NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. Du Bois takes care to emphasize that he does not wish to "bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism," as "Negro blood has a message for the world," but instead "to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American" (Du Bois *Souls* 45).
2. When I use the term "identity" in this study, it pertains to the various personality characteristics, experiences, and group affiliations with which an individual constructs a sense of self. An individual is therefore more conscious of her identity than of her subjectivity, which I understand as the product of the construction and positioning of an individual in relation to forms of social power. In thinking about identity, I recognize that, as Cathy Moses notes, identity is "not something that is imprinted on passive bodies by monolithic social structures," but a "reiterative process of relations of identification between the body and social structures." Moses adds that there is "no stable site for identity—even bodies are subject to change," something that is readily apparent in protest literature (Moses 3).
3. While Du Bois uses "vast" to describe the veil and not the space of America that is his "birthright," the veil's vastness is a reflection on "their world," that space from which he is excluded. I find it interesting that this vast space is simultaneously described as a house; however, I believe this to be a case of mixed metaphor rather than a conscious relocation of the vast American land within the domestic space.
4. Regenia Gagnier provides a helpful gloss on the concept of the "subject" and subjectivity: while "the subject is a subject to itself, an 'I,' " it is also a "subject to, and of, others; in fact, it is often an 'Other' to others, which also affects its sense of its own subjectivity"; it is additionally "a subject of knowledge, most familiarly perhaps of the discourse of social institutions that circumscribe its terms of being," and a "body that is separate . . . from other human bodies" (Gagnier 8). Moreover, although the subject is socially embedded, we "must also grant . . . the subject's mediation (i.e., transformation) of structures and systems, including systems as large as language or the State" (10).
5. I do not mean to suggest that the novels of protest writers were more autobiographical those of than canonical novelists, although a great number of critics have attempted to relate the lives of protest authors to the lives of their

characters. From among the many, I quote David Ickard: "Where does Bob Jones end and Chester Himes begin?" (Ickard 301).

6. I believe that the attempt to evaluate literary genres for their aesthetic or social value is unproductive, since the question of value is based on the critic's historical context and personal experience. June Howard has stated my beliefs on this issue eloquently: "We want, unquestionably, to make assertions about the effect and value of literary texts, but surely we want to make them in . . . concrete terms, for . . . limited contexts; we want, in other words, to historicize the question of value. Literary forms themselves carry what Jameson calls 'socio-symbolic messages,' and form itself is an immanent ideology. But it does not do justice to the full significance of genre to diagnose forms as progressive or reactionary, as truthful or mendacious" (Howard 21).
7. The issue of literary value in proletarian literature eventually caused Claude McKay to resign from his joint editorship of *The Liberator* with Mike Gold in 1922. McKay was certainly willing to print work by "the forgotten members of the working class," but he could not tolerate Gold's editorial policy, which he famously described as printing "doggerel from lumberjacks . . . and true revelations from chambermaids" (Aaron *Writers* 93; Maxwell 99, 100).
8. The modernist novel has been described as "centered on itself and not on anything outside it; neither on ideology or theology nor on the expression of the poet's feelings and personality." According to this logic, political novelists are "putting the subject back into poetry" (Stephen Spender, qtd. in Bogardus and Hobson 4). However, the distinction between the twenties' modernist "high art" and the thirties' naturalistic propaganda is not as clear-cut as critics claim. The birth of modernism did not necessarily entail the banishment of realism and naturalism; the three existed simultaneously and mixed in "curious ways that occasionally resulted in fruitful and important cross-pollination" (Bogardus and Hobson "Introduction" footnote 5).
9. Du Bois' statement appears in his 1926 article "Criteria of Negro Art" (296), while Petry's version appears in her essay "The Novel as Social Criticism" (95). Morrison's can be found in "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation" (202).
10. "Art is not a mirror to reflect the world, but a hammer with which to shape it" –Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893–1930).
11. Ward hesitates to use the term "protest literature," feeling that "protest is a position, not a genre," a "racist box" in which were dumped books of "outlaw status" (173–74). He prefers the terms "thesis novel" or "novel as essay," but I do not believe that using a different term will erase the aesthetic standards that have been and continue to be used to dismiss these novels.
12. However, when the American canon was formed in the early twentieth century, such overtly political texts were left out.
13. In doing so, she surely follows the example of Frederick Douglass, who uses the same strategy in his 1845 *Narrative*. Douglass offers readers Mrs. Sophia Auld, a woman not unlike many of his Northern white female readers (his

primary audience); possessing "the kindest heart and finest feelings," she is entirely unfamiliar with the "blighting and dehumanizing effects" of slavery when Douglass arrives in her household. Once she is trained in the proper way to treat slaves, however, her "angelic face gave place to that of a demon" (*Narrative* 30–31). Her "fall" from innocence and the resulting "blighting" of her beauty would surely make an impact on Douglass' readership—if the sadistic beating of the beautiful Aunt Hester did not.

14. As Sharon Harris notes, Davis's development of a "literature of the commonplace," which is "at the core of all facets of literary realism," dates "back at least to Caroline Kirkland, who also used the term 'commonplace' and was, as early as the 1830s, concerned with mimetic fiction and capitalist exploitation" (*Rebecca* 10). Furthermore, Harris asserts that Howells and other realist writers had all read Davis's work, as it was published alongside theirs in the same periodicals.
15. Anthony Dawahare argues that "in this single passage, Olsen extraneously provides social consciousness ('like all boys') and utopian desire ('vague dreams' of a free community) to the text, and provides her mute character with the voice he, a young unschooled miner, was unable to develop. She also metaphorically expresses the labor theory of value that is central to the dialectical perspective of the novel: 'Earth sucks you in, to spew out the coal, to make a few fat bellies fatter,' and she predicts a revolution when 'strong fists [will] batter the fat bellies' " ("That Joyous Certainty" 6).
16. Ralph Waldo Emerson had used the concept of double consciousness to "affirm the existence of a higher spiritual, religious realm within the human soul," the "higher realm" of the soul being the "inner self" and the rest of the soul and mind being relegated to the "outer self," the individual's collected intellectual detritus (Reed 100). For further discussion of this term, see Arnold Rampersad's work on Du Bois as well as Dickson Bruce's essay. For the Hegelian implications of the term, see Sandra Adell's *Double Consciousness/Double Bind.*
17. William James' "The Hidden Self" (1890) is a review of Pierre Janet's dissertation on the same subject, "De l'Automatisme Psychologique" (1889).
18. In the Jubilee Preface, Du Bois notes that as "a student of James, Royce, and Santayana," he "was 'not unprepared for the revolution in psychology which the Twentieth Century has brought.' Nevertheless," *Souls* "does not adequately allow for unconscious thought and the cake of custom in the growth and influence of race prejudice" (Lutz 261–62). In other words, at the time of writing *Souls,* Du Bois did not fully comprehend the psychological depth of racism.
19. As Megan Obourn notes, the experience of "being-in-the-world for a person 'marked' by a minority identity can be understood as traumatic"; not only the legacies of racial violence, but the "continued and everyday threat of physical harm can be traumatic." She acknowledges Wahneema Lubiano's argument that minorities are "at the mercy of racist, sexist, heterosexist, and global capitalist constructions of the meaning of skin color on a daily basis" (Obourn 3).

20. See Freud's "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through" (1914), which describes the process within the context of analysis whereby the subject symbolizes a trauma through transference.
21. Gavin Jones disagrees with the idea that signifiers of poverty were so vague that racial signifiers had to substitute; his book describes "a polemics of poverty that was firmly established in the 1840s and reached a kind of apotheosis in the Depression years. . . . this contentious discourse comprehended economic inequality in ways largely independent of race, even as it defined poverty as a condition with cultural ramifications never quite reducible to a socioeconomic view of class" (Jones xv).
22. This issue is raised in a number of recent texts. See Barbara Christian's "Race for Theory"; the introduction of Abel, Christian, and Moglen's book *Female Subjects in Black and White: Race, Psychoanalysis, Feminism,* in which they suggest that even a revised psychoanalysis might still privilege the western cultural tradition over the African; work by Christina Zwarg, Gwen Bergner, and Keith Byerman. Dominick LaCapra concedes that "any use of psychoanalysis with reference to society and culture raises the preliminary problem of the applicability of certain concepts—for example, the return of the repressed—beyond the clinical context involving discrete individuals as subjects"; he states that Freud tended to see this applicability as analogical (the individual standing for society), especially if "that applicability is explicitly presented as problematic and suggestive" (LaCapra 173).
23. In this sense, I disagree with Naomi Morgenstern, who argues, "it is at least in part because the trauma cannot be temporally located that it becomes strangely transmissible down through generations. As the skeleton in the closet, the ghost in the attic, the family secret is preserved in its very unutterability" (Morgenstern 103).
24. Morgenstern argues that the slave narrative functions as healing testimony, thereby producing "many of the tropes that still dominate the African-American literary tradition" (105).
25. Neal also asserts that the "three events that stand out above all others in shaping a national identity" are "the epic struggles of the American Revolution, the trauma of the Civil War, and the heroic undertakings in winning World War II," all of which "required extensive personal sacrifices and permanently changed the content of what it means to be an American" (Neal 22). Apparently he doesn't consider American slavery to have affected the "content of what it means to be an American."
26. Before and after Japanese-American internment, Little Tokyo, a Los Angeles neighborhood that still exists today, was populated by Japanese immigrants and their families, as the name suggests; during the period of internment, it became a slum inhabited by African Americans known as "Bronzeville," and the women are discussing the need for more public housing and social services.
27. Critics seem to share Alice's distaste for comparisons between Bigger and Bob. As Robert Skinner notes, Bigger Thomas "is a lost cause when his story opens . . . already a borderline criminal whose ability to believe in his own

future or work towards any personal redemption is nonexistent," while Bob Jones is a "man with a future"—as evidenced by the fact that he "owns an expensive new car and is engaged to a beautiful woman with wealth and position" (Skinner 193). Similarly, Angus Calder concedes that "the rape motif is repeated" in both books, but states that "Bob is nothing like Bigger Thomas. He is a tough and intelligent man who should clearly be accepted as free and equal in any society, not, like Bigger, a pitiful creature depraved by the slums" (Calder 112).

