least of all, its insistence on the extent to which its main characters, four postal workers in Chicago, are obsessed by sex, including the idea of interracial sex.

Even in 1963, the manuscript apparently troubled the editors at Walkers & Company. Ignoring James Joyce's clear influence on Wright — or perhaps not willing to recognize it — the publisher "corrected" many of Wright's innovations in punctuation, capitalization and usage. Words judged obscene were cut; various colloquialisms were polished, presumably to elevate the tone.

The Library of America rejected this version in favor of Wright's last revision. We found this text, finished between 1937 and 1938 (following the various rejections), among Wright's papers at the Beinecke Library of Yale University. The Library of America has been able to restore all the elements taken out or modified in the Walker & Company version of 1963. It will, in effect, give readers a new novel.

*Uncle Tom's Children* offered no comparable difficulties, but *Native Son* required a major salvage operation. At the very moment that the book was set to appear from Harper & Brothers in 1939 came the electrifying news that the Book-of-the-Month Club was interested in *Native Son* — provided that certain revisions were made. Poor all of his life and eager for a financial windfall, Wright assented. The appearance of *Native Son* as a main selection in March 1940 led to sales of almost 215,000 copies within three weeks. However, this book was significantly different from the one Wright had been set to publish.

In the section considered most offensive by the club's selectors, Wright's central character, Bigger Thomas, and a male friend casually masturbate ("polishing my nightstick," Bigger says) as they await the start of a movie. Also questioned was a scene shortly afterward, when Bigger and his friend hungrily view a newsreel featuring Mary Dalton, the attractive young millionaire's daughter Bigger will soon kill. She is shown on vacation, and as Mary's boyfriend chases her on a beach, the announcer leers: "Ha! He's after her! There! He's got her! Oh boy, don't you wish you were down there in Florida? . . . Ah, the naughty rich!" To Bigger, who knows that he will soon be working the Dalton household, Mary is "a hot-looking number, all right." His friend assures him insouciantly that "them rich white women'll go to bed with anybody, from a poodle on up.

They even have their chauffeurs.”

Although the published version of *Native Son* would play down Bigger's sexuality, Wright had intended to make it quite clear that Bigger is indeed sexually stirred by Mary Dalton. Watching the rear-view mirror as he drives her car, he sees “a faint sweep of white thigh.” While Mary and her boyfriend, Jan Erlone, make love on the back seat, Bigger reacts: Filled with a sense of them, his muscles grew gradually taut. He sighed and sat up straight, fighting off the stiffening feeling in his loins.”

Taking the drunken Mary upstairs at home after Jan has left her, “He tightened his arms as lips pressed tightly against hers and he felt her body moving strongly. The thought and conviction that Jan had had her a lot flashed through his mind. He kissed her again and felt the sharp bones of her hips move in a hard and veritable grind.” (Wright even has Bigger thinking of Mary Dalton while he is having sex with his girlfriend, Bessie.)

Strongly objecting to such writing, as well as to several other sexual references, the Book-of-the-Month Club asked Wright to cut the masturbation episode and the newsreel account of Mary Dalton, to shorten his account of Bigger's sexual intercourse with Bessie and to delete at least one detail of what Bigger regarded as foreplay. The speeches of his lawyer and the district attorney were also to be cut. Wright apparently did not resist any of these requests, although he was later to reject an offer for a film version (the proviso was that all of the main characters be white). The club, satisfied with the changes, decided to take the novel.

The Library of America decided to reject the Book-of-the-Month Club text of 1940 — that is, *Native Son* as readers have always known it. Instead, it has published the version Harper was prepared to publish in 1939.

It might be argued, of course, that the masturbation scene is in bad taste. (Even Wright's editor had called the scene “a bit on the raw side.”) But it is also true that in making Bigger almost asexual and unresponsive where Mary Dalton is concerned, the Book-of-the-Month Club version had made him less human, less alive and almost incomprehensible. And quite apart from its meaning in the novel itself, Bigger's vibrant sexuality had historic significance. Never before in American literature, except in scurrilous attacks on black men as rapists or likely rapists, had black male sexuality been represented with such frankness.

