

About This Volume

Kimberly Drake

Richard Wright's extraordinary literary success is summed up by his biographer Hazel Rowley this way: "Wright represented a strange paradox. He was the angriest, most honest and outspoken writer this country had ever seen, and he was a bestselling writer with a vast white readership" (15). As we will see, that vast white readership included liberals with complicated ways of understanding the power of Wright's work, admiring it while calling it nonliterary, unaesthetic, didactic, and "brutal," and critiquing Wright for his negative portrayals of white people and his bitter anger (uncritically conflating his emotions with those of his protagonists). That readership also included some white supremacists, at least one of whom, after reading Wright's tremendously successful autobiography *Black Boy* (1945), demanded that the FBI investigate Wright for sedition. And yet *Black Boy* sold half a million copies, and Wright was hailed after this point as the "father" of African American literature.

Even more paradoxical to his critics and fans was his decision, at the very peak of this groundbreaking success in the mid-1940s, to migrate to Paris with his wife Ellen. Critics have called this Wright's "exile period," claiming that this move "cut him off from his roots and the anger that fueled his writing" and that he was abandoning his political "cause" (Rowley 15). "Letter after letter" to Wright in his papers at Yale, Rowley notes, "carried this message" that "he was making a bad mistake," and the black community "tended to regard Wright as a deserter" (15). But he did not abandon his political cause while in Paris. He left the United States because the "daily insults and petty humiliations" he suffered living with his white wife in supposedly liberal Greenwich Village, New York City were fraying his nerves. He moved because he wanted to live in a "country that allowed him to be a full-fledged human being," where he could "stretch himself to the limits" (15). In Europe, Wright was quickly recognized as a "major American writer and intellectual,"

but the United States began to ignore his work, and it continued its campaign against him and other expatriate writers by keeping him in a perpetual state of insecurity regarding his passport and his Communist past. Literary critics and historians are still in the process of reexamining Wright's work from this period and arguing for its literary and political value. However, Wright died at the young age of 52 of a heart attack without seeing the social changes he might have been hoping his work would produce. His daughter Julia has suggested that responsibility for his death lies with the U.S. government, and that social change was just around the corner, in the Civil Rights movement.

Wright produced an incredible variety of work in various genres and media: journalism and cultural criticism, poetry, short and long fiction, essays and articles, and pieces for the theater, radio, and film. This volume covers the highlights of that output from the fiction and autobiography of *Uncle Tom's Children*, his earliest success, to his unpublished novel *A Father's Law*, found by his daughter Julia, his literary executor, shortly after his death. The chapters here discuss critical views presented by a variety of Wright scholars as well as original archival research by the volume's authors. They also give a sense of continuity to a man who was characterized during his career both by the abject poverty and the traumatic violence he and his characters endured and by the sophisticated philosophical and rhetorical genius of that same work.

In "'Print Compels Us': Richard Wright's Literary Activism," her introduction to this book, editor Kimberly Drake introduces readers to Wright's early life and work through the lens of the FBI's file on Wright, which, though distorting and falsifying Wright's life in the service of its own political agenda, touches on the complexity and contradictory nature of his life and career. Focusing on Wright's lifelong project to write for social change, she examines his literary and political strategies for a goal that never changed throughout his life, even as Wright endeavored to expand his talents and throw off constraints by his critics and publishers, who wanted him to keep producing the same story of black oppression.

We begin the volume with four critical contexts chapters, which are organized chronologically. “The Biographical and Historical Contexts of Richard Wright’s ‘I Tried to Be a Communist,’” by Robert C. Evans, discusses an essay of Wright’s published in 1944 that explains his association with the Communist Party beginning in 1933. Evans does original work on Wright’s long autobiographical piece, one of the most searing, most memorable, and most frightening of the various warnings about communism that began to emerge near the end of World War II. Evans examines the personal and social historical factors that led to Wright’s rejection of the American Communist Party, and explores how his disillusionment with communism evolved over time and reverberated throughout his career. He helps us understand Wright’s change of opinion in relation to various historical contexts, and how his decision affected his relationships with former friends and with other Communists in general.

