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1 | 2009 :

Homage to Michel Fabre

Michel in the Diasporic Imagination

Revising, Resisting, Creating

Book History and African American Studies

LAURENCE COSSU-BEAUMONT ET CLAIRE PARFAIT

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Texte intégral

- 1 In the fifty years that have elapsed since the publication of Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin's *L'Apparition du livre*,² the field of book history has expanded tremendously, on both sides of the Atlantic. As defined by the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP), "The history of the book is not only about books *per se*: broadly speaking, it concerns the creation, dissemination, and reception of script and print, including newspapers, periodicals, and ephemera. Book historians study the social, cultural, and economic history of authorship; the history of the book trade, copyright, censorship, and underground publishing; the publishing histories of particular literary works, authors, editors, imprints, and literary agents; the spread of literacy and book distribution; canon formation and the politics of literary criticism; libraries, reading habits, and reader response."³ This definition underlines the diversity of questions book history addresses, while also giving a hint of the interdisciplinary nature of the field. This paper aims to illustrate the potential contribution of book history to African American studies through two brief case studies: William Wells Brown's slave narrative, the career of Richard Wright.

William Wells Brown, The Narrative of

William Wells Brown, A Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself (1847)

- 2 In the field of African American studies, book historians have until now tended to focus on fiction, and as a result we know comparatively little about the publishing history of nonfictional works.⁴ Yet the study of slave narratives, to take only one example, may benefit from a book history approach, as shown by the case of William Wells Brown.
- 3 A number of scholars have argued for the great marketability of American slave narratives: C. Peter Ripley, in the third volume of *The Black Abolitionist Papers* (30), claims that by the mid 1840s, these works were so successful that commercial publishers started issuing them, thus broadening their audience and bringing much-needed income to their authors. Frances Smith Foster compares the sales figures of Josiah Henson's *Narrative* (1849)—6,000 copies sold in three years—to the paltry 219 copies of Thoreau's *Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849), and the modest royalties Hawthorne received in 1853 for *Mosses from an Old Manse*. She concludes that slave narratives outsold the works of the writers of the American Renaissance, but that the narratives were in turn outsold by sentimental novels (*Witnessing Slavery*, ix; 22-23). In *Truth Stranger than Fiction: Race, Realism and the US Literary Marketplace* (2002), Augusta Rohrbach makes a similar case but, unlike Foster, finds it more relevant to compare the sales of slave narratives with those of other popular contemporary works, for instance Harriet Newell Baker's *Cora and the Doctor; or, Revelations of a Physician's Wife*. Like the slave narratives, this work promised a true account and played on the taste for "authentic" narratives (47).
- 4 Just how marketable were slave narratives? How do they compare with Anglo-American works of the same period, with regard to circumstances of publication, circulation and reception? These are a few of the questions a book history approach may help answer.
- 5 William Wells Brown was born around 1814 and grew up in Missouri. He escaped slavery in 1834 and started lecturing for the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society in 1843.⁵ In 1847, he was hired as a lecturer for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, moved to Boston, and published the story of his life as a slave and his escape from the South. The narrative denounced the cruelties of slavery, the separation of families, the disregard for human life, the abuse of female slaves, all the staples of anti-slavery literature. The two authenticating documents which introduced Brown's story were, as was common in this type of literature, written by prominent white abolitionists.⁶
- 6 Like Frederick Douglass's own narrative, published in 1845,⁷ Brown's bore on the title page the imprint of the Boston Anti-Slavery Office, i.e. the headquarters of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.⁸ However, the Society did not pay for the publication of the work, Brown himself did. He had 3,000 copies of his *Narrative* printed at a total cost of \$326, for an average of less than 11 cents a copy. Two thirds were bound in paper covers, while the remainder were bound in cloth.⁹ The 110-page narrative, with a portrait of Brown placed as a frontispiece, sold for 25 cents when paper-bound and 35 cents or 37 and 1/2 cents when bound in cloth.
- 7 That fugitive slaves or anti-slavery activists may often have paid for the printing of their work, with or without the financial help of white abolitionists, is suggested by the number of slave narratives which bear the words "By the Author," or "For the Author" on the title page.¹⁰ The difficulties involved in self-publishing are sometimes underlined in the paratext of the works: thus William Grimes ended a revised edition (1855) of his narrative on the hope that all his friends and acquaintances would purchase a copy of

his book and thus help him pay the printer and put some money aside for the coming year.¹¹

8 Anti-slavery associations were instrumental in the promotion, sale and circulation of slave narratives. They advertised and reviewed them in their periodicals and sold them in their offices. Thus, the offices of various antislavery groups and of *The Liberator* (Boston), *The Anti-Slavery Bugle* (Salem, Ohio), as well as the *Pennsylvania Freeman* (Philadelphia) and *The National Anti-Slavery Standard* (New York) carried copies of Brown's narrative and of other anti-slavery works. Those booksellers that carried the narratives usually also sold other anti-slavery works, and were probably part of the anti-slavery movement.¹² Indirect evidence indicates that the authors of slave narratives may have sold many copies of their works themselves at the end of anti-slavery meetings, in which they had lectured (Katz, xviii).