Wright understood that, with few exceptions, there could be no serious discussion of race in the United States without reference to sexuality (a fact attested to by works as far apart as William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever*). To nullify Bigger's sexual drive was to dilute or even to sabotage the central power of *Native Son* as a commentary on race in this country.

Four years later, in 1944, Wright's autobiography, *Black Boy*, once again brought him into creative conflict with the Book-of-the-Month Club. Again, Harper had accepted his manuscript for publication and set it in page proofs before the club voiced its interest and its objections. First called “Black Confession” and then “American Hunger,” the manuscript comprised two sections. “South-

ern Night” told of Wright's life until 1927, when he fled the South for Chicago; “The Horror and the Glory” traced Wright's experiences in Chicago, including his membership in the Communist Party and his subsequent break with it in the name of artistic and intellectual freedom. The club asked Wright to drop the entire second section.

Again, Wright agreed. The book appeared in the spring of 1945, renamed *Black Boy*. (“It is honest,” he wrote his editor, Edward Aswell, about the title. “Straight. And many people say it to themselves when they see a Negro and wonder how he lives.”) The changes in *Native Son* almost emasculated Bigger Thomas; the changes in *Black Boy* worked to de-intellectualize Wright, to return him to his childhood and adolescence. Moreover, *Black Boy*, as published, made the white South the only true villain of the text. In this way, Wright's broader criticism of the United States was blunted, as was his criticism of radical socialists, a touchy issue in 1945 as the Allied victory approached. In his journal, Wright recorded his firm belief that Communist pressure had prompted the club's demands.

One part of the deleted section appeared as “I Tried to Be a Communist” in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1944 and another in *Mademoiselle* (of all places) in 1945. However, it was not until 1977, long after Wright's death, that the entire second section was brought out by Harper & Row as “American Hunger.” Like the posthumously published *Lawd Today!*, it has failed to make much of an impression. Without the preceding material, “American Hunger” is more a memoir of a period than an integral part of a life story. Offering a limited vision of Wright, it sometimes makes him seem alternately quarrelsome and egotistical.

Once again, the Library of America decided to publish the book that Harper was set to bring out before the club intervened. For the first time, Wright's remarkable autobiography is offered as he intended it, tracing his life from his birth in the deep South to his break with the Communist Party in the North and the start of his new life as a free artist and intellectual.

*The Outsider*, Wright's long, prophetic political novel of 1953, called for yet another set of decisions. The Book-of-the-Month Club was not an issue here; apparently it foresaw no great interest in a novel about a despairing black intellectual who takes on a new identity following a train wreck, only to be drawn into a doomed interaction with Communists. The novel, which builds steadily to a clamorous denunciation of the rival totalitarianisms of Communism and Fascism, also offers a dire — and accurate — prediction of a worldwide revival of religious fundamentalism in response to the spiritual gloom spawned by these monoliths.

Faced with a manuscript of almost 800 typewritten pages, Wright's new editor at Harper, Jack Fischer, demanded that it be cut by one-third. The relationship quickly became antagonistic, especially after Wright discovered that Fischer was depending on the advice of a consultant. Sex was not the issue — there was little of it, although Wright's hero, Cross Damon, does make love to a white woman, the widow of an unscrupulous Communist leader (killed by Damon) who had married her on orders

from the party. Among the sections marked for elimination were most of those written in the stream-of-consciousness manner, some freighted with philosophic arguments and several involving black characters, who somehow seemed less important to Fischer than they did to Wright.

