

Richard Wright Newsletter

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Richard Wright and Black Music

BY TORU KIUCHI
NIHON UNIVERSITY

(This essay is reprinted from the *Journal of the College of Industrial Technology*, Nihon University, Vol 30, June 1997)

Black music has sent insightful messages to many African American writers when they work on their novels, poems, essays, and plays. The music is an underlying aspect of *Train Whistle Guitar* by Albert Murray. We hear echoes from Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington and Ma Rainey while the novel's protagonist Scooter looks back on and narrates his childhood in the 1920's. Imamu Amiri Baraka's transformation of jazz forms is well known as in his *Black Magic: Collected Poetry, 1961-1967*. Toni Morrison's latest work *Jazz* is like an artful jazz improvisation through written words.

Richard Wright also, like other major African American writers, recognized the importance of black music, especially the blues, because the places where Wright lived during his earliest days were Delta blues towns such as Memphis, Tennessee, Helena, Arkansas, and Jackson, Mississippi. As he writes in *Black Boy*, there was always around him "a saloon in front of which I used to loiter all day long" (27), and from which many types of black music must have been heard every night.

Wright lived near Beale Street in Memphis from 1925 until 1927 when he was seventeen to nineteen years old and most sensitive.

Moreover, the town then reached the climax as the blues center, as Austin Sonnier, Jr. explains in his *A Guide to the Blues* as follows:

"Beale Street was at its zenith from around 1900 to around 1930, when, because of the combined onslaught of economic, social, and political change, it began to collapse at a drastically rapid tempo" (35).

Even more, Chicago and New York where Wright lived from 1927 until 1937 and from 1937 until 1947, respectively, were the major black music centers. Bruce Dick says in his essay "Richard Wright and the Blues Connection" that:

"[Memphis Minnie and Big Bill Broonzy] and others frequented taverns up and down Maxwell Street [in Chicago]... One of Wright's favorite New York nightclubs was the Café Society Downtown...the club attracted some of the biggest names in popular music, including [Count] Basie, Billie Holiday, Lena Horne, Buck Clayton, and Teddy Wilson..." (395-99).

Thus, the blues and other forms of black music had a serious impact upon Wright's writings. His familiarity with black music led him to compose for the first time "Hearst Headline Blues" in 1936, to incorporate play songs into his short story "Big Boy Leaves Home," to have a Negro spiritual which the protagonist Bigger's mother sings and a gospel song "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" which Mary's boyfriend Jan Erlone

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sings in *Native Son*, to even compose "King Joe Blues," and to use play songs in *Black Boy*.

It is reasonable that Ralph Ellison, in his *Shadow and Act*, should regard Wright's *Black Boy* itself as the blues, defining the autobiography as "an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near tragic, near comic lyricism" (78-79).

Wright says in the 1946 interview, referring to black music:

(cont. page 11)

From the Editors

At year's end we send greetings and best wishes for peace and justice to our readers. As this issue demonstrates, the future of Wright studies is a bright one. There is still much to be discovered and debated about his legacy to twentieth-century thought.

In our continuing effort to counter the notion that everything has been said about Richard Wright and offer new directions for scholarly inquiry, we have reprinted for our lead article Toru Kiuchi's "Richard Wright and Black Music," originally written for a Japanese literary journal. We hope you will agree that the article offers valuable insights into Wright's relationship to African American expressive forms, requiring us to rethink the commonly held view that Wright was alienated from and indifferent to African American culture. To put into broader perspective the impact of African American music during Wright's era, we have also included Diane Putnam's review of Jon Panish's *The Color of Jazz: Race and Representation in Postwar American Culture*.

Our section of Teaching and Reading Richard Wright continues to yield a wide array of responses. In addition to Jim Miller's new anthology of *Approaches to Teaching Native Son* (a review of which will follow in our next issue), both traditional and non-traditional teachers/readers are represented in here. Bob Butler's informed assessment of teaching in prisons is complemented by a reading of one of his own students, Jonathan Edwards, currently serving time in Wyoming Cor-

rectional Facility. Both Edwards and Howard Ramsby, II, a student at Tougaloo College, invited us to contemporize Wright, viewing his novels in relationship to the psychological and cultural landscape that defines America's black male population, too many of whom are found in America's prisons. This convergence between real life situations and fictional ones lies at the heart of the realist project, which Wright was ever committed to.

We encourage you to focus on the 40th anniversary of *The Long Dream* in 1998. Please send information about activities involving the novel to *RWN*.

Kudos to Diane Putnam who is serving a second term with the Richard Wright Circle. Diane's stunning achievements as a graduate student and now instructor in the English Department at Northeastern are only matched by her stellar performance as a two-term assistant editor. Thank you, Diane, for demonstrating that commitment to excellence is not a part-time affair.

Next year will also bring significant changes to the Richard Wright Circle and the *Newsletter*. It is likely that the Fall/Winter 1998 issue of *RWN* will be published at a new institution. We will ask members of the Circle to take responsibility for organizing panels at CLA, ALA, and other professional meetings. You will receive details about changes in the next newsletter.

Maryemma Graham
Jerry W. Ward, Jr.

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EDITORS

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Jerry W. Ward, Jr., University of Memphis/Tougaloo College

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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.

Wright News and Reviews

NOTES ON PUBLICATIONS

Approaches to Teaching Wright's Native Son, edited by James A. Miller, should inspire teachers to extend discussions of Wright's masterpiece in new directions. The book contains fifteen essays which "describe strategies ranging from textual analysis to consideration of [*Native Son's*] political and moral dimensions; discuss the difficulties of introducing the novel into the classroom; and provide specific approaches for classroom discussion, such as applying Foucault's theories to Wright's fiction or examining how *Native Son* anticipates Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*. The collection, the fifty-eighth in the Modern Language Association's *Approaches to Teaching World Literature* series, costs \$18.00 in paperback and \$37.50 in cloth. To purchase the book, call MLA customer services (212) 614-6384 or fax your order (212) 358-9140.



In this issue: a book review on Jon Panish's *The Color of Jazz: Race and Representation in Postwar American Culture*.

