A RICHARD WRIGHT BIBLIOGRAPHY: 1987

by

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For Wright studies 1987 was a better year quantitatively than 1986, but nothing of the importance of Joyce Joyce's book or Maryemma Graham's Callaloo collection appeared. Still, there were some highlights. It is always good to have new biographical information. Daphne Athas provides previously unreported details about Wright's dangerous 1940 visit in Chapel Hill, North Carolina; the indefatigable Michel Fabre quotes freely from Ellison's letters to our author during their early friendship; and in her autobiographical memoir Dorothy Norman quotes extensively from Wright's letters to her in 1946 and 1947. Among general treatments Bernard Bell's in his important The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition is perhaps the best, but Valerie Smith and the late Melvin Dixon are also quite good, and Thadious Davis and Lyle Glazier are worth consulting. The one book in 1987, Richard Wright, came from the Bloom factory.

Among the articles on Native Son, Barbara Foley compares it to An American Tragedy; James H. Evans, Jr., finds the key to Bigger's character in religious language; Lynda Hungerford relates dialect to characterization; and Laura E. Tanner focuses on narrative voice. The early short stories also claimed attention. Robert L. Douglas examines religious attitudes in both Uncle Tom's Children and Native Son; Michael Atkinson develops an elaborate comparison of "Big Boy Leaves Home" and a story from Metamorphosis, but offers no external evidence that
Wright ever read Ovid; and Abdul JanMohamed contributes a good examination of Uncle Tom’s Children--and another one of Black Boy--based on Orlando Patterson’s concept of "social death."

Finally, there were excellent articles on Black Power by K. A. Appiah and Jack B. Moore. More work at this level is needed on Wright’s nonfiction.

1987


7. Anon. "The Black Scholar Black Books Roundup #14." The Black Scholar, 18 (July/August-September/October), 30-49. Includes notices of EM (p. 42), Joyce A. Joyce’s Richard Wright’s Art of Tragedy (p. 45), and Michel Fabre’s The World of Richard Wright (p. 48).

8. Anon. "Center Book Chosen." The Southern Register, 5
Notes that Michel Fabre's *The World of Richard Wright*, sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, won designation by *Choice* magazine as one of the Outstanding Scholarly Books of 1987.

   Mentions briefly Abdul JanMohamed’s work-in-progress on W.

10. Anon. "Contributors." *Cultural Critique*, 7 (Fall), [273].
   Mentions briefly Abdul JanMohamed’s work-in-progress on W.

   Mentions the second film version of *NS*.

   Places the new film *NS* in seventeenth place for its first week of December 1986 with $201,000.

   Places the new film *NS* in seventeenth and twenty-first place for its first and second weeks with $201,000 and $90,500.

   Places the new film *NS* in twenty-first and twentieth place for its second and third weeks with $90,500 and $111,000.

   Places the new film *NS* in twentieth and twenty-first place for its third and fourth weeks with $111,000 and $117,400.

   Places the new film *NS* in twenty-first and twenty-fourth place in its fourth and fifth weeks with $17,400 and $67,000.

   Places the new film *NS* in twenty-fourth and twenty-ninth place in its fifth and sixth weeks with $67,000 and $49,700.

   Publisher’s brochure containing a pictorial sketch of *W* and mention of the publication of *NS*.

   Annotated notice.

   Brief notice of a paperback reprint edition.

21. Anon. "1940’s Novel,
'Native Son,' Brought to the Screen." Little Rock Arkansas Gazette (11 January), p. 9G. Comments on the 1941 play and the previous film version. Includes quotations by the producer of the new version, Diane Silver, and the actor who plays Bigger, Victor Love, and a still photograph of Bigger and Max.


31. Armstrong. Roberta R.

Favorable review with special praise for Baker’s treatment of BB.

Quotes Houston Baker on W.

Includes an account of W’s visit to Chapel Hill, N.C., in 1940. A party for W was cancelled when a death threat was received.

Compares W’s story to the myth of Actaeon and Diana. "Ontology and difference, seeing and being seen, idyll and isolation, speech and silence, transformation and wounding—these are the structures of understanding that emerge to guide us when we bring Richard Wright’s story into alignment with its mythic source" (p. 261).
Reprinted: 1988

Contains two paragraphs on the play NS (pp. 241-242).