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Wright refused to drop any of these episodes. Instead, by compressing various scenes he reduced the manuscript by roughly one-sixth. Still later, again urged by Fischer, he made more cuts. Moreover, a careful collation further revealed that while inserting these last changes, a copy editor at Harper quietly removed two additional pages and several other passages and words from the manuscript. No one sought permission for these cuts from Wright, who was given only two days to read the final galleys. The volume appeared without the two pages.

The Library of America decided against restoring any of the material deleted by Wright at Fischer's insistence. Fischer almost certainly improved *The Outsider* by demanding that it be cut; Wright served himself well by refusing to drop whole sections. However, the cuts made without Wright's approval were another matter altogether. The Library of America decided to publish the final

typescript of the novel as submitted by Wright. It restored all the passages pulled by the copy editor, as well as his or her other changes.

The Library of America has insured that most of Wright's major texts are now available as he had wanted them to be read. Whether future printings by other publishers will follow the Library's lead remains to be seen. I hope that Harper Collins, which retains the copyright for most of Wright's major works, will go back to the texts it had originally intended to publish in the case of *Native Son* and *Black Boy*. In a way, our work is a tribute to Harper's courage and foresight in agreeing to bring out Wright's work with a minimum interference. Most important of all is the opportunity we now have to hear a great American writer speak with his own voice about matters that still resonate at the center of our lives. Δ

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## Minutes of the Richard Wright Circle American Literature Association Conference, San Diego, CA

The *Richard Wright Circle* met on Saturday, May 30, 1992 at the Bahia Resort Hotel during the annual meeting American Literature Association Conference in San Diego, CA. Members present were Maryemma Graham, Keneth Kinnamon, Danille Taylor-Guthrie, and Jerry Ward.

Ward gave a brief report on the May 28 business meeting of the ALA. The 1993 conference will be held in Baltimore, May 27-30. In response to a question about *Wright Circle's* formal relationship to ALA. Alfred Bendixen informed Ward that author societies were only obligated to present strong panels at the annual meetings and to announce the ALA meeting in their newsletters. The ALA executive committee may ratify its by-laws during the summer of 1992. The author societies will be asked to write evaluations of the 1992 meeting and to submit their proposals for panels by December 15.

Members agreed that the 1993 annual meeting of the *Circle* should be held during the CLA Convention, April 1-3, 1993, in Daytona Beach, Florida. Ward will contact Dr. Margaret Duncan to have the meeting listed on the program. The Circle must decide on an appropriate panel for the theme "Multiculturalism: Whose Language, Whose Literature?"

Kinnamon requested that his addenda to *A Richard Wright Bibliography* be published as an insert for the Fall 1992 issue of the *Richard Wright Newsletter*. As the official bibliographer for RWC, Kinnamon will prepare the 1983 bibliography for the Spring 1993 issue and yearly bibliographies thereafter until Fall 2001. The Fall 1992 issue will contain reports on the Paris conference, the 1992 Wright Symposium at Tougaloo College, and the 1992 ALA Conference; a reprint of Arnold Rampersad's *NYTRB* article, Eugene Miller's open letter, and an abstract by William Maxwell.

Ward proposed that the panel for ALA 1993 focus on *Pagan Spain* and include a scholar who is an expert on Spanish history and travel literature. Kinnamon recommended that the Circle contact Allen Josephs and Mary Lynn Weiss; Jack Moore should also be asked to serve as a panelist. Graham mentioned her efforts to have Northeastern University Press consider reissuing Wright's non-fiction.

