

Dictionary of Literary Biography

Volume 33:

**Afro-American
Fiction Writers
After 1955**

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Afro-American Fiction Writers After 1955

Edited by
Thadious M. Davis and Trudier Harris
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Plan of the Series

... *Almost the most prodigious asset of a country, and perhaps its most precious possession, is its native literary product—when that product is fine and noble and enduring.*

Mark Twain*

The advisory board, the editors, and the publisher of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* are joined in endorsing Mark Twain's declaration. The literature of a nation provides an inexhaustible resource of permanent worth. It is our expectation that this endeavor will make literature and its creators better understood and more accessible to students and the literate public, while satisfying the standards of teachers and scholars.

To meet these requirements, *literary biography* has been construed in terms of the author's achievement. The most important thing about a writer is his writing. Accordingly, the entries in *DLB* are career biographies, tracing the development of the author's canon and the evolution of his reputation.

The publication plan for *DLB* resulted from two years of preparation. The project was proposed to Brucoli Clark by Frederick G. Ruffner, president of the Gale Research Company, in November 1975. After specimen entries were prepared and typeset, an advisory board was formed to refine the entry format and develop the series rationale. In meetings held during 1976, the publisher, series editors, and advisory board approved the scheme for a comprehensive biographical dictionary of persons who contributed to North American literature. Editorial work on the first volume began in January 1977, and it was published in 1978.

In order to make *DLB* more than a reference tool and to compile volumes that individually have claim to status as literary history, it was decided to organize volumes by topic or period or genre. Each of these freestanding volumes provides a biographical-bibliographical guide and overview for a particular area of literature. We are convinced that this organization—as opposed to a single alphabet method—constitutes a valuable innovation in the presentation of reference material. The volume plan necessarily requires many decisions for the

placement and treatment of authors who might properly be included in two or three volumes. In some instances a major figure will be included in separate volumes, but with different entries emphasizing the aspect of his career appropriate to each volume. Ernest Hemingway, for example, is represented in *American Writers in Paris, 1920-1939* by an entry focusing on his expatriate apprenticeship; he is also in *American Novelists, 1910-1945* with an entry surveying his entire career. Each volume includes a cumulative index of subject authors. The final *DLB* volume will be a comprehensive index to the entire series.

With volume ten in 1982 it was decided to enlarge the scope of *DLB* beyond the literature of the United States. By the end of 1983 twelve volumes treating British literature had been published, and volumes for Commonwealth and Modern European literature were in progress. The series has been further augmented by the *DLB Yearbooks* (since 1981) which update published entries and add new entries to keep the *DLB* current with contemporary activity. There have also been occasional *DLB Documentary Series* volumes which provide biographical and critical background source materials for figures whose work is judged to have particular interest for students. One of these companion volumes is entirely devoted to Tennessee Williams.

The purpose of *DLB* is not only to provide reliable information in a convenient format but also to place the figures in the larger perspective of literary history and to offer appraisals of their accomplishments by qualified scholars.

We define literature as the *intellectual commerce of a nation*: not merely as belles lettres, but as that ample and complex process by which ideas are generated, shaped, and transmitted. *DLB* entries are not limited to "creative writers" but extend to other figures who in this time and in this way influenced the mind of a people. Thus the series encompasses historians, journalists, publishers, and screenwriters. By this means readers of *DLB* may be aided to perceive literature not as cult scripture in the keeping of cultural high priests, but as at the center of a nation's life.

DLB includes the major writers appropriate to each volume and those standing in the ranks immediately behind them. Scholarly and critical counsel has been sought in deciding which minor figures to include and how full their entries should be.

*From an unpublished section of Mark Twain's autobiography, copyright © by the Mark Twain Company.

Wherever possible, useful references will be made to figures who do not warrant separate entries.

Each *DLB* volume has a volume editor responsible for planning the volume, selecting the figures for inclusion, and assigning the entries. Volume editors are also responsible for preparing, where appropriate, appendices surveying the major periodicals and literary and intellectual movements for their volumes, as well as lists of further readings. Work on the series as a whole is coordinated at the Brucoli Clark editorial center in Columbia, South Carolina, where the editorial staff is responsible for the accuracy of the published volumes.