Kimberly Drake’s “The Meaning of Rape in Richard Wright’s *Native Son*” uses a revised psychoanalytic lens combined with a feminist lens to examine Wright’s portrayal of rape in that novel. Drake documents Wright’s interest in psychoanalysis and in Freud, as well as his efforts to bring psychotherapy to the young men of Harlem. However, she qualifies the use value of psychoanalysis as a tool of literary interpretation, examining a scholarly conversation among scholars of Wright and of African American literature as well as trauma theorists about whether psychoanalytic criticism is a tool of white supremacy, relying heavily as it does on a universalized and normative conception of the human male as the basis for its theories and practices. Ultimately, she finds that this modified and contextualized lens allows us to see aspects of Wright’s portrayal of sexual violence in *Native Son* that would not otherwise have been visible.

The chapter entitled “Richard Wright’s Readers,” written by Konstantina Karageorgos, introduces readers to an important genealogy of criticism on Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, which influences how Wright is read today. The author locates the origins of a “clinical” tradition, which diagnoses rather than interprets

Wright, within Dorothy Canfield Fisher's Introduction to the Book-of-the-Month Club edition of *Native Son* (1940), in which Fisher classes the novel as a "report" of "Negro neurosis" and "abnormal nerve-reaction." The chapter traces such clinical readings to the present, revealing how author and text have been pathologized by three generations of readers who problematically avoid reading the novel as politically engaged literature.

Hue Woodson's "Heidegger and *The Outsider*, *Savage Holiday*, and *The Long Dream*" is designed to complicate the critical understanding of existentialism in the three novels Wright wrote after his move to Paris. While *The Outsider* explicitly carries the label of an existentialist novel, Woodson notes, *Savage Holiday* and *The Long Dream* are also invested in Wright's approach to existentialism, since all three novels represent Wright's attempts to translate Sartre's French existentialism into Wright's understanding of what a black existentialism would look like. That translation, for Wright, is not just about interpreting his meaning of "existence in black" through Sartre's "being," or even about Wright appropriating Sartre's equivalency of existentialism with humanism, but, instead, it is much more about Wright attempting to confront Heidegger's "*Dasein*" more directly.

Next, the volume shifts to a series of critical readings chapters, also organized chronologically. The first of these is "A Child's Eye View: Humanizing Naturalism's Horrors in Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*," by Jericho Williams. Observing that Wright is best known for *Native Son* (1940), the novel which propelled him to literary stardom, Williams returns our attention to the March 1938 publication of Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*, which announced the appearance of a major American artist. This chapter reconsiders *Uncle Tom's Children* in light of Wright's engagement with literary naturalism. It examines two ways that Wright attempts to humanize naturalism's scientific elements through a closer analysis of "The Ethics of Jim Crow" and "Big Boy Leaves Home," an essay and short story from the collection. In these two selections, Wright portrays ingenuity in the face of dire cultural circumstances and asserts the strength of the child to thwart the clutch of environmental

determination, thereby adding complexity to the development of literary naturalism in American literature.

In “Revisiting Richard Wright’s *Native Son* as Protest Novel,” Lisa Tomlinson examines the novel as a literary protest project, contextualizing the unjust circumstances around Bigger’s actions and portraying Bigger’s murder of a white woman as an outcry of a black man’s need to be heard in a society where he is marginalized. In a time when Africans in Africa and its Diaspora were seen as culturally void, often represented as barbaric and as savages in the white racial imagination, Richard Wright’s controversial novel *Native Son* self-consciously analyzes the grotesque portrait of the violent African American male. Some critics argued that Wright’s representation reinforced the stereotypes of the volatile black male, reminiscent of Shakespeare’s Moorish character Othello, who brutally strangles his white wife Desdemona in a jealous rage. In this case, Wright’s protagonist, Bigger Thomas, brutally murders the daughter of his white employer and his own black girlfriend. Unlike Othello, portrayed as beastly and with no social context to frame his actions in that play, Bigger’s understanding of himself and his society, and his angry responses to the racism of that society, are developed and contextualized as only a long novel can do. As did many black novelists, Wright used this novel as a means to show not only the frustration and inadequate social conditions of black people in America, but to also tap into the psychological effects of racism and marginalization.