Mentions briefly W and NS (pp. 268, 270).

Quotes from W’s "The History of the Negro in the United States" (pp. 364-365).

Mentions briefly W and BB.

Reprint of 1984.10.


41. Banta, Martha, and Robert Atwan. "The Literature of an
Mentions W briefly (p. 8).


Mentions W in annotations on works by Michael G. Cooke, Theodore L. Gross, Trudier Harris, Sanehide Kodama, Lewis A. Lawson, and R. Baxter Miller.

Mentions W in annotations on works by Mary F. Sisney and Clyde Taylor.

Includes mention of Sanehide Kodama’s treatment of W in American Poetry and Japanese Culture (p. 328).

46. Baskett, Sam S. "Beyond Native Grounds: American Literary Expatriation." Centennial Review, 31 (Spring), 192-211.
Contains a paragraph on W concluding that expatriation caused him to lose "the passion of Native Son and Black Boy" (p. 207). Also quotes Baldwin on W (p. 208).

In the chapter on "Richard Wright and the Triumph of Naturalism," Bell argues that W rejected "both the concept of black nationalism and the values of Afro-American culture" (p. 155). After a full commentary on NS, Bell concludes that Wright’s most significant contributions to the tradition of the Afro-American novel are threefold: his complex and controversial naturalistic vision of urban black characters and culture, his creation of the best-known black character in black fiction by a synthesis of white and black myths of the Bad Nigger, and his projection of the Afro-American as the metaphor for America and modern man" (pp. 166-167).

Includes essays by Michel Fabre and Joseph J. Skerrett, Jr., on the W- Ellison relationship as well as numerous other essays mentioning W.


53. ___. "Editor's Note," in his Richard Wright. New York: Chelsea House, p. vii. Provides one-sentence summaries of the eleven essays collected in the volume, which Bloom considers "the best criticism available" on W.

54. ___. "Introduction," in his Richard Wright. New York: Chelsea House, pp. 1-6. Argues that the aesthetic shortcomings of NS derive from W's "bad authorial ear," but admits the social importance of the work. BB also has social importance, but is perhaps more interesting for its Oedipal theme. Emphasizes Dreiser's influence on W.


Mixed notice complaining of Walker's "uncharitable and doctrinaire" dismissal of her predecessors in W criticism and her "strident" psychologizing, but praising her "highly informed and reliable" personal perspective on W and his times.

Mentions W briefly (p. 181).

Osbey mentions W briefly (p. 36).

Lists three items on "The Man Who Was Almost a Man" (p. 241).

Mentions W briefly (p. 9).

Favorable review except for unfavorable response to "Fantasies and Style in Wright’s Fiction."

Reprint of 1979.56a.

65. _____.
Mentions W briefly (p. 98).

Mentions W briefly (p. 303).

67. Chambers, Kimberly R. "Right on Time: History and Religion in Alice Walker’s The
Biographical headnote to "The Man Who Was Almost a Man."

Contains two analytical paragraphs on the story, a dozen questions for discussion, three topics for writing, and two secondary sources.

Mentions W briefly.

Mentions briefly Michel Fabre’s The World of Richard Wright (p. 463).

Mentions briefly W and

Somewhat abridged translation of 1985

Mentions briefly NS.

Mentions briefly Bigger Thomas.

Headnote to an excerpt from BB.

Nine study questions and two writing suggestions on an excerpt from BB.

Partial reprint of 1984.35.


87. Douglas, Robert L. "Religious Orthodoxy and Skepticism in Richard Wright’s Uncle Tom’s Children and Native Son." Griot, 6 (Fall), 44-51.
Compares UTC and NS with respect to "the treatment of the minister, the concept of religion or religious worldview, and the use of religious music" (p. 44). Ambivalent in his attitude toward black Christianity, W fluctuates between orthodoxy and skepticism. Reprinted: 1988


93. _____.


98. Ensslen, Klaus. "Der afroamerikanische Roman nach 1945," in Der amerikanische

Discusses NS, LT, Q, SH, UTC, and LD (pp. 224-226, 236-237) and mentions W elsewhere (pp. 229, 231, 233, 246, 247, 249, 250).

