A RICHARD WRIGHT BIBLIOGRAPHY: 1983

by

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The Fall 1992 issue of The Richard Wright Newsletter included a supplement containing addenda to A Richard Wright Bibliography: Fifty Years of Criticism and Commentary, 1933-1982. This annotated list of 368 items was limited to the time span covered by the original work.

The following list is the first installment of a projected updating of A Richard Wright Bibliography. A similar compilation for 1984 should be ready for the Fall 1993 issue, to be followed in 1994 by lists for 1985 and 1986, and so on. At this rate, by the year 2001 I will have carried the bibliography through the year 2000.

The arrangement and form of entries here is the same as that followed in A Richard Wright Bibliography and "Addenda to A Richard Wright Bibliography." Item 37 is borrowed from "The Critical Reception of James Baldwin in Japan: An Annotated Bibliography" by Yoshinobu Hakutani and Toru Kiuchi (Black American Literature Forum, 1991). Users of my bibliographical compilations are requested to bear in mind that I am eager to have brought to my attention items that have been inadvertently (or ignorantly) omitted.

1983

   Mentions W briefly (p. 483).

   Interview dated 13 March 1982 including discussion of Alexander's relation to Wright and his characteristics as a writer.

   In this interview Angelou mentions W briefly (pp. 2, 5).
   Reprinted: 1989
   Abstract of the article.

   Includes a notice of Allison Davis's Leadership, Love, and Aggression, which contains a "psychobiography" of W.

   Begins with a quotation from "Richard Wright's Blues."
   Reprinted:

   In this interview Bambara mentions W briefly (p. 20).

   Reprint of 1979.34.

   Notes the influence of W on Peter Abrahams and the role of UTC in Ezekiel Mphahlele's novel The Wanderers.

10. Barrax, Gerald W. "The Head and Heart of Melvin Dixon." Callaloo, 6 (Spring-Summer), 135-144.
    Review of Melvin Dixon's Change of Territory commenting on his poems on W.

    Brief mentions of W in relation to Hughes.

    Mentions NS briefly.

    Favorable review commenting on the individual essays.

    Mentions W briefly.

    Analyzes the relation between sex and race in LD. The taboo on sexual contact between black men and white women stimulates Fishbelly's attraction to whiteness and jeopardizes his survival.

16. Butler, Robert J. "The Quest for Pure Motion in Richard Wright's Black Boy." MELUS, 10 (Fall), 5-17.
    Places W in the open road tradition of both American literature and the blues. In Black Boy the quest for nonteleological movement is developed by repeated contrasts between images of shifting stasis.
and images of a motion that promises possibility. W's commitment to energizing movement "helps to account for his triumph as a man and an artist" (p. 8).

   Includes consideration of Kent's W criticism.

   Disputes critical disparagement of Q and W's exile. Granville Hicks's review of the novel is sound, but Coles gives even greater emphasis to the theme of alienation. W's use of "nonfiction technique," i.e., philosophical monologues of Cross Damon and Ely Houston, looks forward to his nonfiction books on the Third World.

   Biographical-critical sketch with copious quotations from reviewers and other critics.

   Quotes from "Richard Wright's Blues" and distinguishes Ellison's artistic goals from W's (pp. 50-51).

   Psychological interpretation of W's personality and its reflection in his work. The basic formative influence was "his sadistic maternal family" (p. 156). Beaten by his mother and rejected by his father, W developed a self-hatred which he projected on blacks generally. His anger and distrust--and consequent guilt feelings--generate his fictional protagonists.

   Dedication is to "Richard" and others. Epigraph is from BB.

   Poem mentioning W briefly. Reprinted: 1992

   Reprint of 1976.57.

   Poem on W's last days, death, and cremation.
   Reprinted: 1992

   Poem about examining W's papers in Paris in 1975 with Michel Fabre and Ellen Wright.
   Reprinted: 1992

Quotes a passage from "The Man Who Saw the Flood."