28. Dominick LaCapra provides a helpful definition of "working-through," which is not just a process of confronting the traumatic past in a therapeutic context, but "requires the recognition that we are involved in transferential relations to the past in ways that vary according to the subject-positions we find ourselves in, rework, and invent," and which "involves the attempt to counteract the projective reprocessing of the past through which we deny certain of its features and act out our own desires for self-confirming or identity-forming meaning" (LaCapra 64).
29. When Madge drops all charges, Bob realizes that "they'd grilled Madge and learned the truth, or learned enough to guess at the rest," but because the employees took Madge's side and beat Bob severely, the company will "cover for her till hell froze over" (201).
30. At a 2005 MLA panel on trauma theory and American literature, an audience member recognized that typically, the trauma theory applied to discussion of American racial trauma is Holocaust-based, and that while "tropological and historical connections [exist] between the African American and Jewish experience," African American experiences of racism are different in significant ways.
31. Lukács defines the word "bourgeois" as pertaining to a philosophy of "freedom," "permanent residence," and "security" (620). The "Bourgeois Age" (1450–1950), he claims, is marked by the "internal deepening of human consciousness" and thus by an increasing concern with "interiority," comfort, contemplation, and privacy (622). Besides Freud's spatialized description of traumatic neurosis, we can also look to his description of the "uncanny," which in German translates as "unhomelike" (*unheimlich*), an alien presence which re-intrudes into and disturbs the mind after having been repressed or expelled from it ("The Uncanny" 241).
32. Engels was referring to the second definition of determinism when he wrote in a letter to Bloch, "We make our history ourselves, but in the first place, under very definite assumptions and conditions" (qtd. in Williams 85). Similarly, Marx states in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that "Men make their own history but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx 29–39, qtd. in Ferraro 7).
33. As Marx stated in *Theories of Surplus Value, Part I,* "Man himself is the basis of his material production, as of any other production that he carries on. All circumstances, therefore, which affect man, the *subject* of production, more

or less modify all his functions and activities, and therefore too his functions and activities as the creator of material wealth, of commodities. In this respect it can in fact be shown that all human relations and functions, however and in whatever form they may appear, influence material production and have a decisive influence on it" (qtd. in Ferraro 29).

34. Still, I prefer this theory of adaptation to Nietzsche's, in which adaptation is "a second-class activity, a mere capacity for 'reacting'; in fact, life itself has been defined [by Herbert Spencer] as an increasingly effective internal adaptation to external circumstances. This definition, however, fails to realise the real essence of life, its will to power" (Nietzsche 66).
35. Critics of naturalism have agreed to disagree on its defining features and its generic status; many of them, including Walter Benn Michaels and Michel Fabre, refuse to define it at all. I would argue that critics' disagreements about its definition and its generic status are the result of their widely varying and always passionate attitudes about the place of politics in literature. Furthermore, based on Northrop Frye's and Tzvetan Todorov's definitions of the terms "genre" and "mode," I consider naturalism to be a mode of realism, not a separate genre, although, in light of its frequent critical dismissal, I respect the various attempts to legitimize naturalism by considering it a genre.
36. By documentation, I refer to the inclusion of historical "documents" and references serving to reinforce the "realism" of the novel. As June Howard notes, naturalism, like realism, relies on the "crucial mimetic convention that narrative can and does refer to a 'real world' with a material existence somewhere outside the literary text. The names of both forms assert their privileged relationship to that assumed extraterrestrial world, invoking an ability to embody 'reality' or 'nature' as constitutive of the genre itself" (Howard 11).
37. One of the effects of this narrative gap is to reinforce the reader's disgust with the poor, thereby maintaining the status quo instead of reforming it. Amy Kaplan sees a similar problem with realism: rather than a "progressive force exposing the conditions of industrial society," realism is "a conservative force whose very act of exposure reveals its complicity with the structures of power" (*The Social Construction* 1).
38. Charles Child Walcutt rather idealistically suggests that although the naturalist protagonist is stripped of "will and ethical responsibility," that will is transferred to the reader, who "acknowledges his own will and responsibility even as he pities the helpless protagonist" (Walcutt 27). He doesn't mention how this transfer takes place, or how "acknowledging" one's responsibility leads to social reform.
39. Upton Sinclair, "polemical" and "muckraking" author of *The Jungle,* believed that confronting the middle-class reader with the horrors of working conditions in the slaughterhouse would shock them into action on behalf of the workers. But his readers mobilized instead over food purity, forcing Roosevelt to pass a Pure Food Bill. Sinclair was quick to see the irony in the situation: "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach" (qtd. in Howard 160).

40. In contrast, the middle class have the sensation of agency because they have secured a clean space protected from the outside world, satisfied other bodily needs (food and clothing) and thus prevent bodily needs from occupying their minds to the exclusion of other "objects" (from "determining" their thoughts and actions). Their genre is realism, in which the limitations of the environment intrude upon their lives but can be ordered and dealt with to some degree.
41. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud himself notes that he wishes to represent the psyche and its mechanisms, formerly "regarded as in some sort of way *qualitative,*" in a different light, "namely, as being *topographical*" (*Beyond* 46, qtd. in Kirby 85).
42. Citing Walter Benjamin's work on the transformation of space in the modern period, Kirby discusses the "compression, massification, and deindividualization of the space properly one's own," in which an "identity once founded on solitude in open space, privacy, and centrality relative to an unpopulated environment had to redefine itself in relation to masses of obtrusive, impinging 'others' who could be ignored only at one's own peril" (Kirby 74–75). These changes could be characterized, Kirby notes, as a "passage from a logic of 'identity'—encapsulation in an organically formed, internally homogenous field, figurable in terms of a circle or a sphere—to one of 'difference'—the rapidly shifting, unstable movement across a single line dividing the now-equalized territories of interior and exterior, self and other, here and there" (Kirby 76).
43. Fredric Jameson connects the development of the novel itself to these changes in society during this period of industrialization: the "new social material . . . no longer seems to offer any 'laws' or *mouers* or prescribed behavior patterns to describe" ("Goffman" 121, 123, qtd. in Howard 147).
44. Norris was apparently a follower of Cesare Lombroso's theories about criminal anthropology (biology as determinism). See Howard 86, 93 or William Stanton on scientific racism.
45. As David Sibley notes, "power is expressed in the monopolization of space and the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments"; moreover, differentiation between these classes "depends upon disgust" (Sibley ix; Stallybrass and White, qtd. in Sibley 19).
46. Usually seen as distinct from naturalism, literary realism, which purports to construct for the middle class reader a mimetic portrayal of a middle class individual struggling to work through various social and psychological conflicts, is not without its political aspects. As Nancy Armstrong has pointed out in her study of the connection between the novel and conduct manuals for women, the novel has always intended to instruct its readers in various kinds of ideology. More explicitly political, naturalism attempts to portray for the mainstream reader the suffering of the oppressed classes both in order to study society and to raise consciousness about social problems; however, in implicitly imposing social determinist philosophy on its "reality," as Perry Westbrook notes, naturalism is more romantic than it is realist (Westbrook 89).

47. One example of this is in aspects of naturalist style, such as repetition of words or characters, which expose the “absence of a controlling will” and makes us “lose confidence in our own singularity” (Mitchell xiii, 2, 21).
48. Wright condemned Crane’s *Maggie* as being a “coldly materialistic picture of poverty,” while admiring Conroy’s *The Disinherited* for portraying men and women attempting to reach “human dignity” (“Beyond Naturalism?” 48).
49. Wright at this point is still allied with the Communist Party, although as John Reilly states in the afterword to *Native Son,* he is struggling to integrate his vision of Negro life with “Party dogma.” After *Native Son,* he rejects the party’s “political discipline and thought control,” but still maintains a deeply radical philosophy.
50. According to Barbara Foley, the proletarian novel was “written in the ambience of the Communist-led cultural movement that arose and developed in the United States in the context of the Great Depression,” and is set apart from earlier leftist novels by its self-consciousness; its authors “were conscious participants in a literary movement that named itself ‘proletarian’ ” (*Radical* vii).
51. Although socialists had been active in the United States since the early 1920s, it was not until the organization of the periodical *New Masses* in 1926 that a concentrated appeal is made to reach the workers themselves.
52. Irving Howe refers to Gold’s prescriptions for leftist art when he describes the thirties as “a [period] in which talent betrayed itself to the wardens of authoritarianism”—a period, in short, which was “a waste” (“The Thirties” 28). At the First Writer’s Congress in 1935, there were open defenses of writing that did not fit Communist prescriptions (Bogardus 5–6). The split in the literary left had become pronounced by 1936, and many new writers began to move toward a more tolerant literary Marxism independent of the Party.
53. Olsen’s novel focuses on “familial relations, emotional deformation, and the developing consciousness of children,” in opposition to the masculine tenor of most proletarian fiction; the biggest departures from proletarian realism in *Yonnondio* occur in her portrayals of sexism and sexual violence (Coiner 165–66). Subverting the Party’s focus on workplace production and the male worker, Olsen details the work of reproduction, housekeeping, and childrearing, which she calls “the maintenance of life” (Coiner 181).
54. Wright’s condemnation of Zora Neale Hurston’s novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) as politically retrograde, addressing not the black masses but “a white audience whose chauvinistic tastes she knows how to satisfy” (“Review and Comment” 22) exemplifies these views. Interestingly, Hurston’s characterization of Wright’s *Uncle Tom’s Children* (1938) as failing to portray “the broader and more fundamental phases of Negro life instead of . . . the spectacular,—the favorite Negro theme” (Hurston 32) is a similar kind of criticism. His work is too concerned with racial violence (and thus with white racism); hers isn’t concerned enough (and thus has accommodated to white racism). James Baldwin picks up where Hurston leaves off, claiming that the protest novel, or the “report from the pit,” is an exercise in

victimology and voyeurism (Baldwin 22): it does not disturb the white reader but instead reinforces his or her expectations of the violent, meaningless lives of blacks.