99. Evans, James H., Jr.

In a chapter entitled "The Veil of Faith: Richard Wright’s Native Son," Evans "offers a critical analysis ... in which the use of religious language is seen as the key to the development of ... Bigger Thomas" (p. 19). Bigger’s self-realization is finally achieved through openness to faith when in Jan’s example "the word had become flesh." Bigger’s faith is "restless" and "questioning," however, not firm or traditionally Christian.

100. Fabre, Michel.

Reprint of 1975.71.

101. ______.

Traces the early development of Ellison’s political, racial, and literary ideology during his friendship with W, quoting liberally from letters to W, especially concerning TMBV and BB.

Fabre concludes that Ellison was much closer to W’s Marxism than his later writings would indicate.


Mentions W briefly (pp. 21, 25).


Mentions briefly BB and "The Man Who Lived Underground."


Contains a paragraph on W, "the major black writer of the South and the nation" (p. 7).

105. Flynn, Joyce.

Mentions briefly NS (p. xxii).

Claims that Occomy's story "Tin Can" influenced W.

Compared Dreiser's novel of "the tragic consequences of false consciousness" to W's "grotesque rather than tragic ... bitter social commentary" to support the view that proletarian fiction should be judged by a proletarian, not bourgeois, aesthetic. Reprinted: 1993

Mentioned W briefly (p. 201).

Mentioned AH, NS, and "The Man Who Lived Underground."

Comments on NS and Bigger Thomas (p. 21).

Reprint of 1983.34.

112. Freibert, Lucy M. "Southern Song: An Interview with Margaret Walker." Frontiers, 9, no. 3, 50-56.
Includes comments on Walker's relation to W and her use of the word "daemonic" in describing him (pp. 50, 51).

Reprint of 1980.102.

Quotes Martha Foley mentioning W (see 1971).

Contains a reprint of 1983.35 and comments on and quotes from W in the "Introduction" and the first chapter on "Literary Theory and the Black Tradition."

116. _____, ed. "The Black

Includes responses mentioning W by Blyden Jackson, Ishmael Reed, and, in the fall issue, by Eugenia Collier, Sandra E. Drake, and Jerry Ward, Jr.


Mentions W's views on "the art of dissimulation" in a racist society.


The section on W (pp. 150-171) sketches his life and career and discusses UTC (especially its skillful use of language), NS, and LD. "No writer of fiction has caught better than Richard Wright the poetry and tragedy, the violence and aspirations of the American Negro's experience" (p. 154).


Discusses W's early writing including UTC, NS, and BB (pp. 299-302), and mentions W elsewhere.


Lists UTC, NS, the play NS, TMBV, BB, O, BP, and W's death (s.v. 1961 by mistake).


Notes Ellison's friendship with W and mentions W elsewhere (pp. 149-150, 152, 155).


Lists five items s.v. W.


Reprint of 1984


Mentions briefly NS.

Press, pp. 5-6, 7, 13, 18, 25. Discusses the role of Boris Max and anti-Semitism in NS.


Comments on W and NS and their influence on subsequent African American fiction (pp. 4, 25, 26, 27).


134. Holloway, Clayton G. "When a Pariah Becomes a Celebrity: An Interview with James Baldwin." Xavier Review, 7 (Fall), 1-10. Baldwin mentions briefly the play NS (p. 8).


137. Hungerford, Lynda. "Dialect Representation in Native Son." Language and Style, 20 (Winter), 3-15. Demonstrates that W "represented black speech in two contrasting ways to delineate two groups of black characters and underline the thematic content of the novel" (p. 3). For the first group (Bigger and his family and friends) W presents Black English Vernacular through grammatical patterns, especially negative concord, the absence of are, and the absence of have, do, and did. For the second group, Reverend Hammond and the two black workers in Book II, Jack and Jim, W represents dialect orthographically. The result is realistic portrayal of the first group, deliberately stereotypical portrayal of the Tomish second group.


142. JanMohamed, Abdul R. "Negating the Negation as a Form of Affirmation in Minority Discourse: The Construction of Richard Wright as Subject." Cultural Critique, 7 (Fall), 245-266. Examines BB as "a testament to the struggle over the formation of black subjectivity in a racist society" (p. 246). By negating the South's effort to dehumanize him as a "black boy," W achieves his
own subjectivity, thus escaping the "social death" of accommodation while risking the physical death threatening black rebels. Literature provides a way out, and "the literary success of Black Boy becomes an affirmation, a vindication of his strategy of negating the racist negation" (p. 264).