One feature that distinguishes *DLB* is the illustration policy—its concern with the iconography of literature. Just as an author is influenced by his surroundings, so is the reader's understanding of the author enhanced by a knowledge of his environment. Therefore *DLB* volumes include not only drawings, paintings, and photographs of authors, often depicting them at various stages in their careers, but also illustrations of their families and places where they lived. Title pages are regularly reproduced in facsimile along with dust jackets for modern authors. The dust jackets are a special fea-

ture of *DLB* because they often document better than anything else the way in which an author's work was launched in its own time. Specimens of the writers' manuscripts are included when feasible.

A supplement to *DLB*—tentatively titled *A Guide, Chronology, and Glossary for American Literature*—will outline the history of literature in North America and trace the influences that shaped it. This volume will provide a framework for the study of American literature by means of chronological tables, literary affiliation charts, glossarial entries, and concise surveys of the major movements. It has been planned to stand on its own as a vade mecum, providing a ready-reference guide to the study of American literature as well as a companion to the *DLB* volumes for American literature.

Samuel Johnson rightly decreed that "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors." The purpose of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* is to compile literary history in the surest way available to us—by accurate and comprehensive treatment of the lives and work of those who contributed to it.

The *DLB* Advisory Board

Foreword

The mid-1950s brought changes not only to the political and social worlds of Afro-Americans in the United States but to their literary world as well. While black poets and dramatists carried immediate issues into the 1960s, black novelists carried the more introspective aspects of the times. The writers grouped in this volume reflect the trends, hopes, political aspirations, and cultural affirmations of those writers who became identified with the vocal proponents of the black aesthetic as well as those who pursued their art in quieter, less nationalistic, but equally creative ways.

From the obscurity of the 1940s, when voices such as those of Richard Wright, Chester Himes, and Ann Petry were among the few to be heard, the early 1950s gave rise to voices such as James Baldwin's and William Demby's and, through the fervor of the early days of the civil rights movement, anticipated the voices of writers such as John Oliver Killens and William Melvin Kelley in the 1960s, Ernest Gaines and Toni Morrison in the 1970s, and Leon Forrest and John Edgar Wideman in the 1980s.

The nationalistic fervor of the 1960s perhaps showed itself in less dramatic ways in the fiction than in other genres. We could look at poems by Nikki Giovanni and Haki Mahabuti (Don L. Lee) and see the typographical desire to make black poetry different in its self-imposed nationbuilding objective. While some of the writers, such as Clarence Major and Carlene Hatcher Polite, are conscious experimenters with form, many others, such as Kristin Hunter and Charles Wright, are more concerned with experimentation in approaches to their subjects. While Charles R. Johnson could produce a novel in 1982 based on the tradition of the slave narrative, and Alice Walker could produce an epistolary novel in the same year, their experiments reflect a trend in the personal pursuit of artistic achievement rather than any requirements imposed by a social or political movement.

The decade of the 1970s reflects many changes of direction in terms of style. The folk speech and culturally saturated novels of Ernest Gaines and Ellease Southerland illustrate one trend, while the conscious return to specific elements of the folk tradition, urban or rural, shown in the novels of Toni Morrison and John Edgar Wideman, illustrates another. History, both personal and communal, is also important to these

writers, and it takes forms as wide-ranging as those reflected in the novels of David Bradley, Barbara Chase-Riboud, and Ishmael Reed. In contrast to their predecessors, who frequently placed more emphasis on *recording* history, these writers are more concerned with *interpreting* history.

After the 1950s, the nationalistic fervor also brought with it an increased interest in and publication of materials for and about black children. Inspired in part by the nationbuilders' concern with the future, the trend also reflected more receptive outlets for black writers of adolescent and juvenile literature. Virginia Hamilton, Kristin Hunter, and Sharon Bell Mathis are three of the more prominent among this number of writers.

In terms of less traditional literary forms for Afro-American writers, the post-1950s also saw the rise of the first regularly published black writers of science fiction, such as Octavia Butler and Samuel Delany. The most widely read and popular is Delany, who has created through several novels a world that would rival those of Anne McCaffrey and Isaac Asimov. In addition, black writers of detective fiction achieved a measure of success. One example is Donald Goines.

Ranges in genres are paralleled by ranges in talents across various genres. Some of the better-known novelists today, Alice Walker and Gayl Jones, for example, have distinguished themselves by mastering other forms as well. Both are accomplished short-fiction writers and poets; Walker has written children's books and has published a collection of essays. Though Jones and Walker follow in the footsteps of a writer like James Baldwin, who has written plays, essays, short fiction, and novels since the early 1950s, the more recent writers seem to get equal publicity for all of their forms; and they seem to be equally proficient in them.