55. Speaking from the midst of the Renaissance as its self-proclaimed critic (called by C.W.E. Bigsby the "black Matthew Arnold"), Locke notes that up until the inception of the Renaissance, "Negroes have been a race more in name than in fact . . . the chief bond between them has been that of a common condition rather than a common consciousness; a problem in common rather than a life in common. In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self-determination" (Christian, *Black Women* 37). I don't have the space here to provide more context on Locke and his role in the Renaissance, but I do recognize the dangers of relying on one male "spokesperson" (which I have done elsewhere in this book); here, though, I cite a different perspective on the Renaissance period: Hazel Carby notes that "after World War I and the migration," there is "no longer a unitary 'people' "; by the twenties, black artists seek "artistic autonomy" and separate themselves "from the task of writing for the uplifting of the race as a whole" (Carby *Reconstructing* 166).
56. Locke and other official architects of the Renaissance emptied out the term "New Negro" of its original radical meaning.
57. Bigsby neglects to analyze the gender politics of Harlem Renaissance and subsequent black art traditions, conceptualized and controlled by men, which might explain why poetry is the valorized mode of writing during the Renaissance at a time when most women writers are writing novels. See Christian *Black Women*.
58. One could also argue that the Renaissance's dependence on white patrons' interest reduced it to a "fad" that dissolved along with the fortunes of many upper class patrons in the crash.
59. Journals such as *Black World* (*Negro Digest*), *Ebony, New Masses,* and *The Modern Quarterly* are crucial in reconstructing the traditions of protest; these journals printed not only theories and debates on the nature of protest, black power, and the socialist movement, but also printed fiction and poetry by little-known protest writers.
60. Locke's complaint is derived from the idea that the best art is the most complex and the most removed from politics, an idea still at work in condemnations of educators' attempts to (re)position "minority" and women writers amidst the "classics" in literature courses. Indeed, the preoccupation of Renaissance aesthetes (and most literary critics) with making judgments and constructing standards of literature serves only to restrict its circulation and popularity. Many important literary works were lost for decades due to these same exclusionary rules; many working class writers are still unknown by most critics, as class has yet to arrive in the critical mainstream as a valid category of inquiry.
61. "There is, in brief, no '*The Negro,*' " Locke states ("Who and What is Negro" 37).

62. According to Robert Butler, between 1945 and the early 1960s, "Wright's reputation declined substantially and his place in African-American letters was challenged by a wide variety of younger critics and writers"; this was in part due to the opinion of these writers and critics that his talent deteriorated during this period, but also because "the years immediately following World War II saw a decline in naturalism as a literary mode in favor of less doctrinaire, more experimental fictional styles," as well as a "disenchantment with leftist politics" ("Introduction" xxx).
63. Beatrice Horne Royster says critics compliment Petry's "masculine style" but suggests that it may be her misogyny they like (Royster 186).
64. When asked how she felt about black writers being lumped together by race regardless of topic, Petry responded by insisting that collective identity was the cause of this, not necessarily white prejudice: "That's because we're all black . . . we do have a common theme. . . . We can't escape it." She also stated, "it's just an indication of the fact that black people are a minority in this country. If I lived a country where the majority of the people were black people, I would be an 'author'—and the white folks would be 'white authors'—if they were authors." Her stories "The New Mirror" and "Miss Muriel" as well as *Country Place* and even *The Narrows* indicate a different view, that she is an individual who often tires of being "lumped together," and that the collective experience of racism is not a required topic for her (O'Brien 157).
65. Olsen addressed the problem of the working-class writer directly in a 1991 MLA panel, "American Working Class Women's Writing." When Gloria Anzaldúa, also on the panel, confessed to feeling as if she had moved out of the working-class by virtue of her education, Olsen disagreed, claiming that Anzaldúa would always retain her working-class consciousness and culture even if her income and education seemed to remove her from them. This brings up the vexed issue of class boundaries, which Barbara Foley explains:

    Proletarians are people whose ultimate interest lies in their self-abolition as proletarians—that is, as inhabitants of a subject position—and in their becoming, in the words of the 'Internationale,' the 'human race.' Yet their immediate interest lies in acquiring a class consciousness: somewhat paradoxically, in order eventually to supersede their class position, they must first acknowledge and understand it. (*Radical* x)

CHAPTER 2

1. Rampersad notes that Wright "even pondered the possibility of a relationship between the most common ghetto obscenity ('mother——') in the mouths of young men and 'the incest complex' " (*Rite of Passage* 142).
2. Freud first used the term "primal scene" in his work on the "Wolf Man" case (1914), but he discussed the concept of a child witnessing a sexual experience without having the words to describe it, resulting in later neuroses, in a letter, written May 30, 1896, to Wilhelm Fliess; he more fully explored

this in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) and in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Later work on the impact of the primal scene disputes the idea that the sight of intercourse alone is damaging; see M. F. Hoyt, "On the psychology and psychopathology of primal-scene experience" in the *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 8.3 (July 1980), 311–35.

3. As a primal scene, a lynching need not take place in early childhood to have the psychic impact suggested by the original definition of the term. As Bergner argues, Fanon's work "opens the spatiotemporal window of subject formation beyond the family and infancy, since he does not confine crucial moments in the formation of racial identity to the oedipal dynamic, the psychoanalytic scene of sexual differentiation and language acquisition" (Bergner 2). Further, the French psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche's model of the primal scene, the "imperative and impossibility of translation . . . (what does she want from me?)" accommodates a culturally specific scene of lynching if lynching is understood to be warning of the deadly consequences for blacks of failing to translate the semiotics of whites' racial beliefs and practices (Zwarg 9).
4. In Johnny's anger toward his mother and his later mixed feelings toward the black woman who shouts "YOU BOYS!" at him, we see the development of his misogyny toward black women, none of whom could protect their sons from racist trauma.
5. While Rampersad's research indicates that Wright modeled this scenario on a case he encountered at the Wiltwyck school in which a much younger boy was taken from his family, he asserts that at least in Wright's mind the scenario he portrays was not out of the realm of possibility.
6. George further argues that "a link with this trauma exists to varied degrees of intensity for all individuals who identify themselves as African-American. . . . Any maintenance of an African-American racial identity, even a strategic and temporary one, occurs because racism continuously manifests the trauma that interpellates African-Americans into this racial identity" (7). Applied to the social world, this massive racial generalization seems risky, but I find it quite useful as part of a literary theory.
7. Of course, a display of tears is not necessarily an act of release and deferment. As Katherine Fishburn notes in discussing readers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* "Whether those tears shed by Stowe's audience were evidence of her readers' emotional self-indulgence or the first step to efficacious political action is a matter of new debate" (Fishburn 206).
8. I have borrowed the term "safety valve" from Frederick Douglass' *Narrative,* in which he describes how the one-week "holiday" given to slaves between Christmas and New Year's Day serves to "carry off the rebellious spirit of enslaved humanity. But for these, the slave would be forced up to the wildest desperation" (*Narrative* 55).
9. Many Party critics were concerned not only with Wright's insistence on individualism and black nationalism, but with "the absence of . . . Negro [characters] whose rebellion against oppression is expressed in constructive mass action rather than in individual violence" (Aaron "Richard Wright"

179). Moreover, critics were irked by the fact that no white characters, not even Communists, can understand Bigger and aid him in his plight, thus allowing "a sunrise . . . at the end," a happy ending (180).

10. I assume throughout that this novel would be painful for both white and black readers. Irving Howe describes the impact of *Native Son:* "a blow at the white man, the novel forced him to recognize himself as an oppressor. A blow at the black man, the novel forced him to recognize the cost of his submission" (Howe 63).
11. Although he expected "the worst," Wright's "direct and scathing language" in *Native Son* proved to be highly attractive to black and white readers in 1940 (and today). The novel's immense popularity was aided by the extremely favorable first reviews, which set the tone, and also by a "clever" publicity campaign; in advertisements, the novel was called "a black *American Tragedy"* and *"Grapes of Wrath* 1940," comparisons that contained its confrontational message by comparing it to acclaimed novels of "social significance" popular during the Great Depression. In his biography of Wright, Michel Fabre explains the novel's success as a result of social change due to the Depression, noting that "the public was finally ready to face the enormous problem [racism] which the economic crisis had revealed in all its urgency" (*Unfinished Quest* 178).
12. From her examination of the congressional investigation of the Klan in 1871, Hodes concludes that Klan members were the first to justify their acts of racist violence by creating the figurative equation between civil rights and rape, offering "white Southerners a new language of sexualized politics" (Hodes 404).
13. Fishbelly is later arrested on a false rape charge, and he realizes that "the white man's sheer prohibitions served to anchor the sense of his women in the consciousness of black men in a bizarre and distorted manner that could rarely ever be eradicated" (*Long Dream* 388).
14. For further discussion of this idea, see Sondra Guttman's "What Bigger Killed For: Rereading Violence against Women in *Native Son."* Guttman argues that Wright is attempting to communicate the price women pay for this diversion, but that this attempt is "frustrated by the extent to which the rape plot—which he has chosen as the means to communicate this idea—fabricates the rapes of white women while erasing the actual rapes of black women" (182). While I don't agree with her premise that *Native Son* is a "proletarian novel—a novel that aims to convince its readers of the inevitability of a Marxist revolution" (172), I do agree with her point, particularly as expressed in Bigger's reaction to seeing Bessie's body during the trial.
15. Jake's fantasy of himself as both victim and victimizer in the "rape" of Belgium likens his experience of discrimination to a racial "war." For a discussion of rape as American "ethnic cleansing," see Martha Hodes on the Klan's rape of black and working-class white women in "The Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics: White Women and Black Men in the South after the Civil War."