Analyzes the five stories of the expanded version in the light of Orlando Patterson's study of slavery as a kind of "social death" which could be escaped only by rebellion and, usually, actual death, often violent. JanMohamed also places his treatment of the stories in the context of W's own life and the general social conditions of the South in the early twentieth century.


Discusses NS as a fully achieved "drama of consciousness" in which "everything means something; every physical, historical object is a metaphor for feeling" (p. 14). Johnson also mentions AH, Q, and W's influence on Ellison and John A. Williams.


Review mentioning briefly NS.


Mentions W and NS. Quotes from WML (p. 338).


Mentions NS briefly (p. 185).


Mentions W briefly (p. 378).


Unfavorable review of the film NS. "It's a magnanimous, modestly
budgeted, morally medicinal adaptation of Richard Wright's classic novel of race and rage." The acting is generally good, but the film is too stagey and didactic.


Compares W's prose style here quite unfavorably with that of BB. Reprinted: 1991

Mentions briefly W (pp. 93, 94, 95) and NS (p. 102).


Reprint of 1967

165. [Levitt, Morton P.]. "Comparative Studies--Two or More Authors." Journal of Modern Literature, 14 (Fall/Winter), 227-236.
Lists a dissertation (p. 232) and an article treating W.

166. _____. "Criticism of Fiction." Journal of Modern Literature, 14 (Fall/Winter), 261-269.
Lists one dissertation treating W (p. 268).

Lists three dissertations treating W and other writers (pp. 221, 223).

168. _____. "Richard Wright." Journal of Modern Literature, 14 (Fall/Winter), 405.
Lists five articles on W in the annual bibliography.

Reprint of 1964

Quotes briefly from "Blueprint for Negro Writing" (p. 97).

Mentions briefly NS.

Quotes from BB (p. 320) and
"How 'Bigger' Was Born" (p. 330).

Lists twenty-one items on W and cross-references to nineteen other items dealing partially with W.

174. Lubin, Maurice A. "Langston Hughes and Haiti." The Langston Hughes Review, 6 (Spring), 4-7.
Mentions W briefly (p. 6).

Shange mentions W briefly (p. 690).

Comments briefly on naming in BB (pp. 200, 201).

Lists twenty-seven items on W.


Mentions W briefly as an example of black self-hatred.

Mentions W briefly (p. 295).

Mentions W as a friend of Margaret Walker and the subject of her The Demonic [sic] Genius of Richard Wright (pp. 21, 36). Also mentions briefly BB (p. ...
Discuss Silver's background, her production of the film, and her dispute with the director, Jerrold Freedman.

Reprint of 1970.119.

Comments on W's favorable response to A Street in Bronzeville (except for the poem "The Mother") and notes Brook's admiration of BB.

Review acknowledging its "fresh information and helpful insights" but criticizing its pedantry, awkwardness, and repetitiveness.

Includes comment on Robert E. Fleming's "O'Neill's The Hairy Ape as a Source for Native Son" (p. 358).

Contains an analysis of "The Man Who Was Almost a Man" (pp. 19-20).

Favorable notice of "a new and refreshing interpretation [of NS], a welcome revisionist departure from standard readings of Wright's complex work."

Comments on "The Man Who Lived Underground" (p. 411).

Mentions briefly NS (p. 69).

Mentions W briefly (pp. 1090, 1101, 1105, 1108).

Biographical-critical headnote to "Long Black Song" and an excerpt from BB. Emphasizes W's Mississippi background.

Argues that BP is "better read as a novel than as a realistic travel document or personal memoir" (p. 79). So read, W becomes a literary character searching for identity, a character presented as "alien to the scene he desperately desires to feel allegiance to" (p. 90). W the author "richly dramatizes the disordered world" (p. 90) within himself and in the Gold Coast.

Critical treatment commenting on social significance, reception, character development, structure, and imagery.

Favorable notice of Joyce's New Critical approach that "revels the intricate artistry of a work too often dismissed as social realist polemic."

