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Through the Second Looking Glass: Inventing the Minority Bildungsroman

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By

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Abstract

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My dissertation argues for the importance of what I term the minority *Bildungsroman*, a genre that twentieth-century writers adopted in order to represent racial anxiety as well as to imagine a way for the minority subject to move beyond it. By looking at the minority *Bildungsroman* as a literary form that exposes the process of *Bildung* not as self-formation but as self-dissolution, I aim to offer an important new perspective into how minority literature uses genre and literary history: only close attention to plot, character, and narrative reveals how these texts create a new genre to depict the minority subject's escape from the complex of socially-imposed identities originating from the dead mother complex. Unlike the subject of the traditional Bildungsroman, who achieves social integration and a stable ego, the minority subject in this new genre fails to successfully internalize the social roles that he is assigned. The instability and suffering imposed by double consciousness and racial anxiety cause him to throw off his prescribed identities. The narrator of *Invisible Man*, for instance, pursues experiences aimed at achieving social integration. Yet these paths result only in failure. He excels at college and glimpses a future of affluence and prominence, for instance, but only to be summarily expelled. Such experiences fail to produce what they promise, eventually thwarting his desire for normality and success. Seeking to be more than the poor, rural blacks that haunt his memory, yet unable to assimilate, Invisible Man progressively casts off elements of his social identity, and, in the novel's climax, reaches a state of social formlessness, or invisibility. The structures of white society, Ellison implies, cannot but deform those minorities who attempt to live in accordance with them. This movement towards self-disintegration, however, opens the space for the radical conclusion of the minority *Bildungsroman.* As a subject without subjectivities he begins what I call a "second mirror stage." By combining Lacan's notion of subject formation with Du Bois's conception of the end of double consciousness as a "longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self," I argue that the second mirror stage allows the subject to reconstitute his ego and identity. This process terminates racial anxiety and the double consciousness that engenders it. Reworking the form of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, these authors use formal innovation as the means of reimagining the self and, I argue, show that literary analysis is capable of recovering otherwise hard-to-access originary psychic traumas.

Chapter Summaries

My dissertation compares African American and Asian American novels of self-deformation to track the evolution of the a new genre, the minority bildungsroman. In Chapter 1, "Nella Larsen's Rogue Black Women: Anti-Black Aesthetics and the Formation of the Minority Bildungsroman," I show that the inability of the traditional Bildungsroman to capture and imagine the minority subject pushed Larsen to turn towards a new genre. This chapter demonstrates the differences between the operation of character, plot, and narrative closure in the traditional and minority Bildungsroman. I argue that Larsen first asks what it means to be a woman in *Quicksand*, a novel whose authoring leads her to the realization that developmental models of self-formation centered on the traditional processes of marriage and childbirth have worked to imprison black women in the confines of prescribed subjectivities. In *Passing*, Larsen turns to the minority Bildungsroman to convey an alternative vision of African American women's self-formation. Instead of developing her subjects into a restrictive, traditional "fullness," Larsen imbues them with taboo desires that help disintegrate their identities. Motherhood and heterosexuality, for example, are replaced with disinterested and negligent mothers and lesbian love. Although one of the protagonists of *Passing* approaches a full disintegration, she stops short and returns to a typical life—one that will end just like Helga's in *Quicksand*. Clare, the other protagonist, succeeds in completing a second mirror stage, though she dies right after its conclusion. Larsen complicates the stakes of the second mirror stage by indicating that physical death might be a risk in the pursuit of minority Bildung.

My second chapter, "Toward a Second Mirror Stage: A General Theory of Disability in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man,"* considers how Ralph Ellison negotiates the fraught relationship between disability, race, and homosexuality. During the period of Jim Crow, race and male homosexuality in its many forms were considered disabilities. Rather than critique this construct, Ellison adopts its logic to construct a general theory of disability, representing race and homosexuality as just two species of it. By subtly embracing this conflation, Ellison gains the freedom to work through sensitive racial problems by negotiating them through the framework of disability. Encoding Invisible Man's process of disintegration in disability, the narrative does not ostensibly read as a minority Bildungsroman since disability already entails a disintegrating and mangled body. For Ellison, Invisible Man must come to accept rather than resist his disabilities—his race and his homosexuality—in order to properly disintegrate his social identities. Once he successfully disintegrates, he will be able to complete his second mirror stage, terminate his hibernation, and re-enter the world.

In my third chapter, "Blaming the Dead Mother: Finding the Mother in John Okada's *No-No Boy*," I address how the first mirror stage is hijacked by anti-minority racism and how its outcome of a fictive subjectivity reverberates throughout the novel. The first mirror stage incorporates anti-minority racism and repositions the mother function. Okada gives us the opportunity to closely examine why the subjectivity created in the first mirror stage must be disintegrated. Okada illustrates the way in which the forced migration and imprisonment of Japanese Americans into rural encampments during the Second World War stripped Japanese parents of their authority in both the public and private spheres. Okada fictionalizes this debilitation of parents in the socially and psychically "dead" maternal and paternal characters of his novel in order to imagine the consequences of, and a possible escape from, anti-Japanese racism. Okada demonstrates how these dead parents, particularly the dead mother, factor into the formation of youth in the context of the Japanese Internment and Cold War America more

generally. Ichiro, the protagonist son, spends the novel trying to extricate himself from the supposed source of his troubles—the dead mother, whom he blames for his inability to assimilate via enlisting in the military during internment, and for his inability to embody a Japanese, American, or Japanese American identity. Ichiro's obsession with this assignation of guilt results in the disintegration of all of his social identities, including his relationship to his mother. Although Okada continues the narrative a few paragraphs after enacting narrative closure with the second mirror stage, he refuses to describe and thus author Ichiro's new identity. By resisting the movement toward describing Ichiro's new social identity, Okada allows the Japanese American subject to unfold without social or authorial influence. Ichiro finally possesses the ability to define himself.

My final chapter, "How Bigger Wasn't Born: Richard Wright's Aesthetic of Black Bildung, 1940-1958," explores Wright evolving idea of black bildung in *Native Son* and *The Long Dream.* I read *Native Son* as a critique of the social and psychic forces—from anti-black whites and African Americans—policing Bigger into various forms of self-education models. I demonstrate that violence serves not to extricate Bigger from these imposed identities but as a mode to access and develop self-consciousness. Bigger does not achieve "consciousness" nor does Wright flush out a comprehensive theory of black subjectivity. *The Long Dream*, written almost two decades later, crafts a theory of black masculinity in the context of the burgeoning Civil Rights movement. I argue that Wright writes the tenets of the minority bildungsroman into the surface of the narrative. He guides the reader through the multiple introjections and disintegrations of subject positions for the young protagonist, Fishbelly. In each episode Wright exposes the mechanisms of self-deformation. Unlike Larsen and Ellison, Wright demonstrates the tremendous psychic and emotional costs associated with pursing minority bildung. The chapter elaborates on Wright's struggles with black masculinity and I demonstrate how homosocial relations with father and brother figures are integral to the development of identity. I argue that violence, specifically lynching, serves as the vehicle for Fishbelly to disintegrate and seek a new vision of black masculinity.

To my friends who became my family

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Introduction

A nigger's a black man who don't know who he is, '*cause he's too damned dumb to know.*..a nigger's something white folks make a black man believe he is.
The Long Dream, Richard Wright

There is no help for it: I am a white man. For unconsciously I distrust what is black in me, that is, the whole of my being.
Black Skin, White Masks, Frantz Fanon

Section 1: The Raced Psyche and the Classical Narrative of Self-Formation

Most ethnic studies theorists have labored to demonstrate that race is a discursive product rather than a genetic outcome. Omi and Winant's field-shaping text, *Racial Formation in the United States* (1986), posits—along with a huge number of later scholars who subsequently adopted and reproduced their innovative study—that race is socially constructed and that raced subjects can negotiate the outcome of this discursive project. While Omi and Winant produce a theory that emerges from poststructuralist thought, I want to put pressure on their work by recovering that of their (pre-poststructuralist) predecessors—particularly that of Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Frantz Fanon. Whereas Omi and Winant argued that racial formation shifts with different social or discursive architectonics, Douglass and Du Bois focused on theorizing the politics of the body as marked by race. Being black, for the latter pair, was not an arbitrary function of social construction. According to the radical thought of Du Bois, for example, African Americans do not have the luxury of negotiating identity or altering their social fabrication; Du Bois wanted African Americans to shift their political positions to gain social power.

At the center of Du Bois's theory of racial formation lies the crucial historical legacy of slavery and anti-black racism, a legacy that, perhaps paradoxically—that is, despite its infamy—requires rediscovery in the wake of poststructuralist interventions. In 1897 W.E.B. Du Bois penned "Strivings of the Negro People," introducing the theory of "double consciousness" that would later be revised for *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903). He argues that African Americans—as constituted by both American and black American cultures—must exist as subjects with two different yet equal identities: one being African American and the second, an abject otherness determined by anti-black, white culture. Du Bois's theory of the subject famously argues that:

> …the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this

> double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.[1]

As historian Dickson Bruce has argued, the notion of double consciousness simultaneously emphasizes an identity based on African spirituality and another informed by the materialism espoused by Booker T. Washington.[2] Almost a half-century earlier, Frederick Douglass presented a much less radical yet nonetheless similarly psychologically oriented vision of African American slave identity. He argued in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) that:

> …to make a contented slave, you must make a thoughtless one. It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and, as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason…The man who takes his earnings must be able to convince him that he has a perfect right to do so. It must not depend upon mere force—the slave must know no higher law than his master's will.[3]

Douglass establishes the mind as the true battlefield of African American subject formation. The African American subject, per Douglass, inherits the social imperative to construct himself as "thoughtless;" in the future, he must be purged of this imposed disability of critical capacity. Despite the persistent stereotypes of "ideally" subjugated subjects (such as that of the Uncle Tom), however, African American slaves never actually "achieved" the ideals set forth by anti-black racism; subterfuge and subversion allowed slaves to endure and thrive through horrid circumstances entirely capable of darkening their "mental vision." Douglass anticipates Du Bois' theory regarding the psychic assault on African Americans. As remedy, he suggests that African Americans become "men" (and women, as Douglass was a fierce supporter of women's suffrage and civil rights) through hard work.

In his lecture "Self-Made Men," Douglass adapted the American myth of the self-created man to the purpose of defending and motivating African Americans who were emerging from centuries of slavery. He believed that work and the pursuit of commerce—a pair of values that will elicit skepticism from Du Bois—should be the proper channels of self-formation for African Americans. He urged society to "give the Negro fair play and let him alone. If he lives, well. If he dies, equally well. If he cannot stand up, let him fall down."[4] Douglass's notion of a self-fashioning through labor is different from the perhaps similar-sounding American myth espoused by Benjamin Franklin, however. Instead of pursuing isolated, self-motivated work and its (presumably) resultant financial success, Douglass pled that African Americans should cooperate and support each other in their journeys. In support of his exhortation, he adduces the fact that African Americans had been some of the few successful farmers of poor soil in the South. Implicit in this example is the sense that these successful African American "farmers" were more than individuals; they were part of extended kinship units buffered by strong, supportive institutions like the church. This communal aspect of self-making is partially lost in the theories of Du Bois and later Fanon, who both develop notions of subject formation for the individual, rather than the collective, psyche.

Douglass's promotion of the value of accumulating material possessions constitutes the primary point of variance between his ideas and Du Bois's theory of emancipated black

subjectivity. Du Bois called for the emergence of "The Talented Tenth," a group of highly-educated yet middle-class African Americans that would lead the fight for Civil Rights. He rejected Booker T. Washington's platform of vocational and industrial education in favor of the classical liberal arts that the Talent Tenth would pursue. Du Bois's vision regarding this vanguard group was first articulated in 1903 in an article of the same name, in which he emphasized a need to turn to moral education and the development of character. His rejection of wealth as a valid ideal encompassed a dismissal of the whole of Washington's philosophy and, in part, of Douglass's imperative that laboring for financial success would constitute the proper Bildung for African Americans. Almost forty years after his first declaration regarding the Talented Tenth, Du Bois reiterates his vision—in the same year as Richard Wright's *Native Son*—in his autobiography *Dusk of Dawn:* "my own panacea of earlier days was flight of class from mass through the development of the Talented Tenth; but the power of this aristocracy of talent was to lie in its knowledge and character, not in its wealth."[5] For Du Bois, pursuit of development of character over wealth would lead to the eradication of double consciousness and its causes. A classical education emphasizing critical thought and reflection would presumably lead to a moment of crisis: "the history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,--this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self."[6] While Du Bois envisioned that a pedagogy of the oppressed that would include a revival of black spirituality would produce an African American selfhood possessing a single, unified and enlightened, ego, Frantz Fanon will insist that only violence could achieve Du Bois's dream of singularly conscious black subjectivity.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon outlines a revolutionary theory of subject formation. Instead of idealizing hard work or purely intellectual strategies for crafting black subjectivity, Fanon demands that blacks of the African diaspora violently expel colonizers from their lands, their minds, and their bodies. Like Douglass and Du Bois, Fanon focuses his theory of subject formation on the black psyche. He modifies the notion of double consciousness from being a matter of the split between an individual's black and American personalities to being a battle between an "inferior" indigenous cultural identity and the perceived grandeur of the colonizer's society. While Du Bois did not view one of the split personalities of African Americans as better than the other—in his view, both constituted the black subject regardless of the horrors involved—Fanon demonstrates how black culture is, *de facto*, viewed, recognized, and internalized as inferior to white culture. He argues that "for the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white."[7] Fanon reiterates this point throughout the text: "it is in fact customary in Martinique to dream of a form of salvation that consists of magically turning white" and "what they [women of color] must have is whiteness at any price."[8]

The bildung of blacks, according to Fanon, is to achieve whiteness and, in the process, the eradication of blackness and black bodies. At the same time, Fanon evokes the communal aspects of subject formation discussed by Douglass and Du Bois. He views black subject formation as "not an individual question," but a problem of society and history as well as of the individual.[9] Individual relations between whites and blacks do not dominate the process of subject formation. Rather, the engine of these relations is the fact that "…he [a black man] lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex."[10]

Fanon offers a radical diagnosis of the black condition. He develops a socio-psychoanalytic model accounting for how colonized subjects come to "worship" white culture and dismiss their native black one. On the one hand, Fanon attributes the origin of the sense of

"blackness" itself to being a byproduct of the white interventions that befell Negros upon colonial contact. He states that: "when the [adult] Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego" and that "a normal Negro child, having grown up within a normal family, will become abnormal on the slightest contact with the white world."[11] In these examples, Fanon discusses the first wave of Martinquian men and women who travel to France for an education. While receiving their colonial educations, Fanon interprets their encounters with whites thusly: "the first impulse of the black man is to say *no* to those who attempt to build a definition of him."[12] He assumes that "uncontaminated" blacks from Martinique (which is difficult to imagine since colonization began in the seventeenth century in the country) have been able to craft their own identities when outside the influence of the colonizer. But, once the colonization process begins, for "every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality," the imposed complex of inferiority rewrites subjectivity.[13] The other formative process Fanon outlines is one in which the black child, assumedly born into a colonial country, inherits—rather than constructs—her black identity. I will return to this embrace of an erased originary culture in my discussions of formlessness.

Responding to Jacques Lacan's formulation of the mirror stage, Fanon theorizes how the mirror stage would be re-structured for a black context. From his own clinical research into the mirror stage, Fanon "contend[s] that for the Antillean the mirror hallucination is always neutral. When Antilleans tell me that they have experienced it, I always ask the same question: 'What color were you?' Invariably they reply: 'I had no color.'"[14] The image of the self and of the mother in the mirror is colorless, i.e., not black. Somehow the black parent—both as a phenotype and social construct—has been purged from the mirror stage. The child is not identifying with a black parent, but with a colorless imaginary or a white parent. While this is an extremely odd description by his patients, Fanon does not elaborate on the specifics of this process and assumes that the colorless parent is really white. Whereas Fanon based his theoretical conclusions on observation of a society and history of anti-black racism far different from the American versions, my project offers a rigorous account of minority subject formation in the specific context of the American variant of colonial culture. Using the unique historical conditions of American slavery, Jim Crow, and the pre-Asian American movement of the sixties, I argue that the formation of African American and Asian American subjects requires not just one but two mirror stages.

My project participates in conversations on racial identity, attending specifically to the twentieth century fascination with individual self-formation. Implicit within identity politics debates is the question of minority *Bildung* and whether African and Asian Americans can and should follow the same developmental journeys as white Americans. Cultural discourses advocating notions of merit and social integration assume that minorities ought indeed to mirror the bildung of whites, preferably involving key stages along the lines of: a middle-class childhood filled with the "advantages" of a nuclear family; the pursuit of higher education; and the successful reproduction of dominant cultural values and tastes. Identity politics assumes that minorities will assimilate to this cult of individual development. Du Bois's "Talented Tenth" concept augured this position but augmented the form of black identity it endorses with a bit of social justice charity—although the absurdity of this rhetoric is readily revealed in practice, as Nella Larsen demonstrates via Irene's experiences in *Passing*. Implicit within Du Bois's ideology of "uplift" for African Americans is the normative teleology of middle-class bildung.

In a similar fashion, the 'model minority' myth haunts various Asian American communities; immigrants are all too often psychically policed into the model-minority standard. The collectivizing aspect of identity politics—albeit more recent conversations accept difference—tends toward a homogenization of minority groups and presents one standardized model of identity, one standardized form of minority bildung. The communal aspect to minority self-formation moves from extended kin networks to individual models of development that reflect the movement toward alienated identities over the last century.

A focus on self-formation, almost by its denotation, requires a turn away from communal life to the individual—a turn which was a founding impulse of the literature delineating European Enlightenment subjectivity. Historian Reinhart Koselleck traces the genealogy of the concept of bildung across cultures, interrogating the effects of religion, the humanities, and the sciences. He differentiates among the various incorrect English translations of bildung, which would interpret it as consisting in formal education, imagination, self-education, or self-cultivation, determining that "self-formation" (*selbstbildung*) best captures the meaning of the German phenomenon. Koselleck argues that bildung does not imply a pre-given social identity; instead it involves an evolution based upon self-reflection. The concept originated in doctrinal Christian explanations of individuals' divine grace. Koselleck tracks the concept's shift in the eighteenth century to describing a style of educated piety that was full of inner turmoil.[15] Hegel and Goethe preserve Christianity by eliminating its dogmatic dimensions and assimilating naturalistic and materialistic world-views. Thus, education, personal growth, and wealth become classified as "natural" instincts under Christianity's reform efforts and hierarchical systems of governance and salvation. Koselleck makes the larger claim that Hegel attempts to challenge (and dispose of) these religious inheritances by re-interpreting bildung as the task "to perceive and alleviate alienation"—to bring about self-awareness through acts of consciousness and work.[16]

After the 1848 revolution, bildung stabilizes the bourgeoisie (as exemplified in *Le Père Goriot* and *L'Éducation Sentimentale*) and becomes a process of personal, cultural, and political revelation. In a digital humanities study, Franco Moretti confirms Koselleck's social analysis by showing a surge in authorship of novels written in the style of the bildungsroman post-1848.[17] Sociologist Viviana Zelizer would argue that a dramatic decline in infant morality rates and the simultaneous rise of the bourgeoisie's fetishization of the child enabled the cult of self-formation to thrive in the middle of the nineteenth century.[18] Russian philosopher of language Mikhail Baktin adds another perspective on self-formation.

Bahktin adds that realism defines the Bildungsroman. Rather than the social world being in upheaval, subjectivity becomes the location of variability and turbulence.[19] The social world, Bahktin argues, must be described with such a complete degree of detail that it enables time and sight to be continuous; the narrative world must be realistic, complete, and juxtaposed to the character's own inner instability and incompleteness. Koselleck views bildung as attaining a crisis during World War I due to the inability of young men, in particular, to develop into strong and vital adults during such political and social turmoil. No longer can the Bildungsroman represent an unstable character as irony or fiction in contrast to a fully-stabilized external reality due to the fact that this chaos is actually happening on a grand and horrific scale in the real world.[20]

In his study of the Bildungsroman, literary critic Franco Moretti divides the genre into five subgroups: classical, Balzacian, English, Elliotian, and modern (late) categories.[21] In each historical and geographical period, Moretti asserts that (1) the Bildungsroman's definitive

narrative beginning and end attempt to contain the unpredictability of social changes, (2) the plot reflects the flexibility of modernity (starting with Goethe and Austen), and (3) the "un-heroic hero" creates a subjectivity of the everyday. The classical phase includes works by Goethe and Austen, which present bildung as a type of apprenticeship culminating in marriage. Balzac's idea of Bildung, on the other hand, no longer imparts a message of optimistic human relations; rather, capitalism becomes the teacher of morality and identity. The English bildungsroman simultaneously conjures a hero who lacks a spirit for adventure and who is at the mercy of his abusers. The world frightens the hero who has become a normative character (Oliver Twist, e.g.). Moretti believes that the English version of the bildungsroman terminates with the waning of the hero and his spirit for adventure. George Elliot breaks from this English tradition and pushes the Bildungsroman to its absurd limits. She transforms the quest for identity into a quest for a vocation and forges protagonists who advocate unaccepted values instead of buttressing normative social practices.

For Moretti, the last category—the modern or late Bildungsroman—reflects Lukács's ideas regarding the transcendental homelessness of modernity. The protagonist rejects society and seeks meaning within meaning. Modernist literature thrives upon this idea of the shattering and alienated subject. Stephen Dedalus, for example, leaves Ireland disenchanted and feeling alienated, but he continues to exist as a coherent and complicated character. Both Moretti and Koselleck demonstrate the crisis of the European and American Bildungsroman as reaching its apogee in the early twentieth century, around World War I.

While critics argue that the white Bildungsroman founders and terminates in the 1920s, in the same time frame minority authors actually begin to create a new era for bildung, particularly in works of the Harlem Renaissance. In this dissertation, I argue that African American authors do not simply transmogrify the Bildungsroman but that they craft an entirely new genre with its own poetics and aesthetics. I also argue that Asian American authors mirror the struggles of the African American bildungsroman. Collectively, I term these two projects the minority bildungsroman because they articulate a common struggle with and response to the question of identity formation. The minority bildungsroman focuses on the self-deformation of minority subjects.

Section 2: The Dead Mother Complex and the Racialized Mirror Stage

Jacques Lacan's mirror stage describes a child's transition from an amorphous state to a structured one, from being an unbounded child to a demarcated and crystallized subject. Prior to the mirror stage, the child exists in an undefined world in which he cannot distinguish between himself and the external realm; the child lacks language and cannot name or identify specific, bounded objects. As the child masters language, he simultaneously learns to distinguish himself from his world. This adoption of language helps the child form an ideal-I, which is the child's primary mode of understanding his "bounded" self.[22] Lacan calls this ideal-I "more constitutive than constituted" meaning that what the child sees in the mirror—sight, here, encompassing both a visual and an imaginary meaning—is his entire being (constitutive) rather than the sum of influences from social constructions and culture (constituted).[23] The ideal-I is an early version of the ego "prior to its social determination."[24]

This ideal-I is based upon the mirror image and itself becomes the basis for primary narcissism. The next step in the mirror stage requires the splitting of the subject—his castration.

To move from the ideal-I to the I-ideal, "the child anticipates at the mental level the conquest of his own body's functional unity, which is still incomplete at the level of volitional motricity."[25] Once the child masters his body, he can focus on an identification outside of himself. He mirrors his newly controllable body off of the mother or father. This secondary identification occurs when the child is fully engaged with language and can interpret social meanings. The mother is not simply an extension of the self (pre-mirror) or the source of food, love, pain, etc.; she also dons the meanings given to women as mothers by social norms. Part of identifying with the parent includes the child imagining what the mother (or father or parent substitute) desires. Whatever object or thing, like love or affection, that the child comes to believe the mother desires, he attempts to give to the mother in order to secure her attention.

In a violent transition, the child breaks from his ideal-I, primary narcissism, and primary identification and bases his I-ideal around what he believes the mother to desire. He identifies with the parent and with her perceived object of desire. When he realizes that he can never satisfy the mother, he converts that object of desire into the thing that will forever torment him. Lacan calls this the *petit objet a* (or simply the *objet a*). This object of the other is not the Freudian object of desire but rather, per Lacan, the cause of all desires. The child exits the mirror stage and begins to construct his subjectivity around this objet a. The subject does not consciously pursue this objet a; rather, it is the foundation for his desires and pursuits in life. This is Lacan's model for what I will specify constitutes the "white" mirror stage; my project puts pressure on the model of the white mirror stage by asking how it is reshaped when race becomes a factor.

In the article "The Dead Mother" (1983) psychoanalyst Andre Green discusses how the child detects the mother's depression and then comes to imagine her as "psychically dead."[26] The mother does not actually die, but her motherly function ceases. The child senses the mother's debilitation and depression. As the mother "dies" in the eyes of the child, he must radically unbind—must disinvest—from the depressed mother. As a consequence, the child must locate alternative outlets for his mirror relations. For Green, this dramatic severing from the mother (or parent) manifests a narcissism in the child for the mother that will remain latent throughout the child's life. From a Lacanian perspective, this radical decathexis (disinvestment) opens lack in the unconscious that must be satisfied with new mothers, new objects, new attachments, and new signifiers.

It is not difficult to imagine that a slave mother—or in twentieth century literature, any abject or severely oppressed parent—would likely be depressed due to racial limitations. Literary critic Abdul JanMohamed terms this phenomenon the creation of "death-bound-subjects," while sociologist Orlando Patterson describes the scenario for African Americans as "social death." Subjected to constant experiences and threats—to themselves and their children—of death; bodily sale; beatings; rape; and innumerable other mental and physical tortures, African American parents became exemplars—however resilient—of socially (and psychically) 'dead' parents. Regardless of their status as depressed or not, the social world constructs African American parents as psychically dead. Literary critic Hortense Spillers argues that African Americans are dispossessed of their parental roles ("Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 1987). She surmises that African American women are excluded from "the traditional symbolics of female gender" and that both the mother and father are robbed of kinship and parental status. African American kinship relied upon the lineage of the mother, yet she was almost always owned and controlled by a white master—including her reproduction. The child of a slave becomes "owned" not by the black parents but by the white master.[27] Thus, as Spillers argues, the slave child is

robbed of both his parents: the father disposed of, sold, unknown, or unacknowledged, and the mother possessed not by the child but by the master.

This everyday terror socially constructs black parents as dead. Richard Wright, in his *The Long Dream*, *Native Son,* and *Black Boy,* gives life to Spillers's hypothesis that the child witnesses the psychic destruction or disabling of parents. In *Black Boy,* for example, Wright's mother suffers from a domineering mother of her own and from a horrible husband. These domestic forces, in conjunction with anti-black racism and her own medical disabilities, create a psychically dead mother. Wright cannot seek protection, advice, or nurturance from his depressed mother and subsequently turns away from the dead mother in search of thriving parents and viable role models. In a society that devalues and fashions black parents as psychically and socially dead, the question must be asked: how does racial formation proceed for African American children (and how does the African American paradigm compare to that explored in Asian American literature)?

In formulating an answer to these questions, I propose a new theory of racial formation that builds upon Spillers's dispossessed parents, Du Bois's notion of double consciousness, Omi and Winant's social construction, and Fanon's colonization of the mind. My theory introduces a new explanation for Fanon's disturbing statement that "the black soul is a white man's artifact."[28] Fanon, a revolutionary psychiartrist, crafted a theory of black subject-formation without elaborating on the specific mechanisms involved in that formation; my project seeks to redress this deficiency.

In a racialized mirror stage, the black child, in a state of undifferentiation, would establish a primary identification and narcissism with the world around him; most likely, he would forge psychic connections to African American cultural practices and people such as relatives and neighbors. The child's inchoate ego, the ideal-I, forms around this identification, as does primary narcissism. With the mastery of language and of his body, the child would begin to distinguish himself as different and separate from those around him. The aggressive tensions generated from this new situation spur the child to begin wondering what he lacks, what he is missing that caused him to separate from the mother.[29] Lacan refers to this missing object as the *objet* a. As the minority child recognizes the mother as a discrete person, he must also perceive that she is a psychically dead mother. The consequences of relating to the dead mother completely modify the mirror stage.

The minority child must terminate his secondary identification with the dead mother and disinvest his narcissistic libido from images of blackness or Asianness. The child could not sustain a secondary identification with a dead mother; as Lacan argues, "the fear of death…is psychologically subordinate to the [secondary] narcissistic fear of harm to one's own body."[30] The child's objet a with a dead mother would require acknowledging the lack of the body, which, per Lacan, is even more difficult than choosing death. Thus, with an evacuated secondary identification, the child invests, I argue, in the dominant social values as the substitute parent, as a new mirror. Unlike Freud's notion of the Superego, which is mediated through a familial relationship, Lacan's Symbolic register directly relates to the child and allows the child to identify directly with society. A secondary identification with society requires imagining, or being told, what society desires.

The minority child, instead of aggressively attempting to compete for the desire of the dead minority mother, directs his attention towards society's desire. As might be expected, society, if it indeed "desires," orients its goals towards normality, which includes the oppression of African Americans and Asian Americans and the privileging of white Americans and their

culture. This objet a of normality also includes a fantasy for the imagined political, sexual, and social freedom that white Americans can exercise. In a crude sense, the colonized subject replicates the desires of the colonizer—a desire for whiteness. Fanon, though, assumes that an identification with whites means that minorities desire to be white. In the racialized mirror stage, desire is for normality and freedom, which is slightly different from desiring whiteness. Secondary narcissism can appear as the desire for whiteness, however. The minority subject is compelled to love the dominant tastes of the times, which happen to be for white bodies. Throughout this struggle, though, the minority child, as Du Bois well knew, "ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body." In psychoanalysis there are not simply two identities waging a war, however—primary identification and primary narcissism must be rewritten because the dead mother complex presents an incompatibility between primary and secondary processes. The aggression from this inequality forces the ideal-I to be retroactively reconstructed.

When the identification with the black mother is interrupted, the ideal-I in its fledgling state is destroyed. With a secondary identification with normality (rather than with the parent), primary identification and narcissism around blackness or Asianness are no longer possible. The ideal-I formed from these primary processes cannot be sustained. The minority child must disinvest his narcissistic libidinal energies from this ego; the black "soul" becomes archived as an impossibility. The minority child's primary identification becomes what Fanon discovered as "neutral," i.e. white culture and bodies. Primary narcissism, too, is retooled in order to be invested in self-images of the dominant culture, i.e.whiteness. The ideal-I, which is supposed to be "prior to its social determination," must be reconstructed based upon the I-ideal; the minority child's ideal-I actually becomes socially determined.[31]

I believe that this racialized mirror stage explains what Fanon predicts in the colonial context: "the death and burial of its [black] local cultural originality."[32] To reiterate this complex operation of primary processes, the minority child's mirror stage is derailed because of anti-minority racism. A traumatic secondary identification forces the child to retroactively redefine his primary processes. He must destroy his ideal-I and reconstitute his primary identification and narcissism from a mirroring of white culture. With a new ideal-I, the minority child is truly an orphan character since, on the psychic plane, a strong relationship to an ethnic community has been eliminated, reinscribed—whited out, in essence. Anti-minority racism has successfully hijacked the mirror stage and eradicated blackness or Asianness as the foundation for the minority child's subjectivity.

A racialized mirror stage ensures that the egos, and thus identities, "produced" by minority subjects during their journeys of development are crafted by anti-black and anti-Asian racism. These identities are not just socially, but also psychically, constructed. Fanon describes this as psychic dilemma: "if there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: -primarily, economic; -subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalization—of this inferiority."[33] An inferiority complex arises from a racialized mirror stage. As a consequence, anti-minority racism limits—and partially determines—the options available for a black or Asian American subject position. Fanon describes this depressing stricture thus: "it is not I who make a meaning for myself, but it is the meaning that was already there, pre-existing, waiting for me."[34]

Aggression underwrites each step in the racialized mirror stage. The individualized mother, for instance, becomes a source of horror for the child and he no longer wishes to reunite with her; he does not craft his *objet a* around her desires. Instead, the child turns towards the

symbolic father for his secondary identification. He also rewrites his primary identification and narcissism to align with his secondary ones. But in each of these maneuvers, enormous amounts of aggression are developed. In the revision of primary identification, the child must give up his colored self; he must identify with the rejection of blackness or Asianness. In primary narcissism, an attraction to coloredness is replaced by an attraction to social normality. In both instances—whether Asian or Negro—the child must discard primary attachments, performing an abandonment that generates tremendous quantities of aggression. When the child must turn away from a once healthy mother (who is now differentiated and identified as a dead mother) to a paternalistic social order, the child will again be resentful and generate aggression towards both the mother and the forces that have made her psychically ”dead.” The child must relinquish his initial secondary narcissism for blackness/black mother for an attraction to social normality. The aggression created in this violent realignment reappears in the pursuit of formlessness, which I will discuss in the next section. Lacan argues that the mirror stage intrinsically creates a tremendous amount of aggression, which can be seen in people's everyday neuroses, obsessions, etc. The added violence of the racialized mirror stage multiplies the aggression, which will then be funneled into racial anxiety.

The destruction of egos and the abandonment of the mother can seem to resonate with the concept of melancholia. Freud describes melancholia as instanced when: “the object has not perhaps actually died, but has been lost as an object of love.”[35] Obviously, the African American child strives to reclaim both the mother and her lost love, but if the child identified with and mirrored these lost objects, then we would have characters who did not love, did not care, and did not form relationships. Essentially, we would have psychically dead protagonists and that is a rarity in African American and Asian American letters. Toni Morrison's Setha from *Beloved* is a depressed and partially psychically-dead mother, but even Setha achieves a vivacious life with a new daughter and a new lover. African American and Asian American literature produce characters not in melancholia but those working through the absence of vital parents—black, white, or both. The texts represent an awareness of the disappearance of the black parent, but the characters are almost always attempting to recover or repeat the relationship with the parent, to revive them. The parents might be misplaced, but they are not lost.

In *The Melancholy of Race* (2001) Anne Cheng argues that assimilation is the primary effect of racial melancholia. She argues that the definition of a raced subject is one that already includes assimilation:

> in melancholia, assimilation (‘acting like an internalized other’) is a *fait accompli*, part and parcel of ego formation for the dominant and the minority, except that with the latter, such doubling is seen as something false (‘acting like someone you're *not*’). The notion of racial authenticity is thus finally a cultural judgment which itself disguises the *identificatory assimilation* that has already taken place in melancholic racialization.[36]

While I find Cheng's argument both beautiful and compelling—one that continues to influence —I believe that her notion of melancholia does not fully capture the mechanisms at play in the racialized mirror stage. Cheng argues, for instance, that racial melancholia force the minority subject to believe that his assimilation is acting against a more authentic self when both are core, constitutive ideas or identifications. She persuasively argues that the mentality of feeling a foreign other in junction with an assimilated self is a by-product of racial melancholia. Both “identities,” she explains, begin at the formation of raced subjects.

While Cheng's sophisticated argument accounts for the role of the psyche in racial formation, it fails to account for the more technical aspects of ego formation. In the hijacked mirror stage outlined above, the neophyte ideal-I is never completely formed before its destruction and redrafting. The replacement ego has no investment in black or Asian American culture. While this might seem a small technicality, the ego—and subsequent subject developed around that ego—that Cheng assumes in her argument does not exist and the raced subject cannot mourn or be melancholic about something that he no longer cathects to.

Moreover, without cathexis, there cannot be a loss—known or unknown according to Freud. He states in "Mourning and Melancholia," on which Cheng bases her argument, that the melancholic "represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable; he reproaches himself."[37] In addition, if the subject did have a melancholic relationship to the lost object--the mother or Cheng's minority self—Freud informs us that the free libido would withdraw into the ego and would have "served to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object."[38] Again, the ideal-I in this scenario has been disinvested from, destroyed, and reconstructed. The libido cannot "withdraw into" a non-existent ego. Freud does allow for the destruction of the ego. He states that: "the analysis of melancholia now shows that the ego can kill itself only if, owing to the return of the object-cathexis, it can treat itself as an object."[39] Anti-black and anti-Asian racism accomplish this goal: the revised secondary processes view the primary constructs as objects to be terminated. Thus, the ego that could miss the dead mother has been eradicated.

The racialized mirror stage is what the authors whom my project addresses must "fight" against. It binds the minority subject into following a limited number of prefabricated social and political identities. By hijacking the psyche and structuring the subject's relationship to himself, his community, and the white world, the minority subject does not need much social policing in order to fall into a regimented bildung journey. The next section addresses how minority authors respond to the traumas of the racialized mirror stage with the concepts of racial anxiety, surplus *jouissance*, and formlessness.

Section 3: The Question of Minority Style: Racial Anxiety and Surplus Jouissance

The convoluted and violent racialized mirror stage obtains closure by solidifying the ideal-I and I-ideal and inaugurating the emergence of the African American or Asian American subject. Racial anxiety is produced as a residual effect of the racialized mirror stage. It is anxiety experienced due to race.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines anxiety as an "uneasiness or trouble of mind about some uncertain event; solicitude, concern."[40] Søren Kierkegaard began contemplating the condition of a troubled mind in the mid-nineteenth century. In *The Concept of Anxiety, Either/Or, Fear and Trembling*, and *The Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard unfolds an existential psychology of how anxiety, particularly as manifested in relation to despair, relates to a "leap of faith."[41] Kierkegaard distinguishes between fear (*furcht*) and anxiety (*angst*); the former being on the ethical (or universal) plane—what literary criticism refers to as the symbolic or the social—and the latter occurring in relationships with the absolute (God). Confronting ethical or moral matters evokes fear but not anxiety. For Kierkegaard, unethical or immoral acts entail punishments, which are well established by laws and social conventions. The prospect of transgressing an ethical situation evokes specific fears and specific punishments.

On the other hand, Kierkegaard argues that a trouble of the mind in relation to the absolute produces anxiety. In an analysis of the Abraham and Isaac story, Kierkegaard claims that anxiety arises within Abraham not due to the act of murder and its consequences but rather as a result of his defiance of the absolute. In this maneuver, Abraham rises above morality and engages with the absolute; he does not know what will happen when he negotiates with God. This alignment with the absolute requires the relinquishment of "self" in favor of a new subjectivity. For Kierkegaard, the subject's disregard of potential outcomes and his transcendence of morality calls forth anxiety. A leap of faith encompasses the abandonment of the moral and the concomitant engagement with the affective dimension of anxiety. Kierkegaard, similarly to Fanon, does not explore the psychic domain in detail nor the manner in which anxiety operates to help reconfigure the subject. For a view of the interior life, I turn again towards the insights of psychoanalysis to unpack how anxiety necessitates the disinvestment of the "self."

In *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety*, Freud describes anxiety as an affective reaction to trauma.[42] He categorizes anxiety under three taxonomies. Realistic anxiety is a direct and automatic response to a trauma, e.g. an assault—a bear attack, say. Neurotic anxiety involves a memory or fantasy of a trauma that is without an immediate external threat, e.g. worrying about someone tripping on your sidewalk and suing you. Freud expands his notion of anxiety in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*.[43] Anxiety comes to signal new dangers that are similar to previous traumas—real or fantasy-based. In part, an unemployed libido fuels the creation of a symptom from anxiety while at the same time anxiety initiates repressions. In the *New Lectures*, Freud defines traumas as an excited state felt as unpleasure. Typically the pleasure principle discharges pleasure and unpleasures. But when the pleasure principle cannot discharge unpleasure, the body enters the state of anxiety. Freud moves from viewing anxiety as the residuals of a memory or fantasy of trauma or immediate fear into a definition of anxiety as the paralysis of the pleasure principle. Instead of viewing anxiety as just one aspect to the psyche, Melanie Klein modifies Freud's theories and presents a model of the psyche completely structured and determined by anxiety.

Melanie Klein trained under Freud's protégées, first Karl Abrahams and then Ernest Jones. She focused her therapy on children, which constituted a move counter to the treatment protocols of her time. As one of the founders of object relations psychoanalysis, Klein argued that when the ego cannot function properly, several defense mechanisms arise: inhibitions and symptoms. Klein develops her theory of the psyche around Freud's idea of defensive mechanisms. For her, almost all emotional actions are a form of depressive or paranoid anxiety and nearly all mental apparati are defenses against sources of anxiety.[44] Thus, the subject is in an endless state of some type of anxiety. Her most notable contribution to psychoanalysis is the idea that the subject divides himself and others into "bits and pieces" as defense against anxiety.[45] Klein describes patients rupturing their identities (or others) into specific parts and then keeping these parts strictly separate from one another in the psyche. This idea of multiple object parts becomes integral to Lacan's revision of Freud and Klein's theories of anxiety.[46]

In Lacan's seminar on anxiety, he disagrees with Freud that the object of fear causes anxiety or that the anxiety arises from the paralysis of the pleasure principle.[47] He also rejects Klein's notion that "bad" objects cause anxiety (those "bits and pieces" that have been labeled as either good or bad); he claims that Klein conflates the Imaginary and the Symbolic in her idea of object relations.[48] Lacan asserts that anxiety—in fact, the body itself (and as adapted for in this dissertation: the body qua race)—produces the object cause of desire; the body and its psychic

energies are ultimately the sources of anxiety. In his revision of Freud and Klein, the objects no longer cause anxiety (e.g., the bears, the prospect of not finishing an assignment, "bad" objects); nor does the relation to the absolute (as in Kierkegaard) give rise to it. Rather, the body, according to Lacan, generates anxiety each time the object cause of desire (or its displaced representative) is re-encountered.

Lacan's formulation posits a reversal of the causal relation between object and anxiety; that is, it's not that the object causes anxiety but that the body as anxiety reproduces the object. It is the articulation and re-articulation of the object cause of desire that fuels anxiety. The child experiences anxiety when he must end the mirror stage and fabricate an object cause of desire—his *objet a*.[49] Each future encounter with this object, Lacan claims, will henceforth produce anxiety. Ironically, anxiety creates the object that will summon anxiety. In the seminar, Lacan describes suicide, inhibitions, dramatic actions, and a host of other defenses against encounters with anxiety or the *objet a*.

In the racialized mirror stage, the child reconfigures his primary and secondary structures to match the objet a imposed upon him by anti-minority racism. This new objet a parallels the desires of the collective conscious: normality. In the novels, desire, in most instances, seems directed toward whiteness, which is logically the representative of normality. The brown body—the opposite of normal and white—activates desire by marking the extent to which, in its brownness, it lacks normality. This awareness of race—conscious and unconscious—produces racial anxiety as a response to the failure of the flesh and body to align with primary and secondary identifications. The body disappoints; the heavily-marked brown body *cannot not* precipitate racial anxiety. The minority subject thus exists in a constant state of racial anxiety. My analysis agrees with Fanon's insightful conclusion that "the negro is a phobogenic object, a stimulus to anxiety."[50] This omnipresent racial anxiety must be placated so that the subject can function and thrive in an anti-minority world.

The subject can defend against racial anxiety in two different maneuvers. Lacan terms the first as "surplus *jouissance,*" which, as the name suggests, is a form of excessive pleasure. This pleasure, though, extends beyond pleasure (but not beyond the death drive) to deliver an extra type of pleasure.[51] This former pleasure temporarily mitigates racial anxiety by distracting the subject with a more enjoyable situation. The 'extra' pleasure portion reveals that its counterpart (the main pleasure) emanates not from true pleasure but as a defense mechanism; this extra pleasure can also be understood as a critique immanent within pleasure itself. When the subject examines the surplus portion of the pleasure, he can experience a critical moment of insight that reveals how pleasure acts to ameliorate racial anxiety. Irene's habitual worrying in *Passing*, for example, functions as surplus jouissance. She worries about small things such as tea parties to distract herself from racial anxiety. She busies her mind with everything except bodily pleasures. The joy of worrying keeps Irene from obtaining a reflective moment.

This dissertation continues where Lacan left off in *Seminar X*. He claims that anxiety has no object and developed the seminar based upon this assumption. This oversight weakened his position and has relegated the seminar to relative obscurity. Seven years later in *Seminar XVII: The Underside of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan mentions, in one sentence, that surplus *jouissance* is the object of anxiety.[52] He does not develop or elaborate on this point for the rest of his very long career. The dissertation hypothesizes the consequences of this insight into the nature of anxiety: surplus *jouissance* hinders the minority subject from exposing racial anxiety and its origins in the dead mother complex and the racialized mirror stage. The authors examined in my project craft plots that follow "enjoyable" quests of (false) self-formation. By mimicking a white

Bildungsroman, the minority subject as represented in literature gains surplus *jouissance* in order to feel integrated in some small way into society instead of remaining in his (true) abject position. Surplus jouissance distracts the minority subject from the revolutionary impulse to end the ravishing effects of the racialized mirror stage. Surplus jouissance keeps the minority subject paralyzed, preventing him from combating anti-minority racism at the level of the psyche.

Confronting and annihilating racial anxiety is the second and more radical defense mechanism. The protagonist embraces racial anxiety rather than trying to avoid it or cover it up with false pleasure. A direct encounter with racial anxiety—instead of eliciting surplus *jouissance* as a defense—helps to expose and destroy the identities crafted from the racialized mirror stage. By critically confronting racial anxiety head-on or exploring the critical moment immanent within surplus jouissance, the subject can slowly disintegrate the ego and its identifications. When the subject experiences racial anxiety, he can divert this anxiety towards either disrupting false pleasures or towards jettisoning false identities. Aspects of the ego that have proven to be false—such as the plethora of subject positions imposed upon minorities—become displaced and decathexed from the ego. A process of disinvestment over multiple episodes creates an ego emptied of identifications and identities and leaves the protagonist in a state that I term "formless." The minority subject becomes a subject without subjectivity. Attaining formlessness requires tremendous effort and pain by the subject. The subject accomplishes this daunting task by either confronting racial anxiety head-on or exploring the false aspects of surplus jouissance.

Almost the entire narrative of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* tracks the narrator's journey towards formlessness. Ellison conveys the idea of formlessness through the over-determined concept of invisibility. Aside from carrying the weight of representing the failed social and political recognition of Invisible Man (and by extension African Americans), the term "invisible" takes on the idea that psychic structures are liquidated and thus gone—invisible. The body remains available to social interpellations while Invisible Man has disintegrated almost all of the layers of his subjectivity by the end of the novel. His identity and ego become virtually "formless" as they now lack interior components. Ellison, and the other authors, represent a minority psychic world that is also formless in the sense that minority history and culture have been prohibited from occupying a space in the "official" historical register. The reiteration of subterranean spaces throughout *Invisible Man*, for instance, facilitate the reader's uptake of a formless world that the narrator seems to repeatedly fall into throughout the novel.

The formless world consists of the un-representable aspects of minority social and cultural practices and history. This includes minority history (recalling here that ethnic history as a documented entity is a recent phenomenon); minority culture; historical and contemporary forms of anti-Asian and anti-black racisms; the elusive undercurrents of jazz and the blues; the essence of "soul" or Asian mythology; the resiliency to survive over generations of oppression; collective knowledge of life under slavery; life under exclusion acts; life in concentration camps, etc. Formlessness is not simply abjection but a space that also preserves minority culture; it is the material that the child identifies with during original primary identification—his "world" in the mirror should be black or Asian cultures and peoples.

The various transformation of jazz can serve as an example for illustration of how minority culture became formless. Popular forms of jazz permeated American mass culture by the 1950s. Ralph Ellison and Theodor Adorno agree that bebop is a socially appropriated or socially approved distillation of jazz. Bebop is not just adulterated jazz but the only aspect of a filtered form of black culture acceptable for social representation; authentic jazz and authentic

black culture cannot be represented in mass culture. Bebop mimics true jazz and lacks its critical moment. Bebop does not contain the emotional and cultural registers that made early jazz such a powerfully transformative art. The culture industry extracted consumable elements from jazz and gave them representation under the guise of bebop. The core of jazz remains invisible—formless—to the social fabric of American life.

Once the subject reaches a state of formlessness by disintegrating his identities and surrounding himself with "formless" African American or Asian American culture, he can proceed with the next steps of minority bildung. Remaining in a state of formlessness is not an option; the character must rejoin society. Ralph Ellison, for example, presents the invisible man's extended hibernation in a semi-formlessness state as problematic. In Hurston's novel, Janie must return to a hostile black community, and Richard Wright terminates Fishbelly's two-year jail sentence—a period of stagnant formlessness—with a confrontation of the white characters who imprisoned him. The minority subject must accept the self-deformation of his ego as only the first step in minority bildung. A second mirror stage will craft a new ego and subjectivity free from anti-black or anti-Asian racism and of the terrors of the racialized mirror stage. The protagonist begins the second mirror stage not by returning to a state of non-differentiation as in the first mirror stage. Primary identification and narcissism mirror themselves off of the formless—the unrepresented—minority culture that was expelled from the first mirror stage. To capture this bildung of self-disintegration and of a second mirror stage, minority authors invented a new literary genre: the minority *Bildungsroman*.

Section 4: A Second Mirror Stage

From a state of formlessness, the protagonist can either ruminate—for an extended period as seen in *Invisible Man*—or undergo a rebirth, as exemplified by Janie in Zora Neal Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* Janie finds her true love, Teacake, after two failed marriages. The pair thrive as a couple and Janie finally experiences pleasure as an adult. In a tragic twist, Teacake becomes infected with rabies when he saves Janie from a mad dog. Unable to obtain medication, Teacake slowly slides into a crazy rage, which culminates with him attempting to kill Janie. With no option of escape, Janie shoots and kills Teacake in self-defense. While a period of mourning is unavoidable, she manages not to fall into a deep melancholia. Instead, she works through her sadness by recounting her story to an old friend; simultaneous with this story-telling is Janie's journey of rebirth.

After leaving Joe Sparks, her second husband, Janie gradually discards social norms and practices in favor of a new way of relating to the world. Through her adventures with Teacake, she learns to abandon the material world for a more whimsical approach to life. Even though she transforms into a more vivacious and emotionally open character with Teacake, she doesn't become a "complete" subject until after his death. Teacake taught Janie to self-deform her identities tied to the material world and she continues this disinvestment from it after his death. Teacake's death precipitates her final movements toward the second mirror stage. After a period living with Teacake, Janie moves from being at the center of black social life to being at its margins. Her only identity consists in being Teacake's lover. Janie begins the second mirror stage while bringing mourning to a close.

In ending her mourning process, Janie decathects from Teacake and leaves her ego without any identities or attachments. Teacake becomes a memory instead of an object. Janie

becomes completely formless as she is no longer a wife, partner, or lover. Teacake—as an object of mourning and as a memory—functions as a positive mirror for Janie. In this mirror relation, he cannot traumatize her, nor he does not see her as lacking, as are the case during the first mirror stage. He is the lover who cares for her; Teacake is dead but psychically alive. Teacake embodies feminine, not phallic, jouissance, which makes him a candidate for the mirror. Lacan differentiates between phallic and feminine jouissance in *Seminar XX*.

Phallic jouissance encompasses the pleasures of knowing, meaning, duty, and social norms. It also exists in the realm of logical time. Some crude examples would be the pleasure from exercising power over another person, or demanding pleasure from an orgasm. In my chapter on John Okada's *No-No Boy*, I explain how maternal and feminine care can actually manifest as phallic jouissance. Emi, Ichiro's potential lover, attempts to "nurture" him back into society through the temptation of assimilation. Her care does not help Ichiro recover from his traumas, however; it prescribes and manages his recovery.

Feminine jouissance, on the other hand, escapes the confines of time and the social mandates of conformity. Lacan defines feminine jouissance as "a *jouissance* that is hers about which she herself perhaps knows nothing if not that she experiences it."[53] To help concretize this cryptic formulation, feminine *jouissance* can arise in the simplest of moments. A classic example is when a person loses track of time while performing an activity that should not necessarily provide pleasure, i.e. not sex but something like gardening, running, or cleaning out the gutters. He becomes aware of the passed time only in a retroactive understanding; he may or may not consciously 'register' pleasure after the fact, but has experienced it. Feminine jouissance does not require itself to be consciously recognized. Janie, for example, loses track of time while laboring away in the fields with Teacake. She only knows her pleasure after returning home from a day of work and reflecting upon how pleasurable the day was. Telescoping back to the second mirror phase, Janie enters the mirror with Teacake, who embodies feminine *jouissance*. He offers care without restrictions—and without alerting Janie that she will be protected and nurtured in the mirror. She takes a leap of faith by embracing racial anxiety.

Janie is also in the process of mourning during the second mirror stage and this prevents anti-black racism from converting Teacake into a psychically dead lover; he is already dead. Janie orients herself around the memory of Teacake and identifies with his open-ended love—his feminine jouissance—and reads his desires. She crafts a new objet a around Teacake's desires, which is a love for a happy and excited Janie. She should experience racial anxiety by viewing her new self as a black woman but the ego that was susceptible to racial anxiety has been destroyed. In the second mirror stage, Janie crafts a new ego around Teacake's love. This precludes orienting herself around self-hatred and anti-black racism. Additionally, the dead Teacake remains with Janie as a positive memory instead of as an alienating mirror; he does not haunt her as a melancholic object but continues to live with her as a peaceful memory. Janie emerges from the second mirror stage free from the anti-black racism formerly embedded within her psyche. Thus, Hurston endows Janie with the opportunity to construct her own ego and identity after this rebirth.

Mourning and aggression are two other major aspects of the second mirror stage. The journey towards formlessness requires the disintegration of identity and ties to loved ones, including children. Minority authors develop a complex aesthetic of mourning as part of minority self-deformation. The novels address mourning through secondary identification and narcissism. In the racialized mirror stage, the child begins to identify with the mother but discovers that she is a psychically dead creature from whom the child must disinvest his Eros.[54] In the second

mirror stage, the work of mourning becomes simultaneous with the work of secondary identification and secondary narcissism. In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud described mourning as "the reaction to the loss of a loved object."[55] The work of mourning is integral to the second mirror phase.

Using economic language, Freud argues that the end of mourning occurs when the ego "is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished."[56] Freud adds that mourning, like melancholia, comes to an end when the ego relinquishes "the object by declaring the object to be dead and offering the ego the inducement of continuing to live."[57] This exchange model is relevant to the mechanisms of the second mirror stage, as well. Janie, for example, accepts Teacake's death and his need to transform into a memory so that she can be "induced" to craft a new ego and to continue to live. Freud predicts that mourning ends when "reality-testing has shown that the loved object no longer exists, and it proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object" and "the ego becomes free and uninhibited again."[58] Before the ego can become completely destroyed in the second mirror stage, the subject must disinvest from its love object to become "free."

The end of mourning comes about through a resolution of the feelings of loss—a disinvestment from a love object without residual investments beyond memories. The last object-cathexis of the almost formless ego is the attachment to a dead lover. The subject does not want to extinguish its beneficial love bonds; after all, Freud tells us that, "by taking flight into the ego love escapes extinction."[59] The remnants of the ego make their last appearance in the second mirror stage. The ego must be completely destroyed; the work of mourning and secondary identification deliver the final blow. The lover must be released and transformed into a memory. The end of mourning thus occurs simultaneously with the decathexis of the lover from the ego and the subsequent destruction of the ego crafted during the racialized mirror stage. When the subject realizes that the dead lover acts as his second mirror, he can recall their love and feel safe in the context of feminine jouissance. He begins his disinvestment from the lover and in this action, the ego shatters and mourning comes to a completion. The mirror relationship with the memory of the lover (not a lover still cathected to an ego as an object) can proceed along with the formation of the I-ideal.

This particular case of the second mirror stage might appear facile—even slightly utopian. Yet the psychic acrobatics involved with self-formation and the crafting of a new ego reveal that the journey of minority bildung is also extremely violent. It involves the disintegration of social identities, the destruction of multiple egos, and two mirror stages; these maneuvers generate a significant amount of aggression. The second mirror stage is filled with pain and frustration. Aggression undergirds what could be mistaken for an almost idyllic journey of development.

Aggression can be found at each step of the mirror stage. When the child advances from the ideal-I to "a fragmented image of the body…the finally donned armor of an alienating identity [of the I-ideal]," the child suffers greatly.[60] The child's transition from a gestalt unitary image of himself to a split subject position spawns "alienation" and aggression. Note how the neophyte subjectivity as experienced by the child registers as "armor." The mirror phase traumatizes the child to the point of arming himself against a threat (or anxiety). The second mirror stage is not just traumatic but it, too, is a battle. While much of the work of the second mirror stage might appear to involve idyllic notions of the "power of love," the novels insistently refuse sentimental readings by showcasing these intense forces of aggression. The work of

mourning, for example, involves tremendous amounts of violence. The ego exists in an antagonistic relationship to the reality principle, which demands that the ego acknowledge the death of a lover. In turn, the ego responds by sustaining love inside of the ego and acting out against the death of the lover, i.e. by mourning. Both of these actions require the redirection or production, respectively, of aggression. While love does play an integral role in the second mirror stage, the role of aggression forms an even more significant part.

Aggression begins in the second mirror stage when the subject initiates a primary identification with cultural formlessness. Aggression transpires during the mirror stage when there is a loss of "respect for the natural forms of the human body."[61] The minority subject views his body as not just his physical form but in unity with formlessness. The subject's sense of self extends beyond the body to the contents of formlessness. As the ideal-I coalesces around cultural formlessness, this process replaces—displaces—the mis-identifications from the racialized mirror stage. This identification also serves as a strong foundation for an ego to resist and repel anti-black or anti-Asian racism. Ethnic culture bolsters the subject in dismantling the dead mother complex. An identification with formlessness begets aggression when a new primary identification and narcissism replace the old ones.

Secondary identification not only fractures and castrates the subject, but it also initiates a competition for the lover's attention and a slight feeling of alienation. In performing the work of mourning, the subject must figure out what he lacks to fulfill the lover's desire. This feeling of alienation from the lover elicits aggression. Ultimately the subject discovers that the lover desires himself but alienation and aggression are already in motion. In working-through mourning, the subject must relinquish his investment in the lover by realizing and accepting that the lover is dead. This loss simultaneously evokes hostility and elation; the lover can become a pleasant memory instead of a haunting presence while also eliciting anger for the death and permanent absence of the lover. The dead lover must be released so that the final ego produced in the racialized mirror stage can be completely destroyed—otherwise a piece of the ego would remain due to this object-cathexis—and a new ego formed. The work of mourning completes itself at the expense of generating aggression. The subject needs the drive of aggression to complete secondary identification and the second mirror stage.

Secondary narcissism also contributes to aggression. Before the dead lover transforms into a memory, he presents himself as a mirror. The love given by the dead lover does not possess restrictions or requirements. This love, though, does not dictate how the mirror stage will proceed; the subject could become a psychotic, not finish the second mirror phase, commit suicide, etc. The dead lover does not impose rules on the formation of a new ego. He heals and nurses the wounds of castration by offering love and by helping to destroy the old ego. This feminine jouissance, this unadulterated love, serves as a model for the subject and the foundation for the new ego. As the subject engages in the secondary identification with the dead lover, secondary narcissism revolves around feminine jouissance—the quintessence of the dead lover. The lover's feminine jouissance cannot be possessed and this mints aggression because the subject cannot attach to the lover as feminine jouissance. In the same vein, primary narcissism requires that the subject leave formlessness. Primary narcissism first serves as an avenue back to formlessness and cultural strength. The subject will have a narcissistic attraction to representatives of minority culture. He will also be able to engage minority culture, if needed, to find peace or to learn a lesson from cultural history.

Donald Winnicott provides another perspective on primary narcissistic attraction. He posits that the subject is constantly seeking out the mother after the mirror stage. The subject

does this by looking in a real mirror to find the essence of the mother's ego inside of her. Her gaze "reassure[s] herself [for instance, Janie] that the mother-image [Teacake] is there and that the mother can see her and that the mother is *en rapport* with her."[62] To take another example, Ralph Ellison repeatedly describes how the narrator "slips" back into the domain of formlessness.[63] In these moments, Ellison demonstrates the way in which a process of primary identification might work. In these episodes Ellison reflects the narrator's inability to be comfortable in these formless spaces; Invisible Man is only partially formless and he only has bits and pieces of a new primary narcissism. Only after the Invisible Man undergoes a second mirror stage will he be able to comfortably relate to black culture practices and black history.