9 Anti-slavery literature thus seems to have circulated via specific channels and within the rather narrow circles of anti-slavery activists and sympathizers. This is confirmed by Joseph Barker, an Englishman who emigrated to the United States and settled in Ohio, where he was a vigorous advocate for the anti-slavery cause (Garrison, 384). In a speech he made at the 1853 annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Barker noted that in his extensive travels, he had seen comparatively few anti-slavery books, except in the houses of well-known anti-slavery characters.

10 This makes the sales figures of a few of the narratives, including Brown's, all the more remarkable. The first edition of Brown's *Narrative* came out in late July 1847; the 3,000 copies print run sold within the next 6 months and a second edition appeared in February 1848.¹³ The success of the first edition had led Brown to commission the manufacture of stereotype plates for the second edition. Stereotyping, which had appeared in the US in the second decade of the nineteenth century, was more costly than setting a book from type, but it allowed for quick reprints. When Brown left for Europe in 1849, he took with him the stereotype plates of the fourth and last American edition of the *Narrative*, which allowed him to have the work printed in Britain.

11 The 2,000 copies of the second, enlarged, edition of the *Narrative* sold in a little over 6 months, and a third edition, once again revised, was issued in October 1848.¹⁴ A fourth edition, touted as "Complete" and numbering 162 pages,¹⁵ was published by Bela Marsh (Boston) in late May 1849, a little less than two months before Brown's departure for Europe in July.¹⁶

12 In the July-September 1849 issue of the *Christian Examiner*, Ephraim Peabody, commenting on the "immense circulation" of slave narratives, noted that no fewer than 8,000 copies of Brown's narrative had been sold since it first appeared in 1847, a piece of information which may have been derived from Brown himself.¹⁷

13 In spite of these impressive sales figures, when in 1856, Josephine Brown wrote a biography of her father, she explained that the work was needed because Brown's *Narrative* was out of print in the United States.¹⁸ This may be accounted for by the fact Brown had gone to Europe with the stereotype plates, thus making it impossible for Bela Marsh to use them for further reprints. It may also hint at the ephemeral nature of these publications, which often were more akin to pamphlets (in terms of format, binding, and length) than to books issued by publishers.¹⁹ The channels of circulation of the narratives may provide yet another explanation: while many of the copies were, as seems likely, sold by their authors at the end of anti-slavery meetings and lectures (even if some white booksellers and abolitionists also carried a few copies), once the author stopped lecturing, the narratives may very well have stopped selling.²⁰

14 Much more research as well as case studies of individual slave narratives are needed. However, the examination of the circumstances of publication of Brown's narrative invites us to look at the number of such narratives that were self-published. If, as seems

likely, further analysis reveals that this was indeed a common mode of publication for slave narratives, it would imply that this type of literature may not have been as popular with American publishers as has often been claimed. It would also differentiate African American authors from their Anglo-American counterparts, most of whom had some kind of contract with a publisher.²¹

15 Because of the tremendous work that has been done over the past decades in terms of recovery and republication of slave narratives, there is a danger that we may overstate the extent of their popularity and marketability as well as the degree of interest publishers may have taken in them. In other words, the analysis of the publishing history of slave narratives (again, a lot of work has to be done on this subject, and hard evidence is often sadly lacking), may tell a somewhat different story from the one we usually hear.

The Richard Wright Papers at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

16 Like slave narratives—and perhaps more so—the works of Richard Wright enjoy or bear the burden of great fame; like slave narratives they can aptly be read in the new light offered by a book history approach.