Includes comment on Charles W. Scruggs's "Finding Out About This Mencken: The Impact of A Book of Prefaces on Richard Wright" (p. 248).


Mentions W briefly (p. 12).

Bennett mentions briefly NS and BB (p. 359).

Norman gives her
impressions of W; comments on his relation to Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Camus; and explains his connection with Twice a Year. Most importantly, she quotes extensively from letters to her from W dated 10 June, 1 July, 26 August, 30 September 1946, and 10 September 1947. Includes a reprint of "Operation: Richard Wright" (see 1946.248).

Notes Faulkner’s favorable opinion of NS.

204. Ochillo, Yvonne. "Black Boy: Structure as Meaning." Griot, 6 (Spring), 49-54.
Structuring his work in two parts, before and after his departure to Memphis, W is more concerned in BB with the formation of his identity and his artistic imagination than with a complete and chronological factual account. Ochillo stresses W’s encounter with racism, a representative experience.

Contains several brief references to W.

Bibliography including works on W.

207. [O’Neal, Jim]. "Wright Acceptance Letter Donated to Williams Library." The Southern Register, 5 (Spring), 8.
Reports that Julia Wright donated to Williams Library of the University of Mississippi her father’s letter of acceptance of the Spingarn Medal. Quotes from W’s statement.

Applies a "psychocritical" approach to NS, emphasizing "Southern identity ... ostensibly suppressed, only to dominate the narrative through its haunting absences" (p. 170). Makes numerous comparisons to Faulkner, especially to themes of incest and miscegenation. Notes also W’s influence on Ellison.

Lists production details and cast members of NS; reprints reviews by David Sterritt, Kevin Thomas, Roger Ebert, Joseph Gelmis, and J. Hoberman; and lists four other reviews.

210. Pace, Charles. "Theatre


216. Prescott, Peter S. "The Dilemma of a Native Son." Newsweek, 110 (14 December), 86. Obituary of James Baldwin mentioning briefly the quarrel with W.


218. _____. "Richard Wright's Art of Tragedy. By Joyce Ann Joyce." American Literature, 59 (December), 671-672. Favorable review of "a challenging and assertive piece of criticism." Joyce perceives NS as a tragedy and Bigger as a tragic hero. Praises Joyce especially on W's language.

50.2% of the blacks did so.


224. _____. "Thinking History in The Man Who Cried I Am." Black American Literature Forum, 21 (Spring-Summer), 25-42. Summarizes the scholarship on W's response to naturalism in NS (pp. 27-29) and analyzes the character Harry Ames, based on W, in the Williams novel.


228. Roemer, Marjorie Godlin. "Which Reader’s Response?" College English, 49 (December), 911-921. Arguing for an expanded notion of reader response to reflect actual student diversity, Roemer comments at length on a classroom
discussion and student paper on BB.

   Lists W under years of his birth and death and of the publication of his books.

   Mentions briefly W's visit to Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

   Contrasts treatment of mother-child relationships in The Bluest Eye and BB (pp. 438-439).

   Lists twenty-three items on W with cross-references to twelve others.

   Discusses W's favorable reception in Italy during the postwar years (pp. 13-14). Mentions BB, NS, and UTC.

   In an interview, Fernanda Pivano mentions W briefly.

   Reprint of 1963

   Mentions W briefly.

   Mentions briefly the W-Baldwin quarrel.

   Emphasizes the social import of NS and adduces classroom experience to demonstrate its universal appeal.

First paragraph treats W's discovery of Mencken.

Mentions W briefly.

Mentions W briefly (p. 40).


243. Smith, Curtis C. "Werner Sollors' Beyond Ethnicity and Afro-American Literature." MELUS, 14 (Summer), 65-71.
Comments on the book's treatment of W and NS (pp. 65-66, 69).

W's alienated autobiographical persona is projected in most of the fictional protagonists. Like their creator, they learn to overcome their isolation and gain control of their lives by telling their stories. Smith comments on LT, O, and LD and analyzes BB and, at greater length, NS. Partially reprinted: 1993

Mentions W, alluding briefly to PS.

Mentions W briefly.

Mentions W briefly in an essay on Black English.

Reprint of 1977

Mentions W briefly.

250. Stepto, Robert B. "After
Contrasts Toni Morrison's treatment of black women characters to W's in NS and BB (p. 91). Also contrasts Ernest Gaines to W.


