Guide to the Arna Bontemps Collection

JWJ MSS 6

by Beinecke Staff

August 1996

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
beinecke.library@yale.edu
http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/

CALL NUMBER: JWJ MSS 6

CREATOR: Bontemps, Arna, 1902-1973

TITLE: Arna Bontemps Collection

DATES: 1934–1957

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 4 linear feet (6 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Arna Bontemps Collections contains writings and correspondence presented to the James Weldon Johnson Collection by Mr. Bontemps.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.bontemps

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.bontemps.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The Arna Bontemps Collection contains items presented to the James Weldon Johnson Collection by Mr. Bontemps.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Arna Bontemps Collection is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.
Preferred Citation

Arna Bontemps Collection. James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

This finding aid was produced from a previously existing manuscripts inventory. All pertinent information has been retained.

ARNA BONTEMPS (1902-1973)

Arna Bontemps was a teacher and writer whose novel *God Sends Sunday* appeared at the end of the Harlem Renaissance in 1931. He continued writing and editing anthologies and served as librarian at Fisk University.

Scope and Contents

The papers contains materials documenting the life of Arna Bontemps, including Series I, Correspondence, and Series II, Writings.
## Collection Contents
### Series I. Correspondence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 1</td>
<td>Blount, Mildred E. Includes letter from Ruby Bontemps and two autobiographical sketches</td>
<td>1942–45, n.d.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 2</td>
<td>Butain, Anne M. To: 2 / From: 0</td>
<td>1945</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 3</td>
<td>Cambell, E. Simms To: 2 / From: 1</td>
<td>1944–45</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 4</td>
<td>Cayton, Horace R. To: 1 / From: 0</td>
<td>1944</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 5</td>
<td>Collins, Leslie Includes notes on interview of Mrs. Jelliffe To: 1 / From: 0</td>
<td>1944 Oct 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 6</td>
<td>Conroy, Jack Correspondence re: <em>They Seek A City</em> To: 21 / From: 9</td>
<td>c. 1944</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 7</td>
<td>Conroy, Jack Correspondence re: <em>They Seek A City</em> To: 25 / From: 26</td>
<td>c. 1944</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 8</td>
<td>Conroy, Jack Correspondence re: <em>Slappy Hooper</em> To: 3 / From: 0</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 9</td>
<td>Dabney, Wendell P. To: 5 / From: 0</td>
<td>1944</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 10</td>
<td>Davis, Benjamin O. Sr. Fragment To: 1 / From: 0</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 12</td>
<td>Dixon, Dean Includes short description of the Dixon counting method To: 2 / From: 1</td>
<td>1944</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 13</td>
<td>Henry, Algernon P. To: 1 / From: 1</td>
<td>1944</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 14</td>
<td>Houghton Mifflin Co. To: 1 / From: 0</td>
<td>1945</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 15</td>
<td>Hughes, Langston Carbon of letter to Guggenheim Foundation re: AWB</td>
<td>1949</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 16</td>
<td>Jackman, Harold Original AWB letters To: 0 / From: 6</td>
<td>1934–42</td>
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| b. 1, f. 17 | Lem and Ed  
Correspondence re: *St. Louis Woman*  
To: 1 / From: 1 | n.d.       |
| b. 1, f. 18 | LuValle, James E.  
To: 2 / From: 2 | 1944       |
| b. 1, f. 19 | May, Mrs. Emmett  
To: 3 / From: 2 | 1944       |
| b. 1, f. 20 | Moore, Alfred D.  
To: 21 / From: 1 | 1944–45, n.d.|
| b. 1, f. 21 | Palfi, Marion  
To: 3 / From: 2 | 1944       |
| b. 1, f. 22 | Frederick A. Stokes Company  
Letter to Maxim Lieber re: AWB | 1936       |
| b. 1, f. 23 | Trammell, Guy R.  
To: 3 / From: 0 | 1945       |
| b. 1, f. 24 | Van Vechten, Carl  
To: 3 / From: 0 | 1941–47     |
| b. 1, f. 25 | Walker, Margaret  
To: 0 / From: 1 | 1944       |
| b. 1, f. 26 | Walters, Vernon N.  
To: 2 / From: 0 | 1945       |
| b. 1, f. 27 | Watkins, Sylvestre  
To: 2 / From: 2 | 1942, 1944 |
| b. 1, f. 28 | Watson, Douglas C.  
To: 1 / From: 0 | 1944       |
| b. 1, f. 29 | Young, P. Bernard Jr.  
To: 3 / From: 0 | 1944       |
### Series II. Writings

#### Black Thunder

- **b. 1, f. 30**
  - Typescript, corrected of unfinished rewrite of book, with revisions and explanatory note by AWB
  - **n.d.**