16. Paul Ricouer states that "a metaphor may be seen as a model for changing our way of looking at things, of perceiving the world" (Ricouer 150).
17. See Wayne Booth's essay "Metaphor as Rhetoric: The Problem of Evaluation," for a discussion of the idea that metaphors and symbols are responsible for human understanding of self and world.
18. Or, as Juliet Flower McCannell states, "You do not have figures without that figure's having been paid for with a repression" (McCannell 929).
19. The first definition of rape in the unabridged *Random House Dictionary* (1987), for example, is gender specific, while the second definition applies to "a person."
20. In *Uncle Tom's Children* in particular, "proletarian masculinism is significantly revised and critiqued," and "ties to folk culture and community, seen as the province of black women, serve not as the basis for accommodationism, but for a new radicalism that infuses class struggle with the history and experiences of African Americans in the rural South" (Higashida 400).
21. For other discussions of Wright's female characters, see Valerie Smith, "Alienation and Creativity in the Fiction of Richard Wright"; Calvin Hernton, *The Sexual Mountain and Black Women Writers;* Maria K. Mootry, "Bitches, Whores, and Woman Haters: Archetypes and Typologies in the Art of Richard Wright"; and Sherley Anne Williams, "Papa Dick and Sister-Woman: Reflections on Women in the Fiction of Richard Wright."
22. In opposition to Wright's statement about Bigger's "estrangement" from his culture, James Miller has claimed that Bigger "belongs to a specific speech community within the larger black community . . . the world of the black urban male . . . disfranchised working class" ("Bigger Thomas" 109).
23. Wright admired "free agency" and all that it entails; he admits that he encouraged the young boys he worked with at the South Side Boys Club to "prove to the bastards . . . that full-blooded life is harder and hotter than they suspect," in short, to commit criminal acts: "the police blotters of Chicago are testimony to how *much* they did," he says admiringly ("How 'Bigger' Was Born" 873, Wright's emphasis).
24. *Cesspool* was the original title of this novel.
25. While bourgeois readers (particularly white readers) might be more disgusted with (and unconsciously fearful of) the details of the black male body than might working-class readers, I believe Wright was deliberately stressing the unpleasantness of Jake's physicality here, not simply following the dictates of social realism.
26. The act of masturbation is highly coded here, unlike Bigger's and Jack's masturbation in the unexpurgated *Native Son*. Both are moments in which the reader is confronted with the sexual "deviancy" of the black male; Jake's masturbation, a private release of sexual and economic frustration, is less threatening than Bigger's, a public release of frustration with his social and political status.
27. This is similar to Frederick Douglass' descriptions in *My Bondage, My Freedom* of slaveholders who force their slaves to sing and chant; excessive silence can seem threatening because it indicates contemplation.

28. A prime example of an "offensive" protagonist is McTeague from Frank Norris' novel of the same name, although contemporary readers might view the titular protagonists of Stephen Crane's *Maggie* and even Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* as morally or physically offensive.
29. This coping strategy, sex with black women, serves to further reinforce Jake's inability to imagine union among blacks. Jake and his friends call a group of black women working at the post office "the cunts," and while they feel angry when white men look at these women "like they were bitches," they also condemn the women, saying, "Let a nigger woman make fifty dollars a week and she begins to think she's too good for her own race," despite the downtrodden appearances of these women (*Lawd Today!* 139). Jake and his friends claim that "the race ought to stick together," but their ability to function depends on that unity translating as women's silence and sexual availability.
30. Wright states this view of black culture in a frequently quoted passage from *Black Boy:* "how bare our tradition, how hollow our memories, how lacking we were in those intangible sentiments that bind man to man, and how shallow was even our despair" (43). Wright's purpose here is to reveal how white oppression has bankrupted black culture, but his internalization of white attitudes is visible within the critique.
31. According to Walker, Wright's personal philosophy was based on pessimistic social determinism: "Human nature and human society are determinants and, being what he is, man is merely a pawn caught between the worlds of necessity and freedom. He has no freedom of choice; he is born to suffering, despair, and death. He is alone against the odds of Nature, Chance, Fate, and the vicissitudes of life" ("Richard Wright" 199). Bigger is a "pawn" deformed by racism and poverty, Walker claims, and is thus "unconscious," unable to express his emotions and ideas. Apparently conflating Wright with *Native Son*'s narrator and protagonist, Walker suggests that Wright had to plumb his "own psyche and unconscious to reveal exactly how the inarticulate and illiterate Bigger Thomas felt" (*Daemonic Genius* 148).
32. See Michel Fabre, Barbara Foley, and Daniel Aaron for interpretations of Bigger's consciousness, the novel's ending, and the novel's politics. Valerie Smith covers both sets of issues in her article, as I do here, although her connection between the two does not address questions of genre.
33. The rat is also a figure for the black "criminal" stereotype, a savage animal who invades a space where he doesn't belong (the white woman's room), tries to escape, and then turns to fight; the implicit doubling here suggests that Bigger will confront that stereotype later in the book.
34. Vera too experiences the rat's entrance as a form of sexual assault: her response is to run into a corner, half-stoop and gather "the hem of her slip into both of her hands," holding it "tightly over her knees" as if shielding her genitals (*Native Son* 448). Bigger's attack on her (holding the rat over her until she faints) is another kind of assault; Vera constantly accuses Bigger of sexually tinged attacks on her, such as looking up her dress, treating her like a dog, and staring at her.

35. Blum's name marks him as Jewish, but Bigger considers him to be a representative of the white power structure, and Wright provides no evidence to the contrary.
36. The scene in the movie theater was edited heavily in the Book of the Month Club version so that Bigger neither masturbates nor sees Mary Dalton in the newsreel. Additionally, Bigger's contact with Mary after he gets the job as the Dalton's chauffeur is almost entirely desexualized. Clearly, Wright and his editors knew that this was the most threatening aspect of this book—more threatening than the murder of Mary or the rape and murder of Bessie. The Library of America edition of *Native Son,* published in 1991, claims to be unexpurgated, but its editor, Arnold Rampersad, admitted at a session of the 1991 Modern Language Association that (again) certain passages had to be deleted in order to make Wright's novels marketable to a broader audience. See Noah Griffin's review of the new edition in *Crisis* and Louis Menand's review, "The Hammer and the Nail," in *The New Yorker*.
37. Nancy Gager and Cathleen Shurr claim that "probably the single most used cry of rapist to victim is 'you know you want it,"' . . . and afterward, 'there now, you really enjoyed it, didn't you?' " (qtd. in Catherine MacKinnon 653).
38. During Bigger's trial, the prosecutor will claim that Bigger masturbated during, not before, the newsreel—*while* he watched the images of Mary. This indicates that he is not a subject-viewer, as he himself is being watched and stereotyped by another viewer, the theater's manager. Furthermore, his actions are falsified by the prosecutor so that they fit the stereotype of deviant and violent black male sexuality.
39. Katherine Fishburn suggests that in this scene, Bigger's body recalls the "bodily knowledge of his slave ancestors," and that the embodiment of slaves "paradoxically freed the slave narrators to critique the very foundations of liberal humanism" (207). Furthermore, she argues convincingly that Wright, having been influenced "himself by the materialism central to Marxist thought," reflects in his novels the "insight of the slave narratives that embodiment is not a curse to overcome, but is rather the very state that makes possible human be-ing itself," and that in portraying a fully embodied character, Wright is "doing battle with the philosophical and legal underpinnings of white American society" (Fishburn 203–04).
40. The image of the rat with which Wright begins the novel takes on added significance in this scene: Bigger is now the symbolic equivalent of the defiant rat invading the home of the oppressor.
41. The fact that Mary's more sexually consensual actions were edited out of the Book of the Month Club version of the novel reveal the degree to which the public insists upon believing that sexual advances by black men toward white women are by definition "unwanted." Even in a novel that explicitly examines and critiques the rapist stereotype, even in the scene in which Bigger is revealed *not* to have raped Mary, Bigger's relations with Mary must remain those of a rapist.
42. Wright is describing how "being free of the Dixie environment" (as well as making contact with the "labor movement and its ideology") allowed him

to understand himself and his place in society. Wright's insistence on separation from "home" (and thus black women) in order to achieve personal enlightenment is replicated in Bigger.

