



My Dear Boy

Carrie Hughes

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My Dear Boy brings a largely unexplored dimension of Langston Hughes to light. Carmaletta Williams and John Edgar Tidwell explain that scholars have neglected the vital role that correspondence between Carrie Hughes and her son Langston—Harlem Renaissance icon, renowned poet, playwright, fiction writer, autobiographer, and essayist—played in his work.

The more than 120 heretofore unexamined letters presented here are a veritable treasure trove of insights into the relationship between mother Carrie and her renowned son Langston. Until now, a scholarly consensus had begun to emerge, accepting the idea of their lives and his art as simple and transparent. But as Williams and Tidwell argue, this correspondence is precisely where scholars should start in order to understand the underlying complexity in Carrie and Langston's relationship. By employing Family Systems Theory for the first time in Hughes scholarship, they demonstrate that it is an essential heuristic for analyzing the Hughes family and its influence on his work. The study takes the critical truism about Langston's reticence to reveal his inner self and shows how his responses to Carrie were usually not in return letters but, instead, in his created art. Thus *My Dear Boy* reveals the difficult negotiations between family and art that Langston engaged in as he attempted to sustain an elusive but enduring artistic reputation.

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