

Selected Bibliography of Afro-American Literature

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ADE Bulletin 78 (Summer 1984), pp. 40–42

ISSN: 0001-0898

CrossRef DOI: 10.1632/ade.78.40

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SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

DETERMINED to survey the complex variety of works that constitute American literature and to help students understand the complex fate of being American readers, one teacher decides to incorporate Afro-American literature into an American literature course. Her more ambitious colleague, with the blessings of the department chair, plans to offer an Afro-American literature course. Possessed of good intentions but no special training in ethnic literatures, both teachers must ask, "Where do I begin?"

One answer would take into account the circumstances: the audience for whom the course is to be designed, course objectives, the library holdings of Afro-American materials, and any funds that may be available for new resources. Such an answer may not be a proper one, for the question merits a pointed, informative response.

This bibliography is a brief response, intended for teachers and department chairpersons who want to know more about Afro-American literature and to use it in their curricula. They should first familiarize themselves with the literature, then discover something of the scholarship and criticism devoted to it, and lastly survey the special issues pertinent to teaching Afro-American literature. They should begin by reading anthologies, especially *The Negro Caravan*, a catholic representation of the literature up to 1940, and *Black Writers of America*, a balanced selection of work since 1945. Abraham Chapman's companion volumes, *Black Voices* and *New Black Voices*, provide a good overview of the criticism. For those who would gladly learn and gladly teach, *Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Literature* (Turner and Stanford) and *Afro-American Literature: The Reconstruction of Instruction* (Fisher and Stepto) are required reading. Such an introduction can lead to a profitable exploration of the other materials listed and to a new perspective on American literature.

I. Bibliographies

- Brignano, Russell C. *Black Americans in Autobiography: An Annotated Bibliography of Autobiographies and Autobiographical Books Written since the Civil War*. Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1974. Also includes an unannotated checklist of autobiographies and autobiographical books before 1865.
- Fairbanks, Carol, and Eugene A. Engeldinger. *Black American Fiction: A Bibliography*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1978. A useful guide to primary sources, biographical and critical articles, and reviews.

Compiled by Jerry W. Ward, Jr.

- Fowler, Carolyn. *Black Arts and Black Aesthetics*. Atlanta: First World Foundation, 1981. An excellent bibliography of material on culture theory, dance, drama, music, negritude, plastic arts, poetry, and fiction, this work includes a fine introductory essay on black literary tradition and aesthetics.
- French, William P., et al. *Afro-American Poetry and Drama, 1760-1975*. Detroit: Gale, 1979. The poetry section lists general studies, bibliographies, reference works, critical studies, and anthologies; primary sources, biographies, and criticism are listed for individual poets. The drama section includes bibliographies, periodicals, play collections, critical studies, and an annotated bibliography of plays by individual dramatists.
- Hatch, James V., and Omannii Abdullah. *Black Playwrights, 1823-1977: An Annotated Bibliography of Plays*. New York: Bowker, 1977. Identifies and describes more than 2,700 plays written by black Americans between 1823 and 1977; includes a bibliography of anthologies containing scripts, a list of books and sources on black drama and theater, a bibliography of dissertations, and a list of taped interviews with black theater figures.
- Inge, M. Thomas, et al., eds. *Black American Writers: Bibliographic Essays I: The Beginnings through the Harlem Renaissance and Langston Hughes*. New York: St. Martin's, 1978.
- . *Black American Writers: Bibliographic Essays II: Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Amiri Baraka*. New York: St. Martin's, 1978. These comprehensive companion volumes cover scholarship on the major writers in the Afro-American tradition.
- Margolies, Edward, and David Bakish. *Afro-American Fiction, 1853-1976*. Detroit: Gale, 1979. Contains a checklist of novels, a short-story-collection guide, a list of secondary sources for 15 major authors, bibliographies, and general studies. The work is partially annotated.
- Miller, Wayne Charles, et al. *A Comprehensive Bibliography for the Study of American Minorities*. 2 vols. New York: New York Univ. Press, 1976. Volume I contains a bibliographic essay "The Black
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American Experience," annotated bibliographies for periodicals, history, biography and autobiography, literary history and criticism, folklore, and anthologies.

Peavy, Charles D. *Afro-American Literature and Culture since World War II: A Guide to Information Sources*. Detroit: Gale, 1981. Part I is a good guide to sources on such subjects as the black aesthetic, drama, folklore, religion, music, poetry, prison writing, and politics; part 2 contains brief bibliographies for 56 writers. Most of the entries are annotated.

Turner, Darwin. *Afro-American Writers*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970. A useful guide to scholarship on drama, fiction, and poetry up to 1969.

Williams, Ora. *American Black Women in the Arts and Social Sciences: A Bibliographical Survey*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1978. Although the book has few annotations, the emphasis given to literary works by women is valuable.

II. Anthologies

The anthologies listed here are the more useful ones for survey courses. In planning courses, however, teachers should give some attention to the two anthologies that mark watersheds in Afro-American literary history: Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (New York: Boni, 1925); and LeRoi Jones and Larry Neal, eds., *Black Fire* (New York: Morrow, 1968).

Baker, Houston A., ed. *Black Literature in America*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971. A chronological survey from the oral prototypes to the 1960s, this anthology has good introductory and biographical notes.

Barksdale, Richard, and Kenneth Kinnamon, eds. *Black Writers of America*. New York: Macmillan, 1972. The bibliography included in this book is a good supplement to the material appearing in Darwin Turner's *Afro-American Writers* listed above.

Brown, Sterling A., Arthur P. Davis, and Ulysses Lee, eds. *The Negro Caravan*. New York: Arno, 1969 (originally pub. Dryden, 1941). Now regarded as a classic of its kind, this anthology is still valuable as a text for specialized courses or as corollary reading for a survey course.