43. Barbara Johnson's essay "The Re(a)d and the Black" states that Wright "consistently sees the black woman as the reader his writing must face." Johnson claims that Wright kills Bessie off because she's the "black female reader whose reading cannot be mastered by the writer." Perhaps in order to grant some kind of status to *Native Son*'s black women, one that I believe is nonexistent, Johnson conflates Wright with Bigger: Bessie is threatening to Bigger, and thus to Wright. Yet there is little in the novel to indicate that *Wright* felt his "story" was "out of his control" enough to warrant a symbolic warning to the black female reader.
44. The weakness of Bessie's "no" contrasts with the evidence of the prosecutor, who "knows" Bessie was raped, despite what must be a lack of physical evidence, because Bigger is, by definition, a rapist.
45. The full passage states that Wright's "writer's imagination saw no obstacles to combining in one character two types of people—the murderer who kills as an act of creation and the one who kills in response to a social determinism . . . Bigger's murder of Bessie marked a new stage in Wright's literary evolution: everything that he had learned from his naturalist models . . . had prevented him from allowing his characters to give into these demonic temptations . . . " (Fabre *The Unfinished Quest* 171).
46. Bigger has had a brief chance to enjoy another "private" space, the chauffeur's room at the Dalton's; "a room all to himself," he thinks happily, not knowing that he will have only a few moments to enjoy it before his deadly involvement with Jan and Mary (*Native Son* 500).
47. As Smethurst points out, the difference in skin color between the "black" Buddy and the "brown-skinned" Vera are subtle reminders to the reader that "repressed behind the hysterical fear of miscegenation is a massive number of often coercive sexual couplings between white slave masters and black slave women" (Smethurst 36).

CHAPTER 3

1. A novel like Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces* make clear the extent to which the "whore" stereotype damages black women: in this novel, it is white men who rape young black girls. Many black women writers also worked to redirect the "rapacious male" stereotype toward its more accurate target, the white man. Harriet Jacobs's autobiography, for example, exposes the sexual harassment sustained by the slave woman, revealing that promiscuity was forced onto black women. See Hazel Carby's discussion of black women writers' "denial of desire and . . . repression of sexuality" in " 'It Jus Be's Dat Way Sometime': The Sexual Politics of Women's Blues" (240).
2. While I claim that most black female writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were reticent on the subject of sexuality, I realize both

that there are exceptions to this claim and that white women writers too were reluctant to allow their female protagonists any kind of active sexuality (and were attacked if they did so, as was Kate Chopin in reviews of *The Awakening*). Hortense Spillers has noted the dearth of texts by black women on the subject of their sexuality; see "Interstices" (153). For further discussion of the topic of black women writers' portrayals of black female sexuality, see Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood;* Pamela E. Barnett, " 'My Picture of You Is, After All, the True Helga Crane': Portraiture and Identity in Nella Larsen's Quicksand"; and Deborah McDowell's "Introduction" to *Quicksand* and *Passing*.

3. Very few politically active black female characters are unmarried in novels of this time period, and none of those is presented as sexual (even Candace, the Ethiopian queen of Hopkins' *Of One Blood,* is a virgin awaiting her king), revealing authors' adherence to the conventional belief that marriage protects women from sexual danger. Witness Janie Crawford's grandmother's belief in the iron-clad reputation that a "good marriage" provides to a black woman: Nanny claims that, once married, Janie will no longer be in danger of rape by a white man.
4. The term "outdoors" is borrowed from Toni Morrison. As Morrison notes, the fear of being "outdoors" is, for the disenfranchised black family she describes in *The Bluest Eye,* "the real terror of life . . . if you are outdoors, there is no place to go" (17–18).
5. While Larsen's novel does include an attention to class (Helga's marriage to a rural preacher effectively places her in the working class, which only increases her domestic burdens), I would argue that the economic oppression is not a central issue in this novel.
6. Petry's successful career contributed to her feeling of being a specimen (a black woman writer); her discomfort with this position led to her withdrawal from the literary world. Her first publication, "On Saturday the Siren Sounds at Noon," in *The Crisis* (1943), led quickly to success and fame: she won the Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship Award and used it to write the best-selling *The Street*. Her reaction: "I was shocked that suddenly my world was no longer my own. I was a black woman at a point in time when being a writer was not usual, and I was besieged. Everyone wanted a part of me. That was when I ran, back home to Connecticut. I stopped giving interviews. I unlisted my phone" (Fein B2).
7. "Race," according to Henry Louis Gates, has come to stand for "a trope of ultimate, irreducible differences between cultures," a trope that, in a white dominated society, has always meant different from whites (5). Moreover, "color" has come to mean black, so that references to race relations are couched in "black" and "white" terms and "minorities" is often used synonymously with "blacks."
8. The plot of "The New Mirror" focuses on the way stereotypes paralyze individual action. The narrator speculates that her father has refused to replace his missing teeth because "one of the images of the black man that the white man carries around with him is of white teeth flashing in a black

and grinning face." So her father has gone "toothless to destroy that image," but he has now realized that "there is toothless old Uncle Tom, and my old black mammy with her head rag is toothless, too, and without teeth my father fitted *that* image of the black man, didn't he? So he was damned either way, . . . and so was I." While the narrator vows to stop worrying about fighting or conforming to stereotype, she ultimately cannot do so ("New Mirror" 87).

9. Shelby Steele has voiced a similar concern: "the stereotype of the lazy black SOB is common, and the fear is profound that I'll be judged by that stereotype. They will judge our race by him—and they'll overlook me, quietly sitting on that bus grading papers" (Kirp 27).
10. Concurring with Hortense Spillers' analysis, Pamela Barnett argues in her study of Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* that "there is no mode of representation of any legitimate space within society in which black women's sexuality can be expressed" because the only available representations at that time were "racist depictions of primitive sexuality and reactionary portraits of desexualized bourgeois black women" (Barnett 580). My point is not only that Petry challenged both of these representations but that she did so in such a way that her readers have not commented on it. Critics such as Mary Helen Washington, Beatrice Royster, and Thelma Shinn have not recognized Petry's support for female sexual expression, almost replicating traditional views of black female sexual identity in their comments on Petry's characters Min and Mamie: "sexually liberated and aggressive" and therefore "vicious," "degenerate," and "debase[d]" (Royster 186–87); "powerless as well as amoral" (Washington 301); and even "passive" victims of the feminine mystique (Shinn 114).
11. Link recalls Abbie telling him that "it behooved all persons of color to take advantage of the free education now available to everybody . . . she said it particularly behooved Link Williams, *orphan,* adopted out of the goodness of the Major's heart . . . and her heart, to go to school, every day, and learn, and learn, and learn, so that he would stand at the head of his class, in everything, so that he would be a credit to The Race" (141).
12. I agree with Michael Barry that Link's resentment of "an independent woman" is due to "insecurities largely affected by racism": his adoptive mother and elementary school teacher, women in positions of independence and authority, both enforce upon Link various forms of racism (148). I would suggest though that patriarchy as taught to Link by Bill Hod and the other bar workers and patrons provides him with a socially acceptable antidote.
13. Along with Bernard Bell, Barry describes the role chance or "radical contingency" plays in the novel as a telling contrast to "radical determinism" (Barry 147). While Petry certainly presents a far less determined world in *The Narrows* than in *The Street,* I would agree in the end with Link that his false rape charge and murder at the hands of white "avengers" is no chance occurrence.
14. Angela Davis notes that "stories about police assaults on Black women—rape victims sometimes suffering a second rape—are heard too frequently to be dismissed as aberrations" (173).

15. Petry has written another story in which the "home" of a black woman is unprotected: In "Miss Muriel," Aunt Sophronia is pursued even in her own backyard by men in the town who insist on viewing her as available, despite her family's attempt to keep her sheltered.
16. The day that her husband, the Major, is brought home by Bill Hod, the owner of the bar across the street, Abbie is ashamed at what she believes to be the Major's drunkenness and refuses to listen to Hod's claim that the Major is sick. More concerned with her reputation than with the state of her husband's health, she worries that "people would laugh at her. . . . The colored president of the white WCTU . . . and her husband so drunk he couldn't stand up . . . well, he's colored. Ha-ha, ha-ha, ha-ha" (*Narrows* 30). She places her husband in a chair in the parlor, spreading "newspapers all around the chair, thinking, 'My carpet, my beautiful new carpet" (29). Concerned about the Major "soiling" her bourgeois home and reputation, Abbie allows him to sit in the chair all day, until finally her friend Frances comes over and discovers that he's had a stroke. The major dies the next evening; his last words are "The house—Abbie—the house," which indicates his understanding of the house's importance for Abbie, and perhaps his realization that the house is not a homeplace.
17. As Giles Oakley explains, "for those who tried to maintain an ordered goodness, a recognized accepted shape of action in life that would bring freedom at least in death, [the blues] was **the devil's music**" (i, his emphasis).
18. While there were dangers to this sexually free blues persona and the "blue" lyrics of their songs, which could combine to "become a burlesque of African-American sexuality," this kind of exploitation typically resulted from the white music industry's manipulation of the singers and the recordings (Barlow 142).
19. Although blues music was popular to some extent with whites in its early years, this was due primarily to the white-controlled record industry, which "liked to record white performers' 'cover' versions of popular blues to entice the white public to buy the records and to 'upgrade' the music." The industry was thus able to "bring African-American music more into line with European musical conventions, while superimposing on it a veneer of middle-class Anglo-American respectability" (Barlow 124).
20. Ma Rainey considered her physical appearance as important as her voice: her "stage appearance was legendary," and she was "a flamboyant dresser" who wore outrageous costumes and expensive jewelry to shows (Barlow 157).
21. While it is true that self-objectification is inherent in the entertainment business and is thus not necessarily peculiar to one race or gender, I would argue that the historical context here makes the blues singer's performance of allure more risky than for a white male, for example.
22. Mary Helen Washington's account of Petry's women characters reveals the effects of this narrative circumscription. Washington (like Petry's protagonist Lutie) omits any consideration of Min; she also claims that Mamie is "powerless as well as amoral" because she is only seen by the reader "as framed in

her husband's gaze" (Washington 300-01). This isn't accurate, since readers are introduced to Mamie's point of view in the last quarter of the novel; more importantly, though, it reveals that Washington's reading is controlled by the viewpoints of the protagonists.

