

PAL: Perspectives in American Literature - A Research and Reference Guide - An Ongoing Project

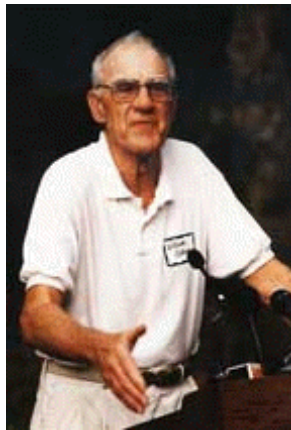
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Chapter 8: William Gibson (1914-)

Page Links: | [Primary Works](#) | [Selected Bibliography 1980-Present](#) | [MLA Style Citation of this Web Page](#) |
| [A Brief Biography](#) |

Site Links: | [Chap. 8: Index](#) | [Alphabetical List](#) | [Table Of Contents](#) | [Home Page](#) | February 2, 2008 |



Source: [The Miracle Worker](#)

Primary Works

The Cobweb, 1954; *The Miracle Worker*, 1957; *The Seesaw Log and Two for the Seesaw*, 1959; *A Mass for the Dead*, 1968; *Grove of Doom*, 1969; *American Primitive*, 1972; *A Season in Heaven*, 1974; *The Body and The Wheel*, 1975; *The Butterfingers Angel, Mary and Joseph, Herod the Nut, and The Slaughter of Twelve Hit Carols in a Pear Tree*, 1975; *Shakespeare's Game*, 1978; *Golda*, 1978; *Monday after the Miracle* (a sequel to *The Miracle Worker*), 1982.

Selected Bibliography 1980-Present

MacNicholas, John. *Twentieth-Century American Dramatists, Part 1: A-J*. Detroit: Gale, 1981.

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William Gibson: A Brief Biography

A Student Project by Sandi Hector

William Gibson is a known dramatist who has written and published poetry, plays, fiction and autobiography. He studied two and one half years at the City College of New York from 1930-1932. William Gibson currently lives in Stockbridge, Massachusetts with his wife, Margaret Brenman, who is a psychoanalyst. They have two sons, Thomas and Daniel.

Gibson's style of writing includes high and low humor with emotional effects. His approach of realism to Brechtian theatricalism is brought on stage by his elegant style of words or gestures. Gibson has an "ability to orchestrate dialogue, actor movement, sound and especially lights to produce impressive and subtle effects", (DLB 7, p. 200).

The Cobweb, written by Gibson in 1954 is a nontheatrical work, but shows Gibson as a dramatist. The novel reveals Gibson as "the writer", by demonstrating a combination of emotionally tense stories with a grotesque comedy that begins with the image of hanging drapes in a mental clinic. Another play Gibson is known highly for is named, Two for the Seesaw. Its premiere was at Booth Theatre in 1958. "The play's strength lies in its characterizations," (DLB 7, p. 201). This play is Gibson's most straightforward, direct play that opened the doors to reflect his openness to real-life ideas. "Two for the Seesaw, has proved to be a durable and reliable piece of theatre, made first into a motion picture and later into a Broadway musical, titled Seesaw," (DLB 7, p. 202).

In tradition of realism, The Miracle Worker, written for television in 1957, is a story of Helen Keller in which her teacher, Anne Sullivan, is portrayed. It is a story of the relationship between the Kellers and Annie and the events that encounter them, where the main incidents are brought on by factual events of Helen Keller's life. The way Gibson portrays his stage for The Miracle Worker was one of a new era. He divided the stage diagonally, with upstage area remaining unchanged and showing different views of the Keller homestead (yard, Perkins Institution for the Blind, garden house). He achieved this set by the use of properties and set pieces, and the use of the movement of actors. The important technique used for his set is the changes in lighting. It is through his stage where one can see the confidence and control Gibson has crafted.

"Gibson's weaknesses as a playwright are an unevenness tone and a tendency toward excessive sentimentality. These are overshadowed by his virtues: skillful characterization, psychological acuity, wit, strong conflict, respect for fact and an assured control of the plastic elements in theatre", (DLB 7 p., 207). Gibson is a playwright admired for his humanity and for focusing on the real life drama.

Sources

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----*Bishop Gibson's Codex and the Reform of the Oxford University Press in the Eighteenth Century* Oxford, England 1995

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---*Selected Letters, VI : 1912-1920* Boston : Twayne, 1983

MLA Style Citation of this Web Page

Reuben, Paul P. "Chapter 8: William Gibson." *PAL: Perspectives in American Literature- A Research and Reference Guide*. URL: <http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap8/gibson.html> (provide page date or date of your login).