These multitalented, multigenred writers reflect another phenomenon of the post-1950s era. Many more black women writers are getting published and are included here, and it is the women writers who seem to be setting the pace for productivity in the 1980s. Their emergence upon the scene has brought with it some distinguishing features in terms of themes and characters. Many more black women characters, for example, are protagonists in these works, and their roles are more complex than those of the mummies and matriarchs of preceding generations. The women writers seem, in addition,

to be much more willing to treat subjects that have traditionally been viewed as taboo by black American writers. For example, Alice Walker has explored the subject of incest, and she has joined Ann Allen Shockley in treating lesbianism. Few other black writers prior to the 1970s were willing to confront the uproars that might be raised if they explored such topics.

Few of these writers, male or female, hold the traditional reverence for Christianity in their works. Baldwin, as the tie between the 1940s and the 1960s, is the exception in the creation of characters who still find themselves in or in reaction to the church. There are few long-suffering, forever-praying black characters in the fiction of Paule Marshall, John McCluskey, or Barry Beckham, although writers such as Leon Forrest and Ronald Fair retain a concern with the place of traditional religion in the lives of black Americans. Few matriarchs, however, are present, and the few strong women who do appear find their sources of strength from an ethic not grounded solely in Christianity.

Most of the writers are concerned with the black family, especially with black fathers and mothers and the relationships between black men and women, but there is little effort to glorify or romanticize them, as can be seen in the novels of Al Young, Rosa B. Guy, John Oliver Killens, and Joyce Carol Thomas. The writers are also concerned with the failure of personal dreams as well as the American dream, a tie they have to writers of earlier generations. John A. Williams and Sarah E. Wright are representative examples of this phenomenon. Other writers, such as Nathan C. Heard and George Cain, exhibit concerns for the drug-related horrors

that await urban blacks. Still others, for instance, Hal Bennett and Ishmael Reed, are concerned with moving beyond drug, family, and other problems to focus on self-fulfillment on whatever soil is available to their characters.

After the individual trends have been noted, perhaps a general and more major one to note is that black American novelists after the 1960s have been less aggressively concerned with black/white conflict in the United States. While they have certainly not forgotten race, their focus has been more on the interactions within the black community rather than its reaction to the white community. The emphasis is on self-reflection and self-healing. The worlds of Toni Morrison, John Edgar Wideman, and Kristin Hunter are only intermittently the worlds of black reaction to white pressures; they are more often worlds in which black people learn to depend upon each other, learn to explore their history together, and learn to live in black environments without being unduly plagued by W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness.

Afro-American writers since the 1950s have been more productive, across a wider variety of genres, than at any other time in their history. Yet, many of the novelists included in this volume remain unknown to the majority of students and scholars of Afro-American literature. This volume is designed, therefore, to provide information that was previously unavailable as well as to encourage further research and teaching of the works of these writers.

—Thadious M. Davis and Trudier Harris

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Dictionary of Literary Biography • Volume Thirty-three

Afro-American Fiction Writers After 1955

Dictionary of Literary Biography

James Baldwin

(2 August 1924-)

John W. Roberts

University of Pennsylvania

See also the Baldwin entries in *DLB 2, American Novelists Since World War II*, and *DLB 7, Twentieth-Century American Dramatists*.

BOOKS: *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (New York: Knopf, 1953; London: Joseph, 1954); *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon, 1955; London: Mayflower, 1958); *Giovanni's Room* (New York: Dial, 1956; London: Joseph, 1957); *Nobody Knows My Name* (New York: Dial, 1961; London: Joseph, 1964); *Another Country* (New York: Dial, 1962; London: Joseph, 1963); *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Dial, 1963; London: Joseph, 1963); *Nothing Personal*, by Baldwin, with photographs by Richard Avedon (New York: Atheneum, 1964; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964); *Blues for Mister Charlie* (New York: Dial, 1964; London: Joseph, 1965); *Going to Meet the Man* (New York: Dial, 1965; London: Joseph, 1965); *The Amen Corner* (New York: Dial, 1968; London: Joseph, 1969); *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (New York: Dial, 1968; London: Joseph, 1968); *A Rap on Race*, by Baldwin and Margaret Mead (Philadelphia & New York: Lippincott, 1971; London: Joseph, 1971); *One Day When I Was Lost: A Scenario Based on 'The Autobiography of Malcolm X'* (London: Joseph, 1972; New York: Dial, 1973); *No Name in the Street* (New York: Dial, 1972; London: Joseph, 1972);