Julie Prebel’s chapter, “Richard Wright’s *Black Boy*: Black Consciousness, Artistic Expression, and Social Justice,” focuses on Richard Wright’s autobiographical narrative, *Black Boy*, which chronicles his experiences as a child in the South and his migration North where he begins his writing career. As this chapter shows, Wright’s narrative highlights the effects of white supremacy experienced by blacks, both in the South and the North—particularly on the development of consciousness and identity. Prebel argues that writing becomes the means through which Wright enacts self-representation, resists racial oppression, and emphasizes the necessity of social justice for blacks more broadly.

In “Richard Wright’s ‘I Tried To Be a Communist’: Its Literary Effectiveness,” Robert C. Evans delivers another view of Wright’s 1944 essay, which recounts Wright’s years as a member of the American Communist Party. The purpose of Evans’ chapter this time, however, is to examine the essay less as a political document than as an effective piece of writing. Why is Wright’s essay so powerful? How does it achieve, in literary terms, its memorable impact? Evans addresses these kinds of questions here, beginning this chapter with a survey of what other readers have had to say about the impact of Wright’s essay as an effective piece of writing.

I want to acknowledge that most of the chapters in the volume study the work of Wright’s early career, before his move to Paris; this is the work for which he is best known and for which he received the greatest praise. The remaining chapters in the volume focus on work written by Wright after his departure from the United States, when his contemporary critics almost universally considered his career to be in decline. In “Of Maids and Men: Racial Mythologies and Gender Revelations in Richard Wright’s ‘Man of All Work,’” Shana A. Russell considers one of Wright’s last short fictional works, a radio play entitled “Man of All Work” (1957), in which a black man impersonates a woman in order to obtain work as a maid. Later published in the short story collection *Eight Men* a year after Wright’s death, this story “bears evidence” of a “mastery of the black signifying tradition” not often on display in Wright’s work (Cossu-Beaumont 5). While the story explores a number of familiar Wright themes, the form of the narrative and its use of suggestion and situational irony represent new terrain for Wright’s writing, which has been criticized for misogynistic portrayals of women as well as for a lack of interest in folk tradition and a mishandling of the “tough American idiom,” as critic Saunders Redding put it in his review of the collection. Russell considers “Man of All Work,” and its use of gender illusion and gender performance, in the context of Wright’s evolving theorization of working class black womanhood, sexuality, and racial violence.

Beth Bennett’s chapter, “A First Look at *Native Son*: Richard Wright’s Uncensored Film,” closely reads the uncut *Native Son* (NS)

film, showing how the roles Wright assigned to his African American actors surprisingly, and seemingly counterintuitively, initially mirrored some features of blackened American entertainers on the minstrel stage a few decades earlier. However, in a sophisticated transformation, the minstrel figure—not Bigger Thomas—who opens this *NS* film and was discovered by Bennett in Wright’s *NS* film manuscript housed in Yale’s Beinecke Library—develops into a morally conscious individual, underscoring the limitations of the minstrel character and symbolizing the possibility of a raceless construction of humanity based on an understanding of the human condition.

Kimberly Drake closes out the volume with “Richard Wright’s Rage: Figures of Disability in *A Father’s Law*.” She takes as her theme the association of Wright’s work, and indeed of black men in general at the time, with violent and dangerous rage, noting that James Baldwin’s discussion of his own rage at Jim Crow racism provides a connection between himself and Wright that critics have endeavored to ignore. That connection is the idea of rage as a disabling disease or a poison, one that is impossible to cure, even when one moves to the relatively enlightened Paris (as both Wright and Baldwin did). Wright’s last book is an unfinished detective novel, an integrationist fantasy featuring Rudolph “Ruddy” Turner, a black police captain who is promoted to chief of police of Brentwood Park, a wealthy and corrupt white city with a serial murderer on the loose. It’s also a portrayal of a successful rags-to-middle-class black professional close to retirement who, in the face of unceasing non-racist admiration and cooperation from the whites around him, has developed an obsessive suspicion about the hidden motives of other people, including his own son, who he begins to believe is the murderer. This chapter connects Ruddy’s suspicions to his tremendous anxiety about disease and corruption, embodied in the figure of his son’s fiancée, who is discovered to have congenital syphilis.