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HURSTON / WRIGHT FOUNDATION PROGRAM

As part of its 1997-98 series "Literature Live!" the Hurston/Wright Foundation sponsored a screening of the documentary *Richard Wright-BLACK BOY* at the Virginia Museum of the Fine Arts (Richmond) on November 15, 1997. The screening was followed by a panel discussion involving Julia Wright, Madison Lacy, the film's director, and Jerry Ward. The panel emphasized the enduring value of Wright's legacy as a starting point for dealing with contemporary humanistic and political issues. Julia Wright's poignant remarks about her father's life and his influence on her politics were especially effective. Lacy focused on the power of film to evoke new perspectives on the past, and Ward drew attention to the recognition of "black-boyhood" as an originating moment for both W.E.B. DuBois and Richard Wright and to the particular reverence of Wright's later works.

Founded by novelist Marita Golden the Hurston/Wright Foundation is committed to commemorating the work and spirit of Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright and to honoring "excellence among African-American college student writers" through its annual Hurston/Wright Award. Additional information about the work of the Foundation can be obtained by writing to Ms. Golden at the English Department, Virginia Commonwealth University, P.O. Box 842005, Richmond, VA 23284-2005.

POSTAGE STAMPS FOR WORLD LITERACY

On November 13, 1997, twelve of the most important figures in modern literary history were honored for the first time on postage stamps in an effort to promote world literacy in emerging nations. The first day of issue ceremony took place at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC and featured a stamp unveiling by the living honorees and family members of those from the earlier part of the century. The event was organized by the Inter-Governmental Philatelic Corp (IGPC) along with the Smithsonian Institution's Center for African-American History and Culture and the African-American Resource Center of Howard University. Issued by the nations of Ghana and Uganda the Stamps honor six living writers: Maya Angelou, Rita Dove, Mari Evans, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Charles Johnson and June Jordan. The six honorees from the past include Toni Cade Bambara, Sterling A Brown, Alex Haley, Stephen Henderson, Zora Neale Hurston, and Richard Wright. The concept of the tribute was developed through a suggestion by E. Ethelbert Miller, Director of the African-American Resource Center at Howard University. Those wishing to obtain this historic postal series should contact a local stamp dealer or call 1-800-STAMP-97.

Teaching Richard Wright . . .

Teaching *Native Son* in Prison

BY ROBERT BUTLER
CANISIUS COLLEGE

For the past twenty years I have taught regularly in the college programs at three Western New York prisons, a maximum security facility at Attica and two medium security prisons, Wyoming Correctional Facility and Collins Correctional Facility. During sections of composition to advanced courses in modern literature and American literature. Teaching Wright's masterwork in these three prison settings has been a deeply rewarding experience for me since the students in these prison classes respond to literature in such intelligent and impassioned ways and are particularly receptive to books possessing the power, depth, and resonance of *Native Son*.

Many of the students whom I teach in prison grew up in circumstances not very different from those which Bigger Thomas is forced to endure and all of these students have no trouble understanding Wright's metaphor of modern society as a "jail" which separates people from each other and frustrates their most human impulses. As a result, they respond to *Native Son* as a living experience which speaks directly to them about their own lives, rather than seeing the book as a dusty museum piece which must be respectfully gazed at and dutifully studied as a way of passing yet another formal requirement on their way to earning a college degree. They read

the book in the spirit in which it was written, as an alarm clock waking up its readers, making them more deeply aware of themselves and the life around them. For these reasons, teaching *Native Son* in such a setting is a very challenging and exciting experience which reminds me forcibly that Wright's novel is as relevant today as it was when it first appeared in 1940.

I taught *Native Son* most recently at Wyoming Correctional Facility in the Spring, 1997 semester as part of a Freshman Composition course which included Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and Theroux's *The Mosquito Coast*. Although the students became energetically and productively engaged with each of these novels, it was *Native Son* that triggered their most thoughtful and impassioned responses both in our class discussions and in their written work.

I began our study of the novel with a lecture on naturalism and existentialism as literary modes, stressing how the former envisions human life as driven by a variety of environmental forces while the latter insists that consciousness and free will are ultimately decisive in human behavior. This led to much careful and spirited debate, with some students arguing that Bigger is a victim of environmental determinants such as social conditioning, economic pressure and biological compulsion while other students claimed that Bigger's consciousness and will shape his behavior. Some students took an intermediate position, insisting that the novel's plot was driven by a complex mixture of free will and environmental pressure, with

neither force being dominant at key points in the novel.

Our study of these philosophical matters not only produced lively discussion but also got students to read the text of *Native Son* very closely, reading key scenes in careful detail and paying attention to important image patterns and symbols. This led to their writing five-page argumentative essays which were not only forcefully written but also meticulously well documented. Some of the students described Bigger sympathetically as a victim of a racist environment which compelled him into acts of self-destructive violence, while other students wrote equally convincing essays which were quite critical of Bigger, arguing that he had better options than the ones he chose to exercise. Saki Salaam, for example, observed that "*Native Son* is as naturalistic as it gets" because Bigger's social environment provided him and other black people with "no chance for advancement." Saki

They read the book in the spirit in which it was written, as an alarm clock waking up its readers, making them more deeply aware of themselves and the life around them. . . . which reminds me forcibly that Wright's novel is as relevant today as it was when it first appeared in 1940.

saw violence as the "norm" in *Native Son* because the novel dramatizes a world saturated with fear:

"Fear was always the focus of Bigger's life... Bigger didn't kill out of lust, or for money, but out of fear... I think Mr. Wright chose the perfect title for Book One because Bigger's environment caused him to fear everything. He had no other choice."

Marwan Sidberry saw Bigger in a much harsher light, contending that "Bigger allows himself to be a victim of environment because he lets his fear of the white world stagnate him" Roderick Harris viewed Bigger neither as a victim nor a failure but as a person who grows and eventually achieves an existential sense of self:

"Bigger finally realizes the complexity of his world. He had tried to solve his problems using violence against outside forces, but this only made his situation worse. He realizes that he has been a puppet of society: that is doing what is expected. At this point, Bigger understands that he must be at peace within before he can truly live. No more will he allow society to dictate his actions. For Bigger, this is a spiritual revolution never before realized."

These papers emphatically reveal that the class as a whole saw Bigger as Wright described him in "How 'Bigger' Was Born," as "a snarl of many realities", a character who is indeed "bigger" than any of the stereotyped views which characters like Buckley, Max and Mr. Dalton have of him.