James Baldwin (photo by Layle Silbert)

A Dialogue, with Nikki Giovanni (Philadelphia & New York: Lippincott, 1973; London: Joseph, 1975); *If Beale Street Could Talk* (London: Joseph, 1974; New York: Dial, 1974);

The Devil Finds Work (New York: Dial, 1976; London: Joseph, 1976);

Little Man, Little Man: A Story of Childhood, by Baldwin and Yoran Cazac (London: Joseph, 1976; New York: Dial, 1976);

Just Above My Head (New York: Dial, 1979; London: Joseph, 1979).

PLAYS: *The Amen Corner*, Washington, D.C., Howard University, 1955; New York, Ethel Barrymore Theatre, 5 April 1965;

Giovanni's Room, New York, Actors' Studio, 1957;

Blues for Mister Charlie, New York, ANTA Theatre, 23 April 1964;

A Deed from the King of Spain, New York, American Center for Stanislavski Theatre Art, 24 January 1974.

James Baldwin emerged in the 1960s as one of America's most gifted writers and one of black America's most articulate spokesmen. Although he is primarily a novelist, Baldwin has also published essays, plays, and short stories. Critics generally agree that Baldwin is at his best as an essayist, shows flashes of brilliance as a fiction writer, and is least impressive as a playwright. Baldwin's career actually began in 1946 with the publication of a book review in the *Nation*. His evolution as a writer of the first order constitutes a narrative as dramatic and compelling as his best story.

"My childhood was awful," Baldwin once said. He was born in Harlem in 1924, the son of Emma Berdis Jones, who was unmarried at the time of his birth. In 1927 when James was almost three years old, his mother married David Baldwin, a disillusioned and embittered New Orleans preacher who had recently migrated to Harlem. Although Baldwin once described his stepfather as the only man he ever hated, he has admitted on several occasions that he both loved and hated, respected and despised this man whose unabashed love he was never able to win. Nevertheless, Baldwin's ambivalent relationship with his stepfather served as a constant source of tension during his formative years and informs some of his best mature writings. David Baldwin became a model for Gabriel Grimes, a central character in *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), and his death and funeral are vividly described in the essay "Notes of A Native Son."

The marriage between David Baldwin and Emma Jones produced eight children whose care fell primarily to young Jimmy Baldwin. The demands of caring for younger siblings and his stepfather's repressive religious convictions in large

part shielded the boy from the harsh realities of Harlem street life during the 1930s. White racism and mistreatment, drugs, alcohol, and social and economic exploitation were real dangers endemic to the environment of the Baldwin family. The family's personal situation, of course, was complicated by the general misfortune of the Depression years. Baldwin was nevertheless able to expand his world through reading, an activity which he found compatible with his babysitting chores. Reading also became his insulation from his stepfather's frequent tirades against white racism and sin. He claims that by age thirteen he had read most of the books in the two Harlem libraries. He then began going downtown to the Forty-second Street New York Public Library where he discovered worlds removed from his own. As he cared for a succession of younger brothers and sisters, Baldwin first became acquainted with Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, developed a passion for Charles Dickens's novels, and dreamed and discovered the path to riches with the heroes of Horatio Alger.

His passion for reading naturally led him to try his hand at writing. "For me writing was an act of love. It was an attempt—not to get the world's attention—it was an attempt to be loved. It seemed a way to save myself and to save my family. It came out of despair. And it seemed the only way to another world." His love of writing became a refuge from both the hate he believed his stepfather felt for him and the ridicule that he received in school. His superior intellectual abilities as a student and his unattractive appearance made him a natural target for the insults of other children at school. He found both support and sanctuary in the school's literary club guided by renowned poet Countee Cullen. In recognition of his writing ability, Baldwin was made editor of the *Douglass Pilot*, the school newspaper at P.S. 139.

Despite these activities, Baldwin had become convinced of his depravity by age fourteen. Everything he experienced during the summer of his fourteenth birthday, especially the changes in his own body, led him toward religious conversion. Through the influence of an older friend, Arthur Moore, and partly in defiance of his stepfather, Baldwin underwent a dramatic religious conversion and became a member of Mount Calvary of the Pentecostal Faith Church. He eventually reached the level of junior minister.