17 Scholarly work on Richard Wright was initiated by Michel Fabre (1973), who first argued in his seminal biography that Wright’s career was in fact “an unfinished quest,” thus breaking the common impression that Wright’s work should be divided in two parts, one before and the other after the author’s exile to France. Much evidence to the contrary lies in the archives kept at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.²² Michel Fabre should be honored for enabling generations of researchers to contribute to the scholarship on Wright. In 1976, the Beinecke Library purchased a considerable number of manuscripts, personal papers and letters from Richard Wright’s widow, Ellen Wright. This enormous collection was made accessible only through Michel Fabre’s painstaking efforts to sort out and label the documents, which required several months. His competence and dedication gave birth to the now celebrated “Richard Wright Papers”.²³ They are kept in 141 yellow “boxes”²⁴ that contain thousands of “files,” including letters from Ralph Ellison, Nelson Algren, William Faulkner and Gertrude Stein as well as the correspondence Wright kept up with Gunnar Myrdal, George Padmore and Kwame N’Krumah.²⁵

18 The outstanding Wright Papers also offer new insights into the conditions of publication and the reception of the first African American author to have made the best-seller list. Wright is now a literary landmark, but the Beinecke archive reveals how complex the negotiations were between a black writer and 1940s white America. In the present paper, I will hint at three pioneering ways in which Wright’s scholarship can be enriched, refreshing our vision of the classics he wrote and better apprehending the decade in which the racial question was about to burst on the American scene.

19 First of all, the surprising number of unpublished manuscripts, many of them completed and only kept unpublished because of the publisher’s initial refusal or change of mind, reveals that Wright’s published texts only represent part of his writings. Moreover, several of the neglected manuscripts shed a completely different light on the supposed masculine only, if not misogynistic, African American world represented in the most famous works, in particular *Native Son* (1940) and *Black Boy* (1945).²⁶ This

interpretation is encapsulated in the typology established by Maria K. Mootry: “Bitches, Whores and Woman Haters : Archetypes and Typologies in the Art of Richard Wright.”²⁷ Critics tend to view Wright’s vision of women in his fictional work through the examples of the humiliated and victimized Bessie, Bigger Thomas’s fiancée in *Native Son*, whom he rapes and murders, and of Granny Wilson, the bigoted Grand-Mother whose harsh treatment of young Richard is recorded in *Black Boy*. The depiction of Granny Wilson as superstitious and irrational has given critics the opportunity to equate the religious rites central to the African American identity with the narrow-mindedness of the black community as described by Wright; Granny Wilson is indeed the censor who blocks young Richard’s access to books and culture. However, a 1941 unpublished essay, at odds with the 1943-1944 autobiographical writings, displays quite a different vision of Granny Wilson. In the 26-page “Memories of my Grand-Mother,” she is celebrated as the sole inspiration for Wright’s urge to write and strength to fight the world around him, quite a stunning contrast with the shallow church-goer and cold torturer she was made into a few years later. Interestingly, “Memories of My Grand-Mother” was meant to be the accompanying essay to a short story Wright wrote on modern alienation, “The Man Who Lived Underground” in which he compared the destinies of African American women such as his Grand-Mother with the anxieties and the isolation of modern man in an absurd world.²⁸ Wright thus did not see women as mere victims that were not worth writing about, although this does not appear from the published work and certainly not from the overshadowing *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, which serve to sum up Wright’s aesthetics and vision for most readers. “The Man Who Lived Underground” and “Memories of My Grand-Mother” were rejected by Wright’s regular publishers, Harper, as they feared it might alienate his usual readership.²⁹ It seems that all of Wright’s works that involved strong, complex and exemplary women were deemed unfit for publication, which raises the question of the long term consequences of a publisher’s strategy in terms of defining a lifetime work.

20 In addition, the Beinecke Library papers contain the 1940 *Black Hope*, a novel about black domestic workers whose central character is Maud, an educated African American woman who “passes” for white and becomes the trusted housekeeper and companion of a wealthy New Yorker, who is about to die. At the core of the narrative is a character named Ollie, the African American housemaid, whom Maud has no qualms exploiting. This set of white and black relationships, where the exploiter is not defined along color lines, ends up in Maud inheriting the money only to pass it on to Ollie, who uses it to open a shelter for battered and exploited women. In the novel, the exploitation of African American women is thus dealt with in a manner unfamiliar to Wright’s readers. However, at his publisher’s urging, after the 1940 success of *Native Son*, by 1942 Wright turned exclusively to his promising autobiographical project, although *Black Hope* had already been announced as Wright’s next book.