As the semester progressed, our work with *Native Son* in the first month of the course continued to yield fruitful results as students deepened their knowledge of the novel by relating it to

the other three works on the syllabus. When we studied *Sister Carrie* many were struck by similarities between Bigger's story and Hurstwood's demise and a few students pursued the literary relationship between Dreiser and Wright in the research paper due at the end of the semester. When we later read *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, one student remarked that Bromden and McMurphy seemed to represent the two extreme poles of Bigger's existence, what Wright described as the two "rhythms" of Bigger's life, "violence and indifference." Other students noticed that Wright's use of the prison as a literal setting and a metaphor of modern society were quite similar to the ways in which Kesey employed the madhouse and they wrote fascinating comparison/contrast papers on this subject. When we concluded the course with *The Mosquito Coast* several students linked it with *Native Son* in terms of its relentless probing of the minds of its central characters. One final exam essay noted that the outward details in these novels were often used as reflectors of inward states of mind and that Allie Fox's psychological collapse was expressed in Fat boy's fiery explosion just as Bigger's tormented mind is reflected in the fires raging in the furnace in the basement of the Daltons' house.

Our study of *Native Son* therefore became a kind of foundation for the entire course. Not only did the novel create vigorous open discussions which set a tone for all of our subsequent meetings but the themes, characterizations, and symbols found in *Native Son* resonated usefully against those found in the other three novels we studied. As a result, students were able to use their strong and

These papers emphatically reveal that the class as a whole saw Bigger as Wright described him in "How 'Bigger' Was Born," as "a snarl of many realities", a character who is indeed "bigger" than any of the stereotyped views which characters like Buckley, Max and Mr. Dalton have of him.

sensitive readings of *Native Son* as a kind of doorway into other books, gradually building a context which got richer and fuller as the course developed. And all of this paid handsome dividends for the extensive writing produced throughout the course. Wright's powerful voice encouraged students to release and develop the power of their own voices as they undertook a wide variety of writing tasks ranging from short critical papers to full research papers.

One of the central paradoxes of *Native Son* is that even though Bigger's life is initially described as a bleak prison existence, he finally develops a human self while physically imprisoned. Perhaps one reason why students in prison read and write about *Native Son* in such perceptive, impassioned ways is that they sense it brings life within prison walls by developing within them the same kind of lucid and nuanced consciousness which Bigger experiences at the end of his life and Wright was liberated by throughout his adult life.

∞

Reading Wright . . .

Repressed Potentials: Do Cross Damons Walk Amongst Us?

BY HOWARD RAMBSY, II
TOUGALOO COLLEGE

The black male characters in Richard Wright's *Lawd Today!*, *Native Son*, and *The Outsider* commit acts of violence and crime. For the many individuals influenced by the media's and society's suggestions that the average black males between the ages 17-25 are very likely to be criminal, violent, and unintelligent, the actions of Bigger Thomas of *Native Son*, Jake of *Lawd Today!*, and Cross Damon of *The Outsider* would make them identifiable with the numerous young black males in handcuffs seen daily in newspapers and on the nightly news. Damon, however, is remote from the stereotypes usually attributed to young African American males. It is his superior intelligence and pondering of philosophical ideas not his violent behavior that disqualify Cross Damon from the criteria of what many call "the average black male." Ironically, all too often, young black intellectuals, male and female,¹ share with Cross Damon the burden of being considered outsiders. They are viewed as outsiders; some black Americans view their independent thinking with suspicion; some non-black communities deny the existence of their intellect.

Though the United States claims to welcome and foster diversity, in many instances, it does not. Aided by negative stereotypes, society's definitions of blackness are taken from the

media's often times biased presentations of a few black politicians, a few black entertainers, a few celebrities and athletes, and a disproportionate number of black criminals. As a result, common misconceptions are that dancing, singing, running, stealing, fighting, and nothing intellectual are the only things of which little black boys and girls are made.

Since the criminal-minded Bigger Thomas of *Native Son* and the violent Jake of *Lawd Today!* fall within these categories, they are more easily identified and noticed. A black intellectual, on the other hand, criminal or not, who ponders philosophical ideas and understands and "overstands" political ideologies such as Cross Damon would be thought only to exist in the mind and words of Richard Wright.

Though Cross Damons and young black intellectuals may be of a rare breed, they have existed. They still exist. For instance, while *Native Son* remains as Wright's most known work of fiction, it is not Bigger but rather Cross Damon of *The Outsider* that resembles Richard Wright the man. And today, the young African American struggling to make sense of this world and nation through self-discovery and independent thinking will more that likely ponder the philosophic Damon. Like Cross Damon, also, these individuals, criminal or not, will face just as many and possibly more hardships and feelings of alienation.

These unique individuals are forced to blend in or reside outside because they cannot or ref-

use to fit within the confines of narrow, stereotypical, and biased definitions of the younger black generation. The future of these "outsiders," as society might call them, is as bleak as their births. Just as Wright created a supplementary work to *Native Son* titled: "How Bigger was born" to help readers understand where Bigger Thomas came from, he should have created a work titled: "How Cross Damon was born." Perhaps, this work is entitled *Black Boy*.

Young black intellectuals will continue to face the challenge of overcoming the circumstances that caused Cross Damon to become criminal. Hopefully, they will escape the unfortunate fate of the traditional independent thinker who has dreams and uses any means necessary to overcome. In the past, these individuals have metaphorically and/or literally met assassins' bullets. When this country's citizens and media cease the inappropriate practices of pontificating what "black is and black ain't," America might be surprised at the number of individuals that it has been unconsciously or consciously repressing.

¹The problems of young black Americans are not necessarily gender-specific, but I limit discussion to males to complement Wright's practice in fiction.



Bigger is Revealed to Himself

BY JONATHAN EDWARDS
WYOMING CORRECTIONAL
FACILITY

(The following selection is excerpted from a longer essay)

We can acknowledge Bigger's environment as hard and vicious, but, on the same hand, however subtly done, we need to see that choice is a conscious decision however limited the fruit of the tree from which we pick.

"He looked at Trader Horne unfold and saw pictures of naked black men and women whirling in wild dances and heard drums beating and then gradually the African scene was replaced by images in his own mind of white men and women dressed in black and white clothes, laughing, talking, drinking and dancing. Those were smart people; they knew how to get hold of money, millions of it" (36).