This volume does not purport to cover all of Wright’s work; much of his short fiction and his nonfiction, and all of his poetry, are not examined. However, the student of Wright should find in this

volume a useful critical introduction to his best-known works (and some a bit less well-known) and to the life of an intellectual whose work changed the course of race relations and American literature in the early and mid-twentieth century.

Works Cited

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A Child's Eye View: Humanizing Naturalism's Horrors in Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*

Jericho Williams

The release of Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children* in March of 1938 announced the appearance of a major American artist and opened the way for *Native Son* (1940), a novel which launched Wright toward literary stardom and which scholars now consider both a canonical work and an exemplar of literary naturalism. Unfortunately, with the passing of time, *Native Son's* great popularity has cast a shadow over *Uncle Tom's Children*. Though Wright's first book received generally favorable reviews upon its release, the general consensus is that it serves as a precursor to Wright's harsh, naturalistic portrayal of Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*. Consequently, despite *Uncle Tom's Children's* originality and power, comparisons to its successor and comments from key critics have lessened its stature. With the hope of encouraging greater consideration of Wright's first work, this essay seeks to accomplish two tasks. First, it documents some of the challenges that Wright weathered as a child and as a young African American writer before the publication of *Uncle Tom's Children* and charts the long-term impact of the book's critical reception. Then, the essay examines two ways that Wright attempts to humanize the more scientific elements of literary naturalism through a closer analysis of "The Ethics of Jim Crow" and "Big Boy Leaves Home," an essay and short story from the collection. In these two selections, Wright portrays ingenuity in the face of dire cultural circumstances and asserts the strength of the child to thwart the clutch of environmental determination, thereby adding complexity to the development of literary naturalism in American literature.

Uncle Tom's Children: Composition and Critical Reception

Wright's apprenticeship for what became *Uncle Tom's Children* consisted of oppressive living circumstances and extensive literary study. From 1908 until late 1927, he lived throughout the southern United States in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Memphis, Tennessee. Throughout this period, poverty and racism shaped Wright's life. As the son of an illiterate sharecropper and a long-suffering mother, he moved often and struggled to find stability and community (Delbanco 29). Repulsed by the violent situations that punctuated his childhood and that he would later recount in *Black Boy* (1945), Wright turned to literature during his late teens in Memphis partly as a means of escape from all that he had witnessed and heard. In lieu of diversion, literature awakened Wright and assisted him in understanding the world around him. Pondering the psychological underpinnings of the reprehensible behavior he saw throughout the South fueled his desire for "realistic and naturalistic fiction and art" (*Black Boy* 97). This literature delineated social injustices throughout the world and empowered him to perceive his elders in a new way. Reflecting about his immersion into reading, Wright writes that reading became a "drug, a dope" (*Black Boy* 238) that "created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living" (*Black Boy* 242). The more Wright read, the more he became acutely aware of the limitations the Jim Crow South imposed upon his family, which fueled his desire to move north to the South Side of Chicago.