Members agreed it is desirable to sponsor a major conference on *Black Boy*, autobiography, and biography in 1995. Ward will open discussions with NEH about funding this summer. Submitted by Jerry W. Ward, Jr. 6/1/92. Δ

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## *Join Us As the MLA Pays Tribute to Ralph Ellison and Margaret Walker*

*A Tribute to Ralph Ellison*

December 28, 1992, 5:15-6:30pm  
Trianon Ballroom, New York Hilton

**Presiding:** Michael S. Harper, Brown University

*Celebrating Traditions in African American Literature: A Tribute to Margaret Walker*

December 30, 1992, 10:15-11:30am  
Gramercy Suite B, New York Hilton

**Presiding:** Maryemma Graham, Northeastern University

## Conferences and Symposia:

### *Mississippi Artist in the Diaspora: A New Look at Richard Wright* Tougaloo, MS

In the last week of Black History Month, 1992, the staff of L. Zenobia Coleman Library (Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, MS) sponsored a two-day symposium that took a new look at Richard Wright, Mississippi artist in the diaspora. The symposium was a part of the staff's continuing effort to interest faculty, students, and the general public in the importance of African-American works to American and world literature and culture. Since the Library of America had just released an unexpurgated version of Wright's earlier works, it was an appropriate time to take a new look at the Mississippi native. Thus, the Library invited scholars in the humanities to discuss and analyze Wright's works and life and to reflect on his contribution to American life, literature, and culture.

The three principle speakers, Margaret Walker Alexander, Max Rudin, and Jerry W. Ward, Jr., have been strongly influenced in different ways by Wright's work and life. Dr. Alexander has a personal link which stretched back 56 years to the time when she worked with him in Chicago for the WPA Writers' Project and in the South Side Writers' Group. As an associate publisher at The Library of America, Mr. Rudin was involved from the beginning in the development of the unexpurgated version of Wright's works. Dr. Ward, professor of English at Tougaloo, is now the co-editor of the *Richard Wright Newsletter*. In addition to these three, students who had taken the Richard Wright course or courses in African-American literature at Tougaloo were anxious to explore his works from their own perspectives.

Exciting things happened in the two days. Jerry Ward and Margaret Walker Alexander opened up Wright's world for all to see and understand—a world which many in the audience had not previously seen. In his opening address, Ward introduced Wright as a "brother in suffering," one who was outraged at the state of the world he beheld. He pictured Wright as a black genius, honed by the travails of the Great Depression and exposed to the American apartheid at its worse, yet who refused to become the "parrot" of other men's thinking. Alexander drew on her personal knowledge of Wright and her difficulties in writing his biography to draw a picture of an angry black man, Southern in his orientation, in search of himself, and frustrated with the world around him.

These portrayals of Wright and his writings may have seemed familiar to some; yet in light of the publication of the unexpurgated version of his earlier works, they had even more force. In his analysis of the content of Wright's works — both the expurgated and the unexpurgated versions — Max Rudin was able to show the depth of concern on the part of publishers about Wright's material. He noted that Wright's works, particularly *Black Boy* and *Native Son* were not censored per se, but altered in order to become commercially acceptable. It was difficult in the

1940s for any publisher from the literary community to accept a work that spoke of race, violence, and sexuality from a black author with a powerful new version. As Rudin read from Wright's original or authoritative text and from the old published text, it was clear that The Library of America has indeed done an invaluable service with its research and publication in helping to define the role for Richard Wright in the overall struggle against oppression.

To truly understand Wright and his work is to understand the nature of oppression and how he saw and felt it. Many issues have been raised as a result of his vision. Some have not been changed with the passage of time or the evolution of social attitudes. In this symposium, some of these issues were raised by those who participated on panels or asked questions from the floor. Among the most important were: the anger and frustration of the black American male; the relationship between racism and urban violence; and above all the role of literature in focusing attention to the need for changes within a society. These issues sparked lively discussion of Wright and the contemporary scene.