Here Wright wants us to know that Bigger is not proud of his ancestry vividly displayed in the movie scene. Bigger replaces the scene with one he feels offers him a better perspective of who he would more want to be like. Bigger sees white people as game players whom he can learn from. As this image slips from his mind he is again confronted with the scene of Africa. The "symbolically darkened movie screen is replaced hearing the roll of tom-toms and the screams of black men and women dancing free and wild..." (37). We can see by the shifting images, that Bigger is not happy with visions that are a reflection of himself. He sees the Africans as savages, which he himself feels like. At the same time he sees them differently. These men and women were adjusted to their *soil* and at home

in their world, secure from fear and hysteria (38). Here the word *soil* appears to have dual meaning. If Bigger were in a more tranquil environment we could view the soil as a physical place. But here the soil means the mind in which these people are at rest with, not their physical environment.

Philosophical thinker and writer Ralph Waldo Emerson likens the *mind* or *soil* to a garden when he said, "A man's mind can be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or neglected, it must, and will bring forth. It will harvest whatever thoughts are planted in it, whether they be or good or evil."

Bigger was not adjusted to his mind and could not develop the basic instinct of planting the right thoughts in his "mind" or "soil."

The intellectual immaturity Bigger displays is also a determining factor that contributes to his downward spiral. When he is faced with a situation that requires a grown-up's attitude, he rebels against it.

"As long as he could remember, he had never been responsible to anyone. The moment a situation became so that it exacted something of him he rebelled. That was the way he lived; he passed his days trying to defeat or gratify power impulses in a world he feared" (47). We can see that it was not the outside world Bigger feared but the inner world of his own mind, which served as a catalyst for his actions in the world. Bigger did not attract that which he wanted in the world but that which he was. We can see that he earns what is in harmony with his thoughts. The problem lies in his inability to control his violent impulses. This would lead the reader to believe that he can only manifest

In meeting Mary the opportunity to get "paid" revealed itself to him, gathered power and he acted upon his own impulse. These circumstances did not make Bigger Thomas, they revealed him to himself.

what is truly inside of himself, regardless of environmental or external forces.

To further illustrate this point on page (93), he is trying to decide whether or not to call Mary's parents and alert them to her drunken state. Here Bigger had a decision to make. At this moment he has complete control of the situation and of his fate to a certain degree. Yet Bigger remembers how Jan was with Mary in the car that night and how he has had her a lot (96). He becomes physically excited, but he still has the chance to leave. When Mrs. Dalton enters the room, he has the chance to reveal Mary's condition and possibly only lose his job. The situation was not harmful and had not escalated to "accidental" murder. This was in fact no accident as Bigger would later admit. Thoughts will go forth to manifest in deeds if gone unchecked, be they good or evil.

One of the most dramatic quotes that shows the confused mind of Bigger occurs when he blames Mary for causing him to murder her.

"Hell, she made me do it! I couldn't help it! She should've known better! She should've left me alone, Goddamnit! He did not feel sorry for Mary; she was

(continued next page)

Bigger is Revealed to Himself

(continued from page 7)

not real to him, not a human being; he had not known her long for that" (129).

In stark contrast to the murder of Mary is the murder of Bessie. Bigger's statement of not knowing Mary would suffice, if the murder of Bessie had not occurred. In both acts Bigger was willfully destructive, calculated and vicious beyond most human comprehension. What separates these two women is Bigger has had one and not the other. The justification of the length of time is not acceptable.

In all Bigger's violent acts he shows little if no remorse. Remorse is a delicate feeling but difficult to hide, except by those who plan and calculate to a violent end. He felt no fear in what he had done to Mary. "It was a kind of eagerness he felt, a confidence, a fullness, a freedom: his whole life was caught up in a supreme and meaningful act (131).

These words leave little room to argue that Bigger's actions were not planned. I assert that he did not come to his end by the pathway of mere forces, fate, or circumstances, but by the pathway of his own thoughts and base desires. He did not all of a sudden fall into these crimes by stress or any external forces. The criminal thought had long been secretly fostered in his heart. In meeting Mary the opportunity to get "paid" revealed itself to him, gathered power and he acted upon his own impulse. These circumstances did not make Bigger Thomas, they revealed him to himself.

All references in the essay are to Wright, Richard. *Native Son*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1993.

Reading Jazz: Book Review

The Color of Jazz: Race and Representation in Postwar American Culture.

by Jon Panish

University Press of Mississippi, 1997

Paperback, 166 p, \$18.00

BY DIANE PUTNAM

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Although *The Color of Jazz* does not deal directly with the life and work of Richard Wright, the period under examination is clearly the time when Wright was at his most productive, and as Toru Kiuchi's cover article indicates, was himself inspired by jazz. Investigating both black and white constructions of jazz in American culture during the early Cold War Era (1945-1966), *The Color of Jazz* is an important work which seeks to reveal the differences between black and white experience, in relation to jazz.

Panish's challenge is to revisit and reveal the racial climate around art forms and in geographical regions (primarily Greenwich Village in New York City, but also Hollywood and San Francisco) which have historically regarded themselves as the most racially "progressive." Defining "culture" as "a signifying system related to but not the same as the signifying and social systems we identify as the political or the economic" (a la Raymond Williams via Edward W. Said), Panish does not neglect to contextualize the culture of the United States during the rise and fall of Bebop with the underpinning political and economic systems in place at the time. His first chapter does a fine job of setting

up the period in general, outlining basic failures of the New Deal for African Americans at the same time that "color blindness" ideology encouraged a politics of assimilation. This, he claims, "enforced a paradoxical approach to race. On one hand, sociologists . . . recognized and deplored the fact that African Americans encountered severely limited opportunities in U.S. society because of racism. Moreover, they held white Americans accountable to a certain extent for perpetuating racism. However, because they theorized that assimilation was the inevitable and desirable goal of African American (or any minority group's) progress, they left the existing racial hierarchy in place: whiteness remained the invisible norm and standard of success, while blackness remained stigmatized as a deficient, primitive culture and identity" (8).

From the mainstream and underground media's response to Bebop to the writings of the Beats, Panish continually reveals fundamental differences in the ways that black and white texts and their authors construct jazz, jazz musicians, and performance, particularly the use of improvisation. Defining blackness is his first task, which he does by citing "structural and thematic unities that inhere in African American culture" as demonstrated by scholars such as Henry Louis Gates, Houston Baker and Stephen Henderson (xvii). Signifying, intertextuality, repetition and revision are all at play in jazz, and Panish points out again and again how these qualities are depicted by black writers differently than by white writers.

Panish also does not shirk from defining how whiteness influences perception, claiming and then thoroughly illustrating that white writers (both mainstream and counter-cultural) generally romanticized and stereotyped jazz heroes, removed jazz from its historical context, and privileged individual struggle and achievement in jazz over that of any community.