Chapman, Abraham, ed. *Black Voices*. New York: New American Library, 1968.

———. *New Black Voices*. New York: New American Library, 1972. Unlike the usual anthologies, these companion volumes include generous selections of literary criticism.

Davis, Arthur P., and Saunders Redding, eds. *Cavalcade*. Boston: Houghton, 1971. Contains useful introductory essays for the five periods represented.

Emanuel, James A., and Theodore L. Gross, eds. *Dark Symphony*. New York: Free Press, 1968. Contains poetry, short stories, and essays by 34 writers; the background information on authors and literary periods is good.

Miller, Ruth, ed. *Black American Literature: 1760 to the Present*. New York: Macmillan, 1971. This anthology contains three fine examples of the folk sermon, work by writers seldom anthologized, and a useful bibliography on individual writers.

Criticism

Baker, Houston A. *The Journey Back: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980. Seven challenging essays on the study of literature in its cultural context.

Bell, Roseann, et al., eds. *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor-Doubleday, 1979. Illuminating essays on images of black women in American, African, and Caribbean literatures.

Bigsby, C. W. E., ed. *The Black American Writer*. 2 vols. Baltimore: Pelican, 1971. Volume 1 contains essays on fiction; volume 2, essays on poetry and drama. These essays delineate prevailing problems in the discussion of Afro-American literature.

Fisher, Dexter, and Robert B. Stepto, eds. *Afro-American Literature: The Reconstruction of Instruction*. New York: MLA, 1978. This book is indispensable for curriculum planning. The essays on Afro-American literary history, language, literature and folklore, theory, and course design are model guides for pedagogy.

Gayle, Addison. *The Way of the New World*. New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1975. A provocative study of the ideological dimensions of black fiction.

Harper, Michael S., and Robert B. Stepto, eds. *Chant of Saints*. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1979. These interdisciplinary essays represent new directions in the discussion of literature and culture.

Henderson, Stephen. *Understanding the New Black Poetry: Black Speech and Black Music as Poetic References*. New York: Morrow, 1973. Henderson's introductory essay on a theory of black poetry is a major contribution to ethno-poetics.

Hill, Errol, ed. *The Theater of Black Americans*. 2 vols. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980. A good collection of essays on the history of Afro-American drama.

Hull, Gloria T., et al., eds. *But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*. Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist, 1982. The bibliographies and bibliographic essays in section 6 and the selected course syllabi in section 7 make this collection especially valuable for curriculum planning.

- Levin, Lawrence. *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977. A thorough investigation of the oral tradition from which Afro-American literature emerges.
- Miller, R. Baxter, ed. *Black American Literature and Humanism*. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1981. These essays are designed to expand understanding of the humanism implicit in the Afro-American literary tradition.
- Redmond, Eugene B. *Drumvoices: The Mission of Afro-American Poetry*. Garden City, NY: Anchor-Doubleday, 1976. To date, the most ambitious attempt to provide a critical introduction to the historical development of black poetry.
- Stepto, Robert. *From behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative*. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1979. A pioneering work in the formulation of Afro-American narrative theory.
- Turner, Darwin T., and Barbara Dodds Stanford. *Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Literature by Afro-Americans*. Urbana: NCTE, 1971. Turner's section on theory foregrounds the problem of periodicity; although directed to high school teachers, Stanford's discussion of practice is stimulating.
- Yarborough, Richard. "The Crisis in Afro-American Letters." *College English* 43 (1981): 773-78. A fine discussion of the problems teachers face in obtaining certain works by Afro-American authors.
- Callaloo: A Black South Journal of Arts and Letters*. Dept. of English, Univ. of Kentucky, Lexington 40506. Includes critical articles and reviews, interviews with writers, and special bibliographies.
- College Language Association Journal*. Morehouse Coll., Atlanta, GA 30314. Includes scholarly essays on Afro-American literature.
- Freedomways*. 799 Broadway, New York, NY 10003. Each issue includes Ernest Kaiser's "Recent Books," a comprehensive, annotated bibliography of publications by and about blacks.
- Journal of Black Studies*. Sage Publications, 275 South Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212. Interdisciplinary; includes occasional articles on Afro-American literature.
- Journal of Ethnic Studies*. Western Washington Univ., Bellingham 98225. Includes articles related to the study of Afro-American literature.
- MELUS* (Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States). Dept. of English, Univ. of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH 45221. Articles often illuminate the interrelations of Afro-American literature with other ethnic literatures.
- Obsidian: Black Literature in Review*. Dept. of English, Wayne State Univ., Detroit, MI 48202. Includes critical articles and bibliographies.
- Phylon*. Atlanta Univ., Atlanta, GA 30314. Interdisciplinary; includes articles on Afro-American literature.
- SAGALA: A Journal of Art and Ideas*. P.O. Box 723, Howard Univ., Washington, DC 20059. Interdisciplinary; includes critical articles on Afro-American literature.
- Western Journal of Black Studies*. Black Studies Program, Washington State Univ., Pullman 99164. Interdisciplinary.

IV. Periodicals

- Black American Literature Forum*. PH 237, Indiana State Univ., Terre Haute 47809. Devoted primarily to scholarly criticism and pedagogical articles, the magazine also publishes valuable interviews and bibliographies.

Discover librarian-selected research resources on African-American Literature from the Questia online library, including full-text online books, academic journals, magazines, newspapers and more. African-American poet Phillis Wheatley published her *Poems on Various Subjects* in 1773. She was a slave brought from Africa and while she was a child she was sold to a merchant.