21 Likewise, another manuscript from the 1940s, “The Jackal,” was uncovered by Arnold Rampersad while he worked through the archive for his 1991 Library of American edition of Wright’s works. Rampersad had this short novel published in 1994 under the name *Rite of Passage*, although it had in fact been published by Harper in the HarperCollins Children’s Book series and had remained confidential, and thus did not alter the prevailing notion that Wright produced a masculine representation of the African American identity in spite of some critics’ insight into the importance of the novel:

Wright, who has been strongly criticized in recent years for stereotyping female characters and generally ignoring or undervaluing the crucial roles black women have played in African American culture, centers *Rite of Passage* on a serious

meditation on how “feminine” values can play an enormously positive role in Johnny’s development while aggressively “masculine” values will lead to his destruction. (Butler, 186)

22 This remark, which is relevant for quite a few unpublished texts,³⁰ provides an incentive to reconsider the usual paradigms and to re-read some of Wright’s published texts such as *Black Boy* or “Bright and Morning Star” in the collection *Uncle Tom Children* (1938) in a new light. Granny Wilson’s legacy as suggested in “Memories of my Grand-Mother” is reminiscent of the 1938 short story’s Aunt Sue with her devotion and determination, while the character of *Black Boy* as well as those in the autobiography, young Richard included, may very well be more fictional than is generally assessed. The women in Richard Wright’s fiction were certainly not allowed to express themselves, and this is owing to the publisher’s choice more than the writer’s lack of interest.

23 Along these lines, I also aim to briefly consider the editorial responsibility and influence that is at play in the extensive correspondence kept at the Beinecke Library. Both *Native Son* and *Black Boy* were significantly altered to meet the public’s demand and these alterations may indeed have triggered their success by offering Wright an unexpected invitation onto the mainstream public’s bookshelves. In this sense, the field of book history is helpful when one considers the events that give birth, not just to a book, but to a best-seller. Both *Native Son* and *Black Boy* (under its original name, *American Hunger*) had been accepted by Harper and were about to be published when the providential news came that the Book-of-the-Month Club was considering the stories for its monthly selection. The galley proofs for *Native Son* were ready and printing was imminent in July 1939, yet it is a different book that was eventually published in March 1940. In both cases, Wright accepted the cuts demanded by the book club to please its subscribers. The potential consequences on distribution and sales of a Book-of-the-Month-Club selection were too important to be overlooked. However, the correspondence reveals a tense and dense negotiation between Wright and Dorothy Canfield Fisher from the Club (Rowley, 625-34). Whereas in 1940 the young writer quickly agreed to remove the sexual scenes which involved Bigger,³¹ in 1944 the more established intellectual resisted the appeals to patriotism for the formatting of *Black Boy*. Though Wright refused to add a happy ending and transform his life experience into a typically American rags-to-riches story, the removal of the second half of the original autobiography, in which Richard is seen quenching his intellectual thirst at the Communist source via the John Reed Club, was certainly the product of the 1945 context.³² The Club’s demands neatly fit the state of American society at the time of publication. In 1940, one could sell a book about a black murderer but one could not imagine a white girl’s loose behaviour inducing the black boy’s losing his mind. In 1945, it was possible to sell a book about the atrocious injustices of Jim Crow but hope had to lie within the values and the system of the American society.³³ These stakes around publication, distribution, and promotion should interest both literary scholars whose appraisal of the autobiography for instance can be informed by the “life of the book,” and historians who may be discovering in the censorship letters new primary sources on contemporary America.

24 More primary documents can actually be found in the Beinecke Library archives in the form of a widely ignored source: fan mail. This is the last suggestion offered here, in the form of a work in progress and a recently developed interest. Wright received extensive mail throughout his career, from the first conferences he delivered about the racial question in the 1940s³⁴ to the best-sellers that reached many readers who knew little about segregation. Perusing these spontaneous reactions of mainstream white Americans to Wright’s stunning portrait of Black America allows one to understand the shock associated with the reading of *Native Son*, for instance. Much has been said on

the polemic that surrounded the best-selling thriller: it triggered weeks of debates and fights within the New York Communist community in particular. Wright was still an active member of the CPUSA at the time, serving for instance as the editor for the Harlem Section of the *Daily Worker*. Ralph Ellison wrote whole pages to Wright, then in Mexico, on the storms the book raised in section meetings. But while the New York *intelligentsia* fought over the genius or betrayal of Bigger Thomas, the silent white America was also meeting Bigger. Indeed the sale of 215,000 copies in a mere three weeks after the novel's release can be accounted for by the Book-of-the-Month Club selection (Fabre, 180), as reflected in the many readers' letters kept by Wright. The shock and emotion expressed by these letters are a reminder that Bigger's story was an unlikely success in 1940s America but they also draw a more complex portrait of a society that was about to fight for freedom worldwide but was not yet ready to address its own contradictions. Wright is thus the first to give a voice and presence to a largely ignored and invisible community—that comprised 12 million Americans at the time. With Wright's best-sellers, Black Americans entered white homes and small town libraries, more than a decade before they made news and history with the civil rights movement. And there is much to learn about a certain modest part of America from the wide range of reactions, from denial to incredulity, which stemmed from the average reader of a book club.