After laying the historical and political groundwork of the post-war period under discussion, Panish focuses his second chapter on the development of Bebop in Greenwich Village, the heart of American progressive and bohemian existence. Rather than the totally race blind or integrated neighborhood which characterize many accounts of Village life during this time, Panish goes to great lengths to establish the racial inequities inherent in an artistic community in which all but a few businesses are owned by Euro-Americans, where blacks and whites shared acquaintanceships but not support systems, and where even interracial couples enacted power politics.

By attacking the progressive stronghold in this way, Panish peels away its veneer to show that good intentions were (and are) not enough, and that memory can indeed reveal truth--when everyone's memory is tapped. James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka, Hettie Jones, Joyce Johnson, Sally Banes, Dan Wakefield, John A. Williams and a score of other former resident bohemians are quoted to reveal that even in the Village, this period "was not the racial millennium" (35).

After turning the Village inside out, Panish turns to specific texts written by African- and European-Americans from within that community, skillfully turning the focus onto Charlie Parker-

that jazz enigma about whom much is said, but little actually known. This third chapter continues to give basic background not just about Parker, but about other musicians and the development of Bebop as a whole. In the process, Panish also reveals that Hollywood movie making about jazz musicians was well behind the times (indeed, he makes a strong point that at this time subcultural elements did not make it to mainstream culture nearly as rapidly as they do now); enormously appropriative of jazz music and culture; and often enacted "color blindness," to shift the blame for the suffering of individual performers from any racist source to drugs, alcohol, and the "hard life" of the musician. As Panish demonstrates by close examination of *The Glenn Miller Story* (1954), *The Benny Goodman Story* (1956), *St. Louis Blues* (1958) and *The Five Pennies* (1959), "in each of these movies the musician and the music itself move away from the black source toward the white mainstream" (45). The focus of these films is on the individual performer rather than the interac-

tion of all band members and the audience, and they seek to elevate jazz by equating it with European orchestral music (when wrested by white musicians from the grasp of black artists) even as they insist that "black" music is primitive and that black musicians inherit musical skill at jazz rather than learn and develop their talents.

From Hollywood movies, Panish moves thoughtfully through a series of texts by Euro-American writers Dorothy Baker, Mezz Mezzrow, Norman Mailer, Jack Kerouac, and Ross Russell for their constructions of jazz music and particularly the lone jazz musician, often based on a Charlie Parker-like figure. These texts reveal romantic idealizations of jazz heroes; identification with another cultural "outsider"; a sense of rebellion against the political and literary establishment through writing about, and stylistically mimicking, jazz; an emphasis on the technical aspects of playing the music over historical, traditional, or emotional qualities; and the attribution of the jazz musician's hardships to anything but racism.

These Euro-American texts are countered by readings of works by Ann Petry, James Baldwin and Amiri Baraka, which create a more "complex portrait" that depicts a musician's "position as part of a historical and current community of people and traditions" (68). These texts deliberately develop differences between African American characters rather than settle on a single representative figure. All of these works also portray a Parker-like figure, not just as a soloist, but as a specifically racial and political symbol, and while all three use him differently, they all locate him in a "history of violence, victimization, and suffering that is

In particular, [Panish's] analysis of Beat writers becomes more elaborate and revealing, questioning not only the self-absorbed preoccupation with the narrator (author's?) relationship to the performing jazz artist, but also the very improvisational nature of the writing itself.

The Color of Jazz

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specific to African American people," a tradition which most white writers at the time did not appear to address (73).

The book moves from the focus on Parker and the individual jazz musician to a broader look at jazz performance as represented in various texts, and finally into the improvisational aspects of the music. Panish uses many of the previously mentioned texts to illustrate the way that the jazz musician performs differently in the works of Euro Americans than in those by African Americans, illuminating the relationship of performer to audience as well as the interaction between members of the band. In particular, his analysis of Beat writers becomes more elaborate and revealing, questioning not only the self-absorbed preoccupation with the narrator (author's?) relationship to the performing jazz artist, but also the very improvisational nature of the writing itself.

It is in his final chapter on "Improvising the text" that Panish delivers some of his most persuasive arguments, proposing that white and black writers, in the way that they translate jazz into literary narrative, "demonstrate significant differences in terms of their understanding of the jazz tradition, the function of the jazz musician, the connections between music and literature and between literature and social reality, and the nature of improvisation" (117). Panish carefully and thoroughly examines the different uses of jazz forms and imitation of jazz techniques in writing by African Americans and European Americans, and his examination is revealing, particularly at the point that Kerouac's

"automatic" writing is exposed less as a brilliant enactment of jazz improvisation than as another form of "stream of consciousness" writing, more in the tradition of James Joyce than of Charlie Parker.

Panish's final chapter contains a worthwhile explanation of jazz improvisation. This explanation would have been useful earlier in the book, particularly during his focus on representations of jazz performance just prior to this chapter. The detailed relationship of jazz improvisation to other African American literary tropes, such as signifying and call and response, reveals the cultural and historical aspects of that musical tradition. This vision of improvisation contrasts vividly with depictions and uses in Euro-American texts which want to reject all ties to tradition. Rather, white texts tend to define improvisation as purely an individual expression of creativity: "Influenced by what they were witnessing at that moment in jazz history--Bebop's full flowering of the jazz soloist--Holmes and Kerouac conflated the latest innovation in the tradition with the essence of improvisation itself" (132).

Panish expresses concern in his Epilogue that his book is overly harsh to whites, acknowledging that the limitations of era and culture applied; however he raises the important question of whether or not good intentions are ever enough. Clearly they were not for the many African Americans who, by the end of the period covered in this book, cut their ties to progressive European Americans in pursuit of separatist strategies for empowerment, recognizing that integration and assimilation meant the continued valorization of all

Panish challenges those who would like to think of themselves as anti-racist white people, in the mainstream and in the margins, to approach the millennium by examining "one's relation to self, others, and culture" (146).

things white. (Indeed, there were many who, like Richard Wright, fully separated from American society by becoming expatriots after the War and attempting to find equality and appreciation elsewhere). Panish calls for a deeper understanding of not only the past, but also present times, when these issues are as pertinent as ever. Panish challenges those who would like to think of themselves as antiracist white people, in the mainstream and in the margins, to approach the millennium by examining "one's relation to self, others, and culture" (146). He has demonstrated these relationships in the past in such a way as to provide a model for today's progressive--carefully but firmly removing the white experience from the center of the universe. Reading this book is an invitation to do just that, and to learn a good deal about jazz, jazz history, and the "evolution" of American popular culture in the process.