Shortly after his conversion, young Baldwin's religious devotion received a challenge. He was accepted at De Witt Clinton High School, a predominantly white school in the Bronx. For the first time

he came into contact with white students his own age, many of whom were Jewish. The intellectual stimulation offered by his new environment was soured by his stepfather's insistence that he was now flirting with the enemy. In addition, the sharp contrast between the religious convictions of his fellow students and his own fundamentalist beliefs caused young Baldwin to examine his religious stance critically. Moreover, his academic and social problems at De Witt Clinton stemmed from the realization that "when the school day was over, I went back into a condition which they could not imagine, and I knew, no matter what anybody said, that the future I faced was not the future they faced."

In part, Baldwin's feelings of guilt and inadequacy severely hampered his academic performance in high school. He did not graduate with his class. He did, however, receive his diploma six months later in 1942. He also established several important and lasting friendships at De Witt Clinton. One of the most important was with Richard Avedon, with whom he shared editorial duties on the *Magpie*, the school's literary magazine. He was later to collaborate with Avedon on a picture book of America entitled *Nothing Personal* (1964).

By the time Baldwin graduated from high school, his stepfather had been forced to give up work because of his deteriorating mental condition. To help support the family, Baldwin took a job in Belle Mead, New Jersey, at the urging of another high school friend, Emile Capouya. In New Jersey Baldwin worked on the construction of the Army Quartermaster Depot. Discrimination made the entire experience a hell for him. He was fired twice and rehired after Capouya intervened on his behalf. All the while he worked, Baldwin lived frugally and sent most of his money home to his mother. By the summer of 1943, Baldwin's stepfather was near death, and his mother was about to give birth to her eighth child. After being fired a third time, James returned to Harlem, where he was coerced by an aunt into visiting his stepfather, now confined to a mental institution on Long Island. Several days before Baldwin's nineteenth birthday, his stepfather died and his mother gave birth to a baby girl whom James named Paula Maria.

Baldwin realized that the financial strain on the family following his stepfather's death could destroy his ambition of becoming a writer if he allowed it to happen. Consequently, he tried a long shot: "The long shot was simply that I would turn into a writer before my mother died and before the children were all put in jail—or became junkies or whores. I had to leave Harlem. I had to leave be-

cause I understood very well, in some part of myself, that I would never be able to fit in anywhere unless I jumped. I knew I had to jump then." He moved to Greenwich Village, where he worked at a variety of jobs and began working seriously on his first novel, which he had originally titled "Crying Holy." He changed the title to "In My Father's House" and began working diligently to complete it. He would work at his job all day, sleep three to four hours a night and write the rest of the time. It was also during this period that he first met Richard Wright. At Wright's request, Baldwin later mailed him the first sixty pages of "In My Father's House," which Wright liked enough to arrange a Eugene F. Saxton Memorial Trust Award for Baldwin. Despite his furious efforts to finish the novel, he was not able to complete it during the tenure of the fellowship. Disappointed with himself, he began reassessing himself as a writer and turned to other types of writing projects which he felt would sharpen his skills.

Success of sorts finally came in 1946 at age twenty-two when he sold his first book review (on Maxim Gorki) to the *Nation*. This review was followed by another. He also did reviews for the *New Leader* on the Negro problem. His abilities as an essayist were recognized by Robert Warshaw, the editor of *Commentary*, the publication of the American Jewish Committee, who asked him to do an article on Harlem. The article, entitled "The Harlem Ghetto," dealt with black anti-Semitism. Since his high school days Baldwin had been wrestling with this question because his experiences with Jews at De Witt Clinton had not paralleled those narrated by most blacks in Harlem. Although it caused controversy in both the black and Jewish communities, the article nevertheless launched Baldwin's career as a writer. He received numerous offers to do articles for other magazines.

Following his early successes, Baldwin began work on a second novel, "Ignorant Armies," which he never completed. The novel was based on the case of Wayne Lonergin, a homosexual who was accused of killing his wife in a disagreement over extramarital affairs. Baldwin's failure to complete the novel stems from his inability to come to terms with his own sexuality at the time. "I was dealing with—it was a very halting attempt to deal with some element in myself, which I had not, at that point in my life, really come to grips with at all. The whole *sexual* element. . . . Well, the whole—what I was grappling with *really*, without knowing it, was the—all the implications in this society of being *bisexual*." The issue of bisexuality for Baldwin would

not be explored in fiction until 1956 with the publication of *Giovanni's Room*.