Lists and comments on residences of W in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Mississippi, and Memphis.


Notes that a microfiche program for high schools by a subsidiary of *The New York Times* does not include W among "50 Great American Writers."


Comments briefly on Bigger Thomas as a trickster figure.


Mentions briefly Bigger Thomas and Mary Dalton (p. 76).


*Revue françaises d'études américaines*, 16 (February), 177.

Review mentioning W.


After commenting on the short fiction and autobiographical writing, Faulkner assesses W's achievement, sketches his life, and analyzes his work. A brief bibliography concludes the essay. "In his best work, Wright gives American literature its strongest statement of the existential theme of alienated man defining himself" (p. 2975).


Comments briefly on Ellison's relation to W (p. 11).

Reprinted:


Discusses Ellison's relation to W: "Ellison in his fiction signifies upon Wright by parodying Wright's literary structures through repetition and difference" (p. 696), especially in *NS*, *BB*, and "The Man Who Lived Underground."

Reprinted: 1984 1987


In this interview Giovanni comments briefly on W's expatriation (pp. 74-75).


Ellison and Baldwin were both influenced by their mentor W but later outgrew his influence. Surveys Baldwin's career, beginning with his meeting with W and ending with the publication
of *Just Above*. Considers *Go Tell It* representative of Baldwin's work. [Y. H. and T. K.]

38. Harper, Michael S. "Don't They Speak Jazz." *MELUS*, 10 (Spring), 3-6.
   Mentions reading W as a youth in Brooklyn.

   Treats the general influence of film and photography on W and the specific influences of *King Kong* on *NS*. Although Hellenbrand does not know that W actually saw the film, it summarized many racial issues also reflected in the novel. "Mythically and sociologically, the movie and the novel tell the same story. The movie, though, tells it largely from the white point of view; and the novel largely from the black" (p. 92).

   Mentions W briefly (p. xxiii).

   Mentions briefly Bigger's desire to fly in *NS* (p. 120).

   Reprint of 1958.161 plus an additional brief mention of W.

   In this interview Hunter mentions W briefly (p. 87).

   Lists Thomas Cripps's article on the film *NS* and two reviews.

   Mentions briefly Fabre's work on W.

   Lists AH, BB, UTC, and "Blueprint for Negro Literature" (p. 764).

   Mentions briefly BB.

   Quotes from W's introduction to the first American edition of this novel.

   Jeffers acknowledges W as one of his favorites: "I profoundly
respect him for depth and power of his rage" (p. 424).


After reviewing various oversimplified versions of W and his work, Lee examines most of the fiction to show that a mythic, hallucinatory dimension co-exists with naturalistic protest. "Big Boy Leaves Home," "The Man Who Lived Underground," NS, and LD are most successful in combining this "inside narrative" with a realistic story. Reprinted: 1987


Review mentioning W briefly.


Abstracts a 1982 University of Colorado dissertation. W "produces characters and a fictional short story world that are aesthetically complimentary to black life."


A Minnesota ninth-grade teacher emphasizes the work’s universal themes and its revelation of support by blacks of social oppression while minimizing its attack on racism.

54. Martin, Tony. Literary


Examines W’s "commentary on and use of blues forms and allusions in selected poems, essays, and fiction" (p. 333). Although W recognizes the expressive power of such folk forms as blues and jazz, his fiction does not adequately utilize this tradition. His isolated, alienated protagonists are a powerful indictment of racism, but he does not achieve "the grand fusion--synthesizing verbal attack with a nourishing cultural tradition" (p. 344).


Discusses NS in the context of American legal history and in comparison to The Pioneers, Billy Budd, and An American Tragedy. Most similar to Dreiser’s novel, NS differs in its portrayal of the liberating psychological effect of the act of killing on the protagonist.


