

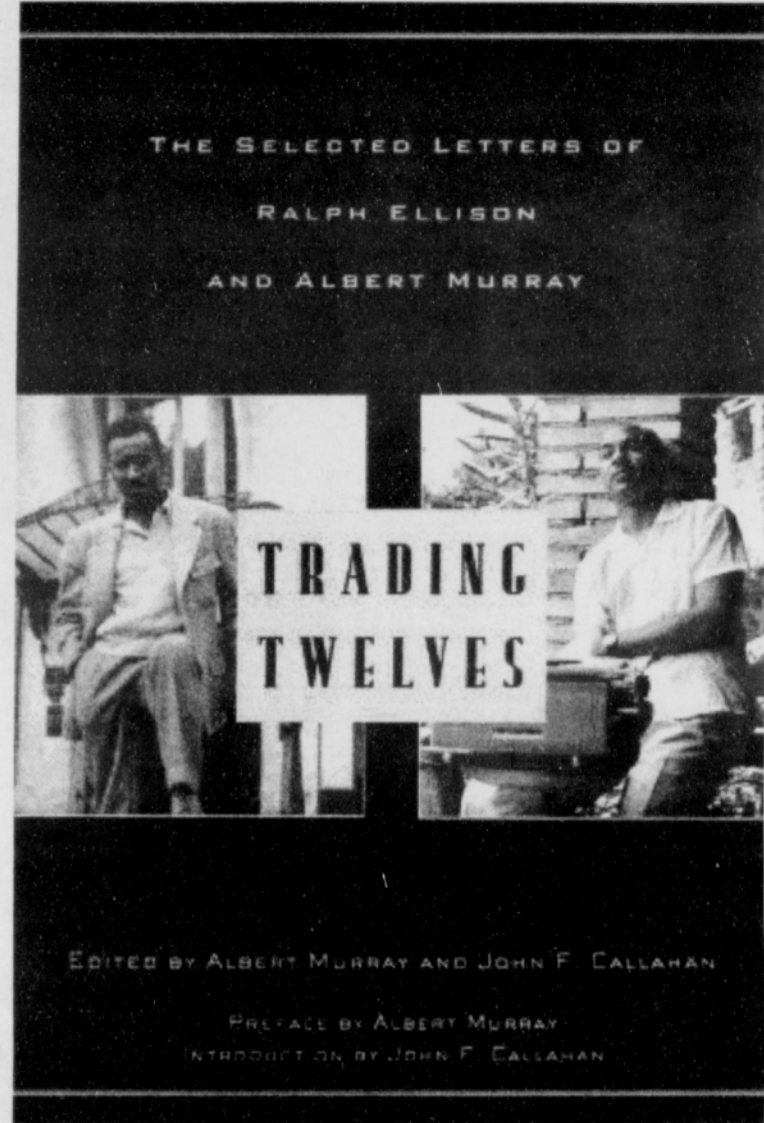
In Print

Trading Twelves: The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray

Edited by Albert Murray and John F. Callahan

When two jazz musicians trade twelves with each other, one musician begins by riffing off twelve bars of music, the other musician throws the twelve bars back through his instrument, and so on, back and forth, in an ecstatic exchange of ideas and emotions. So it is with these letters, the joyful music created by the exchanges between two old, dear friends. Ellison and Murray spill it all to each other – their struggles, frustrations, ambitions, fears, literary gossip, opinions on jazz, and photography – as they correspond. The two men first crossed paths briefly in 1935, when they overlapped as undergraduates at the Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. The younger Murray later writes Ellison that he found his name (usually the only one) in the back of almost every book he checked out of the university library. They were kindred spirits, destined to be introduced in person by a mutual friend in New York in 1942. Thus began one of the great literary friendships, sustained over the next twenty years

through frequent letters and occasional meetings. The period covered by the letters collected in *Trading Twelves* is the decade from 1950 to 1960. The written correspondence between Ellison and Murray ended when it did due to long-distance personal phone calls becoming cheaper and more routine, likewise commercial air travel. When Murray retired to New York City in 1962, the two friends were able to meet and make regular local phone calls until Ellison's death in 1994. Ralph Ellison was born in Oklahoma in 1914. He was the author of the novel *Invisible Man* (1952) as well as numerous essays and short stories. He died in New York City in 1994. Random House published his novel *Juneteenth* posthumously in 1999. (*Juneteenth* is scheduled to be published in paperback by Vintage on June 19, 2000.) Albert Murray was born in Alabama in 1916. A cultural critic, biographer, essayist, and novelist, he has taught at several colleges, including Tuskegee and Columbia, and his works include *Train Whistle Guitar*, *The Blue Devils of Nada*, and *The Seven League Boots*. Murray lives in New York City.