[1] Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk* in *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. eds. Henry Louis Gates and Nellie McKay. New York: Norton, 1997, 615.
[2] Bruce, Dickson. "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness." *American Literature* 64 (June 1992), 302.
[3] Douglass, Frederick. *My Bondage and My Freedom* in *Douglass: Autobiographies.* New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1994, 337.
[4] Douglass, Frederick. "Self-Made Men." The Frederick Douglass Papers at the Library of Congress. < http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mfd&fileName=29/29002/29002page.db&recNum=0&itemLink=/ammem/doughtml/dougFolder5.html&linkText=7>
[5] Du Bois, W.E.B. *Dusk of Dawn.* Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1984, 217.
[6] Du Bois, *Souls*, 617.
[7] Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks.* New York: Grove Books, 1967, 10.
[8] Fanon, 44, 49.
[9] Fanon, 11.
[10] Fanon, 100.
[11] Fanon, 154, 143.
[12] Fanon, 36.
[13] Fanon, 18.
[14] Fanon, 162 (note 25).
[15] Koselleck, Reinhart. *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing, History, Spacing Concepts.* Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2002, 185.
[16] Koselleck, 186 and 192.
[17] Moretti, Franco. *Maps, Graphs, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*. New York: Verso, 2005, 19. The data is for Britain and the date is approximate as read from a graph.
[18] Zelizer, Viviana. *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994.
[19] Bahktin, M. M. "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)." In *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986, 21.
[20] Koselleck, 203.
[21] Moretti, Franco. The *Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*. New York: Verso, 1985.
[22] James and Alix Strachey translated Freud's *ich* as ego instead of "I". While most psychoanalytic literature in English replicated this convention, the accepted translation is now "I" instead of ego.
[23] Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English.* New York: Norton, 2006, 76.
[24] Lacan, 76.
[25] Lacan, Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis." *Ecrits*, 91.
[26] Green, Andre. "The Dead Mother" in *On Private Madness.* London: Karnac Books, 1997, 142.
[27] Many slave children were the product of rape by white men. The children from these unions were considered black and remained slaves like their mothers.
[28] Fanon, 14.
[29] I will refer to the mother to maintain the tradition of speaking about the child's immediate care-giver even though the father, a close relative, extended kin member, or other care-taker could serve in the role identified as the "mother."
[30] Lacan, Jacques. "Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis," 100.
[31] Lacan, Mirror Stage, 76.
[32] Fanon, 18.
[33] Fanon, 11.
[34] Fanon, 134.
[35] Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 245.
[36] Cheng, Anne. "The Melancholy of Race." *The Kenyon Review.* vol. 19, No. 1 (Winter, 1997), 55.
[37] Freud, Mourning and Melancholia, 246.
[38] Freud, Mourning and Melancholia, 249.
[39] Freud, Mourning and Melancholia, 252.
[40] OED

[41] Kierkegaard, Soren. *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition For Upbuilding and Awakening*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983; *The Concept of Anxiety*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981. *Fear and Trembling/Repetition: Kierkegaard's Writings*, Vol. 6. Princeton University Press, 1983; *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*. Penguin Classics, 1992.

42 Sigmund Freud. *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (The Standard Edition). New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990.

43 Sigmund Freud. *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis)*, The Standard Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990.

44 Klein, Melanie. *Envy and Gratitude (1946-1963)*. Free Press, 2002., *Love, Guilt and Reparation: And Other Works 1921-1945*. Free Press, 2002, and *Psychoanalysis of Children*, Free Press, 1984.

[45] Klein, Melanie. "Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states" (1940) and "A contribution to the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states." (1935) in Love, *Guilt, and Reparation: And Other Works 1921-1945*. London: Free Press, 1999.

[46] While Klein's model of psychoanalysis provides a rigorous—in fact, the most comprehensive formula—of anxiety, the theory does not account for the play of language that Lacan introduces to psychoanalytic thought.

[47] Lacan, Jacques. *L'Seminar, livre 10: L'Angoisse*. Paris: Seuil, 2004.

[48] Lacan, Jacques. *Psychosis: Seminar III.* New York: Norton (1993), 253.

[49] Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" in *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. trans. Bruce Fink. New York: W.W. Norton (2007).

[50] Fanon, 151.

[51] Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis, Vol. 17*. New York: Routledge (2006).

[52] Lacan, Jacques. *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Books XVII (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*). New York: W.W. Norton (2007).

[53] Lacan, Jacques. *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge: Book XX (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan)*. New York: W.W. Norton (1999), 74.

[54] Freud does argue that the sadism from melancholia can lead the subject to suicide. But, this act only rarely appears in African American literature. Even in *Passing,* Larsen does not distinguish whether Clare jumps to her death or Irene pushes her out of the window. If minorities were melancholic as Cheng argues, I would imagine that there would be more accounts of suicide in the African American and Asian American communities.

[55] Freud, MM. 245.

[56] Freud, MM, 255.

[57] Freud, MM, 257.

[58] Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 244 and 245, respectively.

[59] Freud, MM, 257.

[60] Lacan, Mirror Stage, 78.

[61] Lacan, Aggressiveness, 85.

[62] Winnicott, D.W. "Mirror-Role of Mother and Family in Child Development" in *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock, 1971, 113.

[63] See my chapter on *Invisible Man* for examples and analyses.

Chapter 1

NELLA LARSEN'S ROGUE BLACK WOMEN:
ANTI-BLACK AESTHETICS AND THE FORMATION OF THE MINORITY *BILDUNGSROMAN*

Section 1: Escaping *Quicksand*

Both Jane Austen and Henry James crafted series of novels in rapid succession. In his prefaces, James self-consciously reflects upon his techniques, discussing the faults of his novels and the necessity of revising and often radically rewriting them. *Portrait of a Lady* was just one of his works which underwent extensive revisions. Austen, too, refashioned a marriage plot in each of her elegant novels while at the same time fundamentally transforming her style with each. Both James and Austen—and Frederick Douglass, who revised his autobiography three times, though over a much longer period of time—respond to the failures and the aesthetic limitations of their own prior work in each of their subsequent novels or revisions. While this observation might appear banal, this chapter explores how Nella Larsen's immediate response to the failures of *Quicksand* (1928) with *Passing* (1929) produced not simply a more complex or stylistically more virtuosic novel but something more rare: an entirely new genre.

This chapter traces Larsen's response to the failures of *Quicksand* as a Bildungsroman. The novel, most critics agree, is her masterpiece. Larsen's aesthetic acrobatics move the reader through exotic landscapes while simultaneously keeping the reader treading on the shores of Helga's ever-changing emotional current. The novel captures each of Helga's journeys of self-discovery. It follows Helga as a young college teacher in the South to her splendid adventures in Europe and America. Each episode appears to transform Helga into a more complex character and culminates as a Bildungsroman typically does for a female protagonist—with marriage, albeit a marriage which destroys Helga through childbirth and life in the rural South. Despite Helga's apparently radical journeys and transformations, with this ending, Larsen represents a fate bestowed upon black women: the reproduction of oppression via motherhood. Literary critic Abdul JanMohamed terms this state "death-bound-subjectivity."[1] He defines this position as constituted by the fact of black subjectivity being constructed by and for death and labor. In the case of African American women, they are "bound" to their children and if they question that kinship, it requires them to risk their lives. Thus, a radical change in the life of an African American woman implies death as a possible outcome. In the novel's end, Helga retains only her life and even that, Larsen hints, she would be glad to relinquish were it not for the question of her children's care. The conclusion of the Bildungsroman for African American women, according to Larsen, is their occupation as wives and as producers of African American children. In the course of the novel, Helga had struggled to avoid both of these death-bound subject-positions; she twice questions the imperative for reproduction, asking "why add any more unwanted, tortured Negroes to America,"[2] since "giving birth to little, helpless, unprotesting

Negro children [was] a sin, an unforgivable outrage…more dark bodies for mobs to lynch."[3] Helga's statement asserts the claim that Negroes' lives are destined for oppression from the moment of birth. From her perspective, all African American children will grow up to be oppressed and socially abject. The stringency of her perspective nevertheless allows the question of whether this philosophy encompasses Helga herself.

Most critics read the ending of *Quicksand* as a failure on Larsen's part to express or imagine an ending outside of the conventions expected for a middle class reader and character. In many regards, Helga's ultimate self-destruction by way of marriage comes off as an unoriginal and flat conclusion. I would argue, however, that the real failure of *Quicksand* lies definitely not in the language of the novel, which is consistently graceful, nor in the spectacular unfolding of Helga's tragedy. While the novel involves experiences that superficially satisfy the requirements for its classification as a Bildungsroman and while, thus, it should culminate with Helga's transformation into a "mature" and thriving subject, Larsen questions the productive dimensions of any such journey. Larsen subscribes to the narrative conventions of the white Bildungsroman. However, she mistakenly assumes that she can modify the Bildungsroman to accommodate a narrative of black self-formation. Larsen asks if Helga *can* develop an identity and thus writes a novel of development in an attempt to represent how race, gender, class, marriage, child birth, origins (parents and the trope of the orphan), and material culture contribute to Helga's education. Over the course of the novel, Helga learns that self-formation for African American women is nothing beyond a fantasy. No matter the level of negotiation or subversion of the social order she attains, Helga does not have access to *bildung* because African Americans are given a range of prefabricated identities from which to select. Helga, at most, can slightly modify this "inherited" racial identity, but she cannot *develop into* a more complex character as her subject position is already fully formed. Thus, writing the novel of education reveals to Larsen the impossibility of an African American *bildung* within the context of a white genre. While the Bildungsroman was an attempt to narrate a life contradictory to this fate, Larsen acquiesces to the limitations of the Bildungsroman as a mode to express an alternative form of African American development. She discovers that the genre only allows her to write a history that documents how Helga comes to occupy the subject position granted to her. In *Quicksand,* Larsen accepts that not even a modified white literary form can express black self-formation. No matter how much Helga struggles to develop her character and no matter how much Larsen infuses the white Bildungsroman with a black aesthetic, the genre and the social world inhibit and limit the latter's abilities to narrate a journey of development. The novel does not trace a journey of development, per se, but does culminate with an ending that seems out of place. Helga's life contracts into the oppressive role of motherhood and she is constantly physically distorted by continuous pregnancies. The domestic sphere radically destroys and ends Helga's journey of self-formation. Larsen concludes the novel with Helga's self-deformation but the novel does not logically lead to this state.

With *Passing* Larsen crafts a new genre that I term the minority *Bildungsroman.* This new genre offers a radical theory of self-formation for minorities. With *Quicksand* Larsen borrowed an aesthetic form from the previous century and transformed it with a few alterations in an attempt to represent black female development. She changed the color of the people yet remained wedded to the idea of self-formation as a struggle that ultimately ends with heterosexual marriage. This repopulation of an autonomous work of art flattens the genre and diminishes its criticality. To paraphrase Theodor Adorno, Larsen cheats her readers out of what the Bildungsroman promises. The promissory note of bildung issued by plot and packaging and

genre is indefinitely prolonged; the reader must be satisfied with reading the nineteenth-century Bildungsroman rather than the twentieth-century African American Bildungsroman.[4] It is only with *Passing* that Larsen learns from her mistakes. She articulates a theory of minority bildung as self-deformation instead of self-formation. Whereas *Quicksand* ends in the figurative and literal self-deformation of Helga, *Passing* articulates a complex and fully developed theory of self-deformation.

While Helga attempts to develop a more complex identity, Clare and Irene aim to disintegrate their prefabricated identities. This radical shift in "development" critiques anti-black racism and its fantasy that African Americans can develop under its disciplining powers. Larsen demonstrates that African Americans must first discard their social identities before crafting a new, more truly African American identity. Larsen reworks the themes in *Quicksand* in *Passing* to help her readers make the jump in genre. Only by grasping the tormented emotions and failed logic of Helga will the project of Irene and Clare's minority Bildungsroman come into focus. By recovering Helga's *bildung* as what literary scholar Saidiya Hartman would classify as "scene of subjection" I aim to demonstrate how Larsen's mirroring of white bildung moments turn out to be incidents that discipline the black body into a normalized and bounded African American subject.[5] Each of Helga's episodes functions not as *self*-formation but rather as a "scene of subjection." Helga must be disciplined into the bounded identity imposed upon her as an African American woman of the middle class. At the same time, each episode of *Quicksand* quietly registers the absurdity and terror of articulating black development through an inherently anti-black aesthetic. These episodes, in an almost picaresque fashion, offer insights into the failed project of a black bildung that is the mirror image of white bildung. Helga's journey of development turns out to be a series of scenes of subjection that do not develop her as an independent black woman but reinforce—or discipline—her into an socially predetermined identity. As scholars have pointed out, Larsen struggles to articulate a response to the story of the tragic mulatta who is psychically torn between her white and black heritages. Larsen introduces a complex yet binary configuration of black and white culture to address Helga's bi-racial troubles. As might be expected, in doing so, she draws upon historical and contemporary myths related to black and white identity. The world of whiteness and its supposed refinement and particularly its reserved "calmness" and self-reflection are represented in Helga's relationship with her mother, stepfamily, and experiences in Copenhagen. On the other side, blackness manifests in the novel as something "savage"—as a terrifyingly unknown quality that is closely tied to the erotic. Larsen complicates these historical fables, however. First, since Helga cannot pass for white, she adopts a "proper" middle class black position that reflects the calmness and self-reflection that she attributes to white culture. These "white" qualities can be seen in the characters of Anne Gray and later in Irene from *Passing*. The focus of my reading does not pivot around Larsen's critique of the black bourgeois interpretation of whiteness. Helga grapples with her own black bourgeoisie sensibility and its negotiation and appropriation of white culture. I want to interrogate Larsen's re-interpretation of the stereotype of African Americans as primitives within this context of the black bourgeoisie. She has Helga, for instance, pursue and slowly become the black savage over the course of the novel as her mode of *bildung*. First, though, Helga must undergo a traditional process of (white/black middle class) self-formation: a proper education.

Trained at the all-black boarding school Naxos to become a teacher, Helga finds herself immersed in the ideology of "racial uplift." Upon graduation, Helga in turn takes on the task of indoctrinating black students in becoming proper gentlemen and ladies of the black middle class. After eight years of uplift, her enthusiasm begins to wane. Helga describes the school as emitting

"a depressing silence . . . [as] the automatons moved."[6] Instead of learning about black history and culture, Helga witnesses the transformation of young minds into the burgeoning black middle class. On the one hand, these students will become the black elite—Du Bois's "Talented Tenth"—supposedly capable of leading the fight for civil rights; on the other, the methods of formation enforced by Naxos's pedagogical machinery prove abhorrent (Helga suggests) to anyone truly talented or enlightened. The school does not teach African Americans to be critical or creative, but rather to adopt the oppressed social positions planned out for them—a teaching made all the more sad by the fact that these positions are prepared under the aegis of a black university and by black educators. For Larsen, any induction into the world of middle class values and cultures serves to inhibit African Americans in pursuing their own self-formation. Helga describes the young students, who are not much younger than herself, as "human beings who were prisoners…in the midst of all this *radiant life*. They weren't, she knew, even conscious of its presence."[7] Larsen refers to the black rural South and to the collective existence of the African Americans at Naxos as exhibiting a "radiant life" that is nevertheless ignored by students and faculty. The students take more of an interest in the industrial and technical education that will bring financial rewards than in enjoying and learning from black "radiance."

Helga locates the "authentic" dimension to race within the folklore and history of the rural blacks and *within* those who come to the school with long and extended family histories; black radiance figures as an innate quality of African Americans. By comparison, an education of uplift is bleak, silent, colorless—white—and unnatural; this color metaphor is a mode of critiquing the values of the black middle class as "white-washed." Twenty years later, Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man* extends Larsen's critique of black higher education as ignoring and suppressing the black culture from which they emerge and by which they are literally surrounded. Ellison, like Larsen, praises the radiant, "black" knowledge of characters such as Jim Trueblood over that of Bledsoe. Larsen, echoed by Ellison, describes the school as "no longer a school. It had grown into a machine…life had died out of it."[8] Instead of a vital black institution, the school produces black subjects who lack life, who lack black "radiance," and whose education will not allow them to critically reflect upon their own formations. The school manufactures widgets known as members of the black middle class.

Helga decides to leave the college when she realizes that her own identity has been crafted without her approval. During her resignation meeting, Dr. Anderson speaks of the project of uplift and manages to temporarily convince Helga to stay and help him transform hard-working youth into black leaders. Driven in part by new-found sexual desire for Anderson, Helga alters her decision in favor of staying. Anderson's rhetoric of uplift pulls Helga's desire back towards its goals; programmed by her education and middle class milieu to desire and believe in the form of uplift taught by Naxos, she is drawn back in by the institution. The power of Anderson's words—along with his sexual attractiveness—produce in Helga an "actual desire to stay, and to come back next year…he had won her."[9] This feeling dissipates and her disgust returns when Anderson tells her that she is of value as a teacher because "'You're a lady. You have dignity and breeding.' At these words turmoil rose again in Helga Crane."[10] This abrupt vacillation in attitude stems from the word "lady." Helga refuses to perform a socially-determined position falsely attributed to her (in actuality, quite non-normative) "breeding": "she could neither conform [to social norms] nor be happy in her unconformity."[11] According to Anderson, however, her tendency to act out by wearing provocative clothing or by being a hermit do not obscure her "good stock."[12] In terms of her actual effect on her fellows at Naxos, Anderson claims, Helga occupies and performs her socially-constructed position as a

professional black woman of the middle class. Anderson insists that Helga *is* a "lady" to her students, peers, and fiancé. The insistence upon this reality—that even in her unconformity she is a lady—encourages Helga's flight from the college. The horror that her own self-education has fashioned her into a middle class race woman is too terrible for Helga to endure. When Helga tells Anderson of her scandalous origins, she attempts to disrupt her performance as a lady—to no avail.

As critics have often noted, Larsen represents the black middle class with harsh disdain. Helga scolds the norms of the class: "why their constant slavish imitation of traits not their own? Why their constant begging to be considered as exact copies of other [white] people?"[13] Larsen classifies the overall project of the middle class as a quest for "happiness, she supposed. Whatever that might be. What, exactly, she wondered, was happiness? Very positively she wanted it."[14] Helga adopts the same routes toward happiness as anyone imitating white norms: personal enrichment, travel, culture, and marriage. Early in the novel, though, she learns that higher education and idealistic values fail as routes to happiness. Over the course of the novel she begins to believe that a return to an essential blackness will bring her to a state of bliss. Larsen changes Helga's path from being one of self-education to one of self-racialization.

After fleeing the South for Chicago, Helga pronounces as she steps into the busy "multicolored crowd…that she had come home. She Helga Crane, who had no home."[15] A year later in Harlem she declares: "there she had been happy, and secured work, had made acquaintances and another friend. Again she had had that strange transforming experience…that magic sense of having come home."[16] Within the context of "home," Helga convinces herself that "she had, as she put it, 'found herself.'" The black community provides a sense of home and functions as her next phase of *bildung*. By juxtaposing Naxos and Chicago/Harlem, Larsen reveals their similarities and as might be expected, Harlem—like Naxos and Chicago, in turn—must be abandoned. In her second year in Harlem, "life became for her only a hateful *place* where one lived in intimacy with people one would not have chosen had one been given the choice."[17] Helga's yearning for the radiance of black life seems to have failed and she no longer feels at "home." Her attempt at self-racialization in moving to Harlem leaves her feeling: "horribly lonely . . . shutting her off from all of life around her…in all the climbing massed city no one cared one whit about her."[18] The joy she attributes to Harlem disappears: "but it didn't last, this happiness of Helga Crane's."[19] Larsen seems to attribute Helga's sadness to the corruption of her idea of blackness as radiance. Her best friend Anne, for example, dislikes whites but loves white culture as it is adapted by the black middle class. She embodies the critique that Helga made of her middle class peers while still at Naxos: "she aped their [white] clothes, their manners, and their gracious ways of living" "yet disliked the songs, the dances, and the softly blurred speech of the [African American] race."[20] To escape the good home turned bad, Helga flees to Copenhagen with her inheritance—like a true member of the bourgeoisie! Helga's Harlem education proves not to advance her self-formation.

Life abroad amuses Helga with fancy clothes, elaborate parties, cultural performances, and romance. After two years of a carefree life with her wealthy aunt, Helga's unrest re-emerges and she attributes it, again, to a notion of place. She becomes homesick after hearing an African American song and decides that like her African American father, she needs to be surrounded by "the inexhaustible humor and the incessant hope of his own kind."[21] While Helga regrets leaving Copenhagen and her family, she wonders "why couldn't she be satisfied in one *place*?"[22] The idea of a stationary life perplexes Helga. Her adolescent inability to resolve the dialect between "the pale calm of Copenhagen to the colorful lure of Harlem" is called "a trifle ridiculous" by the

narrator.[23] Larsen alerts the reader that the stakes of Helga's vacillations consist in something more complex and unconscious than a simple choice of setting. As a form of deflection, Helga interrupts her philosophy of race relations for a more pleasurable worry: her next city. Previously, Helga had emphasized the spatial dimension of home and race. In her justification for leaving Copenhagen, Helga augments this idea of space to include a cultural dimension: "*these* were her people [African Americans]. . . . she had never truly valued this kinship until distance had shown her its worth...[such] ties that were of the spirit. Ties not only superficially entangled with mere outline of features or colors of skin. Deeper. Much deeper than either of these."[24] Helga complicates the idea of a racialized space by demonstrating that "distance" should not affect the fact of cultural/biological ancestry. Larsen introduces the idea of "spirit" over phenotype. This harks back to the sense of the "radiance" of blackness as an abstract quantity that appeared at the beginning of the novel. This raises the question of is Helga just rediscovering her own concept of blackness and race as historically informed and practiced? She rediscovers that race is not simply a question of skin color but also a question of cultural practices and a rich history. It is this spirit and radiance, now reified into black bodies, which Helga claims to miss. In the opening scene, in Anne's home, and in Copenhagen, Helga delights in surrounding herself with luxury items. At the same time, in Harlem Helga, "had found herself surrounded by hundreds, thousands, of dark-eyed brown folk."[25] Larsen cannot be more explicit that Helga confusedly maps African Americans and materials objects onto each other. The blacks of Harlem serve as another form of decoration for Helga's emotional consumption while her emotional sphere—as the opposite of calm—constitutes her idea of blackness. Thus, black radiance manifests itself as expressed through the consumption of African American bodies and as the emotional expression of black history and culture. In each situations, blackness, black bodies, and black radiance remain in (consumptive) circulation for Helga.

African American "worth" and value materialize as both emotional comfort due to their physical presence and their ability to be reified and exchanged as commodity fetishes. Helga cannot, or will not, understand the individual human labor that subtends the crafting African Americans as parents, caregivers, artists, farmers, cooks, friends, lovers, etc. Instead, in anonymous public places, African Americans fulfill Helga's fantasy of a black radiance/spirit in circulation. It is this exchange quality—this disembodied spirit that can travel among a crowd—that becomes the fetish in Helga's interpretation of the value of black bodies in the process of self-formation. As spiritually instrumental fetishes, they aid her journey of self-discovery by endowing psychic and material comfort. Larsen further develops the imagery of Helga surrounded by a world of objects in circulation—men.

Critics have interpreted Helga's sexual life as both a symptom of ephemeral, immature lust and as a marker of a sexuality that cannot be expressed outside the confines of marriage. I want to focus on Larsen's treatment of men as objects that help keep Helga's fantasies in circulation rather than viewing them as underdeveloped characters or as signs of middle class propriety. Helga's passion for Robert Anderson, for example, is not articulated early in the novel. Does it begin in her resignation meeting, before it, or when she spies Anderson with Audrey Denney or Anne Gray? Larsen crafts an ambiguous origin point not because love is nebulous but rather that love, too, must be an object in circulation. Helga is a serial flirt; in the short novel, she seduces James Vayle (engaged), Robert Anderson (potential affair), Axel Olson (proposal of marriage), the Reverend Pleasant Green (marriage), and countless other men around the globe. Larsen breaks literary ground by representing Helga's strong sexuality, although she does not fully develop sexuality in *Quicksand.* Helga's desires, then, remain in circulation and can be

deposited and exchanged with each new suitor. After her rejection by Anderson, Helga metaphorically attaches her love to the first man she encounters: Reverend Green. Larsen describes Helga's love as in-motion, in-circulation and it settles on Green not because he is an interesting character but because Helga approaches him as a thing: "it [marriage] was a chance at stability, at permanent happiness, that she meant *to take.*"[26] Green does not register as a minor character but as a thing that provides stability, happiness, and revenge. Helga believes that her marriage to Green will injure Anderson: "he would be shocked. Grieved. Horribly hurt even."[27] Thus, Green and the other men function as means to an end for Helga. Even with Anderson, Helga views him as a sexual object and not romantic partner: "she had wanted so terribly something special from him. Something special. And now she had forfeited it forever. Forever."[28] While I would like to interpret this "something special" as a fulfilling relationship, Larsen does not allude to romance as being integral to Helga's world. She wants to have sex with Anderson; marriage and romance are out of the question since he is married and an affair would not be compatible with his constitution. And like desire for commodities, Helga who believes she has "forfeited" sex "forever," obtains a replacement object in a just a few days. In remembering an erotic dream, Helga confirms the exchange value of men: "thinking not so much of the man whose arms had held her as of the ecstasy which had flooded her."[29] In the most crude sense, Larsen represents men for their surplus value.

While in Copenhagen Larsen stages the consequences of treating male characters as commodity fetishes. First, an early inheritance from her Uncle Peter enables Helga to journey from Harlem to Copenhagen. He exchanges his kinship and all future relations with Helga for five thousand dollars.[30] This move is both disgusting and disturbing while also illuminating how men—even if Helga wants to build a relationship with them—supply only surplus value. This exchange occurs not in person but in a letter to further emphasize the surplus dimension of men. The reader might become saddened by Uncle Peter's gestures, but Helga anticipates—might possibly precipitates—the transaction. She describes potential husbands as: "any one of them could give her the things which she had now come to desire, a home like Anne's, cars of expensive makes. . .clothes and furs. . . servants, and leisure."[31] Helga is not a romantic but a burgeoning capitalist! Axel believes he confirms this desire; he understands that Helga relates to men for their surplus value. He refers to himself as an object: "I make of myself a present to you. For love."[32] With his wealth he will provide Helga with all of the material goods that she desires including reducing him as a husband into an object with an endless supply of surplus value. After Helga rejects his marriage proposal on the grounds of miscegenation, he retorts at the absurdity of her answer: "you have the warm impulsive nature of the women of Africa, but, my lovely, you have, I fear, the soul of a prostitute. You sell yourself to the highest buyer." Axel nails Helga's philosophy of men as commodities and the absence of love from her universe. Helga attempts to deny Axel's insights by claiming: "I'm not for sale. Not to you. Not to any white man. I don't at all care to be owned." Larsen blurs the distinction between an object for sale and an object in circulation. Helga cannot be transformed into a commodity by or for men, but she represents herself as an object in circulation—just not for sale. Helga desires to be a commodity without an owner, a piece of public property of sorts. Thus, it is not just African American or white men that become commodities; Helga herself participates in the process of exchange and surplus value.

Helga is not "owned" by anyone as she claims, but Larsen does place her in circulation as an object to be admired. Her charm and exotic presentation appear as attributes of her identity, but they also reveal Helga's reification because they mark her surplus value as a woman. Anderson, for example, calls her performance of self "a lady" and for five thousand dollars her

uncle purchases his kinship bonds from Helga rather than simply disinheriting or ostracizing her. Besides rendering Helga as an object for sale in romance or in kinship, Larsen represents her as a pleasurable object for visual consumption. In Denmark, Helga refuses to speak Danish even though she remembers much of the language; she prefers to be the object of attention rather than attempting to integrate into the conversations: "intentionally she kept to the slow, faltering Danish. It was, she decided, more attractive than a nearer perfection."[33] While she blames her aunt for her exoticization—of "being noticed and flattered" (104) —"Helga Crane loved clothes, elaborate ones" when she was still in Naxos (51). It is Helga who enjoys transforming herself into an object. If anything, Aunt Katrina nurtures Helga's sense of style and helps her find love, new friends, and a caring family. Helga interprets this mothering as Katrina's way of showing off her exotic creature. Through this racist construction of African Americans as savages, Larsen facilitates Helga's transformation into an object.

Through the trope of the savage, Larsen reveals that Helga, herself, participates in commodity fetishism. She "felt like a veritable savage . . . . the many pedestrians [in Copenhagen] who stopped to stare at the queer dark creature."[34] Instead of fleeing from the streets, Helga resiliently continues her strolls about the city with her aunt and "felt like nothing so much as some new strange species of pet dog being proudly exhibited."[35] The anti-black stares do not concern Helga. She desires something else in the white gaze: "everyone was very polite and very friendly, but she felt the massed curiosity and interest, so discreetly hidden under the polite greetings" (100). At the end of the walk, Helga feels energized from performing the exotic: "in spite of the mental strain, she had enjoyed her prominence."[36] Later that evening she dresses for dinner in "barbaric bracelets."[37] Following the dinner, she positions herself as the talking exotic: "Helga sat effectively posed on a red satin sofa, the center of an admiring group, replying to questions."[38] Larsen wants the reader to become inflamed by the treatment Helga receives in Copenhagen. She might be with relatives, but Helga's "exact status in her new environment…. [was as] a decoration. A curio. A peacock."[39] She "was, a curiosity, a stunt, at which people came and gazed."[40] Helga transforms from "a lady" of the black middle class into a savage amidst the refined and elite Danish. There should be outrage, but Helga enjoys being the primitive. She is ecstatic about her conversion into a commodity fetish and especially the erasure of her history, of her bildung. Though near fluent in Danish, Helga supposedly can only report a few words spoken by her new suitor. She selectively translates words that construct Helga as an object "'Superb eyes . . . color . . . neck column . . . yellow . . . hair . . . alive . . . wonderful . . .'"[41] Helga appears "suddenly wild" but then "tameness returned" after Axel's marriage proposal.[42] Later Helga describes her own portrait as "some disgusting sensual creature with her features."[43] This conversion into the primitive also appears to endow her with complete freedom from the necessity of assimilating to white culture (via a middle class black "lady"hood) because whiteness and the black middle class demand an active differentiation from the working class, from the primitive. At the end of the novel, Helga accelerates her conversion into an object via a religious conversion experience. Mirroring Marx's famous line that "religion is the opium of the masses," Helga releases control of her subjectivity and allows herself to be dominated by God qua Reverend Green and the domestic life he promises. In a church revival, she "began to yell like one insane, drowning every other clamor, while torrents of tears streamed down her face. *She was unconscious* of the words she uttered, or their meaning: 'Oh, God, mercy, mercy. Have mercy on me!'"[44]

Larsen explicitly draws upon Marx to illustrate how religion dissolves the subject through the process of forgetting. Helga, it appears, "was unconscious" of her own reification, although

we later learn that this conversion was a deliberate gesture in order to test whether the black church would help her become more authentically black. Her final and most dramatic form of reification occurs when she moves from being a vital character to returning to the plebeians as a wife and finally to a flattened and purely reproductive machine as a mother. Once motherhood seizes her, it is as if her entire past has been erased and supplanted by what was always waiting for Helga: heterosexual marriage and motherhood. In these examples, Helga exacerbates the idea of herself as a commodity fetish—especially one that is in a constant state of circulation and transformation. At one point she walks into an open market to be gazed at by working class Danes. She desires not just circulation in the middle or upper classes but also amongst the working class. By moving Helga through various social units, Larsen undeniable demonstrates the reification of Helga Crane in multiple venues. This evokes a series of question, what does Larsen gain by keeping Helga in circulation rather than being owned by a husband and why would she eventually marry and break this cycle with permanent ownership by a husband and children? How does the erasure of subjectivity factor into the novel? What purpose does a self-conscious reification serve? Does Larsen keep Helga in circulation as a mode of critique of race relations?

A more classic reading of Helga qua blackness and its reification would emphasize the fragile status of African American culture as it enters the twentieth century just a few decades removed from slavery. Many critics point out how African American culture becomes positioned as the abject in American social practices—as an object of manipulation and relegated to the world of animality. Larsen implodes both of these typical readings. First, African American culture—even if Helga idealizes folk culture in reaction to a newly thriving black middle class in the North—possesses too rich of a history to be fully reified. History books at the time might exclude black culture or represent it with a false history, but nevertheless, African American history cannot be reified. James Vayle, Helga's fiancé in Naxos, for example, cannot capture the scope of blackness: "'no, it's something else, something deeper than that…I'm afraid it's hard to explain."[45] His inability to confine this history to a few words reflects not its inability to be reified but its inability to be expressed with such precision as would an object. Second, the trope and stereotype of Africans and African Americans as animals, savages, and primitives thrives in the twenties both in America and Europe. Larsen has Helga perform the animal-savage to more easily enter the world of commodities. I want to argue that Larsen constructs a world of objects—including blackness, men, and Helga—as a critique not of how anti-black racism attempts to reify and negate African American culture and African American subjects but as a mode of recovering the lost love of the mother, specifically Helga Crane's white, Danish mother. The black subject, as Hortense Spillers argues in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," cannot have access to the mother—black or white.[46]

Section 2: Reconfiguring the *Bildungsroman*

Helga's desires, I argue, cannot be directly registered. Her lust for Anderson and Vayle, for instance, appear as distortions and nervous ticks. Often represented as an unknown bodily force, Helga's sexual lust has difficulties appearing in the novel. Critics have argued that this reflects Larsen's middle class propriety to abhor sex outside of marriage. I believe, on the contrary, that her desires—as those of a black woman—cannot be represented in the borrowed form of the white Bildungsroman. They can only be revealed through mediations—through

commodities in this instance. The Bildungsroman was designed and refined to express white desires; forcing this genre to represent African American development requires Larsen to alter the protocols of the genre. She attempts to articulate a black woman's developmental experiences as a series of cumulative episodes which function as scenes of subjection that police Helga into predetermined social and emotional roles. Larsen, though, tries to resist and subvert this imperative through various strategies. The opening scene where Helga is surrounded by material goods, for example, is not solely an example of her deriving pleasure from those objects. Instead, the objects serve to protect her from the black middle class that demands that she conform to its culture of gossip, proper decorum, and civilized living. Romantic encounters fail to provide Helga with typical sexual pleasure. Relations with Vayle, Olson, and Anderson evoke feelings of being trapped and disrupt Helga's sense of individuality. Larsen de-emphasizes Helga's desire for men to focus the reader on a reading practice that helps to decipher Helga's reification of the world. Her accumulation of objects and her drive to transform subjects into objects indicates while obscuring the need for protection from an anti-black world that robs Helga of her parents and her ability to be a subject. It also critiques the Bildungsroman as a form incompatible with African American literature.

The novel opens with Helga reading alone in her room. She wears an expensive negligee and sits on an expansive chair whose ottoman is decorated with an expensive oriental silk. Her island of luxury is bounded by an expensive Chinese carpet and lit by an expensive "great black and red shade[d]" lamp.[47] Books, a pricey commodity in her time, and a "shining brass bowl crowed with many-colored nasturtiums" surround her oasis. The room is filled, "crowded" with material objects that produce a feeling of comfort in Helga. And her appreciation—no her need—for objects is different from the typical subject of the culture industry. The other teachers save money and wear mainstream clothing; Helga buys luxury fabrics and spends all of her money on things instead of saving. According to the narrator, "all her life Helga Crane had loved and longed for nice things."[48] Her peers in Naxos call her vain. This accusation misses the mark but illuminates the importance of material "things" in the novel. Helga does not consume nor does she transform the entire universe of the novel into objects as a reflection of middle class consumption. Larsen suggests that a turn to commodity fetish is Helga's lifelong dream: "she had wanted, not money, but the things which money could give, leisure, attention, beautiful surroundings. Things. Things. Things."[49] The world of Helga is not just filled with beautiful objects. Helga actively reifies other characters and herself. Their historical productions of self, their life histories, become lost and forgotten. Helga, for example, represses her history in favor of a new identity as an object. Helga's desire for beautiful surroundings comes true in Copenhagen. In contrast, though, Larsen introduces Aunt Katrina (and by extension her home) as a surrogate mother. Larsen opens the question of what type of relationship exists between the mother and Helga's quest for objects.

Helga converts herself into a commodity to avoid feeling the pains of childhood. Her nervous tick barely registers in the novel and when she does display emotions, they gush out and obfuscate their origins. While not trying to reduce the novel to a psychoanalytic Oedipal drama, Larsen was heavily influenced by the writings of Freud and mapping out Helga's psychic resemblance to Dora would be a fun project but would be beyond the scope of this chapter. Critics might want to read Helga's commodity fetish project as a response to misogynistic forces that want to socially construct women as objects, but Larsen offers an alternative explanation of Dora's aphonia, I mean Helga's. Larsen injects the tragic mulatta narrative not only with a reversal of the typical arrangement of parents (white father and African American mother), but

she also adds a complex psychic dimension to the stock figure. Helga, for instance, is obsessed with forgetting and repressing her traumas. Throughout the novel Helga refers to repressed emotions: "she liked it, this new life. For a time it blotted from her mind all else," (97) "like a storm gathering far on the horizon…this subconscious knowledge added to her growing restlessness and little mental insecurity," (110-111), and "she felt shamed, betrayed…something in her which she had hidden away and wanted to forget" (112). Larsen alerts the reader that a subconscious or subterranean narrative is at work and she fuels these suspicions. Helga wants to eradicate the painful relationships that gave rise to her individual character. Not just evoking an unconscious project, the idea of forgetting signals reification. Adorno said that "all reification is a forgetting."[50] Helga, in forgetting, does the work of erasing her history and relations with others and subsequently abetting her reification. She obliterates her past to avoid its pain while also attempting to reestablish relations with the mother. At the same time that these moments of forgetting erase Helga's history, they narrate and provide a developmental model for her psychic landscape. Through Helga's forgetting, the reader learns that Helga's father abandoned the family when she was just a small child and that her mother remarried a white man out of "a grievous necessity."[51] This stepfather and his children hate and torment Helga all while the mother was calm with her "unloved little Negro girl(s)."[52] Helga can only successfully repress a trauma once it has been made known. This repressed history can become rewritten in a sort of reductive Oedipal explanation. When Helga discusses miscegenation with her aunt, for example, the latter narrates a history of the mother different from the one remembered-repressed by Helga. Katrina tells Helga: "she [the mother] wanted to keep you, she insisted on it, even over his protest, I think. She loved you so much . . . . And so she made you unhappy. Mothers, I suppose, are like that. Selfish."[53] In this almost nonchalant moment, the reader learns that Helga's melancholia might be unjustified and she almost too easily becomes a more complex character—one with a history and less a commodity fetish.

Lacan argues that in the mirror stage, as the child imagines the loss of the mother's attention and love, she tries to become the pleasure lost by the mother. This logic can be seen in Helga's relationship to the mother. Helga assumes that her mother did not love her. She tells Axel: "if we were married, you might come to be ashamed of me, to hate me, to hate all dark people. My mother did that."[54] Helga imagines that her black body is insufficient to be loved by the mother, and as a consequence, she literalizes the fantasy of becoming the object of desire. Helga tracks the mother's desires, for example, while she returns to Copenhagen. Helga notices that she enjoys the family's wealth and love. In the United States, Helga fixates on how much the mother loves the white step-father and new white half-siblings. In turn, Helga forces herself to become the object of the mother's desire: whiteness or money. While she cannot actually become a luxury item or pass for white, she places herself in circulation amongst those objects. As in the opening of the novel and later in Harlem and Copenhagen, Helga's world is composed of beautiful and luxurious things. Larsen allows Helga to refine her objecthood while in Copenhagen. Aunt Katrina not only "mothers" Helga with care, gifts, and love, but she also physically mirrors the real mother: "the resemblance to her own mother was unmistakable."[55] Larsen provides the image of Helga being reborn from her aunt's womb of luxury: "awakening in the great high room. . . . this, then, was where she belonged. This was her proper setting."[56] Helga emerges, "awakens," from the proper womb in Katrina's opulent home. Helga can match her desires with what she believes is the "proper setting." Amongst the wealth, she freely circulates in an exchange relationship with these objects hoping that she, as an equivalent object, will be desired by her mother via the replacement mother. Helga as the primitive, for instance, is

decorated in absolute beauty, and thus she "baits" the mother's desires with the commodities decorating and that are made her equivalent. At the same time, we begin to perceive the objects as offering protection for Helga. Because the mother desired them, Helga viewed them as objects that would defend her from hostile attacks and negative emotions. These "good" objects, to evoke the theories of Melanie Klein, are part of the mother's nurturing world, and if Helga possesses or becomes them, she, too, restores a loving relationship with the mother.[57] Thus, the commodity fetish that Helga enacts partially facilitates the recovery of the mother.[58]

Larsen recognizes that the white bildung journey cannot be directly applied to or represent black subject formation. She discovers that her reworking of bildung to capture the development of Helga—and by extension African American women—is not possible because it cannot trace the complex and historical relationships that contributed to the formation of the protagonist. Helga moves from one experience to the next without "maturing." She essentially repeats the same protocols: serenity, romance, material consumption, hysteria, a supposed epiphany, and finally a fleeing. This formulaic approach to the novel of female development is anything but progress; Helga repeats the same drama just in different outfits and cities. The novel reads as a picaresque rather than as a Bildungsroman. As mentioned earlier, Larsen struggles to craft the black Bildungsroman only to discover that black identities have already been preloaded according to the dictates of socio-political powers. The novel of education turns out to be the novel of teaching Helga her prefabricated identity. In *Quicksand*, Larsen tries to give Helga a true bildung journey, but the historical reality of a limited scope of identities, of preset "scenes of subjection" derail this ambitious project. Most critics cite the predictable ending of the novel as an example of Larsen's aesthetic limitations. Larsen captures Helga's literal fading away from a radiant life by ending the novel with: "so she dozed and dreamed in snatches of sleeping and waking, letting time run on. Away."[59] Helga disappears from the life of the novel and the radiant life she struggled to achieve. Critics want to impose an artificial distinction between the main narrative and this so-called "failed" ending, but I want to emphasize that the novel as a series of scenes of subjection reflects not the picaresque because Helga learns her position in society but conveys Larsen's brilliant critique of the fantasy of black bildung. She must repeatedly fail because the genre does not allow for the successful representation of black-defined development.

Larsen represents each episode, each scene of subjection, as an attempt to construct or "fit" Helga into her socially-determined subject position. This hidden social realism works in conjunction with Larsen's transformation of black bildung into a commodity fetish. This conversion helps to obscure the work of the former. The reader expects each episode to represent a stage of bildung instead of a scene of subjection. The novel is divided into discreet episodes that include Helga in Naxos, in Chicago, in Harlem, in Copenhagen, in Harlem again, and finally in the South. Larsen deconstructs the Bildungsroman by turning its episodic form, where Helga appears to undergo a maturing transformation in each episode, into discreet commodity fetishes. Just as Helga reifies the world, Larsen crafts the novel as a series of pleasurable and expected commodities to be consumed by the reader who wants Helga to overcome her mulatta and orphan background and to find love and fortune in a beautiful, radiant world. This melodramatic sentence, I hope, captures the emotional work performed by each scene of subjection in *Quicksand*. From the opening scene, Larsen gives the reader pleasure but also performs a critical turn with this false pleasure by having Helga relate to the world as if everything were an object in circulation. Larsen introduces reification from the beginning and repeats this mode of social realism as an avenue to expose black bildung as an impossibility, as a fantasy in circulation. She critiques how black bildung has become a commodity fetish that can only narrate the

prefabricated African American subject. *Quicksand*, for example, reflects Larsen's desire to borrow a form from white culture and infuse it with a "black" aesthetic. This approach frames white bildung as a commodity fetish because it erases bildung's rich history as a white literary device and social practice. Larsen effectively purchases bildung without acknowledging that it might not be suited to narrating black experience (regardless of class similarities). Larsen follows the parameters of the Bildungsroman yet the novel reads like Helga is simply shopping for the right journey to capture her (reified) self-formation.

The novel presents black bildung as a commodity fetish in many incarnations. Education serves as the first commodity fetish. Helga believes in the power of education to transform African Americans until one day she changes her mind. She decides that formal education should be exchanged for an education of "authentic" black identity in the North. Then, she defines the black home as a source of abstract "radiance." She exchanges this for a tangible object. When surrounded by Northern blacks, "she had come home" to a "moving multicolored crowd."[60] Larsen converts black identity, which should structure the main questions of the novel, from an abstract concept to a commodity fetish. The black bodies substitute for the spiritual dimensions of the African American experience. This maneuver essentially abandons the question of black history in the novel. Race, for Helga, is not explored in-depth and she never questions the social construction of race. The project of self-formation abandons a critical interrogation of the process of racialization in exchange for accepting blackness as a concrete and social reality that does not have a history. Similarly, Helga approaches her family relations as a series of emotions in circulation. Her relationship with the mother has already been discussed, but the novel does not interrogate Helga's status as an orphan; instead, the Bildungsroman expects her to be an orphan. Larsen approaches being an orphan as a commodity fetish. She inserts this trope into the novel at the expense of interrogating Helga's relationship to the black father. The novel could explore how anti-black racism and miscegenation prevent her parents from marrying or staying together, but delivers an absent black father who is essentially a bad person for abandoning his daughter. Later in the novel, Helga convinces herself that her father needed to return to his "authentic" black roots and that is why he abandoned the family. The history of bildung (as an aesthetic and social practice) refuses to explore the question of racial parenthood and black masculinity; those questions are outside its purview. Larsen's importation of the orphan trope negates the possibility of a critical exploration of anti-black racism within father-daughter relations. Moreover, the form of the novel, even if Larsen had not treated it as constituted by serial commodity fetishes, is designed to convey the self-formation of white characters. The genre cannot narrate or define black self-formation. Larsen, though, as I have argued, creatively works around these obstacles.

The novel mitigates the limitations of the Bildungsroman within each episode. The narrative, for instance, discuses crucial aspects of Helga's psycho-emotional history. The reader learns, through short stories, the basics of Helga's tragic life. These brief histories attempt to restore the relationships that define Helga as a subject. In the process of re-assembling Helga's past, they partially undo the work of reification. But at the same time, Larsen reveals that Helga's journey of self-formation traces how she aligns with the telos demanded of all African American women of her class: heterosexual marriage, children, and middle class social practices. The scenes of subjection reveal Helga's emotional reactions to being disciplined into prescribed social identities. A comprehensive history of Helga's self-formation would reveal how an African American woman came to be what was expected and demanded of her by anti-black racism; it would not trace the contingent choices of a "free" character but the necessary paths

Helga will eventually have to pursue. As the novel demonstrates, she takes a circuitous route to her teleological end point, but in this quest for individuality Larsen stresses the impossibility of a distinct bildung for Helga. This failure does not, however, occur because African American woman cannot or do not pursue self-formation and the construction of individual identities.

The ultimate failure of *Quicksand* is not from Larsen's inability to convert the white Bildungsroman into a black narrative or due to the commodification of bildung and African American women; rather, Larsen failed to understand that commodification—despite her eloquently crafted moments of criticality and resistance—are still phallic maneuvers that do not encompass any narrative of black female development in their purview. Larsen can only represent Helga's desires mediated through commodities and, in a more vulgar fashion, in sexual lust; black female subjectivity in *Quicksand*, then, is a reproduction—and a residual—of a masculine system of language and aesthetic forms. The turn to reification and the circulation of Helga as a commodity fetish—while aesthetically rich and innovative; offers a compelling critique of the limits of subject formation for African American women; and poses a solution to Helga's relationship with her mother—is ultimately an unsatisfactory aesthetic for Larsen. She borrows forms of representation that convert Helga into an empty subject and in the end this white form, though transformed and modified, cannot directly express her desires or craft an identity that is not predestined. As critic Deborah McDowell argues, "these heroines [Helga, Irene, and Clare]" are subjected "to the most conventional fates of narrative history: marriage and death"[61]. Helga must, according to the Western Bildungsroman, follow this path, but Larsen attempts to recover a traumatic history that constitutes Helga in an attempt (as Lukács might argue) to reverse or combat the reification of African American women. This gesture at historical analysis as a means to reveal the constellation of forces that constitute Helga fails to account for the domination of her sexuality and her female body. Her psychic and "black" history might have been recovered by a subversion of the commodity fetish, but Helga as an African American woman, mother, and daughter have not been addressed. The phallic discursive apparti do not give voice to the black woman; they dominate her. Larsen recognizes that she must also recover how African American women have been dominated before hoping that black female subjectivity can be inaugurated into language. The white structure of bildung is inherently anti-black; it privileges the narration of white subjects and as numerous critics, including Toni Morrison in her critique via *Playing in the Dark*, have observed, this whiteness depends on the subjugation of blackness. These white forms—regardless of Larsen's clever reformulations—can only express a black subjectivity that is the predetermined commodity fetish of an anti-black culture and anti-black aesthetic. Larsen finally realizes these failures in writing *Quicksand* and responds by developing a theory of femininity sexuality that can represent the long exiled African American woman, mother, and daughter. Through the relationship between Clare and Irene in *Passing*, Larsen discovers how women can be expressed outside the domination of phallic language and society. Only at the end of *Passing* can Clare attempt to express the full subject position of woman, even if her death is required. *Passing* serves as a pedagogy for ending the domination of African American women.

Larsen critically engaged the notion of a black "radiance," as a space and philosophy to emancipate black women from anti-black racism and to extricate them from the normative policies of the black middle class. In an attempt to historicize this folk culture, Larsen played into one of the defining tropes of modernism: the black primitive. Helga both is viewed as a primitive and she eventually performs the primitive. She conflates black radiance—black history and culture—with the fantasies in circulation that equated African Americans as the relatives of

African primitives. To this end, the notion of black history fails to empower Helga because Larsen, in *Quicksand*, fails to grasp the complex history of the idea of primitive and its application to African American culture. Larsen could not, as critic Amritjit Singh argues about the Harlem Renaissance, escape "the Negro as 'primitive'—that so strongly dominated the public mind."[62] This parallels Fabre and Feith's analysis that "if the Negro was in vogue in the 1920s…[it was because of] the rather exploitative passion for the primitive and exotic seen in cabarets and revues."[63] This fantasy of African Americans as primitive and exotic sprang from white European consumption of African art earlier in the century. Ranging a complex history, I can only give a crude history of this trope. The nineteenth century viewed primitive people, i.e. black Africans, as dangerous, irrational, adventurous, scary, or idealized noble savages.[64] In *Gone Primitive*, Marianna Torgovnick asserts that in the twentieth century "to study the primitive is thus to enter an exotic world which is also a familiar world."[65]

The idea of the primitive was both a source of fear but also a space for the Western world to deposit its own anxieties, fears, and concerns regarding the unknown. Anthropologists such as Franz Boas and Claude Levi-Strauss worked against the notion that primitive Africans (and Asians) lived in simple, developing, and early stage cultures. The idea of the primitive also carried an altered sense of time: "the belief that primitive societies reveal origins or natural order."[66] This cultural fantasy shifted again with Roger Fry's seminal essays in *Vision and Design* (1920). His analysis effectively transformed African art—the art of the primitive—into high art in Britain. France, on the other hand, experienced a negrophile moment much earlier in the century. Starting with the vogue of African art in Paris museums and the work of Picasso, for example his *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), the French began an obsession with the primitive. Josephine Baker, for instance, dominated the cultural scene of France of the twenties.[67] She was "the living embodiment of modern primitivism" with her "J'ai deux amours" and "slave-chic attire."[68] From this point, notions of the primitive as a site for "violence and horror and sexuality"[69] At the same time though, notions of the primitive as dark, black, dangerous, etc. continued from the previous century. The Nazis, for example, represented Jews as primitives in their massive anti-Jewish campaigns.[70] In literature, though, "the primitive becomes a convenient locale for the exploration of Western dullness or degeneracy, and of ways to transcend."[71] Conrad, Lawrence, Eliot, and others critique Western values through the primitive and this is important because Nella Larsen loved Lawrence. While I have no causal evidence that Lawrence influenced Larsen, literary artists in general inherited this modernist tradition. Adapted for the American context, Larsen, as I have already suggested, embeds her critique of black middle class values and norms by having Helga embrace and perform the "primitive." Again, this is an odd maneuver since as Torgovnick argues "the West's fascination with the primitive has to do with its own crises in identity."[72] This identity crisis for whiteness filters into the cultural imaginations of artists working during the Harlem Renaissance. I would like to suggest that in performing the primitive Helga both completely escapes the need to assimilate and at the same time authoritatively co-opts white identity (or assimilates to it) to such an extent that she takes on its identity crisis.

Josephine Baker is one bridge between European notions of the black primitive and Africa America. Another is the aesthetic conversation that took place between African Americans and Europeans. Alain Locke, for instance, encourages black writers "to imitate European primitivist modernism and to get in touch with their 'African' legacy."[73] He guided the anthology *The New Negro*, which in many respects initiated the Harlem Renaissance, with this philosophy. As historian Nathan Huggins has argued, however, the trope of the primitive adopted

and utilized by African American artists "was very romantic and rested on very superficial knowledge of African life."[74] African American intellectuals "had to *learn* to appreciate the value of African art and culture"—most often from white Americans and Europeans.[75] Aaron Douglas, for example, learned the techniques of African art from Winold Reis, a German. The consequence of African Americans adopting and interpreting the modernist trope of the black—now African American—subject as primitive can be seen in countless works. The sculptor Richmond Barthé's "treatment of Negro subjects was not merely ethnic but…emphasized the primitive."[76] A litany of African Americans living in France during the zenith of French negrophilia could be cited. This included Jack Johnson, Sidney Bechet, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and James Weldon Johnson. In 1926 Carl Van Vechten, a white patron of many African American and white American writers, published the scandalous *Nigger Heaven.* The novel played with the idea of the primitive within a quiet librarian and many other versions of the primitive-exotic. Black novelists responded to Van Vechten's novel, which had become a best-seller, with their own versions of black life in or bordering Harlem. Rudolph Fisher's *The Walls of Jericho* (1928) and Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928) both explored the cultural other—for McKay, using the working class as contrast to the intellectual—as a mode of finding an African American identity.

In essence, "black writers had 'climbed aboard the bandwagon' of exoticism and enjoyed the era when the Negro was in vogue."[77] Besides the literary and visual arts, African Americans in Harlem were exposed to primitive-exotic minstrel shows in Harlem cabarets, or what literary critic Shane Vogel terms the "'cult of primitivism.'"[78] These shows interpreted, reinforced, and challenged stereotypes of African Americans as being savage, unrestrained, simple minded, etc. While the audiences were in large part whites from Manhattan, my focus is not on how African Americans served "white psychological needs." Huggins argues that the Harlem cabarets presented "civilized primitives" who could ameliorate whites who felt castrated by bourgeois norms of a cultivated life.[79] As Vogel argues, though, these spaces also provided African American performers a means to redefine themselves through the trope of the primitive—in addition to serving as economic engines for Harlem.

African American authors do not simply inherit these white residues or interpretations. McKay, for example, moves past the primitive as spontaneous, vital, "exotic, naughty, and quaint" to create men that "are no longer simply primitive-exotics, but [who] foreshadow the radical alienation of the mid-twentieth century;" Jake and Ray leave civilization instead of agreeing to embody the negative identity that supports white civilization.[80] Duke Ellington, in a complex relationship between economic success, artistic creation, and exploitation of African American identity, composed a "jungle-style" of jazz for his white patrons at the Cotton Club.[81] White patrons wanted to experience the primitive that they imagined was contained within African American culture. Ellington "had to come up with musical sounds that could be classified [by whites] as 'jungle sounds.'"[82] At the same time that Ellington and the cabarets "sold" the primitive to whites, blues singers appropriated the sexual myth of the primitive to establish agency for African Americans—"Gertrude "Ma" Rainey and Bessie Smith, for example, who sang openly of sexual relationships, of sugar bowls and deep sea divers—whose double entendres were hard to miss."[83]Literary critic Deborah McDowell points out that Smith and Rainey would have enjoyed singing about sex and the eroticism of their black bodies in the context of the "Freudian 1920s, the Jazz Age of sexual abandon and 'free love'".[84] In a popular lyric, Smith sings of jelly rolls, which is a barely veiled code for the vagina:

Jelly roll, jelly roll ain't so hard to find,
There's a baker shop in town bakes it brown like mine,
I got a sweet jelly, a lovin' sweet jelly roll,
If you taste my jelly it'll satisfy your worried soul.[85]

Gertrude "Ma" Rainey sang: "'It's Tight Like That': "See that spider crawling up the wall . . . going to get his ashes hauled. / Oh it's tight like that.'" Bessie Smith also sang "'I'm wild about that thing,' and 'You've got to get it, bring it, and put it right here.'"[86] While McDowell argues that Larsen could not embrace such a lewd approach to sexuality because of her representation of the black middle class and their repression of the pleasures of the body, I would like to suggest—in a vein similar to McDowell's claim of lesbian desire—that Larsen explores sexuality as an emancipatory agent. Larsen was not unable to directly represent the pleasure of the black female body. Helga, for instance, struggles with her sexual lust for Anderson and seemingly makes rash decisions to flee the situation before her sexuality erupts. When she does explore her sexual needs, she ends up pregnant and defeated. In a very superficial sense, sexuality dominates black middle class women.

Larsen offered a genealogical recovery in *Quicksand* as a way to undo the transcendental homelessness inflicted upon African Americans. The turn towards folklore, "black radiance," and the primitive attempt to assist Helga resist commodity fetish in vain. Aligning herself with Lukács' solution to reification failed to produce or let emerge a new definition and model of "woman." Instead, Helga with her embrace of history and male-defined feminine sexuality, specifically Freud's controlling id, withered away in her socially mediated role: mother in the heart of black America. She could not reclaim a female subject position by returning to the South, which she mistook as the reservoir of "black radiance." Larsen's reliance on folklore and an inherited understanding of the primitive create a failed bildung while also exposing the falseness of both mythologies. Black women could not develop under any of these fantasies except into their predestined roles. Larsen "corrects" her assumptions about the journey of female development and the tools that seemed key to helping her achieve those goals. In *Passing*, she adopts a new perspective on the primitive, history, and gender. In *Quicksand* Larsen thought she was trying to write a traditional Bildungsroman that incorporated modernism itself as thematic material but that in truth she wrote a novel with picaresque and bildungsroman elements; both of these genres underwent extensive revisioning by modernist authors. Her art moves beyond this, in *Passing*, by making a synthetic fusion that resulting in a truly new genre: the minority Bildungsroman. Larsen revises her relationship to the female body as commodity fetish, the primitive, and sexuality to craft an innovative bildung philosophy.

Section 3: Traces of Freedom, or the Black Primitive Revised

Helga discovered that her attempted recovery of black history did not dissolve the reification of black women. Throughout the course of the novel Helga sought to don black radiance through an adoption of the black primitive roles that were circulating in New York and Copenhagen—and in Larsen's own social context. Her attempt to appropriate and reify black radiance produced a failed aesthetics and politics. Larsen revives the trope of the primitive in *Passing* but as a mere residue of its former self. Larsen sought a different route than Josephine Baker and blues singers like Bessie Smith who were more able to critique and transform the

primitive myth as exotic, mysterious, dark, and dangerous by appropriating and redefining those fantasies. Larsen instead asks what might actually be "primitive" in African American women? Can the "primitive" like Smith and Baker have shown help release black women from social domination? Larsen responds by returning to its first definition of the primitive during the sixteenth century: "'original or ancestor' of animals, perhaps of men . . . . 'the first, earliest age, period, or stage.'"[87] She wants to return to the origins of the black woman. This idea of primitive as origins is combined with the definitions of the primitive as applied to the women of Asia Pacific. The Asiatic primitive also expressed the idea of "a return to origins and to find an originary plentitude and wholeness."[88] Best represented in the works of Paul Gauguin, Henry Matisse, and Henry Rousseau the island primitive conveys the desire to experience simpler social structures and cultural norms. This definition of the primitive suggests a romantic "recuperability of a primal Edenic idyll and the possibility of regeneration and revivification through unthreatening sensual experience."[89] Larsen imports the Asian but discards the idea of a more simple cultural system. She wants to explore the history of the domination of black women; she returns to the "origins"—even if a fantasy—of when black women were not dominated. The modernist artists still assumed primitive Asian women were dominated but just in "simple" societies. And the return to vitalization will empower black women in their journeys toward a radical freedom.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argue that "the domination of nature ensued once man's primal embeddedness in nature was transcended and then forgotten. A radical humanism carries with it the latent threat of species imperialism, which ultimately returns to haunt human relations."[90] Adorno, himself a modernist and susceptible to the trope of the primitive, in a sense falls prey to the idea of the black subject as exotic-primitive but he, like Larsen, attempts to excavate the processes that contribute to a damaged life. Before the domination of nature by man, which includes man's own self-domination, he engaged in relationships with nature and other men through mimesis; a mimesis of the wolf, for instance, sought to honor a certain wolf god or to mirror—not appropriate—the hunting skills of the wolf. This form of mimesis does not dominate the wolf for his skills or terrain but acknowledges man's hunting abilities as different from the wolf. This preserves difference through mimesis. Over time, man manipulated the external world to reach his own subjective—not collective—purposes. This instrumental rationality, in consequence, required the repression of certain desires that could be hindrances to the self—namely pleasure without restrictions. The unintended cost of this dialectic of enlightenment was the domination of nature.[91] In turn, man and woman too, as parts of nature, become dominated. For Adorno, humankind loses its uniqueness because it no longer honors difference, in no longer believing in mimesis: "the countless agencies of mass production and its culture impress standardized behavior on the individual as the only natural, decent, and rational one. Individuals define themselves now only as things, statistical elements, successes or failures."[92] The dominated world rejects difference in favor of the identical.[93] Larsen exhibits her agreement with this philosophy in her critiques of the disciplining powers of the black middle class. Helga struggles, for instance, to conform to the standards of propriety, reserve, and "lady-like" behavior. She strives for difference but ultimately falls to the interpellative hails to marry and become a submissive wife and fertile mother. Through a series of scenes of subjection, Helga finally fits into the "standardized" mold as a dominated black woman.