23. Yet Petry locates some elements of hooks's "homeplace" in working-class culture: the Last Chance and the Junto, the neighborhood bars of both novels. While Petry idealizes neither bar (particularly the Junto), she describes community and recognition as the reasons that some young women frequent the bar and grill: "they were hungry for the sight and sound of other young people and . . . the creeping silence that could be heard under the blaring radios, under the drunken quarrels in the hall bedrooms, was no longer bearable" (*Street* 144). At the Junto, for example, the white waiters treat black and white customers alike with respect, and the bar is filled with "the sound of laughter, the hum of talk, the sight of people and brilliant lights, the sparkle of the big mirror, the rhythmic music from the juke-box" (145). The big mirror in the Junto "pushed the world of other people's kitchen sinks back where it belonged and destroyed the existence of dirty streets and small shadowed rooms" (146). With this description, the Junto takes on the definition of communal spirit and affirmation; it helps its customers "believe in themselves again" (147).
24. Lutie is not explicitly conscious of the need for community; she seeks a husband because marriage to "a man who had a good job" is "the only other way of getting out" of the street (*Street* 82).
25. Abbie believes Bill Hod to be the devil: "she was genuinely surprised that his hair should lie so flat—she had somehow convinced herself that there would be horns on his head" (*Narrows* 2).
26. Abbie's grief over her husband sends her into a depression so deep that for three months she forgets about her eight-year-old adopted son Link, who eventually goes across the street and asks Bill Hod for food and shelter. When Abbie emerges and realizes that Link is living at the Last Chance, Bill's bar, she goes over to regain custody. Having found a "homeplace" for the first time in his life, Link doesn't want to leave, and Abbie has to pull him out from behind the bar. She is surprised to find that "the floor behind the bar in The Last Chance was dustfree, dirtfree" (*Narrows* 3). Besides providing the reader with a clue that Bill Hod isn't the sloven Abbie believes him to be, the fact that Bill Hod is a good housekeeper and a decent father-substitute reveals, at least to the reader, that Abbie's identity and ideology are themselves unstable, based on a class bias that associates African American working-class culture with dirt.
27. The blues have "always tended to be associated with roughness and a lack of 'class' " by middle-class and educated blacks (Oakley 110), a reminder of the slave and rural folk culture from which the music emerged and of the underworld culture in which it thrived. Similarly, people who frequented root doctors were looked on as "primitive and uneducated" and their beliefs to be "a matter for some shame and a throwback to the days of servitude"

(Oliver 167, 156); for example, in each of his autobiographies (specifically, in his discussion of the root Sandy gives him), Frederick Douglass marks conjure as part of a primitive, heathen African culture inferior to Western culture.

28. For another essay that treats the use of conjure in African American literature, see Helen Jaskoski, "Power Unequal to Man: The Significance of Conjure in Works by Five Afro-American Authors."
29. Johnny repents his rape of his wife, which complicates the reader's tendency to feel that Glory "deserves" to be raped. Because her characters in this novel are white, Petry can explore Glory's sexual behavior and subsequent victimization without worrying that she will damage the public image of black women; she is also free to explore a modernist narrative structure described by Hilary Holladay as follows: "every history is part of a larger fiction, and every author is a character in another author's story. . . . the reality of the whole town changes, depending on one's perspective and mood at the moment" (Holladay 31). However, *Country Place* has long been excluded from the "black canon" precisely because it is about whites. Ann DuCille has developed these ideas further in "Canon Fodder: Rape and Resistance in 'Non-Traditional' Texts of the 1940's."
30. According to Paul Oliver, "the first vocal recording to employ a blues form" was "Crazy Blues" sung by Mamie Smith, recorded August 10, 1920 (Oliver 21).
31. Min's and Mamie's status as working women is signified immediately to Lutie and Abbie by their bunions, physical evidence of long hours on their feet and ill-fitting shoes. Not surprisingly, Lutie doesn't have bunions, which reveals the depth of her refusal to accept a working-class identity.
32. Further complicating the reader's identification strategies, Petry depicts Lutie as having natural talent as a blues singer; this makes it less easy for the reader to blame Lutie's problems on her disdain for working-class culture. In a decidedly Algeresque moment, Lutie is "discovered" singing to herself at the neighborhood bar by a blues musician, Boots Smith, who offers her first a tryout, and after the tryout, a job. Boots plans to extort sex from Lutie as payment for the job, but Lutie is "certain" she can "put him off deftly, neatly, and continue to do it until she sign[s] a contract" (*Street* 227). She believes, in other words, that she can engage with the working-class world but escape its power dynamics and immorality. However, her hopes are crushed by Junto, the white owner of the bar and the blues club as well as Boots' boss. After spotting Lutie singing at the bar, Junto decides that Lutie will become his mistress in exchange for being paid to sing. When Lutie rejects this offer, and goes to an agent for another tryout, she gets the same line. In response, she throws an inkwell at the white agent, thinking, "this is the superior race" (322). It is not only Lutie's middle-class morality that determines her actions here, but also the economic power of white men; in an inversion of the Alger myth, Lutie's talent and beauty do not enable her to transcend her conditions, but rather lead to the destruction of her already meager life.

33. A study by Kathy Peiss indicates that this lack of shame was not uncommon among working class women, many of whom believed that "respectability was not predicated on chastity" (163).
34. Conjure or voodoo is practiced in the United States today, although its specific techniques vary from place to place. As Zora Neale Hurston notes, "nobody knows for sure how many thousands in America are warmed by the fire of hoodoo, because the worship is bound in secrecy. It is not the accepted theology of the Nation and so believers conceal their faith. . . . Nobody can say where it begins or ends. Mouths don't empty themselves unless the ears are sympathetic and knowing" (185). For information on conjure or voodoo, see Hurston, *Mules and Men;* Wilbur Watson, *Black Folk Medicine;* Harry Middleton Hyatt, *Hoodoo-Conjuration-Witchcraft-Rootwork;* Newbell Niles Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*.
35. Jones compares Min's conversation to a "tortuously winding path that continually turned back on itself, disappeared in impenetrable thickets, to emerge farther on at a sharp angle having no apparent relation to its original starting point" (*Street* 295). As readers, we never experience this kind of conversation first-hand, which might lead us to assume that Jones *causes* Min to speak this way by not listening.
36. Earlier in the novel, the nighttime version of Dumble Street is described as "all light and shadow, all murmur of voices and ripple of laughter" (*Narrows* 126). This description gives Dumble Street a beauty exemplified by its communal nature, by the interactions of the people who live on it. Similarly, Mamie could be said to practice intersubjectivity, seen in her blues singing and in her strong connections with her culture and community.
37. Bessie Smith, too, broke down boundaries through combining elements of apparently competing cultural practices. Although "many churchgoers condemned the blues as sinful," the blues and gospel are similar styles, and Bessie drew on this similarity in her performances: she "did the same thing on stage" as "people like Billy Graham" and could "bring about mass hypnotism" at her performances (Oakley 116).
38. Petry insists on Mamie's subjectivity even as she is being objectified: Al, the Treadway chauffeur, sees "a curvy colored wench" (Mamie) on Dumble Street, and calls to her to come over. She turns and smiles "straight at him" but shakes her head, leaving Al to think "I'da paid good money for a piece of that" (215). Instead of ending the scene here, from Al's perspective, Petry shifts to "Mrs. Mamie Powther," who says to herself, "wonder where that big one came from," a smile playing around her mouth and in her eyes. Petry highlights both Mamie's status as wife and her freedom to be interested in another man's attentions to her.
39. Powther thinks this song is "a spiritual," but Mamie "made it sound like the kind of song they banned on the radio" (*Narrows* 209). While gospel and blues are musically related, I contend that Mamie's reinterpretation of a religious song about the journey to heaven as a blues song about a woman's (sexual) freedom is characteristic of her sexual identity.

40. Yet another part of Lutie's past reminds her that the isolation of the suburbs will not fulfill her dreams: "Granny was always home . . . it gave her a sense of security . . . When there was no one in a house with you, it took on a strange emptiness" (*Street* 404).
41. Having tried hard to create the perfect home and to represent her race, Abbie is puzzled by her losses, and until the end of the novel, she blames herself for her husband's death and for her "loss" of Link to Bill Hod: "if she hadn't been chief witness against herself, condemning herself to death . . . she wouldn't have lost Link" (*Narrows* 4). In other words, her reaction to her husband's death was excessive (smacking of "funkiness") to the point of obscuring her other family responsibilities, and it should have been controlled.
42. Another factor in Link's death is Abbie's insistence on maintaining a distance between herself and Mamie, which destroys any connection to Abbie and Link that might have led Mamie to intervene in Camilla's jealous rage at the end of the novel. In Bill Hod's bar one day, Mamie realizes that a drunken Camilla has misinterpreted a comment by Weak Knees and, as a result, believes that Link is in love with Mamie. When Camilla's "face crumples," Mamie sees that "she's in love with him" and thinks, "I ought to say something" to clear up the error (*Narrows* 301–02). After softly attempting to call to Camilla, who doesn't hear her, she gives up, deciding "aw, she's white. It's no skin off my back" (303–04). As a direct result, Camilla decides to get her revenge by accusing Link of rape and setting in motion the events that lead to his death. A stronger bond with Abbie and thus with Link might have prompted Mamie to try harder to get Camilla's attention.
43. What makes Abbie's acceptance of JC even more subversive to Abbie's standards of decency are the strong hints Petry plants in the text indicating that JC is not Powther's son, but Bill Hod's. When Abbie first meets JC, she is "certain she'd seen the little boy somewhere" (*Narrows* 13). Later, Mamie thinks to herself that "Crunch is . . . awful good to JC. I hope she never finds out Bill comes over here so much" (294). I suggest that Mamie links her affair with Bill to JC's relationship with Abbie because if Abbie finds out that Mamie is having an affair with Bill, she might realize why JC looks so familiar.
44. Another determining force is the media. In *The Narrows,* Petry portrays a newspaper owner manipulating public opinion and fanning the flames of race hatred by publishing sensationalized photos and stories; she also includes a meditation on the role of a photographer who photographs human misery without ever considering his responsibility to come to the aid of his subjects. Moreover, she allows her characters to see this manipulation and comment on it: as Miss Doris notes, "that twocent newspaper give it the last big push . . . that picture were pure murder, and this white folks twocent newspaper ought to be took out and burned . . . " (*Narrows* 414). Thus Petry encourages her readers to be more aware of the forces that determine their lives.