Although his childhood and a devotion to reading furnished Wright with the motivation and means to write literary fiction, it could not prepare him for the publishing obstacles he faced during the next decade. He came of age as an artist during the contentious 1930s, a literary period long after the heydays of American Realism and Naturalism, and on the heels of the more recent Modernism. The politicized landscape following the Great Depression and the global tensions between fascism and communism also influenced the publishing field. Literary agents and reviewers expected Wright, as an African American writer who had escaped the nightmarish South, to express himself on account of his race or his Communist

politics at the time, but to also cloak any criticism within a more upbeat, progressive vision that pushed for change. Unsurprisingly, this publishing environment hindered Wright's progress prior to the release of *Uncle Tom's Children*. He composed two novels, *Lawd Today!* (posthumously published in 1963) and *Tarbaby's Dawn* (never released), which publishers rejected because they believed that their bleak social realism would render them commercial failures (Rowley 132). As he fictionalized sketches drawn from his own life and continued to receive rejection notices, Wright came to believe that his failures had "more to do with subject matter than with the quality of his writing" (Rowley 132). He finally caught a huge break in 1937, when *Story* magazine named "Fire and Cloud," a short story that would reappear in *Uncle Tom's Children*, as its winner among five hundred entries. As a result, Harper and Brothers elected to publish Wright's collection of stories in March 1938.

The critical reception of *Uncle Tom's Children* initially enhanced Wright's reputation. It garnered great praise from book reviewers, including a listing as one of the top ten books of the year in the *Nation*, and it earned Wright a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1939 (Yarborough xx). However, the comments of two noteworthy literary figures would characterize its long-term reception. First, Zora Neale Hurston, whose novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Wright publicly criticized in a review in October 1937, described *Uncle Tom's Children* as lacking in originality. She wrote that its principal concern was hate and that "all of the characters are . . . elemental and brutish," while acknowledging that some of Wright's sentences "have the shocking power of a forty-four" (3). Additionally, as much as Hurston claimed to dislike Wright's portrayals of African American life, she abhorred what she perceived to be a collection of stories published for the benefit of the Communist Party. Unbeknownst to Hurston, Wright had abandoned the Chicago Communist Party a year before in 1937, although he would remain affiliated with the national party until 1942 (Delbanco 29). In contrast to Hurston, James T. Farrell, a prominent author of literary naturalism, fully embraced *Uncle Tom's Children*. He wrote that each of its stories channeled "the tragedy, the brutality, and the misery . . . [resulting]

from some accidental occurrence, some unfortunate coincidence” (4), while praising its violent depiction of the Jim Crow South: “Nerves pop. Trigger fingers are given deadly exercise” (5). If both Hurston and Farrell noticed Wright’s preoccupation with violence, albeit in separate ways, the best that can be deduced from their reviews is that Wright wrote powerfully and directly, and if not realistically to Hurston’s taste, then certainly in the stylized vein of literary naturalism.

Nonetheless, both Wright himself and James Baldwin would temporarily undermine *Uncle Tom’s Children’s* legacy. Soon after the collection’s release, Wright came to believe that the stories were not strong enough to spark the cultural outrage he desired. Calling the collection a “naïve mistake” in a talk two years later, given eleven days after the publication of *Native Son* in 1940, Wright noted that rather than writing another book that readers “could read and weep over and feel good about,” he intended that his follow-up novel be “so hard and deep that they [readers] would have to face it without the consolation of tears” (“How” 874). Undoubtedly, this belief sparked the creation of *Bigger Thomas*, but it also put the reputation of his prior work at risk. Too, the comment appeared in the midst of the wildly successful period for *Native Son*, which sold 215,000 copies within three weeks of its release. At the time, Wright may not have meant to harm the reputation of *Uncle Tom’s Children* so much as to champion and celebrate his new work. Yet, the damage became long-lasting, and roughly a decade later, James Baldwin would hoist more harmful criticism on Wright for the hardening naturalistic progression that began in *Uncle Tom’s Children* and reached its peak in *Native Son*. In two essays during the span of two years, “Everybody’s Protest Novel” and “Many Thousands Gone,” Baldwin would denounce Wright, effectively lumping his early works as social protest fiction. Baldwin believed that Wright’s writing remained the product of a tumultuous literary period that continually rejected the “beauty, dread, and power” of the individual in favor of human groupings or categories that its characters could never transcend (“Everybody’s” 23). Baldwin added that even though Wright was the era’s “most eloquent

spokesman,” he and the others of his ilk amounted to little more than “the unlucky shepherd[s]” who, no matter how “bitterly they might [have] consider[ed] themselves estranged or however gallantly they struggled to build a better world,” embargoed themselves with the theoretical limitations of a passing movement (“Many” 32).