It is evident that Richard Wright's works will not vanish, and one who is truly concerned about the future of the nation should not wish them to do so. These works bring to the forefront problems that still are with the nation and are continuing to fester. The nation slowly drifts toward total chaos. In the urban areas a new Bigger is born daily, ready to prey on the establishment once he reaches maturity. The works of Richard Wright shout that this is the reality of the way things are. Change them or be destroyed. One of the conclusions reached at this symposium is that the problems of all oppressed people must be solved if the nation is to survive. Δ

Clarence Hunter, Librarian

**At last. Unexpurgated.  
Authoritative. Wright.**

*Native Son... Black Boy... Uncle Tom's Children...*  
The intense, dramatic works of Richard Wright shocked and moved America into a new understanding of racism. Yet the books known to millions of readers are in fact revised and abbreviated versions of what he wrote. Many passages—even entire chapters—were cut or altered before publication because of their sexual, racial, or political candor. Now, for the first time, all the principal writings of the twentieth century's most important black author are available complete and unexpurgated in two new volumes from The Library of America, edited by acclaimed scholar Arnold Rampersad.

"Readers who think they know these works have some surprises in store for them. Readers coming to Wright for the first time will meet one of the most turbulent figures in twentieth-century literature in all his complexity."  
—HENRY  
—LOUIS  
GATES, JR.

**Richard Wright**

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## ***African Americans and Europe*** **Paris, France**

Over 600 participants from various backgrounds attended the February 5-9, 1992 conference on "African Americans and Europe" at the Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris. The conference was sponsored by Centre d'Etudes Afro-américaines de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research - Harvard University, Center for American Culture Studies - Columbia University, and Center for the Study of Southern Culture - University of Mississippi.

The participants of the conference enjoyed paying homage to Professors Nathan I. Huggins and Jean Wagner, and to the many other academics who fostered African American-European cultural relations. The conference sessions and panel discussions ranged from African American Cinema and the Harlem Renaissance to Music, Visual Arts and Performance, Women Writers and Contemporary Poetry. Issues of gender, Black nationalism, sexuality, and Cold War politics ran rampant throughout the debates at the Paris conference. And, of course, there were a significant number of sessions on James Baldwin and Richard Wright. The panelists did a superb job explaining and debating the many facets of Richard Wright's life and career.

A highlight for many was a series of fiction and poetry readings by African American writers, including Barbara Chase-Riboud, Melvin Dixon, Ernest Gaines, Davida Kilgore, Paule Marshall, Ishmael Reed, John A. Williams, Sherley Ann Williams, Elizabeth Alexander, Melba Joyce Boyd, Doris Davenport, James A. Emanuel, Michael S. Harper, Ted Joans, Sybil Kein, and Lorenzo Thomas, just to name a few. To add to the excitement, Herbert Gentry, Richard Gibson, Ollie Harrington, Lesley Himes, Ellen Wright, and Julia Wright (a panel of friends and relatives of the writers and artists) discussed the "Times of the Expatriates". The final highlight was a dedication ceremony of a commemorative plaque at the home of Richard Wright at 20 rue Jacob. For a more detailed report and perspective on the Paris conference refer to Richard Gibson's "Stocktaking in the city of light," in *West Africa* magazine, 13-19 April 1992 and to Onita Estes-Hicks's "Colloque International - Les Noirs Américains," *Crisis*, June-July 1992, pp. 44-46. Δ

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### **Abstract: "Down Home to Chicago: The Richard Wright-Zora Neale Hurston Debate and the Literature of the Great Migration"**

With the rediscovery and reauthorization of Zora Neale Hurston during the past two decades, her quarrel with Richard Wright is well on its way to becoming the most famous and freighted exchange within the black literary tradition. Few of the proliferating studies of Hurston's work fail to include an account of the great debate attributing the dispute to Wright's blindnesses. While these efforts to give Hurston her due after years of neglect are laudable and necessary, many are predicated on a marginalization of Wright that replicates the either/or thinking of the earlier critics who proclaimed him black literary touchstone at Hurston's expense.

What this paper offers, then, are further "Notes Towards a Balancing of Love and Hatred" of the kind with which June Jordan tried to mediate the Wright-Hurston dispute in her pioneering 1974 article on the subject. It argues that regardless of which figure enjoys privilege, the notion of simple opposition between them obscures as much as it reveals about the relationship of their fiction to what was perhaps the central drama within African-American history during their lifetimes; namely, the Great Migration of over one million southern blacks to the cities of the North and Midwest between 1916 and 1930.