Adorno diverges from theorists like Lukács who view the role of history as a means to terminate reification for the meta-subject. History should, according to Lukács, eventually allow

"a collective meta-subject who could totalize the social world and thereby shatter the illusion of society as second nature [reified]."[94] This unveiling should then illuminate a critical moment—or phase—during which the meta-subject could tear down reification and emerge based upon a new system of labor power. While Lukács and Adorno describe reification in relation to the metasubject and would disagree with my application of their ideas to individual characters, their theories provide productive avenues to think through the question of racial formation. For Helga, this journey of historical recovery reveals that she followed a historically white bildung; yet history fails to shift her present existence. History constituted the reification of race and African Americans as a group and black history could be turned against itself to illuminate Helga's seemingly fixed or predetermined social position. For Adorno reification is not simply the alienated objectification of subjectivity as it is for Lukács. Adorno argues that reification is the suppression of heterogeneity in the name of sameness; this reflects the notion that when man dominated himself and nature he repressed difference for standardization. The end of reification—if even a possibility because of the meta-subject's dialectical engagement with history, culture, and the body and Adorno is not clear whether reification can achieve termination—must consider the domination of the body and the restoration not only of relationships of difference but also the restoration of the bodily drives that have been repressed and appropriated both by the Enlightenment and the culture industry. Adorno cryptically addresses this when he claims that "all reification is a forgetting."[95] Helga and Irene cannot simply recover a memory or the original meaning or wholeness to undo reification. Clare, in many regards, seems to be the perfect recovery of the prehistoric and thus the solution to the domination of woman. She is aggressive, beautiful, vivacious, and a bit mysterious but she is also tormented, traumatized, responsible, and caring. Yet Clare does constitute the stock figure for wholeness and undominated woman; anti-black racism dominates Clare, who must pass to survive. Nevertheless, Larsen represents in Clare a possible solution to forgetting and the recovery of woman.

In a cryptic statement in *Negative Dialectics* Adorno elaborates on the methods to combat domination and reification. He argues that: "art is semblance even at its highest peaks; but its semblance, the irresistible part of it, is given to it by what is not semblance . . . . semblance is a promise of nonsemblance."[96] Adorno is emphasizing how art—or masterly crafted subjects—represents not a replica of an object, emotion, etc. but a representation that is mimetic. The art-work fosters a relationship with the referent not of sameness or duplication but of mimesis. Art that is self-consciously aware that it is not self-sufficient but that exists in a mimetic relationship becomes powerful because it reveals a world where domination has not conquered both representation and referent. Furthermore, this mimetic relationship ensures that the art does not represent itself as whole or complete—it can only survive or impact the world through non-identical relationships, through difference. Thus realist art might appear to be unique and whole but its criticality derives from the fact that it is merely paying homage to its referent via mimesis. Larsen's unwitting manifestation of this philosophy in her work is uncanny. Helga fails in her pursuit of *bildung* in part because she operates without friends. Her closest friend, Anne Grey, turns out to be her rival. Larsen learns from her failure and in her next novel, develops a double Bildungsroman through the paired characters of Clare and Irene. Irene embraces standardization; she loves the security of the black middle class. Clare, on the other hand, is excluded from standardization from an early age as a mixed-race child. She can never be identical to others in a community that refuses to accept mixed-raced marriages and their progeny. Instead, Clare performs mimesis. She (must) pass for white and therefore must learn upper class femininity and

its cultural performance. Unlike Irene, who, in the opening scene of the novel, forgets that she's engaged in an act of passing, Clare remains incessantly self-conscious of her unstable racial identity and of her inability to represent wholeness/whiteness. She is the "semblance [that] is a promise of nonsemblance." Clare flawlessly passes and provides the semblance of a white phenotype and culture, but she never embraces her own mimesis as the truth. Clare does not identify herself as white but neither is she one of the many other dominated black women who populate the novel. In marking Clare as occupying a limbo space—or possibly a space of abjection—Larsen crafts a mimetic relationship to the figure of the prehistoric black woman before her domination. It is this mimetic relationship with the past that everyone reads as the "primitive" or vital within Clare.

Clare's vital beauty and charm link her to the primitive. Larsen steers the reader to an interpretation of Clare as a more refined version of Helga, who failed to suppress her primal urges. Clare, by contrast, is full of culture and grace. She has poise and elegance but at the same time her risk-taking, as viewed from Irene's perspective, comes off as animalistic, as in some sense lacking human emotion. Clare's flirtations and too-generous smiles to men frustrate Irene but also align Clare with overly sexualized primitiveness. Irene perceives Clare as an object of enjoyment—of sexual desire and pleasure.

In this respect, most critics tend to agree with Deborah McDowell and Judith Butler's readings of Irene's queer desires for Clare, but I want to put pressure on what it means for Larsen to represent this queerness and ask what it prevents us from reading. Irene's obsession with Clare obscures the return to origins, to the primitive prehistorical. Larsen develops a character—however filtered through the perspective of Irene—that indexes the critical momentum of a state before domination. Larsen crafts our view of Clare's character by unfolding a series of mimetic relationships—first with Irene and then later with both male and female African Americans. This accomplishes two tasks. First, the imitations display the social reality of the Harlem Renaissance and the conditions of middle class black America. Second, Clare manifest the catalogue of characteristics of the imagined prehistoric black woman free from domination. She demonstrates how natural reality—the body, woman, and race—are transformed by the culture industry while continuing to retain threads of the prehistoric. Forging a character who recovers these fibers and develops mimetic relationships based on the prehistoric can produce a critical moment. For Adorno, this "mimetic moment is intrinsically utopian because it preserved a memory of [wo]man's prehistoric oneness with nature…and was thus a prefiguration of a possible restoration of that condition in the future."[97] Clare is out of sync with the time of the novel—she reflects a past moment when women were not dominated by social identities such as mother, wife, and even the category woman. By establishing relationships of mimesis, Clare offers a radical model of black female development.

Larsen, though, must work against the cultural fantasy of the primitive to communicate her theory of female development in the context of domination. Like Helga's own unfortunate embrace of the trope of the primitive, Larsen must balance the representation of Clare as the primitive defined by modernism and the primitive from the prehistoric. Either situation can allow Clare to be read as a commodity. In a misreading, she has value only because her attributes—her sensual body and charm—can be exchanged and not because whatever might be her "essential" subjectivity has value. Thus, her use value—her primitive yet refined beauty—becomes a commodity fetish. Her social value, then, is her body as unmarked blackness masquerading as white. And this tendency to fetishize Clare means an erasure and reification of the prehistoric. Larsen recovers the prehistoric by demonstrating the necessity of mimetic relationships among

African American women. To reveal and nurture these relationships, Larsen destroys Clare's use value. She accomplishes this task by liquidating Clare's social identities and biological features: wealthy woman, a mother, a white woman, a black woman, and a lover. Characters want to exchange Clare's use values for *jouissance*—for the pleasure that she elicits in them. Larsen disrupts this cycle of exchange by having Clare disintegrate not to the prehistoric and a state where black women are not dominated but to a life with less domination. Clare retains her history and memories of a dominated life and could never be truly free of domination. Unlike a social identity, these memories remain permanently bound to Clare. Moreover, the solution is not a false utopia of pure freedom from domination but that the utopia serves as a critical foundation for initiating social and psychic change. This is Larsen's theory of minority bildung.

The goal of the novel is not for Clare and Irene to merge nor for Irene to become Clare. A combination of the two or a privileging of either follows the fantasy of the western Bildungsroman. Rather, Larsen parallels Adorno's argument: "both are torn halves of an integral freedom, to which however they do not add up."[98] The integral freedom refers to the traces of woman before her domination that is part of the history of all black women. Each character has a different relationship to this freedom. Irene references a socially defined woman—as a mother, as middle class, as docile, as civil, as proper, as a hostess, as the proper black woman who supports uplift (in name at least). Clare indexes a womanhood such as existed before the domination of nature—a primal state of woman before she (and man) dominated herself. In this way, the novel cannot provide a totality of woman—nor does it advocate one definition over the other. Woman, as gender theorists such as Luce Irigaray might say, is multiple, fluid, is difference. In *Quicksand,* Larsen flirted with the idea that the freedom of woman might be achieved by the reconciliation of differences; she discovered that this formulation would be a lie produced by the culture industry. *Passing* demands that there be a constellation of unreconciled desires—of a mimesis of desires that honor the residuals of prehistoric woman.

Clare and Irene are by-products of a racialized mirror stage. As society and its control of psychic formation craft African American women, they leave behind a trace of woman before domination. The journey of self-formation in the minority Bildungsroman pursues the recovery of this black woman before her domination as a path to reinvent the self with less domination. Larsen formulated this genre after writing Helga via the paradigm of the western Bildungsroman; Clare and Irene do not build up their identities but rather they liquidate them. In a form of *écriture feminine,* Larsen launches Clare and Irene on a journey of mutual self-disintegration. Clare, for instance, liquates the ever-same, the standardization of blackness and whiteness imposed on her female body. She does this through engaging in a mimetic relationship with Irene; this act of semblance forces Clare to encounter her own racial anxiety, which is the desire to attain the freedom black women possessed prior to domination. Because this residue is prehistoric, Larsen substitutes the contemporary form of domination: a racialized mirror stage. The subject created in this hostile and oppressive process desires not whiteness nor white middle class values, such as Irene might convince readers are her true desires, but the fantasized freedom that whites possess, the freedom from domination. Thus, the activator of this desire is the reality of the black body and its reminder that African Americans are a socially, politically, and psychically dominated group. This fact of blackness, to evoke a phrase from Fanon, registers in the novel as racial anxiety. For Lacan, anxiety occurs when the object cause of desire re-encounters itself in another guise. The dominated black body "ruins" the fantasy of freedom.

Helga was not permitted to constitute herself as a socio-political subject. Such a creative function was made impossible by a racialized mirror stage and a hostile politics that populated

the category of black woman as mother and "her" other historically submissive roles. In *Quicksand,* Helga lets this racial anxiety—this lack of white racial freedom—consume her. This anxiety causes her to flee Naxos, for example, because working at the school to create the black middle class forces her to encounter her own production as a dominated black woman. She teaches them and disciplines them into desiring (white) middle class norms via the philosophy of uplift. This effectively numbs them to the project of recovering genuine black freedom—false happiness substitutes for a true freedom. Larsen could only have Helga flee from places in response to her racial anxiety; she had to move locations to continue her self-education, she had to develop. In *Passing,* though, Larsen discovers that racial anxiety can be turned back upon the body to help shatter ideology and unhinge socially inscribed identities. This rechanneling occurs in mimetic relationships. Through relationships of mimesis Larsen represents the disintegration of black female subjects.

In *Quicksand,* Larsen interpreted the commodity fetish of women and Helga's subversion of the fetish as a mode of disruption. Larsen oriented Helga's transformation into a sexual, primitive commodity as a means to work through her relationship with her parents. In *Passing,* the female body, too, becomes a site of tension. To manage Irene's desires, Clare becomes represented in bits and pieces like a commodity. Clare's physical traits, her delightfulness at parties, and Irene's desires become equivalences without qualitative difference. Clare becomes fungible as her "parts" transform into abstract quantities. Any reader will notice that Larsen litters the novel with Irene's observations, primarily, of Clare's body. From their initial meeting Irene hones in on Clare's smile and laugh: "the woman laughed, a lovely laugh, a small sequence of notes that was like a trill and also like the ringing of a delicate bell fashioned of a precious metal, a tinkling." This tinkling laugh triggers Irene's memory and is the key to her remembering Clare: "I'd never in this world have known you if you hadn't laughed."[99] This laugh also contains more than one meaning: "that trill of notes…small and clear and the very essence of mockery."[100] Besides mockery, Clare's voice appears to be very powerful. Irene attributes her decision making to this voice: "what was it about Clare's voice that was so appealing, so very seductive?"[101] Clare's eyes also "speak;" when Irene and Gertrude visit Clare for tea: "in Clare's eyes, as she presented her husband, was a queer gleam, a jeer, it might be. Irene couldn't define it."[102] As Cheryl Wall remarks, the material of Clare's eyes "symbolize those aspects of the psyche Irene denies within herself."[103] Helena Michie argues that while Irene might identify with Clare's libido, Clare "will not internalize; she draws people in [via the gaze] without allowing them to change her."[104] On the one hand, Clare's body seems to "speak" to Irene—conveying messages about minority bildung, disintegration, and desire. But what else could Larsen be communicating by describing Clare's every feature in such erotic undertones:

> sweetly scented,
> the ivory of her skin,
> She's really almost too good-looking,
> Clare Kendry's eyes were bright with tears that didn't fall,
> her lips, painted a brilliant geranium red, were sweet and sensitive and a little obstinate. A tempting mouth,
> arresting eyes, slow and mesmeric,
> the caress of Clare's smile, and
> She's so easy on the eyes.

Michie critiques McDowell's argument that these abbreviated gazes register a repressed lesbian sexuality. She disagrees that Larsen uses race as a "cover" for sexuality. I find it almost impossible to read these descriptions of Clare as not erotic, as not a marker of sexual desire and also not about race. The novel leaves no question, in my mind, of the inextricable relationship of race and sexual desire. When Brian creeps up on Irene in her room, she reacts with anger: "in spite, of the years of their life together, [his entering the room unannounced] still had the power to disconcert her." [105] Compare Brian's "noiseless" steps to when Clare "had come softly into the room" and kisses Irene's hair: "Irene Redfield had a sudden inexplicable onrush of affectionate feeling."[106] Irene enjoys the company of Clare and more to the point, she welcomes Clare into her private space. But, I want to emphasize another possible reason for their appearance as the return-of-the-repressed. To expand on McDowell's reading, I argue that Irene can only read Clare in bits and pieces because Clare's *white* beauty traumatizes Irene. Irene falls for the non-passing *white Clare* on the roof top restaurant. It is only after Irene's lust stirs that this unknown woman reveals her racial history. This subterranean blackness is only discovered with the erotic tinkling in Clare's laugh. Upon recognizing a desire for blackness qua whiteness, Irene disembodies Clare—starting with her laugh. This dissonance of desire is placated by the consumption of Clare's beauty in nuggets like her laughter. Irene experiences racial anxiety because she desires a white woman. The racialized mirror stage forces whiteness as a standard to be emulated. Irene has negotiated this impulse via her inclusion in the "Talented Tenth" qua Brian. She participates in American culture while also changing it to be more inclusive and less anti-black. In desiring Clare, Irene must process both a desire for a white woman and a desire for a black woman. To calm her racial anxiety, Irene turns to surplus jouissance and enjoys only parts of Clare, one sensual and lustful glance at a time. Within this surplus jouissance, though, is the failure of the pleasure and a critical moment. At Clare's tea party, for instance, Irene chats with the black Clare and black Gertrude, but when Bellew enters the context, Clare becomes white—without changing her performance of identity. This shift without shifting raises Irene's consciousness about who she desires. "She turned an oblique look on Clare and encountered her peculiar eyes fixed on her with an expression so dark and deep and unfathomable that she had for a short moment the sensation of gazing into the eyes of some creature utterly strange and apart."[107] Irene witnesses the conversion of Clare into a (passing) white woman. She remains perplexed about her feelings for a white woman on her way home: "Irene Redfield was trying to understand the look on Clare's face as she had said good-bye. Partly mocking, it had seemed, and partly menacing. And something else for which she could find no name….a slight shiver ran over her…[she] was close to tears."[108] Irene cannot unravel her desires for a blond, white woman she knew as the black Clare. Lusting after a white woman is beyond taboo.

The illegibility of Clare—both in her letters and racial identity—cascades into the narrative as a major disruption to the process of character formation—it queers bildung. Irene can never read Clare all at once nor can Larsen present Clare as a legible subject. This reflects Clare's position as a subject in disintegration and who follows minority bildung. On the one hand this violent reading practice forces Clare's body into a sort of containment. Irene traps and preserves Clare as an assemblage of eroticized body parts. Each one can be controlled or contained whereas Clare as a whole cannot. Examining the critical moment within this controlling maneuver illuminates another project. Each part of Clare—from her tear filled eyes to her luscious lips—underscores the need for domination which implies that Clare is partially free from domination; Clare performs the freedom that African Americans desire. Through a confusing visual structure Clare possess the freedom denied to African Americans because of her

veneer and historical racial formation as white. But as a black women she should be conquered and mastered; her freedom threatens the mold of African Americans as a dominated people. This logic is expressed from the perspective of Irene who views Clare as not simply passing but as a black woman who is not dominated by anti-black racism. Even Clare, as a black woman, appears haunted only by her own doing and not by anti-black racism—in part because the world has interpellated the adult Clare as white. This confusing state of seeming un-domination draws Irene into admiring Clare all the more and precipitates Irene's mimetic interpretation of Clare's state of freedom as a black woman. From this experience, Irene learns to disintegrate her social and moral obligations. The most prominent example of this non-dominating mimesis leading to disintegration is when Irene follows Clare's ability to "throw anything away." After convincing herself of Clare and Brian's affair, the narrator reports "Yes, life went on precisely as before. It was only she [Irene] that had changed."[109] On the next page Larsen provides an example of this change. Irene discards her identity as a mother: "the boys! For once she'd forgotten them."[110]She continues her disintegration by imagining her life without Brian and no longer functioning as a wife: "time with Brian. Time without him. It was gone, leaving in its place an almost uncontrollable impulse to laugh, to scream, to hurl things about." She accepts that her function for Brian is not even wife but reduced to only an asexual mother, which she has already abandoned: "she didn't count. She was, to him, only the mother of his sons. That was all. Alone she was nothing."[111] At this critical juncture late in the novel, Irene has stealthily shed her identity as wife and mother. She accomplishes the disintegration by disabling her surplus jouissance. The pleasure of security is crushed by the thought of an affair. This conflict slowly erodes the powers of pleasure and launch Irene into a fit of panic, of unmediated racial anxiety. Literally shaking and shivering, Larsen demonstrates how this psychic disturbance helps Irene disinvest from her core identities

Section 4: Mimesis and Disintegration

When Clare re-enters Irene's life, she frames their friendship as an imitation of their close bonds during childhood. By calling Irene "'Rene," Clare creates a relationship out of sync with the present. Irene, too, mirrors Clare's locution; she and the narrator refer to Clare not as Clare Bellew but Clare Kendry. These appellations pull the past into the present. They rekindle the shards of their primitive, or 'original' (in the sense of relating to origins), past. The reminders of their shared childhoods allow them to re-experience the feeling of freedom prior to domination. Even though as children they underwent a racialized mirror stage, the resumption of the "innocence" of childhood temporarily reverses the conscious onset of anti-black social forces. Reclaiming the past in the present implies that the future can be made into a state of difference; the future must take into account the past and present. Midway through the novel, before the phrase makes complete sense, Larsen instructs the reader that the rekindled relationship between Clare and 'Rene/Irene is "something that left its trace on all the future years of her existence."[112]

In addition to forging a mimetic relationship to the past and demonstrating the impact of mimesis on the present and future, Clare engages in a mimetic relationship towards Irene at the level of the unconscious. On numerous occasions Irene remarks that Clare predicts or is "aware of her desire and her hesitation."[113] The narrator agrees with Irene that Clare appears to be a mind reader: "as if she had been in the secret of the other's thoughts."[114] Clare models aspects of her personality on a study of, and homage to, Irene. She rejects, for example, Irene's invitation to

accompany her to a popular black summer resort in Michigan because of a deep empathy. As Clare declines the invite, she tells Irene, who is thinking the same thing, "don't think I've entirely forgotten just what it would mean for you if I went."[115] Larsen distinguishes between identification and mimesis (the nonidentical that preserves difference) in this example. Were Clare truly selfish, she would agree to go on the weekend outing. Clare does not "identify" with Irene; her language also reveals that her declining the invitation stems from a knowledge of the past—not of the present: "don't think I've entirely forgotten." Clare is not identifying with Irene in the present but, rather, her mimesis functions in alignment with a myth or memory of Irene from the past; Clare modulates her behaviors according to an idea of Irene—though not the Irene of the present. Irene as a child could be black and this past continues to haunt Clare as a reminder of her own racial anxiety.

Irene enjoys the radical freedom of being an openly black woman. In addition to the rare initial act of passing that she casually (and successfully) performs in the novel's opening, Irene can express her blackness (especially in Harlem and Southside Chicago) at any moment without too much fear. This freedom from domination, for Clare, elicits her racial anxiety. Larsen describes an episode of this racial anxiety during Clare's childhood: "'Rene, how, when I used to go over to the South Side, I used almost to hate all of you. You had all the things I wanted and never had had.'"[116] Irene interprets this "having" attitude as the need for money and a middle class nuclear family. She misses the intimation that Clare desires precisely what Irene takes for granted as an innate condition of socio-political life: her ability to be an African American woman. The children play and openly socialize with each other as black children (a halcyon scenario Clare attempts to recreate in her subsequent tea party!); in their neighborhoods and homes, their race isn't prohibited. This rejection from community and extended kinship networks causes Clare to experience racial anxiety. Clare recreates her childhood dream by inviting Irene and Gertrude over for a real tea party. This desire shatters when John Bellew enters the conversation; Clare begins to fracture even though it is Irene who appears the most disturbed. After the party Clare writes to Irene conveying how "excitingly happy" it was to play. The letter concludes with the postscript: "*It may be, 'Rene dear, it may just be, that, after all, your way may be the wiser and infinitely happier one.*"[117] Through a mimetic relationship with Irene, Clare begins to unhinge her decision to pass and to create a white family. By reaching into the past for inspiration, Clare's tea party and Bellew's intrusions helps her transform her bildung to a minority bildung. She begins to discard the present in hopes of a better future where she, too, can flourish in a radical freedom of racial expression.

Irene initially rejects building a friendship that would assist Clare (and herself) in her journey of minority bildung. Two years pass before the arrival of Clare's second letter and Irene refuses to answer it. In the time that has passed, Clare has been churning over their encounter and stewing over the possibility of black freedom. She writes to Irene

> . . . For I am lonely, so lonely . . . cannot help longing to be with you again, as I have never longed for anything before; and I have wanted many things in my life . . . . You can't know how in this pale life of mine I am all the time seeing the bright pictures of that other that I once thought I was glad to be free of . . . . It's like an ache, a pain that never ceases . . . .
>
> and

> and it's your fault, 'Rene dear. At least partly. For I wouldn't now, perhaps, have this terrible, this wild desire if I hadn't seen you that time in Chicago . . . .[118]

Clare has been in anxious ruins without Irene. Until their encounter in Chicago, Clare had successfully repressed the desire and knowledge of racial freedom. Isolated in a white world, she could not socialize with middle and upper class African American women; she refused a black maid for fears of being discovered and of being forced to experience the other woman's freedom. Now, Clare feels the ceaseless ache of racial anxiety after forging a mimetic relationship with Irene. Critics have noticed how Larsen presents the second reunion in highly sexualized terms, which reinforces the deep, mimetic relationship Clare established with Irene. Larsen portrays Clare's angst over not hearing back from Irene as the jilted lover. Clare describes her waiting as if "an illicit love affair and that the man had thrown me over." Like a heart-broken lover, she stayed up "half the nights…awake looking out at the watery starts—hopeless things, the stars—worrying and wondering." When Irene dodges an explanation, Clare continues the lover's discourse: "'you mean you don't want me, 'Rene?'"[119] While Clare speaks, Irene even lights the symbolic phallus, a cigarette, that she refuses to give Clare. Still smoking the cigarette, Clare reiterates her letter: "if it hadn't been for that [Irene's visit and the re-established relationship], I'd have gone on to the end, never seeing any of you. But that did something to me, and I've been so lonely since! You can't know. Not close to a single soul. Never anyone to really talk to."[120] Clare shifts the framework from that of a lover to that of kinship. In her white upper class world, she cannot complete an utterance as a black woman. Her speech as a black woman is all unidirectional because she lacks anyone who can hear and respond to her language and her performance of blackness. As language philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin argues, a complete utterance needs a respondent who can understand, interpret, and respond to your speech—including its political and racial dimensions. Clare exists in a state of empty speech save the moments when she has become a white women, I would argue. After twelve years of passing which is almost all of Clare's formative years as an adult, her performed racial and political identity over time has become essentially white. I assume that she speaks with her white friends and husband and gets recognized as a white woman. But, since Irene's visit, Clare can no longer imagine herself as solely a white woman—she is passing. This stress aggravates Clare, but it is her conscious understand of her domination as a black woman and her lack of freedom to express her black identity that drive her to literal tears. She confirms this, weeping: "'how could you know [of her recent racial anxiety]? How could you? You're free. You're happy. And,' with faint derision, 'safe.'"[121] The last element is spoken with irony because Irene is so free that she can fabricate a condition of unfreedom to occupy her boredom. In this moment and in the second letter, Larsen shows Clare disintegrating her white identity. She can only enter full speech with Irene if she is a black woman; this requires the abandonment of her whiteness; the irony, of course, is that Clare is mixed raced. Thus, through a mimetic relationship with Irene/'Rene, Clare begins to disintegrate her social and racial identities.

Larsen endows the character of Clare with a scandalous choice. As Clare disintegrates her whiteness, she must also sever her ties associated with that identity. Irene anticipates a divorce, but she does not expect Clare to destroy the white mother-daughter relationship. Unlike Helga who allowed motherhood to limit her existence, Clare believes that the mother-daughter relationship is also subject to the risks of life. She states: "'that being a mother is the cruelest thing in the world.'"[122] Irene challenges what she views as Clare's immoral risk-taking; Clare cannot un-pass otherwise Margery would be motherless and rejected by her father. Larsen

concludes Irene's scolding about seeking a divorce with "'it's a selfish whim, an unnecessary and—.'"[123] Irene is interrupted and the conversation changes topic. Not until near the tragic end of the novel does the topic of motherhood return. Margery is enrolled in a European boarding school and when Irene inquires about her, Clare must repeat Margery's name as if she has forgotten her own daughter. I argue that this moment signals Clare's disinvestment from her "white" daughter. At this point in the novel, Clare is ready to give up her entire life so she can achieve freedom. Even though Clare attributes her not moving to Harlem as loyalty to Margery, Clare has already sacrificed her daughter—in her "having" way: "'I haven't any proper morals or sense of duty . . .why, to get things I want badly enough, I'd do anything, hurt anybody, throw anything away. Really, 'Rene, I'm not safe.'"[124] Clare understands the difficult choices that must be made to achieve minority bildung. The journey is unconventional and challenges the limits of moral behavior and ethics. Only as a reborn black mother does Clare have a chance to build an authentic relationship with her daughter. Larsen suggests, I believe, that Clare acknowledges her severed ties with her white daughter when Irene suddenly breaks-off with "and as for your giving up things—."[125] Clare then proceeds to burst into tears at the realization that she has given up her white identity, including her daughter. Clare must be focused and committed if she intends to follow minority bildung.

Irene begins her journey of disintegration upon her second friendship with Clare. She disintegrates through a mimetic relationship with Clare including her risk-taking, blackness, and whiteness. Larsen presents Irene's racial anxiety as a reaction to Clare's performances. Her taboo body and social identity as a white mother yet simultaneously a colored sister recall the traumas of a racialized mirror stage. Irene cannot tolerate Clare's commitment to her own desires; she describes the younger black and present white Clare as having "no allegiance beyond her own immediate desire. She was selfish, and cold, and hard."[126] This dedication to desire stokes Irene's repression of her desires and manifests as an obsession with security and control. Unlike Helga who struggled to master and accept middle class norms, Irene jumps over the requirements to become middle class. She adopts the norms so much that she becomes a panopticon for the rules and in turn exercises the power of these social norms upon everyone in her circle. This embrace of standardization effectively quells Irene's desires in what Jacques Lacan calls "surplus jouissance." Inspired by Marx and his idea of surplus and exchange value, Lacan defined surplus jouissance as the object of anxiety. He argues that anxiety is placated in a number of ways—acting out such as throwing a tantrum (e.g. Helga's outbursts), performing an action such as suicide (e.g. Helga's acceptance of marriage and motherhood), etc. The most common way of placating anxiety, though, is the pursuit of surplus jouissance—or pleasure that is just too much. This "too much" is a component of pleasure that exposes the inequalities papered over by exchange value. The pursuit of pleasure for Lacan, in the context of anxiety, is like a form of repression; the pleasure distracts the subject with bodily enjoyment but it also contains a critical moment that demonstrates how the pleasure is really a false pleasure. Larsen presents Irene's pleasure in security as a form of surplus jouissance. She describes the calming effect of this security: "she was aware that, to her, security was the most important and desired thing in life…she wanted only to be tranquil. Only, unmolested."[127] Irene enjoys controlling the lives of her guests, her husband, and her sons. But, Larsen allows the reader to surmise that this is all a show to keep Irene from exploding, from following her desires to disintegrate like Clare. Adorno offers a similar explanation. He states that: "the culture industry replaces pain, which is present in ecstasy no less than in asceticism, with jovial denial. Its supreme law is that its consumers shall at no price be given what they desire: and in that very deprivation they must take their

laughing satisfaction."[128] Surplus jouissance exposes the constructedness of socially mediated relationships. It helps articulate or un-repress the real inequalities hidden behind apparent equivalences, behind the use of pleasure. Larsen capitalizes on (anticipates) these formulations by demonstrating how Irene crafts a mimetic relationship with Clare after learning that her pleasure is false—that it is not security she desires but aspects embodied by Clare.

When Clare insists upon attending the Negro Welfare League ball as a single lady, Irene objects—both verbally and with racial anxiety. Besides voicing her need for security, "all I'm concerned with is the unpleasantness and possible danger which your [Clare] going might incur," Irene must get up from her seat, rearrange flowers, and "her hands shook slightly, for she was in a near rage of impatience and exasperation."[129] Larsen shows the corporeality of racial anxiety. Even though the danger is targeted at Clare, Irene frames everything around herself: "I shouldn't like to be mixed up in any row."[130] Irene eventually capitulates to Clare's request and thus welcomes the dangerous Clare back into her life. She knows the dangers of letting Clare return and goes against her own surplus jouissance situated around security. By placing herself in Clare's position—of being the possible prostitute and more importantly of being exposed by Bellew or one of his associates—Irene begins to empathize with Clare. This mimetic relationship helps Irene embrace her own abject status as a black and (lesbian) desiring woman. She interprets Clare's "futile searching and the firm resolution" as a positionality of abjection. Irene then aligns herself with what she considers the abject and begins to erode her identity. At the same time, this new position still generates surplus jouissance because Irene creates another threat to her security. She takes cynical pleasure in "the disagreeable possibilities in connection with Clare Kendry's coming among them loomed before her in endless irritating array."[131] Clare's inclusion guarantees "endless" pleasure, repression, and also disintegration for Irene. Being associated with scandal will help erode Irene's connection to middle class norms. Literary critic Helena Michie offers a similar analysis. She argues that Clare "forces Irene to look at herself and the constructedness of her marriage, her sexuality, and her racial position."[132] While I agree that Irene changes because of a relationship with Clare, it is through a complex mimicry and not simply from an "exchange of gazes" that involve only identification.

Larsen illustrates Irene's mimesis of Clare. A good example is illustrated when Clare provides a P.O. Box address. Irene is frustrated that Clare does not find her wise enough to avoid being indiscreet. Irene, in a fury, thinks: "having always had complete confidence in her own good judgment and tact, Irene couldn't bear to have anyone seem to question them."[133] This insight partially explains Irene's mis-step—her lack of good judgment and tact—when attempting to manipulate Brian into taking their son abroad for school. She deals with her "fear which crouched, always, deep down within her, stealing away the sense of security," not in a wonderfully elegant manner as she had done before Clare's return, but by antagonizing Brian about the sexual and racial education of their children. She loses her tact, I argue, because she has begun a mimetic relationship with Clare; she abandons patience and like her accusation of Clare has "no allegiance beyond her own immediate desire."[134] The manner in which Irene approached the conversation was "unsafe" with "certain unpleasantness and possible danger."[135] This is the same language she uses to describe Clare; Larsen portrays Irene mirroring Clare but without the same results—Margery is in boarding school in Europe and Irene fails to send her children abroad. This episode highlights Irene's subtle differences and interpretations of Clare. She does not identify or exactly copy Clare's behaviors but incorporates interpretations of specific attributes. By emphasizing mimesis, Larsen retains a difference that is lost in pure mimicry. Irene learns not to make Clare the standard but to practice versions of Clare's behaviors

and desires. In the process Irene reads the prehistoric, non-dominated aspects of Clare. Her mimesis becomes more distinct and important as the novel progresses. At the ball, Irene gains an immense excitement—surplus jouissance—from gazing upon Clare and having the scandal associated with herself. Clare's attendance excites both positive and negative attention. This gesture requires that Irene absorb the risks. In this manner, Irene abandons her security and models herself after Clare. Irene takes on the risk-taking qualities of Clare—but with slight modifications. Irene, like Clare, begins to "shut away reason as well as caution" as she develops their friendship.[136] This includes the dismantling of her need for security—at least temporally. Near the end of the novel, Irene's mimesis becomes more transparent. In another fight with Brian, she loses her patience again: "she must not work herself up. She must not! Where were all the self-control, the common sense, that she was so proud of?"[137] Because of her mimesis with Clare, Irene has learned to disinvest from her attachment to self-control and common sense. Larsen shows her in a state of agitation and disintegration.

Ethnic solidarity, although at times a source of frustration, seems important for Irene. She is "proud" to support uplift and proud of the skin color of her husband and children. She weakly claims an extended kinship with Clare because of their past and because of their racial sisterhood. Supposedly Clare doesn't care about the African American race but merely belongs to it. This frustrates Irene, who remains silent about Clare's secret out of a supposed commitment to their shared race. She thinks: "she couldn't betray Clare . . . .she had toward Clare Kendry a duty. She was bound to her by those very ties of race which, for all her repudiation of them, Clare had been unable to completely sever."[138] While critics such as McDowell or Cheryl Wall might attribute Irene's rationally-articulated sense of duty as a smoke-screen for her erotic desires, Ann DuCille offers another perspective: Clare is Irene's "alter libido."[139] Using this logic, I could argue that the vicarious thrill of Clare's passing is what keeps Irene attached to Clare.

I will argue that this scene does indeed provide an erotic thrill for Irene, but I want to add another—not necessarily divergent—facet of interpretation. Irene's obsession with assisting Clare falls under the rubric of the Bildungsroman: helping a friend maintain her secret so that she can advance or develop. Returning to the previous example, Brian wants to educate his children on sex, lynching, racial slurs, and "the race problem."[140] Irene rejects this approach in favor of a philosophy of bildung: "I want their childhood to be happy and as free from the knowledge of such things as it possibly can be."[141] Larsen emphasizes the alignment of Irene with a "raceless" middle class childhood; she subscribes to the journey of development and as a parent she wants that journey to be "smooth," i.e. without the horrors of race. At this point in the novel, Irene has already begun to fracture and disintegrate, but she also partially mends those wounds. Larsen introduces this confrontation as a way to expose the unreality and impossibility of Irene's notion of bildung for African Americans. Brian wants to fracture the children's sense of reality with a "proper preparation of [black] life": lynching, violence, and anti-black racism.[142] This demand for minority bildung causes racial anxiety in Irene. She must leave the room and is "seized by a convulsion of shivering."[143] To quell this anxiety, Irene begins to suspect that Brian is having an affair with Clare. The fantasy of the affair becomes the surplus jouissance for the latter anxiety. What is most telling in the situation is that when Brian speaks of minority bildung—of just the kind Clare performs—Irene immediately links the two, albeit in the context of a suspected affair instead of with respect to minority bildung. Rather than acknowledging the process of self-deformation advocated by Brian, Irene uses the thrill of jealousy as a smoke-screen.

Section 5: Toward a Second Mirror Stage

The novel ends with a confusing twist: does Irene push Clare to her death or does Clare jump out of the window? Critics have been divided over this issue for decades. By considering the role of disintegration, I want to argue that death is a viable option for the "end" of minority bildung—though not necessarily its trajectory. By examining Irene's "ethical" dilemma—whether to tell of her encounter with John Bellew—I want to examine the termination of the minority Bildungsroman. After Bellew discovers that Irene and thus Clare are black women passing as white woman, Irene enters a state of ecstasy. Larsen structures Clare's outing as pleasure; Irene had hoped to remove Clare from her life and "as if in answer to her wish, the very next day Irene came face to face with Bellew."[144] This turning point in the novel acts as the intersection of multiple plots. First, this moment works to undo the racial anxiety Irene felt about the (pre-)historical freedom she traced in Clare's body. This surplus jouissance at Clare's being caught and the end of her "passing" allows Irene to return to her "normal" state of security. Previously, Irene had partially severed her connections to her secure life by mimicking Clare's state of freedom. The trace she located in Clare, of a time when black women were not dominated, propelled her to abandon her black middle class norms and, more radically, her identities as a wife and mother.

Through this dialectic of identity, Larsen demonstrates that Clare and Irene must completely disintegrate their identities. Irene engages in a relationship of mimesis with Clare but she does not fully disinvest her identities like Clare. If Bellew were to divorce Clare, she would remain in Harlem and thus threaten Irene's security. While a surface reading suggests that Irene would be most anxious at the prospect of being abandoned by Brian, Larsen reveals that Irene's racial anxiety arises from that fact that Irene would inevitably be led to a state of formlessness; her mimesis of Clare entails her emotional, moral, and psychic disintegration. Larsen clues the reader in to this logic: "if Clare was freed, anything might happen."[145] It is Clare's imagined freedom as a passing woman that is the source of Irene's racial anxiety, and if Bellew destroys that freedom, Irene might be "happy." As many critics have argued, Larsen seems to attribute Clare's death to Irene; the murder would restore her security and prevent her from experiencing racial anxiety.

A second interpretation emphasizes how the act of withholding information more fully articulates Larsen's theory of minority bildung. In wanting to discard Clare—to destroy the possibility of freedom for African American women—Irene "wished, for the first time in her life that she had not been born a Negro."[146] The desire to discard Clare qua race translates into Irene's desire to do the same via being born—not just passing for white. She claims to be torn between an allegiance to "the race" via Clare and to her own happiness. This seems like a counterintuitive exchange because Irene's desire for whiteness provides her the freedom that she wants to extinguish in Clare. She wants to achieve Clare's state of non-domination by dominating Clare, by becoming Clare instead of preserving a difference through mimesis. This switch to domination suspends Irene's disintegration. Her revenge on Clare is not that Bellew discovers her biological secret but that he discovers Clare enjoying Harlem in vogue.[147] Larsen reveals that Irene has not given up a mimetic relationship to Clare but merely had a temporary lapse.

Irene returns to a non-dominating mimesis—and thus supports Clare's quest for disintegration—after Clare acknowledges Irene's outing of herself. When Clare arrives for the final party, Larsen plants numerous clues for the reader to decipher. First, when Clare arrives,

she "kissed [Irene's] a bare shoulder, seeming not to notice a slight shrinking." Then, Irene cues Clare that "'Philadelphia. That's not very far, is it? Clare, I—?'"[148] Next she observes that, "Clare didn't notice the unfinished sentence." Irene refuses to speak but she does make a statement; Larsen ends the confession with a question mark. This unfinished question demands a response from Clare; she must locate the question within Irene's cryptic behaviors. The "shrinking" shoulder, for example, should alert Clare to Irene's repugnance and dismay; this greeting compared to the other times Clare enters is extremely different. And, if Clare really "knows" what Irene is always thinking—as so often proven in the novel—Larsen wants the reader to also know that Clare understands Irene's unspoken messages, which plague their awkward interaction. Like Clare's scribbled writings, Irene has mastered Clare's "feminine," wordless communication; her discursive intention indeed reaches Clare. I believe that Larsen exhibits Clare's reception of the message in her answer to Irene's unfinished question regarding what she would do if Bellew discovered her secret. Even Irene seems to register the answer, although she represses her awareness of it: "that smile and the quiet resolution of that one word, 'Yes,' filled Irene with a *primitive* paralyzing dread. Her hands were numb, her feet like ice, her heart like a stone weight. Even her tongue was like a heavy dying thing. There were long spaces between the words as she asked: 'And what should you do?'"[149] The resounding and primitive "yes" answers Irene's earlier yet unspoken confession-cum-question. Clare speaks from a state of formlessness; as she learns of her impending fate, she gathers the strength to disinvest from both her white and black lives. In a space without identity—she is all history, all body—Clare speaks with the authority of the primitive, of a time and space when African American women were not dominated. Larsen even indicates Irene's acknowledgment of Clare's insights. The "long spaces between the words" are what Lacan would call eruptions of the real and the "voice" of the unconscious. As Irene pauses she communicates—through the unconscious—her warning and feelings for Clare. Larsen has previously established a queer form of communication between Clare and Irene early in the novel, and when it appears to fail at this juncture the reader understands that this is not simply a gap in the narrative but a critical maneuver. Irene, however, represses her knowledge: "Clare Kendry had always seemed to know what other people were thinking…, well, she wouldn't know this time."[150] Irene's bad reading scans over Clare's roaring "yes."

After re-establishing her mimetic relationship, Irene no longer relies on the surplus jouissance of Clare's removal to calm her racial anxiety. She exchanges this pain for her old form of surplus jouissance, namely, the security of her middle class nuclear family. In this exchange, Irene feels "this absence of acute, unbearable pain" which is "unjust."[151] She tastes the failed moment in surplus jouissance which reveals that her fears about Clare and security are both equally artificial. In this moment of not feeling the trauma of her self-induced pain, Irene disintegrates her identity as a loving wife: "she couldn't now be sure that she had ever truly known love. Not even for Brian. He was her husband and the father of her sons. But was he anything more?"[152] She realizes that her marriage is a sham and that heterosexual love has only led to her domination. Irene views Brian as merely a social position and function; she discards her identification with wife, lover, mother, and middle class lady. She will pass as a mother and wife just as Clare passes as a white woman. This ultimate self-deformation is the key element of the minority Bildungsroman.

Through Clare's death Larsen represents another process of minority bildung: a second mirror stage. As Clare disintegrates more and more of her identities, she approaches a state of formlessness—or recreates herself as in an original state—as "primitive" according to Larsen.

Clare relinquishes her social and political identities over the course of her un-passing. The remaining attachments are psychic and emotional. Irene is the last connection Clare maintains in the world and she seems to betray Clare. Larsen strongly implies that Irene desired Clare's death and pushed her out of the window. An earlier moment, when Irene drops the teacup at one of her parties in rage, mirrors the ending: a fragile white thing smashes to the ground and Irene obscures the cause.[153] At the party, "Irene finished her cigarette and threw it out [the window she opened], watching the tiny spark drop slowly down to the white ground below."[154] The red flame drops to the ground just as Clare in her red dress will fall to the earth. Larsen relies on less subtle imagery when Irene has reached a point of openly wanting Clare out of her life and imagining her dead.[155] It seems that Irene terminates her friendship with Clare, but as critics have noted, in killing Clare, she acts out of (sexual) passion. I want to closely examine the scene of Clare's death in order to pinpoint Irene's role in it and elaborate on the process of Clare's second mirror stage.

The spatial configuration of the characters in this scene provides insight into Larsen's theory of rebirth. When Bellew enters the apartment, he rushes through the line of men and towards the seated Clare. As he shouts at her, three events simultaneously occur: the men approach him, Felice warns him, and Clare moves from a chair to the window. As Clare stands at the window with "a faint smile on her full red lips and in her shining eyes," this smile "maddened" Irene. She runs across the room, bypassing her husband, Felice, the line of men, and Bellew, to place herself between Bellew and Clare. Irene seems to be the only person protecting Clare, acting as a shield from Bellew, yet Larsen offers a different vocabulary: "before *them* stood John Bellew . . . beyond *them* the little huddle of other people, and Brian steeping out from among *them* . . ."[156] The paragraph describes the configuration of the room, but as I have shown above, Larsen provides a detailed map of everyone's location before this two-sentence paragraph repeats the information. What is added by this paragraph is that Larsen describes Clare and Irene as a singular unit: "them." How does Irene move from a point of mimesis to a coupling with Clare?

This dyad forms as a consequence of Irene's recognition that Clare stands before the party as if "the whole structure of her life were not lying in fragments before her. She seemed unaware of any danger or uncaring."[157] The fact that Clare does not become hysterical but remains calm and poised befuddles Irene. She makes the reader conscious of Clare's disintegration by articulating the fragments that Clare has shed. Then, Irene recognizes Clare's freedom shining through in the smile that appears on her mouth and in her eyes. Irene reads on Clare's body the signs that announce her achievement of formlessness—with all but one identity evaporating. Irene rushes to Clare's aid and thinks: "she couldn't have Clare Kendry cast aside by Bellew. She couldn't have her free."[158] While the freedom Irene references presumably recalls a divorced Clare living openly as a black woman in Harlem and seducing Brian, Larsen indexes a radically different set of meanings. First, Clare is in a state of formlessness. Through the process of minority bildung, she has disintegrated her social, political, and psychic identities. In this process, Clare has moved closer to a state free from domination. If, at this point, Clare is "cast aside," Bellew transforms her back into an object by reconstituting her identity as a divorcee and a dominated black woman and effectively turns her entire journey of self-deformation to rubbish. He would reify a formless Clare and in effect reinstigate the first racialized mirror stage. Bellew could re-dominate Clare, only this time as an African American woman. Irene refuses to have Clare available—"free"—for re-colonization. The radical freedom achieved by Clare must be the launching point for a second mirror stage.

At this point in the sequence of events, Bellew might discard Clare or Irene might help her achieve a second mirror stage. Larsen indicates that the latter occurs by creating the dyad structure. Irene and Clare become united. As a loving friend Irene assists Clare in crafting a new identity. Remember that Irene did not fully betray Clare by being seen by Bellew with her black friend and that she unconsciously informs Clare of her impending outing by Bellew. Clare's sole remaining psychic bond is with Irene. The stage is set for the second mirror relationship. The window and jump serve as wonderful images of the womb, but the question remains: whose womb? Earlier Irene opened the window and launched a red flame out of the window. Now, Clare occupies the same space and enters the womb of Irene. When Irene rejoins the space, the two women—as Larsen alludes to with the unified pronoun—forge a new womb and animate the start of a new mirror and new mimetic relationship. In this second mirror stage, Clare can mirror herself off of Irene's love and care. Unlike a child who does not have access to language or does not possess a personal history, Clare understands that her mirror parent is a healthy and vital black woman, albeit one in decay.

At the same time, Clare can disinvest from Irene as a friend and trust that the recreated womb will facilitate the forging of her new identity. Clare, in complete formlessness, can establish a primary identification with blackness without interference from anti-black racism. Irene has proven a caretaker and defender of "the race" and has assisted Clare in reentering the black world of Harlem. In structuring secondary identification, Clare must accept that Irene wants her to be free—to enjoy a life without domination (or as little as possible). Occupying the position of the mother, Irene demonstrates an embrace of blackness rather than a desire for white freedom. She desire that Clare pursue her own freedom as a woman and African American. In this mirror relationship, Clare forges an ego free from the damaging effects of anti-black racism, but she must still face the domination of being a woman. Clare's deep connection with the mythic past where women were not dominated by man (although there was a dialectic of domination with nature) cannot be represented in the world. Woman still retains the idea of wife, mother, sister, daughter, etc. so a full expression of woman is not possible. Irene misses not the racial dimensions of Clare but her "mocking daring, the gallantry of her pose, the ringing of her laughter."[159] Irene knows that the second mirror stage allows Clare to express her racial identity but she mourns the traces of Clare's freedom from the domination of anti-black racism. Larsen can only express this state of non-domination through her body parts—each one revealing the historical, primitive woman.

Irene and Clare both realize that the second mirror stage cannot craft a space of free womanhood within the social. It can help Clare not be traumatized by anti-woman oppression, but Clare and Irene both want more than psychic freedom. In a secondary identification with Irene's desire for absolute racial, gendered, and sexual freedom for Clare and herself, Clare accepts that the socio-political world has not developed a means to represent woman. Instead of being repressed, Clare and Irene accept death as an alternative to a failed representation. Clare cannot pass as a woman free from domination—that state does not yet exist. In a brave move, Clare and Irene decide that death is a radical solution to the failure of the representation of woman. Irene pushes as Clare jumps from the window. In her death, Clare completes the second mirror stage and fashions a new ego that enables her to make her first and final choice. This trajectory of disintegration, formlessness, and second mirror stage almost completes the action of the minority Bildungsroman.

The last few pages of the novel seem anti-climatic after Clare's dramatic death. Irene appears to be in a state of hysteria from her murderous acts. I want to suggest that Larsen

continues Irene's journey of disintegration in the aftermath of Clare's rebirth and death. Clare, the love object, has been destroyed. While death does not equate to a psychic disinvestment, Larsen suggests that Irene will negotiate the category of woman through living. When Irene finally decides to come downstairs, she acts like a guilty woman. She did push Clare, so that feeling should be present. In a surprising maneuver, Larsen also resumes Irene's disinvestment from her identities. When Irene wants to comfort Brian, she is "helpless, having so completely lost control of his mind and heart."[160] Unlike her earlier vacillations, she remains true here to the abandonment of security and of her identities as a mother and wife. The marriage bonds seem broken. Larsen confirms this when Brian provides Irene a "soothing gesture" and gives her his coat. Instead of feeling warm, she reacts with anger and sadness, as when Brian enters her room unannounced: "she began to cry rackingly, her entire body heaving with convulsive sobs."[161] She cries for Clare and rejects Brian's attempts at comfort.

In the psychic register, Irene disinvests from her love attachment to Clare after asking "'is she—is she—?'" and convulsing, i.e. using grief to de-cathect her love from a dead object. Irene achieves a state of near-formlessness. Lastly, Irene cannot complete her last utterance of the novel. As she informs the police that Bellew did not push Clare, she says, "I'm quite certain that he didn't. I was there, too. As close as he was. She just fell, before anybody could stop her. I—"[162] Irene lets Bellew off the hook, but she cannot articulate her own actions. I would like to suggest that when Irene does utter the penultimate sentence, her illocution recreates the second mirror stage—but this time for Irene. Then, the lone "I" performs the perlocutionary act of offering Irene's end, her last moment of existence. The single "I" impresses upon the reader Irene's slippage into her own second mirror stage because she no longer exists as a coherent subject; she is formless and thus her "I" refers to an impossible subject. She is, after all, still the "them" from before; this "I" is false. The next two paragraphs, I believe, confirm this advancement. Irene's "knees gave way…she moaned and sank down, moaned again. Through the great heaviness that submerged and drowned her she was dimly conscious…then everything was dark."[163]

These experiences repeat Clare's falling and the movement into a dark space of the womb. Irene, too, falls, and is covered with the same darkness involved in Clare's death. When Irene awakes from her rebirth "centuries after," Larsen leaves the reader with an odd last word to the novel: "'Death by misadventure, I'm inclined to believe. Let's go up and have another look at that window.'"[164]The window, as womb, recalls Clare's rebirth and now Irene's. Larsen wants the reader to remember the womb/window as a reminder not of Clare's defenestration but of Irene's recent emergence from a second mirror stage. In addition, "centuries later" recalls Clare and Irene's quest to recreate a time-space where black women were not dominated. This radical and primitive freedom existed eons ago, centuries ago, and it is apropos that Irene emerges from her second mirror stage dazed from inhabiting a psychic space that helped her craft a new ego free from racial oppression. She just returned from that ancient past and out of the window/womb. Unlike Clare, Irene commits to exploring life as a black woman free from the psychic constraints of anti-black racism. She must continue to negotiate anti-black racism in the social and political spheres but she is no longer dominated by a socially imposed psyche or identity. While Clare dies from following minority bildung, Larsen encourages her readers to look into the window that they opened together and to follow Irene's journey to a state of black freedom.

[1] JanMohamed, Abdul. *The Death-Bound-Subject: The Archaeology of Richard Wright.* Durham: Duke UP, 2007.
[2] Quicksand, 132.
[3] Quicksand, 104.
[4] Adorno, Theodor. *Dialectics of Enlightenment.* 111.
[5] Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997, 4.
[6] Quicksand, 46-47.
[7] Quicksand, 49 emphasis added.
[8] Quicksand, 39.
[9] Quicksand, 54.
[10] Quicksand, 54.
[11] Quicksand, 42.
[12] Quicksand, 55.
[13] Quicksand, 113.
[14] Quicksand, 45.
[15] Quicksand, 62-63.
[16] Quicksand, 75.
[17] Quicksand, 84 (emphasis added).
[18] Quicksand, 66.
[19] Quicksand, 78.
[20] Quicksand, 80.
[21] Quicksand, 122.
[22] Quicksand, 123 (emphasis added).
[23] Quicksand, 125.
[24] Quicksand, 125 (underline added, italics original).
[25] Quicksand, 125.
[26] Quicksand, 144 (emphasis added).
[27] Quicksand, 145.
[28] Quicksand, 136-7.
[29] Quicksand, 133.
[30] Quicksand, 85.
[31] Quicksand, 77.
[32] Quicksand, 117.
[33] Quicksand, 104.
[34] Quicksand, 99.
[35] Quicksand, 100.
[36] Quicksand, 100.
[37] Quicksand, 100.
[38] Quicksand, 100.
[39] Quicksand, 103.
[40] Quicksand, 102.
[41] Quicksand, 101 (ellipses original).
[42] Quicksand, 117.
[43] Quicksand, 119.
[44] Quicksand, 142 (emphasis added).
[45] Quicksand, 130.
[46] Spillers, Hortense. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics.* vol 17, no. 2, Summer 1987.
[47] Quicksand, 35-36.
[48] Quicksand, 41.
[49] Quicksand, 97.
[50] Letter 117 from Adorno to Benjamin, dated 29 February 1940 in Adorno, Theodor and Walter Benjamin. *The Complete Correspondence, 1928-1940.* Cambridge: Harvard UP (2001), 321.
[51] Quicksand, 56.
[52] Quicksand, 56.

[53] Quicksand, 108.
[54] Quicksand, 118.
[55] Quicksand, 96.
[56] Quicksand, 97.
[57] Klein, Melanie. "Love, Guilt and Reparation" in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945.* New York: The Free Press, 1975
[58] The father, on the other hand, and his representation as blackness, participate in another form of the commodity fetish.
[59] There has been much controversy over the exact ending of the novel. The citation above is the last line from the first edition of the novel. The second printing includes another one-sentence paragraph that describes Helga giving birth to her fifth child and alludes to her utter failure to achieve the radiant life she pursued throughout the novel. Either ending supports my argument about how Helga fades from life due to motherhood and selecting a husband based upon a scene of subjection that requires Helga to marry someone interested in uplift. Quicksand, 162.
[60] Quicksand, 62-3.
[61] McDowell, Deborah. *"The Changing Same": Black Women's Literature, Criticism, and Theory*. Bloomington, Indiana UP, (1995), 79.
[62] Singh, Amritjit. *The Novels of the Harlem Renaissance: Twelve Black Writers, 1923-1933.* State College: Penn State UP (2001), 36.
[63] Fabre, Genevieve and Michel Feith (eds). *Temples for Tomorrow.* Bloomington: Indiana UP (2001), 11.
[64] Archer-Straw, Petrine. *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s.* New York: Thames & Hudson (2000), 13.
[65] Torgovnick, Marianna. *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives.* Chicago: U. Chicago Press (1990), 8.
[66] Torgovnick, 46.
[67] For an extended analysis of Josephine Baker and French negrophilia see Anne Cheng's *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011.
[68] Sweeney, Carole. *From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism, and Primitivism 1919-1935.* Westport, CT: Praeger (2004), 3.
[69] Torgovnick, 127.
[70] Torgovnick, 198-9.
[71] Torgovnick, 153.
[72] Torgovnick, 157.
[73] Lemke, Sieglinde. *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism.* Oxford: Oxford UP (1998), 8-9.
[74] Huggins, Nathan. *Harlem Renaissance.* Oxford: Oxford UP (2007, 1971), 188.
[75] Huggins, 187 (italics original).
[76] Huggins, 166.
[77] Singh, 34.
[78] Vogel, Shane. *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance.* Chicago: U of Chicago Press (2009), 6.
[79] Huggins, 89.
[80] Huggins, 172-175.
[81] http://www.kennedy-center.org/programs/jazz/ambassadors/Lesson9.html accessed 11 April 2012.
[82] ibid.
[83] McDowell, Deborah, 75.
[84] McDowell, 80.
[85] McDowell, 75.
[86] McDowell, 80-81.
[87] Torgovnick, 18-19.
[88] Sweeney, 16
[89] Sweeeny, 17.
[90] Jay, Martin. *Adorno.* Cambridge: Harvard UP (1984), 62.
[91] Jay, 72.
[92] Horkheimer, Max and Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments.* Stanford: Stanford UP (2002, 1947), 21.

[93] Adorno and critical theorists use the term "identity" to mean identical. Because studies in racial formation use the term identity in a very different manner, I will substitute critical theory's term with "the identical," "the same," etc.
[94] Jay, Martin. *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 269. The process of dereification for Lukács also depends upon a value-creating power of labor that forms the basis for a new collective unalienated social practice (270).
[95] Letter 117 from Adorno to Benjamin, dated 29 February 1940 in Adorno, Theodor and Walter Benjamin. *The Complete Correspondence, 1928-1940.* Cambridge: Harvard UP (2001), 321.
[96] Adorno, Theodor. *Negative Dialectics.* New York: Continuum (1981), 53.
[97] Jay, Adorno, 156.
[98] Adorno, Theodor. Letter to Benjamin 18 March 1936 in *Aesthetics and Politics: Debates between Block, Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno.* ed. *New Left Review.* London (1977), 104.
[99] Passing, 180.
[100] Passing, 183.
[101] Passing, 194.
[102] Passing, 200.
[103] Wall, Cheryl. "Aspects of Identity in Nella Larsen's Novels" in *Passing.* ed Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton (2007), 361.
[104] Michie, Helena. "Sororophobia" in *Passing.* ed Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton (2007), 411.
[105] Passing, 213.
[106] Passing, 225.
[107] Passing, 201.
[108] Passing, 206.
[109] Passing, 251.
[110] Passing, 252.
[111] Passing, 254.
[112] Larsen, Nella. *Passing* in *The Complete Fiction of Nella Larsen.* New York: Anchor Books (2001), 253.
[113] *Passing,* 187.
[114] *Passing,* 185.
[115] *Passing,* 186.
[116] Passing, 188.
[117] Passing, 208 (italics original).
[118] Passing, 174 (ellipses original).
[119] Passing, 225.
[120] Passing, 227.
[121] Passing, 227.
[122] Passing, 227.
[123] Passing, 228.
[124] Passing, 240.
[125] Passing, 241.
[126] Passing, 172.
[127] Passing, 276.
[128] Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* 112-113.
[129] Passing, 230-231.
[130] Passing, 231.
[131] Passing, 232-3.
[132] Michie, Helena. "Sororophobia" in *Passing.* ed Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton (2007), 416.
[133] Passing, 222.
[134] Passing, 172.
[135] Passing, 172.
[136] Passing, 231.
[137] Passing, 264.
[138] Passing, 212-213.
[139] DuCille, Ann. "*Passing* Fancies" in *Passing.* ed Carla Kaplan. New York: Norton (2007), 438.
[140] Passing, 263.
[141] Passing, 263.