Baldwin's abandonment of "Ignorant Armies" freed him to explore other subjects equally as important to his development as a writer. He worked with Theodore Pelalowski on a documentary on storefront churches. Although the documentary was never published, the project won for him a Rosenwald Foundation Fellowship. He then completed his first short story, "Previous Condition," which was published in *Commentary* in October of 1948.

"I wrote it in a white heat," Baldwin once said of "Previous Condition." The story is a thinly veiled version of Baldwin's condition in 1948. Images suggestive of torture and restraint introduce the reader to Peter, the black unemployed actor and narrator of the story. He woke up "to find the sheet was gray and twisted like a rope. I breathed like I had been running. I couldn't move for the longest while. I just lay on my back, spread eagled. . . ." The room in which Peter is living had been rented for him by his white Jewish friend, Jules, and Peter fully expects to be kicked out when discovered by the landlady. When he is evicted, Peter simply resigns himself to it despite urgings to fight back from Jules and his Irish female friend, Ida. Finally, he goes uptown seeking the comfort of familiar surroundings in a bar in Harlem. It is at this point that the reader begins to realize that Peter's dispossession has broader implications. His dispossession of his living quarters is simply a metaphor for his dispossession within American society. The whites reject him because he is black, and he, as black artist, finds himself alienated from his own people because of his sensibilities. At the bar in Harlem Peter is approached by an older woman who asks him "What's your story?" His reply: "I got no story, Ma." Peter has no story because he has no identity, a theme that will recur again and again in Baldwin's fiction.

The feelings of dispossession experienced by Peter in "Previous Condition" must have been eating away at Baldwin during this period. Although he had achieved a modicum of success as a writer, he had yet to produce a major work. His village lifestyle and experiences were also taking their toll on him. In a desperate effort to save himself, Baldwin made the decision to use his last Rosenwald Foundation Fellowship check to book passage to France. On 11 November 1948, James Baldwin left New York for Paris.

As with many other American writers, Paris did not greet Baldwin with open arms. After a brief

reunion with Richard Wright, Baldwin found himself in dire financial straits. He had arrived in Paris with only about fifty dollars in his pocket. Shortly after his arrival, Baldwin found himself broke. He was locked out of his hotel room for lack of payment and forced to sell his clothes and typewriter to live. He fell ill and was nursed back to health by a Corsican woman who had taken a liking to him. He eventually ended up in jail for stealing a bedsheet, a charge of which he was innocent. Nevertheless he found respite in Paris from those pressures that had hampered his growth as a writer in the States. He discovered that even in jail he was an American first and a black man second. "I got over—and a lot beyond—the terms of—all the terms in which Americans identified me—in my own mind."

Six months after arriving in Paris, Baldwin wrote one of his best known and most influential essays, "Everybody's Protest Novel." The essay was to be Baldwin's personal emancipation proclamation from the stereotypical writings expected of black writers in America. This essay is best known, however, for its attack on protest fiction, especially that of Richard Wright. The essay traces protest fiction from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Baldwin denounces protest fiction because it robs black men of their humanity and has the effect of reinforcing the very stereotypes that it is intended to destroy. Although Baldwin naively hoped that Wright would praise his essay, Wright felt betrayed by his younger protégé. The rift between the men was never patched up.

After outlining the principles on which future Afro-American literature should be based in "Everybody's Protest Novel," Baldwin was still laboring to finish "In My Father's House" in 1951. When he had almost decided to abandon the book, it suddenly began falling into place. He moved to a chalet owned by the parents of his friend, Lucien Happersberger. Living in virtual isolation, Baldwin completed the manuscript in three months. On 26 February 1952, he mailed the final draft to Helen Strauss of the William Morris Agency, who had agreed earlier to serve as his literary agent. Baldwin then moved back to Paris, where Ms. Strauss notified him that Knopf was interested in publishing the novel. To put added pressure on Knopf, Baldwin decided to return to New York after an absence of four years.

"In My Father's House," retitled *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, was finally published in 1953 to excellent reviews. Baldwin's ten-year struggle with his stepfather's legacy was temporarily abated, if not