Richard Wright and Black Music

(continued from page 1)

"But never forget when you hear the jazz or the spirituals that back of them simmers bitter rebellion. Do not overlook the fact that hatred is the element in which the Negroes live, the hatred of the disinherited from which no black man can isolate himself!" (*Conversations with Richard Wright* 108).

This is Wright's typical view of black music before he leaves for Europe. As his *Native Son* and *Black Boy* are written on the basis of protest, Wright's concept of black music is based upon "bitter rebellion" and "hatred." However, in the 1960 interview a few days before his death in Paris, Wright puts his concept of black music upon the basis of sexuality. He says:

"In spirituals and in Ray Charles--I repeat--there's the same erotic exultation. This aspect of black music has been denied for too long. The faith of mystics and of most blacks has a sexual ingredient which well meaning people are too timid to dare admit, but which must be proclaimed" (*Conversations with Richard Wright* 243).

Thus, Wright's viewpoint of black music is slightly but significantly changed after he permanently moves from the United States to Europe in the summer of 1947. It is meaningful for us to trace further the change of Wright's image of black music in order to interpret the musical aspect of his works written in Europe.

Even after he moved to Europe, however, Wright's interests in music did not cease, of course. The first essay that Wright wrote after his arrival in Europe was "Litterature noire américaine" published in French in the August 1948 issue of *Les Temps Modernes*. This essay was later expanded to an English

version and was incorporated as "The Literature of the Negro in the United States" into *White Man, Listen!* in 1957. This French version is slightly different from the English one, but they are basically the same in the general idea.

In the English version, Wright adopts Negro spirituals and black folk songs as examples for an account of the African American literary history. He notes in this essay on the blues and other folk songs that "Numerically, this formless folk utterance accounts for the great majority of the Negro people in the United States, and it is my conviction that the subject matter of future novels and poems resides in the lives of these nameless million" (*White Man, Listen!* 88).

Wright's viewpoint of black music is slightly but significantly changed after he permanently moves from the United States to Europe in the summer of 1947.

Wright notices that there are two pools of black music expression: the sacred and the secular. For the sacred examples, Wright cites from Negro spirituals such as "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Steal Away to Jesus," and "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho." For the secular examples, Bessie Smith's "Backwater Blues" and "Dink's Blues" as well as *The Dirty Dozens*. As he takes up well known African American poets such as Phillis Wheatley, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Arna Bon-temps, W.E.B. Du Bois, and James

Weldon Johnson, Wright deals with these Negro spirituals, the blues, and ditties as a valuable part of African American literary history.

He recognized the historical importance of black music with the initial glance at American culture from that distant place. While he was within the United States before 1947, he was only of the somewhat narrow opinion that the blues embodies protest and anger, and could not afford to have a global outlook on music. Only when he took a look at it with an exile's eye did he obtain the objective viewpoint of black music.

Moreover, Wright was greatly influenced by his direct encounter with European culture, including his acquaintance with Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, their existentialist writings, the other French surrealists, European modernist movement and so forth. In the 1950's the blues and jazz musicians were much more respected in France than in the United States. Wright himself could keep his pride high in such a mood in Europe.

According to Paul Oliver's *The Story of the Blues*, the first blues singer who impressed himself on French audiences was Huddie Ledbetter who visited France in 1949 as a singer for le Fondation des États-Units Concert, that is, the Paris Jazz Fair. Two years later, in 1957, Big Bill Broonzy was invited to France and he traveled around the European continent, not only France but England and Belgium, every year. Wright himself praises Huddie Ledbetter as representing "the entire folk culture of the American Negro" in his article "Huddie Ledbetter, Famous Negro Folk Artist" which appeared in the 1937 *Daily Worker* news-

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Richard Wright and Black Music

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paper. Later, he also wrote the jacket notes titled "So Long, Big Bill Broonzy" when Big Bill died in 1958. In this liner note he considers the blues musician "a daringly truthful and universal poet."

In the European reevaluation of the blues, many European popular music scholars such as Paul Oliver made a field research on the blues in the South of the United States. As a result, incredibly, European blues fans outnumbered American fans in the mid-1960s. When Wright was living in Paris in the late 1950s, this was the environment around black music.

After he spent two years in Paris and a few months in other European cities, Wright made a visit to Chicago from Paris in the summer of 1949 for the filming of *Native Son*. This was his first visit since he left the United States in 1947. He wrote an essay titled "The Shame of Chicago" for the December 1951 issue of the *Ebony* magazine, which relates his impressions of the South Side in the city:

"Chicago Negroes were still turning out jazz records! The blues are still being sung! One of my fondest memories is of a visit to a South Side record shop. What music! From the South Side jazz and blues have gone to the four corners of the earth and made known the humanity of the Negro and have quickened and lifted the sense of humanity in countless others. Chicago's Negro music has become the music of the teeming millions who live in most of the cities of the world today!... There is no death for a song" (32).

Wright wistfully and freshly listened to the blues and jazz from juke boxes in Chicago after a long

absence. What he listened to was the rhythm and blues played by Sonny Boy Williamson, Leroy Carr, Tampa Red, Peetie Wheatstraw, and so on. The music sounded quite new to him after having lived away from America for two years in Europe. He listened to it with an almost Parisien ear. To Wright, the blues lyrics began to have another meaning.

When the filming of the ghetto scene in Chicago was finished, Wright and his other movie people went to Argentina. Because Wright concentrated on the filming of *Native Son*. "The FB Eye Blues" was the only work that he produced during his stay in Argentina. Even though he decided to bring his mind to bear on playing the role of Bigger Thomas, he did not forget music. The eye in FB eye is not the capital letter I but the eye to see. The last stanza in "The FB Eye Blues" is:

That old FB eye; tied a bell
to my bed stall

Said old FB eye; tied a bell
to my bed stall

Each time I love my baby,
gover'ment Know it all.

There is an explicit sexual suggestion in the last line of the stanza, compared to the last stanza in "King Joe Blues" that Wright composed in New York:

Bull frog told boll weevil;
Joe's done quit the ring

Bull frog told boll weevil;
Joe's done quit the ring

Bull weevil says; he ain't
gone and he's still the king.