CHAPTER 4

1. Catherine Beecher's *Treatise* on housekeeping has been called "revolutionary" in its approach both to modern architecture and to domestic science; she revised the "masculine idea of the home," in which it was "a retreat from the cares of the world, a place to be at ease," to the "feminine idea," in which the home was "dynamic," having "to do with ease, but also with work" (159–61). Despite these new ideas, as Witold Rybczynski notes, Beecher's book is fundamentally conservative regarding gender roles.
2. See Phyllis Palmer for an explanation of the ways that domestic work is linked to bodies, and for more information on the ways that the "job description" of the homemaker changed between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For further discussion of the origins of bourgeois ideas of privacy, domesticity, and childrearing, see Rybczynski.
3. While I realize that Mary Douglas' "argument about purification and defilement needs to be qualified in regard to time and place," I agree with David Sibley, who points out "that it has wider application than she recognized" (Sibley 38).
4. I am using the word "bourgeois" in what John Lukács would argue is its strictest meaning: derived from the word meaning "city-dwellers," it pertains to a philosophy of "freedom," "permanent residence," and "security" (620). This very definition is directly related to conceptions of the home and the family, as mentioned in Chapter 1.
5. This was the end stage of a social transformation that Eli Zaretsky describes as "proletarianization," the creation of wage laborers. Because the newly emerging proletarian (including women and children) was no longer producing goods at home, "a new form of the family among the masses of people," emerged, "one separated off from the sphere of goods production" (Zaretsky 61). Family relations "lost their economic meaning," and the family "became the realm of the personal and the sexual" (Foreman 74). Meanwhile, the division of labor was threatened as all members of the family did roughly the same kinds of work, which led to the intervention of reformers whose goal was to "save the family" by keeping wives and children out of factories (Zaretsky 62). As these reforms took hold and child labor was eliminated, "women and children lost the central place they had occupied in the early proletariat," and the "housewife emerged" (Zaretsky 64). Eventually, "the ability of the worker to keep his wife at home became a sign of working-class strength, of prosperity" (Foreman 92).
6. This redefinition of social space and of family life was an effort begun by reformers and codified by sociologists, yet the opposition of "female, domestic, private, often suburban worlds and male, productive, public, usually urban worlds does not really describe the lives of many people." As Susan Saegert notes, the "segregation of public and private, male and female domains appears strongest as a guiding fiction, yet one that finds its way into public policy and planning and into women's and men's sense of who they are" (Saegert S111).

7. While "petty bourgeois individualism" argued that "one's work should be an expression of oneself rather than just a means to survival," working-class individuals would consider themselves "represented" by holding any job at all (Zaretsky 58).
8. Rather than provide jobs for women, New Deal relief programs kept women "out of competition for jobs traditionally thought of as men's" and "attached to the home" by "stressing women's connection with housekeeping" (Palmer 101). "In the midst of the Depression, programs that taught women how to make homes healthier and more cheerful were justified on the grounds that better-skilled housewives would presumably have higher job morale and improved ability to care for families harmed by business failures and unserved by an overstretched government" (Palmer 101). For the woman who did go to work outside the home, returning to "her 'natural' sphere came during the Great Depression to be a goal, the achievement of which would be a sign of the return of 'good times' " (McElvaine 184).
9. Mary Douglas notes that "danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable. The person who must pass from one to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others . . . To have been in the margins is to have been in contact with danger, to have been at a source of power" (Douglas 96–97). Joel Kovel explains that the "root symbol between the idea of dirt" and blackness is feces (Kovel 87).
10. The need "to create order and hierarchy" through urban and social reform began, in fact, because people of different genders, races, and classes "coexisted in close physical proximity" in the big cities at mid-nineteenth century (*Women in Public* 74–75).
11. For farmers and some of the urban poor, the Depression began long before 1929; during the years after World War I, the farmer was already in an "economic trap from which he could not escape" and the Crash simply made his situation even more intolerable (Salzman 13). For the urban poor, the Great Depression was only a worsening of conditions they had been experiencing since the less severe depression of 1920–21. See Robert McElvaine, *The Great Depression*. *Yonnondio* opens in the early twenties in just such economic misery, but it was conceived of as a novel "from the thirties" and in fact was intended to extend through the Depression.
12. Rosenfelt claims that Olsen's "consciousness, vision and choice of subject are rooted in . . . the communist Old Left of the 1930's and the tradition of radical political thought and action"; however, she also argues that one reason Olsen didn't finish the novel could be that the "dominant tenets of proletarian realism also required a structure, scope, resolution and political explicitness in some ways at odds with the particular nature of her developing craft" (Rosenfelt 218, 232). She clearly disagrees with Constance Coiner's contention that Party sexism explains Tillie Olsen's "difficulties" with *Yonnondio.* I agree that Olsen confronted the Party's lack of attention to domestic labor and that she appears to have ignored many of proletarian realism's tenets.

13. Most of those writing about women and communism agree with Hayden that Marx left housekeeping out of his economic analysis by placing it in the category of nonproductive labor and that most Marxists accepted Engels's conflation of the categories of class and gender that "falsely removed by a sleight of hand the necessity of making a specific analysis of the relation between the two" (Foreman 29). As Ann Foreman points out, by stripping the family of "economic meaning," Lukács and Marx effectively privatized it all over again, leaving it within the "realm of the personal and the sexual, emotions that were considered subjective and not susceptible to intellectual analysis" (Foreman 74). Yet Deborah Rosenfelt argues against this perspective on Marxism and women, pointing out that "in no other segment of American society at that time were there such extensive discussions about the sources of women's oppression" and that "housework did receive a substantial amount of critical attention" (Rosenfelt 242). See Constance Coiner (164–65) for further discussion.
14. Sexuality as metaphor for social proximity is the basis of Jim Crow; the Reconstruction-era fear of miscegenation and rape involves the same issues of purity and contamination as does the fear of interclass mixing.
15. Later, when the Holbrooks have moved to the city slums, Mazie reveals that her mother has instructed her about sexual danger: "My momma don't let me go down by the river," she tells her friend Annamae. "She says bad people's there that hurts girls" (*Yonnondio* 117).
16. Mary Douglass discusses Sartre's essay on viscosity, which "repels" because it is neither liquid nor solid, but something that sticks, that "attacks the boundary between myself and it"; the spit Mazie contacts, as well as Sheen's jelly-like face, is perceived of as "matter out of place" and therefore "unclean" (Douglas 38–40).
17. Jim batters Anna, who in turn batters her children; Anna hits the kids "in a blind rage, as if it were some devil she was exorcising" (7). Anna realizes that her violent moods are caused by a "devil" within her; she says to herself, "Somethin just seems to get into me when I have something to hit" (*Yonnondio* 7). See Constance Coiner's discussion of this circle of violence.
18. While her father is responsible for abusing Mazie and her mother, he also recognizes her need for comfort and protection, if only subconsciously: finding Mazie in the street after her mother suffers a miscarriage, he says, "Kiss Poppa and we'll go home and I'll make a *farm* and warm you, a nice fire, and you can fall asleep on daddy's lap" (*Yonnondio* 78, my emphasis). Jim's unconscious use of the word "farm" instead of "fire" reveals his own awareness of the farm as a safe, pure space for his children, one he cannot provide any longer.
19. Ben's similar experience of the heat is to imagine that he's one of the chicks that was burned to death in the stove during that winter on the farm (see *Yonnondio* 11); he feels like he is "in the stove black all around like something burned" (112).
20. For a deeper analysis of the treatment of Erina, see disability theory, especially Lennard Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*.

21. This type of institutional "support" was just one of the many "private and public institutions" that arose over time to "mediate between capitalism and the family, like banks, schools, insurance, welfare, even unions" (Zaretsky 62).
22. Mazie subconsciously blames her mother's pregnancy for her own suffering during the winter, focusing in particular on the effects of this "poisoning" of the brain: when she is first allowed outside in the spring, she suddenly begins to hit her brother Will, "hard, ferocious," and cries, "Wouldja live in a room all breath, all winter breath?" (43). Though vented on her brother, her anger is directed at her mother, whose pregnancy she views a form of contamination of the family. This anger and disgust is visible in her description of the springtime "mother nature" as a battered, deformed female body: "Ugly and ugly the earth. . . . scabs of old leaves that like a bruise hid the violets underneath. Trees fat with oily buds, and the swollen breasts of prairie. Ugh" (43). When Mazie turns "her eyes to the sky for oblivion," she sees "bellies, swollen bellies, black and corpse gray, puffing out baggier and baggier, cloud belly" (43). After her experience during the winter, Mazie sees both her pregnant mother and the "pregnant" earth as "monstrous," as hideously swollen and still swelling, producing not life (the violets) but death (signaled by the word "corpse," a reminder of the burned chicks). The approaching birth of a younger sibling is not a joyous occasion for Mazie (or Anna), but a further infringement on her ability to survive.
23. The doctor tells Jim "everything she needs, but not how to get it (cry from a million swollen throats)"; this is a perfect example of how middle-class reformers intervened into the lives of the working class (*Yonnondio* 78).
24. David Sibley's book displays a picture of a very similar (perhaps the identical) poster. The poster, from the "Health and Cleanliness Council, London," ca. 1920, is captioned "Where there's Dirt there's Danger," and it shows four scenes. The first displays a baby near a fly-infested trash can; its heading reads "Dirt brings Flies, Flies bring Disease." The next scene warns "Cleanliness means Health. Dirt means Suffering," and depicts a crippled boy next to a healthy one. The third frame reads "The Result of Cleanliness is Happiness" and shows a pretty, smiling little girl dancing. The fourth, showing an obviously angry and bitter man leaving his home, his slovenly wife looking on anxiously, reads "The result of Dirt is Misery" (Sibley 20).
25. As Levitas notes, Marxists have often harshly criticized utopianism, which they have "understood as the construction of blueprints of a future society that are incapable of realization," and "the charge of utopianism has also been levelled at Marxism by its opponents, using a similar definition" (35). In contrast, Levitas argues that utopianism is a healthy part of human consciousness. Furthermore, Vincent Geoghegan suggests that "art has the power to create alternatives to the present" and is therefore "one of the most potent forms of imagination" (105).
26. The only "memory" of the book besides Mazie's flashbacks, Anna recalls "her grandmother bending in . . . twilight over lit candles chanting in an unknown

tongue, white bread on the table over a shining white tablecloth and red wine" (27).