[142] Passing, 264.
[143] Passing, 264.
[144] Passing, 259.
[145] Passing, 268.
[146] Passing, 258.
[147] Passing, 258.
[148] Passing, 265 (endash original).
[149] Passing, 265-266 (italics added).
[150] Passing, 266.
[151] Passing, 267.
[152] Passing, 268.
[153] Passing, 254-5.
[154] Passing, 270.
[155] Passing, 261.
[156] Passing, 271 (emphasis added).
[157] Passing, 271.
[158] Passing, 271.
[159] Passing, 272.
[160] Passing, 274.
[161] Passing, 274.
[162] Passing, 274.
[163] Passing, 275.
[164] Passing, 275.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARD A SECOND MIRROR STAGE:

A GENERAL THEORY OF DISABILITY IN RALPH ELLISON'S *INVISIBLE MAN*

Section 1: The Collision of Race and Disability

The American film, *Home of the Brave*, depicts Peter Moss's journey in a five-member military unit during the Second World War.[1] Stationed on an island in Japan, Moss, an African American soldier, uses his expertise in surveying to help map an attack on the Japanese army. The film recounts Moss's experiences with racism in his desegregated unit, which is anachronistic for WWII, and how he works through the emotional traumas of racism. During their reconnaissance mission, Moss's best friend dies, Mingo, another unit member, receives an injury that causes him to lose an arm, and Moss develops hysterical paralysis. In the final scene of the film, the recovered Moss contemplates how he can resolve his relationship to his blackness. In *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*, Fanon reacts to Mingo's declaration to Moss: "resign yourself to your color the way I got used to my stump; we're both victims."[2] The disabled body of Mingo and the black body of Moss become equivalent modes of personhood. Fanon objects to how the film inculcates a social logic of race as disability: "with all my strength I refuse to accept that amputation. I feel in myself a soul as immense as the world . . . . I am a master and I am advised to adopt the humility of the cripple."[3] Fanon refuses the conflation between being black and being disabled while simultaneously accepting that ideology by reacting as-if he could feel his blackness as an amputation; he may "refuse to accept that amputation" of blackness, but this formulation nonetheless performs blackness as a form of disability. Moss represents, for Fanon, not just African American men, but also West Indian and African soldiers who might have served in the Second World War. Moss's dilemma is not just a creative imagining or attempt at empathy for Fanon but a near reality. Fanon served in Charles de Gaulle's Free French Army during World War II and intimately identifies with Moss's plight through the first-person.[4] Literary critic Bryan Wagner elaborates on this point: "Fanon objects to the potential analogy to blackness on grounds that blackness locks its victims into their bodies in a way that bars the potential for self-conscious existence, whether the condition is accepted or not."[5] If Fanon accepts the "false consolation offered by the amputee" then the revolutionary project to extricate blacks, specifically the colonized body and mind, from colonial ideology will fail.[6] Fanon must work against the mapping of disability onto race that permeates the public imagination, especially a body of films that render blackness as a form of disability.[7]

Following Fanon's rejection of this demeaning fact of blackness, African American critics and artists also attack this conflation of blackness and disability. Beginning in the nineteenth century African American artists such as Charles Chesnutt, Frances E.W. Harper, Jessie Redmon Fauset, and later James Weldon Johnson attack the relationship of blackness and disability. But, not until Ralph Ellison does this relation become fully explored. Published the same year as Fanon's reaction, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* appears to critique the idea of blackness as a form of blindness. The title of the novel already suggests a reaction to the

equation that blindness as "invisibility" can be substituted for black. In the opening paragraph, Ellison seems to acknowledge the perspective that African Americans can be viewed as disabled. Invisible Man describes himself "like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows."[8] Ellison explicitly represents the narrator as a disfigured and disabled character. On the next page, Invisible Man identifies himself as a "phantom" who almost kills a passerby. This phantom presence reverberates back to the second line of the novel: "no, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe."[9] The "spook" Ellison refers to is not a ghost or an apparition but rather the racial epithet. At the same time, Ellison's word play connects the "bodiless heads" with the idea of a phantom limb that has been amputated. The novel initiates with a complex discussion of race and disability that the scholarship on Ralph Ellison has largely ignored; invisible can also mean disabled.

Ellison offers a compelling critique of the conflation of race with disability. The Battle Royal, for instance, reveals the horrors of Invisible Man's first adult encounter with anti-black racism. The white men of the town create a context which forces Invisible Man to act as a pseudo-disabled beggar. Unlike the unhoused persons that work on the urban streets of the contemporary world, beggars in the 1930s and 1940s were more often either physically disabled (blind, deaf, missing limbs, or deformed), poor, either black or white, and often paupers. During the Battle Royal, the boys become blind via blindfolding and intellectually disabled via receiving electric shock therapy on the electrified rug; the pauper boys are now blind, too. Invisible Man and the boys are forced to perform: they fight in the boxing ring, they "dance" on the electric rug; and Invisible Man "sings" his graduation speech for the wealthy white men. Ellison stages the Battle Royal as a street performance by disabled, black beggars to illuminate and protest the ways in which white culture attempts to view and force African Americans into the role of the disabled.

Invisible Man protests how African Americans are perceived as disabled during his emotionally powerful speech to a Harlem crowd. He informs the crowd that they become disabled the moment of their birth: "'they [whites] think we're blind—*un*-commonly blind . . . they've dispossessed us each of one eye from the day we're born . . . we're a nation of one-eyed mice.'"[10] Not only are African American physically blind, but they are also cognitively deficient. He qualifies this form of blindness by telling the audience that the other eye can be popped out, too, if African Americans are not attentive to the operations of anti-black racism. Invisible Man reacts against the socio-political and psychic formation of African Americans as physically, socially, and cognitively disabled. He addresses his audience as "my dumb one-eyed brothers" as a way to signify the multiple disabilities that converge to create and express African American identity.[11] Invisible Man's speech seems to be awakening a political unconscious of African Americans. Ellison, then, suggests that African Americans should revolt: "'let's make a miracle…let's take back our pillaged eyes!"[12] Extricating blindness from race seems to be Ellison and Fanon's projects. But, is *Invisible Man* a meditation on how African Americans should be un-disabled and how, like Fanon, race shouldn't be viewed as a form of disability?

The project Ellison purposes, I argue, is much less expected and even controversial. Instead of protesting against the conflation of race and disability, he accepts—and demands Invisible Man to accept—this equivalencing. The novel represents both characters with disabilities and characters transforming into disabled bodies and minds. In the arena speech, Invisible Man does not advocate that African Americans become able-bodied via restoring their pillaged eyes, but rather he wants them to comprehend anti-black racism's networks of power. He urges African Americans to remain disabled yet become more politically engaged. Ellison

does not purport to convert the African American body or race into something more "assimilated" or more recognized. He embraces the disabled-status of African Americans because it is only when disfigured blacks—not the able-bodied Bledsoes of the world—unite can they create sociopolitical transformations. Invisible Man asks the audience: "'did you ever notice . . . how two totally blind men can get together and help one another along? . . . Let's get together, uncommon people. With both our eyes we may see what makes us so uncommon, we'll see *who* make us so uncommon!"[13] *Invisible Man* effectively accepts African Americans as a one-eyed and disabled race that must come together. Ellison reinforces this African American *bildung* by converting the narrator into a blind man throughout this scene.

Upon entering the arena, Invisible Man enters a locker room that is reminiscent of his basement: strange smells, subterranean living, and a world of darkness illuminated by light bulbs. He is drawn to a photograph of "a popular fighter who had lost his sight in the ring. It must have been right here in this arena."[14] Invisible Man remembers his father's story about how a fixed fight caused the boxer to go blind and end up in a home for the disabled. Recalling images of the Battle Royal, Ellison begins to foreshadow the narrator's own conversation into a disabled man. He will fight with words in the arena, but Invisible Man, too, must become blind. While waiting to speak, he strolls outside and is approached by a syphilitic man living in a shanty town. This disfigured man, Invisible imagines, comes "up to the street only to beg money for food…in my mind I saw him stretching out a hand from which the fingers had been eaten away [by the syphilis sores]."[15] The imagery of the disabled beggar recalls and subtly rewrites Invisible Man's own resurfacing at the beginning of the novel; Ellison hints at how Invisible Man is disabled in the Prologue. Ellison resumes Invisible Man's conversion as he reaches the stage filled with spotlights: "I was blinded."[16] In two separate moments during his speech, "the light was so strong that I could no longer see the audience" and "I couldn't see them [the audience]."[17] These increments of blindness culminate in Invisible Man's main argument: "'we're blind—*un*-commonly blind." As Ellison constructs Invisible Man into a blind man, Invisible Man constructs African Americans into a blind race.

Ellison's project to turn Invisible Man into a blind person becomes more transparent during the Battle Royal. Entering the boxing ring blindfolded accomplishes three tasks. First, Ellison performs how Invisible Man's coming to consciousness of race is also a coming to consciousness of how African American (men) are disabled because of their race. As previously mentioned, Ellison shows how a context crafted by whites situates African Americans as disabled via the trope of the disabled beggar. The Battle Royal places the narrator into the position of the syphilitic beggar and thus equates race, disability, and mendicancy. The boys must beg for money: one boy earns ten dollars and the narrator receives a scholarship. Lastly, Ellison introduces another form of disability: homosexuality. Daniel Kim has elegantly argued that white male desire in the novel is essentially a form of homosexual desire for the black male body.[18] The Battle Royal initiates the reader into a world not only of physically disabled African Americans but also a world of homoerotics: the collective erections of the young black boys and the older white men, the bloody, sweaty, and shirtless bodies of the youth, the erotics of the fighting and tortured bodies, and the eroticized power of the white men. A formative moment for Invisible Man turns out to be his indoctrination into the brotherhood of race *and* disability. Why would Ellison attempt to convert Invisible Man into a person with disabilities rather than critique that maneuver? What does this have to do with Invisible Man's thought at the end of the arena chapter that "to become less—in order to become more?"[19] How does Ellison use the social stigma of disability to create a more robust and emancipated black subject? While Fanon simply

rejects race as disability, Ellison instead accepts and modifies this equation in order to work within the social reality of its power.

Ellison singles out blindness via his key term "invisible," in order to discuss the problem of race. In the novel it is the exception to talk about blindness as racially-oriented when Ellison has already conflated race with disability to best mirror the public imagination. *Invisible Man* constructs a general theory of disability, representing race as just one species or type of it. By embracing this conflation, in a subtle maneuver, Ellison gives himself freedom to work through sensitive racial problems by negotiating them vicariously through the framework of disability. Encoding Invisible Man's process of self-formation in disability, the narrative does not ostensibly read as *bildung*, or self-formation, since disability already entails a disintegrating and mangled body. The black body, for example, figures as disabled and needing something in order to function. The social identity of Invisible Man figures as a prosthetic device. His social position then mars and masks his disability—his deformed and raced body. The novel is filled with characters with disabilities: the Founder has deformed genitals, the blind Reverend Homer Barbee, the insane veterans, the syphilitic beggar, the crazy Tod Clifton, the sexually deviant Supercargo, Jim Trueblood, Mr. Norton, and Young Emerson, the partially blind Jack who wears a prosthetic eye, Lucius Brockway and his prosthetic teeth, African-Americans as a "one-eyed" people, Mary as maimed so as unable to bear children, Brother Tarp's deformed foot, and the narrator as a homosexual.[20] With race and disability conflated, the blindness discussed in the Prologue becomes a synonym for disability: Ellison smuggles out a general theory of disability from this master term. In effect, blindness is an exceptional in the novel's discussion of race because Ellison treats all disabilities as markers of race whereas blackness is seen as falling on a spectrum, from the country folk of Jim Trueblood to the working class blacks in the North to the educated African Americans at college. The novel turns disability into race and race into disability and refuses to follow the disavowal of this transformation because Ellison evokes the social reality of how race is imagined. As a consequence blackness becomes another species of disability with many cousins. For example, by drawing upon the historical context of the 1930s (the setting of the novel), along with biographical and other literary writings by Ellison, this chapter demonstrates that homosexuality is another form of "disability" suffered by Invisible Man. His love for Tod Clifton, his colleague in the Brotherhood, pushes him to lead a city-wide funeral for Tod, which precipitates his disinvestment from the Brotherhood. His disabled love for Tod becomes not just a site for contestation but a means for Ellison to resolve the tensions of race, sexuality, and the concept of *bildung*. Invisible Man accepts his disability via loving Tod while at the same time he comes to better understand his racial position by discarding heterosexuality and the black rapist fantasy in the episode where he refuses to act out this fantasy for an eager white woman. In Ellison's general theory of disability, race and sexuality can be critiqued in the same moment.

Ellison presents disability from the perspective of the insane, homosexual, and raced. In this way, race qua disability can be read as a fruitful and positive avenue for legitimately articulating oneself in an anti-black world that recognizes race as an expression of disability. Ellison does not simply critique this tension but puts pressure on the dialectical relationship to help advance Invisible Man towards a condition of formlessness, that is, towards the state in which he can discard his social identities, i.e. his "prosthetic' devices. From this position, Ellison introduces a new occasion for subject formation.

The goal of black *bildung* in my analysis is to first undo the pre-given identity fabricated that creates what Ellison calls a one-eyed race. This entails the disintegration of various identities

until the subject reaches a point of formlessness where he no longer dons social identities. In Ellison's case, he transforms race into disability as the means to exfoliate Invisible Man's prosthetic identities. The final step of formlessness is the removal of psychic attachments, such as love bonds that trigger mourning. Once the subject achieves both social and psychic formlessness, the novel presents the opportunity to undergo what I term "the second mirror stage." This reconstitution of the subject involves not only the complete destruction of the ego and all of its attachments to loved ones and to dreams, but it also requires a reconfiguration of the psychic and thus social identity of the African American subject. Then, when the subject has reached a state in which, firstly, anti-black racism has no influence upon his mirror stage; and secondly, he has *himself* selected his own replacement mother, a new ego and identity are able to be crafted. These maneuvers and conditions allow the subject to be reborn with both eyes present. This, in my analysis, is Ellison's general theory of disability.

Section 2: Historical Context of the Novel

While blindness is the most striking instance of the novel's formulation of race, it may well surprise the reader to find that disability is everywhere in *The Invisible Man*. Fanon and Ellison register larger cultural trends in America that align African Americans with the disabled. In the 1940s and 50s, America experienced one facet of the effects of massive war efforts in their production of a horrific quantity of disabled bodies. During the Second World War, over half of the soldiers injured suffered non-fatal wounds, leaving approximately 671,846 disabled veterans.[21] In addition, the war efforts at home produced nearly 8.5 million disabled workers.[22] After the war, America not only underwent transformations of its physical geography and politics, but also of the biopolitical landscape which now included millions of these disabled bodies. In 1946, for example, the Goodwill Industries of America's marketing materials included a poster that told potential contributors exactly what percentage of their donations went to providing jobs for specific types of "handicaps": "10% blind, Deaf or Defective Speech; 14% Mental, Emotional or Social Handicaps; 17% Non-Handicapped; 20% Handicapped by Age or Infirmity; and 39% Orthopedic or General Health Handicaps."[23] While the Goodwill (and other agencies) helped provide some people with disabilities with work, more often than not people with disabilities were viewed as vagrants because they were so often unemployed.

This stigmatization of the disabled, however, began much earlier in the nineteenth century with what are called the "Ugly Laws." Cultural critic Susan Schweik uncovers how these Ugly Laws operated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,[24] writing that in addition to removing disabled bodies from the streets, the law immediately extended beggars into the category of the "disabled" or "handicapped." Schweik demonstrates that the Ugly Laws were used to police three other areas of society: prostitution and indecency, immigration, and racial segregation.[25] In each of these areas, social forces used the Ugly Laws and the idea of disability to articulate each group as "ugly" and thereby mark each as a manifestation of disability.[26] In theory any African American could be seen as disabled not just for their race but because of the Ugly Laws, mendicancy, and high unemployment rates. Schweik presents an elegant historical argument about how the category "African American" was slowly transformed into a category of disability. It is this turn that is captured in *Home of the Brave* and that Ellison ingeniously transforms into a route for overcoming racial anxiety.

In 1948, Ralph Ellison visited the Lafargue Psychiatric Clinic in Harlem. In an essay pursuant to this visit, Ellison aimed to demonstrate that the intellectual disabilities of African Americans required immediate attention and that the clinic had "become in two years one of Harlem's most important institutions."[27] In a letter to Richard Wright, Ellison explained his work on the clinic as "'a piece…describing the social conditions of Harlem which make the clinic a necessity.'"[28]While in the clinic and in Harlem, he observed that the Great Migration—the massive influx of approximately 400,000 Southern African Americans to the urban North—created a great strain on members of his race. Ellison attributes African Americans' vulnerability to emotional stress and to psychic breakdown to anti-black racism. He argues that, "in the North he [the African American] surrenders and does not replace certain important supports to his personality."[29] This occurs because "segregation and discrimination" produce "Negroes that have no stable recognized place in society."[30] In addition, these intellectual disabilities arise because "the major energy of the imagination goes not into creating works of art, but to overcoming the frustrations of social discrimination."[31] His biographer Arnold Rampersad claims that "no single task honed more sharply Ralph's ability to depict Invisible's experience in Harlem and New York City" than his own experiences with the Lafargue Clinic.[32] Ellison's resulting familiarity with disabilities would subsequently help him develop the general theory of disability that appears in the novel.

Homosexuality was officially regarded as an intellectual disability (or "handicap," to use the terminology appropriate for the novel) until 1973 in the United States. The American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* removed homosexuality from its list of all mental diseases in that year. But the concept of homosexuality has a long history in America. Historian George Chauncey has shown that the term "homosexual" did not exist in American English until around the 1930s to 40s—the time when Ellison began writing *Invisible Man* and lived in New York. Chauncey shows that during this time gay men were classified into numerous categories instead of just under the umbrella category of "homosexual." Gay men who behaved in an effeminate manner were known as "fairies" or "inverts," and were imagined as an intermediate sex (a "third sex") between male and female. They were often associated with transvestism but it did not define them. Fairies usually performed a conventionally feminine role, yet they were sexually aggressive in soliciting men for sex. Fairies were attracted only to men and usually performed the passive sexual role. Men who behaved in a conventionally masculine manner but who had sex with fairies were grouped into two main categories: "trade" and "wolves." The former were men who had sex with both women and fairies. Fairies were a legitimate and sometimes preferred substitute for female prostitutes.[33] Often military men or immigrants would sleep with fairies because they viewed fairies as another sex—not men—and they were sexually passive like women (were imagined to be). Wolves (also known as "husbands" or "normal"), on the other hand, acted in a masculine manner and slept exclusively with fairies or "punks." A punk, on the other hand, was "often neither homosexually interested nor effeminate, but was sometimes equated with women because of his youth and his subordination to the older man," the wolf.[34] The wolf assumed the active position and seduced both fairies and punks. With the latter, wolves often provided "money, protection, or other forms of support."[35] These gay sexualities, I believe, enter into the fabric of the novel and continue the articulation of disability as a means of evoking racial anxiety, as inherently taboo.[36]

Section 3: Black Bildung, the Journey of Self-Deformation

The novel begins as a typical *Bildungsroman* with a naïve character learning the lessons of life, although in its own particular—traumatic and racialized—context.[37] Critic Kenneth Burke compares the plot of *Invisible Man* to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, the first *Bildungsroman*, and its unfolding does indeed bear a similarity to that prototypical example of the genre.[38] The narrator leaves for college, gets expelled from school, migrates to the North, and undergoes a variety of "learning" experiences in New York. In the city, he literally blows himself up, starts a riot, becomes a national political figure, and eventually hibernates in the sewers of Manhattan. Critic Valerie Smith claims the narrator seeks "an appropriate identity," while John Wright interprets the quest for *bildung* as a picaresque.[39] Working against these notions, however, is the concept of minority *bildung* which my analysis shall develop.

The trope of disability helps Ellison unfold his minority *Bildungsroman*. Instead of the typical Freudian narrative of development and integration into society, Ellison shows how the process of minority *bildung* is really a quest for self-deformation. His reformulation of *bildung* as an adventure of disintegration reverberates with many other diasporic thinkers. For example, Ellison revamps W.E.B. Du Bois' idea of what is meant—and is required—by development. Du Bois demonstrates the ongoing bifurcation of African American identity:

> In a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."[40]

Du Bois introduces the idea that the African American subject is divided, contaminated by anti-black racism, and forced to occupy a subject position partially created from without. Frantz Fanon adds a radical spin to the idea of double consciousness, claiming that "the black soul is a white man's artifact."[41] Double consciousness itself is a byproduct of the social and psychic construction of the African American subject. Fanon argues that blacks have been colonized both in terms of their body and mind to be products of white colonial practices.

More contemporary critics, however, emphasize alternative theories to the problem of racial formation. For example, Homi Bhabha's poststructuralist argument extends Fanon's observations with his term 'colonial mimicry,' which he details as the process by which subjectivity is imposed by the colonizer upon the colonized via language.[42] Houston Baker further demonstrates the importance of language to the construction of the African American subject by analyzing Frederick Douglass's experience with language, showing that Douglass—and all slaves—must appropriate the language of the master as his own.[43] It is not just the master's speech that he must adopt but the whole matrix of the master-culture. Claudia Tate augments these language-oriented discussions of psychic formation by considering the affective consequences involved, arguing that African Americans can "internalize the disgust, loathing, and revulsion that the racist Other projects.[44]

Cultural critic Hortense Spillers, however, offers a slightly different approach to understanding Ellison's particular intellectual perspective on racial formation. In her famous essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," Spillers argues that the African slave trade rendered the category of gender defunct for African Americans. She traces a movement of constructing the diasporic body as "flesh." Because African American subjectivity is always constructed in relationship to whiteness and treated as a source of labor, reproduction, blood, or pleasure, Spillers argues that African Americans are figured as genderless flesh rather than subjects, male or female. She writes that the "diasporic plight marked a *theft of the body*—a willful and violent (and unimaginable from this distance) severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire…the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver."[45] In addition, the offspring of the enslaved female is not an orphan because the anti-black racism withdrew typical kinship structures for slaves. Instead, slave children were those "whose human and familial status…had yet to be defined."[46] In this view, slaves existed without family kinship networks because they were "flesh" and not humans. Like Fanon and others, Spillers situates the identity of African Americans as imposed from without, outside the boundaries of blackness. The *bildung* journey for American Americans seems to be one of self-deformation—that of destroying their identities that have been imposed from without.

Ellison tackles the problem of representing minority *bildung* and its process of disintegration within the novel by creating two distinct yet intertwined narratives while maintaining the guise of there being just one narrative. The core narrative of minority *bildung* thereby interrupts the 'main' narrative but does so without calling attention to itself. By treating the second narrative as a story of disability qua race, Ellison can pursue a much larger project that includes the rebirth of the disabled subject. Almost every significant character in the novel has a form of disability, yet no critic has read the novel as being populated by characters with disabilities or classified the novel as within the purview of disability studies. When Ellison subsumes race into disability, each encounter with race is immediately translated into the question of disability and the reader is blind to the fact of disability and its narrative. They dialectically read race and disability. This minority *bildung* narrative only appears in truncated, "disabled" form in the novel; it, too, performs disability. Like the disabled body that is hidden in plain sight by prosthesis or by refusing to recognize it, this covert narrative is really not invisible, just not recognized.

Ellison hits the reader with this hidden narrative right at the beginning of the novel. In the Prologue Invisible Man, who narrates the novel, sits among 1,369 light bulbs as he listens to Louis Armstrong's "What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue" on a phonograph and smokes marijuana.[47] Then what appears to be the surreal—or the hallucinogenic—erupts into the novel: "the unheard sounds came through…I found myself hearing not only in time, but in space as well. *I not only entered the music but descended, like Dante, into its depths* [italics original]."[48] After entering into the music, as emphasized by the italics, the narrator descends three levels: first to a place where there is "*an old woman singing a spiritual;*" then, "*beneath that lay a still lower level on which I saw a beautiful girl the color of ivory pleading in a voice like my mother's as she stood before a group of slaveowners who bid for her naked body*." Below the mother figure the narrator "*found a lower level and a more rapid tempo*" of a preacher and his congregation engaged in a call-and-response song about blackness.[49] Still inside the music—within what is the alternate narrative—a "*speeding machine struck me, scraping the skin from my leg as it roared past.* Then somehow I came out of it, ascending hastily from this underworld of sound to hear Louis Armstrong."[50] Ellison marks the emergence from minority *bildung* by a shift

back to normal typeface. The narrator explains that being invisible, i.e. raced and disabled, allows him to inhabit the internal space of music and that it gives him "a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat… *And you slip into the breaks and look around. That's what you hear vaguely in Louis' music."*[51] The narrator thus describes slipping not only into music but into, but into the intervals within musical time (between breaks), which themselves become a space—that of the other narrative. Ironically, the narrator only directly mentions this space in the last line of the novel: "who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?"[52] Ellison waits until the end of the novel to inform the reader of the range of his wanderings—which dug not just into the sewers and the narrator's youth, but through its own dimensions into the 'lower frequencies' of this subalternate narrative.

This narrative of minority *bildung* seems to perform not only the disintegration of what Fanon calls a colonized identity but also the history of African Americans. In his descent, for example, Invisible Man encounters jazz and the blues, the history of slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow, disrupted kinship structures that hark back to Spillers's arguments, and black cultural institutions like the church.[53] Berndt Ostendorf and Alan Nadel remind us that African American history is a relatively new field. Before the publication of *Invisible Man,* black history and cultural practices were "denied, rejected, and suppressed—invisible" in American culture.[54] Thus, it makes sense that Ellison relegates them to this invisible narrative and to the condition of formlessness[55] Thus, I use the term 'formless' not only as the end-product of disintegration but as the condition and embodiment of African American history and social practices. To be formless is to be whatever Fanon, Du Bois, and Ellison imagine as the "authentic" form of blackness—being formless is to be in unison with blackness. This narrative space, however, contains not just history but the evolving present. Black movements for independence make an appearance with Ras's speed machine. And the blues, as Houston Baker defines them, are "always becoming, shaping, transforming, displacing the peculiar experiences of Africans in the New World."[56] Invisible Man's violent ejection from the minority *bildung,* though, begs the question: who can enter this space and under what conditions? How does Ellison's general theory of disability relate to this subalternate narrative?

Section 4. Theoretical Interventions

The minority *Bildungsroman* works to disintegrate the African American protagonist rather than track his self-formation. As Fanon articulates, the black body and mind are authored from without. The black man "is rooted at the core of a universe from which he must be extricated…I propose nothing short of the liberation of the man of color from himself."[57] Ellison, writing at nearly the same time, approaches the dialectal relationship between blackness and whiteness as one in which "whites impose interpretations upon Negro experience that are not only false but, in effect, a denial of Negro humanity."[58] The subject positions represented in African American literature are thus fully formed products—*bildung* cannot occur for a commodity that is already fully assembled. Instead Ellison works to erode and disintegrate this false representation of black subjectivity and to "extricate" the African American from his own fiction. The project then is to emancipate or give birth to the "authentic" black subject. Hortense Spillers defines this project as "the heritage of the mother that the African-American male must regain as an aspect of his own personhood—the power to say 'yes' to the 'female' within."[59] This project of rebirth originates with the initial formation of the colonized black body and mind.

The narrator's struggles with a father figure, first with President Bledsoe and later with Brother Jack, and then with his peers in the form of Tod Clifton and Ras the Exhorter, seem to align with Hortense Spillers's argument about the removal of the African American male from the equation of castration. She argues that the mother is the only remaining power:

> …the African American woman, the mother, the daughter, becomes historically the powerful and shadowy evocation of a cultural synthesis long evaporated—the law of the Mother—only and precisely because legal enslavement removed the African-American male not so much from sight as from mimetic view as a partner in the prevailing social fiction of the Father's name, the Father's law.[60]

Ellison, I believe, goes even further than Spillers imagines, to a length that Fanon can only hint at.[61] The African American mother does exert a "law of the Mother," but it is not "shadowy." Drawing upon the work of Jacques Lacan, I argue that anti-black racism converts the mother into a psychically dead creature that derails the mirror stage. In a reformulation of the mirror stage, I argue that the vital black mother, in the context of Jim Crow and the horrors of anti-black racism, is converted into a source of terror and death. The child responds to this situation by abruptly altering the course of his mirror stage. He must find a replacement mother. This replacement is the Law of the (white) Father. The child identifies with this abstract whiteness and creates a subject position around this alternative identification. The object of desire is whiteness or more precisely normality and the object of horror is blackness. Even though Fanon never articulated the step-by-step psychoanalytic processes involved in colonization, he would agree that "for the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white."[62] This psychic imperative to be aligned with normative culture forces the minority subject to craft a colonized subjectivity that emphasizes normality at the expense of racial connections. Because anti-black racism intervenes to destroy the African American mother, the outcome of the mirror stage is predetermined. While there will be a variety of manifestations of the quest for normality, the entire apparatus of black subjectivity is a fiction authored in large part by anti-black racism.

The outcome of this mirror stage fundamentally altered by the dead mother is racial anxiety. It is the re-encountering of his object of horror—blackness—that triggers an emotional attack.[63] Whenever the African American protagonist realizes his own racialized social position, he experiences racial anxiety, with even his own "ginger-colored" body becoming a source of it.[64] In addition, the narrator becomes a pseudo-orphan, as if to signal a disruption of the mirror stage and to indicate that black parents do not figure in the creation of black subjectivity. Instead of being born without or losing a family, as in the Western *Bildungsroman*, the narrator is compelled to discard his biological family. With only one episode (the "Battle Royal") and a few details from his childhood present in the novel, the narrator commences the story and Prologue as two variations of the orphan—he is at once orphan child and adult. As Spillers argues, the African American child is not technically orphaned but rather a "subject" "whose human and familial status…had yet to be defined" and whose identity could be disrupted at any moment by anti-black racism.[65] In the context of racial anxiety, the quasi-orphaned Invisible Man performs Spillers's logic: his identity is hijacked as he pursues the course of the traditional, white *Bildungsroman.*

The novel presents two defenses to ameliorate racial anxiety. The first is what Lacan terms "surplus *jouissance*," which means that the defense produces pleasure but also a surplus of it that fails to give pleasure.[66] This surplus *jouissance* enables Invisible Man to temporarily

mitigate racial anxiety at the same time that in its failure it registers, however subtly, both racial anxiety and a threat to the cohesiveness of colonized subjectivity. In the novel, the narrator attempts to replicate Frederick Douglass's joy from delivering speeches: "I felt myself a slave, and the idea of speaking to white people weighed me down. I spoke but a few moments, when I felt a degree of freedom…from that time until now, I have been engaged in pleading the cause of my brethren."[67] The narrator loves giving speeches—and even tells his own story—but always to his detriment. Nothing good comes from his speech-making, or as he calls it "rabble-rousing." These failures are surplus *jouissance* that register racial anxiety; the narrator misses the opportunity to critically examine surplus *jouissance* because the enjoyment from the speeches deflects an acknowledgement of the kernel of non-pleasure that persists within it. In his analysis of the increased mental health problems of Harlem, Ellison provides a real world example of the operation of surplus *jouissance*, writing that, "Harlem's popular speech, [is] doubtless a word-magic against the states they name—calm in the face of the unreality of Negro life has become increasingly difficult [sic]. And while some seek relief in strange hysterical forms of religion, in alcohol and drugs, and [sic] others learn to analyze the causes for their predicament and join with others to correct them."[68] Surplus *jouissance* takes the form of substance abuse and religion while others seem to take the second route in relationship to racial anxiety.

The second and more radical defense mechanism involves confronting and eradicating racial anxiety. The protagonist must embrace racial anxiety rather than try to avoid it, or, as Hortense Spillers argues, upon "actually claiming the monstrosity (of a female with the potential to "name")," a new phase of life can begin.[69] A direct encounter with racial anxiety—instead of eliciting surplus *jouissance* as a defense—helps to expose and destroy colonized subjectivities. This helps Invisible Man disintegrate his psychically and socially constructed identity. By "claiming the monstrosity" of disability and turning it on himself, Invisible Man can shatter his identity by using a socially stigmatized and contaminated trope; from an able-bodied position, it is logical to distance oneself from disability, to discard and flee from it. In this way, the narrative of minority *bildung* follows Fanon's advice that "it is imperative to eliminate a whole set of defects left over from childhood."[70] But the aesthetic intervention crafted by Ellison is an even more radical approach to throwing off a colonized subjectivity. By appropriating various forms of disability, Invisible Man can disinvest from his prosthetic subject position and embrace formlessness—the end point of disintegration. I argue that Ellison represents the narrator's colonized subjectivity as an imposed prosthetic device that must be removed in order to reach a state of formlessness. The inclusion of material prosthetic devices—such as Brother Jack's glass eye or Lucius Brockway's dentures—indicates the presence of "actual" disabled bodies that will help Invisible Man challenge racial anxiety. By fighting these personifications of racial anxiety, Invisible Man loses some aspect of his identity and further disintegrates.

At a formal level, the novel represents nearly all of the characters as disabled. Each instance of prosthesis and disability in the novel aims to register both the narrator suffocated by racial anxiety and his colonized identity, and the presence of the second narrative of minority *bildung* that demands he disintegrate. In a radical move, Ellison slowly converts the narrator from being an able-bodied subject into a person with disabilities, i.e., he slowly "outs" the narrator as gay. This movement from able-bodied to disabled achieves two insights. First, during the course of the novel, Ellison gets the reader to empathize with the able-bodied narrator and his journey. After Ellison solidifies this bond, he can reveal Invisible Man's covert disability. This not only allows the reader to experience disability from a first-person perspective, but the reader discovers that there is nothing wrong with the unsightly and disabled body. This revised

perspective helps the reader and Invisible Man accept disability as a positive situation rather than requiring that it be abhorred as in Fanon's perspective. Second, with this embrace of disability, Invisible Man can reappropriate the negative aspects socially ascribed to disability by exposing their contradictions—namely that the disabled (and African Americans) are unproductive. This appropriation of disability (and race) helps Invisible Man advance in his minority *bildung*. He realizes that prosthetics can hide or help to disavow disabilities.[71] This suppression of the disabled and raced body, this shame of self, must be stopped. Invisible Man responds by discarding any and all prosthetics, which in this context happen to be his colonized identities. Thus, by making race a species of disability, Ellison equips Invisible Man with the means to reach a state of formlessness.

When discussing patients at the Lafargue Psychiatric Clinic, Ellison reveals his hopes for their treatment: "an insight into the relation between his problems and his environment, and out of this understanding to reforge the will to endure in a hostile world."[72] This reforging of the "will" is similar to what I believe Ellison implicitly advocates for in *Invisible Man*. He wants Invisible Man to create a new "will" or ego. But, this dream of rebirth is not something new to Ellison, but rather an idea he inherits from W.E.B. Du Bois. He argues that the African American has long had "this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost... He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American."[73] How then, does Ellison enact this process of rebirth?

After reaching a state of social formlessness, Invisible Man has the opportunity to begin what I term a "second mirror stage." Although Lacan never suggested such a feat, both Du Bois and Ellison saw the need for a reconfiguration of the self into one that was not plagued by double consciousness and racial anxiety. This involves the complete destruction of the colonized ego and a new castration. Since Invisible Man struggles with and eliminates father figures continually and the novel excludes the typical mother, a replacement castrator is needed. Ellison suggests that a homosexual lover, who provides queer care, assists in the second mirror stage. In a not too surprising move, *Invisible Man* rejects the actualization of a homosexual relationship—killing off the gay lover, Tod Clifton, deleting an entire homosexual dimension to novel, and leaving only queer care. Tod also plays another role in the second mirror stage, in that Invisible Man undergoes a process of mourning the death of Tod, and the second mirror stage completes this work of mourning while also bringing to fruition the positive aspects of a gay disability. Invisible Man can work through his loss of Tod by repopulating Tod's life with a new purpose: as castrator. Invisible Man can then move on from mourning Tod's death, because in the second mirror stage he will acknowledge their love bonds and crafts his new ego around this kernel of love. In this way, mourning comes to a completion and Invisible Man can craft a new identity founded on this love rather than in racial anxiety.[74] This rebirth is the conclusion of the minority *Bildungsroman* and might be what Ellison refers to in the Prologue when he writes that, "The end is in the beginning and lies far ahead."[75] Where the initial mirror stage creates a colonized subjectivity, the second, racialized mirror stage brings an end to racial anxiety—but only after the narrator has run the course of a traditional Western *bildung*.

Ellison, though, does not conclude the novel in such a tidy fashion. The Prologue occurs after the narrative actions associated with the traditional *Bildungsroman*. We enter the novel after Invisible Man has lived in the sewers of New York City for an unspecified number of years. From the Epilogue, which occurs after the Prologue, we know that Invisible Man is tempted to rejoin society. From this we know that he has not undergone his second mirror stage. But Ellison

does clue the reader in to what prevents Invisible Man from disintegrating just one last element of his identity: his attachment to the powers of democracy. Invisible Man refuses to disinvest from the hope of democracy and we must remember that Civil Rights was still far on the horizon at the time of the novel's publication. Although Ellison lived his adult years in New York, he was still living in a Jim Crow world. Whatever the reason for Invisible Man's hope, Ellison refuses him a second mirror stage because of it. But as a consequence, Ellison is able to introduce the narrative of minority *bildung* that resurfaces throughout the novel. It is only those who are formless or have undergone a rebirth who can access—without being expelled—this other narrative space. Invisible Man can only enter this narrative for short bursts because he is close to being formless but not quite there. Thus, as he retells his story in the main narrative, the minority *bildung* narrative makes occasional appearances. And, interestingly, each re-appearance occurs at the nexus of disability and race.

Section 5: The Disabling of Invisible Man

To construct his general theory of disability, Ellison converts the narrator into a person with a disability in myriad ways: he becomes a man who is blind like Jack and Barbee, slightly insane like the Vets, and mentally deficient due to his gay desire. As a result of his first Brotherhood speech, the narrator first becomes a disabled black man. Upon entering the site of this speech, he notices a photograph of a boxer who lost his sight during a fight at the same arena.[76] The fighter was "beaten blind in a crooked fight…[he] had died in a home for the blind."[77] The narrator repeats this performance; over the course of the evening he will become blind, and the novel concludes with the narrator in the basement claiming that he is invisible—i.e. in a home for the blind. As the narrator waits for his turn to speak, he becomes aware of his formlessness: "I watched them [the Brothers], feeling very young and inexperienced and yet strangely old, with an oldness that watched and waited quietly within me."[78] Next he enters the stage and introduces his disability: "I could see rows of blurred faces—then suddenly I was blinded and felt myself crash into the man ahead of me."[79] As he stands up to deliver his speech, the lights blind him.[80] Still blinded, the narrator continues his speech and acknowledges the colonized subjectivities of African Americans and the role they play in forging those false identities: "they think we're blind—*un*-commonly blind…they've dispossessed us each of one eye from the day we're born. So now we can only see in straight lines. We're a nation of one-eyed mice."[81] He tells the audience that it is not just anti-black racism that has blinded African Americans but also that "'*We let them do it!*'"[82] He claims that because African Americas are born as one-eyed monsters, anti-black racists can "slip up on our blind sides and—*plop!* out goes our last good eye and we're blind as bats!"[83]

The narrator proceeds to elaborate on how African Americans become "blind" to their own self-constitutions and how as a group they must perform a rebirth to escape the torments of racial anxiety, yet at the same time the narrator avoids racial anxiety by gaining surplus *jouissance* from giving his speech.[84] He screams with joy "let's take back our pillaged eyes! Let's reclaim our sight" instead of resolving this problem.[85] His philosophy is a sort of queer Oedipal complex, in which he wants the community to unite and rebirth themselves without the aid of the mother and with the help of him and their new white fathers, the Brotherhood.[86] Brother Jack figures as the replacement father, usurping the position of substitute father from the Founder and Bledsoe. Jack becomes the nurturing father who gave birth to the "new" narrator via his assisted-death, renaming, rebirth, and now "fathering," to revise Nancy Chodorow's

description of mothering.[87] The narrator communicates a revision of Jack's philosophy of rebirth for African Americans in his speech: "the new is being born and the vital old revived."[88] In both Jack and the narrator's idea of rebirth, the mother fails to appear. Whiteness assists blind African Americans in their rebirth as automatons. As a race, African Americans figure as a disabled people not just because of the Ugly Laws and due to being a 'one-eyed' or blind people, but also because they must rely upon colonized subjectivities. Thus, in a moment of critique and humor, the narrator leaves the arena a black and blind Oedipus. His conversion to a disabled man has begun.

The novel imbues insanity and the insane with the intellectual energy to reach a state of formlessness. Ellison transposes the supposition that the insane are disinvested from reality into a playful critique that they are disinvested from their subjectivities. Like Cassandra, they speak the truth but no one listens and in their case this is because they occupy a disabled social position. For example, the narrator and the university community live next to the vets' insane asylum, yet the vets exist in a separate social sphere and are not upstanding members of the community.[89] They block the road when the narrator and Mr. Norton drive to the Golden Day and only move when the narrator offers the proper response to their insane call: "Who the hell you think you are, running down the army? Give the countersign. Who's in command of this outfit?"[90] Not flustered in the least, the narrator delivers the correct response to indicate that he has dealt with the vets before.[91] The insane engage the narrator in a call-and-response throughout the novel. In this case, the narrator produced a correct response and is given passage. But throughout the rest of the text, the narrator only gradually learns the appropriate response, namely: to disinvest himself of colonized subjectivities and to perform his own rebirth. Until he can do this, the narrator confuses the insane for their social functions instead of learning from their teachings.

The former physician, Burnside, performs the "call" but the narrator refuses to recognize the crazy vet beyond his socially inscribed position. At the Golden Day, Burnside diagnoses Mr. Norton's neurological or psychological condition. The space of disability supports the articulation of "truth." Besides reading the failures of the white body, Ellison imbues this disabled space as the repository for the diagnosis and the remedy to black "sickness." Burnside describes how the social world has suffocated the narrator's "humanity" and "his emotions" to create a black man who is nothing but a "mechanical man."[92] From the voice of insanity, the novel reveals how colonized subjectivities and anti-black racism work to create a controlled, disposable, and reproducible black machine that parades as a subject. Burnside continues describing how colonized subjectivities smother formlessness: "the boy, this automaton, he was made of the very mud of the region and he sees far less than you [Norton]…[he is] a thing and not a man; a child, or even less—a black amorphous thing."[93] Burnside, though addressing Norton, reveals the narrative of minority *bildung* here; he informs the narrator of his status as a "black amorphous thing," not as a critique of Norton, but as a way to expose what is underneath the "automaton": his formlessness. The narrator must reclaim and return to the "ma[king] of the very mud of the region." He must create something out of the mud. In the position of disability—and remember that the narrator of the Prologue and Epilogue borders on the insane—the novel can represent the narrative of minority *bildung*. Mr. Norton and the young narrator cannot tolerate this disabled space: "'Let us go, young man,' he said angrily…'Hurry, the man [Burnside] is as insane as the rest."[94] Both Norton and the narrator cannot "digest" nor be in the space of this "insane" and unsightly discourse. They must escape from the narrative of minority *bildung* back into the main narrative—a place comfortable for whites and black "automatons." At the same time, Burnside offers in his "call" a curative for colonization.

The narrator begins to register the response required by Burnside's call but represses his reaction.[95] Indeed, as Burnside exposes the project of minority *bildung*, he inverts the location of the narratives: the main narrative disappears while the latter comes forth to confront the narrator. Burnside exits the novel with his last and most direct transmission of this alternative narrative to Invisible Man. On the bus ride to New York, the narrator encounters Burnside, who is being transferred from the insane asylum for upsetting Norton. Burnside informs Invisible Man of a secret to locate the narrative of minority *bildung*: "'But for God's sake, learn to look beneath the surface,' he said. 'Come out of the fog, young man…learn how it [colonized subjectivity] operates, learn how *you* [formlessness] operate.'"[96] He continues his diagnosis: "'you're hidden right out in the open—that is, you would be if you only realized it. They wouldn't see you because they don't expect you to know anything, since they believe they've taken care of that. . ."[97] Burnside locates the narrative of minority *bildung* as "beneath the surface" of the main narrative and exposes how the colonized subjectivities render Invisible Man ignorant of his formlessness—the italicized "you." The narrator fails to comprehend how the construction of his "I" suffocates his formlessness. Finally, Burnside prescribes a seemingly impossible antidote: "be your own father."[98] The narrator must castrate himself; he must assume the position of the father who threatens and then actually performs the castration. He must give birth to himself. Unfortunately, the narrator digests only part of the call; he does manage to "look beneath the [narrative] surface" to locate his formlessness, but he fails to respond to the "be your own father" and to rebirth himself. Instead, he uses the privilege of his social position as a sane, educated man to dismiss Burnside's advice. Rather than confront racial anxiety the narrator simply enjoys his ignorance—at a cost.

It is Tod Clifton who performs the proper "response" to the advice of Burnside and Barbee. The narrator interprets Tod's famous line of "stepping outside of history" as not only disinvesting oneself of colonized subjectivities but also achieving a social and biological death instead of a rebirth. His insanity, marked by his leaving the Brotherhood and selling Sambo dolls on the street, culminates in his death at the hands of the police. Sexuality, as articulated in the coming paragraphs, and insanity converge to eventually destroy the colonized subjectivity known as Tod Clifton. The novel facilitates a reading of homosexuality as needing elimination, and of insanity as rendering a person worthless to society. Both of these socially-situated readings produce friction with the narrative of minority *bildung*'s formulation of disability. At the intersection of these disabilities, the narrator learns how to "respond" to the mourning for Tod Clifton by taking a lesson from the Harlem community.

During the funeral march, the narrator encounters the narrative of minority *bildung* in three instances. First, while the old man sings, the narrator feels it as: "it was not the words…it was as though he'd changed the emotion beneath the words."[99] Then, the mourners can hear the narrative of minority *bildung* as it appears in the narrator's eulogy: "they were listening intently, and as though looking not at me, but at the pattern of my voice upon the air."[100] Next, the narrator highlights that Tod mistook himself for a subject who constitutes himself: "his name was Tod Clifton and he was full of illusions. He thought he was a man when he was only Tod Clifton…he forgot his history, he forgot the time and the place. He lost hold on reality."[101] The narrator denounces the Brotherhood for instilling in Tod the idea that he was a "man." Because the Brotherhood—and anti-black racism before and during the Brotherhood—constituted his identity as if he were an agential subject, Tod did not understand that his fictional identity as a man was not compatible with the social milieu. The Brotherhood crafted something that could not possibly exist within reality, yet they enforced this identity as a truth. Tod's colonized self

could not combat the realities of Harlem and the anti-black world. In the end, Tod not only went insane, but the narrator announces to the funeral crowd that Tod died because of his colonized subjectivity: "cause of death (be specific): resisting reality."[102] By "responding" to the crowd, to Tod, and the narrative of minority *bildung* as evoked throughout the funeral, the narrator discovers the existence and potential of the minority *bildung*. His next steps will be to fully disinvest himself of his colonized subjectivities and begin the rebirth process. But how does homosexuality as a disability and historically relevant topic enter the novel? I trace the discourses of sexuality into disability. In this way, sexuality, like race, is another species of disability.

Even though the novel limits the explicit appearance of homosexuality to the character of Young Emerson, Ellison's life was immersed in gay culture—two of his mentors, Langston Hughes and the sculptor Richmond Barthé, were gay—Ellison lived with latter for a short period; he lived and worked in the gay centers of the city, namely the West Village and Harlem (whose Faggot's Balls were immensely famous) and the Harlem YMCA. Gays were ubiquitous in the speakeasies he frequented.[103] And Ellison was sexually harassed by a gay dean while at Tuskegee.[104] In "Out of the Hospital and Under the Bar," published in 1963, Ellison provides the original and radically different hospital episode that reveals his complex relationship to homosexuality.[105] In this version, the narrator overindulges in Southern food and his severe indigestion brings him to the hospital, where the doctors subject him to a new medical machine.[106] He tells Mary, an orderly in the hospital, that he, as a punk, refuses to accept money in exchange for sex from a white man; this first version of the hospital scene helps shed light on the narrator's sexuality in the final, published novel.[107]

During another key scene of homosexuality—the bar brawl at the Golden Day—the insane veterans topple Supercargo, their supervisor for the outing. Invisible Man describes Supercargo among the crazy vets: "I saw a huge black giant of a man, dressed only in white shorts, swaying on the stairs. It was Supercargo, the attendant. I hardly recognized him without his hard-starched white uniform."[108] Like Tatlock's unhidden erection from the Battle Royal, the description of Supercargo's large physical size and his "hard-starched" clothing substitute for the sight of his erection; after all, he has just run out from a prostitute's room in confusion and only wearing underwear. After his appearance, five vets charge Supercargo on the balcony and the narrator records: "I saw the giant bend and clutch the posts at the top of the stairs with both hands, bracing himself, his body gleaming bare in his white shorts."[109] Then, the men storm Supercargo: "I saw Supercargo snap suddenly erect and grab his forehead, his face bathed in whiskey…I saw him wave, rigid from his ankles upward."[110] The barely veiled sexual images hark back to the narrator's recent visit to Jim Trueblood. The descriptions of Supercargo present the erotic: his "giant" manliness, his "gleaming" bare skin, the question of what is underneath the white shorts, and his erect body parts.

There appear to be two styles in this scene: a sharp, crisp narrative of the veterans' attack and a naturalistic aesthetic with an erotic undertone. The latter produces a feeling of passive calmness as the narrator articulates minor details of the story such as "Supercargo got set to swing his leg again. It was a narrow stair and only one man could get up at a time. As fast as they rushed up, the giant kicked them back. He swung this leg, kicking them down…Watching him, I forgot Mr. Norton. The Golden Day was in an uproar."[111] The level of detail almost bores the readers and subtracts from the emotional vitality of the fight. Every movement by Supercargo must be recorded, and without exaggerated or embellished vocabulary or framing. The reader does not need to know about Supercargo's leg movements as he tries to kick the men. These

details actually deflate the action. Even though the narrator should be in complete hysteria because Mr. Norton, the white Trustee of the college, sits at the center of this black bar fight; the report reads as if the narrator has no concern about Mr. Norton.

While trying to neutralize the sexual excitement of the scene, Ellison crafts prose that attempts but fails to suppress the narrator's desire for Supercargo's body—the description is a moment of surplus *jouissance* that quells the racial anxiety that arises because Invisible Man desires blackness, specifically Supercargo, who name draws attention to the size of his penis. Instead, the meticulous attention to detail focuses the reader's attention onto Supercargo's body and dissolves the context. The narrator points out each movement of Supercargo's stiff or erect leg, posture, hands, head, face, ankles, feet, eyes, and ribs—everything but what is concealed by his white shorts. The narrative fades away as the black body—the origin of racial anxiety—comes to the forefront; the narrative of minority *bildung* makes an appearance. Through a reading of gay sexual desire via Supercargo's black and erect body moving with a "sexual" rhythm, the narrator can slip into this other narrative space.

Gay desire and the narrative of minority *bildung* cannot remain visible, however. The Western *bildung* narrative must eradicate this desire for a disability. The heterosexual and insane men destroy the gay icon after throwing bottles at him and dragging him down the stairs. A vet proceeds to mutilate Supercargo's body: "aiming a shoe at the attendant's head. The flesh above his right eye jumped out as though it had been inflated…Men were jumping upon Supercargo with both feet now and I [Invisible Man] felt such an excitement that I wanted to join them."[112] The narrator joins the heterosexual men in disfiguring the sexual beauty of Supercargo. Their brutal attacks ensure Supercargo's body will no longer excite gay desire by deforming the object of desire. In effect, they—and the main narrative—must transform Supercargo from a sexual object into physically disabled flesh, to evoke Spillers concept.

When the narrator does meet a gay male character, he receives enlightenment and care—this is the first character who will nurture him, albeit with some lascivious intentions.[113] Like Supercargo, the narrator recalls the physical aspects of the Young Emerson: "I saw the figure out of a collar ad: ruddy face with blond hair faultlessly in place, a tropical weave suit draped handsomely from his broad shoulders, his eyes gray and nervous behind clear-framed glasses."[114] He provides Bledsoe's introductory letter to Emerson, who invites him into his father's office and insists that the narrator enter the room first to observe the 'goods' (the narrator's physique): "'Come in, please,' he said. 'Thank you.' I said, waiting to follow him. 'Please,' he said with a slight smile. I moved ahead of him, sounding the tone of his words for a sign."[115] The "sign" would be gay desire. After seated, Emerson quickly asks the narrator if he was a student athlete: "'You have the build,' he said, looking me up and down. 'You'd probably make an excellent runner, a sprinter.'"[116] Emerson asks this question about his slim legs because he was able to gaze at the narrator from behind. Emerson then mentions "Club Calamus" to find out if the narrator is "in the life," a code phrase or sign that gay African Americans would use to identify each other. Calamus is the name of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* section on male-male love. The narrator misses this, the open book of *Totem and Taboo*, the numerous references to gay identity ("but fellows like you," "I'm afraid my father considers *me* one of the unspeakable," the narrator's angry question "What kind of man are you, anyway?"), and the most obvious request or sign to become Emerson's lover.[117]

In an earlier design of the novel, Ellison imagined the scene with a female secretary who gives Invisible Man Bledsoe's letter out of pity.[118] Instead of simply pity, Ellison adds a layer of sexual desire to the motives of Young Emerson. It is as if the devastating news must be delivered

by the abject—"because to help you I [Emerson] must disillusion you . . ."[119] The gay man—in this case a wolf who offers money and protection to the young, athletic, and sexy punk narrator—must "disillusion" the narrator, must help the narrator to disinvest himself of his colonized identity as a Tuskegee college boy who will change the world. Young Emerson offers to help the narrator confront racial anxiety and taboos on gay love. Instead of reading disability as a defect or liability, young Emerson extends help and care. The articulation of gayness as a disability turns out to benefit the narrator by moving him to the next stage of his life and by helping him to disinvest one layer of his colonized subjectivity. In addition, Emerson sends him to Liberty Paints where he enters the narrative of minority *bildung* and is able to disinvest more of his colonized subjectivities. The text articulates queerness as a disability, as a reservoir of care, and a means to reach formlessness.

Ellison verifies this usage of homosexuality as a means of care. He writes that "Emerson is a messenger who brings news *which destroys* 'IM' changing him from believer into questioner" (emphasis added).[120] It is the intervention of disability that shatters Invisible Man's foundations. The homosexual and disability helps Invisible Man "destroy" his identities and bring him closer to a state of formlessness. Ellison needed a homosexual "who would move outside of at least some of the textures and patterns of normative behavior to help Invisible Man."[121] Ellison biographer Lawrence Jackson reconstructs Ellison's reasoning behind the inclusion of homosexuality based upon Walt Whitman's rational for including African Americans into his "Calamus" poems. In the latter, African Americans for Ellison indicated Whitman's "struggle to render homosexuality."[122] But, young Emerson's homosexuality isn't the only thread that helps to destroy the narrator. In Ellison's notes, he wanted Invisible Man to be aligned in this scene with Oedipus. Specifically, he wanted the narrator's pride—his confidence that he would succeed with the help of the white Trustees—"to temper the tragic revelation."[123] Ellison wanted the reader to witness how the narrator's pride was an act of self-blinding just like Oedipus. In this moment, Ellison demonstrates how a homosexual, a person with a disability, triggers the self-disabling, the self-crippling of an African American. Ellison continues to articulate how homosexuality helps Invisible Man reach formlessness.

Enter Tod Clifton, and Invisible Man, instead of receiving care—as in the case of his relationship with Mary, Tarp, and Young Emerson—must provide care. He describes Tod as a living embodiment of a Greek statue. Invisible Man gazes upon Tod at a Brotherhood meeting after hearing "the quick intake of a woman's pleasurable sigh."[124] With sexual tensions revved, the Bacchanalian description of Tod can be read as being like the Shakespearean blazons which were always used to describe women (except in the case of Juliet, who uses it to portray Romeo):

> I saw that he was very black and very handsome, and as he advanced mid-distance into the room, that he possessed the chiseled, black-marble features sometimes found on statues in northern museums and alive in southern towns in which the white offspring of house children and the black offspring of yard children bear names, feature and character traits as identical as the rifling of bullets fired from a common barrel. And now close up, leaning tall and relaxed, his arms outstretched stiffly upon the table, I saw the broad, taut span of his knuckles upon the dark grain of the wood, the muscular, sweatered arms, the curving line of the chest rising to the easy pulsing of his throat, to the square, smooth chin, and saw a small X-shaped patch of adhesive upon the subtly blended, velvet-over-stone, granite-over-bone, Afro-Anglo-Saxon contour of his cheek.[125]

The scene seems to waver between a feminine and masculine binary beginning with a woman's gasp and then Tod's ultra masculine "easy Negro stride."[126] The descriptions appear to be filled with masculine objects: a statue, bullets, wood, stone, and granite that grossly conjure an erect penis or muscular, sexualized body. At the same time, the description wavers between hard and rigid images to soft and lush ones: shadow/light, black/handsome, chiseled and marble/flesh of real Southern bodies, bullets/barrel, arms outstretched stiffly/broad knuckles, muscular/curving, and chin/velvet/granite.

But the male/female binary neglects that "fairies" were considered a third sex and that punks embodied all three genders. From this revised perspective, the narrator can view Tod as another punk who possesses both masculine and feminine attributes without tension. Only from a heterosexual/homosexual binary would we need to read this desire as one or the other. Rather, the narrator can desire another punk; reading this passage after the 1950s would evoke a heteronormative America where heterosexuality and homosexuality were strong ideological categories. But, in pre-1940s New York, the time when Ellison is writing the novel, this oscillation reflects not items in tension but rather a unity—the punk. We must read with the historical context in mind to grasp the meanings intended here—unconscious or not. Invisible Man desires Tod as a punk who possesses all of these qualities in harmony. This flow of descriptions, then, is not a cyclical wavering from hard to soft, from masculine to fairy/feminine but rather a complete and whole picture of Tod and the narrator's sexual desires. From the gay perspective, this punk-punk desire expresses a legitimate form of love and care. The social dynamics of the 1950s would not condone this reading, of course, but neither has any subsequent scholarly literature on the novel yet grasped the true non-binarism of sexuality at work here.

The scene concludes with the narrator focused on the beauty of Tod's cheek and the "x," which serves as the stain of sexual desire. The x created by the bandages—the literal x that marks the spot—converges punk desire and race onto Tod Clifton's body. The x mark draws our attention to the taboo and that which must be x-ed out. Gay desire is embedded within Tod—just as desire marked Supercargo's body. These sexualized descriptions of Tod construct him as disabled—in addition, Tod goes insane by the end of the novel—because his body participates in gay desire. Again, the novel articulates queerness as a form of disability. This is important because each encounter with Tod forces the narrator to deal with racial anxiety—desire for male blackness—as surplus *jouissance* to guide him toward disintegration; his "disabled" queer care for Tod places him in the narrative of minority *bildung*. This queer care appears in two important moments: the inclusion of Tod in the "After the Struggle: The Rainbow of American's Future" poster that hangs right next to the narrator's desk; and at Tod's funeral. By loving Tod, the narrator can disinvest himself of colonized subjectivities that deem gay love intolerable. Through gay desire, the narrator faces racial anxiety and disinvests from an identity constructed around normative sexuality. This love brings him closer to complete formlessness, but he has not achieved to begin his rebirth.

Section 6: A Failed Second Mirror Stage

After the narrator's conversion into a character with disabilities, he begins to shed his colonized layers. Once this process begins, the novel demands that he complete his disinvestments. Each significant character has left the residue of a colonized layer upon him: Bledsoe, Tod, Mary, the men from the Battle Royal, Jack, and his grandfather. The penultimate

task of the novel is to reach a state of complete formlessness so that the narrator can be formless, and not just partially formless as we find him in the Prologue and Epilogue. The narrator attempts to become his own father by literally crafting himself anew by telling his own story, but as the Epilogue reveals, he retains an attachment to democracy and thus fails to achieve complete formlessness or rebirth.[127] Before examining Invisible Man's failure, I want to present a successful second mirror stage in the form of Jim Trueblood. As with many missed moments during the Jim Trueblood episode, Ellison demonstrates how Trueblood completes a second mirror stage via expressions of disability.[128]In the Jim Trueblood episode, the novel presents a character that has disinvested himself of his colonized subjectivities and undergone a rebirth via his sexual and moral disability. Cloaked within the horrors of incest, the text details how Trueblood, via conduits in jazz and the blues, manages to rebirth himself and thrive. From one perspective, the entire Trueblood episode can be viewed as the narrative of minority *bildung* in the sense that it produces anxiety from its beginning—as seen in Norton, the fetishist, and in African American neighbors in the country and at the college. Local whites, on the other hand, seem highly amused with his story rather than appalled; they send out reporters, enjoy the retelling of the story, and provide Trueblood with work to ensure that he remains in the black community; they know that his family partially undoes the work of uplift. In Trueblood's story, the over-determined dream assigns numerous images of him penetrating his daughter and ejaculating as if he recycled those particular images in his multiple retellings.[129] He must be crafting this version of the story for his pedophile audience otherwise the story does not logically follow. Even his recounting of his wife's responses seems fictionalized; his style, including its musicality and suspense, overcomes the question of whether he accurately remembers the dream and aftermath. His story emphasizes multiplicity over truthful reproduction.[130] Trueblood's tale provides graphic details and wonderful prose while also being a horrible series of events; they imperfectly replicate the original scene.

Trueblood, the Br'er Rabbit salesman, crafts an original copy of the master story for each listener; as such, he tweaks the imagery and its frequency to satisfy the customer.[131] The listener wants to consume the horrific story, not assure its accuracy. Thus his reproductions can serve as a form of art if, he, as artist, attempts to embed a critical message of how to combat racial anxiety within the reproduction. I would like to argue that Trueblood's stories only appear as reproductions when instead each story is an original and contains a unique message to eradicate racial anxiety. As such, I believe his story reveals his formlessness and rebirth in four movements.