Wright’s comments and Baldwin’s perspective sank the reputation of *Uncle Tom’s Children* until the 1970s, when later scholarly interest in the collection revived and eventually initiated discussions about its relationship with naturalism. In 1973, James R. Giles proclaimed Wright’s self-criticism of *Uncle Tom’s Children* as “shortsighted,” perhaps both in his assessment of the book as well as in reference to the long-term damage his comments may have caused (256). Five years later, Steven J. Rubin praised the collection for its breadth, noting that the stories explored a wide range of themes such as “the possibility of freedom, man’s isolation and alienation, the inherent irrationality of American society, and the nature of personal rebellion within that society” (405). More recently, Bob Mielke champions both *Uncle Tom’s Children* and *Native Son*, but particularly highlights “the sheer force and intensity as well as . . . [the] directness of statement” of the short stories (130). Richard Lehan praises Wright for consistently reaching beyond the limited theoretical scope of literary naturalism, especially in *Native Son*, which he celebrates for “directly bringing to the surface ideas that are often submerged in other naturalistic fiction” (223), and Jennifer Wallach similarly notes that *Uncle Tom’s Children*’s stories “do not read as political tracts, nor do they pose simplistic solutions to American racism” (69). Each of these critics suggests that *Uncle Tom’s Children* merits greater attention, and especially in the way that the collection clarifies the struggles of African Americans in the Jim Crow South beyond simple descriptors such as social protest or naturalist fiction.

Humanizing a Naturalistic World

Like many African American artists, Richard Wright remained committed to social progress yet skeptical of the means to accomplish it. His career trajectory reveals the development of an

About the Editor

Kimberly Drake is Associate Professor and chair of the Writing and Rhetoric major at Scripps College, where she teaches creative nonfiction writing and American literature and culture. She received her bachelor's degree and Ph.D in English at the University of California, Berkeley, where she specialized in U.S. protest literature (including African American literature and working-class literature), theories of race and gender, and theories of writing. Her current scholarly interests lie in writing (literary and popular) and writing pedagogy that seeks to bring attention to social justice issues. Her publications reflect this interest; for the Critical Insights series of Salem Press, she has been Volume Editor and contributed chapters to *Literature of Protest* (2013), *The Slave Narrative* (2014), *Literature of Fear, Paranoia, and Terror* (2017), and *Inequality* (2018). She also contributed a chapter on Chester Himes' critical reception to the Critical Insights volume *Literature of Social Justice* (2018). Her monograph *Subjectivity in the American Protest Novel* (Palgrave Macmillan 2011) concerns trauma theory, double consciousness, and topological constructions of identity in novels by Richard Wright, Ann Petry, Chester Himes, Tillie Olsen, and Sarah Wright. She edited the recipes and stories for the collection *Stinging for their Suppers: How Women in Prison Nourish Their Bodies and Souls* (Lulu Press 2013), a collection of women's writing about cooking in prison. Other publications focus on gender-neutral pronouns and writing pedagogy; prison literature; and punk rock music and memoir. Her in-progress work continues to focus on both literary protest (rhetorics of disability and social determinism in the American detective novel), and writing pedagogy (emotional support animals in individual writing conferences).

Contributors

Beth Bennett teaches at Boston University where she completed her Ph.D. in American and New England Studies with a dissertation on Richard Wright. In 2014-2015 she was a Fulbright Scholar, teaching African American literature and writing at the University of Ghana (Legon) and tracing Wright's steps throughout the African country. She currently serves as the vice president of the Massachusetts chapter of the Fulbright Association.

Robert C. Evans is I. B. Young Professor of English at Auburn University at Montgomery. He earned his Ph.D. from Princeton University in 1984. In 1982 he began teaching at AUM, where he has been named Distinguished Research Professor, Distinguished Teaching Professor, and University Alumni Professor. External awards include fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Philosophical Society, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, and the Folger, Huntington, and Newberry Libraries. He is the author or editor of roughly fifty books and of more than four hundred essays, including recent work on various American writers.