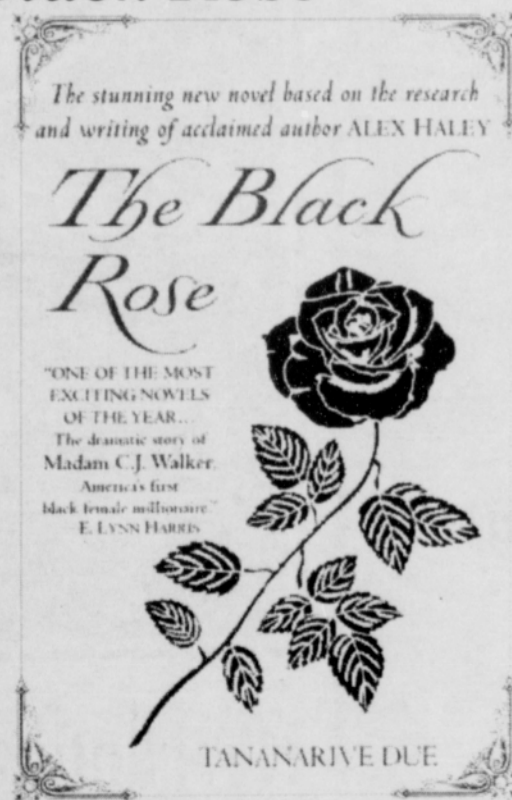
The Black Rose

By Tananarive Due  
Ballantine Books Hardcover; 2000

At the time of his death in 1992, Alex Haley had amassed thousands of pages of research and writing for a major new novel in the tradition of *Roots* – the story of Madam C.J. Walker, the legendary first black female millionaire whose image graced a commemorative postage stamp in 1998. Critically acclaimed novelist Tananarive Due has brought Alex Haley's vision to inspiration fruition in a compelling, richly textured narrative, *The Black Rose*.

Long before there was media entrepreneur and millionaire Oprah, there was Madam C.J. Walker. Born to former slaves on a Louisiana plantation in 1867, she rose from poverty and indignity to become the head of a hugely successful company and a leading philanthropist in African American causes. She accomplished all this with virtually no education or role models at a time of rampant lynchings and race riots, when the vast majority of African Americans languished in poverty.

"I got myself a start by giving myself a start," Madam C.J. was fond of saying as she recounted her transformation from the uneducated laundress Sarah Breedlove to a woman of wealth, culture, and celebrity. Madam C.J. was nearing forty and married to a maverick Denver newspaperman when the wonder-working hair care method she discovered changed her life. Seemingly overnight, she built a marketing empire that enlisted more than twenty thousand bright young



African American women to demonstrate and sell her products door to door. As Alex Haley wrote, "In an era of inhumanity, she dared to give black women beauty and pride; she showed the world that nothing is more beautiful than a black rose."

By the time she died in 1919, Madam C.J. Walker had constructed her own factory from the ground up, established a training school, and built a thirty-room mansion at Irvington-on-Hudson, called Villa Lawaro.

A dynamic, brilliantly creative businesswoman, Madam C.J. also became a tireless activist in the fight against racial oppression and a key figure in the anti-lynching

movement. A stalwart "race woman," she worked with black leaders like Booker T. Washington, and her legacy inspired poets like Langston Hughes. Yet she paid a steep emotional price for her worldly triumphs. Betrayed by her husband, plagued by rumors of her beloved daughter's scandalous behavior, Madam C.J. suffered the private pain and disappointment all too familiar to many successful women. In the tradition of Alex Haley's *Roots*, Tananarive Due interweaves documented history, vivid dialogue, and sweeping fictionalized narrative into a spellbinding portrait of this passionate and tenacious pioneer and the unforgettable era in which she lived.

Studio 14  
Hair Design

Summer Special

Cuts & Color \$45.00  
(Color / Haircut / Style)

We also do braiding, weaving, and natural hair twists.  
Call for an appointment  
287-2557

Hours 12-6pm Tues-Fri  
and Sat, 10-6pm  
Temporarily located at The Mane Place 2721 NE 7th Ave.