In "The FB Eye Blues," as one can see, there is not only protest but also humor and sexuality. Wright's first experience as an exile in Europe made this dif-

*"Chicago's Negro music
has become the music
of the teeming millions
who live in most of the
cities of the world to-
day!... There is no death
for a song"*

--Wright, "The Shame
of Chicago"

ference.

The next work Wright tried his hand at was the novel *The Outsider*. Wright started in earnest to work on it as soon as he arrived in Paris in September 1947. It took five years and the novel was completed in 1952 and finally published in 1953, when Wright was already known as a Parisien intellectual. The novel begins with the protagonist Cross's friend Pink's song:

If the ocean was whisky

And I was a duck

I'd dive right in

And never come up. (2)

Now, Wright knows the efficacy of music, and puts this symbolic song at the beginning of the novel, representing the existentialist fate of Cross Damon's life. After a subway train accident in Chicago, Cross Damon leaves for New York and begins a new life in a lodging house in New York. The owner Mrs. Hattie Turner always plays blues or jazz records. Cross contemplates that:

"The raucous blue-jazz became his only emotional home now and he listened with an appreciation he had never had before. He came to feel that this music was the rhythmic flauntings of guilty feelings,

the syncopated outpourings of frightened joy existing in guises forbidden and despised by others" (140).

This passage also shows how Wright himself thinks of the blues in Paris. Living for more than five years in Europe now and materially influenced by European culture, he interprets that the blues and jazz are not so much a representation of "bitter rebellion" and "hatred," as an expression of "guilty feelings" and "frightened joy." It is in Paris that Wright wrote this passage about New York. Cross Damon or Richard Wright listens to the blue-jazz with an appreciation he has never had before. The European influence deepens his concept of the blues and jazz.

Cross Damon leaves Mrs. Turner's apartment for Greenwich Village in New York and shares another room with a white Communist Party official Gil Blount. Alone in his room, Cross ponders over Communism, and then, an idea hits upon him.

"This systematizing of the sensual impulses of man to be a god must needs be jealous of all rival systems of sensuality, even those found in poetry and music. Cross, lying on his bed and staring at the ceiling, marveled at the astuteness of both Communist and Fascist politicians who had banned the demonic contagions of jazz" (200).

As Wright's spokesman, Cross declares the sensual power possessed by music. His European experiences more and more deepen his view of music. He recognizes another aspect of black music in the light of politics. Wright writes in the foreword for Paul Oliver's *Blues Fell This Morning*:

"Yet the most astonishing aspect of the blues is that, though replete with a sense of defeat and

down-heartedness, they are not intrinsically pessimistic; their burden of woe and melancholy is dialectically redeemed through sheer force of sensuality, into an almost exultant affirmation of life, of love, of sex, of movement, of hope" (ix-x).

As Wright stated in the 1960 interview mentioned before, he finally found that musical obsession is stronger than any other political power. The psychoanalytical novel *Savage Holiday* was written under the influence of Freudian psychology as one of the European cultures, with an emphasis on a sexual cause. As for music, Wright notices, the sexual power in a psychological sense also has a great soothing potency. After the child Tony's death from tumbling from balcony, for which the protagonist Erskine Fowler is partly responsible, he goes to church and hears a hymn faintly floating out of the church. "The nostalgia of the singing voices soothed his taut nerves and at once he felt better" (84). The church hymn song goes:

Just as I am, though toss'd
about
With many a conflict, many a
doubt,
Fightings and fears within,
without,
O Lamb of God, I come. (84)

In the short story "Man of All Work" written in 1957 and later posthumously published in 1961,

As Wright stated in the 1960 interview mentioned before, he finally found that musical obsession is stronger than any other political power.

the protagonist Lucy sings "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" for a girl Lily, as Jan Erlone does in *Native Son*. Similarly, the short story "Man, Got Ain't Like That" written in 1958 has ten songs in it. Among all of his published writings, this story is the only fiction with Paris for the setting.

In fact, his last novel *The Long Dream* deals with the Southern climate from where Wright's black music has been derived. In the novel, music, especially songs, also plays an important role. First, Fishbelly sings in his dream. The mood in the novel seems as if returning to that in *Uncle Tom's Children*. Music is further treated here as follows:

When I'm a man
I mean to buy
A dozen barrels
Of pumpkin pie... (27)

After Fishbelly is scolded by his mother for secretly smoking, he dashes out of the house and starts a mud ball fight with his friend Zeke, singing these ditties:

Old man Bud
Was a man like this;
He saved his money
By loving his fis'...
(101-03)

Fishbelly declares that "Man, music's wonderful" (103). Fishbelly's friend Tony boasts that "We black folks sing better'n anybody in the world" (103). These songs cause Fishbelly to grow out of childhood to become a man. The funeral ceremony of Fishbelly's father Tyree takes place after he is shot to death. As many as eight sacred hymn songs are

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sung for Tyree and the other forty-two victims at the ceremony.

He flies away from the South directly to Paris after the incident, not via Chicago or New York, unlike Wright himself. The unpublished novel "Island of Hallucination" is a sequel to *The Long Dream*, depicting Fishbelly after arriving in Paris. Michel Fabre's essay "Richard Wright's Paris," which appeared in *The City in African American Literature* traces the protagonist fish's first adventure in Paris. Fabre writes: "...[Fishbelly] slouches back through the Latin Quarter until he comes across orgiastic jazz music streaming from the lighted windows of café La Pergola... While an ornate juke box plays "Send for Me," a bespectacled youngster, who prides himself upon writing for *Real Jazz*, asks him point blank whether he knows who played trumpet for Earl Hines in 1924 at the Sunset Café in Chicago. Fish[belly] cannot answer, and to his amazement, the youngster tells him that jazz is his culture, a term he had never heard anybody in America apply to black music. For him Jazz is relaxation, but the French study it as art" (101).

This impression must be the same when Wright first had to face the French attitude toward black music. Wright knew that there was a different way to listen to black music, and his view of it changed little by little after that.

In his latest days, Wright composed thousands of haiku on his death bed. He learned this Japanese short poem style through R.H. Blyth's book *Haiku* which he borrowed from an African youth. Haiku is a keyword to his concept of black music in

Europe.