27. Olsen recognizes the need for privacy by showing Mazie's reaction to living in such cramped quarters: " 'I dont *have* no place. If I'd kept [my homemade perfume] in the bedroom Jimmie woulda been into it, or maybe Will.' Violently: '*Why dont I* have *no place?*' Anna says to herself, 'Maybe I can make a place for you on a shelf somewhere soon as I get some time. Dont see why not' " (123, emphasis in the original).
28. In four sections of the novel, Olsen uses narrative intrusion to dispel the romanticizing of various scenes.
29. This reference to "hands" is an echo of Engels's 1844 description of workers as not "heads" but "hands," not *Homo cogitans* but *Homo laborans;* Olsen's novel, however, argues against this exclusive emphasis on the body in insisting on her characters' "self-perception[s] as . . . integrated, autonomous agent[s]" (Gagnier 142).
30. Zaretsky also claims that "proletarianization created a new form of the family among the masses of people" by separating it "off from the sphere of goods production": the "family became the major sphere of society in which the [working class] individual could be foremost—it was the only space that proletarians 'owned' " (Zaretsky 61).
31. Harris maintains that religion "did and does not embody the values many Black folk wanted to preserve. When the choice is between Christian resignation or faith and humanistic action or reason, literary characters, like their folk counterparts, often reject Christianity in favor of a more exacting and humanistic idealism." Mariah's aspirations for "peace, freedom, and happiness" go "beyond Christianity" and are based instead on the codes of "folk culture," codes that determine "models for love and sacrifice that are willingly made for others" (Harris 52).
32. This is the beginning of a William Cowper poem, "Verses Supposed to Be Written by Alexander Selkirk" (1782), the first lines of which read "I am monarch of all I survey, / My right there is none to dispute"; not quoted by Jacob but quite accurately describing Jacob's situation, the last lines of that first verse read "Better dwell in the midst of alarms, / Than reign in this horrible place."
33. At one point, during a moment of despair, Jacob decides that he's "Gonna tell his papa, I'm leaving! . . . Gonna go right 'long with Mariah." But at the thought of leaving the land, "Pain sliced his stomach in two," and he quickly banishes the thought from his mind (*This Child* 101–02).
34. As Walter Trattner notes in his history of the U.S. welfare system, at this time, caseworkers believed that "the poor were responsible for their difficulties" and, because of their training in Freudian psychology, also assumed the poor were "emotionally disturbed" (262); caseworkers "had a moralistic approach to the needy" and "sought to distinguish between the 'worthy' and the 'unworthy' poor." Casework was "basically a device for snooping, refusing appeals for help, or attempting to control the needy," all of which takes place in *This Child* (Trattner 254).

35. Apparently Wright's unfinished second novel, part of a trilogy about Tangierneck, was found by her husband after her death. Written over a ten-year period, this installment "appears to concern Bardetta Upshur, the child who was meant to live—and did" (Fox 3).
36. In her portrayal of Bardetta and the "stain" of her "sinful" conception, Wright reverses color imagery that associates blackness and black sin with sin; Bardetta's very light skin signifies Mariah's "sin" of (possibly) becoming impregnated by Dr. Grene.
37. When Mariah confesses in front of the church that she is pregnant, the committee members call Ol Jefferson to stand beside her, believing he's the "man who's sinned with" Mariah. Horrified, Mariah screams, "Go back, go back! . . . It ain't his, it ain't his. It's Jacob's. Church, help me" (*This Child* 82). Ol Jefferson insists he's not the father, explaining "I'm just accusing myself of patting her on the head, because God don't like ugly. I don't think Jacob's had nothing to do with her either" (82). The committee also initially refuses to believe that the baby is Jacob's.

CHAPTER 5

1. Although the racially oriented protest novels *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) and *Lonely Crusade* (1947) were the first and second published novels of Himes, his prison novel was his first novel-length project.
2. According to Margolies and Fabre, Himes wrote an article for *Crisis* calling "for a revolution to fulfill the promises of the Constitution" (Margolies and Fabre 49).
3. Himes was able to begin writing *If He Hollers* after getting a Rosenwald Foundation grant in 1944; his first plot idea for this novel, "a mystery in which white people are being killed seemingly at random everywhere in Los Angeles" (an idea that finds its way into his last novel, *Plan B*) reveals the extent of his anger (Margolies and Fabre 50–51).
4. This speech can also be found in *Beyond the Angry Black,* ed. John Williams (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1966).
5. As Aaron Winter contends, up until the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, whiteness "held a position of universality and invisibility" (Winter "(Dis)Placement"). For further discussion of whiteness, see also Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness;* Michelle Fine, "Witnessing Whiteness"; and Joe Kincheloe, et al., eds. *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America.*
6. Notably, Himes only adopts the "writer" label after the publication of "Crazy in the Stir" in the April 1934 edition of *Esquire,* despite the fact that his first pieces, probably written in 1931, were published in 1932 and 1933 in Negro publications (Margolies and Fabre 36).
7. There is evidence that Himes spent time around black convicts, most of whom he considered degraded ("dull-witted, stupid, uneducated, practically illiterate, slightly above animals," he notes); this generalization could reveal

a contrasting judgment of the intelligence of white convicts with whom he had interacted (Himes *Quality* 64).

8. George Jackson experiences a similar nerve-deadening disillusionment: "What is happening to me here, what has happened, what will happen, can never surprise or upset me again. My nerves have been fractured, my sensibilities outraged, for the last time" (83).
9. Indeed, Himes's autobiography largely avoids the details of his prison years, and those he mentions specifically are similarly described in his fiction. For example, the autobiography alludes to his memory of a convict sneaking up on a sleeping inmate and cutting his throat while he slept, as well as the Easter Monday fire of 1930; both are recalled in *Yesterday,* the fire also depicted in "To What Red Hell," published in *Esquire* 1934 (Himes *Quality* 63).
10. Himes adds to this generalization by alluding to the worst kind of violence, racialized sexual and cannibalistic violence: "why should I be surprised when white men cut out some poor black man's nuts, or when black men eat the tasty palms of white explorers?" (Himes *Quality* 65).
11. In a footnote, Butler further defines abjection as "literally . . . to cast off, away, or out and hence," thus presupposing and producing "a domain of agency from which it is differentiated." She differentiates this concept from a similar one, the "psychoanalytic notion of *Verwerfung,* translated as 'foreclosure,' " which "produces sociality through a repudiation of a primary signifier which produces an unconscious or, in Lacan's theory, the register of the real"; in contrast, "the notion of abjection designates a degraded or cast out status within the terms of sociality. . . . what is foreclosed or repudiated *within* psychoanalytic terms is precisely what may not reenter the field of the social without threatening psychosis, that is, the dissolution of the subject itself" (243).
12. In *A Farewell to Arms,* Ernest Hemingway uses the term "realize" in a similar way, to denote the soldier's comprehension of how horrible war really is and that he is in the middle of it; I would argue that there are great similarities between the experiences of modern warfare and imprisonment.
13. The experience of irrationality and abnormality is the essence of the gothic, yet the use of generic conventions by convict writers allows a displacement of their experience, which is not finally irrational or abnormal in context.
14. Describing his post-prison life at the end of the Depression, Himes describes a similar circumstance in which race is transcended: "on the Writers Project" he says, "I did not feel the racial hurt so much . . . we were all, black and white, bound into the human family by our desperate struggle for bread" (Himes *Quality* 72).
15. This is almost precisely a description of a naturalist character, one who has been psychologically constrained and environmentally determined until he or she lives entirely in the present tense.
16. As Cohen notes, a convict "may be serving life, but [she or he] is not serving 'my life.' " In a study done of lifers, not a single one was completely resigned to dying in prison—all had hope of being freed before they died (93).

17. This interest in the "palpable . . . unreality of time," one of the most recognizable features of prison, is also a feature of gothic literature, as is clear from Victor Serge's book *Men in Prison* (London: Gollancz, 1970, p. 56): "What a measureless gap from one hour to the next. When you tell yourself in advance that six months—or six years—are to pass like this, you feel the terror of facing an abyss. At the bottom, mists in the darkness" (qtd. in Cohen 91). The language of the gothic here stands in for the unspeakability of facing years or decades in a zone of abjection.
18. On the other hand, writing, which "shares with the experience of involuntary memory this possibility of escape from time," can be pleasurable to the convict (Lloyd 139). Perhaps this is because it "unifies past and present moments in a way that makes of them an identity—extracting from the past something universal which it can share with the present" (139).

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