First, the stories do not exactly reproduce the master 'original.' They are "sold" as copies but in fact Trueblood weaves anew the images, frequency, and order of events, including his asides, to meet the consumer. He passes off an original as a copy. The story can help combat racial anxiety by exposing the surplus *jouissance* of normalcy, albeit in an extremely morally trangressive fashion. Second, Trueblood can openly reveal the narrative of minority *bildung* because the text forecloses the possibility of a close reading of his heinous moral crimes. Third, Trueblood achieves formlessness and completes a second mirror stage. After being isolated by the community, the women surround and protect Matty Lou, his now pregnant daughter, and Kate, his pregnant wife. Trueblood decides to return to his family after rebirthing himself. The text does not record the rebirth process in detail but the text offers some insights into his rebirth. By singing and descending into the blues—located in the narrative of minority *bildung*—Trueblood abandons his entire identity as a father, a man, a singer, a farmer, etc.[132] After committing incest, Trueblood must confront racial anxiety—there is no surplus *jouissance* he can

turn to. He can no longer function in the social world that he knows, and he disinvests from his identities to become formless. Through the blues, he sloughs off his identities until he becomes formless. Then, in a hidden moment of castration, he constitutes himself anew; he becomes a double father—to both his wife's child and his daughter's child.[133] Somehow, Trueblood envisioned himself as the father of himself. In his castration (as story-performance), he retains the past, but it does not haunt him—the incest can only haunt his former identities. He re-establishes his relationships to his community and family and builds relations with whites. This rebirth, while an example of my main argument, is often neglected and ignored due to moral absurdities involved—that Trueblood would return to his family and prevent the abortion of his grandchild/child. In his reconfigured relations, Trueblood seems content with his family not speaking to him and being able to work and speak with the white community; he is not afraid of anti-black racism and he does not let others author his life. Trueblood now constitutes his subjectivity and in the process creates art. He also continues to live and work in the social world but with a new subject position. In this sense, he has been reborn and re-established his relationship to anti-black racism—just not in the context expected, and by not letting racial anxiety structure his identity.

If Invisible Man cannot register the narrative of minority *bildung* in Trueblood's blues, his famous riddle of "moving without moving," and his captivating story, then his raw wound, like Tod's wounded face, Supercargo's blood body, and Ras's punctured face, offers another avenue to confront racial anxiety: "the man had a scar on his right cheek, as though he had been hit in the face with a sledge. The wound was raw and moist and from time to time he lifted his handkerchief to fan away the gnats."[134] This literal insight into his body creates a physical entrance into the disabled body and mind. His wounded and disabled body represents the condition of Oedipus, who comes to blind himself. When Trueblood replies in the affirmative that he is okay after the incest, Norton eagerly responds: "You do? You feel no inner turmoil, no need to cast out the offending eye?"[135] Norton views the need to blind "the offending eye" like Oedipus for committing incest. Yet this eye is the social eye and not the physiological one. Norton, I believe, wants access to whatever enabled Trueblood to "cast out the offending eye" without becoming Oedipus; he wants the secrets of rebirth.

Trueblood provides the secrets of minority *bildung* (disinvestment, formlessness, and rebirth) but Invisible Man and Mr. Norton must extract the negative moments by first viewing the story as art, as unique and then by completely listening to Trueblood's story without allowing moral and emotional registers to mediate their listening. Trueblood survives his castration by performing it upon himself. Instead of gouging out his eyes, he re-orients himself to the world. Trueblood faced the anxiety of incest and managed to perform his own rebirth. In this manner, a queer rather than gay rebirth occurs as it is the subject without the mother or father that must give birth to himself. By encoding the poetic of racial anxiety in the Trueblood episode, Ellison ensured that the abject—including the disabled black body—would hold the key to rebirth. It is precisely Trueblood's failure to become Oedipus—to not become like Invisible Man and to resist Jim Crow and morality—that reveals his rebirth as something beyond another colonized identity. Trueblood, the artist, has been reborn.

My argument differs from Houston Baker's tour-de-force reading of the Trueblood episode. While I agree that Trueblood makes black expression, folklore, and the blues into commodities and that the blues represents a complex language of the black experience, I view this process of commodification and Trueblood's radical deployment of the blues as only possible by a more sophisticated, revised Trueblood. Baker argues that no rebirth occurred but

instead that "Trueblood realizes that he is not so changed by catastrophe that he must condemn, mortify, or redefine his essential self" because he has "incorporated his personal disaster into a code of blues meanings."[136] I think Baker would agree that Trueblood must undergo a rebirth if we revisit his penultimate line, which Baker also cites: "I make up my mind that I ain't nobody but myself and ain't nothin' I can do but let whatever is gonna happen, happen."[137] Trueblood becomes his own father at this moment and castrates himself. Invisible Man, on the other hand, fails to achieve a second mirror stage even though he accomplishes nearly everything required to free himself.

After the narrator falls into the sewer, he burns his precious documents, which symbolize his traditional *bildung* that has failed and most of his colonized subjectivities, for light—playing with the notion that the light produced from the disintegration of these objects will lead the narrator to knowledge instead of simply illuminating the sewer. Each item represents the last thread connecting his colonized layers to his formlessness. He confronts racial anxiety head on by burning and turning the objects into trash, fully disinvesting from the colonized layer connected to each object. The layers remain a part of his history, but not as active constituents of his being. Robert Stepto agrees that at this point the narrator is "ready to birth his form."[138] But even before this final severance, the narrator began to dislodge the colonized layers. With Bledsoe, the narrator attacks a Reverend whom he mistakes for the headmaster by drenching the man in water.[139] With Tod, the narrator provides him a funeral and desires him with punk love. But not all the paths to disinvestment are so simple. The narrator must also turn what Melanie Klein would call "good" objects into trash. The journey continues with his disinvestment of Brother Jack's colonized layers and a reconciliation of his Southern past.

The text returns to the trope of disability to aid in the disinvestment process. The narrator fails to recognize that Brother Jack's left eye is a prosthetic device. He recalls looking at Brother Jack's "sparkling" eyes, which would be impossible with an inanimate prosthetic.[140] Again, at a Harlem bar with Jack, he notices that "he laughed, one of his eyes glowing brighter than the other."[141] The narrator does not understand the significance of his observations until he confronts Jack over Tod's funeral. Right after renaming—and destroying—Jack as the "Great White Father" and "Marse Jack," Jack reaches a level of frustration that causes his prosthetic eye to pop out onto the table. The narrator enters a state of racial anxiety as he realizes that Jack has been masquerading as an able-bodied person. Jack, too, has a disability and this causes the narrator to redefine his psychic relationship with him: "his left eye had collapsed, a line of raw redness showing where the lid refused to close, and his gaze had lost its command"—the scene also recalls the eyelid gash of beaten-up Supercargo.[142]

Disinvesting himself from Brother Jack's power of identity production no long provides the surplus *jouissance* of a well-intentioned father-substitute. For the rest of their conversation, Invisible Man remains in shock over the prosthetic eye. Jack's powerful gaze dissolves. The narrator believes that Jack "disemboweled himself just in order to confound me . . . and the others had know it all along."[143]The gaze of Brother/Marse Jack signifies a significant shift in the narrator's development. If we understand the gaze through psychoanalysis, we discover that the object cause of desire structures and produces the gaze. The gaze serves as the recognition of the anxiety embedded in whatever object you happen to be looking (gazing) at. The viewer projects their own anxiety into another object (or person) and finds himself usually attracted to the object either from pleasure or disgust. So, if Jack figures as the father-turned-disabled-"Marse," the narrator must deal with how the object, which has been enclosed in Jack's body, can now be released through the open wound. Thus, when the narrator states that Jack

"disembowels" himself, the object cause of desire exits the body. The narrator literally encounters his anxiety as it seeps out of Jack—like with Supercargo's flesh popping out of his eyelid, Tod's "x," and Trueblood's open wound, racial anxiety could escape from the body.

To quell this racial anxiety, the narrator attempts to make a joke, a form of surplus *jouissance* that helps relieve the tensions of anxiety; he describes Jack as "he stopped, squinting at me with Cyclopean irritation."[144] A page later, he can no longer calm himself with jokes and enters into an ecstatic dialogue with himself. Invisible Man realizes that Jack could not "see" his formlessness, his authentic self but rather that Jack and the Brotherhood were always at work fabricating the narrator's colonized subjectivities. In the role of the blind and disabled "Marse," Jack's auto-disembowelment helps the narrator begin his own disembowelment. Jack's self-castration is what the narrator must perform on himself. He alone must get rid of the colonized layers to reach a state of formlessness. The narrator begins to reconcile his past as both formative and oppressive. These acts of reconciliation, of viewing the past as a dimension to himself rather than as an active subjectivity, helps the narrator to disinvest—but to preserve in memory—these controlling colonized layers. He thinks: "and now all past humiliations became precious parts of my experience…I began to accept my past and, as I accepted it, I felt memories welling up within me. It was as though I'd learned suddenly to look around corners."[145] This moment is important not just because the narrator learns to disinvest his colonized layers but because he learns how to interact with minority *bildung*—to look around corners—and become more comfortable with his formlessness. These insights help him manage his relationship with Mary.

One cold day the narrator returns to his boarding room to find that Mary had placed a piggy-bank in the form of a Sambo figure underneath his bed. In Mary's unending love, she gives the narrator the filled bank so that he could feel better—even though her bills are running behind. The narrator smashes the bank in a moment of rage and shoves the broken pieces and coins into the Battle Royal briefcase and flees Mary's boarding house. While he tries to transform Mary and her gift into rubbish, the novel prevents him. An old woman calls after the narrator to reclaim the briefcase he has thrown in her trash can.[146] A few minutes later, a man on the street foils the narrator's second disposal of the bag by forcing him to reclaim it; he vows to dispose of the bag once he arrives at his new Brotherhood apartment.[147]

The narrator must repress the racial anxiety produced by his encounters with Mary and her messages of uplift by remembering her gifts of money and love. This surplus *jouissance* for Mary keeps the narrator sane for a long period. But the briefcase and its contents reappear two hundred pages later at the end of the narrator's journeys with the Brotherhood—and Mary returns with it. Though he could leave the briefcase at home, the narrator grabs the case before rushing out to the Harlem riots.[148] At the riot, he deposits all of his "good" objects into the briefcase: "remembering Mary's broken bank…I found myself opening the briefcase and dropping all my papers—my Brotherhood identification, the anonymous letter, along with Clifton's doll—into it."[149] With all of the chaos of the riots, the narrator almost loses the briefcase three times and retrieves his good objects at any cost—even risking his life. After being nicked by a stray bullet, the narrator falls to the ground and loses the bag. Scofield, his new friend, hands it back to the narrator who exclaims: "I seized it with sudden panic, as though something infinitely precious had almost been lost to me."[150] In the next scene, the narrator rushes back into a burning building to retrieve his briefcase.[151] And finally, as two young white men attempt to confiscate his briefcase, the narrator flees from them and falls into the sewer.[152]

The briefcase and its contents continue to serve as good objects for the narrator as he battles Ras. During the fight, the narrator retrieves from the briefcase Brother "Tarp's leg chain,

and I slipped it over my knuckles."[153] After piercing Ras's cheek with the spear, the narrator "hit the first [of Ras's men] with Tarp's leg chain and the other in the middle with my briefcase" and then runs to Mary's home.[154] Later he hits another man with Tarp's chain.[155] These two objects defend the narrator from harm and Mary remains a figure and space of protection—even though Jack demanded that he abandon her and his past, which are all now symbolically enclosed in his briefcase.

In the underground, the narrator torches all of the good objects and completes his disinvestment of most of his colonized identities. Before falling into the sewer, the narrator confronts his colonization as Ras's lynch mob approaches him: "I had no longer to run for or from the Jacks and the Emerson and the Bledsoes and Nortons."[156] He severs the connection to these men; they cannot control his colonized subjectivities any longer because he disinvests himself of them. He symbolically burns the remaining connections to complete his disinvestments; first his high school diploma (tied to ideas of uplift); then Tod's doll (his love for Tod and the Brotherhood); the slip of paper with his new name; Jack's warning letter; and his Brotherhood identification card (the Brotherhood); and finally all of his other formative papers. Ellison confirms this reading in an interview: "before he could have some vice in his own destiny he had to discard these old identities and illusion; his enlightenment couldn't come until then. Once he recognizes the hole of darkness into which these papers put him, he has to burn them."[157] While this burn of the past metaphor is not an original argument, I argue that it is the culmination of the failed *Bildungsroman* and the plot of the minority *Bildungsroman.* All the papers destroy his connections to male institutions, but Ellison fails to mention what happens to Mary as she is not in the pile of papers.[158]

The narrator transforms fluids into a representation of Mary as a means to confront and discard her. As a mother figure, he cannot directly confront Mary and her interpellations of him as a leader of uplift. For some reason, the narrator cannot survive a confrontation with a mother whether because she is the dead mother or whether she is the function of female that Spillers formulates.[159] As such, Mary's influence must be purged via aesthetics. The novel hints that Mary should be read as fluids. As he runs to Mary's house, he recalls her when he sees spilled milk: "as I ran I was trying to get to Mary's. It was not a decision of thought but something I realized suddenly while running over puddles of milk in the black street, stopping to swing the heavy briefcase and the leg chain."[160]

First, Mary is aligned with the other good objects and fluids. In this instance, the mother's spilled milk seems almost like a Freudian slip—or another attempt at surplus *jouissance* that helps calm Invisible Man's anxieties. Besides the crude combination of the black street, milk, and fluid as representations of the maternal body, dark fluids evoke the protection of Mary. For example, the narrator thinks: "To Mary, I thought, to Mary" after being struck by the police's water spray and then a little later in his flight: "I would go now to Mary's …I moved off over the black water, floating, sighing…sleeping invisibly."[161] The latter occurs right before the narrator falls asleep for the first time in the sewer. Because he did not reach Mary's home, he dreams of visiting her. After he awakes and burns all of his good objects, he again dreams of Mary, but this time she appears only as the dark fluids: "*I lay a prisoner of a group consisting of Jack and Old Emerson and Bledsoe and Norton and Ras…and a number of others whom I failed to recognize, but all of whom has run me, who now pressed around me as I lay beside a river of <u>black water</u>*." (my underlining, italics original)[162]

If Mary is the black water in the dream, does it mean that she, too, is a part of the colonizers, of the oppressors? How does she participate in castration? The mob literally cuts off

the narrator's testicles—castrates him—and throws them onto the bridge: "*they took the two bloody blobs and cast them over the bridge*" (italics original).[163] In this feminine space now turned into a space of masculine, fatherly castration, the narrator declares that "*I'll free myself*" right before the cut.[164] At the end of the dream, the narrator tells Jack that "*'I'm not afraid now,' I said. 'But if you'll look, you'll see . . . It's not invisible . . .*" (ellipse in original).[165] Invisible Man awakes from the dream and ends the narrative section of the novel with "and now I realized that I couldn't return to Mary's."[166] Mary must have appeared in the dream—either as the black water or one of the unrecognizable figures—because the narrator declares that "I had been as invisible to Mary as I had been to the Brotherhood."[167] The dream space represents a castration by both "bad" fathers and mothers. Thus, the final castration must come from the narrator as he claims: "*I'll free myself*"; he finally listens to the words of the insane vet.

In the dream, the narrator successfully disinvests himself from all of his colonized identities save his grandfather's words, which he interprets as something to do with democracy. Without this last disinvestment, the narrator remains colonized and this last layer suffocates his formlessness and prevents him from performing a rebirth. The novel introduces the grandfather's torment in the Prologue. On his death bed, the grandfather informs the family that he has been a traitor all of his life and leaves them with an enigmatic message that they, especially the young people, should "'overcome 'em [whites] with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open.'"[168]

These words traumatize the narrator; he is forever thrown into racial anxiety whenever he remembers these perplexing words.[169] He imagines "the old man's words were like a curse."[170] These astute and bewildering observations about life as a black man remain irreconcilable for the narrator. As the narrator wins acclaim and becomes an upstanding black man who is "praised for my conduct," he feels an intense "guilt" for being accomplished. This ambivalence for "proper" racial identity cascades into racial anxiety as the narrator advances in his *bildung*. He imagines himself as "a traitor and a spy" and "against the wishes of the white folks" for being black.[171] In addition, the younger Invisible Man views blacks as belonging either to the category of the Jim Truebloods—the country folk—or to that of his "tough" classmates, with both types being undesirable forms of blackness. On the one hand these judgments seem based upon class distinctions, and on the other upon internalized white perspectives: "I felt that only these [white] men could judge truly my ability."[172] His colonized layers demand white approval and can protect him from the grandfather's haunting riddle; they are the ultimate form of surplus *jouissance*.

When the narrator returns from the Battle Royal, he confronts the dead grandfather via a photograph with the briefcase as a protective "good" object: "I even felt safe from grandfather, whose deathbed curse usually spoiled my triumphs. I stood beneath his photograph with my brief case in hand and smiled triumphantly into his stolid black peasant's face."[173] The "white" gift protects the narrator from the grandfather. It marks the severing of the old and the transition to "uplift."

But at night the good objects disappear. The grandfather's words activate racial anxiety in the narrator. In one nightmare of many, the grandfather contaminates this briefcase by retrieving a letter from within it. He tells the narrator to open the envelope and read it, but the envelope simply contains another envelope. The narrator tirelessly opens more and more envelopes until the final envelope contains a message from his grandfather via the whites who provided the briefcase: "'read it,' my grandfather said. 'Out loud!' 'To Whom It May Concern,' I intoned.

'Keep This Nigger-Boy Running.' I awoke with the old man's laughter ringing in my ears. It was a dream I was to remember and dream again for many years after."[174]

The dream's letters foreshadow how the narrator's identity will shift and morph over time from the influence of anti-black racism. Even as the novel ends and the narrator claims to be invisible, the grandfather's words torment and continue to interpolate the narrator: "I'm still plagued by his deathbed advice . . . perhaps he hid this meaning deeper than I thought, perhaps his anger threw me off—I can't decide. Could he have meant—."[175]The narrator fails to become his own father, his own decision-maker because he continues to solve the grandfather's riddle: Invisible Man thinks the answer is democracy. Ellison confirms that Invisible Man needs to make his own decisions in a critical reflection of the novel: "in the epilogue the hero discovers what he had not discovered throughout the book: you have to make your own decisions; you have to think for yourself."[176]

By following the poetics of racial anxiety, Invisible Man discovers his colonized subjectivities and proceeds to disinvest from them. He even attempts a rebirth via his story, but this, too, cannot come to fruition because he retains one last identity. The narrator fails to reach a state of complete formlessness. Although Robert Stepto believes that the narrator exits his hole at the end of the novel in part because Stepto fails to recognize that the narrator has not been able to disinvest himself from the grandfather. In the Epilogue, the narrator seems to move back towards colonized subjectivities: "but now that I've tried to put it all down the old fascination with playing a role returns, and I'm drawn upward again."[177]

Feeling the pull of this remaining colonized layer, the narrator concludes the novel as he begins it: with half-truths, a riddle, and stuck in the underground. In the Prologue he demanded that the reader recognize his formlessness, yet he himself seems to have failed to achieve that unadulterated state. He teases the reader: "you won't believe in my invisibility…you'll fail to see it even though death waits for both of us if you don't…but don't let me trick you, there *is* a death in the smell of spring, and in the smell of thee as in the smell of me."[178] He mocks the reader who believes that the only solution to the race problem is recognition. Invisible Man wants us to see that death, not rebirth, awaits him; he alludes to his failure, but also to a hope that we, his readers, will find and fulfill the poetics of racial anxiety he's contended with. Finally, the narrator leaves the reader with an enigma just as tormenting as the advice his grandfather left him: "who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?"[179] The question stands as an exhortation—to plunge into the narrative of minority *bildung* to create our own formlessness, and once there, perhaps speak alongside the narrator and help him go from being almost an invisible man to Invisible Man. Alternatively, in telling his story, like Jim Trueblood, Invisible Man might just have undergone a second mirror stage. In the Epilogue he could easily be jazzing up the story for his reader. As a man of word play, he could be telling us that he achieved his rebirth because, if he can speak for us on the lower frequencies, he might just now be occupying the narrative of minority *bildung*.

[1] Robson, Mark. *Home of the Brave*. United Artists Films, 1949.

[2] Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks.* New York: Grove, 1967, 140.
[3] Fanon, 140.
[4] For a detailed history of the conversion of the play to a film see Garcia, Jay. "Home of the Brave, Frantz Fanon and cultural pluralism." *Comparative American Studies.* vol 4(1), 2006, 52.
[5] Wagner, Bryan. *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009, 113.
[6] Wagner, 113.
[7] See John Nickel's "Disabling African American Men: Liberalism and Race Message Films." *Cinema Journal*, 44:1 (2004). Nickel reviews a host of "race-disability" films from the 1940s to 1960s that presents African Americans as disabled.
[8] Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man.* New York: Vintage, 1995 (1952), 3. Hereafter, I refer to all citations from the novel as "IM, page number."
[9] IM, 3.
[10] IM, 343.
[11] IM, 344.
[12] IM, 344.
[13] IM, 344.
[14] IM, 334.
[15] IM, 337.
[16] IM, 338.
[17] IM, 341, 342.
[18] See in particular the Introduction and Chapter 1, "Invisible Desires: Homoerotic Racism and Its Homophobic Critique in *Invisible Man.*"
[19] IM, 354.
[20] In an earlier draft of the novel, Mary has an unidentified condition that prevents her from bearing children.
[21] http://ehistory.osu.edu/osu/mmh/machinery/1to8.cfm accessed March 10, 2010.
[22] ibid. This included permanent partial disabilities and temporary total disabilities. This does not include permanent total disabilities or deaths which were 75, 400.
[23] "The Goodwill Way: 1946 Annual Report," Goodwill Industries of American. Cited in http://www.disabilitiesmuseum.org/lib/docs/
[24] Schweik, Susan. "Begging the Question: Disability, Mendicancy, Speech and the Law" *Narrative* 15.1 (January 2007), 59.
[25] Schweik, Susan. *The Ugly Laws.* New York: NYU Press, 2009, 184-5.
[26] Schweik. *The Ugly Laws*, 185.
[27] Ellison, Ralph. "Harlem is Nowhere." *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison.* New York: Modern Library, 2003, 320.
[28] Letter to Richard Wright cited in Arnold Rampersad. *Ralph Ellison.* New York: Knopf, 2007, 219.
[29] Ellison, "Harlem is Nowhere," 323.
[30] Ellison, "Harlem is Nowhere," 324-325.
[31] Ellison, "Harlem is Nowhere," 322.
[32] Rampersad, 219.
[33] Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World.* New York: Basic Books, 1995, 83.
[34] Chauncey, 88.
[35] Chauncey, 88.
[36] A limited amount of scholarship covers sexuality in the novel. For example Claudia Tate's "Notes on Invisible Women" examines the role of women as sexual objects and conduits for knowledge. Michael Hardin's "Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man: Invisibility, Race, and Homoeroticism" examines the narrator's homosexual desires. (*The Southern Literary Journal.* vol. 37 no.1 (Fall 2004), 96-120.
[37] In *The Craft of Ralph Ellison*, Robert O'Meally details how the narrator's *bildung* quest advances through various encounters with folklore (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980, 79).
[38] Burke, Kenneth. "Ralph Ellison's Trueblooded Bildungsroman" in *Speaking for You: The Vision of Ralph Ellison.* ed. Kimberly Benston. Washington, D.C.: Howard UP, 1988.
[39] Smith, Valerie. "The Meaning of Narfration in Invisible Man" in *New Essay on Invisible Man*. ed. Robert O'Meally. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988, 27.

[40] Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk.* New York: Barnes & Nobles Classics, 2005 (1903).
[41] Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks*, 14.
[42] Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture.* New York: Routledge, 1994.
[43] Baker, Houston. *The Journey Back: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism.* Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1980, 36-7.
[44] Tate, Claudia. *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998, 144.
[45] Spillers, Hortense. "Mama' Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* 17.2 (Summer 1987), 67.
[46] Spillers, 74.
[47] In Harlem numerology the number 369 was the code for shit; the narrator sitting in shit is just one of the many jokes in the novel.
[48] IM, 3.
[49] IM, 9.
[50] IM, 12.
[51] IM, 8, emphasis added.
[52] IM, 581.
[53] Neal, Larry. "Ellison's Zoot Suit" in *Speaking for You*. While Neal does not articulate the presence of the lower frequency, he does offer that folklore "churn[s] way beneath the surface of the novel's narrative…[to] form the overall structure of the novel" (116). I agree with Neal and O'Meally that Ellison infuses the entire novel with folklore.
[54] Ostendorf, 110.
[55] Alan Nadel discusses why African American history and culture cannot be expressed in white culture in his *Invisible Criticism: Ralph Ellison and the American Canon.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988.
[56] Baker, Houston. *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory.* Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1984, 5.
[57] Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks*, 8.
[58] Ellison, "Harlem is Nowhere," 326.
[59] Spillers, 80.
[60] Spillers, 80.
[61] Fanon cites Charles Odier who argues that "all anxiety derives from a certain subjective insecurity linked to the absence of the mother" (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 154). Fanon does not develop this point nor does he link it to how the process of colonization occurs.
[62] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 10.
[63] Lacan, Jacques. Le Séminaire Livre X: L'angoisse (1962-63). Paris: Seuil, 2004.
[64] IM, 22.
[65] Spillers, 74.
[66] Lacan, Jacques. *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis, Book XVII.* New York: Norton, 2007.
[67] Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* in *The Classic Slave Narratives.* ed. Henry Louis Gates. New York: Signet, 1987, 429.
[68] Ellison, "Harlem is Nowhere," 323.
[69] Spillers, 80.
[70] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 10.
[71] While many prosthetics help people to have more functionality and movement, Ellison is playing on the idea that prosthetics are used to hide the shame of being disabled. Ellison does not give representation to helpful prosthetics. For example, Brockway's false teeth are not needed. He does not speak to anyone and the teeth can be seen more as a vanity item or a way to cover up his disability. On a more practical note, the teeth help him to eat. But, Ellison makes it clear that Brockway does not need to speak with his co-workers.
[72] Ellison, "Harlem is Nowhere," 327.
[73] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 4.
[74] Warren, Kenneth. *So Black and Blue: Ralph Ellison and the Occasion of Criticism.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2003). Warren claims that Ellison sought to articulate not an identity free from racial anxiety but an "identity that could, through expressing the ideals of a democratic society, remain at once cultural and political" (41).
[75] IM, 9.

[76] IM, 334.
[77] IM, 334.
[78] IM, 337.
[79] IM, 338.
[80] IM, 341.
[81] IM, 343.
[82] IM, 343.
[83] IM, 343.
[84] IM, 344.
[85] IM, 344.
[86] Brother Jack who sits watching the speeches "like a bemused father listening to the performance of his adoring children." IM, 340.
[87] I discuss Jack's actions later in the essay. See Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
[88] IM, 346.
[89] IM, 35.
[90] IM, 72.
[91] IM, 72.
[92] IM, 94.
[93] IM, 95.
[94] IM, 95.
[95] IM, 106.
[96] IM, 153-4.
[97] IM, 154.
[98] IM, 156.
[99] IM, 453.
[100] IM, 454-5.
[101] IM, 457.
[102] IM, 458.
[103] Chauncey, 250.
[104] Jackson, Lawrence. *Ralph Ellison: Emergence of Genius.* New York: Wiley, 2002, 135.
[105] Daniel Kim writes about white male homosocial desire at the Battle Royal but he does not explore the narrator's sexuality. See his "Invisible Desires: Homoerotic Racism and its Homophobic Critique in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*," *Novel* 30 (1997): 309-28.
[106] Ellison, Ralph. "Working Notes for *Invisible Man,"* (1945) in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, 345.
[107] James Smethurst argues in "Something Warmly, Infuriatingly Feminine" that no African American character desires the narrator (119). He does not consider the young African American women who desire the narrator when he parades as Rinehart or the narrator's complex relationship with Tod Clifton (in *A Historical Guide to Ralph Ellison*. ed. Steven Tracy. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004).
[108] IM, 82.
[109] IM, 82-3.
[110] IM, 83.
[111] IM, 83.
[112] IM, 84.
[113] The narrator's English professor Mr. Woodside is gay but only briefly mentioned in the novel on page 40. In Ellison's draft materials, Woodside is more developed as a gay character. Also, Mary Rambo provides a certain form of care that is incompatible with rebirth; she insist that the narrator follow the philosophy of uplift whereas Young Emerson attempts to "nurture" and exploit the punk sexuality he detects in the narrator.
[114] IM, 180.
[115] IM, 182.
[116] IM, 183.
[117] IM, 192.
[118] Ellison, Ralph. "Working Notes for *Invisible Man"* in *The Collected Essays*, 345. This scene also evokes the original hospital chapter. The narrator, positioned as a punk, is offered money for sex from a white wolf man. This

connection is most apparent in the question asked by the narrator that is almost exactly like the one asked by the wolf man: "What kind of man are you, anyways?" (IM, 189).
[119] IM, 187.
[120] Ellison, untitled not ["At what point…"], Box 49, Folder "Emerson," REP in *Ralph Ellison: Emergence of a Genius*, 387.
[121] Jackson, Lawrence. *Ralph Ellison: Emergence of Genius*, 387.
[122] Ellison, untitled note ["north…"], Box 49, Folder "Emerson," REP in *Ralph Ellison: Emergence of Genius*, 387.
[123] Jackson, 387.
[124] IM, 363.
[125] IM, 363.
[126] IM, 363.
[127] John Callahan suggests that as the narrator becomes a writer he gains perspective on himself. While not a rebirth, it does help explain the importance of writing for the novel. Callahan, John. *Ellison's Invisible Man.* Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 2001.
[128] The narrative of minority *bildung* reappears throughout the novel in the following scenes: Jim Trueblood, the Golden Day, Reverend Homer Barbee, Lucius Brockway and Liberty Paints, the hospital, the eviction, the arena speech, numerous instances during the Brotherhood, and finally his castration. The contents of the lower frequency speak to the narrator at the eviction scene: "I watched them, feeling very young and inexperienced and yet strangely old, with an oldness that watched and waited quietly within me." (IM, 337).
[129] IM, 57-59.
[130] Houston Baker in *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* points out that Trueblood's story relies on multiple frame narratives to draw in the reader (176).
[131] Baker argues that we must not forget that the story is a commodity (*Blues*, 192).
[132] Kent, George. "Ralph Ellison and Afro-American Folk and Cultural Tradition" in *Speaking for You.* Kent agrees that the blues aids Trueblood in re-entering the social world. He claims that Trueblood sings the blues to "get himself together" after the rape (98).
[133] IM, 66.
[134] IM, 51.
[135] IM, 51.
[136] Houston, Baker. "To Move Without Moving: An Analysis of Creativity and Commerce in Ralph Ellison's Trueblood Episode." *PMLA* 98 (1983), 337.
[137] IM, 66.
[138] Stepto, Robert. *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative.* Urbana: U of Illinois Press (1979), 381.
[139] IM, 257.
[140] IM, 399.
[141] IM, 359.
[142] IM, 474.
[143] IM, 474, ellipses original.
[144] IM, 474.
[145] IM, 508.
[146] IM, 328.
[147] IM, 332. Another briefcase used for work appears on 408.
[148] IM, 527.
[149] IM, 540.
[150] IM, 537.
[151] IM, 548.
[152] IM, 565.
[153] IM, 559.
[154] IM, 560.
[155] IM, 560.
[156] IM, 559.
[157] Ellison, Ralph. "The Art of Fiction: An Interview" in *The Collected Essays*, 219.
[158] The narrator also drops the Rinehart sunglasses during his fight with Ras and the leg chain from Tarp is not accounted for although I assume he discarded it in his stay underground.

[159] Note: the narrator skips the mother figure in the Prologue's descent into the lower frequency, the young mother on the slave auction block, and the mother hanging laundry. Each of these fertile mothers does not speak and does not come into contact with the narrator.
[160] IM, 560.
[161] IM, 561 and 567.
[162] IM, 569, italics original.
[163] IM, 569, italics original.
[164] IM, 569, italics original.
[165] IM, 570, italics and ellipses original.
[166] IM, 571.
[167] IM, 571.
[168] IM, 16.
[169] IM, 16.
[170] IM, 17.
[171] IM, 16 and 17.
[172] IM, 25.
[173] IM, 33.
[174] IM, 33.
[175] IM, 574, ellipse original.
[176] Ellison, Ralph. "The Art of Fiction: An Interview," in *The Collected Essays*, 220.
[177] IM, 579.
[178] IM, 580.
[179] IM, 581.

Chapter 3

BLAMING THE DEAD MOTHER:
FINDING THE MOTHER IN JOHN OKADA'S *NO-NO BOY*

Section 1: Politics and Aesthetics in *No-No Boy*

Literary scholars have frequently read John Okada's novel *No-No Boy*, which ostensibly traces the development of protagonist Ichiro Yamada during and after the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII, as a type of *Bildungsroman.* Yet surprisingly, the activities of the novel span just under two weeks of Ichiro's life. How could two weeks afford a journey, an epiphany, and a 'happily-ever-after' marriage?[1] How is this novel a journey of self-formation without these latter genre elements? Critics have consistently failed to raise such questions due to the fact that most orient their investigations of the text around socio-political concerns. But what does it mean to read Asian American novels politically? Does it imply that aesthetics are irrelevant? And what happens when a novel—or group of novels—is read almost solely as political treatise?

During and after WWII, an explosion of semi-autobiographical novels by Japanese American and Japanese Canadian authors appeared, detailing their experiences in concentration camps.[2] Until recently, these texts—and much of the Asian American literary canon—have been treated as commentaries on personal experiences, historical events, and political chaos, i.e., as reflections on social facts rather than manifestations of the narrative arts. Daniel Kim[3], for example, takes Kenji's gangrene-stricken leg, already amputated numerous times, as the political marker for the castration of Asian American masculinity, while Viet Nguyen argues that "Kenji's missing leg and visible stump become symbols for the phallus: the missing leg is the physically disempowering price Kenji pays for the symbolic power that remains visible in the stump."[4] In both instances, the decaying leg serves not as an aesthetic representation of pain or angst, a morality tale, or a commentary on narrative form, but rather a direct translation of the political status of Asian Americans.

The first major challenge to these one-dimensional reading practices came in 1998 when critic Jinqi Ling began to interrogate the aesthetic dimensions of Asian American literature.[5] More recently, three anthologies of essays have continued Ling's line of inquiry: Keith Lawrence and Floyd Cheung's *Recovered Legacies: Authority and Identity in Early Asian American Literature* (2005), Zhou Xiaojing and Samina Najmi's *Form and Transformation in Asian American Literature* (2005), and Rocio Davis and Sue-Im Lee's *Literary Gestures: The Aesthetic in Asian American Writing* (2006).[6] These collected essays have begun to address Asian American literature's relation to established literary genres, methods, and forms from the perspective of how artists have appropriated, modified, and invented aesthetic forms. But as literary critic Colleen Lye has pointed out, "the continuing polarization of the 'ethnic' and the 'aesthetic'…has overlooked the critical potential of literary interpretation to discover for the ethnic text more transformative kinds of agency."[7] Just as purely political readings of Asian American literature—or any minority literature—fail to account for the aesthetic, Lye points out

how a reading of aesthetics neglects the political dimensions of art. This chapter follows Lye's methodology of reading both "the historical force of aesthetic form and the formal mediation of social relations…to generate new insights into the specificity, significance, and possible existence of Asian American racial formation."[8]

Reading *No-No Boy* for its political commentary, critics have produced powerful conversations on race, masculinity, assimilation, and Cold War ideology. Scholars such as Rocio Davis and Lisa Lowe emphasize that the history of internment constitutes a trauma that continues to haunt texts as an unforgettable experience in the cultural imagination.[9] Considering questions of repression, Kehler, Chen, and Daniel Kim have begun to explore the more psychological dimensions of the text.[10] Chen, for example, argues that the novel should be read as the Lacanian "thing"—that is, as the object cause of desire that operates on the dimension of the Real.[11] This interpretation approaches the novel from a more aesthetic perspective. William Yeh insists that "Ichiro died in prison; he is still essentially dead upon his arrival in Seattle."[12] Instead of applying a purely literal political reading of Ichiro as a "dead" socio-political actor, I bifurcate these politically-focused readings into a conversation between aesthetics and political critique. This chapter complicates the established readings of Okada's representation of Ichiro by asking how this "essentially dead" position on a political plane is complemented by a condition of decay on the aesthetic plane, and posits that we can better read the socio-political by approaching the issues of assimilation and the maternal through the lens of such decay.

Both Daniel Kim and Xu focus on the power that Ichiro's mother has over him and they seem to attribute his decision of saying "no-no" to American military service to the mother's potent influence.[13] Joseph Entin draws on recent research in affect theory to contradict Okada's apparent stance on assimilation; he writes that, "noir represents a discourse of negative feelings that continually, if incompletely, undercuts the affirmative, patriotic sentiments that the text labors to endorse."[14] While Entin's attention to the aesthetic dimensions of the novel is laudable, he uses these aesthetic observations to buttress more political readings that do not complement his interventions but rather seem to work against them. He writes, for example, that "Ichiro is a personification of debilitated, maladjusted postwar manhood whose deeply antisocial anger and resentment are potentially subversive of national ideals."[15] Entin's continuation of the line of limited political readings of the novel thus ultimately fails to address Lye's call for a dialectal reading between form and politics.

Reading *No-No Boy* as simply political prevents us from appreciating the genuine artistry inherent to Okada's construction of new literary forms and devices, as well as the larger stakes of the relationship between his revision of the *Bildungsroman* genre and racial formation and history. This chapter attempts to recover the aesthetic in *No-No Boy* while simultaneously reading the aesthetic for its critiques of the political and of the genre. I will not comprehensively rehash established political readings since scholars beside myself have already produced a significant body of work regarding them, but I will draw upon those readings to push against the inadequacies of some formalist interventions. A prime example is Kenji's gangrene-stricken leg. By moving beyond political readings of the amputated leg as a "phallic" stump or as the "price" Ichiro would pay to be masculine or American, we can begin to notice how the kind of decay vividly instanced in Ichiro's stricken limb propagates throughout and literally works to disintegrate the corpus of the *Bildungsroman*.[16] Okada introduces decay as the driving aesthetic device to index not only Ichiro's deformation of subjectivity as a Japanese/Japanese American, but also the deformation of gender and sexuality, the decay of Mrs. Yamada's sanity, the decay of the Japanese American community, and many other "political" manifestations of decay. Thus,

forms of decay alert the reader to aesthetic, narrative, and political ruptures. At the same time, the politics of assimilation seems to have created the decay that Okada transforms into a question of aesthetics.

There has been an extended debate on how the novel ends—on whether it constitutes assimilation, an epiphany concerning how to overcome assimilation, or even the utopian possibility that Ichiro actually defeats Cold War ideology's mandate to assimilate. All of these readings address subject formation purely on the plane of the political. They neglect how narrative closure might offer its own representation or solution to the problem of racial formation. If we read the novel's utopian closure on the level of aesthetics, what do we learn about racial formation in the context of Cold War ideology and the cultural compulsion to assimilate? If the novel ends pointing towards utopia, then what is the narrative function of trauma and death? Is it simply a fairy-tale reading to consider that Ichiro overcomes the obstacles of anti-Asian racism, incarceration, and death? This chapter examines how trauma, particularly manifested as death, relates to the trope of decay. Why must death be subordinated to decay in the novel? What historical context supports an aesthetic of decay in the Asian American *Bildungsroman* while the African-American *Bildungsroman* prefers to emphasize death? By asking the same question in multiple domains—such as why is decay important for aesthetics? for politics? for social relations? for sexuality? for gender?—the chapter aims to map the variegation of potential responses in order to offer a theory of racial formation and to highlight the rich aesthetic and political history of *No-No Boy.*[17]

The trope of decay reverberates within and structures the latent content and form of the novel. What does the decay of literary form mean in the text? Why would Okada represent a return to home and family as decay? How does this dialectic operate in the text and what does it reveal about Okada's aesthetic project? There are two realms of decay: that of the novel's form and that of the Asian American characters depicted within it. Exploiting the more obvious political theme of Ichiro's loss of American and Japanese identities, Okada redefines the Asian American subject and aesthetic by upturning form. The novel cannot represent Asian America—Japanese America in particular—as a static or even locatable entity, especially, as I argue later in this chapter, at the end of the novel. The discourses of assimilation and American Cold War Nationalism strive to create and present a unified Asian/American subject, but the text insists on disrupting the concept of Asian American-ness by presenting form and subjects in the process of decay. Within his distortion of form, Okada introduces the reader to his distinct vantage on minority *Bildung.* His decay of narrative trajectory, time, vision, hearing, gender, race, discourse, and disability all converge on the notion of racial formlessness and the need for the Japanese American subject's rebirth via a second mirror stage.

This journey includes exposing the ideological dimensions of subject formation—how political discourses craft and re-craft minority subjects; it also traces the process of de-subjugation and its residuals, asking what is required to become a self-authorized subject. I hope to situate the text within the literary history of the novel and of 20th century Asian American literature. My working definition of minority *Bildung* goes against literary critic Patricia Chu's interpretation of the Asian American *Bildungsroman.* She argues that Asian American authors reformulate the genre to reveal "their vexed and unstable positions in America…[and] to demonstrate…mastery of American culture."[18] For Chu, the goal of the *Bildungsroman* is still a quest of self-formation, albeit one filled with anti-Asian racism.

As argued in the previous chapters, twentieth-century African American writers have tended to be preoccupied with an aesthetics of death. Within slavery and Jim Crow, a concern

over life and death became integral to everyday life. Orlando Patterson and Abdul JanMohamed have both theorized the importance of death in the lives of African Americans and African American writers.[19] But Asian Americans—as a large and diverse group—possess a much different history in America. Japanese Americans suffered a long battle against anti-Japanese racism dating from their first arrival in America and Hawaii. Each time Japanese Americans seemed to gain hope, anti-Japanese racism forced them to relinquish—to decay—that hope.

Japanese laborers arrived in Hawaii and the mainland in the 1890s as farmers for the booming sugar industry. White owners preferred Japanese laborers over Chinese because "the Japs just drift—we don't have to look out for them."[20] In the 1880s, the Meiji government in Japan levied a high tax on farmers. Unable to pay their taxes, many lost their farms and livelihoods and decided to immigrate to Hawaii or American for just a few years in order to then return home in better standing. They believed that in one year they could save the same amount of money that a high-ranking Japanese official would earn and would thus be able to repurchase their lands.[21] Unlike Chinese immigrants who came to America without families, Japanese immigration included women from its initial design. In Hawaii, single and married women were encouraged to immigrate in the first waves. Japanese women could and did enter the work force in addition to pursuing domestic responsibilities. One negative aspect of female immigration, however, was that it spurred the abduction and sale of women into prostitution.

Upon their arrival in American urban centers, the Japanese faced intense racial discrimination at all levels of society. In reaction to their own rejection from society, the Japanese formed Japantowns to isolate themselves from the full effects of anti-Japanese racism. In the countryside, whites burned or attacked Japanese labor camps, farms, and homes. Japanese railroad workers, for example, were excluded from the general services provided by their employers. This translated into their not being provided shelter and being forced to sleep wherever they could each night. Each day they had to pack up their "homes" while they worked to construct the transcontinental railroads.[22]

The abuse of the Japanese escalated rather than declined as time went on. By 1920, the agricultural production of Japanese farms was 10% of the total value of all of California's farms and employed about 46% of the Japanese in the state.[23] Just seven years earlier, racist white Americans attempted to derail the progress of Japanese farmers. A 1913 state law barred all immigrants from owning property. While the Japanese found ways to circumvent the law—mostly by transferring the property to their children—anti-Japanese racism fueled a revision of the law to close this loophole. In effect, many Japanese farmers were forced to abandon their fields.

In cities, the Japanese faced no better odds. The unions controlled the factory jobs and refused Japanese membership. When Japanese were able to secure factory positions, they worked at severely reduced rates compared to their "white" peers. Anti-Japanese political activists managed not only to exclude Japanese children from public schools, but also advocated for the Japanese to be added to the Chinese Exclusion Act. These,second-generation Japanese in America, known as Nisei, would experience Du Bois' double consciousness. They, too, faced widespread anti-Japanese racism. For example, they were unable to find careers after graduating from college. In the novel, the offer made by Mr. Carrick to Ichiro is indeed an exception to the rule and should be highlighted as not just Mr. Carrick helping out a sad boy but as a politically dangerous move of crossing the color-line. A white man offering Ichiro a professional position would be sure to bring much attention and violent reactions.

Probably the most horrific act committed against Japanese Americans was their internment during the Second World War. Even before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the government pondered whether people with Japanese ancestry living in the United States should be considered a threat to national security. The War Department, the Federal Communications Commission, the Attorney General, and Hoover's Federal Bureau of Investigation all concluded that the Japanese in America and Japanese Americans were not, in fact, security threats. Even given these findings, anti-Japanese racism flared up in the public sphere, and President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 to rip people from their communities and place them in concentration camps. Many people had just a few days to sell all of their property, including their homes, before heading off to unknown prisons. Once in the concentration camps, Roosevelt allowed "loyal" Americans to enlist in an all-Nisei unit. Ichiro answered "no" to the two following questions put forth to every man of military age in these prisons:

> Question 27: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?
> Question 28: Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of American and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?[24]

Over a fifth of all Nisei men said no to both questions. Those who did answer yes and who enrolled in the army had much more miserable fates, though Ichiro would disagree: two-thirds of the 442nd regiment would be injured in the war; and those who survived returned with mangled bodies, missing limbs, and dead friends.

From a historical point of view, this chapter explores why Asian American authors adopted the trope of decay as lying at the core of the experience of being Asian American in post-war America. What is the importance of decay in the novel and for Japanese Americans? Instead of signifying death and the threat of death, John Okada references the historical decay and attacks on the Japanese in America and their hegemonic assimilation—the diachronic, generational process of supplanting a home culture and identity with the more dominant culture and its notion of personhood. The concept of decay captures the synchronic aspects of assimilation—such as how food preferences or idioms of the dominant overwrite the "Asian"—while also revealing the condition of the home culture as a source of contamination that is in the process of rotting, yet retains power over the Asian American psyche.

Elaine Kim describes the state of decay as "the fragmentation and disintegrating influence of American racism on the Japanese American community and its members…depicted through the incompleteness of each individual character."[25] The Asian mother in the novel, for example, is clearly a "strong" character, yet she comes to be viewed as decaying or withering from an "American" perspective. The Japanese body must be eradicated and replaced by a new form: the assimilated Japanese American body. Okada vacillates in his perspective on these bodies, but ultimately he indicates that both the old and the hegemonic new forms must decay. First-generation Japanese bodies are seen as poisoned—as even impossible—in the context of a jingoist America. The Japanese/Japanese American body cannot pass into America without significant modification, and the Japanese body processed through American ideology—now the assimilated or assimilating body—cannot survive in a state of suffocation.

Pushing against Du Bois's notion of a double consciousness that allows "one ever feels his two-ness,--an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder," Japanese Americans were unable to retain a cohesive "Japanese" culture, instead opting to be assimilated.[26] They could not support a true notion of double consciousness. Unlike the African American community, however, Japanese Americans were relatively more successful in interacting with white American culture post-assimilation. After their release from the concentration camps, Japanese Americans for the most part elected to assimilate into white America. On the one hand the novel seems to embrace the ideological imperative for Ichiro and Japanese Americans to assimilate, while, in its aesthetics, the novel critiques the abandonment of a home culture and advocates a radical solution to assimilation and the hegemonic identities donned by Asian Americans. Okada threads his argument about the condition of Japanese Americans through the text via the concept of decay. At the same time, the novel is self-conscious about how its representation of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans contributes to the making or unmaking of those categories. This culminates at the end of the novel with a second mirror stage. Okada cannot give full representation to Ichiro after he has undergone the second mirror stage. At this juncture, he refuses to participate in the aesthetic and political construction of the reborn Asian American subject. In this way, Okada acknowledges how literature participates in the construction of Asian Americans.

Okada facilitates the reader's uptake of the trope of decay through the figure of Kenji's gangrenous and amputated leg. The discourse of the decaying body and leg trains the reader to search for additional manifestations of decay. The novel plays, for example, with the idea that Kenji is a decaying entity rather than a subject: "a leg that was eating itself away until it would consume the man himself…for hobbling toward death on a cane and one good leg seemed far more disastrous than having both legs and an emptiness that might conceivably still be filled."[27] The plot-line traced by Kenji involves a journey of physical decay—his multiple amputations—culminating in his being eaten by his own flesh. Kenji's putrefying leg mirrors Ichiro's journey of slow decay: "one already dead but still alive and contemplating fifty or sixty years more of dead aliveness, and the other, living and dying slowly."[28] Okada concretizes the idea of the "dead aliveness" by contrasting Ichiro and Kenji's forms of decay.

Okada presents race through this frame of decay. Assimilation requires the decay of the Japanese part of Ichiro for the sake of the creation of a hegemonic Japanese American subject. But at the same time, resisting—or in Ichiro's case, whining about—assimilation also leads to psychic and social decay. Returning to the idea of having one good leg and one decaying leg, Okada frames Ichiro's anxieties over his racial subject position in terms of the good (the American) and the bad or decaying (the Japanese). In a monologue, after holding his tongue in the face of his mother's crazy ideas, Ichiro describes himself as being divided in half—Japanese and American. In a wildly confusing tirade, he claims that he did not:

> …love enough, for you were still half my mother and I was thereby still half Japanese and when the war came and they told me to fight for America, I was not strong enough to fight you and I was not strong enough to fight the bitterness which made the half of me which was you bigger than the half of me which was American and really the whole of me that I could not see or feel…but it is not enough to be American only in the eyes of the law and it is not enough to be only half an American and know that it is an empty half. I am not your son and I am not Japanese and I am not American.[29]

At the beginning of this monologue, Ichiro views himself as wholly Japanese and then describes his transformation into being American due to being raised in America. Adopting the same decay rhetoric and imagery as that used with respect to Kenji's legs, Ichiro views himself as whole and then fractured by race. The Japanese half helps to kill the American half: "I do not understand what it was about the half that made me destroy the half of me which was American."[30] He becomes a living Japanese half and a decaying American half. In prison while his American half is "empty," Ichiro realizes that his Japanese half qua his mother is also in a state of decay and that both halves, or all of him, is in decay: "…now that I know the truth when it is too late and the half of me which was you [the mother] is no longer there."[31] Thus, Ichiro is neither Japanese nor American. He is a decaying Japanese and a decaying American with no development. His *bildung* is one of decay and not of self-formation.

When Ichiro returns to Seattle he is socially and politically formless. To white Americans and even African Americans, he remains hyper-visible as the non-citizen, the enemy. The world views him as homeless—a "Jap" in America who is always Japanese and not Japanese American. In terms of his political position, Ichiro makes himself formless by disavowing his allegiance to America (with his "no-no") and rejecting assimilation. He acknowledges his quagmire: "…it is not an easy thing to discover suddenly that being American is a terribly incomplete thing if one's face is not white and one's parents are Japanese of the country Japan which attacked America."[32] His body cannot inhabit the forms he strove to be. Instead, he must remain formless and in search of an identity. His two years in prison and two years in the concentration camp stripped him of all his social and political identities. Okada uses the genre of minority *Bildungsroman* to facilitate Ichiro's journey toward becoming psychically formless.

Ichiro demonstrates a contrast between social and political forms of decay with the ideal of the home. He imagines that "home is there waiting for him forever."[33] The permanence of home, figured as citizenship and the nuclear family, calms Ichiro's anxieties and fears. Okada suggests that if Ichiro cannot belong politically and socially to America, then at least the home is a refuge. Yet, what type of home does Ichiro return to at the conclusion of the war? He returns to a dysfunctional domestic situation. His mother believes that the Japanese are winning the war and will be sending ships to America to retrieve the family; Mr. Yamada remains in a drunken stupor to avoid his wife's insanity; Taro, the younger son, resents his no-no boy brother Ichiro and both of his parents. None of the characters are moving forward, in part because they do not assimilate. Only when Taro ambushes Ichiro in a bar fight and abandons the family for the military, i.e. when he assimilates, does he seem to advance.

Okada creates "home" as a place of chaos in order to crush the false utopia of an assimilation founded in the familial. For Ichiro, home is a "prison…carved out of his stupidity [which] granted no paroles or pardons. It was a prison of forever."[34]And this prison of the home is ruled by the mother. Ichiro, Taro, their father, and possibly even the narrator blame the mother for the pain inflicted upon the family. They imagine that if she weren't overbearing and insane, then they would be welcomed into America. They want to forget about anti-Japanese racism. It is this hope that destroys Taro and the father. By examining the mother, I want to demonstrate the decay of the maternal function in Japanese American culture and its consequences for the community, particularly for Mrs. Yamada's children. How does her social and psychic condition affect her family? But first, we must consider the way in which she becomes a figure who serves to wreak havoc on her family. Why is she the centerpiece of disintegration and why does Ichiro blame her for his social, political, and psychic decay?

Section 2: The Dead Mother

Okada seduces the reader into sympathizing with Ichiro and assimilated Japanese Americans by crafting Mrs. Yamada as a crazy, overbearing mother. Throughout the novel, Ichiro contemplates the extent to which his mother forced him to say "no" to allegiance to the U.S. and "no" to serving in the armed forces.[35] When his friend who catches the mother in a crazy spell, Ichiro tells him: "I guess you could say she's been crazy a long time…maybe ever since the day she was born."[36] Jinqi Ling argues that the mother is "a caricature of the stubborn, unassimilable 'Japanese' of racial stereotyping."[37] In a more overtly political reading of the mother, Stephen Sumida calls her "a complex allegory of reaction against and yet imitation of her oppressors: her own logic tells her that if she has no choice but to be considered a 'Jap,' then she will *be* a 'Jap.'"[38] In my reading, the mother is one of the central characters of the novel—not simply a stereotype or an allegory for the political sphere. Her insanity marks a much deeper trauma than would be indicated by a straightforward representation of a fanatical Japanese nationalist or, as Gribben would like to view her, a reflection of the crises of "masculine identity formation."[39]

The novel refutes a purely political reading of the mother when Ichiro reveals that the mother was "never alive to us [Taro and himself]."[40] Ichiro makes the claim that the mother has been emotionally dead at least since he can remember. Okada continues to emphasize the psychic death of the mother, revealing the question of racial formation in light of the problem of representing an emotionally dead maternal figure. The father informs Ichiro that: "'Your mama is sick, Ichiro, and she has made you sick and I am sick because I cannot do anything for her.'"[41] The text explicitly renders the mother as mentally incapacitated—without explicit reference to a source of illness—and as contagious, as able to infect her sons. She is literally not a mother but "a rock of hate and fanatic stubbornness"—"neither woman nor mother."[42] Okada emphasizes not only the abjection of the mother but also how her representation points to something beyond the biological or socio-political. She cannot be a woman or mother in the socio-political realm; there, she must be a psychically destroyed creature.

Okada explains the formation of the dead Asian mother through the character of Mrs. Yamada. The most poignant differentiation between a psychically dead mother and a physically dead mother occurs when Ichiro discovers his mother's suicide. He busts open the bathroom door and finds his drowned mother while "feeling only disgust and irritation."[43] Gazing at his dead mother, he thinks "dead…all dead. For me, you have been dead a long time, as long as I can remember." Okada distinguishes between two forms of death: physical and psycho-emotional. Mrs. Yamada was "never alive" because Ichiro can only remember and relate to the mother as psychically dead. Okada reinforces the mother's characterization as dead during the reader's first encounter with her. When she returns from errands, Okada omits her actual speech and instead offers an analysis of the missing words: "the sharp, lifeless tone of his mother's words flipped through the silence and he [Ichiro] knew that she hadn't changed."[44] Her voice possesses a "lifeless tone" and literally decays into incomprehensible sounds that reflect her moribund status.

Language fails because Ichiro does not know how to communicate with a dead mother. He thinks: "how is one to talk to a woman, a mother who is also a stranger because the son does not know who or what she is? Tell me, Mother, who are you? What is it to be a Japanese? There must have been a time when you were a little girl."[45] Ichiro can only pose questions to an

imaginary entity because the dead mother cannot speak; he wants the history of the mother so that he can confirm that she was once psychically alive. Without a history, Ichiro can only relate to her as dead.[46] In line with Wenying Xu's idea that "when the maternal sphere of a given community becomes embittered and violated, there is little hope for the community as a whole,"[47] I want to attend to how the political question of an entire "dead" community challenges the aesthetic representation of one character in order to elaborate a larger cultural question.

In his seminal essay on depressed mothers, entitled "The Dead Mother," French psychoanalyst Andre Green argues that the "imago [of the mother] which has been constituted in the child's mind, following maternal depression" terrorizes the child and disrupts his psychic formation.[48] While the idea of the disembodied father and his linguistic transformations—namely, the Superego and the Name-of-the-Father—dominate the discussion of psychoanalysis, Green focuses on what happens when a mother, still living and often assumed to be the first object of affection for the child, becomes depressed or emotionally immobilized. The child responds to this psychically dead mother, who, as a consequence of her depression, has withdrawn her love from the child, by disinvesting from the (alive) mother.[49] But before the child can re-establish a relationship with the mother via the dead mother, he must disinvest from her. He cannot identify with her morbidity in the long term. In a state of decathexis from a love object, the child seeks out a replacement figure.[50]

As Ichiro disinvests from the dead mother, Okada shows the reader what the child uses as substitute for the maternal object. As with the other minority protagonists in this dissertation, Ichiro identifies with the Superego of the (white) social world rather than with the Superego of the Japanese American family. In terms of re-writing the mirror stage and the dead mother complex for the minority context, Okada shows that the mirror stage is jointly occupied by the mother, the dead mother, and social norms of white America. Green argues that after the child turns away from the now dead mother, he attaches himself to the fiction of normality. This in turn requires the child to rewrite his primary identification and narcissism in order to align with a new "mother." Clearly, for a colored child, a primary identification with whiteness will wreak havoc in his future. In this modified mirror stage, Ichiro comes to view his own body as a cause of horror that threatens his desire for normality.

This bipolar effect has been best formulated by W.E.B. Du Bois. He argues that the raced subject is always torn by competing identities and desires: "one ever feels his twoness-an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." Okada pushes the boundaries of double consciousness, intimating that the "twoness—an American, a Negro [an Asian]" is really the consequence of the dead mother complex and the artificially imposed desire for normality. Both the American and minority subject positions are social-psychic constructions inaugurated and perpetuated by anti-Japanese racism. For Okada, the racialized dead mother complex arises because the minority mother has been converted into the socially abject. This historical and cultural practice of maternal abjection re-writes even the most vibrant minority mother into a dead mother. In the figure of Mrs. Yamada, Okada demonstrates how a once-vital woman slowly decays during her life in America, showing the consequences of anti-Asian racism on Asian American motherhood. Thus, we must read against the political grain of viewing Mrs. Yamada as simply a woman tormented and delusional due to her continuing allegiance to Japan, but rather as being such due to the fact that anti-Japanese racism has

dismantled the entire category of motherhood and replaced it with moribund figures. Only if she assimilates can she become an "alive" Japanese American mother.

Okada offers a harsh critique of anti-Japanese racism in showing how it instills this dead mother complex in the Japanese American community. The novel skims over the concentration camps and life before WWII. Okada makes it clear that anti-Japanese racism, propelled in this case by mass hysteria and fear over the bombing of Pearl Harbor, motivated the imprisonment of Japanese Americans. But he deflects the focus of his critique from these types of anti-Japanese and anti-Asian racism because, it would seem, for him they are such integral and vital dimensions of American culture. Even his disgust for the internment lacks the expected (and appropriate) vitriol of response.[51] His language barely registers his disdain—a reaction that is in extreme disproportion to the horrendous nature of the crimes committed against Japanese Americans. This reserved style enables the novel to be less a direct political commentary on the war, the internment, and the more overt forms of anti-Japanese racism that manifested before the war, and instead to focus on the more subtle, unconscious forms of anti-Japanese racism: i.e., the formation of the dead mother and its consequences.

As Ichiro reflects upon his relationship with his mother, he concludes: "right or wrong, she, in her way, had tried harder than most mothers to be a good mother to him…[America] turned the once very possible dreams into a madness which was madness only in view of the changed status of the Japanese in America."[52] Ichiro attributes the production of the dead mother to America, but only when America enters the war. He disavows that anti-Japanese racism worked to transform the mother upon her arrival in America. Instead, Ichiro partially blames the Japanese who bombed Pearl Harbor for the change in America's attitude towards Japanese Americans. But he does comprehend the structure of oppression, regardless of the question of its point of origin, as anti-Japanese racism. Like the concentration camps and the long history of anti-Asian racism in America, Okada specifically formulates the origins of the dead mother complex in the overarching context of anti-Japanese hatred, even if Ichiro cannot exhume this buried history.

Ichiro struggles to understand why his mother was "never alive." In jail he tells a fellow inmate: "how tough it was for kids of immigrants because parents and kids were so different and they never really got to know each other."[53] These excuses about language and cultural barriers seem to be answered by Kenji's father. Mr. Kanno recounts his conversion into a "good" assimilated parent while in the concentration camps. A sociologist proselytized the merits of "American" parenting: "'change, now, if you can, even if it may be too late, and become companions to your children. This is America…I will tell you what it is like to be an American boy or girl. I will tell you what the relationship between parents and children is in an American family.'"[54] The advice smacks of Cold War ideology. Mr. Kanno assimilates and thus he *should* have a good life, yet his son is decaying, his wife is deceased, and he works in a menial job.

Okada demonstrates that assimilation does not automatically grant the fantasy of the good American life. By contrasting Mr. Kanno's assimilation with Mrs. Yamada's insanity and refusal to assimilate, Okada seems to flatten the issue into an either/or choice. Refusing to assimilate leads to the psychic death of the mother, while actually assimilating appears to imbibe death of a home culture. Okada complicates the binary choice by revealing the failure of both routes. The constellation of these ideologies and their consequences produce a plot that implores the reader to reconsider the value of assimilation, to reconsider blaming the mother, and to investigate the origins of the mother's insanity. Okada focuses the novel on an exploration of the dead mother complex to help us find a solution to this no-win game.