- **b. 1, f. 31**
  - Dramatization by Roland Mulhauser, typescript, corrected
  - Includes: explanatory note by AWB
  - **1937**

#### Bubber Joins the Band

- **b. 1, f. 32**
  - Typescript, carbon
  - Unpublished children's story with explanatory note by AWB
  - **[ca. 1932–33]**

#### Drums at Dusk

*See: Purple Island, Box 1, folder 36*

#### The Fast Sooner Hound

- **b. 1, f. 33**
  - Typescript corrected
  - First version of children's story By AWB and Jack Conroy with explanatory note by AWB
  - **1942**

#### Father of the Blues

- **b. 1, f. 34**
  - Typescript carbon
  - Part of AWB's version of W. C. Handy's autobiography with explanatory notes by AWB
  - **n.d.**

#### God Sends Sunday

*See: St. Louis Woman, Box 2, folder 37*

#### Poor Frizzly Chicken

- **b. 1, f. 35**
  - Typescript carbon
  - Unpublished children's story, original unrevised version, with illustrations and explanatory note by AWB
  - **1934**

#### Purple Island

- **b. 1, f. 36**
  - Typescript, corrected
  - First draft of book *Drums at Dusk* with explanatory note by AWB
  - **n.d.**

#### St. Louis Woman

- **b. 2, f. 37**
  - Typescript carbon
  - Play by AWB and CountĂše Cullen with revisions, an explanatory note by AWB, and inscription by CountĂše Cullen
  - **n.d.**

- **b. 2, f. 38**
  - Mixture of typescript and carbon versions, corrected
  - **n.d.**

- **b. 2, f. 39**
  - Typescript carbon, corrected
  - **n.d.**

- **b. 2, f. 40**
  - Typescript carbon, corrected
  - With new Prologue by Langston Hughes
  - **n.d.**
<table>
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<th>Container</th>
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<td>n.d.</td>
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<td>Holograph and typescript revisions and rewrites</td>
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<td>“How ‘St. Louis Woman’ Was Born” handwritten draft of publicity statement</td>
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<td><strong>Slappy Hooper</strong></td>
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<td>b. 2, f. 48</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Children’s story by AWB and Jack Conroy</td>
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<td>b. 2, f. 49</td>
<td>Typescript and carbon revisions</td>
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<td><strong>The Story of the Negro</strong></td>
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<td>b. 3, f. 51-52</td>
<td>Typescript, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
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<td>b. 3, f. 53</td>
<td>Index (on 3 x 5 cards) with corrections</td>
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<td>b. 3, f. 54</td>
<td>Galley proofs, corrected</td>
<td>1947–48</td>
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<td><strong>They Seek A City</strong></td>
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<td>b. 3, f. 55</td>
<td>Notes, drafts, outlines, etc.</td>
<td>1945, n.d.</td>
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<td>b. 4, f. 59-61</td>
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<td>n.d.</td>
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<td>Includes: second versions of some chapters</td>
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<td>b. 4, f. 62-66</td>
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<td>1945</td>
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<td>b. 4, f. 67</td>
<td>Bibliography and index, corrected</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
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<td><strong>Tom-Tom Treasures</strong></td>
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<td>b. 5, f. 69</td>
<td>Typescript, corrected</td>
<td>1938</td>
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<td>Unpublished children’s story</td>
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<td><strong>“The Two Harlems”</strong></td>
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<td>b. 5, f. 70</td>
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<td>article for <em>American Scholar</em></td>
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<td><strong>“Remarks in Presenting...”</strong></td>
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<td>Full title: “Remarks in Presenting American Library Association’s Liberty and</td>
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<td>Justice Award in Imaginative Literature to James Thurber</td>
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"Remarks in Presenting..." (continued)

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<td>b. 5, f. 71</td>
<td>Typescript carbon</td>
<td>1957</td>
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<td>b. 5, f. 72</td>
<td>Research notes, clippings, and typed manuscript of biographical sketch of Dean Dixon</td>
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| b. 5, f. 73-74 | First draft, typescript, corrected  
| b. 5, f. 75  | Second draft, typescript, corrected                                                                                                                                                                            | n.d.   |
| b. 5, f. 76-77 | Setting typescript, corrected                                                                                                                                                                               | n.d.   |
| b. 5, f. 78  | Galley proofs                                                                                                                                                                                                | n.d.   |
| b. 5, f. 79  | Typescript, corrected  
First version of children’s story (original title *Shine Boy*) with revisions and explanatory notes by AWB                                                                                     | n.d.   |
<p>| b. 5, f. 80  | Typescript, corrected, of unpublished article                                                                                                                                                                | n.d.   |</p>
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Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library’s online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects
African American authors -- 20th Century -- Archives.
Authors, American -- 20th Century -- Archives.

Names
Bontemps, Arna, 1902-1973