As Craig Werner argues in the essay "Bigger Blues: *Native Son* and the Articulation of Afro-American Modernism" which appeared in *New Essays on Native Son* that European modernists such as James Joyce, Marcel Proust, and Virginia Woolf, even before Wright left for Europe, had already cast a shadow over *Native Son*. Wright knew that a surrealistic element can be seen in African-American life as well as in the blues and jazz.

Though he made more and more different uses of black music aspects in his works during his later years in Europe, Wright never failed to forget his blues roots from the deep South, as Michel Fabre justly points out in his *The World of Richard Wright* that "At the root of Wright's fondness for what he calls surrealism one finds not a reading of the French surrealists...but rather...the influence of the blues with their typical ability to bring together seemingly unrelated elements of the American Negro's existence and blend them into a new, meaningful whole" (72). For example, the lyrics in Hudie Ledbetter's song "C.C. Rider" goes as follows:

See see rider; see what you
done done
You made me love you; now
your man done come
I was looking right at her;
when the sun went down
She was standing in the
kitchen; in the morning
gown
Let me be your sidetrack; till
your mainline comes.
(Taft 165)

Here, suddenly railroad terms such as "sidetrack" and "mainline" appear as symbolic words for traveling to the north, connecting the image of free traveling with that of love. Two African-American elements "migra-

*Though he made more
and more different uses
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tion" and "tough life" are blended into a new whole.

The blues born in rural Mississippi was urbanized in going up to Chicago, and was accordingly changed into the form of modernized soul and jazz. Influenced by European culture such as surrealism, Wright found a characteristic common both to the blues and to haiku, seeing the method of juxtaposing and blending two seemingly unrelated matters, as shown in examples such as a Japanese ancient haiku poet Basho's poem in R.H. Blyth's *Haiku*:

The old pond;
A frog jumps in
The sound of the water.

Blyth explains about this poem in the technique of haiku, saying that "The haiku has no logical connection of premise and conclusion, but there is some similarity between it and the syllogism" (329).

When Wright read this explanation he noticed that the composition of haiku is quite similar to the lyrics of the blues, and that the blues lyrics are applicable to haiku composition. He "bring[s] together seemingly unrelated elements" into one to compose haiku as he did in making his blues. Here is a representative example of Wright's

haiku, which he applies the blues lyrics to:

Just enough of rain
To bring the smell of silk
From the umbrellas

Wright blends seemingly unrelated elements "rain" and "silk" into a new poetical and surrealistic whole. Influenced by European culture, he applies a surrealistic interpretation of the blues to the composition of haiku.

Just before his death, Wright was planning a series of broadcasts on the blues and jazz for an African radio, according to the article entitled "New York Beat" in January 1961 issue of the *Jet* magazine. Wright's further application of black music to his literary expression regrettably ceased just before he went beyond Europe to the world.

Toru Kiuchi is an Associate Professor at the Department of Liberal Arts and Basic Sciences, College of Industrial Technology, Nihon University.

This article is based upon a paper Kiuchi read at the International Conference "African American Music/Dance and Europe," held at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, from April 24-27, 1996.



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Conferences and Symposia

American Literature Association San Diego, California May 28-31, 1998

The eighth annual conference of the American Literature Association will be held at the Bahia Hotel, 998 West Mission Bay Drive, San Diego, CA 92109 (ph. 800-288-0770). The conference will begin on Thursday morning and continue through Sunday at noon, with an opening celebration Wednesday night and a closing celebration Saturday evening. Preregistration Conference fees will be \$40 (with a special rate of \$10 for independent scholars, retired individuals, and students). The hotel is offering a conference rate of \$82 single and \$90 double. Pre-registration information will be mailed to all program participants two weeks before the general mailing to all ALA members.

Participating author societies will issue their own call for papers. No one may present more than one paper at the conference. Papers must not be longer than 20 minutes.

Check the ALA website for updated conference and society information: <http://english.byu.edu/cronin/ala.htm>.

If you have questions about the 1998 conference, please contact the Conference Director, Jeanne Campbell Reesman, by email: reesman@lonestar.utsa.edu, or fax: 210-458-5366.

See you there!

Creative Women During the Chicago Renaissance

Agnes Scott College
November 6-8, 1997

This symposium marked the first gathering of scholars from fields as diverse as literature, musicology, women's studies and African-American studies to examine the Chicago Renaissance. Poet Gwendolyn Brooks spoke about her experiences growing up in the culturally stimulating environment of the Chicago Renaissance, and she read some of her poetry set in that era. Marietta Simpson performed a concert of art songs by Price, Bonds, and their predecessors and successors. Dr. Robert Bone, Professor Emeritus of English, Columbia University, was among the featured lecturers (see the abstract from his talk below). A photographic exhibit of scenes from Chicago's African-American community was on display, and a panel discussion focused on areas in which further research is needed.

Richard Wright's Phototext: *Twelve Million Black Voices*

by Robert Bone
(presented Saturday, November 8th)

This paper argues that Richard Wright's phototext, * *Twelve Million Black Voices: a Folk History of the Negro in the United States* (Viking Press, 1941) is the central document of the Chicago Renaissance. Its centrality lies in its sociologically sophisticated treatment of the Great Migration, which Wright describes in his foreword as "a complex movement of a debased feudal folk toward a twentieth-century urbanization. This paper will document Wright's intellectual debt to the Chicago School of Sociology, to whose writings he was introduced by Horace Cayton, a black sociologist whose major work, in collaboration with St. Clair Drake, was a classic study of southside Chicago entitled *Black Metropolis*, published by Harcourt Brace in 1945, with an introduction by Richard Wright. I will attempt to show that Wright's profoundest insights into the folk migration derived not from his Marxist sources, but from the writings of such Chicago sociologists as Robert Park, Louis Wirth, and Robert Redfield.

*Photo-direction by Edwin Roskam.

Renewal Notice

As you receive this issue of the *Richard Wright Newsletter*, we want to remind you that if you did not renew your membership in the Richard Wright Circle after receiving the Spring/Summer 1997 issue, now is the time for renewal. The yearly \$10 membership fee runs for one calendar year and entitles you to two issues of the *Newsletter*: Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer. In order to receive the next issue and continue your membership, you need to fill out and send us the form below (to insure that we have your latest address) along with a \$10 check or money order made out to the Richard Wright Circle. Please remember that your membership dues still constitute the primary funding for the Circle and *Newsletter*. Your cooperation in helping us to maintain the Circle and *Newsletter* is greatly appreciated.

*Thanks to those subscribers who renewed
after the last issue!*

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