Conclusion

- 25 Among a wealth of potential research topics, the study of the circumstances of publication and of the reception of African American writers represents a rich field of investigation, which some French scholars have successfully started mining. Cécile Cottenet has, for instance, worked on the publication and reception of Charles Chesnutt's novels and short story collections and of Jean Toomer's *Cane*.³⁵ Much more work remains to be done on individual works or genres, but the research projects have demonstrated that a book history approach can shed new light on literary works.
- 26 Concerning the reception of these works, we are often limited to the study of critical reception by professional reviewers and literary critics. The "ordinary" reader remains an elusive entity. Yet, sometimes, that elusive being can actually be traced, thanks to letters sent to writers, and this opens tantalizing vistas.
- 27 Another rich field of investigation lies in transatlantic studies: which African American writers were translated in France? Who chose to have them translated? For what reasons? What were those translations like? And how were they received? In this area too, Michel Fabre led the way, with, for instance, his work on the reception of Harlem Renaissance writers in France.³⁶
- 28 Nonfiction represents an almost untapped resource, particularly as regards African American historians of the 19th and early 20th centuries:³⁷ The publishing history of their works may tell us a lot about the influence—or lack thereof—that these works exerted in the field of African American and American historiography.

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Notes

1 Laurence Cossu-Beaumont on Wright, Claire Parfait on Brown.

2 Lucien Febvre et Henri-Jean Martin, *L'apparition du livre*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1958 (*The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*, translated by David Gerard, edited by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and David Wootton, London, New Left Books, 1976).

3 <http://www.sharpweb.org/intro.html>

4 John K. Young mainly deals with fiction in his *Black Writers, White Publishers: Marketplace Politics in Twentieth-Century African American Literature*. It should be noted, however, that volume 4 of *A History of the Book in America* (forthcoming) carries an article by James Danky, entitled "Reading, Writing, and Resisting: African American Print Culture, 1880-1940".

5 For Brown's biography, see William Edward Farrison, *William Wells Brown, Author and Reformer*. Chicago, the University of Chicago Press, 1969.

6 The preface was signed by J.C. Hathaway who, as the president of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, was Brown's previous employer. The second document was a letter from Edmund Quincy, a rich abolitionist from Boston, who served on the Executive Committee of *The Liberator*, and edited the narrative.

7 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*.

8 The office of *The Liberator*, which Garrison had launched in 1831, served as the headquarters of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, itself a branch of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

9 Samuel May, Jr. to John B. Estlin, 13 January 1848, Anti-Slavery papers, Boston Public Library.

10 See the list of 111 fugitive slave narratives provided by William L. Andrews in his *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* and the longer list on the website of "Documenting the American South," at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/>

11 Quoted in Foster, *Witnessing*, p. 126.

12 See, for instance, the ad placed by J. Elizabeth Jones in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* dated 23 October 1846, listing works just received and for sale.

13 *The Liberator*, 11 February 1848.

14 *The Liberator*, 20 October 1848. Like the first edition, it bore the imprint of the Boston Anti-Slavery Office.

15 *National Union Catalog*.

16 Bela Marsh sold anti-slavery literature and published, among others, Brown's collection of anti-slavery songs, *The Anti-Slavery Harp* (1848).

17 Ephraim Peabody, "Narratives of Fugitive Slaves," reprinted in Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, eds., *The Slave's Narrative*, pp. 19-28. In a "Note to the Present Edition," Brown writes: "The present Narrative was first published in Boston, (U.S.) in July, 1847, and eight thousand copies were sold in less than eighteen months from the time of its publication. This rapid sale may be attributed to the circumstance, that for three years preceding its publication, I had been employed as a lecturing agent by the American Anti-slavery Society; and I was thus very generally known throughout the Free States of the Great Republic, as one who had spent the first twenty years of his life as a slave, in her southern house of bondage." W.W. Brown, *Narrative*, p. iii.

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/brownw/brown.html>. The figures cannot be checked by available evidence.