Konstantina Karageorgos is an Assistant Professor of English at the State University of New York, Oneonta, where she teaches courses in African American and anticolonial literature, culture, and theory. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Mediations* and *Against the Current* and the edited volumes *Cambridge History of the U.S. South* and *Lineages of the Literary Left*.

Julie Prebel is associate professor of Writing and Rhetoric and the Writing Programs-Writing Center Director at Occidental College in Los Angeles. She teaches a range of writing, rhetorical theory, and cultural studies courses that resonate with her wider interests in critical race, gender, and sexuality studies. In addition to her chapter for this volume on Richard Wright, Prebel has contributed chapters on Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Toni Morrison in previous editions of *Critical Insights*. She

has also published in peer-reviewed journals on topics such as pedagogy in first-year writing seminars and emotion and social justice in community-based learning. Her forthcoming work focuses on embodied feminist rhetorics in works by Black women rhetors in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Shana A. Russell is a scholar of black women's labor and the daughter of four generations of domestic workers. As a cultural historian, her research combines history and literature to construct a narrative of resistance among women workers of color. Russell's scholarship has been featured in the anthology *From Uncle Tom's Cabin to the Help: White-Authored Narratives of Black Life* and the journal *Science and Society*. Her current manuscript in progress, "Richard Wright's Native Daughters," explores fictional representations of domestic workers in the work of Richard Wright. She received her Ph.D. in American Studies from Rutgers University-Newark.

Lisa Tomlinson is a researcher and author of the book entitled *The African-Jamaican Aesthetic: Cultural Retention and Transformation Across Borders*. Her areas of specialization include literary and cultural studies of the Caribbean and African diaspora. Lisa is currently a lecturer at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus in the Institute of Caribbean Studies where she teaches courses on Caribbean and African Diaspora film, the study of culture, and reggae aesthetics. Some of her publications include book chapters in *Jamaicans in the Canadian Experience: A Multiculturalizing Presence*; *Archipelagos of Sound: Transnational Caribbeanities, Women and Music*; and *International Reggae: Current and Future Trends in Jamaican Popular Music* as well as encyclopedia literary entries in the *Dictionary of Afro-Latin American and Caribbean Biography*. Lisa Tomlinson is also a blogger with Huffington Post Canada. Her writing has been featured in popular online newspapers, such as *African American Intellectual History Society*, the *Black Agenda*, *Feminist Wire*, and *Jamaica Gleaner*.

Jericho Williams is a Professor of English at Spartanburg Methodist College who researches American and African American literature. He has published essays about environmental education and injustice in American

slave narratives in *Ecogothic in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Routledge, 2017) and *Critical Insights: Inequality* (Salem, 2018), and he is the author of forthcoming essays about children and childhood development in the fiction of Henry James (*Children's Play in Literature*, Routledge, 2019) and Nella Larsen (*South Atlantic Review*, 2019).

Hue Woodson is an Assistant Professor of English at Tarrant County College. He is a Ph.D. (ABD) candidate in English at the University of Texas at Arlington, and is currently writing his dissertation on Heidegger and posthumanism. He holds a Th.M. in History and Theology and an M.T.S. from Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, an M.A. in English from the University of North Texas, and an M.Ed. and B.A. in English from the University of Texas at Arlington. His research specializes in contemporary theory, Shakespeare, rhetoric, Heidegger, continental philosophy, theological and philosophical hermeneutics, systematic theology and existential theology. He is the author of *Heideggerian Theologies: The Pathmarks of John Macquarrie, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, and Karl Rahner* (Wipf and Stock), *A Theologian's Guide to Heidegger* (forthcoming from Wipf and Stock), *Existential Theology: An Introduction* (forthcoming from Wipf and Stock), with forthcoming articles on Jacques Lacan, Clarence Major, bell hooks, John Milton and William Blake, Pope Urban II, and fourteen encyclopedia entries in the forthcoming *Race and Ethnicity in the United States*.