Includes a discussion of NS (pp. 21-25) in relation to Light in August and other treatments of the black murderer. Mentions also UTC, LD, and WML.

Argues for a sharp distinction between Bigger and the narrative voice in the novel, which constantly moves from "the material substance of [Bigger's] actions into a symbolic universe in which they are reinscribed within the narrator's own language game" (p. 414). In Book 3 Max's voice becomes identical to the narrative voice. The narrative voice is unreliable, "white," at times almost racist.


I, 2 (April), 431-434.
Review of Arnold
Rampersad’s biography of
Langston Hughes mentioning
W.

259. Toll, William. "Pluralism
and Moral Force in the Black-
Jewish Dialogue." American
Jewish History, 77
(September), 87-105.
Quotes from WML on cultural
disadvantages of
"traditional 'colored' cultures" (p. 94).

260. Traylor, Eleanor W.
"'Bolder Measures Crashing
Through': Margaret Walker’s
Poem of the Century." Callaloo,
10 (Fall), 570-595.
Mentions W briefly (pp.
571, 572, 592).

261. Turner, Darwin T.
"Introduction." The Black
Scholar, 18
(January/February), front
matter.
Mentions briefly the 1971
conference on W at the
University of Iowa.

262. _____. "Retrospective of
a Renaissance." The Black
Scholar, 18
(January/February), 2-10.
Mentions briefly BP (p.7).

263. Van Vechten, Carl.
Letters of Carl Van Vechten.
Ed. Bruce Kellner. New Haven:
Yale University Press, pp.
196, 213, 220.
Writing to Blanche Knopf,
Van Vechten says that W
"could write a humdinger"
on the Negro question (c.
16 August 1943). Mentions
BB early in 1945 and W on
nuclear disaster late in
the same year.

264. Wald, Alan M. The New
York Intellectuals. Chapel
Hill: The University of North
Carolina Press, p. 236.
Contains a paragraph on NS,
to which Lionel Trilling’s
story "The Other Margaret"
"may be partially intended
as a response."

265. _____. "Theorizing
Cultural Difference: A
Critique of the 'Ethnicity
School.'" MELUS, 14 (Summer),
21-33.
Mentions W briefly (p. 21).

"Chronology," in Reference
Guide to American Literature.
Kirkpatrick. Chicago: St.
Lists NS and BB.

267. Walker, Warren
S. "Bibliography." Studies in
Short Fiction, 24 (Summer),
369.
Lists two items on W.

268. Ward, Jerry W., Jr. "The
Black Person in Art: How
Should S/he Be Portrayed?
(Part II)." Black American
Literature Forum, 21 (Fall),
322-324.
Mentions briefly W and NS.

269. Washington, Mary Helen.
"Anna Julia Cooper: The Black
Feminist Voice." Legacy, 4
(Fall), 3-15.
Refers to Cooper’s
criticism of the black
critics afraid to criticize
NS because of white support
of the novel.

270. _____, ed. Invented
Lives: Narratives of Black
Women 1860-1960. New York:
Doubleday, pp. xvi, xix, xx, xxi, 80, 297, 298-299.
Comments on W's review of Their Eyes Were Watching God and his relation to Ann Petry, and mentions W elsewhere.

Mentions W briefly (pp. xvi, xxix).
Reprinted: 1994

Relates a discussion Waters had with W concerning his expatriation.

Mentions W's "forthright protesting and witnessing," especially in BB (p. 89).

Mentions briefly "The Man Who Lived Underground" and "Blueprint for Negro Writing."

Compares Charlie Biggs of Ernest Gaines's A Gathering of Old Men to Big Boy and Bigger Thomas (p. 44) and elsewhere mentions W (pp. 41-42) and "Fire and Cloud" (p. 52).


Contains a photograph with Winfrey as Mrs. Thomas in the second film version of NS.

Quotes from TMBV (p. 390) and mentions briefly "The Man Who Lived Underground" (p. 398).


Review noting that W is absent from the Long-Collier anthology because of the "executors' wishes."


Mentions W briefly (p. 193).


Mentions briefly BB (pp. 50, 51).


Mentions briefly TMBV (p. 64).


Lists two items on W.