While Mr. Kanno appears to be happy, it is in part because his assimilation grants him a pleasure that also contains a trace of its failure to produce authentic pleasure. This concept of surplus *jouissance* will be discussed later in the essay. He experiences pleasure, but he also experiences a slight sensation that he is not happy, which registers as the knowledge that he gains pleasure only because he practices the life of assimilation. Within the pleasure resides the pain from constantly practicing assimilation, from constantly rejecting a "home" culture. To quell this pain, which I term racial anxiety, he is authorized to feel pleasure in assimilating because the hegemonic social world grants him this privilege. It recognizes his accomplishments as he becomes more and more (white) middle class—he receives joy from these daily routines. If he allowed himself to fully experience the critical message in his surplus *jouissance*, he might be able to recognize the reality of his situation over time, but the attraction of assimilation provides too many social and political rewards for him to interrogate his pleasures and choices. He knows that before assimilating, he, too, was once a dead father.

Okada provides a range of other characters that also undergo the "dead mother" complex: "it was like finding out that an incurable strain of insanity pervaded the family, an intangible horror that swayed and taunted beyond the grasp of [one's] reaching fingers."[55] Ichiro realizes that the "sickness" which he recognizes as the dead mother complex extends to his entire family and community. The "dead father" is presented as a "drunken father who could not get drunk enough to forget" about the mother's insanity, about pleas from impoverished relatives in Japan whom he can't help without going against his wife, and about his own complicity in the production of himself as a dead father.[56] The father continues to drink so that he can continually deny that his former self was vibrant and optimistic, and the prospect of sobriety frightens him greatly.

Ichiro's brother is likewise depicted as a dead subject. Taro decides to join the military to end his suffering. He imagines that joining the military will validate his body and his subjectivity as being authentically "American." Thus, like Mr. Kanno, he, too, chooses to assimilate rather than remain a dead subject. Even Emi, Ichiro's potential love object, is psychically dead. He realizes this when he gazes at her: "what he saw made him intensely sad. It wasn't sorrow or despair or anxiety, but the lack of these or any other readable emotions. Her lovely face was empty, even immobile."[57] In line with Green's description of the dead mother, Emi has become moribund. She does not transmit emotions and her love is gone, "immobile," withdrawn from Ichiro. She has become a dead subject and will become a dead mother, too, if they marry. The dead mother complex torments both assimilating and unassimilated Japanese Americans.

How does the dead mother complex affect Ichiro? How does the dead mother complex move from being a socio-political form to a psycho-social form? The consequence of the dead mother complex according to Green is that the adult who suffered from a dead mother attempts to "take[s] the place of an ideal dead object"[58] while at the same time he "spends his life nourishing his dead [mother], as though he alone has charge of it."[59] The central conflict of the novel revolves around Ichiro's having become in part the dead mother and nurturer of his failed and decaying self. A major frustration for readers is that Ichiro fails to act, instead choosing to continually whine about and even destroy his future; in this way he ensures that, as dead son, he cannot have a dynamic future—otherwise, he wouldn't be a dead son.

Section 3: The Torment of the Dead Mother: Racial Anxiety

The dead mother complex instills racial anxiety into Ichiro. When he withdraws from the mother, he also withdraws his identification with her—decathecting his sense of being a Japanese American. The drive for assimilation—or social normality—becomes Ichiro's new target for identification. The consequences of this new attraction reverberate throughout and structure the novel. Every instant that Ichiro encounters an Asian, and in particular Japanese, body, he experiences the trauma of the dead mother. Because his and other Asian bodies do not align with his identification with social normality, the affective response is racial anxiety. Ironically, his own race, body, family, and community cause him this trauma.

Other characters in the novel advocate a simple solution to racial anxiety. The practice of assimilation delivers surplus *jouissance* that temporarily quells racial anxiety. Okada, though, offers an alternative to surplus *jouissance* in his refusal to allow Ichiro's participation in language. The failure to speak or the tendency to constantly whine about the same topic stagnates Ichiro's development. Moreover, these arrested developments force Ichiro to fully experience racial anxiety and its consequences. Okada transforms Ichiro's failure to be a political actor into an aesthetic of decay and a psycho-social response to racial anxiety. Instead of assimilation, Okada demonstrates Ichiro's path to formlessness and how he uses experiences of racial anxiety to disintegrate himself. Before turning to Ichiro's failure of language, I want to emphasize the importance of language in the novel.

When Ichiro returns to Seattle as a no-no boy, he encounters his peer Eto, a veteran from the war. Eto, who has attempted to verify his status as an American and who has relegated his pre-war self to the rubbish pile, wields a vitriolic and anti-Japanese discourse that constructs Ichiro as the reviled "Japanese." At first, Eto behaves and speaks as if Ichiro is also returning from serving in the army. But Ichiro "made an effort to be free of Eto and his questions."[60] He knows that Eto's language, his "questions," will be able to torment him, to construct him into whatever type of subject Eto enacts with speech. In a few more minutes, Ichiro's racial anxiety comes to fruition: "he remembered. He knew. The friendliness was gone as he said: 'No-no boy, huh?'"[61] Ichiro is re-made into a no-no boy as Eto spews his venom. Eto's language reinforces how the dominant culture can relegate one to abjection.

The political deployment of language in the novel both interpellates and constructs subjects. After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, for example, the media shifted to a negative discourse regarding Japanese Americans. This strategic unfolding of language enacts its power to structure the political and the personal domains: "the moment the impact of the words solemnly being transmitted over the several million radios of the nation struck home, everything Japanese and everyone Japanese became despicable."[62] While anti-Asian racism had amassed a long history by 1941, Okada wants to emphasize the sudden and intense deployment of hate via political language that mobilized the feelings of an entire country. This hate also works its way into the subjects that it aims to create.

The narrator elaborates on the power of language to transform minority subjects: "the Japanese who were born Americans and remained Japanese because biology does not know the meaning of patriotism no longer worried about whether they were Japanese-Americans or American-Japanese. They were Japanese…the radio had said as much."[63] Exemplifying Foucault's argument of how specialized language disciplines individuals into new categories of being, Okada demonstrates how political language flattens and re-writes the Japanese American subject. Regardless of their birth place, political allegiance, or commitment to the U.S., Japanese

Americans became national threats needing to be placed in concentration camps. During the war, this power to interpellate extended to Japanese Americans who explicitly assimilated and supported the U.S. armed forces.

As a no-no boy who refused to join the war efforts and as a Japanese American, Ichiro is doubly marked for exclusion. Language and its power to shape reality and to shape subject positions are not available to Ichiro. Furthermore, he cannot correct or even participate in the construction of himself—or as Wittgenstein might formulate it, Ichiro cannot participate in the language games that govern subjectivity. Ichiro can only precipitate his decay by failing to participate in the political realm. Okada presents this political situation as a complex aesthetic argument.

Okada fills each failure to speak—and thus another failure to author oneself—not with silence but with racial anxiety. As Ichiro anticipates Eto's discovery of his no-no boy status, the text alerts the reader to Ichiro's unrest. Okada displays this racial anxiety as Ichiro awaits Eto's response after discovering Ichiro's shameful secret: "he wanted to return the look of despising hatred and say simply yes, but it was too much to say."[64] The reader can register Ichiro's shaking body and emotional frustrations. The despair is affective and political. Okada situates Ichiro's failure to speak not just with hostile enemies but also with friends to demonstrate that racial anxiety is caused by the Asian body and not just purely context-dependent.

In another example, when Ichiro attempts to say good-bye to Kenji, who will soon die, words fail Ichiro in this loving environment: "the things he wanted to say would not be said. He said "Bye" and no sound came out because the word got caught far down inside his throat and he felt his mouth open and shut against the empty silence."[65] Even in a moment that should be sentimental, Ichiro instead appears to experience racial anxiety. He cannot acknowledge his love for a Japanese body. This would not only force a confrontation with racial anxiety, but it would also acknowledge the fruitful capacities of homosexuality. He must repress his mourning for Kenji. In another emotionally straining episode, Ichiro debates the reasons for his refusal to enlist in the army. He blames his allegiance for his mother: "it [saying no-no] was to please her, he said to himself with teeth clamped together to imprison the wild, meaningless, despairing cry which was forever straining inside of him."[66]

What appears during these failures of speech is not silence but a "cry" of the object left in him as a remembrance of the dead mother. This "wild, meaningless" utterance registers the effect of racial anxiety. Ichiro encounters himself—as constructed by the other—as the object that both disrupts the white social order and reminds him of the object that terrorized the dead mother. As previously mentioned, racial anxiety is the re-experiencing of the Japanese American body. When the child flees the mirror stage with a dead mother, he turns to the socio-political world for guidance. With the social order as 'mother,' the logical pursuit of the social is the typical, the average. This normality includes not just striving to assimilate into the hegemonic culture and race but something more radical. Because the social represents the values of white culture in the early 20th century, the child must adopt the demands of the replacement mother. To meet these requirements, the Japanese American subject must become "white"—culturally, physically, and psychically.

This horrific logic and its imperatives fracture and terrorize the Japanese American subject. The raced body, including its cultural performance and history, becomes an actual object of terror! Whenever the minority subject comes into contact with his own indelibly marked racialized body, he experiences racial anxiety. He stresses, he flusters, and he is visibly distraught at the level of the corporeal. Assimilation partially satisfies the demand to achieve the

normative. But with irony in full play, the satisfaction from fulfilling a desire never produces complete satisfaction. First, the subject who attempts to satisfy his desires misses the point. The apparent desire is simply a cause of desire that cannot be satisfied. Second, for the Japanese American subject, the desire to be normal can never be achieved. His yellow skin, slanty eyes, thick black hair, cultural background, and personal history as an Asian prevent him from achieving a state of 'normality.' Moreover, assimilation provides temporary relief from racial anxiety because it in part reconfigures the subject as more normal on the cultural plane by distancing him from his own cultural practices. It also replaces anything that distinguishes him as "ethnic."

In critical moments of the novel, Okada calls into question the role of race in Ichiro's subject formation. On the first page of chapter one, Okada introduces Ichiro to the reader as a strong character who decided to abstain from the war: "of his own free will, he had stood before the judge and said that he would not go in the army."[67]Just moments later, Okada attributes Ichiro's racial formation and agency not to himself but to the mother. In one of the many occasions that he blames the mother for his choice to abstain from the war, he imagines: "it was she who opened my mouth and made my lips move to sound the words which got me two years in prison and an emptiness that is more empty and frightening than the caverns of hell. She's killed me with her meanness and hatred and I hope she's happy because I'll never know the meaning of it again."[68] Ichiro acknowledges his psychic position as a "killed"-dead son. The mother operates from within Ichiro by embedding her object, her "meanness and hatred," within him. She elaborates this transference process:

> 'I am proud to call you my son.' It was her way of saying that she had made him what he was and that the thing in him which made him say no to the judge and go to prison for two years was the growth of a seed planted by the mother tree and that she was the mother who had put this thing in her son and that everything that had been done and said was exactly as it should have been and that that was what made him her son because no other would have made her feel the pride that was in her breast.[69] (emphasis added)

The metaphor of the seed that grows in her children seems to have bloomed in Ichiro. She takes credit for his subject formation and he seems to agree with her interpretation. He appropriates her claim and even says that, "it was she who opened my mouth and made my lips move." The mother seems to wield absolute power over Ichiro.

At times Ichiro characterizes the mother's object-thing as controlling and killing him and at other times he minimizes her influence. This dialectic between a benevolent and malicious seed, or what Melanie Klein would refer to as good and bad object, vacillates for Ichiro throughout the novel. In a moment of seeming clarity and with the absence of racial anxiety, Ichiro assumes the blame for his no-no response: "I did not go because I was weak and could not do what I should have done. It was not my mother, whom I have never really known. It was me, myself. It was done and there can be no excuse."[70] This instance belies the fact that racial anxiety is still present. The seeming calmness is not calmness but just another appearance of the mother's object-thing as he forecloses the possibility of interpretation and the multiplicity of influences. He lets the object-thing "speak" in such a way that "there can be no excuse" for his actions. As a dead son, he reproduces and nurtures the dead mother by sustaining his *objet a* that she "gave" him. By owning the blame through imagining the object as the quiescence of the mother, Ichiro reproduces or grows the dead mother.

At the end of the novel, Okada again reverses this position. At the Christian Rehabilitation Center, Ichiro blames his mother for his not taking a job in Portland: "I should have taken it, he thought; if Ma had been dead then, I would have."[71] Ichiro's shifts back to blaming the mother—this time, blaming her physical presence. Even after Ichiro seems to resolve his position on who influenced his decisions, he cannot help blaming the mother. This time, he ineffectively argues, the mother's physical presence causes him to say "no" to a wonderful job opportunity and new life. She was not in Portland with him and she did not prepare him for the interview unlike the court sessions. From a political perspective, it appears that Ichiro fails to accept responsibility for his actions. But, at this point the reader knows that the mother's object-thing inside of Ichiro causes him to create drama even though he appears to have made the decision. Although Patricia Chu argues that Ichiro "must question and discard [the mother] in order to construct himself as an Asian American subject," the process of minority *Bildung* requires that Ichiro disinvest from the by-product, the dead mother, of anti-Japanese racism.[72] The mother is not "discarded" but remains a strong and important memory for Ichiro.

The dead mother complex extends to Taro. On the second day of Ichiro's return to Seattle, Taro decides to enter the army before turning 18. Okada attributes Taro's unwise decision to mark himself as an American because "Taro hated that *thing* in his elder brother which had prevented him from thinking for himself."[73] Okada illustrates how the dead Ichiro, in conjunction with the dead mother, traumatizes and installs an object in Taro. Okada writes: "he [Taro] had to go in the army because of his brother whose weakness made it impossible for him to do otherwise and because he did not understand what it was about his mother that haunted him day and night and pulled his insides into meaningless bits and was slowly destroying him…he had to cut himself free."[74] Taro psychically registers the dead aspect of Ichiro. He attacks Ichiro for being weak and unable to resist the mother's object-thing. In a state of racial anxiety, Taro abandons the non-American family to become an American via the military-industrial complex. As Taro begins his radical flight from his Japanese American past and family, Ichiro cannot speak to Taro and he can only think: "you [Taro] are fortunate because the weakness which was mine made the same weakness in you the strength to turn your back on Ma and Pa and makes it so frighteningly urgent for you to get into uniform to prove that you are not a part of me."[75]

Taro relinquishes not only his Japanese American heritage but also his entire family in the process of assimilation. Okada stresses how kinship must also be in a state of decay so that assimilation and the reconstitution of Taro as an American can materialize. In a direct reformulation of the *Bildungsroman,* Okada converts Taro into an orphan so that his journey of self-formation can begin. Okada presents another side to this dialectic of the orphan figure. While Taro enacts his own orphanhood, metaphorically killing his brother and parents, Ichiro realizes the futility of becoming this type of orphan. At first he imagines reproducing Taro's flight but concludes: "I'll be getting away from them and here, but I won't really be running away because the thing that's inside of me is going along and always will be where it is."[76] The object-thing won't go away with movement or an idealistic new beginning, nor will this form of the orphan produce a positive transformation. Taro's hope that joining the army will rid him of the effects of anti-Japanese racism, history, and the family is one of the threads of surplus *jouissance* that structure the novel.

Okada does not limit racial anxiety to the novel's characters. The minority *Bildungsroman* as a form itself performs racial anxiety. Okada compacts the narrative's temporal dimension to show the reader the effects of racial anxiety on genre. For example, when Ichiro fills out application forms, he cannot produce a narrative of the last two years of his life; his

imprisonment, his memories, and his experiences cannot be told. Only his immediate circumstances can be recounted.[77] We only see the racial anxiety that "speaks" for the past. Critic Jinqi Ling argues that Okada had to write a war-time novel in order to secure a publisher, which may or may not be correct.[78] But what is fascinating about *No-No Boy* as a war novel is that Okada refuses to directly represent the war. The concentration camps receive similar treatment. We see little of the daily life of the camps and nothing about the war. The text severs the trauma of war to focus on the trauma of racial anxiety. The most striking demonstration of the latter is that the novel spans approximately eleven days. In that time period, Ichiro gains a best friend by day two, witnesses his mother progress from unstable to full decay to death, watches his new best friend die within hours of his own mother, secures a new lover willing to abandon her entire life for him in a matter of an evening, receives a brutal attack by his brother who also runs away, and experiences the shift of his father from drunk to community socialite after the mother dies.

While this compressed timeline might not pose a problem for a literary work ascribing to just any old genre, I believe it demonstrates how Okada insists that the genre of *Bildungsroman*, too, experiences the effects of decay. The novel is usually understood as a *Bildungsroman*, and as such it should track the development of the protagonist over a long duration. Ichiro goes on journeys, discovers new things about himself, finds himself a virtual orphan, and even finds love. Yet, as mentioned previously, this so-called *Bildungsroman* spans only eleven days. How is this possible? Okada not only shows how characters decay but also how the *Bildungsroman* decays into the minority *Bildungsroman.* The reformulation of time also serves to underscore the constructedness of the text and that its use of a style that might be thought of as social realism is part of its aesthetic system—not a document of social fact.

Section 4: The Scapegoat: Surplus Jouissance

This section describes the methods most prevalent in the novel for placating racial anxiety. Okada reveals that his characters enact defense mechanisms in order to psychically distance themselves from racial anxiety. These include socio-political assimilation, nervousness, and love. The defense maneuvers provide the characters with surplus *jouissance*, which bestows them with enough pleasure to temporarily alleviate racial anxiety. At the same time, the surplus portion of this pleasure constitutes a critical moment that reveals to the subject its own false origins—not solely from pleasure but as a defense mechanism that helps distance the subject from the "thing" of racial anxiety. Moreover, the pleasure enjoyed by the subject helps him avoid his own racialized body and the precipitation of racial anxiety. Thus, surplus *jouissance* marks the false aspects of the pleasure experienced when one is confronted with racial anxiety. In this section, I will analyze the various forms of surplus *jouissance* after providing two concrete examples. Then, I conclude with an analysis of how Okada threads multiple political discourses advocating surplus *jouissance* through the character of Emi, Ichiro's potential lover. This section aims to explain the aesthetic aspects of the seemingly overwhelmingly political discourse of the novel. I argue that Okada uses the socio-political—the expected discourse of his historical moment—in an aesthetic rather than purely political manner in order to convey a much more complex critique of social relations and racial formation than the former discourse allows for.

In the previous section, we saw how Taro feels surplus *jouissance* when he runs away from his family to join the army. He obtains pleasure from fleeing and from the removal of

familial oppressions, i.e. the dead family—but, at the same time, his raced body, which cannot be overcome by merely changing his environs, will always by definition cause him racial anxiety. Okada contrasts Taro's fleeing with the father's choice to remain with the family. He consumes copious amounts of alcohol to keep himself "numb" to the dead mother and to his own dead position. The alcohol delivers a euphoria while simultaneously crippling the father and unmasking the reasons for his drinking: the mother's object-thing and his own racial anxiety.[79] The largest concentration of surplus *jouissance*, though, permeates Ichiro's journey of minority *bildung*.

The powerful trope of the American Dream requires the destruction of an old self in place of a new identity—albeit a contingent one. Immigration requires that one "destroy(ed) the longing for a past that really must not have been as precious as (he) imagined."[80] Mr. Yamada believes that America is such a wonderful place that it is okay to forget the home country. He cannot simultaneously be homesick for Japan and love America. The American Dream makes it an imperative to relinquish the past. The poverty of the Yamadas becomes written as a narrative of empowerment and the ability to overcome obstacles in the context of the American Dream. This colonizing ideology can be seen in Kenji's logic and others who joined the "American" army: "it was because he was Japanese and, at the same time, had to prove to the world that he was not Japanese that the turmoil was in his soul and urged him to enlist."[81] Kenji's improper desires and acts call into question what the American mythos plasters over. His Japanese identity and his relationship to his parents must be suffocated. The condition of his self—both in terms of racial anxiety and of the historical past—must be relegated to the repressed. The only trace of their existence seems to arise through affect—racial anxiety that permeates Kenji's everyday life as an odd and annoying force for both him and the reader. While Cold War ideology implants the notion of assimilation and the mother enhances this with a performance of a Japanese identity, Okada develops a third option: productive surplus *jouissance* as a reaction to racial anxiety. The text, though, struggles with the manifestations of any critical affect; Okada destablizes feelings to dismantle any potential binary of good and bad emotions. An example of this occurs when Ichiro writes a postcard to Mr. Carrick turning down a wonderful job offer: "what words would transmit the bigness of his feelings to match the bigness of the heart of this American who…was continually nursing and worrying the infant America into the greatness of its inheritance?"[82] Feelings rapidly become sentimental and are deployed to validate a neonatal Cold War ideology and a new form of Nationalism that counteracts the dead mothers that populate the novel; America figures as a vital and thriving mother. The sentimental aspects of care also give rise to surplus *jouissance*.

Ichiro's whining, worrying, and wayward thinking dominates the novel. Numerous critics have discussed the political dimensions of these complaints, but I want to read them as both political and aesthetic—as instances of surplus *jouissance*. As Ichiro mopes around feeling sorry for himself, Freddie, another no-no boy, sarcastically shouts: "'You been stewin' about it for two years. How much time you need?'"[83] Freddie notices that Ichiro's "stewin" has gone on for too long and that it no longer serves the purpose of contemplating his no-no decision. Freddie's sarcasm performs the critical moment of surplus *jouissance*: Ichiro's worrying (along with his failure to breath during his numerous run-on sentences) brings him pleasure while also covering up his racial anxiety. If he can worry about his decision then he does not have to experience the bigger issue of his racialized subjectivity. Ichiro's worries keep his mind occupied because there is no solution: he "served time, two years all told, and I have been granted a full pardon. Why is it then that I am unable to convince myself that I am no different from any other American? Why

is it that, in my freedom, I feel more imprisoned in the wrongness of myself?"[84] By trying to place the blame on himself, Ichiro will never reach a more obvious solution: anti-Japanese racism. He compares himself to "other American(s)," yet he fails to account for his abject racial difference. He enjoys forgetting about race and the body because they will enact a more conscious racial anxiety.

Ichiro's obsessive whining about his so-called horrible life effectively frustrates the reader. For instance, he compares his conditions to Kenji's rotting leg and concludes that Kenji, who is doubtless going to die yet is a certified "American," is in a better position than himself. He fails to consider Kenji's pain and suffering and instead focuses solely on his own problems. Ichiro loves to worry about the state of his identity. The reader wants him to take action—to fight for himself.[85] Okada needs this impulse on the reader's part, in order to expose the powers of decay. Joseph Entin suggests a more politically attuned interpretation of Ichiro's whining: his "traumas stem not from the horrors of combat, but from the trials of incarceration and the shame and guilt he feels for his refusal to enlist."[86] On the surface, Ichiro consumes himself with this worry, but, as I have shown, this worrying is simply a form of surplus *jouissance*. It is a way to repress or temporarily negate his racial anxiety.

Within Ichiro's whining/surplus *jouissance*, Okada articulates a critical truth. Ichiro informs Kenji about being a decaying/dead subject: "I wasn't in the army, Ken. I was in jail. I'm a no-no boy."[87] The pleasure of interpellating himself as the most abject of the abject contains a nugget of truth that demonstrates the lie of the perlocution. Ichiro literally embodies "no;" he is not American and he is not Japanese. He is formless and lacks a subject position that he determines. Okada bolsters this idea of formlessness when Ichiro drunkenly cries to Kenji: "I'm not even a son of a bitch. I'm nobody, nothing. Just plain nothing."[88] Embedded within these perlocutions and the title of the novel, Okada demonstrates the impossibility of the Japanese American subject. The subjectivity represented at the beginning of the novel must be read as a product of the fictions of social construction and creative writing. The form of the novel must undoubtedly transform from being the language of the social to the language of formless "Japanese Americans." This subtle shift in language and the reinterpretation of narrative devices will be explored in the next section. But what other forms of surplus *jouissance* help Okada craft an "Asian American" literary style?

Serving in the armed forces substantiates citizenship and masculinity, but at the same time, the surplus *jouissance* of serving and of political assimilation expose the work of ideology on the psyche. For Ichiro, being a veteran "gives you the right to hold your head high" because fighting in the war offered an official political and social stamping of American citizenship onto the Japanese body.[89] Ichiro wrongly believes that: "thousand[s] chose to fight for the right to continue to be Americans because homes and cars and money could be regained but only if they first regained their rights as citizens, and that was everything."[90] The politics of citizenship is a well-studied field, so I will focus instead on the surplus *jouissance* of citizenship.

The psychic need for the external world to "authenticate" Ichiro assumes two things: first, that Japanese American identity is malleable and rewritable and second, that the dominant social ideology helps to socially construct raced bodies. And it is not just the dominant social that does the writing but its agents—including the dead mother, the military complex, and ordinary actors. In the latter two cases, Ichiro becomes hysterical when confronted by a "young Japanese [waiter] who had to wear a discharge button on his shirt to prove to everyone who came in [to the diner] that he was a top-flight American."[91] The metal button itself seems imbued with the power to traumatize and to write Ichiro as non-citizen. Even Kenji's stump seems to possess the power to

rewrite Ichiro as the abject non-citizen. Ichiro imagines: "Kenji could still hope. A leg more or less wasn't important when compared with himself, Ichiro, who was strong and perfect but only an empty shell. He would have given both legs to change places with Kenji."[92] Again the images or representatives of the war seem to code Ichiro as non-citizen. Okada, I believe, emphasizes the write-ability of the Japanese American subject to reveal that Ichiro, and Japanese Americans more generally, have relinquished the ability to author themselves. The critical moments of racial anxiety and surplus *jouissance* perform for the reader the fact that subjectivity is flexible and can be recoded.

Obssessing over his failure to "love" America becomes a fundamental technique for Ichiro's avoidance of racial anxiety. By fantasizing about loving America in the correct "American" way, Ichiro defends himself from the racial anxiety that ensues from not "loving." As he dances with Emi, he blames his bad attitude for his socio-political position: "There's no trouble to be had without looking for it…no bad feelings except for those that have always existed and probably always will. It's a matter of attitude. Mine needs changing. I've got to love the world the way I used to. I've got to love it and the people so I'll feel good, and feeling good will make life worth while…I want only to go on living and be happy. I've only to let myself do so."[93] This moment figures as a Joycean epiphany. Ichiro extracts pleasure from believing that he has figured out a great clue to his life. Loving the world seems fairly benign, but because Ichiro wants to love it as he did before, he neglects that the world has radically transformed, that his love has changed, and most importantly that anti-Japanese racism existed and flourished even in the "good" days of the past. Moreover, surplus *jouissance* reveals that a static model of love is not emancipatory but rather inhibits the dynamic aspects of care. Utopian love also acts as a form of surplus *jouissance* to cover over the realities of racism.

Kenji has a utopian hope that a common struggle among the oppressed will unite them to overcome their collective oppressions. He yearns for a relationship of the oppressed: "one hears the voice of the Negro or Japanese or Chinese or Jew, a clear and bell-like intonation of the common struggle for recognition as a complete human being and there is a sense of unity and purpose which inspires one to hope and optimism."[94] The novel retains as a source of surplus *jouissance* the Marxist notion of the proletariat uprising. Kenji desires social harmony not via assimilation but through a collective identity. But within the pleasure of this imagined unity, Kenji tastes the bitterness of the false pleasure: racism structures the relationships between minority groups as antagonistic. After two African Americans are refused entry into the Club Oriental, Kenji encounters the false reality of his dreams. He presents an extensive list of inter-minority discrimination.[95] The reality of racism shatters Kenji's fantasy of a social utopia, while Ichiro's own, less ambitious, form of social utopia is less about social harmony than about how he can fit into the social fabric so as not to create any disruptions.

The ideas of forgiving and forgetting occupy a large portion of Ichiro's defense against racial anxiety. He eagerly awaits the moment when "people forgot and, in forgetting, forgave. Time would ease the rupture which now separated him from the young Japanese who were Americans because they had fought for America…in time, there will again be a place for me."[96] Ichiro needs time to decay the memories and prejudices of people. He gains pleasure in this idea that other people will eventually forgive him for his "treasonous" decisions. This decay of memory is not just the typical generational struggle between the older and younger but it is Ichiro's peer group that must forget. Yet even within this moment of patience, Okada places a small critical moment in Ichiro's pleasure to show how it is false pleasure. While Ichiro waits for his peers to forget, he keeps the memory of his "treason" fresh and pristine: "the trouble was

inside of him and time would not soften that."[97] Even if the social forgets and forgives the no-no boys, Ichiro will not perform either action. He keeps the memory alive and he refuses to forgive himself. His self-tormenting will consequently always keep open the "rupture" between himself and other Japanese Americans. Thus, he undoes his own pleasure of wanting others to forgive and forget. The novel continues to play with the idea of time—here, as an apparent healer that, in truth, sustains Ichiro's unrelinquished kernel of decay—as a means of defense against racial anxiety.

Ichiro dreams of another time (and another social context) that would idyllically reduce, or even completely mitigate, racial anxiety. Okada begins the Preface with an homage to Japanese Americans from white Americans. He narrates how whites appreciated the Japanese Americans before the war for their small acts of "kindness." A few examples include how a Japanese American landlord dragged a drunk to bed even though he owed many weeks in back rent, how a white whore appreciated the "hot and fast" Japanese men, and how a white businessman enjoyed haggling with Japanese American merchants.[98] The time before the bombing of Pearl Harbor becomes a nostalgic period of seemingly minimal anti-Japanese racism. The entering into war seems to be the cause of racial anxiety, and by consequence, the country of Japan appears to be responsible for the up-surge of racism towards Japanese Americans. This nostalgia completely obscures the (white) American origins of anti-Japanese racism and its long historical legacy in the United States. Okada tempts the reader into gaining pleasure by remembering a "better" past free of anti-Japanese racism. Yet, history provides the critical apparatus to dispel the myth of a pre-war America devoid of anti-Japanese racism. Deflecting blame is a common source of surplus *jouissance*. The father who blames himself pursues another form of surplus joussiance after the mother's death.

The mother's death is a source of surplus *jouissance* for the father. After the mother dies, the father radically transforms from a drunken, submissive figure into a lively, energetic man. The father appears "to be enjoying himself" and "unable to suppress a pleased grin" during the mother's funeral.[99] Ichiro, on the other hand, feels "disgust" for his father's elation.[100] He cannot stand his father's excitation and vitality now that the mother has died; he cannot understand the father's surplus *jouissance*. The father is not happy that the mother is dead but that his grief over her sickness has ended. He asks Ichiro: "the grief has finally come to an end for you? It has for me in a way, her being gone. We'll have to talk about it."[101] The father celebrates the end of the dead mother but he also celebrates not having to be a dead father. He can now assimilate with the mother out of the way. He even appropriates the discourse of the good, American father by wanting to talk with Ichiro about his feelings, etc., like Kenji's father and like the missionary in the concentration camp. The father may be enjoying not being a dead father, but he is also celebrating his own decay of subjectivity into an assimilated Japanese American subject. Ichiro's skepticism marks the irony inherent in this exchange of the dead father for a happy, assimilated father—as well as that inherent in two differing types of surplus *jouissance* (Ichiro's angst-ridden form and his father's elated kind) encountering one another. Okada further elaborates the structure of surplus *jouissance* and its requirements in the figure of Emi.

Okada critiques the Cold War notion of the curative and normalizing powers of the heterosexual nuclear family via the character of Emi. She offers, in an aggressive fashion, the lures of normality that drive Ichiro's desires. As critic Jodi Kim argues, Asian American literary works are "constituted by the Cold War but dialectically critique their very constitution; Asian American cultural texts and productions are critical Cold War compositions that confound the Manichaean logics of official nationalist Cold War histories, epistemologies, and ontologies."[102]

In this vein, we should read *No-No Boy* as a form of critique of Cold War ideologies while also accepting these veils. Emi wants Ichiro to also accept the life defined by hegemonic culture, but Okada critiques her every utterance. Her fertile body and discourse—what Althusser would term an Ideological State Apparatus—force Ichiro to gain pleasure from an alignment with ideological behaviors and thinking. But with the rejection of Emi, Okada performs the critical moment of surplus *jouissance* to expose how ideology delivers false pleasure. Through Emi, Okada exposes how heterosexual love and care serve as forms of surplus *jouissance*.

Emi wields love as a tool to accomplish her goal: Ichiro's assimilation. I term this "phallic" love because the actions implemented under the aegis of "love" are actually instrumental forms of coercion that seek to achieve an ideological goal. In the next section, I will present Okada's response to phallic love. For example, Emi overtly defines the concept of love for Ichiro. She claims that. "love is not something you save and hoard. You're born with it and you spend it when you have to and there's always more because you're a woman and there's always suffering and pain and gentleness and sadness to make it grow."[103] She begins with an almost beautiful definition of love as boundless, but encases her ideas in economic terms such as "save," "hoard," spend it," "always more," "to make it grow." For Emi, love must be spent in order to gain purchase on something; love is exchange value. When love—apparently both quantifiable and limited in quantity—runs out, the labor of "suffering and pain" creates more love—"make[s] it grow." Emi even indicates, despite her claims otherwise, that love is "spent" "when you have to"—that, in fact, it would be preferable to hoard love, were one not compelled by necessity to expend it. Her shift to the second-person basically attributes womanhood to Ichiro; he becomes the woman and Emi occupies the space of the man. She legitimates wielding phallic love.

Emi gains pleasure from phallic love, but she also fails to experience a more authentic, less exchange value-based/economic love. She even orders Kenji to return home to exchange his presence for phallic love: "'Go home and see your father and your brothers and sisters.'"[104] Emi does love Kenji, but she deploys phallic love as a form of surplus *jouissance*. She uses love with specific parameters regarding how to experience it. Kenji must exchange his body for love with his family. While he may indeed express his care for them by visiting and sharing in conversation, Emi insists, by using an imperative construction, on how exactly to love and care. His visit home becomes instrumental and a requirement rather than an act of care without the worries of duty or of meeting social expectations. While critic Ling calls Emi "a benevolent woman of profound moral compassion," her love and compassion exist only under certain conditions.[105]

Emi's care also exhibits the signs of phallic love and surplus *jouissance*. As she attempts to care for Ichiro, she occupies the space of empathy: "'I put myself in your place and I know how you feel. It's a very hopeless sort of feeling.'"[106] Even though Emi attempts to care for Ichiro by figuring out what he is feeling, she proclaims: "I know how you feel." She cuts off Ichiro's individuality by occupying it herself and then defining it to him. She assumes ("knows") that she has the correct feeling and she produces a final judgment of it as "very hopeless." In an attempt to comfort Ichiro's "hopeless[ness]," she evokes not a form of true care but phallic care that masks the Cold War project of assimilation. She tells him: "this is a big country with a big heart. There's room her for all kinds of people."[107] She continues by instructing Ichiro to "be intelligent. Admit your mistake and do something about it." Care, for Emi, is tantamount to following and propagating the propaganda of the American Dream and following the dictates of the mother with "a big heart." When Ichiro rejects her imperative to "admit your mistake" (and

thus forget about anti-Japanese racism by attributing his imprisonment to his mistake), she douses him with more ideological babble: "I can remember how full I used to get with pride and patriotism when we sang 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and pledge allegiance to the flag at school assemblies, and *that's the feeling you've got to have*."[108]

In essence, Emi tries to assist Ichiro in overcoming his period of mourning, but she does so by dictating the structure of his emotional sphere. She prescribes a moment in the past for him to mimic. He must adopt this "American" love and she forces him to align his entire subjectivity with this hegemonic feeling. Because Ichiro does not agree with this feeling, Emi further manipulates him with her care. She reiterates how Ichiro must feel: "'That's how you've got to feel, so big that the bigness seems to want to bust out, and then you'll understand why it is that your mistake was no bigger than the mistake your country made."[109] Emi demands that Ichiro forgive the government for the concentration camps and his imprisonment because they forgave and then released him (after false imprisonment): "'they admit [their mistake] by letting you run around loose.'"[110] She describes him like an animal that runs "loose" but can (and perhaps, if he doesn't straighten up, should) be caged at any moment. Her arguments discount race and Ichiro's struggle to locate a positive racial space and identity within a hegemonically constructed social dominated by anti-Japanese racism. Emi permits Ichiro to receive pleasure from assimilating and accepting her ideology, but a critical moment in her discourse of surplus *jouissance* reveals how she (as the representative of the socio-political) forecloses the possibility of a discussion of alternative routes of healing. Her phallic care limits Ichiro to just one route unless he prefers to be like the dead mother. Although critics such as Jeanne Sokolowski may argue that Emi "offers him a theory of citizenship that necessitates an imaginative regeneration of the nation-citizen relationship,"—that offer comes with many string attached.[111]

Emi further confines Ichiro's imagination by rejecting the possibility of double consciousness. When Ichiro becomes slightly critical of his subject position, Emi truncates his readings and thus in part preemptively defines Ichiro. For example, he begins to question the origins of his no-no boy status: "'I've ruined my life and I want to know what it is that made me do it. I'm not sick like them. I'm not crazy like Ma…but I must have been.'" Emi responds: "'It's because we're American and because we're Japanese and sometimes the two don't mix…you had to be one or the other.'"[112] Emi denies the possibility of double consciousness; Ichiro can only be a non-racialized American or a fully racialized immigrant Japanese. There is no room for a Japanese American with two heritages. Emi conveys Cold War nationalism while simultaneously forgetting that Italian Americans, Polish Americans, Welsh Americans, etc., all exist without contradiction. Those with a more Caucasian phenotype can negotiate dual heritages. Even African Americans seem able to occupy two consciousnesses successfully in the novel. But Emi's declaration sweeps the historical situation of Asian Americans under the rug. Ichiro cannot retain his Japanese heritage if he wants to be an American—if the reader agrees to believe Emi's perspective.

Okada transmits the voice of anti-Asian racism and of assimilation in the guise of care, albeit phallic care. Emi is a figure to be mistrusted. Okada never intends the reader to accept Emi's advice. The introduction of her character is surrounded with warnings. As Kenji brings Ichiro to Emi's house, Okada describes Emi with the odd praise that, "her long legs were strong and shapely like a white woman's."[113] By aligning Emi with whiteness, Okada helps the reader decipher how to read Emi's care as phallic and prompts him to be on the lookout for the critical aspects of her care. Consequently, Emi cannot offer a "provisional resolution of Ichiro's

emotional suffering" as critic Jinqi Ling argues.[114] But Okada offers a host of characters who do seem like they can help Ichiro in his recovery.

The constellation of male characters in the novel present what literary critic David Eng might term forms of racial castration: Asian American men—or white men who sympathize with Asian American men—who cannot assert a masculine identity in an anti-Asian racist world.[115] While Freddie cannot assert himself and eventually this impotence leads him to suicide, Mr. Kanno, Kenji's father, seems to offer a form of feminine care that might be without restrictions. This contrasts with Emi's phallic care. Each of their offers of care expresses surplus *jouissance* in addition to some form of nurturance. Mr. Kanno internalizes the advice of the sociologist who proselytized in the concentration camp about immigrant parents and second-generation children getting "to know each other" as immigrants with different cultures within the same family.[116] Implicit within this assimilation narrative is the burden on the parents to identify themselves as other and foreign and the children as normal and "American-ish." The two must position themselves as polar opposites while knowing that they are also part of the other.

Mr. Kanno, for example, performs the assimilated other-parent and the understanding parent to the other-child: "they laughed together comfortably, the father because he loved his son and the son because he both loved and respected his father."[117] This stylized encounter of the "American" family includes a trace of assimilation: "he both loved and respected his father." The addition of respected marks the saccharine sentence as foreign. By default, the (white) American child "loves" but it is the immigrant child from a non-Christian religion that "respects" parents. Besides playing the role of both parents due to the death of his wife, Mr. Kanno continues the dead mother complex, simply in disguise. As Kenji and the father respect one another, Mr. Kanno "noticing [Kenji's pain], …screwed his face as if the pain were in himself, for it was."[118] Before the dependent clause, the situation could be read as a form of empathy that assumedly all people who are close possess. But Okada deliberately literalizes the location of the pain as inside Mr. Kanno. The description of the pain inside of Mr. Kanno as a conduit to Kenji mirrors Mrs. Yamada's "thing" connection to Ichiro. Mr. Kanno offers phallic care just like Emi. Without a doubt he offers care—but, unfortunately, a form of care that has been prescribed, literally by a sociologist.

Mr. Carrick, too, gives phallic care. He empathizes with Ichiro and the plight of the Japanese and also offers Ichiro a form of reparation for the actions of the U.S. government via a higher-than-deserved salary for an entry-level engineering position. It is only after discovering that Ichiro was not a veteran but a no-no boy that Mr. Carrick offers the inflated wages. The job and wages assuage his guilt, i.e. this care comes with an implicit exchange. Even though Carrick is presented in the context of the manager of an engineering firm, Okada aligns him with the feminine. He behaves like Emi and Ichiro frames him as "good and gentle and just, [in whom] there still beat a heart of kindness and patience and forgiveness."[119] Besides phallic care, Ichiro derives surplus *jouissance* from his encounter with Carrick. He feels the "forgiveness" of America, which does not actually exist. He wants to believe the rhetoric of the Cold War and it does provide pleasure—just more false pleasure. Both Mr. Kanno and Mr. Carrick gain surplus *jouissance* by offering phallic care. They both help, but only under certain conditions. Surplus jouissance is also derived from the agglutinative language in this sentence—and in the many run-on sentences that Ichiro either thinks or speaks. The "and's" produce a rushing, nervous sound like it's hurrying to cover up something with a deluge of verbiage. The combinations of meanings reflects both an homage to Japanese, an agglutinative language, and Ichiro's need to

quell racial anxiety. The uselessness of phallic care and his need for feminine care must be suppressed. The agglutinative language accomplishes both.

After being inundated with forms of surplus *jouissance*, Ichiro begins to locate the critical moment in the surplus *jouissance* of the American Dream. In a fit of rage, he begins to question how the American Dream brings real pleasure for Japanese Americans. He asks in an aggressive manner: "where is that place they talk of…with the clean, white cottages surrounding the new, red-brick church with the clean, white steeple, where the families all have two children…and a shiny new car in the garage…and life is like living in the land of the happily-ever-after? Surely it must be around here someplace, someplace in America. Or is it just that it's not for me?"[120] Ichiro finally begins to examine how his pleasure does not provide him with authentic happiness. He contrasts the reality of his experience of America with the fantasy of America provided by an unknown "they," realizing that his fantasies and desires pursue a false reality. It is only the pleasure of those desires that he receives.

As he experiences the false pleasure of the American Dream, he begins to have an epiphany: "maybe the whole damned country is pushing and shoving and screaming to get into someplace that doesn't exist."[121] He exposes how it is merely surplus *jouissance* that everyone is chasing rather than an actual reality. This realization aids him in dismissing the role of his own agency and his mother in the entire no-no boy fiasco: "it wasn't his fault. Neither was it the fault of his mother."[122] Within the pleasure of Cold War ideology, Ichiro locates how the pleasures of assimilation and forgetting and forgiving America are all false pleasures that cover up a world, including his very own subjectivity, that is organized and structured by anti-Japanese racism. In this state of formlessness—of having relinquished any notion of an "American" identity, Ichiro now begins his final journey of the novel: his second mirror stage.

Section 5: The Final Performance: A Second Mirror Stage

No-No Boy refuses to allow Ichiro the option of death but instead insists on a specific form of decay.[123] Freddie, another no-no boy, illustrates an alternative form of decay. He refuses to work, sleeps with his married neighbor, stabs another person outside a bar, and assaults a pool hall manager with the pool balls, to name a few manifestations of his personal decay. These moral, social, and political transgressions do not lead to a second mirror stage, but instead culminate in Freddie's death. The mother's death further complicates the idea of decay. She becomes delusional and rejects the outcome of the war. By identifying with an ideal of Japanese preeminence instead of becoming an immigrant or American, she falls into a psychological decay. Thus, mental decay forecloses the possibility of a second mirror stage. Kenji, on the other hand, is a love object who dies on the fifth day of the novel.[124] With a gangrenous leg, there is no option for him but death. Okada needs Kenji to die because a homosexual love would not be socially or aesthetically acceptable—at least if performed by "living" characters; we will see that only when Kenji is dead and Ichiro lacks an ego or being can Okada actualize a homosexual relationship. Besides functioning as a potential love object for Ichiro, Kenji also advocates the transgression of other love bonds: miscegenation. He implores Ichiro to marry outside their race: "go someplace where there isn't another Jap within a thousand miles. Marry a white girl or a Negro or an Italian or even a Chinese. Anything but a Japanese. After a few generations of that, you've got the thing beat."[125] Kenji's advice cuts across social norms and the contemporary laws of most states. Taken to its logical conclusion, Kenji suggests a model of decay such that over

time the ethnicity of Ichiro's kin will be unrecognizable; this would help free Ichiro from racial anxiety if race is eradicated. Besides giving socially transgressive advice, Kenji models a mode of life extricated from racial anxiety.

Kenji performs the loving mother while simultaneously functioning as lover. When Ichiro whines about his predicament, Kenji severs this mental torture. Note how this compares to Emi's truncation of Ichiro's whining; she attempts to stop his whining and make him accept assimilation. Kenji begins by telling Ichiro: "'Don't blame yourself…blame the world, the Japs, the Germans. But not yourself. You're killing yourself.'"[126] This form of decay is not what the novel demands. Rather than allow Ichiro to lose the will to live, Kenji intervenes. While on the one hand Ichiro might pursue his own journey of resolution, Kenji demonstrates that the problem is social and requires others to participate in its resolution. Ichiro notices this quality when he befriends Kenji: "Ichiro felt drawn to the soft-spoken veteran who voluntarily spoke of things that the battle-wise and battle-scarred were thought not to discuss because they had been through hell and hell was not a thing which a man kept alive in himself."[127] In comparison to the "thing" of the mother, we see that Kenji does not possess such a thing—even though veterans seem to have some version of the thing via war. Kenji openly shares his experiences rather than keeping them repressed (into a "thing"). Kenji is transparent and gives Ichiro the option to locate the truth rather than enact Emi's demands to avoid the truth and to assimilate. Moreover, in Ichiro's interactions with Kenji, Okada hints at Ichiro's attraction to feminine *jouissance*—what will become his secondary narcissism in the second mirror stage.

Emi performs care with restrictions and Kenji performs care without restrictions, and it is this that defines the former as phallic *jouissance* and the latter as feminine *jouissance*. For example, Kenji notices that Ichiro wants to join in a card game but lacks the funds. He gives Ichiro money so that he can enjoy himself. Kenji does not tell Ichiro to play nor does Kenji insist that Ichiro not.[128] While Emi wants Ichiro to assimilate and eventually start a new life with her, Kenji does not put restrictions on the friendship or gift of money. Later that same evening Kenji, who is one-legged and supposedly feeble, rescues Ichiro from an ambush arranged by Taro, Ichiro's brother. Afterwards Kenji notices that Ichiro is tormented by his own thoughts of being a no-no boy. He responds by figuring out what Ichiro needs. Kenji asks if Ichiro's head hurts, if he wants a drink, and if driving fast bothers him. In the end, Kenji brings Ichiro to Emi's house for the intimacy that he cannot deliver.[129] Because Okada bars male-male sexual relations, Emi becomes Kenji's substitute.

Even though Emi desires Kenji because of Ichiro's resemblance to her husband, who served with Kenji in the war, Kenji cannot sexually perform. He tells Ichiro: "'I'm only half a man, Ichiro, and when my leg starts aching, even that half is no good.'" Ichiro realizes that Kenji brought him to Emi's house for a sexual encounter. Kenji tells Ichiro: "'She needs you…no, I should say she needs someone. Just like you need someone. Just like I need someone sometimes.'"[130] Whatever Emi's needs might be, Kenji and Ichiro cannot physically bond after a night of ecstatic emotional bonding; they have become close friends only after a day! It is truly a Romeo and Juliet situation of love at first sight. As Ichiro is instructed to go upstairs to be with Emi, he confronts Kenji's desires: "'So you're sending in a substitute, is that it?'"[131] While one reading supports the views that Ichiro substitutes for Kenji, the context of the evening seems to suggest that Emi substitutes for Kenji. Okada dramatizes this reading by inserting two additional key details. First, Ichiro thinks: "if Kenji had said another word…he would have snatched the keys and rushed out."[132] Clearly he is upset about not getting to have sex with Kenji. Otherwise, there would be no reason that Ichiro, who has already boasted of a slightly promiscuous sexual

life (sleeping with a redhead in college, e.g.) and who hasn't had sex with a woman for many years, would rush away from a beautiful and sexually receptive woman. He pouts because he cannot have Kenji. Second, as Ichiro walks to Emi's room he turns back to look at Kenji: "walking up to the partly open door, Ichiro paused and glanced back at Kenji."[133] This last-minute gaze could be Ichiro turning to Kenji for support or could be a romantic gesture of unfulfilled longing, the look given to a lover before heading out into the world. My queer reading would be weak if Okada did not weave an interesting set of scenes here. Emi refuses to let Ichiro turn on the lights in the bedroom when he enters. He never sees Emi. Their encounter is purely physical, with Kenji as the last image in Ichiro's mind. In addition, the text makes it ambiguous whether or not Ichiro and Emi have sex, since the scene ends with Ichiro crying on Emi's breast. More interesting, though, is that the next morning the first person Ichiro sees is Kenji sleeping on the couch. Emi slipped out of bed early to begin work out in the garden. The elimination of Emi from the visual sexual plane and the need to keep a continuous image of Kenji in Ichiro's mind reinforces the idea that Ichiro desired Kenji in bed. This reading, while not addressed by other critics, seems to parallel their observations about Ichiro's fascination with Kenji's visible 'phallus.' Daniel Kim and Viet Nguyen both draw attention to Ichiro's obsession with Kenji's gangrenous leg. Kim plays off of Ichiro's asking Kenji "whose is bigger" (meaning their wound but talking about the leg) while Nguyen frames the leg as a "phallus." In both cases, Okada does not hide Ichiro's sexual desire for Kenji, but he does bar the act from the novel. This act of denial is just another means of discarding Ichiro's identities.

The title of the novel alludes to the process of disintegration that concerns Ichiro's journey. Besides the erasure of homosexual desires, Ichiro becomes formless in a variety of encounters with racial anxiety. In one of the many moments concerning his national identity, Ichiro makes it clear that he "was neither Japanese nor American because he had failed to recognize the gift of his birthright when recognition meant everything."[134] We see that Ichiro lacks a socio-political identity save being the abject no-no boy. Even though he was born in America, Ichiro realizes that the condition of being/looking Asian negates a viable socio-political position. The novel begins with a socially formless Ichiro. As he steps off of the bus in Seattle he is socially invisible to most whites and to African Americans. To other Japanese Americans his two years in prison mark him as a non-American and too much Japanese. Moreover, the racial anxiety from being this "too" Japanese prevents Ichiro from becoming a hybrid subject. Being a hyphenated American is not possible because Ichiro is stuck in racial anxiety. In this way, Ichiro has already relinquished his ethnic and national identities. At a local level, Ichiro, too, embraces his formlessness. He can be neither a friend nor a son because as he whines to Kenji: "'I'm not even a son of a bitch. I'm nobody, nothing. Just plain nothing…I got no right to let you be my friend.'"[135] Ichiro does not see himself as constituting an identity capable of friendships and Okada has barred Ichiro from being a homosexual. He appears to have shed the identity of friend and lover on his path to formlessness.

Okada parallels Ichiro's disintegration with his becoming an orphan. Taro, his brother, attempts to injure if not kill Ichiro and then abandons the family, Mrs. Yamada passes away in a fit of insanity, Mr. Yamada joins his assimilated friends and abandon's Ichiro, his one old friend, Freddie, dies, and his new lover-friend, Kenji, also dies. Nearing a state of formlessness, Okada begins to offer Ichiro potential solutions to being an orphan. The first is to present Ichiro as a wiser person who is ready to begin a new life, without emotional baggage. Okada plays with this Cold War message of assimilation in a blatantly sarcastic tone. In describing Ichiro the day before Freddie's death, he writes: "he was young still, but a little wise. Perhaps he was a bit more

settled in heart and mind."[136] On the surface Okada suggests that Ichiro approaches a state of resolve—as would be expected if Ichiro were to begin the process of assimilation. Yet, two factors prevent this reading of hope. First, this line closes the chapter before the last chapter in the novel, where Freddie mentally snaps and dies after getting into a bar fight. The final chapter crushes this sense of hope. Second, we have seen Okada compresses the temporal domain within the novel. While Ichiro's augmentation in wisdom might be believable a few years after returning from prison and dealing with his losses and orphan status, this evaluation occurs on either day 8 or 9 of the novel. While epiphanies do occur, Stephen Daedalus required an entire adolescence and a few years into adulthood to reach any insights into himself and the world. The line is pure absurdity.

Okada models another rebirth based upon the ideal of inner peace. Gary, another no-no boy, paints signs for the Christian Reclamation Center. Freddie describes the center as "a big junkyard and the place is fulla drunks and dead beats and homos."[137] Gary insists that painting gives him tranquility. At first, Gary's story of rebirth fascinates Ichiro who has had the opposite experience: "It was good, the years I [Gary] rotted in prison. I got the lead out of my ass and the talk out of my system. I died in prison. And when I came back to life, all that really mattered for me was to make a painting."[138] Ichiro is drawn to this idealized rebirth. He experienced anxiety and despair in prison so Gary's uplifting transformation appeals to Ichiro. He then proceeds to verify Gary's transformation by checking for the typical trace sign of racial anxiety: "he looked deep into his friend's eyes to detect the fear and loneliness and bitterness that ought to have been there and saw only the placidness reflected in the soft, gentle smile."[139] But, Okada reveals two flaws in Gary's theory of rebirth. While Ichiro seems not to detect racial anxiety in Gary, Okada has Gary tell Ichiro otherwise: "as I've said, I feel like a guy that's come back from the dead. Living on borrowed time, you know. Makes one a bit *anxious*, of course, but there's a peace about it that takes away all the ordinary fears of getting hurt or dying."[140] Racial anxiety continues to plague Gary. He manages it by enjoying his surplus *jouissance*: the idea of peace and happiness. Instead of experiencing racial anxiety, Gary feels at "peace" because his happy outlook represses "getting hurt or dying." Second, Gary is a miser. He has not rejoined society. Upon returning home, supposedly reborn and at peace, he could not communicate or tolerate socializing with his family; he tells Ichiro that "old friends are now strangers. I've no one to talk to and no desire to talk, for I have nothing to say."[141] Like Ralph Ellison's invisible man, Gary has entered a state of miserly hibernation. He refuses to socialize, "I'm just forgetting how to be sociable." [142] Okada's second mirror stage demands sociability and a return to the social world. This hibernation and surplus *jouissance* beguile Ichiro into believing that Gary achieved a rebirth.

Okada continues the fantasy of rebirths by presenting Kenji as a role model to emulate. Instead of assimilating along the lines of Emi's Cold War ideology or becoming a miser like Gary, Ichiro begins to adopt Kenji's philosophy. When Freddie spirals out of control due to racial anxiety—like Ichiro for most of the novel, Ichiro notices that Freddie "sought relief in total, hateful rejection of self and family and society." Ichiro assumes Kenji's calm and caring demeanor by feeling sympathy for Freddie and noticing the effects of racial anxiety. Ichiro offers to the crazed Freddie: "we can go to my place…[to] Talk."[143] This parallels Kenji's offer to talk with an outraged Ichiro and the two offers even occur in the same context: a car ride after a brutal encounter with a formerly positive institution (a pool hall and the university, for Freddie and Ichiro, respectively). Ichiro moves from the position of angry no-no boy to the "wise" counselor. This abrupt shift in personality just isn't believable nor possible, but it does reinforce

the notion that re-entering society is a requirement for the minority *Bildungsroman*. Ichiro intervenes in part because Freddie rejects "self and family and society." Family and friends are vital elements for the second mirror stage.

Sociability is important for Okada because social bonds comprise the fabric of formlessness. They must be retained and nurtured. Gary, as mentioned above, and Freddie can reject sociality because of surplus *jouissance*. Gary relies on his painting and the Christian Rehabilitation Center as sources of "social" affirmation and pleasure. A dedication to painting channels the notion of how a vocation provides fulfillment, especially in an era of increased university training via veterans utilizing the GI bill. The Center, a social institution even for misfits, shelters Freddie from his abject position and supports his reclusion beyond the domains of the junkyard. The surplus *jouissance* Gary derives from a vocation of painting and church employment mitigate his experiences of racial anxiety and of sociality. Freddie, on the other hand, lacks a career but does inhabit a pseudo-social sphere. He "socializes" with his neighbor's wife, i.e. they have sex, and many people at various bars. In the previous scene Freddie interacts with others via fighting with a bar manager. He does not befriend people but engages in aggressive behavior at the many venues he frequents. This leads Ichiro to conclude that: "on the surface, there was wit…and even a rough sort of charm, but one made a mistake in probing underneath…it was like being on a pair of water skis, skimming over the top as long as one traveled at a reasonable speed, but, the moment he slowed down or stopped, it was to sink into the nothingness that offered no real support."[144] This extended insight reveals how Freddie gains surplus *jouissance* by appearing to be social through his many social engagements. Instead, Okada points out how this false sociability—fighting—reveals the lack of any true social bonds. Freddie literally moves so quickly from place to place to gather more surplus *jouissance*. He needs to move, like on skis, otherwise the racial anxiety that he attempts to repress will swallow him. His anger and his frequent travels keep him believing that he has social bonds. As Okada tells the reader, surplus *jouissance* is "nothingness." Ichiro learns that surplus *jouissance* delivers a temporary and false solution to racial anxiety.

Ichiro continues to move closer to formlessness and the second mirror stage as he deals with the past and identifies racial anxiety as a socio-political rather than a purely psycho-social issue. The dead mother and the "thing" she implanted in Ichiro plague him long before the opening of the novel—in fact it began when he became a subject in the first mirror stage. Throughout the novel Ichiro seeks to rid himself of his inferior "Japanese" past. Whether through assimilation or the elimination of characters who constitute his past and present, the novel enacts Ichiro's desire to be extricated from the past. Eventually Ichiro demarcates between racial anxiety and racial history. While Ichiro would like to abort his family and his racial status, he realizes that "a man does not start totally anew because he is already old by virtue of having lived and laughed and cried for twenty…years and there is no way to destroy them [his family] without destroying life itself."[145] Thus, Ichiro learns that the past, including his choice or no-choice to be a no-no boy, cannot be and should not be repressed. This positive historical connection allows Okada to foreshadow the importance of formlessness and its contents: cultural and personal history. Ichiro cannot slip into formlessness if he has dismissed his own history, i.e. he would be foreclosing the condition of becoming formless.

In his journey to formlessness, Ichiro learns to stop blaming himself for his condition. Learning from Kenji, Ichiro begins to comprehend the concept of social construction. Early in the novel Kenji assuages his father's guilt for his lost leg by revealing the socio-political nature of war: "you're not to blame, Pop...I know you're blaming yourself. Don't do it. Nobody's to

blame, nobody.'"[146] Okada informs the reader that "nobody's to blame" not to ease the guilt of the father, but to point to the socio-political structures that created the situation. Okada wants the reader to envision a more complex notion of agency and of anti-Asian racism. At the local level Kenji chose to enter the army instead of remaining a prisoner; Ichiro chose to honor his mother instead of obeying social mandates. In both situations, Okada reveals that any personal decision must consider the influence of much larger structures—beyond the individual, family, or racial community/prison camp. These socio-political factors contribute to Kenji's "decision" to enlist in the war. Cultural pressures, political forces, social practices, etc. all participate in what is known as "individual" choice and Okada exposes their invisible hands by having Kenji acknowledge their presence as the "nobody's." In time, Ichiro acquires this same knowledge. Towards the end of the novel, he realizes that "it wasn't his fault [saying no-no to the judge]. Neither was it the fault of his mother."[147] Ichiro begins to piece together how anti-Japanese racism at the socio-political level registers on the psycho-social level. The dead mother complex is a manifestation of that transformation and his mother, his dead mother, cannot be blamed for the anti-Japanese racism that has constructed him as a subject. The mother's thing, while a psycho-social phenomenon comes from a different sphere of life, the socio-political. In this way, Ichiro can embrace not only the complexity of "his" choice but he also understands how anti-Japanese racism manages to be attributed to specific people rather than to itself. Moreover, Ichiro can begin to love his psychically dead mother and emasculated father. This helps him discard his identity based upon anger and playing the victim. In relinquishing his whining personality that has plagued the novel, he begins to enter a state of formlessness.