Comments on "Island of Hallucination" and LD. Translated: 1989

58. Miller, Eugene E. "Folkloric Aspects of Wright’s ’The Man Who Killed a Shadow.’" CLA Journal, 27
Claims that W "inadvertently and yet consciously" gave "folkloric characteristics" to the story. The librarian's screams are analogous to the screeches of an owl, in black folklore an old maid metamorphosed. Saul Saunders is himself a folk character. The story's structure follows closely the pattern described by Axel Olrik in his 1909 essay "Epic Traces of Folk Narrative." The story's haunting quality derives from its folkloric aspects.

59. Miller, Wayne Charles. "Editor's Column." MELUS, 10 (Fall), 1-3.
Praises Robert J. Butler's "The Quest for Pure Motion in Richard Wright's Black Boy," included in this issue of the journal.

Mentions W several times.

Review of Al Young's Snakes mentioning briefly BB.

Mentions W briefly.

63. Pollard, Leslie T. "The Grapes of Wrath and Native Son: Literary Criticism as Social Definition." Dissertation Abstracts International, 44 (October), 1136A.
Abstracts a 1983 University of Kansas dissertation. Analyzes the milieu and issues of the two novels, as well as the critical response to them from 1939 to 1941.

Examines the influence of popular media on "Long Black Song," LT, and NS. Such fiction "describes worlds in which mass culture serves as the locus of personal identity" (p. 5). Image becomes more important than character, especially in the case of Bigger Thomas.

Quotes briefly from W's introduction to George Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin (p. 293).

Mentions briefly W and NS.

The chapter "Richard Wright and the Critique of Class Theory" is subdivided as follows: Marxist Theory and the Black Radical Intellectual, The Novel as Politics, Wright's Social Theory, Blacks as the Negation of Capitalism, and The Outsider as a Critique of Christianity and Marxism. Robinson concludes that although W had reservations about Marxism as a theory of society and as an ideology, "as a method of social analysis he found it compelling" (p. 434).

68. Rubin, Louis D., Jr.
Mentions briefly W (p. 25) and NS (p. 27).

Wideman mentions reading W.

Contains a review of Addison Gayle's Richard Wright: Ordeal of a Native Son. Valuable for its account of governmental harassment of W, Gayle's biography is too reluctant to engage ideological issues.

Review mentioning briefly LT.

72. Sekora, John and Houston A. Baker, Jr. "Written-Off: Narratives, Master Texts, and Afro-American Writing from 1760 to 1945."
Komparatische Hefte 7, 39-52.
The first section shows how early African American autobiography was forced to conform to dominant white values. The second section is a poststructuralist treatment of BB showing how it broke from these restraints to achieve a liberated narrative. Sekora and Baker's trope for this process is the black hole.
Reprinted: 1984

Poem containing the following line: "Bigger is not a black boy yearning for an airplane."

Includes consideration of Gladys in LD.

Places Q in the context of W's intellectual development. Its origin is in his "attempt to resolve the dilemma of the individual versus society, the mind versus materialism" (p. 134). The influence of Sartre and the urgency of Third World politics are reflected in the novel. Q does not fulfill W's humanistic search because he cannot reconcile his allegiances to Western thought with his Third World sympathies.
Reprinted: 1984

Abstracts a 1982 University of Virginia dissertation. Argues that "learning to tell his story convinces Bigger Thomas both of the coherence of his individual life and his connection to other people."

Mentions W briefly, p. 392.


Mentions briefly Cross Damon's journey in Q.


Extensive comparison of NS and Light in August. Includes discussion of Baldwin's view of NS.


Reprint of 1975.197a.


Reprint of 1980


Deplores W's lack of a choice to stay in or depart from Mississippi (p. 164).


Mentions W briefly (p. 239).

Reprint of 1974


Mentions favorably BB, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," and Bigger Thomas (pp. 131, 137).


Reprint of 1972.203A.


Interview containing much material on W (pp. 193-200), most of it in her biography of W. She emphasizes her qualifications and disparages Constance Webb and Michel Fabre.


Mentions briefly NS, BB, WML, and EM.
