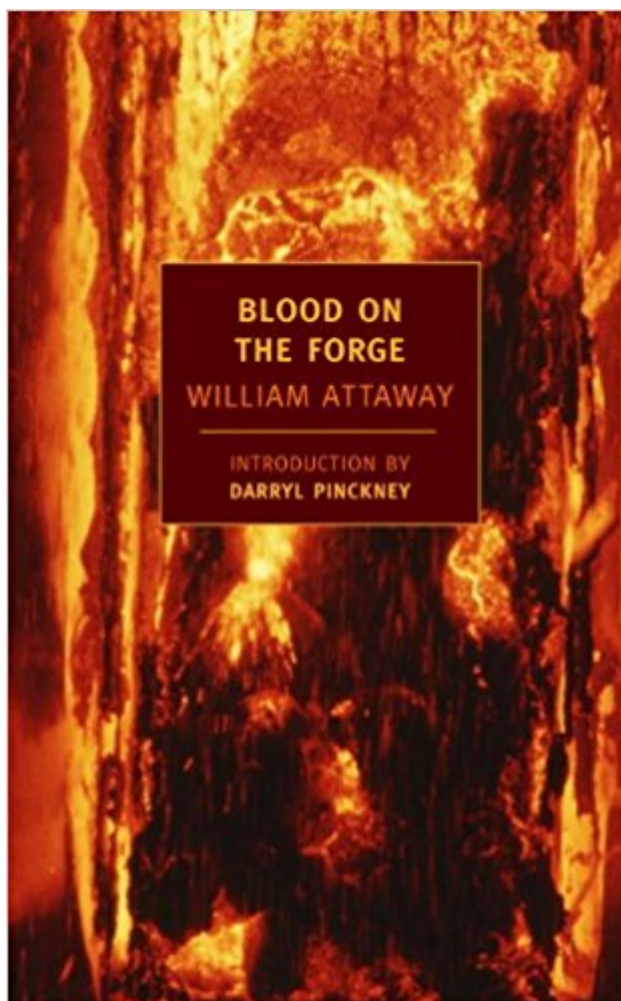


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Blood On The Forge (New York Review Books Classics)



Synopsis

This brutally gripping novel about the African-American Great Migration follows the three Moss brothers, who flee the rural South to work in industries up North. Delivered by day into the searing inferno of the steel mills, by night they encounter a world of surreal devastation, crowded with dogfighters, whores, cripples, strikers, and scabs. Keenly sensitive to character, prophetic in its depiction of environmental degradation and globalized labor, Attaway's novel is an unprecedented confrontation with the realities of American life, offering an apocalyptic vision of the melting pot not as an icon of hope but as an instrument of destruction. *Blood on the Forge* was first published in 1941, when it attracted the admiring attention of Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison. It is an indispensable account of a major turning point in black history, as well as a triumph of individual style, charged with the concentrated power and poignance of the blues.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"In his *Blood on the Forge*, William Attaway presents with skill the impact of industrial life on the simple black folk who fled the plantations of the South. It will add a new and better knowledge of American civilization. The reality that Attaway depicts is not beautiful, but it is none the less moving and human for that." —Richard Wright

Spanning two areas and eras of Negro experience, those of the semi-feudal plantation and the industrial urban environment, Attaway's source material receives its dynamic movement from the clash of two modes of economic production. The characters are caught in the force of a struggle which, like the steel

furnace, roars throughout its pages. Attaway has proven himself one of the most gifted Negro writers." — Ralph Ellison

First published in 1941, this is a scalding, uncompromising novel of the Great Migration and its impact on the Southern black man. With a new introduction by Nicholas Lemann, author of the award-winning *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration And How It Changed America*. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Blood on the Forge tells the story of three brothers: Melody, who finds the music in every place and situation; Chinatown, who finds the humor; and Big Mat, a relentless worker who studies the Bible and tries to find an elusive inner peace. They work as sharecroppers in Kentucky, accustomed to poverty and racism, until circumstances brought on by Big Mat's quick temper compel their move to Pennsylvania, where they take jobs in a steel mill. Poverty is replaced by dangerous grueling labor that leaves them too exhausted to spend their wages on anything except alcohol, gambling, and whores. Racism is replaced by class division as black steelworkers join new immigrants from Ireland and Italy and Middle Europe, all viewed with disdain by those who inhabit the big houses overlooking the mill. By the novel's end, that conflict is defined by the workers' attempt to organize a union and by the owners' resort to violence to suppress that effort -- leaving the brothers caught in the middle of the conflict, and to some extent divided by it. Although racism and class struggle are important themes in the novel, the story is about much more than that. It is fundamentally the story of three very different brothers, bonded by family ties and shared lives, but torn apart by their unique experiences. Chinatown must cope with injuries inflicted by hot steel, leaving him feeling less than whole. Big Mat must cope with his own feelings of inadequacy, his inability to give the Mexican woman who moves in with him the moneyed lifestyle that she craves, a feeling he can only overcome with the sense of power he derives from violent behavior. As he struggles to find his music, Melody must cope with the desire he feels for the woman who is living with Big Mat, and with the secret he learns about her. Attaway tells the story from the perspectives of the brothers, using language that is eloquent in its simplicity. The story is powerful, sad and moving, unforgettable. At the end of the fast moving novel I literally said "Wow."

Gives a good understanding of the sharecropping system and its downfalls and abuse. Also the attempts by Northern factory owners to divide the labor force and break up unions

The time frame of the three brothers near feudal existence in Kentucky and their exodus to the steel mills is mind boggling. The stark conditions, brutality, lack of safety controls in the steel mills and the ever present possibility of disability or death in an accident is truly unsettling. Their lives were nasty, brutish and short.

A gripping and tragic tale of three brothers who face the violent oppression of the jim-crow South and the hyper exploitation of the industrial North, *Blood on the Forge* is an important novel and a neglected classic.

If you want to know what life was like for the Black men and women who migrated north to Chicago and other industrial towns in search of work outside the dead-end of Dixie agriculture in the 1920's, this is for you. It is a grim picture, indeed.

Looked just like photo.

I was very happy to receive this book in good condition because it is a classic and I wanted a good copy for my collection of novels I wish to keep. My favorite English professor is teaching it this semester, and though I'm not in school, I will do the readings to keep up with the class.

After killing a dumb redneck who seemed not to have noticed that slavery had been outlawed half a century earlier Big Mat, together with his two brothers Melody and Chinatown, leave family and sharecropping and make their way to the steel mills of Pennsylvania. Here they metamorphose from 'n-----s' into 'coloreds' and graft alongside other migrant workers from the Ukraine, Italy and Ireland. It is not a pretty world: dog fights and gang rapes, murders and industrial fatalities; but at least they get money. Unbeknown by his brothers, Melody falls in love with an underage prostitute who instead takes up with the stronger Big Mat, indifferent to his wife back in Kentucky. The brothers, caught up in their own little, world fail to notice significant changes happening around them as their already hard lives tip into the abyss when union-boss conflict divides along racial lines. This book is a superb parable on the northward African-American migration, a social cataclysm that was to change the economic and cultural landscape of the United States and massively contribute to its future world dominance. Attaway was a contemporary of both Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison and was highly regarded by both. Naturalistic, fatalistic, powerful and poignant, *Blood on the Forge* is the equal in quality to Steinbeck at his best in its description of tough and pitiless migrant lives and is a

true twentieth century classic.

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