The second mirror stage begins as Ichiro relinquishes his final identity. After discarding his family, save as a memory, Kenji, Emi, Gary, Mr. Carrick, and even distancing himself emotionally from Freddie, Ichiro begins to confront racial anxiety and initiates the second mirror stage. Okada represents this journey as a form of Kierkegaard's leap of faith. Kenji offers a way of confronting racial anxiety: miscegenation. He tells Ichiro to marry outside of the race and defy social norms. But, this transgression of social and legal laws only contradicts the socio-political order. While this act of "resistance" against social conventions would result in Ichiro and his wife's ostracism from most cultural institutions, the outcome is predictable. They would suffer but again they could anticipate the retributions. A leap of faith for Kierkegaard requires a transgression against God or life itself. In this case, racial anxiety is the God that controls Ichiro's life.

In the final pages of the novel, Ichiro makes his leap of faith and begins a second mirror stage. Freddie and Ichiro enter a bar where they encounter Bull, a vet who has a grudge with Freddie. As Bull and Freddie drag their fight outside, Ichiro is pulled back by a spectator so misses the first few moments of the physical fight. When Ichiro makes it outside, he attempts to defuse the situation by telling Bull that "we won't come back" if he stops his attack.[148] Needless to say, this plea is rejected and the fighting continues. Ichiro tackles Bull in order to free Freddie from Bull's grip. The two roll down the alley and Ichiro again pleas to stop the fight. Bull refuses and Ichiro begins to confront racial anxiety qua Bull's enactment and embodiment of anti-Japanese racism: "driven by fear, urged by a need to fight this thing which no amount of fighting would ever destroy, Ichiro raised his fist and drove it down [into Bull's face]." Bull responds with blood spewing out of his mouth and nose, "'I'll kill you.'" Then, "Ichiro looked into the angry eyes and saw that to quit now would mean to submit to that unrelenting fury. He raised his fist again, sick with what he was having to do."[149] In this exchange, Bull represents an externalized version of racial anxiety. Not only is he is the Asian American other that causes

racial anxiety, but he also gives voice to the social's ineffable judgments and ridicules of Ichiro's abject self. Instead of running away from Bull as the manifestation of the socio-political system, Ichiro turns to face it. Registering his fear of the omnipotent social order, Ichiro continues to fight a battle that cannot be won. Even though racial anxiety was at its zenith during the fight, Ichiro decides to battle it: "to quit now would mean to submit to that unrelenting fury." In this moment, he offers up his ego for destruction. Furthermore, racial anxiety loses its power over Ichiro the instant Ichiro enters a complete state of formlessness and disintegrates his ego. Now that the second mirror stage has commenced, can Ichiro achieve a new castration, ego, and identity and not just a sentimental rebirth—especially since the novel ends in four pages?

The second mirror stage mandates a dialectical relationship between the formless protagonist and dead lover. Although Ichiro seems to appreciate Emi, Mr. Carrick, and Kenji, which of the three continues into the mirror stage? The narrator reveals that these three contribute to a new feeling in Ichiro: "he was alone again, but not quite as nakedly alone as he had been the first day out of prison and walking up Jackson Street on the way home."[150] As we have already evaluated, Emi cannot enter the mirror stage with Ichiro because she deploys a host of restrictions, i.e. all directed towards assimilation. Mr. Carrick overcompensates with false care out of his guilt for America's imprisonment of Japanese Americans in concentration camps. He, too, would be a toxic force in the mirror stage. This leaves Kenji as the only possible castrator and he offers the feminine *jouissance* needed to reconstitute Ichiro free from the bonds of racial anxiety and the dead mother complex. But, how does Okada indicate the second mirror stage?

The disappearance of language signifies the second mirror stage. After Freddie dies escaping from Bull, Ichiro attempts to comfort Bull. Like Eto's mixing of the bodily fluids with words at the beginning of the novel, Bull, too, combines the two: "[Bull's] throaty roar was mixed with streaks of agonized screaming verging on the hysterical." After shouting nonsense, "the words refused to come out any longer…'agggggggghh,' he [Bull] screamed and…then he started to cry, not like a man in grief or a soldier in pain, but like a baby in loud, gasping, beseeching howl."[151] Bull performs formlessness. He and Ichiro move out of the social world into a more primordial space of formlessness. Okada brings the setting back to the mirror stage by conjuring the cries of a baby who is losing his unity and mother in the mirror stage. Ichiro does not just observe Bull's slippage into formlessness, he inhabits the space, too. Ichiro is without language for the rest of the novel. He walk away from Bull after "put[ting] a hand on Bull's shoulder, sharing the empty sorrow in the hulking body, feeling the terrible loneliness of the distressed wails, and saying nothing. He gave the shoulder a tender squeeze, patted the head once tenderly, and began to walk slowly down the alley away from…the morbidity of the crowd."[152] We can distill from this episode the traces of the second mirror stage. Ichiro, in a place of love and care for Bull, can complete the mourning for his dead lover and friends. Okada lets the reader know that Ichiro can no longer mourn Kenji or others. As he walks down the alley, the narrator tells us that "he wanted to think about Ken and Freddie and Mr. Carrick…," but that Ichiro cannot do so.[153] Ichiro has a new ego and has disinvested from Kenji at this point; Kenji does not need to be mourned and Ichiro, with a new ego, does not have any investment in Kenji beyond him as a memory of the past. In addition, we see that Ichiro leaves behind—he has destroyed—the the dead mother complex and his tormented ego. This culminates in the "tender squeeze" of Bull, who represents at this moment the entirety of anti-Japanese racism and all of its psychic and social forces. Ichiro not only has confronted racial anxiety via fighting Bull, but he has also disinvested himself from it and moved past it. Ichiro's gestures of squeezing and patting Bull signify his leaving behind Bull and anti-Japanese racism. The crowd with its "morbidity"

symbolizes the dead mother complex as a socio-psychic institution. Ichiro is completely free from the devastating powers of the dead mother complex and anti-Japanese racism. A new ego and identity can form without their influence. While anti-Japanese racism continues to yield its powers in everyday life, it will not construct Ichiro's ego and identity. It remains part of the social landscape. Thus, the novel ends with an essentially new character that possesses the memories of Ichiro but a completely new ego. This reading of complete fracturing and disintegration of Ichiro goes against a long literary criticism of reading the novel as closing with a sense of Ichiro becoming "whole" again.

The manifest plot of the minority *Bildungsroman* is that of a journey of self-formation. It is only when we read the journey of self-deformation that the plot thickens. Which of these plots then determines narrative closure? Do we treat them as one or two plots? *No-No Boy* seems to ask "will and how does Ichiro recover from his imprisonment?" Carroll frames closure as "a matter of the play answering all the pressing questions it has evoked."[154] And what about questions of the mother? Doesn't the novel ask about her origins as a dead mother? Why do critics simply want answers to what Ichiro decides?

Some critics read Okada's closing paragraphs as oriented around the notion of assimilation as Ichiro chases "a glimmer of hope—was that it?"[155] For example, Suzanne Arakawa argues that although Ichiro must somehow assimilate, there is "the faint hope—through sacrifice—of a (re)negotiated American identity."[156] In a slight twist from the idea of assimilation, other critics call for a sense of redemption of some ambiguous notion of what it means to be "Japanese American." Dorothy McDonald argues the ending shows "progress in self redemption"[157] while Daniel Kim and Lawson Inada emphasize the concept of wholeness. Kim argues that Ichiro experiences "the sense of wholeness" at the end of the novel when as he walks away after touching Bull.[158] Lawson also emphasizes this abstract idea of wholeness being accomplished at the end of the novel: "this is what the novel is all about: the quest by Japanese-American to be whole again."[159] In this argument, Lawson does not distinguish how the Asian American *Bildungsroman* differs from its white American/European counterpart. One scholar sums up the sentimentality of this reading: "Ichiro's consolation of Bull signifies his ability to accept the fact that others, such as Kenji, Emi, and Carrick, have forgiven his past action. Only from this emotional place can he believe in his future in America."[160] Jeanne Sokolowski reiterates this same point. [161] Daniel Kim adds that as Ichiro walks away from the weeping Bull, Ichiro's "American identity might be restored…by learning from the examples of men like Mr. Carrick—men who seem effortlessly to embody the maternal instincts so notably lacking in Mrs. Yamada."[162] While Carrick and Kenji figure as maternal replacements, I find Kim's conceptualizing of Mrs. Yamada as an instance of how the novel wants the reader to blame her for deficiencies that have imposed from the outside. For example, it appears that men must replace the mother because of what is "lacking in Mrs. Yamada." Because of her position as a dead mother, she cannot offer the care traditionally demanded of the mother. She does not lack but rather she her ability to be a nurturing mother has decayed.

In the other camp, critics read the ending of the novel as offering a message of dissolution. Floyd Cheung and Bill Peterson argue that Ichiro "does not seem to have negotiated an identity that provides unity and purpose."[163] They do not believe that Ichiro has reached a state of reconciliation or wholeness nor does Jinqi Ling. Ichiro, in their arguments, remains at odds with the socio-political world and retains his position as the abject. Ling then offers that Ichiro does work through his identity confusion—but not that Ichiro becomes whole.[164] To make a more general claim about Japanese American culture, Cheung and Peterson expand their

argument: "the ideological setting of postwar American provides impoverished imagoes from which to choose for Japanese American men. Neither the no-no boys nor the yes-yes boys are happy."[165] Their "un-happy" ending provides an interesting contrast to the overwhelming "happy" endings produced by other critics.

As I have argued throughout this chapter, the minority *Bildungsroman* is a novel of self-deformation so the notion of a return to "wholeness" goes against Okada's reading practice. He demands that the reader follow his trajectory of decay and not one of "wholeness." Furthermore, the novel's distortion of time and the physical death or rejection of everyone around Ichiro refuses any sort of closure based around reconciliation. While the last two paragraphs of the novel could be read as Ichiro continuing his journey to assimilation, Okada explicitly excludes Emi and Mr. Carrick from Ichiro's future. They both offer Ichiro easy paths of assimilation and the novel ends with their exclusion. The construction of Ichiro into an orphan—with no Emi, Carrick, mother, father, brother, or Kenji—demonstrates that he is fact far from being "whole" or reconciled to his social location. He must not only mourn the deaths or being abandoned by his loved ones, but he must also figure out how to live in a world without his former social bonds. In addition, if scholars who read the novel as culminating in "wholeness" view the novel as raising the question of "how or when will Ichiro resolve his socio-political identity crisis?" then I find it problematic that they would view the end of the novel as providing narrative closure. Ichiro does not learn at the end of the novel that the relationship between being Japanese, Japanese American, immigrant, and American is highly complex and full of tension. Nor does Okada seem to articulate any clear sense of what it means to be "whole" or reconciled. The answer to the novel's questions cannot be that Ichiro must walk his own path without love bonds. Narrative closure, for these critics, appears to be an illusion of hope—another form of surplus *jouissance*. While I can sympathize with the need for narrative closure and the resolution to Ichiro's struggles, I believe Okada offers two narrative closures—though one is false. The false closure draws momentum from both the reader's desire to have Ichiro finally "act" and the influence of Cold War ideology. If the death of his mother and his best friend-lover Kenji, Emi's sexual advances and temptations into a new life, Mr. Carrick's generous job offer, or an attempt on his life by his own brother did not push Ichiro to act and discontinue his whining, at the end of the novel the reader wants to believe that Freddie's death—a marginal friend at best—and the masculine weeping of a yes-yes boy, Bull, provoke Ichiro to radically act. This hope is another form of surplus *jouissance* that Okada embeds within the novel. Okada signifies on the literary tradition of happy endings. In this instance, the resolution gives the reader pleasure but at the same time it reveals its impossibility and failure. The questions of the novel have not been sufficiently answered by the information provided. Okada is not naïve enough to believe that reconciliation can occur between anti-Japanese racism and Japanese Americans. The hope of a reconciliation, even within the "whole" subject, is not possible due to restrictions imposed on the racial formation of Japanese Americans. Anti-Japanese racism is the driving force in this project and so any reconciliation comes at the price of false consciousness. This hope simply negates Okada's aesthetic and political projects of self-deformation and decay.

When viewed through the history of the minority *Bildungsroman*, narrative closure appears, just slightly cloaked. The main question of the novel is "how does Ichiro overcome racial discrimination?" As I have argued in this chapter, the form of the minority *Bildungsroman* addresses this question. Ichiro has worked through the tensions regarding his identity and discovered that assimilation and reconciliation are really manifestations of surplus *jouissance* which act to veil racial anxiety. Okada refuses assimilation as an option for Ichiro. He suggests a

much more radical solution: Ichiro's disintegration and decay to the point of formlessness, a second mirror phase, and a reconstituted ego and subject position. The last few pages of the novel capture Ichiro's second mirror stage while the rest of the novel works to get Ichiro to a place of formlessness so that he can begin the second mirror stage. But, what happens after the second mirror phase? Shouldn't the novel end after Ichiro's emergence?

As someone recently emerging from the second mirror stage, it is expected that Ichiro would be confused and that "he chase(d) that faint and elusive insinuation of promise."[166] In addition, Okada calls into question the narrator's ability to have insight into the new Ichiro; he indicates that the narrator does not have a reliable grasp on Ichiro's newly formed ego. The narrator's uncertainty culminates in the quote that most critics read as a sign of "wholeness": "a glimmer of hope—or something else."[167] The narrator cannot be certain what Ichiro's neophyte ego desires or will pursue. He suggests that Ichiro might follow "hope" but what critics neglect to analyze is the latter half of the sentence after the emdash. The "or something else" alerts the reader that the narrator has difficulty reading Ichiro's mind because it is starting anew. His identity is taking shape and the narrator only has access to his memories. Ichiro's desires and subject position are still in flux. The narrator, like the newly constituted Ichiro, must adjust to a new ego and a new character. Needless to say, the ending is ambiguous because we have a new character and we do not know him—cannot know him because he is just emerging from the second mirror stage. Thus, narrative closure—in the sense that the major questions of the novel have been answered—occurs after the completion of the second mirror stage.

The concept of formlessness interrupts the notion of narrative closure occurring simultaneously with the last line of the novel. Because formlessness neither begins nor ends but rather is the repressed history, memories, and cultural practices of a minority group and its members, the elements of the narrative that address questions of formlessness—Ichiro's neophyte ego—puncture a tidy definition of narrative closure. The last few paragraphs represent Ichiro in a state of formlessness—after the novel has reached narrative closure. As explained in detail in the theoretical chapter of the dissertation, Ichiro's new secondary narcissism and identification will help him locate and slip back into formlessness when needed in his future life. The narrative, then, of formlessness cannot come to an end. It not only resists closure, but the main idea of formlessness is that it is always available to the minority subject. Furthermore, it seems that Okada makes narrative closure the penultimate event of the novel to highlight a more important aspect of the novel. By this disruption of the aesthetics of the novel, Okada not only highlights how the end(s) provoke surplus *jouissance*, but he also makes the critical moment of the ending very pronounced and direct—instead of hidden or repressed. The insertion of this "formless" narrative helps the reader move from a question of aesthetics, of why the novel ends in a such a provocative manner, to asking the reader to find a political response to the psycho-social and socio-political problems raised in the novel. Okada models this shift by ceasing what is expected of the novel before its end. This "extra" narrative of formlessness performs the inability of assimilation, reconciliation, or wholeness to be effective pathways for Ichiro. In this way, Okada informs the reader who may have missed the second mirror stage that a radical transformation occurred in Ichiro that is not of the lineage of Cold War ideology. Okada asks the reader to continue reading until he discovers how the true narrative closure—that is both a question of aesthetics and politics—comes about in his novel.

While my reading might suggest a utopian ending with a rebirth of Ichiro, I want to emphasize that the process and consequences of the second mirror stage are filled with horror. First, the second mirror stage is an extremely hostile and difficult process that is anything but

utopian—it requires the destruction of the subject that has been present throughout the novel. The Ichiro that appears after the second mirror stage is never once referred to as Ichiro; the narrator can only refer to him as "he." The character is too new, his ego too newly formed for the narrator to convey knowledge about him/Ichiro. Second, there is no guarantee of a positive life even with a second mirror stage. Ralph Ellison dramatically demonstrates this in the character of Jim Trueblood, the father of his own grandchild. He lives on the margins of the black community and lacks a sense of community with other blacks. They view him as a monster and disgrace and thus shun him. Trueblood's only social interaction besides his family appears to be white who are fascinated by this story. His life, even though he underwent a second mirror stage, is very miserable. Likewise, the only verified positive aspect of the second mirror stage is that Asian American subjects are not terrorized by the dead mother complex and the social mandate to assimilate. They can and most likely will become neurotics, hysterics, and the like. They will fill their lives with worries, miseries, and hopefully occasions to be joyful. The second mirror stage only frees them from an ego plagued by racial anxiety, but they must endure the travails of everyday life without the happy ending. They will live in an anti-Japanese racist world, but they will not be socially or psychically constructed by that ideology. But, in the end, Ichiro is an orphan without a mother, brother, lover, or best friend. His father turns to assimilation and has already faded from his life. Ichiro may be free of racial anxiety but the radical cost of his freedom—becoming an orphan—is open for debate.

[1] Gribben, Bryn. "The Mother that Won't Reflect Back: Situating Psychoanalysis and the Japanese Mother in *No-No Boy.*" *MELUS.* 28:2 (Summer 2003). Gribben calls the novel a "psychological bildungsroman [sic]" (31).
[2] For example see *Nisei Daughter* (Monica Itoi Stone), *Obasan* (Joy Jogawa), and *Citizen 13660* (Mine Okubo).
[3] Kim, Daniel. "Once More, with Feeling: Cold War Masculinity and the Sentiment of Patriotism in John Okada's *No-No Boy.*" *Criticism.* vol. 47, No. 1 (Winter 2005).
[4] Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Race and Resistance: Literature & Politics in Asian America.* Oxford: Oxford UP (2002), 76.
[5] Ling, Jinqi. *Narrating Nationalism: Ideology and Form in Asian American Literature.* Oxford: Oxford UP (1998).
[6] Lawrence, Keith and Floyd Cheung, eds. *Recovered Legacies: Authority and Identity in Early Asian American Literature.* Philadelphia: Temple UP (2005); Xiaojing, Zhou and Samina Najmi, eds. *Form and Transformation in Asian American Literature.* Seattle: University of Washington Press (2005); and Davis, Rocio and Sue-Im Lee. *Literary Gestures: The Aesthetic in Asian American Writing.* Philadelphia: Temple UP (2005).
[7] Lye, Colleen. "Racial Form." *Representations.* Vol. 104, No. 1 (Fall2008), 94.
[8] Lye, Colleen. "The Afro-Asian Analogy." *PMLA.* 123:5 (October 2008), 1735.
[9] Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics.* Durham: Duke UP (1996).
[10] Kehler, Dorothea. "Shakespeare, Okada, and Kingston: The First Generation." *Comparatist: Journal of the Southern Comparative Literature Association.* (May 1998).
[11] Chen Fu-jen. "A Lacanian Reading of *No-No Boy* and *Obasan:* Traumatic Thing and Transformation into Subjects of *Jouissance*." *The Comparatist.* 31 (May 2007), 110. While Chen opens the text to Lacanian readings, her argument lacks a focus. She argues that at least six objects are the Lacanian "things." For Lacan, there is only one object of desire, but that object can be metonymically displaced into/onto other objects. Chen needs to clarify the relationship between these tropes.
[12] Yeh, William. "To Belong or Not to Belong: The Liminality of John Okada's *No-No Boy.*" *Amerasia Journal.* 19:1 (1992), 131.
[13] Xu, Wenying. "Sticky Rice Balls or Lemon Pie: Enjoyment and Ethnic Identities in *No-No Boy* and *Obasan.*" *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory.* 13 (2002).
[14] Entin, Joseph, "'A Terribly Incomplete Thing': *No-No Boy* and the Ugly Feelings of Noir." *MELUS* 35:3 (Fall 2010), 87.
[15] Entin, 92.
[16] See Ling and Kim, respectively for readings of the leg.
[17] Frank Chin's *Bildungsroman* and plays could also be examples of the project of decay. Chin's artist protagonists refuse success like Ichiro.
[18] Chu, Patricia. *Assimilating Asians: Gendered Strategies of Authorship in Asian America.* Durham: Duke UP, 2000, 6 and 16.
[19] Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1985 and JanMohamed, Abdul. *The Death Bound Subject: The Archaeology of Richard Wright.* Durham: Duke UP, 2007.
[20] Takaki, Ronald. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans.* Boston: Back Bay Books, 1989, 29.
[21] Takaki, 45.
[22] Takaki, 183.
[23] Takaki, 191.
[24] Takaki, 397.
[25] Kim, Elaine. *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press (1982), 156.
[26] Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk.* originally published 1903.
[27] NNB, 63-64.
[28] NNB, 73.
[29] NNB, 16.
[30] NNB, 16.
[31] NNB, 16.
[32] NNB, 54.
[33] NNB, 39.
[34] NNB, 40.
[35] Approximately 20% of all eligible Nisei men said "no-no" to the government regarding their allegiance to the Japanese emperor and serving in the U.S. military. See Ronald Takaki's *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans.* New York: Penguin (1989), 397.

[36] NNB, 138.
[37] Ling, Jinqi. "Race, Power, and Cultural Politics in John Okada's *No-No Boy.*" *American Literature*. 76:2 (June 1995), 365.
[38] Sumida, Stephen. "Japanese American Moral Dilemmas in John Okada's *No-No Boy* and Milton Murayama's *All I Asking for is My Body.*" *Frontiers of Asian American Studies: Writing, Research, and Community.* eds. Gail Nomura, Russell Endo, Stephen Sumida, and Russell Leong. Pullman, WA: Washington State UP (1989), 224.
[39] Gribben, 32.
[40] NNB, 186.
[41] NNB, 37.
[42] NNB, 21.
[43] NNB, 185.
[44] NNB, 10.
[45] NNB, 105 and 104, respectively.
[46] At Mrs. Yamada's funeral, Okada provides some biographical data on the mother: her year of birth, her humble origins as a peasant, her growing up, her schooling, her honors, and her marriage. Ichiro carefully listens to this history and "it was as if he were hearing about a stranger" (193-4). In this instance, the dead mother becomes alive for a brief moment before Ichiro must repress the idea of an alive mother.
[47] Xu, Wenying. "Sticky Rice Balls or Lemon Pie: Enjoyment and Ethnic Identities in *No-No Boy* and *Obasan.*" *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory.* 13 (2002), 56-7.
[48] Green, Andre. "The Dead Mother" in *On Private Madness.* London: Karrnac Books, 1997, 142-3.
[49] Green, 150.
[50] Green, 155.
[51] NNB, ix-x.
[52] NNB, 104.
[53] NNB, 138.
[54] NNB, 125.
[55] NNB, 14.
[56] NNB, 35.
[57] NNB, 206.
[58] Green, 162.
[59] Green, 164.
[60] NNB, 3.
[61] NNB, 3.
[62] NNB, vii.
[63] NNB, viii-ix.
[64] NNB, 3.
[65] NNB, 166.
[66] NNB, 12.
[67] NNB, 1.
[68] NNB, 12.
[69] NNB, 11, emphasis added.
[70] NNB, 34.
[71] NNB, 221.
[72] Chu, *Assimilating Asians,* 56.
[73] NNB, 19.
[74] NNB, 67.
[75] NNB, 81.
[76] NNB, 112.
[77] NNB, 146.
[78] Ling, Jinqi. "Race, Power, and Cultural Politics in John Okada's *No-No Boy.*" *American Literature*. 76:2 (June 1995), 360-2.
[79] NNB, 178.
[80] NNB, 120.
[81] NNB, 121.
[82] NNB, 155.

[83] NNB, 49.
[84] NNB, 82.
[85] Davis, James. "Ichiro is a Punk, and other Lessons from Teaching 'The Immigrant Experience.'" *Radical Teacher.* Number 84 (2009), 57. Davis records that the novel's "angst-ridden account of Ichiro's postwar blues wore them [my students] out." The novel delays—or decays—Ichiro's ability to act to strategically highlight the dead mother complex and the second mirror stage.
[86] Entin, 92.
[87] NNB, 62.
[88] NNB, 76.
[89] NNB, 64.
[90] NNB, 34.
[91] NNB, 158.
[92] NNB, 60.
[93] NNB, 209.
[94] NNB, 134.
[95] Kenji cites five examples not including the exclusion of the African American men from the Club Oriental. (1) an Asian or Latina woman refuses to sit with an African American male on a bus, (2) a young Chinese woman believes herself superior to other Chinese women because she dates a white boy, (3) Italians refuse to serve a group of Jewish boy with their Japanese pal because "the place is not for Japs" (135), (4) African Americans resent and hate those who pass, and (5) the younger Japanese dislike the older Japanese because they embody the essence of foreignness and non-assimilation (135-6).
[96] NNB, 51-52.
[97] NNB, 52.
[98] NNB, viii.
[99] NNB, 189.
[100] NNB, 192.
[101] NNB, 204.
[102] Kim, Jodi. *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 11.
[103] NNB, 168.
[104] NNB, 100.
[105] Ling, 372.
[106] NNB, 95.
[107] NNB, 95.
[108] NNB, 96, emphasis added.
[109] NNB, 96.
[110] NNB, 96.
[111] Sokolowski, 87.
[112] NNB, 91.
[113] NNB, 83.
[114] Ling, 371.
[115] Eng, David. *Racial Castration.* Durham: Duke UP, 2001.
[116] NNB, 138.
[117] NNB, 118.
[118] NNB, 119.
[119] NNB, 153.
[120] NNB, 159.
[121] NNB, 160.
[122] NNB, 229.
[123] For example, Ichiro imagines his suicide: "lying there, he wished the roof would fall in and bury forever the anguish which permeated his every pore" (11). Even Kenji utters the desire for death: "sometimes I think about killing myself" (61).
[124] NNB, 183.
[125] NNB, 164.
[126] NNB, 72.

[127] NNB, 60.
[128] NNB, 70.
[129] NNB, 82.
[130] NNB, 89.
[131] NNB, 89.
[132] NNB, 89.
[133] NNB, 90.
[134] NNB, 73.
[135] NNB, 76.
[136] NNB, 232.
[137] NNB, 203.
[138] NNB, 223-4.
[139] NNB, 224.
[140] NNB, 226, emphasis added.
[141] NNB, 224.
[142] NNB, 225.
[143] NNB, 242.
[144] NNB, 201.
[145] NNB, 154.
[146] NNB, 122.
[147] NNB, 229.
[148] NNB, 246.
[149] NNB, 247.
[150] NNB, 180.
[151] NNB, 250.
[152] NNB, 250.
[153] NNB, 250.
[154] Carroll, Noel. "Narrative Closure." *Philosophical Studies.* 135:1 (May 2007), 4.
[155] NNB, 250.
[156] Arakaw, Suzanne. "Suffering Male Bodies: Representations of Dissent and Displacement in the Internment-Themed Narratives of John Okada and Toshio Mori." *Recovered Legacies: Authority and Identity in Early Asian American Literature,* 192.
[157] McDonald, Dorothy Ritsuko. "After Imprisonment: Ichiro's Search for Redemption in *No-No Boy.*" *MELUS.* 6:3 (Autumn 1979), 26.
[158] Kim, 80.
[159] Inada, Lawson. "Of Place and Displacement: The Range of Japanese-American Literature." in *Three American Literatures.* ed. Houston Baker. New York: MLA (1982), 263.
[160] Sokolowski, 89.
[161] Sokolowski, Jeanne. "Internment and Post-War Japanese American Literature: Toward a Theory of Divine Citizenship." *MELUS* 34:1 (Spring 2009), 69.
[162] Kim, 74.
[163] Cheung, Floyd and Bill Peterson. "Psychology and Asian American Literature: application of the Life-Story Model of Identity to No-No Boy." *CR: The New Centennial Review.* 6:2 (Fall 2006), 205.
[164] Ling, 362.
[165] Cheung and Peterson, 207.
[166] NNB, 251.
[167] NNB, 250.

Chapter 4

How Bigger Wasn't Born:
Richard Wright's Aesthetic of Black Bildung, 1940-1958

Book Three of *Native Son* begins with the following absurd scenario: Having been subjected to a painfully protracted chase by a mob of 8,000 whites out to capture the black rapist of a white woman, then to a highly melodramatic, King Kong-esque arrest atop an apartment highrise's water tower, Bigger wakes from a long sleep in prison. In his narrow cell, Bigger is first greeted by his mother's preacher, the Reverend Hammond. Then, Jan, a recent acquaintance, arrives, bringing with him the Communist Party lawyer, Max. Next, the State's Attorney Buckley joins the party, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Dalton. Soon after, Bigger's mother, sister, brother, and his misfit friends Gus, Jack, and G.H. come to visit. As this litany of personages suggests, the scene is (at the very least) logistically eyebrow-raising—but critics have gone so far as to characterize it as not only a challenge to spatial relations, but as a full-blown mistake within the novel's aesthetic system.

Without a doubt, Wright's decision to pack thirteen people (plus cops) into a tiny cell shatters the novel's commitment to Naturalism. In its absurdity, however, the scene does something more—something that provides a glimpse into the inner mechanics of Wright's philosophy on race. I want to suggest that the constellation of characters here represents neither a narrative failure nor simply a statuary of those who have emotional or political relations with Bigger. Instead, I argue that the scene represents the focal point of Richard Wright's obsession with the question of constructing a journey of *bildung* that gives rise to a black subject with agency and full consciousness. *Native Son* is not a *Bildungsroman*, but it does constitute Wright's philosophical reflection on the many forms of bildung that act upon and are appropriated by African Americans.

Wright breaks open the fantasy of a perfect journey of self-formation for African Americans, unveiling a multiplicity of bildung available to and imposed upon African American subjects. Within this vortex of competing positions, a central question dominates the novel, namely: why must violence be rendered a constitutive element of black male identity? *Native Son* is a warehouse of ideas on bildung that reappear throughout Wright's oeuvre and that culminate with a radical theory of black self-formation in *The Long Dream*. Part one of the chapter traverses the multiple theories of bildung represented by the characters in the jail cell and then analyzes violence as a form of black bildung. Before moving into a reading of Wright's final theory of bildung in *The Long Dream*, I analyze Bigger's post-capture attempts at forging a new journey of development.

Section 1: A Polyphony of Parents: An Overdetermined Native Son

Native Son begins with the sound of an alarm clock rattling the Thomas family awake. Both the cacophony of this intrusive sound and Bigger's slumber are cut short—and indeed, "castrating" is an apt descriptor here—by mother Thomas's rapid-fire imperatives: "'Bigger, shut that thing off!;'" "'Turn on the light, Bigger;'" "'turn your heads so I can dress."[1] Next, she commands Bigger to kill a rat. While critics have read this opening scene as a metaphor for Bigger's trapped life and its inevitable end in death, I want to emphasize that it is mother Thomas who controls this scene—not simply their abject poverty, as other critics suggest. Mother Thomas powerfully conveys the ethos of Jim Crow living that she inherits from the black church. In the words of her preacher when he visits Bigger in jail: "he [Jesus] showed us tha' t' live in this worl' wuz t' be crucified by it. This worl' ain' our home. Life ever' day is a crucifixion."[2] The ideology of the church asserts that African Americans must accept that earthly life in a world dominated by whites can never allow for happiness. Instead, each African American should lay "his head upon a pillow of humility and gave up his hope of living in the world."[3] A Jim Crow world entails only suffering, and according to the black church, as Wright represents it, African Americans can only accept suffering and await the wonderful life they will experience after death, in Heaven. Per this model of bildung, corporeal life must be lived with meekness and servitude—to whites. African Americans—like mother Thomas, Vera, and Bessie—should work hard without expectations of change or of chances for success; they should not cause trouble; and they should accept their inferiority to whites.

Bigger rejects this route of bildung—which sadly also means rejecting his mother and the black church—from any early age. As a child, Bigger notes that blacks play no role in the Christian creation myth, so he determines that the bildung espoused by mother and church promises an impossible afterlife. Two problematics arise from this rejection of maternity and faith. Firstly, it pushes Bigger to imagine that he forge an alternate world in which African Americans do not repress their desire for earthly pleasures or delay efforts towards obtaining them. Unfortunately, Bigger's line of reasoning leads him to pursue a life devoted to acquiring material goods by any means necessary, meaning that he structures his entire existence around criminal activity. His mother, as anyone of common sense could, predicts the outcome of this criminal bildung: "'the gallows is at the end of the road you traveling, boy. Just remember that.'"[4]

The policing of Bigger's masculinity, and the effect it has on his formation as a subject, becomes the second problem. Mother Thomas expects Bigger to fulfill the masculine gender role (derived from her bildung-philosophy) of money-earner for the family. He is expected to play the part of meek Uncle Tom, inferior laborer and servant to whites, and his performance is to be rewarded financially. When Bigger subscribes to a different self-formation, mother Thomas berates him for becoming precisely the kind of subject that embodies the abject of her philosophy. Moreover, in order to retain Bigger as a member of the family, she must continue to "craft" him—but in light of his decisions, her only choice is to mold him into a figure of the abject. In essence, she attacks both Bigger and his development: she vociferously vocalizes her irritation with respect to his actions; she humiliates him by constantly belittling him; and she actively instills him with a sense of shame for not being the "correct" sort of African American male who financially supports his kin. A prime example of her incessant harassment can be seen in how she scolds him for his lack of legal employment: "even when the relief offers you a job you won't take it till they threaten to cut off your food and starve you! Bigger, honest, you the

most no-countest [sic] man I ever seen in all my life!"[5] In order to remain part of his family Bigger must accept these "caring" words, submitting to his mother's discursive disciplining and her emasculation of him as an element of *his* self-formation.

Bigger's paramour Bessie adds another layer of complexity to the religious bildung espoused by mother Thomas. While Bessie, too, subscribes to the belief that full black existence will be expressed not in this lifetime but in the next, the relationship she builds with Bigger allows her something of an escape clause. She spends most of her time embodying an ethic of hard work that neither hopes for nor requests equality or opportunity. But while Bessie spends her days laboring away for a white family, she requires a foil, a counteracting agent, to balance the ecstatic excess of her religious suffering. She needs bodily pleasures that distract her from her pain and suffering, from the obvious price of conformity to her bildung. Bigger provides this relief in the form of drinking, sex, comfort, money, and entertainment.

At the same time, Bessie's demands have a powerful impact on Bigger's masculinity and identity. To be a "good" boyfriend, Bigger must both perform "love" and be an excellent sexual partner. According to Bessie's prescription for masculine bildung, Bigger must also furnish her with money, alcohol, and general amusement. Bigger gives Bessie rent money, pays for her drinks and dinners, and accompanies her to dances and parties. He develops his masculinity according to the cues of Bessie's desires.

Wright reserves a particularly devastating fate for Bessie, whose requirements for Bigger's bildung he ironically perverts and crushes by taking them to their extreme. The pleasure and drinks provided by Bigger become an elixir of false love that turns Bessie into his co-conspirator in the murder of Mary. Sexual pleasures devolve into brutal rape and her acceptance of illegally obtained money from Bigger explodes into her taking on the role of helping to collect ransom. Wright is at his most ironic and brutal in his destruction of Bessie's model of masculine bildung. He transforms the demand that black masculinity construct itself around the goal of entertaining and amusing black women into a perverse self-fulfillment: under the guise of a faux elopement, Bigger kidnaps, rapes, and murders Bessie. In an invitation that surpasses even her fantasies, he convinces her to move with him to a new city to start a fresh life together. Bessie's imperative that Bigger entertain her leads to her dying not in the comfort that she demands from him, but rather clawing her way out of an airshaft after Bigger smashes her head. Bessie even anticipates this inversion of her bildung; she tells Bigger, "I ain't got no happiness. I ain't never had none. I ain't got nothing and you do this to me. After how good I been to you. Now you just spoil my whole life."[6] The life she speaks of here largely depends on successfully casting Bigger into her specific mold of masculinity; and Wright voices an intense rejection of her conception of black male bildung in the novel's most violent scene.

Bigger must also fight against a current of identity formations from anti-black whites. The lawyers Max and Buckley conjure up another form of bildung: the anti-black social construction of African Americans, specifically of males. Max tends to propose a more sympathetic reading of Bigger's social construction while Buckley exposes some of the flaws in Max's argument. Buckley acknowledges the inequalities established by a white world; he tells Bigger "I know how you feel, boy. You're colored and you feel that you haven't had a square deal."[7] This "square deal" as elaborated by Max is a vulgar reading of the social construction of black male subjectivity: "this boy comes from an oppressed people. Even if he's done wrong, we must take that into consideration."[8] African Americans per Max are "hemmed in, limited, circumscribed" such that they lack opportunities to develop beyond the prescriptions of an anti-black racist social world.[9] Before proceeding it might be helpful to explain why Wright presents

the most powerful shapers of identity from the perspective of the "law." For Lacan, the symbolic realm is for the most part dictated by the "Name-of-the-Father." This superego derivative maintains, organizes, and determines social and cultural practices including which practices are good and bad. Within this Lacanian context of the law, the social construction of African Americans originates not from the African American community but from the anti-black community. Wright emphasizes the psychic violence done by liberal whites in their sympathetic social constructions. Yet, Wright's brilliance manifests in his apparent support of Max's liberal though anti-black reading of black culture. In the novel Wright substantiates and perhaps indulges Max's vulgar reading of black life with examples such as Bigger's inability to learn how to fly or to enter a professional career and Bessie and Vera's limited occupations. In a metaphorical maneuver, Wright highlights the mortgage and rental practices that confine African Americans to specific geographical locations within Chicago. These everyday and spatial limitations reflect the boundedness of the forms of black self-formation permitted within the black community by the dominant social order. Max uses this social "fact" to partially explain the outrage of the white community: "they felt they had you fenced off so that you could not do what you did. Now they're mad because deep down in them they believe that they made you do it."[10] The subjectivity allowed has been breached and Max argues that even the anomalous subject position pursued by Bigger originates in anti-black racism. He ascribes Bigger's murders to a form of development: "he was impelled toward murder…it was his way of *living!*" (original italics)[11] In effect, Max argues that anti-black racism spawns a mode of self-formation inevitably culminating in the creation of homicidal criminals. Mother Thomas's rhetoric parallels this legal interpretation of the social construction of the black criminal in her "prophesizing" that Bigger's end-point will be jail. And Bigger retroactively naturalizes this fate: "well, to tell the truth, Mr. Max, it seems sort of natural-like, me being here facing that death chair. Now I come to think of it, it seems like something like this just had to be."[12] The actions Bigger "selects" are not the only thing constructed by the symbolic father; his emotions follow another version of African American development.

Creating a sense of the social construction of the psyche remains a central aspect to the crafting of Bigger's subjectivity in the novel. Bigger retroactively interprets his murders as evidence of his own power to dictate his psychic development. Wright parallels Bigger's fantasy that is based on criminality with Buckley's arguments that frame Bigger as a criminal. In this dialectical relationship, Bigger's emotional sphere first undergoes a writing by anti-black racism and then Bigger retrospectively appropriates the latter as stemming from his own authorship. Wright points out why this retrospective writing can occur. Bigger possesses "a feeling of being forever commanded by others so much that thinking and feeling for one's self was impossible."[13] Indeed, Wright illuminates that the events from 'Book 1: Fear" emerge from a long battle over the operation and ownership of the black psyche. The entire novel is an argument for the various ways that the process black subject formation is the colonization of the black body and mind that anticipates Fanon's *Black Skins, White Mask*. Max argues that Bigger "sees and feels no way of acting except to hate and kill" because of "the hate and fear which we have inspired in him, woven by our civilization into the very structure of his consciousness, into his blood and bone, into the hourly functioning of his personality."[14] Max outlines a clear theory of psychic formation where the range of emotional responses and the intensity of affects seems to be crafted by anti-black whites and then inherited—or deposited—into the minds and bodies of African Americans. Bigger registers this imposition of feelings: "they don't even let you feel what you want to feel."[15] When Buckley comments that he knows Bigger's feelings, Wright subtly

registers not an act of empathy but rather demonstrates Buckley's unfettered access to Bigger's emotional world. Buckley identifies himself as the law to Bigger—"you're dealing with the *law* now—referencing both his legal powers and those of psychic construction.[16] Throughout the novel Wright relies on a limited palette of emotions—primarily hate, shame, anger, and guilt—for Bigger. Like Bigger's limited opportunities and limited physical geography, Wright presents a constricted emotional geography.

Working in tandem with, yet not seemingly in contradiction to cultural, anti-black social and psychic constructions is the idea that Bigger controls his own moral and political self-education. The early Jan, Mary, and Max approach Bigger with the assumption that he possesses the means to exert a personal agency and responsibility. Bigger registers a moment of irritation when Max and Jan insist upon Bigger's moral culpability and his ability to accept responsibility: "they were telling him to believe in himself."[17] Bigger recognizes that his agency is limited—that what powers he can exert operate only within the realm of the domestic or in "institutions" limited to the African American community. He can frighten his sister, chose to drop out of school, engage in illegal "work", date Bessie, terrorize his community, and neglect the welfare of his family. These activities as Wright suggests are mediated through Bigger's relationship with an anti-black world and with the other forms of bildung imposed upon him. Max mistakes this micro-agency for Bigger's consciousness and "free will." He asks Bigger questions about his dreams, career aspirations, and social hopes as if Bigger should and could have had these ideas fully formed.[18]

Max's questions assume that Bigger, as a human subject and an American male, inherently possesses agency and determination over his own subject development. At the same time, Max offers a social-construction defense which partially contradicts his assertion that Bigger possesses social power. Buckley, on the other hand, complicates the question of Bigger's social power. His argument at the trial focuses on Bigger's "sanity" as a marker of his agency rather than the more obvious selection tactic to emphasize that Bigger murdered. Even though Buckley recognizes the socially constructed aspects of identity, he suspends those ideas while arguing that Bigger maintained full control of his actions Buckley's prosecution establishes that Bigger was "sane" because he had the ability to command the shape of his character and morals. Because of this self-control and self-formation, Bigger "chose" to attack. Buckley's argument channels Wright's questioning of the role of social forces in shaping Bigger's identity and actions. Wright showcases the idea of free will to complicate sociological studies of African Americans, in particular sociologist Robert Parks' claim that "Negroes are the ladies of the races" and thus not able to commit violent murder. With Buckley's prosecution arguments, the novel pushes aside the influence of historical circumstances, context, and individual experiences as powerful forces affecting the moral character of an individual. In addition, Buckley's argument indirectly asserts that because African American men do possess free will they, as savages, will always want to rape white women. In summary, Wright tracks the discourses of "free will" that attempt to show that African Americans cannot wield power or agency to become fully integrated into society but that they do possess the free will to murder, rape, and commit crimes.

Wright showcases another influence on Bigger's identity through the characters Gus, G.H., and Jack—Bigger's criminal buddies. They rob apartments and steal merchandise for their livelihood—and in order to supply Bessie with the material comforts she demands from Bigger. Besides providing the social milieu to support Bigger's identity as criminal, this crew helps Wright raise the question of why Bigger murders. Bigger's friends undergo bildungen to his, yet

they do not commit murder. Unlike Bigger, they do not attempt to question the bildung pressed upon them by anti-black culture and, in part, from the black church and community. Bigger distinguishes himself from his peers due to the fact that, as he tells Max in jail: "'I wanted to be happy in this world, not out of it [in heaven or in the escapist havens of the black church].'"[19] Bigger wants more than the predetermined position and bildungen accessible within his native milieu. Wright further illuminates the difference between Gus and Bigger as they wait outside a black pool hall hoping to do something exciting:

> Bigger: "Goddammit!"
> Gus: "What's the matter?"
> Bigger: "They don't let us do *nothing.*"
> Gus: "Who?"
> Bigger: "The *white* folks."
> Gus: "You talk like you just now finding that out."
> Bigger: "Naw. But I just can't get used to it."[20]

Like Bessie and mother Thomas, Gus accepts—or has gotten "used to"—the forces of anti-black racism. Bigger refuses to live within the bounds of the spectrum of experience proscribed by the anti-black subject position given to him. He must accept that it "lives" deep within him, "right down here in my stomach" but he constantly battles with its presence.[21] Later in the chapter I will explore how Bigger attempts to dislodge this bildung through racial anxiety; for now, however, I want to put pressure on this failure to "get used to" anti-black racism. The histories of slavery and Jim Crow provide numerous examples of the consequences in store for black men and women who refuse to relegate themselves to positions of inferiority. Wright formulates a different self-formation for Bigger—one that helps him strike out against and disrupt the force of a white-authored path toward subjectivity for African Americans.

Wright distinguishes Bigger from Gus et al. is not only by Bigger's escalating predilection for violence but also by his seemingly strong "free will" to resist and subvert anti-black racism. Bigger retroactively rationalizes his killing of Mary as a means, he believes, to gain political and emotional freedom. He tells Max that "for a little while I was free. I was doing something. It was wrong, but I was *feeling* all right" (emphasis added).[22] Although Bigger convinces himself of his momentary freedom, he bases this conclusion on this fleeting ability to experience "feeling," which I hope to have shown to be, in large part, constructed from outside Bigger rather than an organic process. Unlike the sensory numbness that appears in modernist literature, anti-black racism plans and implements Bigger's emotional disability. Sensory alienation and its shattering through violence might weaken symbolic law; in this way Wright reflects Walter Benjamin's idea that law-preserving violence, which Bigger imagines himself doing through the ransom note and evading capture, "indirectly weakens the lawmaking violence" of Buckley and anti-black racism.[23] In addition, Bigger "had created a new world for himself, and for that he was to die."[24] Again, Bigger's apparent free will leads him to rape and murder. He fantasizes a radical power being generated through his violent actions, but Wright forces the reader and Bigger to disavow that anti-black racism allowed Bigger to pursue a subjectivity that led to him becoming a murderer and allowed Bigger to feel a (false) freedom and power. For a white American, an act of violence against an oppressive regime or political force could be characterized as an instance of freedom and the renewed ability to feel through action. In the context of black America, though, Bigger cannot pursue a self-formation journey

that includes violence as freedom—that journey is only for whites. If Bigger selects the path of violence, then social laws dictate that this can only mean Bigger is a criminal. Wright, though, exposes this double standard. Through an identity politics based upon violence, Wright explores another interpretation of the role of violence for African American self-formation. Bigger believes that violence opens the door to consciousness and to a new form of life. Through the fantasy of individual power, Wright explores—via the white myth of violence as empowerment—the role of violence in African American self-formation.

Section 2: Violence as the Foundation for African American Bildung?

The role of violence in *Native Son* has been a topic of criticism since the novel's first reviews. Even supporters of Wright, such as Malcolm Cowley, questioned the specific kinds of aesthetic representations of violence and more generally they had a problem with black violence being aestheticized. Indeed, Wright does present violence as the means to structure and organize a certain type of self-formation. Through the appropriation and wielding of violence Bigger "becomes" his pre-ordained identity: black rapist and black murderer; his social construction is fulfilled through his violation and murder of Mary Dalton. It is my claim, however, that Wright queers this act of violence, crafting a new violence-based black identity. Through violence Wright explores Bigger's rebirth and the emergence of his consciousness.

Wright replays much of the violence in the novel through the spectacle of newspaper reports. The newspapers validate Bigger's story—their repeated reporting of the murder (and false rape) repeat and sustain Bigger's violence. The stories also present a story of Bigger's development from ignorant and innocent savage to black rapist to mastermind of the ransom scheme. Bigger has an obsession with the newspapers. On the one hand, he needs them to find out what happened to Jan, whom he framed for the kidnapping of Mary. On the other, he receives pleasure from knowing that the newspapers, the "law", has incorporated his lies and misdirections in the disappearance of Mary. The newspapers believe Bigger's false stories and he feels power in lying to representatives of power. Bigger enjoys reading about his own actions from the voices of white power; the newspapers co-author his new journey as criminal. Each new edition of the paper details more of Bigger's growing consciousness to murder, rape, trick, and evade.

But Bigger only appropriates Mary's murder as a form of power and as his own (retroactively endorsed) path of bildung after relishing his transgression of social norms. Bigger cannot validate his own accomplishments until the Name-of-the-Father —by way of the newspapers—recognizes and proclaims his actions as deviant, as acts that reveal a form of nascent black power—albeit one tied up in an immoral act. For a short period of his life, Bigger feels empowered because he believes that killing Mary has provided him with social power. Bigger forgets that a contingent act cannot support, for an extended period, an identity based upon a necessity. Bigger did not consciously murder Mary; his actions at the time of the murder and up until his capture appear motivated more by overpowering fear than by a conscious decision to suffocate her. The fantasy must eventually crumble. After reflecting in jail on his retrospective interpretations of murdering Mary (not Bessie), he questions his identity based upon violence: "he had reached out and killed and had not solved anything, so why not reach inward and kill that which had duped him?"[25] Wright exposes that violence does not offer a new form of development and power for African Americans nor does it lead to consciousness.

Though violence had long been the means of disciplining African Americans before and after slavery, Wright refuses to provide a moral and political subjectivity based upon violence. Does violence serve another aesthetic and political purpose in the novel?

Violence serves as the reaction to racial anxiety; it quells racial anxiety. In my other chapters I define racial anxiety as the object-cause of desire deriving not from the typical mirror stage but from the racialized mirror stage that has been hijacked and controlled by anti-black racism. In *Passing*, for example, Irene's object-cause of desire is her abhorrence of her own race. Thus, an encounter with Clare, who has for all intents and purposes achieved Irene's desires by passing and performing whiteness, Irene falls apart. Her reaction is a manifestation of racial anxiety that emerges from latency when she reencounters her object-cause of desire.

In *Native Son*, however, I believe that Wright complicates the question of desire by building a plethora of potential object-causes but registering them all in the black male body. Wright focuses his efforts on the aftermath of desire and the unfolding of bildung as a mode of tracking these various paths of desire. Bigger's relationship to his own body and to his own bildung seem to be the main causes of his racial anxieties. Wright demonstrates this racial anxiety mainly through the affects of fear, hate, and shame. The first two books of the novel seem plastered with this triumvirate, which all seem to occur in close proximity or simultaneously with each other. Whenever Bigger is faced with a negotiation between a bildung and its interpretation of his black body he experiences racial anxiety. When he first meets Jan, for example, Bigger experiences racial anxiety. He has never been so close to white people, especially from the upper or middle classes; he has never shaken hands with them nor has he ever called them by first name. Upon shaking hands with Jan, Bigger thinks: "they made him feel his black skin by just standing there looking at him, one holding his hand and the other smiling [Mary]…he was something he hated, the badge of shame which he knew was attached to a black skin."[26] The language here makes it such that Bigger doesn't feel the shame, he is it; or, he isn't even the shame, but an emblem of it. He is an emblem of something attached to his skin. Emotions are imposed upon Bigger's black skin; he does not create the emotion. This fear and shame is closely followed by a fuming hatred: "he felt naked, transparent; he felt that this white man, having helped to put him down, having helped to deform him, held him up now to look at him and be amused. At that moment he felt toward Mary and Jan a dumb, cold, and inarticulate hate."

When Bigger encounters an awareness of his black skin and its meaning (and attached emotions) he undergoes a fit of racial anxiety. Wright constructions another version of black self-formation through Bigger's recognition of the complete mutability of his own subjectivity/skin, its free availability to access and manipulation by whites. The shame, fear, and hate—the violence—register Bigger's racial anxiety at being constructed as rubbish: "naked, transparent…deform[ed]." To be more precise, though, the racial anxiety consists in this disturbance as it is registered at the level of the body. The feelings that overpopulate the novel are examples of racial anxiety. The violent reactions are what tame racial anxiety. In the above example, if Bigger did not experience a cold hate for Jan and Mary, he would explode with anxiety. To sever the powers of racial anxiety, to calm its affective manifestations, Bigger turns to violence. The rising senses of fear, shame, and hate dissipate Bigger's "feeling" of nakedness and his "feelings" of his black skin by redirecting them into these discursively-comprehensible "emotions." I want to point out that Wright constantly evokes Bigger's (more visceral) so-called "feelings," but that he keeps these vague and undefined—both highly corporeal, yet evocative of an inability to abide in or substantiate his own corporeality. This strategy demonstrates the

repression of Bigger's consciousness but also the limited range of emotions allowed him. Wright emphasizes how anti-black racism endowed Bigger with only a small range of "feelings"—shame, hate, and fear—and he turns these into formal devices that register not so much straightforward emotion nor a simple 'expression' of his deformed subjectivity, but rather the necessary means by which Bigger must alleviate the subtending burgeoning of racial anxiety.

Wright presents numerous examples of how violence functions as a mode to mitigate the experience of racial anxiety. Bigger's definition of rape offers another striking example of this emotional logic. He defines rape in the following manner:

> …every time he felt as he had felt that night, he raped. But rape was not what one did to women. Rape was what one felt when one's back was against a wall and one had to strike out, whether one wanted to or not, to keep the pack from killing one. He committed rape every time he looked into a white face. He was a long, taut piece of rubber which a thousand white hands had stretched to the snapping point, and when he snapped it was rape. But it was rape when he cried out in hate deep in his heart as he felt the strain of living day by day.[27]

Bigger responds to the sense of racial anxiety via "rape." To process his feelings, Bigger acts out in violence rather than reflect upon why or what causes those feelings. This reliance on violence to placate racial anxiety also highlights Bigger's limited emotional sphere. This definition of rape encompasses the entire spectrum of Bigger's reactions. He does not move from basic affects to fruitful discussions of the meaning or significance of those emotions—rather, rape itself is the agent of action here, moving, unhindered, transitively through him from its violation of his heart into his almost subjectivity-less performance of it. Wright maintains Bigger in this narrow range of affect in order to critique the bildungen imposed upon Bigger which limit and impinge upon his development. These bildungen are fulfilled because Bigger not only registers racial anxiety but also because he can only "feel" and respond to this registration of anxiety by channeling a violence unfettered by any interference on the part of his own subjectivity.

Wright outlines this early in the novel when Bigger communicates his dreams of becoming a pilot to Gus. When Gus questions the reality of this hope due to Jim Crow restrictions, Bigger begins to become irritated and then tells Gus: "if I took a plane up I'd take a couple of bombs along and drop 'em as sure as hell. . . ."[28] Bigger introduces violence—the bombs—to forget about black prohibition from earning a pilot's license. Wright fills the novel with this equation of racial anxiety to violence: "his [Bigger's] body hungered for keen sensation, something exciting and violent to relieve the tautness" and "he didn't like that noise; it made him feel like cutting something with his knife."[29] When Bigger first enters the Dalton house, his fears overcome him and he "wanted to strike something with his fist."[30] This pattern continues after the murder of Mary, when Bigger schemes with Bessie: "an iota more of fear would have sent him plunging again into murder."[31]

This logic comes to fruition with the murder of Mary and the murder and rape of Bessie. Bigger experiences racial anxiety in both episodes, and he justifies his actions because he "feels" hate, fear, and shame. He replaces racial anxiety with these violence-producing feelings in order to control his body. When Gus and Bigger talk about robbing Blum, a white merchant in the neighborhood, Bigger feels "hysteria" and "longed for a stimulus powerful enough to focus his attention and drain off his energies."[32] He pacifies this racial anxiety "through action so violent that it would make him forget."[33] The most important characteristic of violence here is that it

helps distract Bigger from racial anxiety; his body can calm down by transforming anxiety into violence. Violence, in turn, temporally negates Bigger's anxiety. Lacan calls this curative surplus jouissance. Violence appears to fix the outburst of racial anxiety but, as Wright demonstrates, Bigger is calm only for a short period. Even after discharging his racial anxieties by a brutal attack-rape on Gus, Bigger just hours later murders Mary. The irony of surplus jouissance is that it is a false cure that also reveals and perpetuates what it covers up.

Violence as surplus jouissance enables Bigger to question his feelings and actions—to discover both sides of violence as cure and as symptom. Before and during the fight with Gus, Wright only allows Bigger to feel fear, hate, and shame. Only after enacting violence—severely beating and almost murdering Gus—can Bigger analyze his situation: "thinking of how he had felt when he fought Gus in Doc's poolroom…he was disgusted with the gang…he knew that the fear of robbing a white man had hold of him when he started the fight with Gus; but he knew it in a way that kept it from coming to his mind."[34] Violence is that which "kept it from coming" to consciousness and instead made his emotions remain in a state of fear, shame, and hate until he could become violent and thus "process" his emotions by further diluting them. At the same time, once violence occurs and discharges anxiety Bigger can reflect upon the event. In this episode Bigger attempts to extract the meaning of his violence, but he has not gained access to his emotions and his repressed desires. Even though this opportunity for reflection holds the possibility for a critical moment, Bigger does not yet know how to interrogate his violence, his surplus jouissance. The tragedy and effectiveness of surplus jouissance is that it allays fears, which are Bigger's greatest concern. His reflections end with the triumph of surplus jouissance: "he had fought Gus because Gus was late; that was the reason his emotions accepted and he did not try to justify himself."[35]

Surplus jouissance's corresponding violence can also serve as the foundation for a new bildung. As discussed previously, Bigger attempts to craft a new bildung based upon Mary's murder. He comes to this conclusion during his reflection on her murder. While eating breakfast with his family, Bigger thinks of the crime and then "he looked around the room, seeing it for the first time."[36] He attributes this fresh vision not to surplus jouissance nor to violence but to the fantasy that "he had murdered and had created a new life for himself. It was something that was all his own." In reflecting upon his violence, surplus jouissance endows Bigger with the notion that his killing opens up a new bildung—one authored by Bigger himself. He enjoys this feeling of power and its elation allows him to briefly access his unconscious to exhume his repressions. Bigger can "see" his family's turmoil and pain by recognizing their social positions. Prior to this moment Bigger had been self-obsessed and had in essence rejected his family. He discovers that his family is "blind" to the extent of anti-black racism and to the futility of their lives and that in his new bildung, "he would know how to act from now on."[37] Because he has had a glimpse of his unconscious, Bigger imagines that his is "like a man reborn."[38]

While these fantasies of mastering anti-black racism excite Bigger—they are, after all, excessive pleasure—Wright distances the reader from accepting them and emphasizes the tragic: the failure of surplus jouissance and of Bigger's response to emotions. As previously mentioned, Max argues that Bigger is a new life form because of his murder. He subscribes to the fantasy that violence creates a new form of bildung for Bigger. Max argues that murdering Mary "made him free, gave him the possibility of choice, of action, the opportunity to act and to feel that his actions carried weight."[39] First, Max mistakes that Bigger has access to freedom and personal action or free will. He imposes his fantasy onto Bigger. Second, choice, action, and opportunity remain fantasies for Bigger. He believes that his actions will bring about change or a new

direction in his life. Instead, he fails to realize that his actions, in large part, have been prescribed by the various bildungen imposed upon him.

Surplus jouissance helps Bigger believe that he possesses power. He appropriates the social fact (or fantasy) that white men who act create their own opportunities by making choices and then acting upon those choices. Bigger does not have access to the positive outcomes of this white scenario. Opportunity for success is out of reach for him. Third, Bigger begins to understand his own blindness and the failed bildung journey that his fantasy obscures. He begins to comprehend that "he had lived and acted on the assumption that he was alone, and now he saw that he had not been."[40] As Buckley points out in his prosecution, Bigger fails his mother, his sister, his brother, and the African American community because he does not consider himself embedded in a network of social relations. The failure immanent in violence helps Bigger break the waters of consciousness. Wright continues to extract from violence a power for reflection.

Bigger needs violence in order to reach consciousness. First, consciousness is achieved when Bigger reflects not simply on his violent actions but on how violence quells and obscures his racial anxiety and his fear, hate, and shame. This mode of reflection, though, can only unlock a small amount of "consciousness" for Bigger. Wright suggests that violence should be replaced by talking—the talking cure par excellence—as a mode of reflection that does not entail surplus jouissance and its destruction. Wright initiates Bigger's transition from violence to consciousness during Bigger's stay in jail:

> …once before he had accepted completely what his life had made him feel, even unto murder. He had emptied the vessel which life had filled for him and found the emptying meaningless. Yet the vessel was full again, waiting to be poured out. But no! Not blindly this time! He felt that he could not move again unless he swung out from the base of his own feelings; he felt that he would have to have light in order to act now.[41]

"Life had made him feel" like a loser, a rapist, an animal, and a murderer with no chances, no opportunities, etc. Wright critiques all of the bildungen thrown at Bigger to adopt. Each of these philosophies of self-formation "made him feel"—and compelled him to act—a certain way. Next, Wright addresses the destructive powers of racial anxiety in the phrase: "emptied the vessel." By giving in to rage and violence, Bigger effectively silences his conscience and represses his feeling and desires. This emptying consists in Bigger constantly and blindly repressing his emotions and his awareness of the world. At this juncture in the novel, Bigger realizes that his life is over and that murder did not produce a new bildung; he realizes that his fantasy of having acquired power through killing is "meaningless." In spite of the new bildung he believed himself to have taken on, Bigger is visited in jail by just about everyone in the novel and, as outlined above, each continues to impose more self-formation trajectories upon him. Their visits and their interpolations effectively fill him back up. Jan, Max, the preacher, the priest, the Daltons, the mob, the newspapers, Buckley, mother Thomas, Vera, Buddy, Gus, G.H., and Jack all impart their own ideas of what Bigger should become and how he should handle himself. Wright informs the reader that violence cannot be the means for pouring out—of rejecting—these imposed identities. Violence kept Bigger "blind" to the pernicious nature of the pleasures of surplus jouissance. In response to violence, Bigger must now act from "the base of his own feelings" not the imposed feelings of hate, fear, and shame. Bigger must break free of racial anxiety and restore (or inaugurate) his consciousness. Wright suggests that only talking

and building a relationship with another person will help Bigger move past violence, will help him replace violence with care and friendship.