Rather than concentrating solely on Wright and Hurston's hostile reviews of each other's work, attention is paid to the points of contact between the urban intellectual

traditions each used to make sense of the Great Migration—in Wright's case, Chicago School sociology and a newly ethnographic Marxism; in Hurston's case, Boasian anthropology. The paper then offers a reading of Wright's "Long Black Song" and Hurston's "The Gilded Six-Bits" as similar efforts to represent the black South as a utopian counter to the non-utopian aspects of the Great Migration that were becoming clear by the Great Depression. Neither story ultimately imagines the South as a nostalgic retreat from the ghetto and urban unemployment; instead, both present narratives of social antagonism in which the urge to join the northern exodus is seen as a fatal temptation to be resisted. The paper concludes by suggesting that despite their antagonistic reviews, the Wright and Hurston of the 1930s shared a desire to produce enabling visions of the black South in the wake of the Great Migration, visions that might help to heal the social and psychological dislocations caused by African American relocation to the North. Δ

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Editions Jean-Michel Place, 12 Rue Pierre et Marie Curie 75005 Paris, is pleased to announce the release of the complete collection of *La Revue Monde Noir : The Review of the Black World*. The book discusses the effects that Black culture (African, West Indian, and American) had on the French during the 1930s. It also gives first-hand knowledge of the political reactions, the financial difficulties, and the like experienced by the artists during this time period. This book includes articles by such brilliant authors as Emile Sicard, Clara Shepard, Louis-Thomas Achille, Felix Eboue, Etienne Lero, and the Nardal sisters (Paulette and Andree).

The Centre d'Etudes Afro-americaïnes et des Nouvelles Literatures en Anglais de la Sorbonne Nouvelle 5, rue de l'Ecole de Medecine, F 75006 Paris gladly announces the publication *Afram Newsletter*. The *Afram Newsletter*, which is distributed regularly, is a major source of scholarship on Black Studies in Europe, Africa, and North America. Back issues are available.

Paule Marshall has written an article in the October 18, 1992 issue of the *New York Times Magazine*. It is entitled "Chez Tournon: A Homage." Marshall writes about black writers at the Tournon. There is also a commentary on "Black Writers in Paris." Δ

The *Richard Wright Newsletter* is published biannually by Northeastern University, Dept. of English, 406 Holmes Hall, Boston, MA 02115 (617) 437-4549.

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Editorial Assistant: Tanya Millner

The editors welcome all news relevant to the life and work of Richard Wright. The *Richard Wright Circle* is supported by the departments of African American Studies and English at Northeastern University.

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## RICHARD WRIGHT CIRCLE MEMBERSHIP

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You are invited to become a member of the *Richard Wright Circle*, which is an international association of scholars, teachers, students and other persons who have sustained interest in the life and work of Richard Wright. The *Richard Wright Circle* started in 1990, the fiftieth anniversary of *Native Son*. The *Circle* is dedicated to promoting the teaching of Wright's works in undergraduate and graduate programs, encouraging textual scholarship and preparation of critical editions, galvanizing a network of international scholars to facilitate scholarship and criticism on Richard Wright's literature.

Each member will receive a biannual publication, "The Richard Wright Newsletter," containing brief research and archival notes, letters of inquiry, information about new directions in criticism and scholarship, and items on conferences in and outside the United States.

This is a special opportunity to be a part of an interpretive community devoted to Wright's works.

Complete the information below and send a \$10.00 check or money order for a one year membership to the *Richard Wright Circle*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Area of special interest in Wright studies \_\_\_\_\_

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Send form and dues to: Dr. Maryemma Graham, Northeastern University, 406 Holmes Hall, Boston, MA 02115; (617) 437-4549; FAX NUMBER (617) 437-2509.