18 Josephine Brown, Preface, *Biography of an American Bondman*, 1856, reprinted in William L. Andrews, ed., *Two Biographies by African-American Women*, 1991.

19 Many of the narratives appeared in periodicals and were thus all the more ephemeral.

20 Fabian notes quite rightly that, in respect to slave narratives, “the success of publication came to depend on former slaves appearing on the lecture circuit” (101-102).

21 On mid-nineteenth-century contracts, see Claire Parfait, *The Publishing History of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, 1852-2002*, (chapter 2).

22 Although the James Weldon Johnson collection at the Beinecke that comprises the Wright Papers is unparalleled, sources related to Wright’s career and work can be found in three other locations: the Fales Collection of New York University has the manuscript of *Native Son*, the Schomburg Library, the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library, owns a few original manuscripts and letters as well as the research papers of biographer Constance Webb, and the Firestone Library of Princeton University owns the Harper archive and therefore extensive correspondence between Wright and his major publisher.

23 <http://webtext.library.yale.edu/xml2html/beinecke.WRIGHT.con.html>

24 The collection rests on more than 22 meters of shelves in the stacks of the Beinecke.

25 Apart from his published account of his trip to the Gold Coast, *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos*, Wright maintained correspondence and personal relations with both men who have often been dubbed the “fathers of Pan-Africanism”.

26 Both works are part of the 1991 Library of America edition of Wright’s works.

27 In Richard Macksey and Franck E. Moorer, eds., *Richard Wright, A Collection of Critical Essays* (117-29).

28 “Memories of My Grand Mother” attempts to connect, in 1941, the fate of African Americans with the experience of modern alienation. This is an invitation to read *The Outsider*, Wright’s 1954 novel, as a continuation of this ongoing reflection, and not just as the sorry product of the existentialists’ influence on the exiled writer. *The Outsider* is available in its annotated Library of America edition (1991).

29 Eventually Wright managed to have the short story published in a magazine, *Cross Section*, in April 1944; the essay remained unpublished.

30 There is yet another project, “Strange Daughter / Girl,” developed in a 1955 letter to his editor Edward Aswell. The latter’s lack of enthusiasm discouraged Wright from developing this original novel on “reversed” miscegenation insofar as the black lover of the pregnant white heroin murders her for fear his blood might be spoilt on an impure child. Instead Wright was talked by his editor and agent into writing the more consensual *The Long Dream* (1957), the story of a Mississippi boy who finds his destiny in Paris.

31 These included Bigger Thomas masturbating at the movie theater after seeing his future employer and victim, Mary, revealing her bare legs on a Florida beach in the newsreel, as well as Bigger witnessing Mary and Jan making love in the back of the car he was driving as Mary’s driver. Julia Wright refers to those cuts as the “emasculat[i]on” of Bigger, Julia Wright in Butler (171-72).

32 The second half of the original manuscript, concerning Chicago, was published thanks to Michel Fabre’s 1976 work in the Wright papers. He had it published by Harper in 1977. The two parts are now brought together in the Library of America edition (1991).

33 A more thorough analysis of the negotiations around *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, fully illustrated by excerpts from the letters, can be found in Cossu-Beaumont.

34 The content of some of these conferences is known from some of the pieces of *White Man Listen !* (New York, Doubleday, 1957) but the conference tour and the mainstream public’s reaction to it have not been studied so far.

35 Cécile Cottenet, “Histoires éditoriales: *The Conjure Woman* de Charles W. Chesnutt (1899) et *Cane* de Jean Toomer (1923)”; “‘Every Book Is a Gamble at Best’: l’histoire éditoriale de *The Marrow of Tradition*, de Charles Chesnutt,” pp. 105-131, in Marie-Françoise Cachin et Claire Parfait, dirs., *Histoire(s) de livres : le livre et l’édition dans le monde anglophone*.

36 See for instance Michel Fabre, “The Reception of *Cane* in France,” pp. 202-214 in Geneviève Fabre and Michel Feith eds., *Jean Toomer and the Harlem Renaissance*, and Michel Fabre, “The Harlem Renaissance Abroad: French Critics and the New Negro Literary Movement (1924-1964), pp. 314-332 in Geneviève Fabre and Michel Feith, eds, *Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance*.

37 Among the rare examples of studies that investigate the mode of production of nonfiction, see Hélène Christol, “Dire’ et écrire l’histoire: le cas d’Hosea Hudson,” pp. 87-97 in Hélène Le Dantec-Lowry et Arlette Frund.

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