When Max attempts to learn Bigger's perspective on the incidents in order to construct a defense, Bigger moves from a state of violence to a neophyte and limited consciousness. At first Bigger resists Max's questions and feels his old triumvirate of feelings. Bigger compares Max's dialogue to Jan's handshake—as something evoking fear, shame, and hate within him. In this instance, though, Bigger decides to humor Max and thinks: "well, tell him. Talk. Get it over with and let Max go."[42] During and after a lengthy conversation—not merely a monologue— with Max, Bigger comes to reflect on his life and gains an awareness, a consciousness of his desires and of the forces acting upon him. Bigger "had spoken to Max as he had never spoken to anyone in his life; not even to himself…then he was suddenly and violently angry. Max had tricked him! But no…he had talked of his own accord, prodded by excitement, by a curiosity about his own feelings…his anger passed and fear took its place."[43]

During the conversation, Bigger replaces violence with self-reflection. Instead of getting violent with Max, Bigger engages in a dialogue and explores his feelings, unconscious thoughts, and identity for the first time without surplus jouissance or violence. Bigger achieves a fledgling consciousness and discovers that talking and reflecting are the appropriate responses to racial anxiety. He also enacts his first act of empathy in the novel when he decides to talk because he wants to "let Max go." Bigger places himself in Max's position and feels for Max. This fledgling care for Max is also a component to the replacement of violence. Bigger cares instead of becoming violent and he builds a relationship with his interlocutor. While Bigger does briefly achieve some form of consciousness, he quickly reverts to his old method of confronting troubling emotions.

As he processes his thoughts, Bigger vacillates between consciousness and the impulse toward violence. He contemplates the possibility that all of his bildungen have been false and that white and black men, like he and Max, could be peers and equals, but "a strong counter-emotion wax in him, urging him, warning him to leave this newly-seen and newly-felt thing alone, that it would lead him to…deeper hate and shame."[44] Bigger pushes past this racial anxiety and continues debating the possibility of a new relationship to white men: "he was seized with a nervous eagerness…[he] tried to see himself in relation to other [white] men." Then, racial anxiety short-circuits this budding consciousness: "he was tired, sleepy, and feverish" and "too weak to stand any longer."[45] The affect literally shakes and disables his body to the point of collapse. Typically Bigger would lash out in violence to discharge this racial anxiety, but he manages to work through it and question whether genuine black-white relations might be a reality accessible to him. This kernel of consciousness is so powerful that Bigger regains the will to live; he "wanted to live now…to find out, to see if it were true, and to feel it more deeply."[46] His experience and care for Max verify for Bigger that he can relate to white people without fear, hate, shame, and violence. At this moment Bigger glimpses that his life—all of his bildungen—have prevented him from achieving a moral, political, and personal consciousness and he wants the opportunity to pursue this "newly-seen" bildung.

Bigger's coming into consciousness requires that his years of using violence to both preemptively define and pacify himself reach a terminal point. His transformation to a more conscious subject position, however, proceeds at a slow pace, with multiple instances of regression to violent thoughts—though not violent actions. In the remaining pages of the novel, Wright cannot, as a naturalist and realist writer, end with Bigger reaching a full transformation. This happy ending just isn't possible for Bigger. He strives to better understand himself and to

build a relationship with Max, but Max does not return and does not re-engage Bigger. As he is left alone in his cell, Bigger attempts to question his life and actions and to imagine his moral culpability for the murders, rape, and for the disappointments to his family, but "his feelings clamored for an answer his mind could not give."[47] His consciousness isn't developed and he realizes that he needs Max, or a friend, to delve further into it. Bigger cannot reach consciousness through the rudimentary feelings and racial anxiety that have dominated his life. He needs a social mirror to help him learn to develop and express his own thoughts and feelings; he needs to engage with a caring person to mirror their commitment to empathy and the positive development of consciousness; he needs love to shape his own bildung. Wright concludes the novel not with Bigger's successful transition to consciousness but with his regression to violence. When Max finally visits Bigger after a long absence, Bigger concludes: "what I killed for, I *am*!"[48] This chilling pronouncement evokes terror in Max. Instead of coming to consciousness, Bigger decides that the hate, shame, and fear that constituted his emotional world "must've been pretty deep in me to make me kill!" He mirrors himself not off of Max's care, kindness, empathy, and critical thinking but off of his own social hate, fear, and shame. Instead of moving into consciousness, Bigger recedes into the folds of anti-black racism.

Wright presents this final perspective on bildung philosophy in order to demonstrate the pernicious depths of anti-black racism. It not only reaches into Bigger's unconscious but structures and limits his consciousness. He cannot achieve any lasting critical consciousness because an anti-black world refuses to let him mirror himself upon even the kindest of its members. The bildungen allowed Bigger all have one feature in common: a mirror relationship not with African Americans or African American culture and community but a terrifying and insidious mimetic relationship with anti-black racism. In *Native Son* Wright showcases this problem in each of the bildungen imposed upon or created by Bigger. The problem established by the novel is how to work through the anti-black bildungen forced upon African Americans. Wright begins answering this question by introducing a more positive mirror and thus the possibility for a constructive identity for Bigger, but years of indoctrination and of living in fear, shame, and hate cannot be undone in the span of the novel's timeframe of a few weeks. In addition, Wright does not model a bildung based upon the disintegration of the subject. He does not assimilate Nella Larsen or Zora Neale Hurston's aesthetic of black bildung here. I want to suggest that not until his last published novel, *The Long Dream*, does Wright offer a theory of bildung that responds to Larsen, Hurston, and Ellison's call for an African American bildung that emphasizes the disintegration of the black body and mind. Only at the end of his career and in exile does Wright join the party—and he does so with an explosive clarity that makes his and the other writers' projects recognizable and brings them into the full consciousness of their readers. Wright, I will argue, slaps the reader with so powerful a theory of bildung qua disintegration that, unlike Bigger, she cannot possibly miss the message.

Section 3: Mirroring Masculinity: Identity in the Age of Civil Rights

In *The Long Dream* (1958), Wright continues to struggle with the question of black subject formation in the context of Jim Crow America. As Wright's last novel published during his lifetime, *The Long Dream* was to be the first part of a planned trilogy tracing the journeys of Rex "Fishbelly" Tucker in Mississippi and France. The second, unpublished, manuscript lies in the Beinecke Library at Yale University, while Wright did not begin work on the third prior to

his early death. *The Long Dream* received mixed reviews when published. Most critics expressed a deep or partial skepticism that Wright, who had lived in France for the past fourteen years, knew the present state of race relations in America. In 1958, the Civil Rights movement was in full swing, with the country passing such milestones as Brown v Board of Education, the murder of Emmett Till, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The novel slightly refracts Till's murder in the lynching of Chris and in the imprisonment of Fishbelly, but on the whole, it does not register the burgeoning civil rights movement. In part, this reception of the novel as being insufficiently in step with the times is due to critics' conception that "race" fiction should be little more than sociological transcriptions of the relative present. Many in the black community viewed Wright as a deserter and they asserted that his abandonment revoked his privilege to write about race.[49] Ted Poston of the *New York Post* asserted that Wright "shows no awareness of whathas happened to America—and even to Mississippi—during this decade."[50] His extensive writings on race during his "exile" years proves otherwise along with, as Keneth Kinnamon points out, that Wright voraciously read the foreign newspapers and knew of the developments in his long-abandoned homeland.[51]

While any work is, necessarily, informed by its author and usually by some measure of historical context, novels are not universally judged by the extent of their address of contemporary problems. This might seem an obvious remark, but race literature did not have roots in the academy nor in the wider cultural sphere, and authors were under pressure to provide barely-fictionalized accounts of current politics; even Ralph Ellison's masterpiece, *Invisible Man*, was initially hailed more for its racial commentary than for its aesthetic feats. For Wright, then, setting the novel against the grain of social politics served another purpose. In utilizing the seemingly anachronistic setting of the thirties and forties, Wright, I want to argue, engages in a productive conversation with Nella Larsen, Zora Neal Hurston, and Ralph Ellison after years of artistic and political disputes—and with Ellison, following an estrangement after a close friendship. If, as my other chapters work out, insights into the writings of the latter authors crucially depend on "symptomatic" close readings to locate their philosophies of minority bildung, in Wright's final novel what might elsewhere be hidden or latent bildungen shift to the "surface."

A reader of Wright would have been expected to know about the psychoanalytic concepts he deploys; and any reader growing up in the first half of the century would be familiar enough with Freud to comprehend the over-determined imagery in the novel. Wright presents Fishbelly, for instance, walking in on his father, Tyree, having sex with a prostitute and describes Tyree as a train. Then throughout the novel the train, its motion, and rides on trains become transposed—condensed to use Freud's terminology—onto a variety of objects or people in order to mark sexual desire. Typically, dream imagery might require a symptomic reading to parse the metaphors and metonyms, but since Wright defines the meaning of the train so clearly little decoding—just a good memory—is needed to read into Fishbelly's unconscious sexual desires. Along with clearly mapping out and displaying the meanings of his images and symbols, Wright "surfaces" the notion of a black bildung that requires both disintegration and a second mirror phase. What critic Saunders Redding of the *New York Times Book Review* has called a plot of disconnected and socially irrelevant "episode after furibund episode" I suggest is, in fact, Wright's making-conscious, making-surface of the turbulent and evolving process of minority self-formation.[52]

For Wright, I argue, the minority Bildungsroman encompasses a process of disintegration extremely different from that imagined by other artists—a process which reflects his

preoccupation with psychoanalysis. This double Bildungsroman, of Fishbelly and Tyree, explores two differing, yet not necessarily competing, paths of subjectivity. Critic Abdul JanMohamed has argued that Tyree follows the trajectory of the "death-bound-subject." This trajectory includes Tyree's risking his physical life for a more symbolic death, which would impart his existence a greater meaning. In the novel, Tyree moves from subverting white domination by acting as a partner of white criminals to exchanging his physical life for a more significant and meaningful identity as a proud African American male not under the purview of anti-black racism. Tyree dies in an act of defiance, disrupting these criminals' corruption-extortion scheme, and he continues to fight whites even after his death through the knowledge of their corruption that he imparts to Fishbelly. Tyree's elaborate journey does indeed end in a self-destruction much like Helga's in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, but I want to focus on Wright's efforts to craft a different type of bildung journey for Fishbelly.

Unlike the protagonists in early chapters of Helga from *Quicksand*, Clare and Irene from *Passing*, Invisible Man from *Invisible Man*, Ichiro from *No-No Boy*, and Bigger from *Native Son*, Fishbelly's self-formation and self-deformation process are narrated by Wright starting from a young age—from five years old into his full (de)maturation. Wright also relies on a new form of disintegration: one involving the incorporation or introjection of multiple identities. Each successive incorporation effectively negates the previous one, although Wright portrays Fishbelly vacillating between—and thus re-introjecting—competing identities. Unlike young adult characters who are presented as having already undergone a racialized mirror stage, Fishbelly's negotiation of the mirror stage is actually portrayed in the novel. Through his series of introjections and thus identifications, in fact, Fishbelly seems to remain in an extended mirror phase. Via the process of disintegration through incorporation that he constructs for Fishbelly, Wright comments on how race, gender, class, sexuality, and minority subjectivity form a turbulent constellation of forces influencing Fishbelly's bildung. To demonstrate this series of incorporations, this section will, for the most part, parallel the chronology of the events in the novel. In tracing this chronology I hope to reveal the tensions and contradictions at play between each incorporation and highlight the process of disintegration that I believe Wright brings to the surface. In addition, I hope to demonstrate how Wright replaces the figures of both mother and father with queer substitutes.

The novel begins with an episode that fulfills every expectation of a classical Bildungsroman's opening. In it, Rex earns the nickname "Fishbelly" by mistakenly calling inflated fish bladders "bellies" in a slip of the tongue for which his friends tease him. Wright appears to be depicting an innocent middle class childhood for Rex. This same opening scene, however, recalibrates the Oedipal complex by questioning the role of black women in the self-formation of African American men. Emma, Fishbelly's mother, rarely speaks in the novel and when she does, Wright usually endows her with the language of commander and moral judge. She also typically inspires dread in Fishbelly. The first sentence of the novel positions Emma within the space of depression: "he felt seized by a whirlpool of despair as his mother tucked the bedcovers about his shoulders." Then, "she vetoes the plea" to leave the lights on and seems inordinately exhausted merely by the act of putting Fishbelly—who, albeit, is a curious and active young boy—to bed.[53] Answering his penultimate question with a sigh and a "'yeah," Emma bears an unpleasant atmosphere—especially so in her answer to Fishbelly's final question before she leaves his room: "'Mama, do fishes bite?' / 'If you fool enough to put your finger in his mouth, he'll bite you.'"[54] Her apparent disinterestedness and subsequent biting reply could stem from the tiredness of a mother worn thin from a day of caretaking, but Wright persists in

depicting Emma as a depressed—not simply passive or socially defeated—mother in further episodes. During a lynching, for example, Fishbelly actually attempts to kill his parents by alerting the white mob of their locations. Upon returning home that evening, "as he neared her, he rejected her" because "he saw his parents as he felt and thought that the white people saw them and he felt toward them some of the contempt that the white people felt for them." When Emma hugs Fishbelly, "he wanted to shrink from her as though from something unclean."[55] This "unclean" attribute ascribed to the mother originally appears when Tyree arrives home with fish, which Fishbelly immediately associates with the odors of his mother's vagina: "'they smell like . . .' His voice trailed off. His limpid brown eyes circled and rested wonderingly upon his mother, for that odd smell associated itself somehow with her body."[56] The actions of the mother precipitate the fish bladder and smell. When Tyree returns home from his nighttime fishing trip, Emma guts the fish. Fishbelly watches her in amazement for this is the first time he has seen a fish and, as Wright portrays it, it is his first experience with castration. Emma dissects and effectively castrates Tyree's gift of fish. At this point in the novel, Wright has not informed the reader that Tyree was probably not out fishing—or that if he was, he spent part of the night with either a prostitute or his lover Gladys. Wright signals Emma's depression—her position as a woman/wife/mother whose husband not only possesses a lover but sleeps with many prostitutes as the co-owner of a whore house—in her irritated and sad mood towards Fishbelly. Her act of gutting the fish is a transparent gutting of Tyree, who has spent not simply the evening but the entire night with a whore. This context helps Wright introduce the dead mother complex.

In the seminal essay, "The Dead Mother," Andre Green articulates a theory of the dead mother complex as a response to Freud and psychoanalysis's obsession with discussing the failings and castrations of the father by the child, mother, and changing social context. Green argues that a depressed mother—whatever the cause of her depression, which can stem from any number of circumstances—becomes psychically and emotionally unavailable for the child. This causes the child to relate to the mother as a "dead" being who has withdrawn her love and care. This transformation, from an emotionally vibrant and alive, to a psychically dead mother forces the child to withdraw his attachments to his decaying or dead mother. The dead mother must be expelled from the purview of the child. For Green, this involves a libidinal detachment from, but also a residual identification with the dead mother. The child will also attempt to "revive" the dead mother by himself becoming, in part, the dead mother.

However, as I argue in my formulation of the racialized mirror stage, Green only offers a model of the dead white mother. When race and anti-black racism become salient traits of the dynamic, the dead mother complex follows a different trajectory. In *The Long Dream*, Emma "becomes" a 'dead mother' through a variety of social forces. Tyree repeatedly cheats on Emma, openly parading around town with mistresses and prostitutes; through the marriage contract she is reduced to a non-sexual partner who provides care and services such as reading and writing for the illiterate Tyree. Obviously, an equally if not more virulent attack on Emma's psyche derives from the misogynist, anti-black world in which she lives, a world that continually abuses and limits the opportunities of African American women. Later in the novel, Fishbelly will further humiliate Emma as he takes on the role of a black male possessing social dominance over women—which role allows him to disintegrate his identifications with the mother and to unravel the maternally-guided strains of his bildung. Green would argue that Fishbelly should identify with Emma as the dead mother, but Wright depicts Fishbelly entering into series of mirror-identifications with anyone other than his mother.[57]

Anti-black racism intervenes in the mirror relationship such that, instead of identifying with the dead mother, the child must identify with the dominant socio-political culture and its representatives. Rather than identifying with Emma qua dead mother and thereby with himself as dead son, as would be argued in Green's theory, Wright demonstrates a prohibition of this pattern at work.[58] Via the own unique system of bildung he creates, Wright narrates Fishbelly's movement away from a social identity of dead son, his refusal to accept a Bigger Thomas-like subject-position pre-formed by white culture and forced on African American males. Wright dismantles any such typical process of subject formation by exposing Fishbelly to a series of mirror-identifications that circumvent them and allow for the emergence of a new bildung, a new subjectivity. Each of Fishbelly's subsequent identificatory subjective incorporations complicates and eventually disintegrates each previous identification. This bildung journey culminates in an identity that actually manages to free itself from the psychic and emotional traumas perpetrated by anti-black racism; it enables the African American subject to determine his own identity, his own subjectivity.

In the most recent example, Wright explores the long standing tension between Fishbelly and Emma. This is an example of the child decathecting from the dead mother. Only once we have read the novel is it possible to comprehend Emma's sad predicament. Wright introduces introjection as a response to Emma's depression and castrating powers. As Emma disembowels the fish that stands in for Tyree and African American men generally, Tyree reaches into the pile of entrails—the remainders of castration—and inflates a fish bladder. Amazed, Fishbelly mirrors his father: "he puffed and the fish flesh began to distend…'I blowed up the fish's belly!'"[59] Tyree undoes the castration by the dead mother-wife by creating life and strength from the castrato, from the entrails, and Fishbelly mirrors his actions. Tyree subverts Emma's remaining agency as a dead mother; his actions demonstrate that he can protect Fishbelly from the dead mother by reviving the world that she attacks. This protection requires that Fishbelly disengage from the realm of the maternal. Wright reinforces the identification with Tyree by having Fishbelly quickly repair and reverse the mother's castrations: "he inflated the bladders as fast as his mother disemboweled the fishes."[60] When asked why he mistakenly calls the bladders bellies, Fishbelly cannot conjure an answer "but in his mind there was floating a dim image of Mrs. Brown who had had a baby and her belly had been big, big like these balloons."[61]

Wright explicitly links Fishbelly's actions with procreation and the giving of life—the revival of the fish, Tyree, and possibly himself. In addition, He also adds a more overt racial dimension to the nickname Fishbelly. When Fishbelly first sees the fishes, he notices not their fins, tails, eyes, or scales, but rather he describes them only as "a mass of *white-bellied* objects [emphasis added]."[62] The inflated bladders thus hold a further meaning, beyond their procreative, life-giving aspect. In revivifying them, Fishbelly also revives whiteness and white identities. He becomes simultaneously a defender of black masculinity and of whiteness by the same stroke. His name, too, signifies a latent relationship to whiteness. The name Fishbelly masks an alternate identity as it fails to recall the "white-bellied" fish; his name should really read "Whitefishbelly." This not fully avowed incorporation and relationship to whiteness will be a fundamental problem throughout the novel.

In Fishbelly's first independent encounter with white men, Wright maps out a complex incorporation of white masculinity. As Fishbelly walks to his father's office he is stopped by a group of white gamblers. One man, Ned, accosts Fishbelly and extracts some of Fishbelly's "virgin luck." He claims: "niggers are born with luck. You ain't shot no dice, so you got *all* your luck. I'm going to borrow some of it."[63] When Fishbelly wins for Ned, one of the losing players

threatens to kill Fishbelly but Ned intervenes—like Tyree, he interrupts a potential destruction and protects his life: "touch this nigger and I'll kill you."[64] At this point, Ned transforms into a new man: "his protector shoved the attacker away," "his benefactor put a dollar bill into his hand" and commands the others: "don't hit 'im."[65] This conversion becomes more significant when Tyree tells Fishbelly that the dollar, which Fishbelly claims he found, means that "a white man dropped it and you found it, so you got some of *his* luck."[66] This exchange principle evokes the process of incorporation: exchanging Tyree for Ned in a non-domestic primal scene that is extremely sexual, even bordering on the pedophilic. Ned "defends" Fishbelly from terror just as Tyree protected Fishbelly from the mother. More importantly, Ned protects Fishbelly not from an African American mother but from the more vicious and fear-inducing white man. Tyree furthers the image of Ned as a positive role model-cum-father. He corrects Fishbelly's fear about Ned, asking "what you say when somebody give you something?" While he is referring here to his own gift of another dollar to Fishbelly, Tyree replaces Fishbelly's fear of Ned's gift with a command to respect and genuflect to the benevolent white father.

Thus, the exchange of luck and money becomes an exchange of primal fathers. Fishbelly is retroactively allowed—commanded, in fact—to identify with Ned as a protector, benefactor, and father. He even spills Fishbelly's virgin blood as a marker of Fishbelly's indoctrination into whiteness. This transposition of fathers, though, also demands a transposition of racial identification: Fishbelly appropriates and mirrors himself upon a "white" psyche. Fishbelly might have given Ned some black "luck" but in return he obtains, as Tyree claims, some white power. As might be expected, this white power manifests not simply as double consciousness but as identification with primal white masculinity. Moreover, Fishbelly must now negotiate between an identification with white and black masculinity. This conflict will resurface throughout the novel until Fishbelly ultimately disintegrates these identities.

The next chapter presents a real primal fantasy through an encounter which provides Fishbelly with an opportunity for a sexual mirror. In a surprise visit to his father's office, Fishbelly catches Tyree in the act of intercourse with a black prostitute. The incident is traumatic for Fishbelly and his perceptions of the scene disavow the very sight of his father's and the woman's sexual organs. Instead, Wright registers sex through the senses: a noise: "*bumpbump bumpbump bumpbump*;" as perspiration and wetness: "a slither of dim light from the edge of the window shade revealed sliding sweat on his father's concentrated face;" as smell: "the room's fetid air;" and the vaginal odor from the first chapter: "he smelled an odd odor and was whisked back through time to that morning when his father had brought home a pail of fishes…before his eyes floated a huge, glistening balloon."[67]

Fishbelly is quite aware of the nature of the events taking place, yet he refuses to recognize the incident. As he watches Tyree climax, he thinks: "that this unknown, laughing woman was in his mother's place." Wright reinforces that the dead mother has been rejected and abjected not only by Fishbelly but also by Tyree. The mother should occupy this sexual position, but Tyree provides a different lesson in gender and sexual relations. Tyree cements this lesson by making a pact with Fishbelly, giving him some cash and masculine camaraderie organized around repression and denial: "now, just you forgit what you *think* you saw or heard, see?" and "keep your mouth shut about this 'shop,' hear?" While Fishbelly walks away from the encounter feeling a false pleasure deriving from "what was most important, [that] he shared a dark secret with his father," Wright also reveals a deep incorporation, not simply a repression, of seeing the father's erect penis and semen. In the mode of what I've described as surface-writing, Wright

recycles the "*bumpbump*" and Fishbelly's description of his father's sexual motions as a train image throughout the novel in order to signal sexual desire or the act of sex.

Upon returning home from this traumatic-pleasurable encounter, Fishbelly is seen incorporating—not repressing—the sexual acts and desires of Tyree: "that awful scene in that dim room was being replaced by a hunger to get home and play with his electric trains. From that day on, thundering trains loomed in his dreams—hurtling, sleek, black monsters whose stack pipes belched gobs of serpentine smoke…"[68] The description continues with more metaphors of sex. Wright does not even attempt to make the reader perform a symptomic reading; the hurtling trains are Tyree's bodily movements and the stack pipes belching gobs of smoke are the penis ejaculating. Fishbelly proceeds to dream about being a train himself, which helps substantiate the incorporation. There is no true repression at work, as he only disavows the penis, which returns quite quickly, and since, as the narrator amply illustrates, this imagery returns to Fishbelly again and again.

In this wet-dream come to life, Fishbelly registers more than his incorporation of the father's sexual body and desire. At the end of the dream, he appears to register some guilt for replicating the pleasure of the father but manifested as an incestuous desire for the father: "*feeling that he had done something terribly wrong and was going to be whipped for it…*"[69] The sense of potential shame and guilt also carries another valence. While awaiting punishment in his father's office after witnessing the primal scene, Fishbelly identifies sexual desire for women not with the dead mother or with the "brown, plump, smiling" prostitute. He identifies sexual arousal with—besides Tyree's body—another laughing figure: "on the wall was a calendar that held the photo of a laughing white girl strolling along a sandy beach, her blond hair blown back, her lips holding a cigarette, her legs white as bread, and her rounded breasts billowing under satin." He interrupts his own fantasy: "'but she's *black,*' he whispered, recalling the patch of black woman skin."[70] Notwithstanding the predominance of white women in erotic calendars or Tyree's lust for women of any color or shade, Fishbelly identities with white sexual desire. While sexual appeal might be argued to be colorblind, Wright plays not only with the fantasy of the black rapist but also more seriously with Fishbelly's introjections of Ned. The notion of incorporation does not simply entail a mimicry of the behaviors and actions of the mirroree; as Lacan argues in *Seminar I: Freud's Papers on Techniques*, introjections take in not only the psychic apparati articulated by Freud and Klein but the "the speech of the other."[71] Lacan argues that "speech" includes the entire discursive field and the unconscious apparatus. This means that Ned's desires are also incorporated into Fishbelly; it's almost like Ned has implanted "virgin" Fishbelly with his seed. The shame Fishbelly feels for desiring the white woman is a combination of disavowal for witnessing a primal scene and an eruption of Ned's white desires. This quest for whiteness and white women resurfaces in the novel during a dream and when Fishbelly dates a light-skinned African American prostitute who can "pass" for white.

Wright emphasizes the tension between Fishbelly's introjections of two fathers: Ned qua dominant culture (male whiteness) and Tyree. In a contentious discussion about race, Fishbelly and his friends refuse to acknowledge their desire to be white, which they are accused of by Sam: "'Sam says we want to be *white.*'"[72] Fishbelly refuses to defend himself, internally pondering how "he did not want to think of why he had had it [his hair] straightened." Throughout their argument about race and living in Jim Crow America the narrator notes that Fishbelly is "resentful." While a typical desire to imitate white aesthetics might reveal a petty jealousy or a wish to be more mainstream, Fishbelly's resentment—rather than shame or disturbance—marks his reaction as different from that of his friends. Wright highlights this emotion as a marker not

of Fishbelly's normalcy as a black boy, but of his differentiation, as a black boy who identities with a white father. He does not precisely want to be white because, psychically, he *is* white.

Wright further develops this idea during Fishbelly's bout with pneumonia. In a fevered dream, he imagines that his friend Tony steals his shirts: "shirts so white that Tony had teasingly called him 'white boy.'"[73] The dream then morphs into a gruesome scene of disembowelment. Fishbelly imagines that his hands are covered with flies; he attempts to remove them by scratching at them and "tugging at his hot flesh." Then, "the skin of his hands and arms began to peel, shredding off in long, shriveled strips like black rubber, leaving his flesh a gleaming, raw red."[74] In these dreams Fishbelly manifests fear of being "made" black through the theft of his white covering (the shirts) and thus his whiteness. Acting on behalf of blackness, Tony's theft disintegrates Fishbelly's white identity.

The second dream reiterates this point in that the "black flies" densely coat Fishbelly's hands and become his very flesh. The "shriveled strips [of skin] like black rubber" he mentions consist of the black flies-become-flesh, not his 'own' native skin. *His* skin, rather, is white, but covered by this film of black flies. If the skinning were not enough, in a state of pure red flesh, the black flies reassemble on the red flesh of his body: "the flies remained glued to his bloody, vulnerable flesh." The nightmare demonstrates Fishbelly's fear of his whiteness being consumed by blackness Black "skin" traps his white psyche and flesh beneath an external layer created by a grotesquely voracious, blindly group-minded natural black socius (the horde of flies), synthetically 'sticking' (like rubber, glue) on his true surface. And should the reader be tempted to attribute the images to 'just dreams' or unreality, Wright transfers the dream-content to real life. When Fishbelly awakes, he searches the kitchen for food and finds something cooking on the stove. As he falls from a chair while reaching for a pot on the stove, "he could hear…a frying crackle as his neck, like a pork chop in a red-hot, ungreased skillet, stuck itself to the sizzling iron."[75] Fishbelly nearly dies from the searing of his skin. Wright again recycles the dream imagery to make his argument surface—to make it *into* surface. Like the black flies that cause Fishbelly's white skin to deteriorate, the black iron stove top fries Fishbelly's skin to reveal a "red-hot" flesh of trauma that it cooks like food. But, as we can see in that his neck itself (with the help of gravity) is the agent of action here, Fishbelly acts out his unconscious dream of removing his black skin from his white body. Fishbelly is willing to destroy his skin—and it almost seems that his skin is attracted like a magnet, "sticking itself" to destruction by the instrument of blackness (the stove)—and essentially his life, in order to manifest the white identity that he has incorporated from Ned and the white world. This tragic episode demonstrates the extreme degree of Wright's commitment to the journey of black bildung, even in its demand for disintegration of identities—and even if Fishbelly chooses here to destroy the "wrong" identity.

The self-deformation of Fishbelly's sexuality and class position becomes a key element of Wright's theory of bildung. At a local carnival, for example, Fishbelly and his friends experience first-hand how to curb, how to disintegrate their desires for white women. Even though Fishbelly has been told by his father to avoid whites, he and his friends attempt to see "the greatest sex show on earth" at the carnival; but they are not allowed in, since black boys are not permitted to see white women perform. Sam, Fishbelly's peer, clarifies the injunction: "'white men don't want you looking at their naked women.'"[76] Instead they attend a "colored" show that has partly nude black dancers and a minstrel performance. The Jim Crow South with its segregated spaces channels black male desire towards black women. After the show the boys stumble upon a game called "HIT THE NIGGER HEAD Three baseballs for 50¢." Fishbelly

initially feels moved to identify with the performer, but he terminates the identification with violence: "that obscene black face was his own face and, to quell the war in his heart, he had either to reject it in hate or accept it in love."[77] The boys buy balls and launch them in fury at the black performer. Fishbelly misses the man but Tony nails the man on the mouth causing him to bleed. The boys leave feeling ashamed and Wright marks this episode as a moment in which Fishbelly chooses to expel working-class blackness. Rather than allowing an incorporation, Fishbelly violently dejects such identification; he discards an identity and relationship to lower class African Americans. This violent expulsion is contrasted with the displacement of sexual desire. The boys' initial desire is to see white female strippers, but they are met with a prohibition. Instead of terminating that desire in a way similar to Fishbelly's disintegration of a working-class black identity, Wright keeps open Fishbelly's desire for white women. Even though the boys run in fear from a white prostitute, Fishbelly's identification with white male desire remains—but it persists within a complicated relationship to his black identities.

In the next episode Wright stages a series of mirror relationships that force Fishbelly to question the fluidity of his incorporations and disintegrations. The lynching of Chris, an older brother figure who is twenty-four, becomes a major spectacle in the novel—for Fishbelly at least. As a critique of northern African Americans, especially those like James Baldwin who did not experience the everyday horrors of the Jim Crow South, and as a turning point for the development of Fishbelly, the "*white* folks" as Tyree calls them lynch Chris for sleeping with a white co-worker at his hotel.[78] Being from the most affluent African American family in Clintonville, Fishbelly "had never experienced obvious Jim Crow" and this lynching serves as his inculcation to Jim Crow and "the steep, dangerous precipice leading from childhood to manhood."[79] Fishbelly in this chapter of the novel could be read as both the young character and as "naïve" African Americans who do not appreciate the civil rights struggles in the South. Lynching and the threat of death isn't a reality for this younger generation and Wright graphically demonstrates the effects of fear on the African American psyche. When Tyree literally grabs Fishbelly from the school playground, Fishbelly begins to resist and reject his father's flight "instinct" upon learning that he and other African Americans will not be fighting the whites to prevent Chris from being lynching. Arriving home Emma greets Fishbelly but "he rejected her" thinking: "were these scared and trembling people his parents?"[80] While he disintegrated his identification with Emma, he continues to expel her from his emotions because he relates to this parents not as an African American but white child: "suddenly he saw his parents as he felt and thought that white people saw them and he felt toward them some of the contempt that the white people felt for them."[81] A few moments later Fishbelly reiterates this perspective: "he was beginning to look at his people through alien eyes and what he saw [from a white position] evoked in him a sense of distance between him and his people that baffled and worried him."[82] Wright explicitly shows Fishbelly disintegrating his identification with African Americans while simultaneously bolstering his identification with the "white folks." From an anti-black subject position, Fishbelly describes his relationship to his mother as "he wanted to shrink from her as though from something unclean." He adopts the discourse of anti-black racism and views his mother as filth, as rubbish to be expelled. Fishbelly also rejects Tyree because he exhibits fear. This causes Fishbelly to think: "if his father could not defend him, then who could? He was lost, and so were all black people."[83] Fishbelly discards Tyree and "all the reverent awe had had once felt for his father."[84] This disinvestment from his parents and African Americans leads Fishbelly to "act" white. While his family hides in the dark from the passing lynch mob, Fishbelly attempts to turn on the lights and thus alert the mob to scared African

Americans ready to be lynched. In disgust of his family, Fishbelly leaves their presence and hides in the bathroom. In there he finds a newspaper photo of a white woman and muses on how they cause the death of black men like Chris. He tears out the photo and keeps it in his pocket but "he didn't know why he had don't that."[85] Wright will return to this photo. In the meantime, the lynching riot has completed and Tyree takes Fishbelly to the morgue, where Tyree is the undertaker, to prepare Chris' body for burial. As Dr. Bruce slowly examines the mutilated body, Fishbelly watches in horror and fascination. Chris has a neck with at least two breaks, no nose, no right ear, protruding intestines, severed and removed genitals, missing teeth, worn lips, destroyed cheeks, and abrasions from beatings, dragging, and being hanged. The lynching and Tyree's explanations of white hate and the prohibition of sex with white woman further exacerbate Fishbelly's disintegration of his identification with Tyree: "he held toward his father a nameless hatred."[86] At the same time the lynching is completed, Fishbelly equally disembowels himself of his identification with his father, mother, and African Americans. He is left in a state of confusion and need of a new mirror. In this episode Wright communicates Fishbelly's entrance to adulthood not through a complex and more rich character but through the self-deformation of Fishbelly's identities. He is left with "no anchor in this restless sea."[87] Wright, though, offers another avenue for identification.

The lynched body of Chris serves as the catalyst for Fishbelly's next incorporation. The night of the lynching Fishbelly dreams of re-encountering Chris. Wright reminds the reader that Fishbelly has disintegrated his identifications with his parents just before he goes to sleep. When Emma tries to give him a kiss good-night, Fishbelly pushes her away and thinks: "he had shed his emotional swaddling clothes" from his mother.[88] In a state of being without a strong identification with an African American adult, Fishbelly falls into a nightmare that reveals his next introjections. In his parents' bedroom Fishbelly sees a "*white clock with a white face and two white hands"* that watches his every move. This imagery does not need a translation. Fishbelly finds a "*fish belly wet stinking crumpled with fuzzy hair*" at his mother's dressing table. Then, he hears a train approaching and "*the locomotive's stack pipe touched the fish belly*."[89] The fish belly expands to the size of the room and nearly suffocates Fishbelly until it bursts. Contained with the belly is Chris, naked, and profuse amounts of blood. The blood rises so high as to drown Fishbelly and then he awakes from the dream. Throughout the dream the white folks qua the clock say "*DON'T DON'T*" as they watch the events. As another recycled image, Wright revises the context of the fish belly—which remember is really a fish bladder—as a vehicle to describe castration. The fish belly is no longer smooth as in chapter 1 of the novel but has "fuzzy hair" that might be Chris' hair on his head or more likely a revised image of Chris' genital region. Chris was physically castrated so all Fishbelly saw was pubic hair surround a black hole. The fish belly is Chris' castrated genitals. (Alternatively the bladder could be read as the mother's genitals/womb since the bladder is found under her chair and she is the original castrator. I would discount this reading since Chris emerges from the bladder and it is most likely Chris' entrails seen spilling out at the morgue.) Once the fish bladder—or Chris' genitals—is inflated not through air but by the touch of the train's black stack pipe, which Wright has established represents a black penis. In the previous episodes, Tyree revived the disemboweled (castrated) fish and his son. Fishbelly revives Chris because now Fishbelly yields the phallus that restores psychic and sexual life to Chris. First, the dead, or now revived Chris functions as a mirror for Fishbelly. He has been a role model and idol for Fishbelly and the neighborhood boys. On the psychic plane, Chris achieves what Fishbelly desires through a rudimentary logic: sleeping with a white woman—recall the photo of the white girl—because Fishbelly identifies, in

part, as white. Thus, this bond facilitates Fishbelly's identification and incorporation of Chris. Second, Fishbelly also revives and rescues Chris. He could easily identify with the image or memory of Chris but Fishbelly literally gives birth to Chris by "fucking" Chris' genitals. Fishbelly inserts his penis into Chris' castrated genitals—now a receptive hole—and (re)creates life. Wright is very clear that Fishbelly's sexual actions, supported by the clues for sex: "thunderingly" and the thrice repeated rhythmic "HUMPFF HUMPFF" of Fishbelly's sexual acts (thrusts), cause a pregnancy and the resulting rebirth of Chris. At the same time, the white folks monitoring this dream keep telling Fishbelly not to act upon his desires with their "Don't Don't." Fishbelly registers his guilt for this homosexuality via his drowning in the blood of queer creation. The social stigma of homosexuality cannot be expressed in lived reality; by lynching Chris, Wright seems to deny homosexuality from being a central component of African American male bildung.

When Fishbelly and his friends attack Aggie, a local gay black boy, Wright portrays homosexuality as a viable bildung if allowed to thrive. When Aggie asks to join baseball practice, the boys launch a variety of verbal assaults upon Aggie. They call him a sissy, fruit, pansy, fairy, homo, and spook. When he does not leave the boys throw a stone at him and "a sheet of blood gushed, flooding the back of Aggie's shirt, forming a red collar about his neck."[90] Like a lynch mob, the boys are not satisfied with a brutal injury. They proceed to beat Aggie with a beat, kick him, slap him, and punch him until he is "blood-drenched" and seriously injured. In reflection, the boys ponder their brutality—similar to how Bigger can only reflect upon violence—and conclude that "'mebbe he can't [change and be heterosexual]…Mebbe it's like being black.'"[91] They then realize that they treat Aggie, with violence and wishes to stay away from them, just like white treat African Americans. The boys realize their actions were similar to lynching and this helps them to erode the cultural bias that heterosexual is the only "normal" and legitimate form of sexuality.

Chris enters Fishbelly's imagination first as a role model and then as a sexual object and mirror. In the initial chapter as Fishbelly awaits the return of Tyree from his fishing trip, he dreams of Chris. The dream begins with Fishbelly striking a gigantic fish with his baseball bat but before he can swing the fish transforms into Chris. His fear turns into joy as Chris pitches Fishbelly a ball and exclaims: "'*you only five years old, but you hit like a big-league player!*'"[92] Then, Chris reverts into the fish who pitches a ball that gets stuck in Fishbelly's mouth. At this point, the fish attempts to swallow Fishbelly who still holds the ball in his mouth. Chris functions both as a role model who plays and praises Fishbelly's athletic abilities and as a sexual object. The white ball he, as the fish, pitches into Fishbelly's mouth could take on a variety of sexual metaphors. Furthermore, Fishbelly "refuses" to dislodge this sexual gift from his mouth, from his literal introjections of Chris. This dream also helps establish Chris as the object saved by Tyree and then Fishbelly during the opening scene of the novel. Fishbelly revives Chris twice. Moreover, as Fishbelly negotiates between an identification with Tyree and Ned, he also negotiates an identity based upon a mirroring and desiring Chris. In another episode, Fishbelly finds a discarded condom along the road and converts it into a protective sheath for this imagined sword, i.e. a broken broom handle. He shows Chris who tells Fishbelly and his friends to throw away the sword because "'that rubber's been in a woman's "bad" thing.'"[93] The condom-stick is without a doubt unhygienic, but Chris' statement reveals an odd position. Chris dies because of his on-going relationship with a white woman but calling the vagina "bad" seems to belie another message—that heterosexual is indeed a "bad" thing. Chris is in his late teens at this point so he is past the adolescent stage of "hating" girls. Wright could have arranged this sexual

awakening of the boys in a much different manner but he marks heterosexuality as possibly dangerous and riddled with uncleanliness as the boys run to wash their hands. This degradation of heterosexuality seems to keep open the doors for homosocial and possibly bisexual relations.

Section 4: Racial Anxiety and the Question of Black Masculinity

After Chris's lynching Wright brings racial anxiety to the forefront of the novel. The lynching is a turning point in the work, forcing Fishbelly to fully experience the hate, fear, and shame precipitated by his increased consciousness of the harsh realities of race relations—and of the nature of his own racial identities. Fishbelly begins to sense more fully the limited scope of black power, becoming aware of the inferiority complex, created by the racialized mirror stage, imposed on him as an African American male in the South. These by-products of the racialized mirror stage elicit racial anxiety, the nascent trauma of which requires quelling by a web of surplus jouissance. In this connection, Fishbelly continually incorporates "good" and "bad" aspects of Tyree and Chris (to borrow the language of Melanie Klein). The second half of the novel represents sexuality as a mode of bildung functioning by way of a circulatory network of surplus jouissance—of object-causes of desire consisting in white culture and bodies—a network whose movements precipitate the disintegration and incorporation of identities.

Even after the eroding of Ned as symbolic father, Wright depicts Fishbelly's attraction to white culture and identity as continuing to grow. Kids at school tease him: "a fish's belly's *white* and Fishbelly *feels* he's white."[94] Fishbelly confirms this feeling: "when he thought of that white world he hated it; but when he daydreamed of it he loved it."[95] Fishbelly "desires" to date a very pale-skinned woman, Gladys, because she can pass for white. Wright distinguishes between Fishbelly's fantasies and rational thoughts. Fishbelly desires white culture and white women in his daydreams. When he "thinks" about the prospects of desiring whiteness, Fishbelly comprehends its destructive powers and rejects his fantasies.

I want to argue that Wright presents Fishbelly's episodes of desiring whiteness as moments of surplus jouissance that occur in response to traumatic instances of racial anxiety. Fishbelly must process his dawning recognition that "the real reality of the lives of his people was negated; the *real* world lay over *there* somewhere—in a place where white people lived, people who had the power to say who could or could not live and on what terms."[96] Chris's death teaches Fishbelly the failure of any black identity that is defined by white culture. He understands that the "reality" of the racialized mirror stage produces dead mothers, homicidal Bigger Thomases, sycophantic Tyrees and Bessies, and lynched black men like Chris. He also concludes that commanding the process of bildung—of crafting an identity that cannot be "negated" by whites—is a question of power relations. He learns that the forms of black masculinity in circulation and available for him to mirror do not possess social or psychic power; only whites—both male and female—seem to yield these powers. Throughout the novel, Fishbelly witnesses the failure of these black masculinities. Chris's form of masculinity is an obvious failure because it ends in lynching and death. But his is only the extreme version of the power failure Fishbelly sees in all black men. For example, when Cantley, a corrupt white chief of police and Tyree's silent business partner, interrupts a meeting of black men, "his coming…annulled the reality of their lives, for the black men present were not their own masters."[97] Power resides with Cantley no matter how desperately the black men try to subvert

his powers. Thus, any of the available black bildung journeys Fishbelly might pursue cannot enact social or psychic power. They are all failures of black masculinity.

The racial anxiety generated by these reactions to black masculinity manifests itself as a desire for whiteness. Fishbelly embraces whiteness as a means to mitigate his racial anxiety. During his arrest for trespassing, for example, Fishbelly gazes at a white waitress from the backseat of the police car. When the police catch him repeatedly and lustfully gazing at the girl, one of the officers puts his knife at Fishbelly's crotch and says "'I'm going to fix you so you won't *never* look at another white gal…nigger, I'm going to *castrate* you!'"[98] As a response to this literal castration anxiety, Fishbelly faints. Fainting here functions as a form of surplus jouissance that both deploys a successful defense against castration and performs an upper-middle class, typically feminine, response to fear. Later in the car ride to jail Fishbelly remembers that he has a picture of a near-naked white woman in his wallet. Possessing this image would no doubt cause him great harm at the jail when they went through his possessions. Again, black masculinity fails Fishbelly because it disallows him from admiring or possessing the photo of the naked white woman; he is prohibited from 'owning' that which he values (its placement in his wallet emphasizing this near-literal status as object of value). Fishbelly cannot discard of the photo, so instead swallows it—incorporating the image. This swallowing of the white woman implies that Fishbelly incorporates her identity. The image, however, is "that photograph that he had impulsively torn out of the newspaper in the toilet on the night that Chris had been killed!"[99] The ingestion is thus not simply an incorporation of the white girl but also relates to the reason he has carried the image for over two years. Fishbelly re-incorporates Chris—but with some qualifications. Chris, and the black masculinity he represents, ended in death and failure; Fishbelly has already rejected that part of Chris's identity. Fishbelly therefore must fashion a restricted or selective incorporation of Chris's various characteristics. This incorporation illuminates the fainting, the photograph, and his gaze at the waitress.

Fishbelly constructs a new form of black masculinity out of his piecemeal incorporation of Chris. He devises an identity that attempts to draw attention to himself rather than be a supplicant who remains invisible and unrecognized by whites. He decides that *"you are nothing because you are black, and proof of your being nothing is that if you touch a white woman, you'll be killed.*"[100] Similar to Bigger's formulation of an identity based upon violence and murder, Fishbelly forges an identity based upon the transgression of social taboos—but of, additionally, surviving that transgression. Fishbelly does not simply want to "get away with" what Chris got lynched for; rather, he wants to disrupt the social logic that figures black masculinity as both dangerous and as, at the same time, lacking power. Fishbelly instigates this new identity during his fainting spells. When he gazes at the white waitress, for instance, Fishbelly does desire the woman because she is white but not because she is sexually attractive; his fixed gaze produces a castration threat by (not just white men but, even more terrifyingly) white police officers. Fishbelly faces whites and their threats of castration for transgressing a social taboo and survives. The first couple of castration threats terminate with surplus jouissance—his fainting. The last time Clem threatens Fishbelly with castration he retains his consciousness and decides that "he was willing to die, but he would never faint again…they could not violate him that way any more."[101] Fishbelly refuses to allow the police to treat him as a scared and powerless black man (or black woman if the scene is read as rape). Surplus jouissance is replaced by a full encounter with racial anxiety. This also begins the exfoliation of his class position. He disintegrates his classed response to the threat of castration. Later in the novel, Tyree assists Fishbelly with the full disintegration of a middle-class identity. He tells

Fishbelly that "'there ain't no *low* niggers and *high* niggers for white folks…we all the same to them, except when they can git something out of us.'"[102]

Wright subsequently builds on his description of Fishbelly's incorporation of Chris with telling details. As Fishbelly walks home from jail, he finds an injured dog on the side of the road. The dog was hit by a car and his back is broken. Fishbelly understands that he must kill the dog rather than leave him wounded: "if he did not kill the dog, it would lie here and suffer for hours in this brutal sun, dying of slow torture."[103] Fishbelly tries to kill the dog but he cannot; as the dog licks his hands, he finally gains the strength to put him out of his misery. This seemingly chance scene becomes an avenue for Wright to represent Fishbelly's relationship to Chris: "the dog's dying associatively linked itself with another vivid dying and another far-off death: the lynched body of Chris."[104] Then, in a gory maneuver, Fishbelly disembowels the dog and removes each one of its organs. In dissecting the dog-Chris, he was "trying to detect some secret that it harbored."[105] Fishbelly assumes that he's learned the meaning of death from the disembowelment of the dog-Chris:

> he had realized it all, had enthroned it in himself in the same manner in which he had swallowed the white woman's picture. When the whites came at him now, he would know what death was…he could live somewhat at peace now with himself; the world of white faces no longer had the power to surprise him.[106]

Fishbelly believes that his experiences with Chris's and the dog's deaths prepare him to face death at the hands of white men. Wright throws a wrench in this thought pattern, however, by aligning the ingestion of the girl's photo with the exploration of the dog-Chris's body. As mentioned previously, the swallowing of the photo is more an incorporation of Chris (and the incorporation of a stereotypical female response to fear). The act of disembowelment has similar consequences to the act of swallowing Chris. Wright raises an interesting question in this context: what is the "secret that it [Chris's body] harbored?" On the surface, the secret is the missing—castrated—phallus. Fishbelly searches for Chris's sexual organs to satisfy his sexual desires. Alternatively, the phallus as a representation of male power could be the other meaning evoked by Wright. Fishbelly swallows Chris's phallus—just like he swallowed his genitals in a childhood dream—incorporating the model of black masculinity related to Chris. This includes the transgression of social taboos that he represents: sleeping with white women, homosexual desire, and refusing to obey white power. Wright demonstrates the latter right after Fishbelly disembowels the dog-Chris. The man who hit the dog had crashed and is pinned under his car. The man repeatedly shouts orders at Fishbelly such as "'G-goddammit, q-quick, nigger!'"[107] Fishbelly's refusal to obey these imperatives reflects his recent development of a new bildung. At first, he tries to help the man, but after being called "nigger" he then decides to walk away from the man. Fishbelly responds to this instance of racial anxiety by (besides essentially killing the man) pursing his own masculinity. He refuses a white imperative and survives; he does so at the cost of a man's life. Before advancing into my next argument, I want to continue to address the question of Fishbelly's apparent desire for whiteness.

Fishbelly's sexual bildung seems to reflect said desire. He dates the prostitute Gladys, who is pale enough to pass if she wanted to. He specially selects her from among the other prostitutes because of her skin color and resemblance to a white woman. Maybelle, the most dark-skinned prostitute, castigates Fishbelly for his selection: "'what she's got smells just like mine! It feels the same. Even if you eat it, it tastes the same. You think it's better'n mine just

'cause it looks *white*, but it ain't white. You 'shamed of your color! You goddamn *white-struck* black fools."[108] At this point in the novel, associating with and sleeping with Gladys serves two purposes. First, it is a form of surplus jouissance that alleviates Fishbelly's racial anxiety regarding being a "castrated" black man. Second, sleeping with Gladys helps fulfill his desire to survive the transgression of social taboos. Fishbelly sleeps with someone whom he can imagine is a white woman, without having whites castrate or lynch him; he "satisfies" his desires even if only as a delusion—as another manifestation of surplus jouissance. When Gladys dies in a fire, Fishbelly seems to focus on a different form of surplus jouissance. This coincides with a change in Tyree's masculinity.

From his incorporation of selective attributes of Chris, Fishbelly learns that he must negotiate—must take charge of—the second major phase of identifications with Tyree. In the past, Fishbelly has undergone introjections and disintegrations of identification, but with limited control over the process. He incorporated Ned almost 'wholesale,' without filtering the identification, and he summarily disintegrated Tyree's incorporation without much, if any, reflection. The episode with the dog's body acting as Chris's enables Fishbelly to better master his incorporations; he successfully learns to dictate his bildung journey. However, Fishbelly must still determine what to keep and what to disintegrate in relationship to Tyree. While being released from jail, Tyree acts the supplicant to the white police officers. This version of the father irritates Fishbelly: "this was a father whom he had never known, a father whom he loathed and did not want to know."[109] Fishbelly cannot identify with this blithering sycophant and disintegrates the father figure: "he was all alone…he did not really have a father!"[110] When Tyree schools Fishbelly in the rules of interaction with whites, Fishbelly cannot incorporate, cannot swallow (so to speak) the idea that he should "either [be] crying or grinning."[111]

After a few hours, however, Fishbelly revises his identification when Tyree takes him to his brothel, enlightening him as to the nature of the family estate. Now, "he had a good father. How had he ever thought otherwise? He walked at Tyree's side, marveling at his wisdom, his generosity."[112]As Fishbelly learns the mechanisms of the business—of giving bribes to the local authorities and top political figures—he adds another goal. From Chris' murder he formulated the desire to transgress social taboos and yet not get lynched. He is shocked to learn that Tyree has already accomplished this goal: "Tyree not only violated the law, but violated that law with the law's *permission*."[113] Fishbelly decides that Tyree's relationships with whites aren't satisfying. A "grinning" way of life simply makes Fishbelly "loathe" his father. The option of either grinning or crying for whites is infantilizing. These acts make black men feels as though they have not undergone any development at all. After Gladys's death, Fishbelly discontinues his pursuit of whiteness via dating. Tyree offers Fishbelly a new form of masculinity.

Tyree becomes a "fighting" man, exhibiting a form of masculinity that appeals to Fishbelly. Early in the novel, Fishbelly disinvested from his father because he refused to combat the whites to save Chris from a lynching. After Fishbelly works with Tyree for at least a year—the timeframe being nebulous in the novel—Cantley, the chief of police, decides to put Tyree (and Dr. Bruce) in jail for the deaths of the club patrons. Tyree and Dr. Bruce own the club, but Cantley receives monthly cuts of the profits. The attention the club fire will attain necessitates that Cantley silence Tyree before he can say anything about the kickbacks. Fishbelly witnesses the aggressive subversion—the attack—Tyree inflicts on Cantley by exposing the chief's involvement and is flabbergasted by Tyree's strength. Wright borrows from Hegel's master-slave dialectic and Douglass's episode with Covey to describe the scene: "with all the strength of his being, the slave was fighting the master."[114] No longer, it would appear, does black masculinity

lack social or political power. Tyree demonstrates for Fishbelly the power that he has long cultivated through his more subtle subversions. Finally, Fishbelly learns from Tyree that "crying and begging—well, that's a way of fighting."[115] Fishbelly incorporates both of these styles of "fighting" anti-black racism because Tyree has continued to transgress the boundaries set for African Americans by white America and continued to survive. Fishbelly realizes that he need not so much acquire identities in earnest as access and deploy them strategically, at will. Unfortunately, Tyree's blackmail of Cantley (with copies of the cashed bribery checks) ends in his death at the hands of Cantley and the police. In his dying words to Fishbelly, Tyree proclaims that "'*we won, son*...I won my fight! They didn't git my money and that chief's done for. . . . You'll see. I'll be fighting that sonofabitch from my grave!'"[116] Sadly, Cantley manages to steal the checks from the District Attorney's evidence room and goes undefeated. Fishbelly, needless to say, is crushed by his father's death; he learns that strategic deployment of identities also leads to failure—and death. Tyree was unable to transgress and live. With his "failure" to perform a consistent masculinity, Fishbelly enacts a final disinvestment from his identification with Tyree as a viable model of masculinity. Tyree remains a father, but not a role model.

As Fishbelly steps into Tyree's business role, he tests out a businessman identity. He collects rent and operates all of Tyree's illegal enterprises, including paying out bribes. He follows "Tyree's dying admonition: *Make like you believe what they say. . . .You can't do nothing. . . .*"[117] Fishbelly has long resisted the latter advice and despises the conclusion, but he nonetheless puts this principle into practice as a black business man. This new world does not last long; Fishbelly finds a few of the cashed checks that will incriminate Cantley—and Cantley discovers this, too, as he has determined that not all of the checks were given to the district attorney. He frames Fishbelly for having sex with a white woman and imprisons him until he gives up the checks. Tyree's advice fails him and he abandons the posture of supplicant. In jail, he tells Cantley "'awright, kill me."[118] Fishbelly replaces Tyree's masculinity—of a failed assault and "grinning" persona—with the idea that he would transgress white power and survive. He is charged (but not tried) with attempted sex/rape of a white woman, meaning that, in effect, he has transgressed a social taboo (if only in the whites' own lies). He stays in jail for two years without talking and without thinking. After being released from jail he flees to Paris, not because he identifies with the myth of a non-racist France, but because he needs a change of environment and needs to escape the harsh anti-black racism of the South and of America. His bildung is modeled off of his father's and it has failed him. Fighting anti-black racism, Fishbelly discovers, is not possible in Mississippi. He does discover, however, that changing his perspective and his identity will allow him to function in the world. He does not identify with the black masculinities of his father nor Chris's because they do not provide freedom of expression; their subversions, however effective or ineffective, are still dictated and modulated by anti-black racism just like the world of freedom Bigger imagines he creates. Fishbelly has no more mirrors and his bildung is empty; an anti-black society refuses to present him with anyone to identify with that isn't constructed or heavily policed by anti-black racism. His minority bildung of disintegration has come to a conclusion. Fishbelly ends the novel as a man without an identity.

[1] Wright, Richard. *Native Son.* New York: Harpers Perennial Classics, 1998, 3.
[2] Native Son, 285.
[3] Native Son, 254.
[4] Native Son, 9.
[5] Native Son, 9.
[6] Native Son, 180.
[7] Native Son, 308.
[8] Native Son, 294.
[9] Native Son, 390.
[10] Native Son, 358.
[11] Native Son, 401.
[12] Native Son, 358.
[13] Native Son, 331.
[14] Native Son, 390 and 400, respectively.
[15] Native Son, 353.
[16] Native Son, 303.
[17] Native Son, 311.
[18] Native Son, 353-5.
[19] Native Son, 356.
[20] Native Son, 19-20 (italics original, speaker names added).
[21] Native Son, 21-22.
[22] Native Son, 354.
[23] Benjamin, Walter. "Critique of Violence" *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings.* ed Peter Demetz. New York: Schocken Books, 1978, 300.
[24] Native Son, 285.
[25] Native Son, 274.
[26] Native Son, 67.
[27] Native Son, 227-8.
[28] Native Son, 17, ellipses original.
[29] Native Son, 36.
[30] Native Son, 44. Wright repeats this line on page 91 when Bigger feels the fear that Mary's body will not fit into the furnace.
[31] Native Son, 179.
[32] Native Son, 28.
[33] Native Son, 29.
[34] Native Son, 42.
[35] Native Son, 42.
[36] Native Son, 105.
[37] Native Son, 106.
[38] Native Son, 111.
[39] Native Son, 396.
[40] Native Son, 298.
[41] Native Son, 311.
[42] Native Son, 347.
[43] Native Son, 359-60.
[44] Native Son, 361.
[45] Native Son, 362.
[46] Native Son, 363.
[47] Native Son, 419.
[48] Native Son, 429.
[49] Rowley, Hazel. "The Exile Years: How the '50s Culture Wars Destroyed Richard Wright." Accessed: July 25, 2012 <http://0042404.netsolhost.com/exileyears.html>
[50] Poston, Ted. "Wright: He's Out of Touch." *New York Post,* October 26, 1958.
[51] "Forward." Keneth Kinnamon in *The Long Dream.* Boston: Northeastern UP, 2000.

[52] Redding, Saunders. "The Way It Was." *New York Times Book Review.* October 26, 1958, 4, 38.
[53] Wright, Richard. *The Long Dream.* Boston: Northeastern UP, 2000, 9. The novel will be abbreviated as "TLD, page number" in future citations.
[54] TLD, 10.
[55] TLD, 63.
[56] THD, 12.
[57] Green, Andre. "The Dead Mother" in *One Private Madness.* London: Karnac Press, 2005 (1986), 151.
[58] Green, 151.
[59] TLD, 12.
[60] TLD, 12-13.
[61] TLD, 13.
[62] TLD, 11.
[63] TLD, 15.
[64] TLD, 16.
[65] TLD, 17.
[66] TLD, 19 (italics original).
[67] TLD, 22-24 (italics original).
[68] TLD, 27.
[69] TLD, 28.
[70] TLD, 24.
[71] Lacan, Jacques. *Seminar I: Freud's Papers on Technique*. New York: Norton, 1991, 83.
[72] TLD, 32.
[73] TLD, 58.
[74] TLD, 58.
[75] TLD, 60.
[76] TLD, 42.
[77] TLD, 46.
[78] TLD, 62.
[79] TLD, 68 and 64.
[80] TLD, 63.
[81] TLD, 63.
[82] TLD, 67.
[83] TLD, 66.
[84] TLD, 69.
[85] TLD, 69.
[86] TLD, 79.
[87] TLD, 80.
[88] TLD, 81.
[89] TLD, 82.
[90] TLD, 39.
[91] TLD, 40 (ellipses original).
[92] TLD, 10.
[93] TLD, 30.
[94] TLD, 100.
[95] TLD, 177.
[96] TLD, 67.
[97] TLD, 238.
[98] TLD, 111.
[99] TLD, 113.
[100] TLD, 157.
[101] TLD, 121.
[102] TLD, 253.
[103] TLD, 133.
[104] TLD, 134-5.
[105] TLD, 135.

[106] TLD, 135.
[107] TLD, 137.
[108] TLD, 172.
[109] TLD, 125-6.
[110] TLD, 127.
[111] TLD, 142.
[112] TLD, 149.
[113] TLD, 150.
[114] TLD, 250.
[115] TLD, 259.
[116] TLD, 297.
[117] TLD, 301.
[118] TLD, 356.