at reasonable prices. Obviously no other bibliographical series approaches this fine quality, and some are actually rather shoddy. G.K. Hall's and Garland's are not even typeset. The University of Pittsburgh's is illustrated, but the paper and binding are of mediocre quality. Scarecrow's is merely functional as is the Soho series from Oxford University Press. The Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia is perhaps the best of the lot, but Black Sparrow is in a class of its own. In sum then, *Paul Bowles: A Descriptive Bibliography* is an excellent contribution to American literary bibliography and deserves a place in all research collections.

ROBERT HAUPTMAN

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When a bibliography of a major author, compiled by a well-known scholar-collector is announced, to be published by an established university press that has embarked on a series of bibliographies of major American authors, it is the occasion for the joyful anticipation of yet another much-needed tool in the arsenal of scholars, collectors, and dealers. Thus *Nelson Algren: A Descriptive Bibliography*, compiled by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Judith Baughman and published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in their ongoing 'Series in Bibliography,' fills in one more lacuna in the field of reference works for American authors.

The physical format of the volume issued just recently is to be commended. It is printed on paper substantial enough that there is no bleed-through even from the pages bearing illustrations, a fault apparently endemic with the decrease in the quality of paper available at a viable cost to publishers of anything but deluxe limited editions. The binding is sturdy, in the standard dark blue-grey cloth used throughout the entire series. And – hallelujah – it is printed and bound in sewn signatures, complete with headbands, a rarity in this age of 'fast-food' techniques filtering down into book production, even from major publishers, most of whom now use the ironically termed 'perfect binding' – glued sheets that are guaranteed to self-destruct on first opening the book. It is comforting to know that this volume will withstand constant use without falling apart.

The number of illustrations is faultless: every title page has been reproduced, along with its copyright notice page, and there is a photograph of every dust jacket. But this last aspect is a major disappointment. The quality of the individual jackets used for illustration is in many cases inexcusably poor. With books of the vintage covered by Algren's publications, there is no excuse for using tattered, torn, and worn jackets with portions missing. There are sufficient copies abounding in many collections, both private and institutional, in perfect condition that could and should have been employed. But what is worse, the photography itself is woefully poor. In several instances, the camera seems to be out of focus, rendering it impossi
ble to read the printing on these jackets. The surrounding black background tends to make it even harder to gain any clear idea of the actual appearance of the jackets. The jackets for *The Neon Wilderness* and *Never Come Morning* are particularly bad. What has gone wrong here is hard to fathom, given the care that has gone into all the other aspects of the production. From personal experience as compiler, editor, and publisher of bibliographies, I know that it is easily possible to have better reproductions of jackets at no great expense. In Kathy McBeil's bibliography of Gary Snyder, for example, the illustrations of jackets were made by Xerox, and came out far more clearly than these, which are obviously photographs and which conceivably should have reproduced more legibly than Xerox. With jackets, the optimum would be full-colour reproductions, though this, of course, may represent a cost not commensurate with a university press budget. But it costs nothing extra to use perfect jackets.

Whether the illustrations in a bibliography are good or poor is, after all, a secondary matter. The actual meat of such a book is in the amount of information given, and how thorough and accurate it is. Here Bruccoli is on better ground, although not totally on *terra firma*, as will be discussed a bit further on. First of all, his organization is in some places at variance with standard bibliographic practice. I refer specifically to the division of Section c - Appearances in Periodicals - into two groups: reviews in one, and everything else in a separate category. There seems to be no valid reason for such a segregation. It impedes scholarly study of the chronologically growth of Algren's work, and serves no purpose that I can ascertain. Donald Gallup, certainly the acknowledged master bibliographer of our time, in his definitive bibliographies of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, saw no reason to segregate the periodical appearances. In these works, non-poetic items were marked with a typographic symbol, a practice which could have been adopted here with profit to all, rendering the work easier to use and eliminating the awkwardness of having to shuffle back and forth between the two sections.

A more serious defect is the complete omission of foreign translations. While such a section is perhaps not the most crucial area, it is standard in all major bibliographies. This is admittedly the most difficult area to compile, as I know all too well from personal experience. But the compilation of a bibliography is not a task to be undertaken by the faint-hearted or the weak of will. And when one such is offered as the definitive study, some attempt should be made to render it as complete as possible.

Finally, there is even some confusion in the present work as to what constitutes a proper entry in the 'A' section, which is always strictly limited to books, pamphlets, and broadsides written by the author. In his entry A7.1, Bruccoli lists a programme for a performance of a musical adaptation of the novel *A Walk on the Wild Side*. This programme is reproduced *in toto* in the accompanying illustration. The only text by Algren would seem to be the titles of the musical numbers. The texts for the songs themselves do not appear in this programme, which consists of a single leaf. While it is obviously a scarce item – Bruccoli can locate only one extant copy – it does not qualify by any bibliographic standards as an 'A' section item. At best it would properly appear in a section devoted to ephemera, a category not dealt with in this work. Bruccoli is to be congratulated for his indefatigable energy in finding this
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item, but to elevate it to an 'A' entry simply cannot be justified. But matters do not stop there. Things are made more confusing by listing in the same entry, with no further numbering, the sheet music for this show. Insofar as this very unclear entry reads, Algren apparently co-authored the lyrics. These conceivably could merit an 'A' entry, but if so, full bibliographic description of them should be given, rather than relegating them to an obscure footnote to an item that in itself does not belong in this section.

As for the balance of the text, aside from the unfortunate errors described above, the work is sound and informative. The descriptions are detailed and accurate, and the reproductions of the title pages with their collateral copyright pages, both for the U.S. and the corresponding British editions, are full-sized and clear. This is extremely helpful, both to collectors and dealers, for it eliminates any possibility of misidentifying a first edition. I know of virtually no other bibliography where so much care has been lavished on title-page reproduction. This factor alone makes the volume invaluable as a reference tool, and certainly goes a long way toward redeeming the departures from standard bibliographic practice discussed above. Lest this review sound too much like a hatchet job, may I say that these criticisms arose more from disappointment that a work that was so close to being perfect missed the opportunity when just a little more effort would have rendered it as nearly perfect as such a book can be. To sum up, it is a valuable, much-needed study that will certainly not be superceded in the foreseeable future, and is recommended to all collectors, dealers, and institutions dealing with twentieth-century literature.

ROBERT A. WILSON
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The pioneer studies of nineteenth-century publishers' bindings by Michael Sadleir and John Carter are now more than fifty years old. In recent decades there has been increasing interest in Victorian books and their covers. Pictorial surveys by Ruari McLean and Sue Allen have drawn attention to their visual appeal. Other scholars have examined such specialized subjects as designers (Pantazzi, Barber), plate dies (Ellenport), cloth patterns (Tanselle and others), and binders' tickets (Munby, Mitchell). Catalogues of the nineteenth-century fiction collections of Michael Sadleir and Robert Lee Wolff have emphasized the bibliographical importance of binding variants. The Victorian book trades have been documented in some two dozen histories and memoirs published since 1900, and the archives of several major publishing firms have been made more accessible through microfilm.

In Victorian Publishers' Bindings Douglas Ball provides a good introduction to the subject, summarizing earlier research and adding some of his own. His chapters are short and straightforward, and each is fully documented. He defines the term