PREFACE

Richard Wright, reckoned to be the "angry young man" of the African American Novel, seeks to find a voice in his fiction to reveal the most inner life of a community that refuses to thrive on blackness. He is one of the stalwarts of the Wright-Ellison generation. Signifying a shift from "Negro Renaissance" to an "era of rebellion," his works are characterized by the essential quest for the existential self. Wright makes his protagonists resort to violence and crime in the process of self-actualization and avenging the ravished black spirit. He succeeds in formulating the African American from stereotype to archetype.

Experiencing the unusual trauma of "black existence," Wright grew into a major writer. The autobiographical element is all pervasive in most of his works. There is also a vivid description of the socio-economic conditions that act as the agents for the alienation, victimization, and physical as well as psychological castration of the blacks. Wright defines "blackness" as the protest against the injustice that destroys the black spirit and crushes its dignity. He means it as the revolution for the liberation of the blacks from the shackles of the eternal servitude that are tempered by the white society's determination to keep them in their places, restricting their
freedom of movement, and confining them to the regions of subordination and inferiority.

My study makes an attempt to explore the genius of Richard Wright vis-à-vis the thematic concerns of his novels. Wright's concerns are not only with the themes of outrage but also with sociological, philosophical, psychological and psychosexual themes. They provide deep insights into human psychology. There is also a lesson in morals that one who longs for an existential leap, crossing all the barriers—social, political, religious, and moral—has to realize that conventions alone make one human. In my discussion of the novels, all page references are to the following editions:


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BLACK and WHITE

When I born, I Black
When I grow up, I Black
When I go in sun, I Black
When I scared, I Black
When I sick, I Black
And when I died, I still Black.

And you White fella,
When you born, you pink,
When you grow up, you white,
When you go in sun, you red,
When you cold, you blue,
When you scared, you yellow,
When you sick, you green,
And when you die, you grey.
And you calling me colored?

(Contributed by Vipin Bucksey, New Delhi)